

## Professional conditions and job satisfaction of Colombian journalists

*Situación profesional y satisfacción laboral  
de los periodistas colombianos*

LILIANA GUTIÉRREZ-COBA<sup>1</sup>

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5532-8765>

This article exposes labor characteristics of Colombian journalists, their satisfaction level with their work conditions, and associated sociodemographic variables. Through 300 surveys and 40 in-depth interviews, the results show a worsening of salary conditions in the last ten years but an improvement in hiring modalities. Journalists' global job satisfaction perception is moderate, and there are extrinsic/intrinsic factors associated with that level of perception, such as the lack of training programs and promotion opportunities.

**KEYWORDS:** Journalist, working conditions, job satisfaction, Colombia.

*Este artículo expone las características laborales de los periodistas colombianos, su nivel de satisfacción con sus condiciones de trabajo y las variables sociodemográficas asociadas. A través de 300 encuestas y 40 entrevistas en profundidad, los resultados muestran un empeoramiento de las condiciones salariales en los últimos diez años, aunque una mejora en las modalidades de contratación. La percepción global de la satisfacción laboral de los periodistas es moderada y existen factores extrínsecos/intrínsecos asociados, como la falta de programas de capacitación y de oportunidades de promoción.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Periodista, condiciones laborales, satisfacción laboral, Colombia.

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<sup>1</sup> Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia.

[liliana.gutierrez1@unisabana.edu.co](mailto:liliana.gutierrez1@unisabana.edu.co)

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The interest in ensuring that the information that reaches society is true, useful and well-thought-out has gained strength in recent years. Although the concept of informational or journalistic quality has different meanings, researchers typically agree that it involves the different phases of production of informational content: checking sources, making the product, and distributing the product (Gómez-Mompart et al., 2013; Gutiérrez-Coba, 2009; Schulz, 2000).

Some researchers also agree that there are various conditioning factors for journalistic processes to be properly carried out. On the one hand are external factors, such as the existence of legal provisions that guarantee freedom of the press and protective measures for journalists who practice their profession in places immersed in armed conflict or in unsafe settings (Espino, 2016; Garcés & Arroyave, 2017). In the case of Colombia, the violent conditions generated by guerrillas, paramilitarism and organized crime have hindered journalistic practice in various regions of the country. The Foundation for Press Freedom (*Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa*) (FLIP, 2018) noted in its 2018 report that the number of attacks on the press increased by 53% compared to 2017, and by 120% compared to the previous year. Kidnappings, harassment, threats, obstruction of the press, removal of journalistic material, legal harassment, gender violence, exile and internal displacement continue to be problems that Colombian journalists must face.

According to researchers of journalistic quality, there should be regulations that prevent the concentration of the media in a few hands so that a diversity of views of reality is guaranteed; the business structure of the media and associated power groups has an important influence on the independence of journalists to carry out their work, as has been documented in Latin America (Becerra & Mastrini, 2017; Huerta-Wong & García, 2013; Trejo, 2010) and in Colombia (Consejo de Redacción & Poderopedia, 2015; Federación Colombiana de Periodistas [Fecolper] & Reporters without Borders, n.d.). In the case of Colombia, the ownership of 57% of the media is concentrated in three economic groups: Organización Luis Carlos Sarmiento Angulo, Organización Ardila Lulle and Valorem. There are also three public television channels owned by the government –Señal Colombia, Canal

Institucional and Canal UNO— and seven Colombian departments<sup>2</sup> have a regional channel, three of which are local channels owned by the territorial entities where they are located and which are funded largely by the National Television Authority (Autoridad Nacional de Televisión—ANTV) and the departmental or municipal governments. Additionally, there are community media, i.e., nonprofit media, which are created and managed by communities in neighborhoods and localities of different municipalities and which typically operate in precarious conditions.

There is also a great variety of digital native ventures, comprising 88 in 2012 (Rey & Novoa, 2012) but proliferating in recent years; in 2018 there were 334 (Barragán, 2018). The most recent quarterly report from the Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (2019) indicates that at the end of the fourth quarter of 2018, the country had a total of 32.7 million broadband Internet connections, which represents a penetration rate of 65.5%. Statistics from the International Telecommunication Union (2018) showed that in 2017, Colombia ranked 19<sup>th</sup> among 27 Latin American countries in terms of mobile Internet penetration (48.8 active connections per 100 inhabitants), which shows a lag in the country in terms of connectivity, which in turn influences the consumption of digital media.

Other conditioning factors are more specific to journalists' internal domain, such as compliance with information verification standards, adequate reporting routines and adherence to ethical commitments to truth and independence (Casero-Ripollés & Rabadán, 2013; Pellegrini et al., 2011; Reyes et al., 2015; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2016).

Last, there are conditioning factors that depend on the media company, which must guarantee the spaces and resources necessary for journalists to perform their tasks well, healthy work environments and fair working conditions, which include hiring characterized by employment stability and decent wages (Mellado & Lagos, 2013; Ufarte, 2012).

The combination of all these factors would guarantee that citizens receive good quality information that serves the common good and not the interests of a few.

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<sup>2</sup> States or communities.

As seen, journalistic quality is a complex phenomenon; therefore, researchers typically address some of these aspects separately. This study investigates the working conditions and job satisfaction of journalists, with the understanding that without fair wages and in precarious situations, motivation and commitment to journalistic values can be compromised.

### *Precariousness in the shadows*

Studies on the working conditions of journalists in Colombia are scarce. Less than a handful of studies have been conducted on the subject in the last 15 years (Barrios & Arroyave, 2007; Gutiérrez Coba et al., 2010; Manrique & Cardona, 2003). In 2015, the Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa (FLIP, n.d.) began mapping the existing media in Colombia; this was perhaps the most exhaustive study that has been carried out on the reality of the information system in the country. Although the results are still preliminary because interviews with representatives of each of the more than 2 000 media outlets found have not been completed, the study reveals a worrying scenario of low wages and no labor contracts in the media outlets located in the municipalities furthest away from the capitals.

The most recent published work on the subject dates from 2010 (Gutiérrez-Coba et al., 2010) and shows that little attention has been given to the working conditions of journalists, making it relevant to compare the 2010 study with the FLIP report from 2015, although not all variables are the same, in order to establish whether there has been improvement in the work situation of Colombian journalists.

The idea to conduct this study arose from the previous references, and it seeks to establish the working conditions of journalists in Colombia, not only in terms of the type of hiring and how much compensation they receive for their work but also other factors such as the autonomy, training, resources and incentives provided to them to perform their work well, all of which affect their perception of job satisfaction. Thus, there are four research questions guiding this study: What is the profile of the Colombian journalist? What are the working conditions of Colombian journalists? What associations exist between the journalist's profile and better working conditions? How satisfied

are Colombian journalists with their work situation? This way, it will be possible to establish the specific points that journalists' unions, Social Communication and Journalism schools, journalistic companies and the government should address to improve the work situation of information professionals.

This is of special interest in a context in which journalism is radically different from what it was at the beginning of the century. The relentless development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT's) obligated the media to rethink the information they provide, their business structure, labor relations with their journalists, the way they interact with audiences and their business model. All of these factors have had a negative impact on the working conditions of reporters because in many cases, media companies have reduced the number of workers while taking on challenges such as convergence, instantaneity and the distribution of content through social networks. Thus, journalists have experienced an increase in their workload while also facing the work uncertainty generated by the new conditions of their employment, as referenced by various studies that have found changes in the forms of reporting and distributing information and in the work routines of journalists (Barrios & Zambrano, 2015; Fariás & Gómez, 2011; Márquez-Ramírez & Hughes, 2017; Mellado & Lagos, 2013; Odriozola et al., 2016; Sabés & Verón, 2012; Túniz & Martínez, 2015).

### *Context on job satisfaction*

Job satisfaction has been the subject of study by many researchers since the 1960's. This has led to definitions as simple as the degree to which employees like their job (Fisher, 2000; Fritzsche & Parrish, 2005), which implies an affective or emotional response, to more complex definitions that present it as an evaluative judgment, positive or negative, that the individual makes of their work situation and that involves aspects such as salary, hours, and physical workplace conditions, among others (Bowling et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2010; Weiss, 2002).

Thompson and Phua (2012) argue that the best way to establish job satisfaction is to think of it in terms of two different and complementary categories. On the one hand is cognitive job satisfaction, the result of a process of conscious evaluation of the characteristics of the work and its

comparison with an external parameter. On the other hand is affective job satisfaction, which represents a positive emotional response of the worker towards the work as a whole.

The present study identifies with the latter definition given that, historically, studies on journalistic work have shown a paradoxical contrast: despite the precarious conditions in which they carry out their work, journalists feel passion for what they do, and their commitment to the social function remains intact (Arroyave & Blanco, 2005; Cantalapedra et al., 2016; Díaz Jordán & Serrano, 2017; Mellado & Parra, 2008; Rodríguez, 2003).

Thus, an attempt will be made to identify the intrinsic elements, i.e., journalists' own perception of the aspects of their work that generate a sense of well-being, and the extrinsic elements over which journalists have no control and which are more objective with regard to their real working conditions.

## METHOD

A mixed quantitative-qualitative study was conducted, consisting of surveys and semistructured interviews. Given that there is no reliable census on the number of journalists currently working in the Colombian media, the survey was based on the media map prepared by the Consejo de Redacción and Poderopedia (2015), which reported the existence of 220 media outlets (88 print, 50 radio, 44 Internet and 38 television). The surveys were sent by email and Twitter to 500 journalists, and responses were received from 300 belonging to 123 media outlets in 24 cities in the country, in the period between February 2018 and February 2019 (Table 1).

Although this is a nonprobabilistic sample and, therefore, the results are not generalizable to the entire population of Colombian journalists, it gives an idea of the working conditions faced by reporters in the country, especially those who work in private media outlets, from which a greater number of responses was obtained.

The survey consisted of seven items related to the profile of the journalist, seven on working conditions and 11 on job satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha 0.906), which are scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

TABLE 1  
TYPE OF MEDIA ACCORDING TO CITY OF ORIGIN

City	Public	Private	For profit	Nonprofit	Total
Arauca (Arauca)	0	0	1	0	1
Armenia (Quindío)	3	0	0	0	3
Barranquilla (Atlántico)	1	5	0	2	8
Bogotá (Cundinamarca)	20	176	3	5	204
Bucaramanga (Santander)	4	5	0	0	9
Cali (Valle)	4	7	1	0	12
Cartagena (Bolívar)	0	2	0	0	2
Cúcuta (North Santander)	0	2	0	0	2
Fusagasugá (Cundinamarca)	0	0	1	0	1
Granada (Antioquia)	0	0	0	2	2
Ibagué (Tolima)	0	4	0	0	4
La Mesa (Cundinamarca)	0	0	1	0	1
Manizáles (Caldas)	0	3	0	0	3
Medellín (Antioquia)	9	11	1	0	21
Montería (Córdoba)	0	2	0	0	2
Neiva (Huila)	0	5	0	0	5
Palmira (Valle)	0	2	0	0	2
Pasto (Nariño)	1	0	0	0	1
Pereira (Risaralda)	1	1	0	0	2
Puerto Berrío (Antioquia)	0	0	1	0	1
Riohacha (Guajira)	0	0	1	0	1
Sopó (Cundinamarca)	1	0	0	0	1
Valledupar (Cesar)	0	2	0	0	2
Villanueva (Guajira)	0	0	0	1	1
No report	2	4	1	2	9
Total	46	231	11	12	300

Source: Research data.

The global score for the job satisfaction instrument ranges from 11 to 55 points. A higher score is associated with a higher global perception of job satisfaction, and three intervals were established: low job satisfaction (11 to 25 points), moderate job satisfaction (26 to 40), and high job satisfaction (41 to 55).

This scale in turn encompasses two subscales. The first considers intrinsic factors, such as the acknowledgment of superiors when the journalist does the job well, the support received for the same reason, the opportunities for promotion and the autonomy to make decisions (Cronbach's alpha, 0.845). On this scale, satisfaction is considered low between 4 and 9 points, moderate between 10 and 14 points and high between 15 to 20 points.

The second subscale addresses extrinsic factors, i.e., those that are beyond the worker's control, such as salary, hours, physical and environmental workplace conditions, occupational health conditions, accident prevention, training and development programs offered by the company and well-being activities offered by the company to the worker's family (Cronbach's alpha, 0.853). Extrinsic satisfaction is considered low between 7 and 16 points, moderate between 17 and 25 points, and high between 26 and 35 points.

Between May and August 2018, in-depth interviews were conducted with 40 journalists from eight Colombian cities (Bogotá, Cali, Bucaramanga, Medellín, Valledupar, Pereira, Barranquilla and Neiva) to address specific aspects about what generates satisfaction and dissatisfaction in journalists regarding their work. The journalists selected for the interviews did not occupy managerial positions in the media companies. For each city, two journalists each from two private, one public, one for-profit and one nonprofit media outlets were interviewed.

## RESULTS

### *Colombian journalist profile and working conditions*

The profile of the 300 journalists<sup>3</sup> who answered the survey shows that they are mainly men (69%) under 40 years of age (70.3%). The predominant age range is 26 to 30 years (22.3%), followed by 31 to 35 years (19.3%). This is followed by very similar percentages of those 36 to 40 years of age (14.7%) and aged under 25 years of age (14%).

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<sup>3</sup> The database can be consulted at [https://figshare.com/articles/DATOS\\_EN-CUESTA\\_PERIODISTAS\\_mayo\\_sav/12269519](https://figshare.com/articles/DATOS_EN-CUESTA_PERIODISTAS_mayo_sav/12269519)

Regarding the length of professional experience, three blocks are observed: those with up to 5 years of experience in journalism (34%), those with between 6 and 15 years of experience in journalism (32.3%) and those who have dedicated 16 to more than 20 years to the profession (33%).

During one's profession, changes in jobs are frequent. The majority of the respondents work in private media (76%), followed by public (16%), nonprofit (4%) and for-profit (3.7%) media. A total of 34% of the respondents work in television as their main platform, followed by 29% in print, 20.3% on the web and 16.7% in radio.

A total of 58.3% of the respondents had a university degree, 13.7% had a specialization degree, and 22% had a Master's degree, results that are substantially different compared with the percentages reported by Gutiérrez-Coba et al. (2010), where only 5.9% of the journalists consulted had a graduate degree.

Regarding salary compensation, in Colombia, the minimum legal monthly salary (MLMS) for 2019 was 828 116 Colombian pesos, that is, approximately 259 US dollars. Of the 300 journalists who answered the survey, 26.3% earn between 1.2 and 2.4 MLMS for their work, followed by 23.3% who earn between 2.4 and 3.6 MLMS and 10% who earn between 0.6 and 1.2 MLMS. Additionally, 2.7% reported earning less than 0.6 MLMS. That is, 62.3% of the respondents earn less than 3.6 MLMS, while only 37.7% exceeded this range (Table 2).

When comparing the data reported by Gutiérrez-Coba et al. (2010) with those of the present study, a decline in the compensation level of Colombian journalists is observed. In 2010, the MLMS was 515 000 Colombian pesos, and 34% of the respondents reported earning between two and four MLMS, while 27.6% earned between one and two MLMS. Additionally, 6% earned less than one MLMS, and 32.4% earned more than five MLMS. This was equivalent to 61.6% of journalists earning one to four MLMS. By 2019, 49.6% earned between 1.2 and 3.6 MLMS for their work, while 12.7% earned less than one MLMS. A total of 28.7% earned more than five MLMS (Figure 1).

This situation is more complex if the devaluation of the Colombian peso against the US dollar is considered. Thus, one MLMS in 2010 corresponded to approximately US\$269, while in 2019, when the study data were analyzed, it was equivalent to US\$259, that is, US\$10 less than a decade ago.

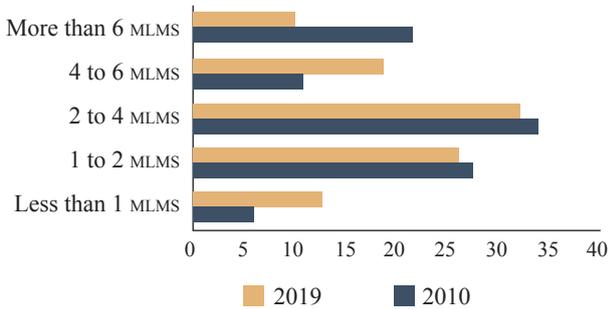
TABLE 2  
SALARY RANGE ACCORDING TO MEDIA TYPE

Salary range (Colombian pesos)	Public		Private		For profit		Nonprofit		Total	
		%		%		%		%		%
Less than \$500 000 (<0.6 MLMS)	0	0.0	4	1.3	4	1.3	0	0.0	8	2.7
\$500 000 to less than \$1 million (0.6 to 1.2 MLMS)	4	1.3	22	7.3	1	0.3	3	1.0	30	10.0
\$1 million to less than \$2 million (1.2 to 2.4 MLMS)	14	4.7	57	19.0	3	1.0	5	1.7	79	26.3
\$2 million to less than \$3 million (2.4 to 3.6 MLMS)	7	2.3	61	20.3	0	0.0	2	0.7	70	23.3
\$3 million to less than \$4 million (3.6 and 4.8 MLMS)	5	1.7	21	7.0	0	0.0	1	0.3	27	9.0
\$4 million to less than \$5 million (4.8 to 6 MLMS)	6	2.0	24	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	30	10.0
\$5 million to less than \$6 million (6 to 7.2 MLMS)	7	2.3	15	5.0	3	1.0	1	0.3	26	8.7
More than \$6 million (>7.2 MLMS)	6	2.0	24	8.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	30	10.0
Total	49	16.3	228	76.0	11	3.7	12	4.0	300	100.0

Source: Research data

The association between salary level and educational training (contingency coefficient = 0.52;  $p < 0.05$ ) confirms the hypothesis that the higher one's educational training is, the higher his or her earning level, in more than 50% of cases. For example, of the 66 journalists with a Master's degree, 62% earn more than 3.6 MLMS, and of these,

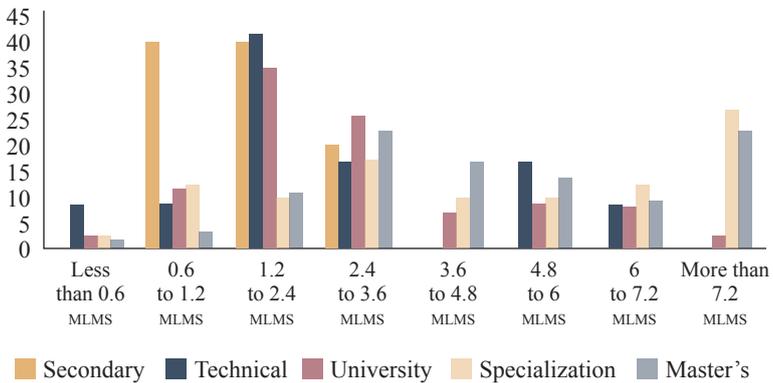
FIGURE 1  
COMPARISON OF JOURNALIST SALARIES IN 2010 AND 2019 (PERCENTAGE)



Source: Research data

22.7% reported earning more than 7.2 MLMS. The same is observed with the 41 who have specialist degrees, of whom 58.5% earn more than 3.6 MLMS. In turn, of the 175 who reported having a university degree, only 25.7% earn more than 3.6 MLMS (Figure 2).

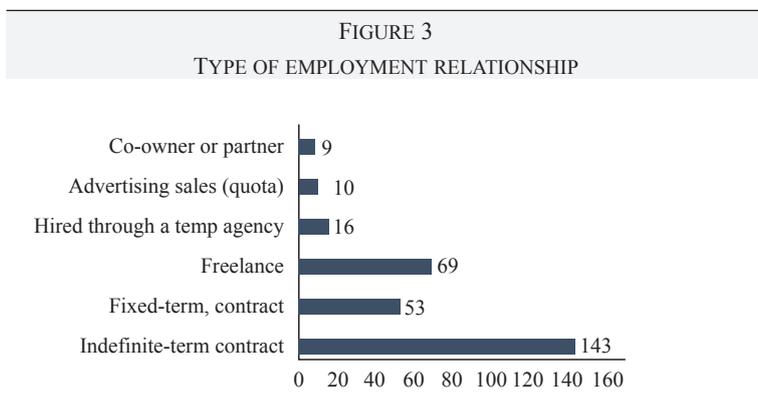
FIGURE 2  
SALARY RANGE ACCORDING TO EDUCATION LEVEL



Source: Research data.

The hypothetical relationship between work experience and salary (contingency coefficient = 0.55;  $p = 0.05$ ) is moderate and significant. Thus, 57.6% of the 59 journalists who have more than 20 years of professional experience earn more than 3.6 MLMS, as do 60% of the 40 journalists who have between 16 and 20 years of experience and 54.6% of the 44 journalists with between 11 and 15 years of experience. In turn, only 32% of the 53 journalists who have between six and ten years of experience earn more than 3.6 MLMS, and only 13.8% of the 104 journalists who have less than five years of work experience reach this salary range.

Regarding the type of hiring, 47.7% of those surveyed had an indefinite-term contract, followed by 23% who were freelancers and 17.7% who were hired for a fixed term. The advertising quota hiring modality, in which the journalist is obliged to sell advertising space while also producing informational content, which was very frequent in previous times in Colombia, occurred at a frequency of 3.3%, which indicates an improvement in the work situation of reporters (Figure 3).



Source: Research data

For 66.7% of the respondents, the media company covers social benefit payments (pension, health, occupational risk administrator, and family compensation fund), but 33.3% still remain unprotected in these aspects.

For the majority of the journalists consulted (64.3%), the working day comprises between eight and ten hours of work per day, and for 62.3%, exclusive dedication is not required; therefore, they can have several jobs simultaneously.

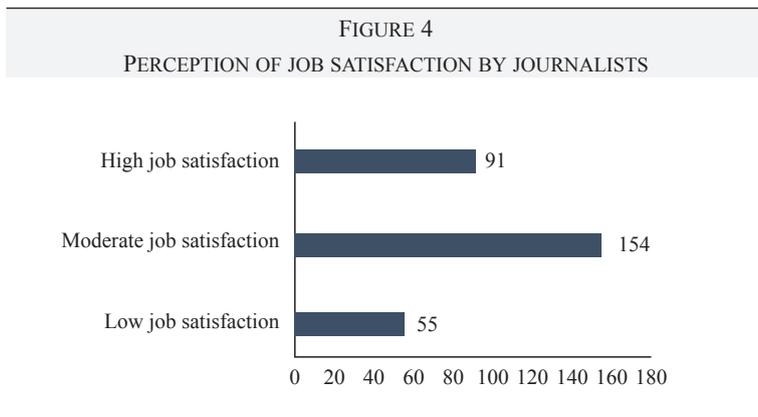
The interviews reveal concern about working conditions, especially among young journalists, who perceive high job instability and the latent danger of identity loss, related to the role played by journalists in society as spokespeople for the community and defenders of truth.

If a job doesn't pay well, no matter how passionate about the profession, performance will be affected, ending up in adoption of the law of least effort and not caring about the responsibility as a bridge between citizens and information" (Radio journalist, Bogotá, interviewed June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018). A print journalist points out: "The degree of commitment to the truth of a journalist who feels good in their work is much greater compared to the one who doesn't feel it" (Newspaper journalist, Bogotá, interviewed May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Of the 40 interviewees, those who had more than ten years of experience in the profession did not consider switching from journalism to another activity and justified their decision by the passion for what they do and the difficulty of adjusting to something very different from what they have always done. These individuals also stated that they felt comfortable with their current working conditions and compensation. In turn, those who had less than ten years of experience in the professional practice of journalism declared that they would change their activity: "I would if the opportunity to have better working and salary conditions presents itself" (Radio journalist, Bogotá, interviewed May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018); "Yes, I have thought about it. We are human beings, and we have families, and I think of other options to live better" (Radio journalist, Bogotá, interviewed June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018); "I think so, in the sense that if another profession or other activity guarantees me a better future, I think I would take it if it catches my attention and if I have the talent and the ability to do it. I have no other clear option, but if I have another opportunity, I would surely take it" (Television journalist, Bogotá, interviewed June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

### *Moderately satisfied journalists*

A total of 51.3% of the journalists have a moderate global perception of job satisfaction, followed by 30.3% who have a high perception of satisfaction (Figure 4).



Source: Research data

In the interviews, it was evident that the factors related to the motivation for doing the job and the social function of journalism influence the positive global perception of satisfaction. This is how a radio journalist with nine years of professional experience explains it: “What gives me the most satisfaction is knowing that we can be the voice of people who have important complaints that do not gain traction until they reach the media” (Radio journalist, Bogotá, interviewed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018). A journalist from a public television channel with more than ten years in the profession highlights: “It satisfies me to serve others and help many people improve their situation” (Television journalist, Bogotá, interviewed June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

When discriminating the scales by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, 42.3% of the respondents have high intrinsic job satisfaction, followed by 36.7% with moderate intrinsic job satisfaction. Among the factors that most influence this positive perception are autonomy to develop one’s own way of working, which is valued satisfactorily by 63%; the support received from a direct superior to do the job well, with 59%

favorability; and the acknowledgment expressed by superiors when the job is done well, which is well valued by 42% of the respondents.

However, 51% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the possibilities for advancement or promotion they have in their work. This comes to light in the interviews, as recounted by a web journalist with seven years of experience: “it bothers me that it is so difficult to progress in the career; because the medium is not very broad, there are many difficulties to exercise and advance” (Digital journalist, Bogotá, interviewed August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

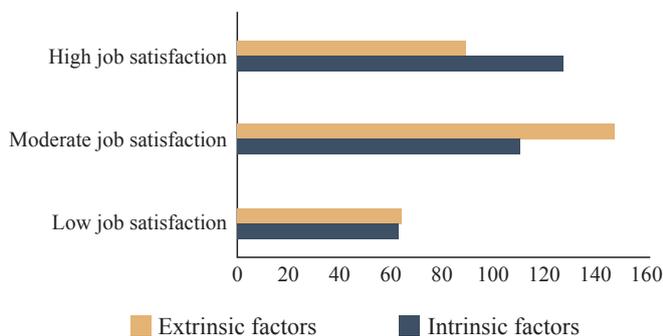
Regarding extrinsic job satisfaction, 49% of the respondents rate it as moderate, followed by 29.7% who rate it as high. Among the factors considered in this scale that draw attention is that 31% of the journalists feel little satisfaction or are not satisfied with their salary, compared to 36% who feel quite or very satisfied and 33% moderately satisfied. A print journalist with more than ten years of work experience expresses: “in Colombia, the work of the journalist is quite risky and is not monetarily compensated in accordance with the danger involved” (Magazine journalist, Bogotá, interviewed July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Among the factors that generate greater positive perception in extrinsic satisfaction are the physical workplace conditions, which are well valued by 64% of the respondents; occupational health conditions and accident prevention, with which 55.3% are satisfied; and the schedule, with which 47.3% of the journalists consulted are satisfied.

In turn, training or updating courses offered by the company are factors of dissatisfaction, with which 42.3% are little or not satisfied, as are professional development programs, with which 39.7% are dissatisfied, and the well-being activities offered by the company to the worker’s family, which generate dissatisfaction by 56.7% of the journalists. A journalist reported during the interview: “I work for two media outlets, and there is no support for training. Currently, I am advancing my professional career, but everything is on my own, and in regard to courses on new digital platforms, they are very sporadic” (Regional television channel journalist, Cali, interviewed May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Extrinsic factors contribute to a decrease in the perception of job satisfaction in the surveyed journalists (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5  
PERCEPTION OF SATISFACTION ACCORDING TO INTRINSIC  
AND EXTRINSIC FACTORS



Source: Research data

### *How the country context influences the work of journalists*

The interviews revealed certain aspects that were not considered in the survey and that cause dissatisfaction among Colombian journalists, including the new business landscape generated by ICT's and the pressures to which they are subjected by different actors.

The journalists interviewed point out that technologies have changed the way of accessing information and have brought with them a certain ease, for which they are directly responsible: "I am bothered by the laziness of colleagues. They don't know what they are up to. They don't call; they don't investigate; they don't go out to look for information" (For-profit digital journalist, Bogotá, interviewed July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

However, the journalists also blame the newspaper companies that, in the effort to overcome the crisis faced by a commercially funded business model, have chosen to reduce the number of reporters, reduce investment in direct reporting and seek traffic in social networks. In this context, journalists feel that they perform more tasks than before, as one reporter explains: "We are responsible for writing the article and editing the video; we are multidisciplinary because we are editors, writers, designers and distributors" (Local television channel journalist, Medellín, interviewed May 3<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

In turn, many journalists reiterate that they feel pressured, directly or indirectly, by the relationships the media have with the government or with particular economic groups. “Sometimes, due to certain commitments of the environment where one works, one cannot move freely” (Regional television channel journalist, Bucaramanga, interviewed May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018). Another journalist from a private radio station notes; “The media answer to a certain political ideology or to certain friendship relations, and sometimes one feels tied up” (Radio journalist, Bogotá, interviewed May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Although none of the interviewees currently received threats from outlaws, they recognize that there are colleagues who must face these situations, as a journalist from a nonprofit radio outlet explains: “In Bogotá, there is slightly more freedom to practice journalism, but in other regions, this is not possible because we’re in a country where journalists are still being killed” (Non-profit radio journalist, Bogotá, interview August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

## CONCLUSIONS

Although the results of this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of Colombian journalists, because their exact number is unknown, the sample of 300 journalists from 123 media outlets in 24 cities in the country provides an idea of the situation that many of them experience. The employment landscape of Colombian journalists is still worrying ten years after the most recent study on the subject (Gutiérrez-Coba et al., 2010). The salary level has declined in terms of the number of MLMS that journalists earn for their work, especially at the highest remuneration ranges, although there has been an increase at the low ranges.

Although wages have worsened, hiring conditions seem to have improved because most journalists have indefinite-term contracts and few face a practice that for years was recurrent in the regions and compromised the freedom of the press: the sale of advertising space. It is also positive that companies are mostly complying with the obligation to cover the social benefits of journalists, but 33.3% are still unprotected and require intervention by journalist unions and the government.

However, more than with their salary, journalists feel dissatisfied with the lack of opportunities for career advancement and with the lack of support to continue studying formally (specializations or Master's degrees) or to train through short courses or workshops.

This is of special importance because journalists who are better paid mostly have graduate training, which speaks to the need for journalists to continue studying after earning their university degree, for which they require support in terms of time and money from the companies they work for. However, it is necessary to recognize that the number of journalists with graduate degrees has tripled compared to ten years ago, which may be due to the existence of a greater availability of programs of this type in the country and to a growing interest in education by journalists.

The interviewed journalists want more training, and the issue is quite sensitive when considering that ICT's have caused journalists to work on different platforms simultaneously, often without having the necessary knowledge to do so. Here, the work of journalist unions can be important because they can facilitate short courses that are taught in some medium-size cities.

From the population that responded to the survey, it could be inferred that the newsrooms of the Colombian media are made up mostly of men, which requires research into the existence of a gender gap in this field of work. In turn, in a positive light, there is an adequate distribution of professionals with little, intermediate and long professional experience, meaning the experience of those who have been in the job for longer can enrich those who have spent less time in information work, which in turn can provide those who have been in the profession for more years with new ideas and tools.

Regarding the level of job satisfaction, journalists have a moderate global perception of job satisfaction. However, when the intrinsic factors, dependent on the journalists' own motivations, are analyzed separately from the extrinsic factors, which are dependent on external factors, marked differences are found. Intrinsic satisfaction is mostly high, while extrinsic satisfaction is mostly moderate.

Intrinsic satisfaction is high because autonomy at work and the traditional values of journalism, such as giving voice to those without

it and serving the community, continue to be the main motivators for reporters, who also highly value the support of their superiors to perform their own work and feel satisfied when their superiors acknowledge that they have done a good job, as has also been recorded in previous studies in other countries (Rodríguez, 2003; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Even so, journalists reveal their disagreement with the constraints of knowing that media ownership is in the hands of an economic group with particular interests or local or regional governments because, although there is no direct censorship, journalists tend to avoid certain issues that affect the interests of the power groups to which the media for which they work are attached and warn that they feel their freedom of expression is restricted.

Regarding extrinsic satisfaction, which is mostly moderate, it is easy to identify aspects in which media companies could generate concrete and simple changes to improve the perception of satisfaction. Organizing refresher courses and training in specific digital tool skills and management, conducting well-being activities for the families of journalists, supporting the training of journalists by giving them time to take graduate courses, and generating greater possibilities for promotion to positions of responsibility are some of the possible actions. This would not only improve the perception of job satisfaction but may give better returns in terms of work commitment and stability.

In turn, poor working conditions, especially among younger journalists, seem to directly affect their motivation to do the job well and their professional identity. Proof of this is that if they were given better opportunities, these journalists would switch their work activity without reservations. The latter is detrimental to the quality of journalism and is an issue that should be explored because the high turnover of journalists in the media is another problem that influences the quality of the information produced, and despite the possibility that technologies offer direct access to information without an intermediary, the media are still necessary as reliable sources. For this reason, what happens with media professionals should be a topic of interest for the entire society.

Although the quality of journalism that citizens receive does not depend only on the work situation and job satisfaction of journalists,

these are the factors that most influence journalistic quality, and it is necessary that both media companies and professional associations pay attention to them.

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