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**THREATS, OBSTACLES AND THE STATE OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN HONDURAS IN 2018 AND 2019**

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**Abstract.** A content analysis was carried out of the articles labeled as investigative journalism in the only written media of Honduras, with a sample of 2,190 editions of the most important newspapers in the country (El Heraldo, La Prensa and La Tribuna) from the years 2018 and 2019. In addition, 23 journalism professionals were interviewed who, from their experience, speak of the risks and obstacles they have to carry out journalistic investigations. The results indicate that investigative journalism is scarce in the content of Honduran newspapers, which mainly publish filter journalism. Doing investigative journalism is dangerous in the country and represents facing a series of obstacles that range from laws that prevent access to information, such as the *Secrecy Laws* or the new *Penal Code*, as well as the political and economic interests of the media. Experts advise promoting and strengthening investigative journalism by training journalists, reforming study plans at universities and ensuring that the media have financial resources to do investigative journalism, as this will allow them to have their own agenda and not be subject to the interests of power or advertisers.

**Keywords.** Investigation journalism; filtering journalism; newspapers; risks; obstacles.

**Introduction**

Investigative journalism reached its pinnacle when The Washington Post's American reporters, Bob Woodward, and Carl Bernstein, began investigating the apparent break-in at the Watergate Hotel in 1972. On May 7, 1973, this report won the

Pulitzer Prize and, in 1974, caused the resignation of President Richard Nixon, a unique case in the history of the United States.

Díaz Güell (2004) summarizes the significance of the Watergate case for journalism in the following way:

This simple event would give rise to the most impressive exercise in investigative journalism that has taken place in the developed world during the last quarter of the twentieth century. To such an extent that the Watergate case has been the great attraction of multiple promotions of young journalists who, at the beginning of their careers in their respective countries, have only had the objective of discovering in each report that they were starting a new Watergate. A whole generation of journalists in the Western world had Watergate on the brain and thought they could be the next Carl Bernstein or Bob Woodward if only they had the courage to reveal a confidence, violate anyone's privacy or gain access to any document considered top secret. (P.37)

Waisbord (2001) believes that things have now changed, and that investigative journalism is not the brightest star in the firmament of the American press. He asserts that factors such as media monopoly, commercial interests, lack of economic resources and personnel have taken away the strength and vigor it once had.

As in the United States and many other countries, investigative journalism has also lost interest in Spain. As Chicote Lerena (2006) states, the business concentration, and political relations of the media, together with the lack of sources and the lack of support for journalists, mean that the practice of investigative journalism is minimal. Miguel Jara also points to society, which has stopped demanding critical journalism with the spheres of power and lives in the media consumerism of sensationalist products or pink content (cited in Rodríguez Gómez, 2017).

Rodríguez Gómez (2017) explains that a study carried out by Soengas, Rodríguez and Abuín (2014) found in Spain a clear increase in agency news and a decrease in journalistic investigations. In this sense, Antonio Rubio assures that without the support of the editor and the communication company, investigative journalism cannot be done (Díaz Güell, 2004).

In South America, according to Lagos (2013), the practice of investigative journalism (except in Brazil) has stagnated, attributing this to sociopolitical, economic, organizational, and professional factors.

In Central America, although presidents have fallen due to the work developed by investigative journalism, its practice remains an occupational hazard. Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists have pointed out that criminal structures in some countries in the region are linked to corrupt police, military, businessmen and civilian officials, making Central America one of the most dangerous territories for journalists, according to Sánchez Reyes (2017).

"For the journalist, a target of organized crime, according to reports from international organizations, adequate protection mechanisms are still incipient. In Central America, they are practically nonexistent," Sánchez Reyes expresses. Similarly, Montenegro states that the debt of the media in Central America lies in the fact that little investigative journalism is done due to lack of investment (Miranda Aburto, 2016).

The significance of this panorama for society is pointed out by the Nicaraguan journalist and researcher Sofía Montenegro:

If the media are the lungs of democracy and this lung is running out of oxygen, it affects the state of freedom of expression, the right to know, the right to control and control over the power of the media. (Orozco et al, 2014, p. 131).

### ***Investigative journalism in Honduras***

"From the beginnings of Honduran journalism to the present time there is no deep and devastating journalistic investigation (of the impact of Watergate). We can say that the Honduran press has the enormous challenge of generating work that allows it to graduate in investigative journalism". This was written by journalist and university professor Juan Ramón Durán (2010) in a paper on investigative journalism in the written media of Honduras (taking as reference the newspapers *El Herald* and *La Tribuna*, from January 1 to June 28, 2009), the only article on the subject, in the Honduran context, published in scientific and academic journals. This analysis spoke of an investigative journalism that was taking its first steps in Honduras.

Professor Durán's statement may seem adventurous, however, currently, a decade later, the development of investigative journalism is still a pending matter in the country, which has faced serious restrictions on freedom of expression and violence against journalists since the coup d'état of 2009 (Owens, 2014). Honduras is one of the countries in Latin America with the greatest danger for communicators, ranking 151 out of 180 in the world press freedom ranking. "Assaults and death threats, murders and prosecutions against opposition journalists and community media continue to rise" (Reporters Without Borders, 2021).

The Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Honduras (CODEH) has denounced, in the last ten years of the National Party government, the violent deaths of 74 people linked to the media, including journalists, social communicators, cameramen, photographers and media owners. More than 90% of these crimes remain unpunished and only eight cases have been solved (Funes, 2019).

### ***Leak or investigation?***

What would be his definition of investigative journalism, the renowned journalist Miguel Ángel Bastenier was asked in an interview: "There is only investigative journalism, everything else is filler. There are two terms that mean the same thing: own agenda and investigative journalism... The only valid journalism that remains is investigative journalism" (Ramírez, 2014). In the same sense, the Nobel Prize in Literature Gabriel García Márquez (2007), in his speech before the Assembly of the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA), said that "all journalism must be investigative by definition".

This way of looking at investigative journalism makes its importance clear, but does not clarify precisely what should be understood by it. The definition of investigative journalism encompasses many characteristics. Pepe Rodríguez (1994), for example, states that investigative journalism is good journalism, i.e., that "which investigates, analyzes, contrasts, verifies and publishes information".

However, this way of looking at things could also lead to confusion and lead one to believe that all good journalism is investigative journalism. To clarify this, we can resort to a metaphor: well-done journalism shows a photograph of reality, while investigative journalism shows an x-ray of that reality. That is to say, investigative journalism is that which brings to light that which does not emerge at first sight, but which remains hidden and comes to light with techniques and differentiated work (Ricardo Arqués quoted in Caminos Marcet, 1997a).

Authors such as Petra Secanella or Daniel Santoro (Di Domenica, 2018) assure that investigative journalism is characterized because such information is intended to be kept hidden, the content achieved is the result of the journalist's research work and is a subject of interest to society.

Considering these characteristics, rigorous work is part of investigative journalism, since all information presented must be unobjectionable. The content published must be truthful and verified from beginning to end by the journalist himself. In this sense, Caminos Marcet and Camacho (2011) express themselves as follows:

For investigative journalism to exist, it is necessary that the verification of the data be done by the journalist and not by the source of information. If it is the journalist who verifies the data, we are dealing with an investigation. If the source is the one who has verified the data, we are dealing with a leak.. (p.45)

Chicote Lerena (2006) also points out that the responsible for the verification must be the journalist, because if he/she only writes a row of documents that was delivered, without a verification, this "can never be sold as an investigation, but as dossier journalism" (p.85).

In journalistic jargon there is something called a leak, which Núñez Ladevéze (1991, cited in Caminos Marcet, 1997b) defines as the supply of information by a source who maintains anonymity and who acts out of self-interest or on behalf of his superiors. Journalists work continuously with leaks that come from everywhere and provide clues to initiate an investigation or confirm data. The problem is when a source leaks complete information, limiting the journalist only to summarize and then publish it. This is called false investigative journalism.

From this, it can be considered an ethical problem for the media to present the leaks as investigated and verified materials. "The media tend to hide the existence of leaks because they know that the public's attitude towards the veracity of what is claimed is not the same if they are faced with a leak" (Ispizua Hormaetxea, 2014).

This often happens in Honduran newspapers, which show on their front pages works with the seal of investigation, but which really have the characteristics of leak journalism. Based on the above, the first objective of this article is to perform a content analysis of what the three most important Honduran newspapers (El Heraldo, La Prensa and La Tribuna) published as investigative journalism for two years (2018 and 2019), in order to understand what they are really offering to the audience: leak or investigative reporting?

The second objective of this article is to make a characterization of the state of investigative journalism in Honduran print media, taking as a basis for this the experience of experts in the field. More specifically, the aim is to identify the factors that influence the non-publication of investigative journalism, the risks, and obstacles to its publication and how the press can be encouraged to play the role of watch-dog, which is materialized precisely through the production of investigative reports (Martínez Albertos, 1994).

## **Methodology**

### ***Design***

This is a mixed approach research, cross-sectional and non-experimental design. The objective of choosing a design with these characteristics is to build an overview of written investigative journalism in Honduras from quantitative data, and the qualitative part has the purpose of deepening the phenomenon of investigative journalism in the country from the subjective experiences of theoretical and practical experts in the subject (Hernández Sampieri, Fernández Collado, & Baptista Lucio, 2014).

### ***Sample***

For the realization of this research work, the three main written media in Honduras were taken into account: the newspapers El Heraldo and La Tribuna, published in Tegucigalpa, and La Prensa, from San Pedro Sula. The sample was framed in the years 2018 and 2019 due to the fact that a considerable amount of works with investigative journalism seal were published in them. In total, 2,190 newspaper editions corresponding to this period were reviewed. This is the quantitative part.

In the qualitative part, 23 interviews were conducted with journalists who stand out for their investigative work in Honduras and Central America. Of these experts, 18 are Honduran and five are from other countries in the region.

### ***Data collection and analysis strategies***

In the quantitative part of this research, a content analysis was conducted to identify the investigative works published in the country's written newspapers (2018-2019), differentiating them from those that are in-depth or leak journalism. This was carried out based on the characteristics of investigative journalism proposed by Caminos Marcet: discovering something that someone is interested in it remaining hidden, that such discovery is proper (not a leak), that it is of public interest and that the information has been verified and contrasted by the same journalist.

For the qualitative part, three versions of a semi-structured interview guide were elaborated, with 16 questions each. The three versions of the interview were applied to three subgroups into which the 23 interviewees were classified: journalists, directors of journalism courses at various universities and editors and editors-in-chief of Honduran newspapers. They were asked questions such as the following: "Is investigative journalism done in the print media in Honduras?" and "What are the biggest obstacles faced in doing investigative journalism in Honduras?".

In the end, due to the variety and richness of the sample, sufficient information was obtained to characterize investigative journalism in Honduras, even comparing it with other Central American countries.

## **Results**

### ***State of investigative journalism in Honduras***

When comparing Durán's data (2010) with those found in the present research, it is evident that investigative journalism in the print media in Honduras has not evolved much, especially because it continues to be scarce. In addition, there is confusion related to the fact that many works that are published with the seal of investigative journalism,

announced from the relevance of the front page, are in fact filtration journalism. This confusion is transferred to many readers who do not have the tools to distinguish between one exercise and the other.

By applying a content analysis to the three most important newspapers in Honduras (El Herald, La Prensa and La Tribuna), after reviewing 2,190 editions (using as a frame of reference the parameters proposed by Caminos Marcet), it is found that in 2018 and 2019, 14 works were published that can be considered investigative journalism (see Table 1). It stands out that in La Tribuna no work of investigative journalism was found in the two years studied, even though this newspaper nominally has an investigative unit.

Table 1

*Investigative journalism reports in the Honduran print media*

News Paper	Year 2018	Year 2019
El Herald	5	7
La Prensa	2	0
La Tribuna	0	0

*Note:* Author's own creation based on research data.

Diario La Prensa in 2019 bet on one-week or three-day series with extensive work on gangs, sexual abuse, migration, public services, and employment. Some of them were published under the label of special series and others as investigative series, although they were really in-depth reports.

In March 2019, El Herald's Investigative Unit published four series, all works of investigative journalism in which a journalistic team infiltrated to get the information. In one of them it was evidenced that in social networks marijuana cakes are marketed, abortion pills are found, there is free sexual trade and sale of illegal weapons. And in 2018 the same newspaper published the report *Red de timadores operan en agencias de colocación* (Network of scammers operating in employment agencies) the result of the infiltration of a journalist in a placement agency to corroborate a scam. The data make it clear that El Herald is the print media that does the most investigative journalism work and the one that most uses the technique of infiltrating a journalist.

The other works published (97 in total) in these years with the seal of investigative journalism are rather cases of leak journalism (Table 2).

Table 2

*Leakage journalism reports in the print media in Honduras*

News Paper	Year 2018	Year 2019
El Herald	32	18

La Prensa	17	11
La Tribuna	14	5
Total	63	34

Note: Author's own creation based on research data.

The data obtained from the 18 journalists and researchers interviewed corroborate the results of the content analysis on the state of investigative journalism in the country (see Table 3). This is noticeable in expressions such as the following: *"Investigative journalism is not currently practiced in Honduras and the road towards investigative journalism is too paved"* (newspaper editor, San Pedro Sula, 2020).

Table 3  
State of investigative journalism in Honduras

Opinion	Percentage
There is	11%
In process	28%
Scarce	33%
None	28%

Note: Author's own creation based on research data.

It should be noted that most of the interviewees perceive that investigative journalism is being produced in Honduras, but that it is still *"very incipient due to economic, political and censorship factors. I don't think Honduras has advanced at the newspaper level, but at the website level there have been interesting exercises"* (journalist and teacher, Tegucigalpa, 2020).

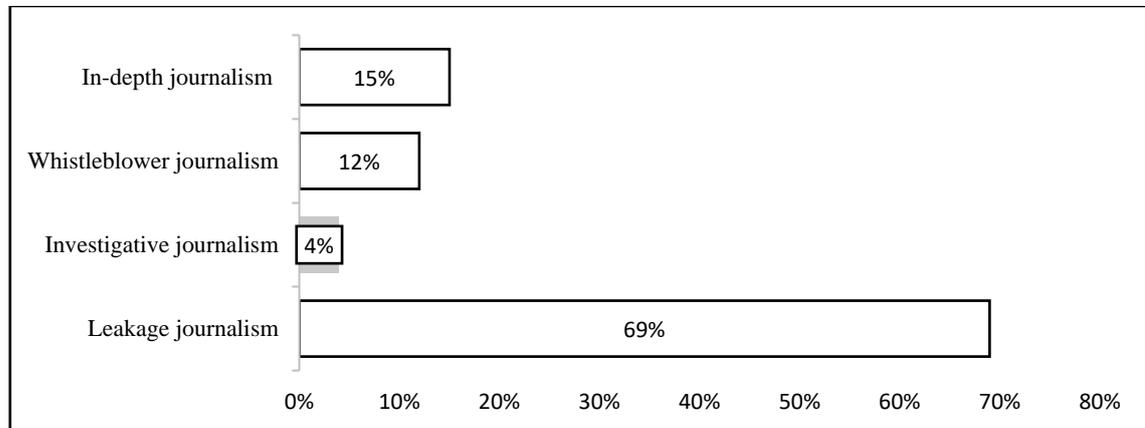
From what this informant said, we can begin to understand the reasons why investigative journalism has not been consolidated as a recurrent practice in the country (this topic is discussed in more detail later in this article), and it is also relevant that he points out how information technologies have become tools that facilitate this type of journalistic exercise. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that the ease of creating a website or blog makes it possible to overcome the economic barriers posed by physical publication, giving the journalist or communicator a certain degree of independence.

Regarding the confusion between investigative journalism and filtration that arises from the labels with which the written media classify their reports, the interviewees consider that *"there is a marketing campaign that wants to sell investigative journalism when it is in-depth and filtration journalism, but as a sales issue it is being sold as investigative journalism, this tends to confuse the population"* (digital editor, Tegucigalpa, 2020).

This marketing campaign shows that the confusion is generated voluntarily with the intention of giving prestige to the media and increasing sales. Based on the opinion of the experts, it is possible to distinguish four types of publications that are published

under the label of investigative journalism: in-depth journalism, denunciation, filtration and true investigative journalism (see Figure 1).

Figure 1  
Types of reports published under the label of investigative journalism



Source: Author's own creation.

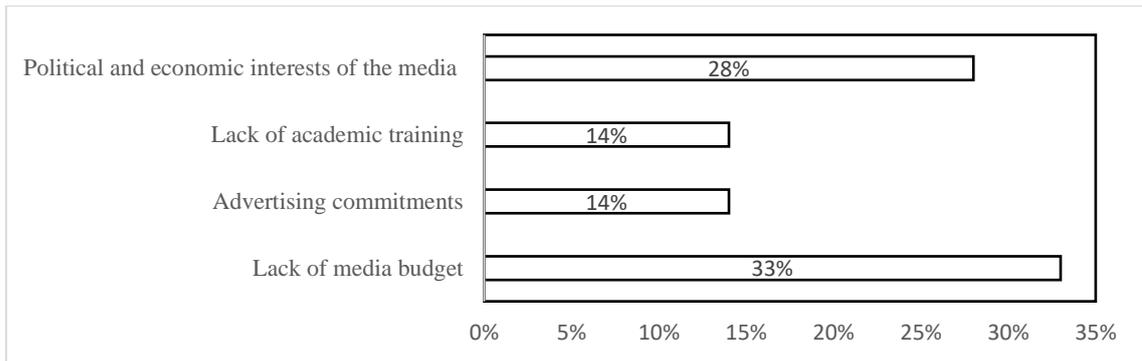
### ***Why is investigative journalism scarce in the print media?***

The main reason that investigative journalism has not been consolidated as a practice in the Honduran print media is the media's lack of budget to be able to have investigative units. *"Every small, medium or large media outlet should have an investigative team, but doing investigative journalism is expensive. The logistics, the personnel, the time involved, everything is limited and that's not the way to work"* (editor-in-chief, Tegucigalpa, 2020).

However, in addition to this, there are determining factors such as the interests of the media and advertising, as they are constraints for independent journalism. *"In Honduras, it has been noted that the interest in attracting publicity sometimes pushes the media away from investigative journalism; in the end, it is the media that allows or does not allow investigative journalism to be put into practice"* (journalist and teacher, Tegucigalpa, 2020).

To this we must also add academic training, in which many journalists do not develop the necessary skills to put into practice quality investigative journalism (see figure 2 below).

Figure 2  
Experts' perceptions of the reasons why investigative journalism is not being done in Honduras



Source: Author’s own creation.

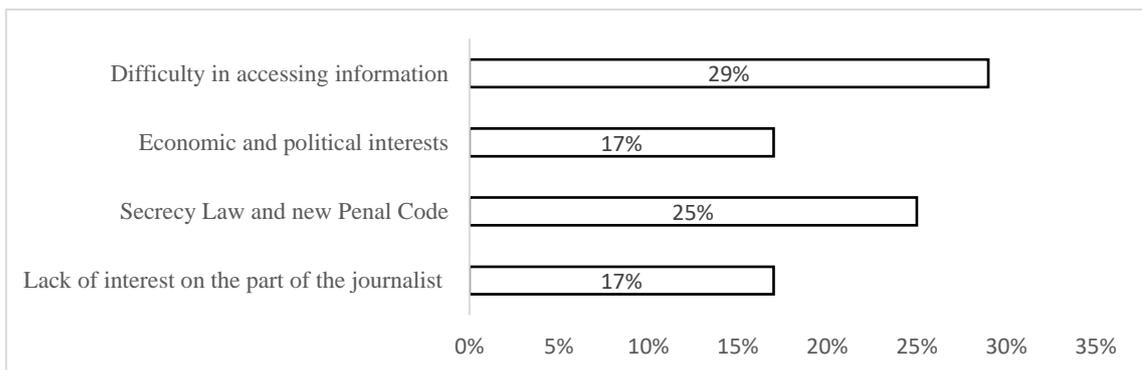
### Obstacles and risks for investigative journalism

Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries in which to practice journalism, and this translates into a series of obstacles and risks that investigative journalists must face. In the case of the obstacles (see Figure 3), one stands out mainly because it comes from the State apparatus: the Secrecy Law and the new Penal Code.

*This "Secrecy Law" is an obstacle to investigative journalism, as is the new Penal Code, which criminalizes the anonymous or confidential source because most of the information provided is from secret sources that cannot be revealed for security reasons. It is a law against freedom of expression and investigative journalism. The Penal Code criminalizes anyone who receives information or discloses it, and if it is considered that the honor and reputation of a person is being damaged, the journalist runs the risk of going to jail. So it is a very big limitation for investigative journalism (editor-in-chief, Tegucigalpa, 2020).*

Figure 3

Main obstacles identified for the realization of investigative journalism



Note: Author’s own creation.

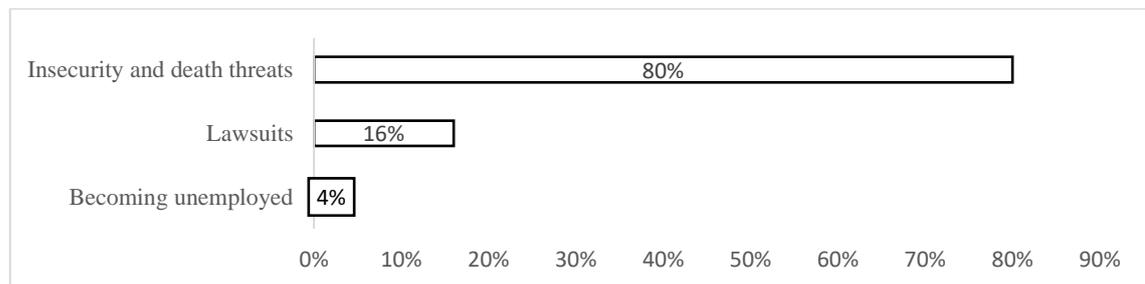
In addition, doing journalism implies the risk of suffering serious consequences (see Figure 4), and this means that *"one must think a lot about all that it implies, since Honduras is one of the most insecure countries in which to practice journalism"* (editor-in-chief, Tegucigalpa, 2020).

In this context, investigative journalists receive death threats and even attempts on their lives, they are exposed to legal proceedings or are out of a job if they allude to the interests of the power groups. This is how one of the informants interviewed put it:

*In 2017, I did not want my media to have another partner, the money came from the government, and I did not accept it. Three hours later I suffered the attack, about 120 meters from the newspaper, my wife was driving, I was listening to an Olimpia game, when a car crossed in front, there were four assassins, later I found out that the attack came from the high spheres of political power in the country, from the Presidency.... My eldest daughter was killed in the coup d'état, she was burned alive with her husband, we had colleagues who were kidnapped and tortured, they stole expensive photographic equipment, there were persecutions, they went to draw the legend RIP in front of the newspaper's office (founder of a media outlet, Tegucigalpa, 2020).*

Figure 4

*Main risks identified for the practice of investigative journalism*



Note: Author's own creation.

***Alternative media's bet on investigative journalism***

In line with what was identified about the use of social networks as channels that facilitate the exercise and publication of works, in Honduras it is the alternative and small media that bet on investigative journalism, not the traditional media, which are generally committed to political and economic power groups. This is what one of the expert informants says:

*It is the non-traditional or alternative media that are betting on investigative journalism. Honduras is going through an interesting moment; independent media are emerging, no longer linked to economic interests or to the country's monopolistic corporations. I feel that investigative journalism is the salvation of this country (founder of a digital media), Tegucigalpa, 2020)*

***Investigative journalism and independent media in Central America***

The situation in the rest of Central America is not very different from that of Honduras in this matter: it is the digital and alternative media that are being referents and "have achieved interesting advances in investigative journalism in the region" (journalist from Guatemala, Guatemala City, 2020). Among these media are El Faro and Revista Factum in El Salvador, Plaza Pública and Nómada in Guatemala, El Confidencial in Nicaragua and Semanario Universidad in Costa Rica.

This has allowed that, in Central America, which is not a pioneer in the area of investigative journalism, consolidated efforts have been made to become a reference in this area, although great challenges are still identified to achieve it, such as the need to

professionalize those who practice journalism and the preparation of the faculties to graduate professionals with the required competences. This is the opinion of an investigative journalist from El Salvador:

*Great investigations have been made at the level of independent media and processes that no other media, big or small, has been able to tell. But there are still challenges to further professionalize the profession and for the new generations to acquire basic knowledge of investigative journalism in university faculties.*

However, as in Honduras, investigative journalism in Central America carries significant risks:

*The risks are many because the journalist will always be an obstacle for the corrupt to continue doing their business. In Nicaragua, for example, the profession has been criminalized by Daniel Ortega's regime, where journalists and independent media are censored in state events, threatened, and attacked by FSLN groups, mayoral authorities, the Sandinista Youth and sympathizers of Orteguismo (Nicaragua journalist, Managua, 2020).*

In this context, investigative journalism can be classified as an exercise of courage, which also does not find much funding or openness in the traditional media, so that, as in Honduras, *"this type of journalism has evolved to web pages, where it is reflected that it is investigative or journalistic reporting, by the quality of the data collected or contrasted"* (journalist from Panama, Panama City, 2020).

One of the biggest challenges for investigative journalism in Central America is then to have the *"resources, audience and to find bosses who believe in it. The media do not have the space and time to do it"* (journalist from Costa Rica, San José, 2020), so that journalistic work ends up being reduced largely to red news, entertainment and political news, which have a more or less interested public.

### ***How to improve investigative journalism in Honduran newspapers***

It is said that education is the key to the development of a society; this is also true for investigative journalism. Most experts agree that the promotion and strengthening of investigative journalism should begin in the academy. This should begin with a thematic update in the journalism careers offered by universities, emphasizing investigative journalism and deepening knowledge about national events. Ideally, vocational and aptitude tests could even be conducted to identify potential students with investigative skills.

To this must be added the requirement that the teachers who teach the subject of investigative journalism must themselves be researchers. At the same time, students should be given small internships in newsrooms or other media outlets in the country, with the intention of producing research in association with them. In that sense, one of the informants says: *"These collaborative projects between universities and media can bring about transcendental progress"* (journalist, Tegucigalpa, 2020).

However, this must go further: the importance of the academy for the training of investigative journalists implies that more aggressive measures for professional training in journalism schools must be taken by the academy itself. One of these measures is the creation of a specialty in Investigative Journalism, to be taught in two or three modules over a period of six to nine months, depending on the academic periods of each educational institution.

All this shapes a fundamental conclusion: *"The university should be the first laboratory and par excellence the place where the potential of the investigative journalist is unleashed and discovered"* (founder of a media outlet, Tegucigalpa, 2020). However,

newspapers and the media in general should also invest in the education and training of journalists, especially those who have shown qualities such as interest and a nose for unraveling facts and situations that merit the implementation of investigative journalism.

The final aspiration is that the investigative journalism works come out of the media's own agenda, without advertising, political or economic coercion, since it is necessary to give them a news approach of their own. *"The written media must always offer exclusive and differentiated content to readers, and not topics imposed by third parties"* (editor, Tegucigalpa, 2020). Only in this way can the media assume their role as public watchdogs and be at the service of the people and the community with responsibility.

### Conclusions

This study focused on the works that the print media in Honduras highlighted on the front page with the investigative seal during 2018 and 2019. It is concluded that there is ambiguity in the written press regarding the handling of the concept of investigative journalism, since many of the works published as investigations actually correspond to filtration journalism. This is evidenced by the fact that of the 111 published as investigative journalism in 2 years, only 14 are actually investigative journalism. The rest, 97, are exercises in filtration journalism, according to the conceptualization made by Caminos Marcet and Camacho (2011) and Chicote Lerena (2006).

This conclusion is reinforced by the data collected in the in-depth interviews with the experts, since 69% have the perception that what is mostly read in newspapers is filter journalism, and only 4% think it is investigative journalism.

The print media that most publishes investigative journalism is El Heraldo, with 12 works carried out between 2018 and 2019. It is followed by La Prensa with 2. La Tribuna has none. El Heraldo is also the one that most uses the technique of infiltrating a journalist to do investigations and is also the one that carries out the most leaks, having done 50 in the two years taken into account for this study. Diario La Prensa published 28 and La Tribuna 19. In total, 63 filtration works were published in 2018, and 34 in 2019.

The most recurrent topics in investigative journalism works in print media, in the period 2018-2019, were irregularities and public corruption. These same results were obtained by Durán in the content analysis he conducted in 2009 in written media. This makes it evident that these topics have more than 10 years of being a problematic of reference in the country.

Among the reasons for the lack of constant practice of investigative journalism in the written media are the lack of budget to keep the investigative units active and trained, as well as the economic and political interests of the media owners. Chicote Lerena (2006) believes that the problem is that "there are no longer entrepreneurs of information, but of business, people who put business results before the search for truth" (p. 73). According to Durán, the problem is that in Honduras "avoiding political partisanship is dramatic (...), since the media are owned by businessmen who, generally, have partisan or political ties that advise their actions" (p. 73).

Although newspapers have an investigative unit, it is often not supported with economic and logistical resources to carry out more work, either by the management or the owner of the media outlet. This adds to the little time journalists have to dedicate exclusively to this unit, as they are also involved in other daily jobs by their editors. In

this sense, Sobral (2014) exposes that there is reluctance on the part of the media to hire journalists who are exclusively dedicated to do research, preferring a person who makes several notes in a day, who performs an exercise of diarism, instead of investing in someone who has full dedication to a single assignment, as required by investigative journalism.

On the other hand, through interviews, journalists confirm that the difficulty in accessing information, the Secrecy Law and the new Penal Code are among the biggest obstacles to investigative journalism in Honduras. These laws restrict freedom of expression, they are practically a muzzle for not denouncing and investigating in depth any act of corruption, since journalists run the risk of going to jail or even being victims of worse reprisals such as homicide.

All this directly produces censorship or self-censorship, elements that also play a relevant role in the scarcity of Honduran investigative journalism. This has also been denounced in the work of Meza and Oliva (2014): "Censorship continues to be identified as the main obstacle to the exercise of freedom of expression and the free exercise of journalism. The sources of censorship identified include media owners, advertisers and public officials" (p.105).

Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries in the world to practice investigative journalism. This is proven by the fact that, according to the interviewees, insecurity and death threats are the main risks for investigative journalism in the country. This was also identified by Meza and Oliva (2014), who explain that attacks on journalists involve threats, harassment, surveillance, illegal detentions and even restrictions on access to public information. This is also endorsed by data from the International Press Institute (IPI), which states that since 2001, 82 journalists have been murdered in Honduras and only seven of these crimes have been solved by the authorities (Wiseman, 2020). Some factors that contribute to the configuration of the risk faced by investigative journalists are the widespread presence of organized crime, corruption of state security officials and agents, and impunity, according to the study by Sánchez Reyes (2017).

Alternative media are the ones that are betting on investigative journalism in Honduras, and not the traditional media or the largest or most powerful ones. This is the opinion of 83% of the experts interviewed. This is also true for the rest of Central America, where the independent media are the referents in investigative journalism. This is due, in the opinion of the experts, to the fact that in the traditional media, journalists go as far as the owner of the media, advertising or their suppliers, which in many cases are the government and private companies, allow them to go. The alternative media, on the other hand, are largely supported by international cooperation, which has been interested in offering subsidies for this type of journalism.

Based on the above, it is imperative that the Honduran academy begins to lead the training of future researchers, based on a deep knowledge of national events. For this, the faculties of communication and journalism must carry out scientific studies that allow them to identify deficiencies and present formative improvements, such as the incorporation of teachers trained in this area, make reforms in the curricula, practice vocation and aptitude tests to students and incorporate them into collaborative projects with other universities and media, as well as stimulate entrepreneurship -focused on the creation of alternative media- in the training of future journalists, to avoid censorship imposed from the political power through the big owners.

More scientific studies are needed on the risks and obstacles faced by investigative journalism in the country, and on the training needs of journalists to perform successfully and freely in this field. The present study focused on the phenomenon of investigative journalism, but there is also a need to study the curricula of universities and review the way in which investigative journalism is taught. This will allow us to identify those things in which the academy must improve to promote the practice of investigative journalism in Honduras.

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