

AUDIOVISUAL NARRATIVES IN LATIN AMERICA IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC INSECURITY

Bogotá, Guayaquil and San Salvador across Digital Platforms

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ABSTRACT

Digital media have transformed the ways in which Latin American cities narrate and represent urban life. This research compares the narratives found in photo reports and podcasts produced in Bogotá, Guayaquil, and San Salvador, published on the most viewed social media platforms between January 2024 and June 2025. The study is grounded in the hypothesis that contemporary audiovisual formats reconfigure representations of urban creativity, generating new paradigms that reflect the cultural identities, social challenges, and creative potential of each metropolitan context. The aim is to identify how creative production contributes to addressing social difficulties and proposing solutions to the risks associated with public insecurity. A mixed methodological approach is employed, combining interviews and content analysis. Photo features tend to be more specialised, whereas podcasts offer a more immersive experience. Recognising these differences helps content creators and researchers make effective use of each medium's particular strengths.

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1. Introduction

Latin America faces crime-related challenges stemming from economic disparities, unemployment and drug trafficking, a phenomenon that has become more pronounced since the second decade of the twenty-first century. The region is undergoing “a period of sharp increase in insecurity and violence that responds to structural and historical causes and an increase in the presence of organised crime and drug trafficking” (Malamud & Núñez, 2024, p. 1). It is therefore one of the most violent regions in the world, and this constitutes a significant problem that affects affluent and impoverished communities in different ways.

Urban violence in Latin America is complex and cannot be fully captured by homicide rates alone, as both real and perceived violence continue to have a significant impact on residents’ lives. This complexity is crucial to understanding the implications for communities (Doyle, 2019; Garro-Aburto et al., 2024). Paradoxically, it is also one of the most digitally connected regions, which is why governments and civil society are leveraging information and communication technologies to map and mitigate insecurity, thereby enhancing citizen participation and institutional capacity (Muggah & Diniz, 2013).

This reality for millions of citizens is reported in both traditional and digital media. Media coverage of insecurity in Latin American newspapers significantly influences public perception. Crime-related issues are a matter of public concern, and the way they are presented in the media shapes citizens’ perceptions of risk (Zunino & Focás, 2018). Unfortunately, many print media outlets portray violence from a normalising perspective and commercialise it as a form of entertainment (Montiel & Martin, 2021).

Digital platforms frequently explore the legacy of drug trafficking, particularly in countries such as Colombia and Mexico. This includes the aestheticisation of drug lords and the normalisation of narco-culture through user-generated content (Guerrero-Sierra et al., 2025). Netflix, in particular, has an impact on the Latin American audiovisual landscape, albeit to a limited extent, as some countries, such as Ecuador, have minimal representation on this content provider (Ordóñez et al., 2018). Fiction, however, often reflects reality, even if it exaggerates certain aspects. This relationship exacerbates conflict and undermines the capacity of political leaders to govern effectively (Rubio, 2025). The expansion of drug trafficking, inspired in part by the *Narco* series, contributes to increased risks that manifest in crime and the proliferation of criminal gangs (Pino-Urbe et al., 2025).

Narratives on social media allow young people living on the margins to become protagonists of their own stories, challenging convention and offering alternative perspectives on social inequality (Bonilla et al., 2024; Sánchez et al., 2025). Some of these narratives revolve around violence, express mistrust in institutions, and justify people resorting to everyday violence (Berents & ten Have, 2017). The discourse on violence in Colombia often presents fragmented and sensationalised facts, combining data without context and thereby generating an alarmist perception among the public (Cruz, n.d.). Meanwhile, Instagram’s visual content and immediacy create a sense of proximity to danger (Mullo, 2023). Although academic research has largely focused on Facebook and Twitter, the increasing use of Instagram and the dissemination of podcasts to share testimonies have raised expectations regarding their impact on the construction of collective imaginaries (Morales, 2023).

In addition, audiovisual fiction influences trust in security institutions and democracy. The series *La Casa de Papel*, for example, conveys political optimism mediated by the belief in a just world (González-González & Igartua, 2024). It is therefore highly significant that films and series such as *Loving Pablo* or *Narcos* construct aesthetics around drug trafficking, interpreting historical events and shaping citizens’ perceptions (Blanco, 2020), thereby perpetuating inequalities in audiovisual consumption (Bárcenas, 2022). In Mexico, this is also reflected in social media narratives, which indicate limited trust in the state (Berents & ten Have, 2017).

Looking ahead, the challenge lies in conducting further research on audiovisual narratives, as there are still few results available, and in developing an ethical protocol sensitive to digital

storytelling (Ascuez-Valero & Turriate-Guzmán, 2022; Ruiz-Bañuls et al., 2024). Acquiring digital skills and fostering media literacy are essential to empowering audiences in regions affected by organised crime, including the creation of new strategies to strengthen civic participation (Grijalva-Verdugo & Moreno-Candil, 2017; Niño et al., 2019). Based on the above, the research question is as follows: do social networks, specifically Instagram and podcasts, address citizen insecurity resulting from violence and offer suggestions for overcoming the crisis?

It is valuable to examine the stories produced in emerging formats that circulate on social media. Podcasts can function as tools of public education, contributing to awareness and reflection on social problems such as urban violence (Carrillo & Méndez, 2019). They are also used in educational settings to address issues such as gender-based violence. Podcasts provide a platform for disseminating knowledge and facilitating debate on complex social issues, making information accessible and appealing to a wider audience (Arense-Gómez et al., 2024; Huento, 2024).

Regarding the dissemination of images, Instagram is a widely used social network, and there is extensive research on its operation and uses (Bard Wigdor & Magallanes Udovicich, 2021), which makes it suitable for social and cultural analysis of its photographic and video content (Manovich, 2017; Muñoz, 2010). Instagram is particularly valued for its ability to generate social connections, especially among young people (Staniewski & Awruk, 2022), which underlines its relevance in the representation of violence. Podcasts such as *El Hilo* (2024) document testimonies from teachers, students and journalists in Guayaquil, who describe how organised violence and drug trafficking affect daily life, revealing fear and widespread insecurity. Other podcasts, such as *José Cherrez* (2024), analyse the failures of the security forces and their preparedness, and how these limitations exacerbate perceptions of violence.

This research focuses on comparing the cases of Ecuador, Colombia and El Salvador, due to their high homicide rates, recent histories and efforts to restore peace. Ecuador, in particular, is besieged by violence.

Ecuador ended 2023 with two record figures related to violence: 1) The homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants reached a historic peak of 47, while the average for Latin America was 20. The situation described above not only caused a sociopolitical shock but also far exceeded the institutional capacity to resolve diverse social conflicts peacefully through democratic mechanisms. Fortunately, however, this shock has not completely stifled academic reflection. (Rodríguez & Silva, 2024).

By 2025, the *Observatorio Ecuatoriano de Crimen Organizado* (2025) reported more than 4,600 homicides in the first half of the year, an increase of 47% compared to the previous year. In El Salvador, social media also serves to disseminate content related to violence. Some posts reflect evolving perceptions of security, with reports and visuals on the state of emergency and its effects on society. Instagram, together with traditional media, distributes news, images, and rumours about violence among the population. Overexposure to violent content fosters a state of hypervigilance and social stress.

As in other parts of the world, in South America social media is transforming from a mirror of reality into a utopia where citizens' desires converge (González-González & Igartua, 2024). Digital platforms are altering the ways in which urban communities interact, reflecting human activities beyond everyday life and capturing social projects that seek greater impact and reach. These representations of reality constitute new digital imaginaries that are gaining ground as alternative ways of understanding urban social development.

Images and personal voices acquire symbolic value that shapes individual and collective perceptions, thereby influencing trust in institutions (Aguerre & Bonina, 2024). The cities of Bogotá, Guayaquil and San Salvador have experienced historical processes that have affected the collective consciousness of their citizens. Today, visual and audio narratives provide meaning and a sense of belonging, issue warnings and propose alternative forms of resilience. These imaginaries thus function as paradigms of attention and as spaces for the proliferation of civic

engagement among users and followers, an exercise that is at once restricted and encouraged within digital networks and communities.

2. Methodology

The research employs qualitative and quantitative methodologies with a descriptive framework. The instruments used include semi-structured interviews and content analysis. These methods have been previously applied to studies of violence and security, such as research into forensic patients' perceptions of the risk of violence and the detection of intimate partner violence (IPV) by family doctors (Kopčavar et al., 2016; Levin et al., 2022).

Qualitative methodologies, particularly semi-structured interviews and content analysis, are effective for exploring complex issues such as violence and insecurity. They provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions, which can inform the development of more effective interventions and public policies (Hardesty et al., 2019; Nathan et al., 2019).

Given that social media allows for continuous user input, it is impossible to address all available content within a single study. Therefore, the social network Instagram was analysed for the months of June 2024 and June 2025 through a non-comparative analytical-descriptive study considered as a cross-sectional sample.

The analytical framework for the podcasts draws upon established approaches to podcast studies in cultural and academic contexts. Kulkov et al., (2024) propose a seven-step guide encompassing dimensions of credibility, relevance and ethics. In turn, outlines evaluation criteria focusing on narrative and sound aspects. Similarly, authors such as Barbarino et al. (2022) emphasise methodologies centred on sound representations and the analysis of urban and community dimensions.

Content analysis was performed on ten podcasts (Ecuador–Guayaquil, Colombia–Bogotá and El Salvador–San Salvador) hosted on Spotify, YouTube and Podcast platforms between January 2024 and June 2025. The descriptive design facilitated the identification of narrative and sound patterns (Kulkov et al., 2024).

A 50-question analytical matrix was developed for the study, integrating thematic analysis with ethical and sound evaluation procedures to ensure a comprehensive interpretation. The podcasts were transcribed using automatic speech-to-text tools, with manual validation to guarantee linguistic accuracy. To complement the qualitative analysis, natural language processing was employed to identify emotional polarities (Dumbach et al., 2024).

The research adhered to ethical standards in communication and the social sciences. Only open-access content was analysed. No sensitive data were used, nor were personal identities disclosed. The no harm criterion was also applied, particularly in episodes addressing social violence (Kulkov et al., 2024).

On Instagram, the selection encompassed three discursive and aesthetic approaches that shape the collective imagination: academic, social and journalistic. The study period differed from that of the audio content, as visual production tends to evolve more rapidly. Six variables were examined, including how the posts respond to specific issues, the ways in which they do so, how they promote new narratives, the main topics they address, and what they represent visually.

The analysis file safeguarded the anonymity of individuals by referring to cases rather than names when these appeared on the network. As research of this nature does not require a probabilistic approach, the months of June 2024 and June 2025 were intentionally selected. All posts from each profile during those months were examined, including both single-image and carousel publications, while video content was excluded. The photographic analysis focused not on semiotics or rhetoric but on the descriptive content of each image (Mira Pastor, 2024).

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with five academic leaders and professionals specialising in digital communication in the region. These interviews took place via Zoom between 1 and 15 August 2025. The profiles of the interviewees were as follows:

- Interviewee 1. Television news anchor
- Interviewee 2. Member of the National Citizen Observatory

- Interviewee 3. Professor specialising in security
- Interviewee 4. News director
- Interviewee 5. Social media analyst

Statement on the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies: During the preparation of this work, the authors used the large-scale language models Qwen3 and ChatGPT (GPT-5) to assist with bibliographic searches, refine the writing of certain sections, and generate graphics based on the data obtained. All content produced with these tools was subsequently reviewed and edited by the authors, who assume full responsibility for the final version of the published article.

3. Results

An analysis of podcast productions from Colombia, Ecuador and El Salvador between January 2024 and June 2025 (Table 1) reveals a diverse range of narrative forms, distribution platforms and sound strategies. A common thread emerges across the three countries: the representation of violence and its social repercussions. The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate how podcasts address urban and security issues through both linear and non-linear narratives, employing soundscapes that are predominantly environmental and ethically oriented. Local stories are reaching broader audiences within the digital spectrum, particularly through leading platforms such as Spotify and YouTube.

Analysis of narrative, ethical, sonic and emotional variables using an analytical matrix and natural language tools revealed convergent and divergent patterns across the Latin American podcasts examined. In Ecuador, there is an emphasis on everyday life and its disruption by armed violence and organised crime; in Colombia, the focus lies on the historical dimensions of the conflict and the persistence of armed violence over decades; and in El Salvador, the emphasis is placed on the violence that has profoundly transformed people's lives and on the country's transition from conflict towards relative peace.

1 Table Matrix of podcasts analysed in Latin America

ID	City	Programme name	Title	Platform
1	Guayaquil / Ecuador	El Hilo (Radio Ambulante Studios)	Ecuador: Growing Up Amidst Bullets (The Impact of Violence on Children and Adolescents)	Spotify
2	Guayaquil / Ecuador	Let's Talk Politics (podcast + academic event).	Violence spills over in Ecuador. What do we know? What can we do?	Spotify
3	Guayaquil / Ecuador	El Hilo (Radio Ambulante Studios)	Ecuador: chronology of chaos	Spotify
4	Guayaquil / Ecuador	Today in EL PAÍS (podcast)	How Ecuador went from being a model of peace to a country at war	(podcast)
5	Bogotá / Colombia	Criminal behaviour	My daughter ran away from her ex: he searched ALL OVER BOGOTÁ and the M4TØ on a SITP bus	YouTube
6	Bogotá / Colombia	The Origin of Violence in Colombia	Podcast Chapter 1 - The Origin of Violence in Colombia: An In-Depth Look	YouTube
7	Bogotá / Colombia	Faces and Territories	Podcast Chapter 2 - Faces and Territories: Memories of the Armed Conflict in Colombia	YouTube
8	San Salvador / El Salvador	The non-violent struggle for the disappeared in El Salvador Podcast 37	The non-violent struggle for the disappeared in El Salvador Podcast 37	YouTube
9	San Salvador / El Salvador	EL SALVADOR and NAYIB BUKELE: A New Country?	EL SALVADOR and NAYIB BUKELE: A New Country?	YouTube

10	San Salvador / El Salvador	Podcast—Causes and consequences of femicides in El Salvador	Podcast—Causes and consequences of femicides in El Salvador	YouTube
		Source: Own elaboration, 2025.		

Table 2 provides a cross-country comparison of audio productions that address violence and urban life, focusing on three key dimensions. Ecuador, with the largest number of productions (four), presents narratives centred on everyday neighbourhood life and the effects of violence on younger populations. These works typically adopt a linear narrative structure and neutral sound design, featuring background music and limited immersive techniques, combined with a consistently ethical stance that is generally evaluated as good or exemplary.

By contrast, Colombia offers a more historical perspective, reflecting the enduring presence of conflict across its regions. The narratives are complex, eschewing a strictly linear structure in favour of alternating between personal testimonies and analytical segments that revisit key moments in the country’s recent history. The incorporation of a broader range of voices enriches the understanding of violence as a facet of social memory, reactivating collective recollections of past suffering.

In El Salvador, the narratives address a broader range of political and state-control issues, highlighting the impact of governmental pressure on how violence is represented in the media. They are largely homogeneous and consistently adhere to ethical standards.

Violence constitutes the central narrative axis across the three countries, yet each approaches it in a way that reflects its distinct social and historical realities. Ecuador offers an intimate, testimonial perspective, foregrounding the experiences of communities affected by insecurity. In Colombia, narratives draw on collective and historical memory, linking past and present. In El Salvador, the focus is on public safety, emphasising social control and state responses to crime and violence.

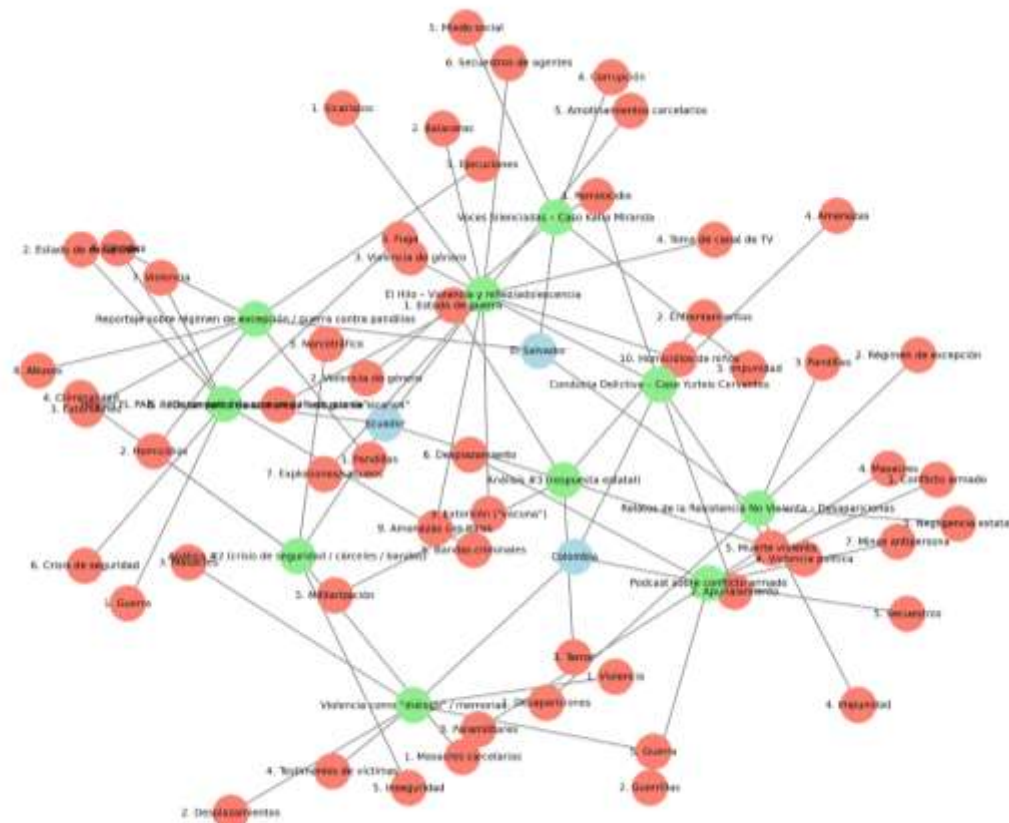
2 Table Comparative table by country

Country	Episodes	Audio quality	Sound immersion	Ethical treatment
Colombia	3	3 – Acceptable	2 – Poor 4 – Rich / immersive,	4 – Good
Ecuador	4	5 – Excellent/clear, 4 – Good	2 – Poor, 3 – Moderate/acceptable	5 – Excellent/exemplary, 4 – Good
El Salvador	3	3 – Acceptable 4 – Good	2 – Poor, 3 – Moderate/acceptable	4 – Good, 5 – Excellent/exemplary

Source: Own elaboration 2025.

In the network of nodes shown in Figure 1, each episode acts as a bridge linking national contexts with the thematic axes of violence. In Ecuador, key terms centre on contract killings, extortion, shootings, criminal gangs and drug trafficking. In Colombia, the most frequent terms, including threats, violent death, displacement, armed conflict and guerrillas, reflect the country’s protracted history of violence. In El Salvador, dominant terms include disappearances, state control, femicide, prisons and social fear, with discourse framing security as a governmental response.

1 Figure Podcast network - keywords - country



Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

With regard to the analysis of Instagram, contemporary networks function as spaces for creation and social reinterpretation, moving beyond their traditional role as platforms for two-way communication to become new voices with mass reach. To examine imagery on Instagram, three profiles were selected. In Bogotá, the account @cerosetenta was chosen; it is a digital media outlet created by Ceperantes at the University of the Andes and represents the academic community. In San Salvador, the selected account was @glasswingsv, an international organisation that works with young people to promote entrepreneurship and support them in overcoming situations of violence through educational programmes. For Guayaquil, the account @luisantonio_ruizv was selected; it belongs to a journalist with a long career across various media outlets. These accounts thus represent academic, social and journalistic perspectives.

An initial observation is that the number of posts varies considerably: @cerosetenta has 31 posts, @glasswingsv 10 and @luisantonio_ruizv 65. This disparity is not attributable to the social realities of each city, but rather to the individual activity of each creator. In terms of content, Bogotá en Enfoque addresses eight thematic areas: (1) Politics and Society, covering political analysis, attacks on politicians and international politics; (2) Human Rights and Justice, including reports on femicide, pseudo anti-homosexuality treatments and legislative reforms; (3) Environment and Territory, encompassing protection of the Amazon, territorial occupation and the drinking water crisis; (4) Economy and Labour, examining labour reform, artificial intelligence and the economic impact of the war in the Middle East; (5) Culture and Communication, exploring world cinema, photographic ethics and Colombian music in the international market; (6) History and Memory; (7) Philosophy and Technology; and (8) Journalistic Formats.

In El Salvador, the account focuses mainly on news of events that have already taken place, reflecting its own organisation and activities, without venturing into topics beyond its remit. In Guayaquil, the most frequently addressed topics are: (1) Domestic Politics, which deals with issues related to Ecuador's legal decisions; (2) Insecurity and Violence, covering assaults, robberies, kidnappings, contract killings and crime; and (3) Society, which encompasses routine police work, vandalism in the city and obituaries.

The ways in which these accounts construct their publications reveal clear differences. @cerosetenta presents carefully elaborated editorial work, focusing on textual layouts, infographics, halftone-style photo editing and combinations of images with text or animations with text, in a manner reminiscent of print media design. @glasswingsv, by contrast, publishes still photographs, either individually or in carousels, with only occasional use of illustrations. In Ecuador, @luisantonio_ruizv frequently employs videos from CCTV and police cameras, alongside some home recordings.

The immediacy of photography lends itself well to social networks such as Instagram, although it displays limited creative potential, except in carousels that present sequential narratives. Text-based designs and infographics, by contrast, demonstrate greater editorial effort. The use of video is direct and explicit, especially when unedited and showing the faces of both victims and perpetrators. Only in cases involving fatalities or suspects are the images distorted, in compliance with Ecuadorian law; nevertheless, to the naked eye, there is little sign of editing in terms of effects or screen time. The journalistic approach is markedly more violent, depicting assaults, kidnappings, murders and crime reports, compared with accounts that adopt a social or academic perspective. This reaffirms McLuhan's assertion that form and content carry equal weight.

The publications examined not only perform an informative function but also reveal diversity in the ways social reality is seen and interpreted. The circulation of content on social media is unpredictable and difficult to measure in terms of reach, responses and engagement. In this sense, they help to shape user dialogue. The content studied presents reality through everyday life, crises, complaints and major security issues, where violence emerges as a constant message in citizens' daily experiences. Although these contributions add value, they tend to be isolated and have limited impact. At the same time, the discourses appeal to reflection, motivation and emotions that keep the community alert.

According to Martín-Barbero (1987), Latin American communication acquires meaning through context. Publications, therefore, form part of a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Although they may be studied by time period or theme, they attain greater significance when understood in all their dimensions. This explains the creative strategies employed to foster dialogue and debate. Similarly, the transmedia possibilities offered by digital networks (Scolari, 2013) enable the participation of actors who reinterpret and renew content, thus strengthening new voices in response to hegemonic discourses.

The growing volume of social media content necessitates both technical and narrative innovation. Textual design, infographics, photography, editing and video can be reinterpreted in both substance and form to enhance engagement with social media users. The cases analysed reveal multiple facets of the Latin American context: on the one hand, videos of violence that appear to perpetuate insecurity and fear; on the other, visual design and political-ethical reflection that foster hope through constructive critique. Instagram thus clearly functions as a space of coexistence, in which creative richness contributes to communication in a far more substantive manner than mere ornamental rhetoric.

The interviews reinforce this understanding. Testimonies converge in emphasising that the perception of insecurity is a complex social construct, shaped by both objective factors, such as victimisation, and subjective factors, such as media coverage and indirect experience. This perception has tangible consequences for quality of life, the economy and social cohesion, regardless of its alignment with official data. All interviewees agreed that the perception of security does not directly reflect crime but arises from multiple interrelated factors. Interviewee 5 articulated this clearly: "The perception of security has certain factors and also certain

consequences (...) the primary factors are victimisation, vulnerability, indirect experience and environmental conditions”.

Two experts further developed this idea, referring to “subjective experience” and explaining how events such as the 9/11 attacks intensified fear in the United States without a proportional rise in crime. They also noted widespread mistrust of official statistics and government narratives. There was a critical consensus regarding the reliability of official figures and their communication by authorities. One interviewee argued that “official data should not be trusted because it is neither reliable nor valid” and complained that it is often presented “in a misleading way”. However, he did not directly criticise governments.

Interviewee 5 attributed these issues to the limitations of current data collection methods, stating that “it is not useful to have a survey every six months”, which underscores the need for alternative, real-time sources capable of measuring phenomena that traditional metrics cannot capture with sufficient agility or accuracy.

All participants stressed that the perception of insecurity, irrespective of its objective basis, produces real and negative effects. Interviewee 5 noted that it affects “quality of life”, leading to “social isolation” and “mental illness”, as well as broader “socio-economic impacts”. Experts added that insecurity has altered everyday life: “people are becoming more pessimistic”, “they are beginning to change their habits”, and even resorting to extreme measures such as “lynchings” and armed self-defence, resulting in what one described as a “law of the jungle”.

There was also consensus that security policies have historically been reactive, fragmented and often ineffective. The design of data analysis models and tools for “decision-makers” to create “strategies” based on real-time data was viewed positively. Nonetheless, interviewees criticised the “lack of leadership”, the absence of a coherent “strategy” (replaced by isolated “programmes”), and the persistent myth of “coordination” that never materialises. They emphasised the urgent need to “share information in real time and create protocols for inter-agency trust”.

Public perception lies at the centre of the debate, recognised as a political and social indicator as significant as crime statistics. The phrase “three out of four people say they do not feel safe” constitutes a political fact of the first order. The testimonies point to a profound crisis of legitimacy: when the state is unable to guarantee personal and property security, it becomes structurally weakened. As Interviewee 1 observed, this situation can give rise to “failed” or, at the very least, “weakened” states.

In line with the data analysis, Interviewee 5 emphasised an innovative and crucial development: the use of big data and natural language processing (NLP) techniques to measure complex social phenomena. His approach of “sentiment quantification” on social media offers a promising methodology for achieving more dynamic and nuanced measurements. At the same time, a vicious cycle was identified, in which violence, corruption and impunity feed one another, eroding the social fabric and driving populations towards despair and extralegal responses.

The interviews also revealed fundamental contradictions, most notably between two discourses: the official narrative and the citizen or academic perspective. Authorities tend to employ statistics to project an image of control or improvement, while citizens, academics and analysts perceive a much more serious reality. They express deep mistrust of official data, arguing that it is manipulated, incomplete or fails to reflect their lived experience. This contradiction extends into political practice: while experts advocate for prevention policies and the strengthening of the social fabric, governments persist with “reactive” and “heavy-handed” strategies, widely considered ineffective and counterproductive in the long term. There is a shared criticism that “prevention policies are less politically appealing”, which explains their neglect.

Looking ahead, the testimonies point in several directions. Future research and policy efforts should focus on refining analytical models, incorporating the detection of irony and sarcasm, integrating data from multiple social media platforms and combining perception analysis with crime prediction to enable proactive responses. In the long term, the challenge lies in strengthening state institutions, not only in operational capacity but also in transparency and accountability. As Interviewee 5 noted, it is essential to “create institutions that work” and that

“respond to citizens”. In the face of state inaction, civil society plays a crucial role. Security is increasingly seen as “a matter for neighbours”, and citizens are encouraged to organise themselves, through neighbourhood associations or collectives, to demand accountability and protect their communities.

A further concern for the future is the warning that public despair may translate into growing support for authoritarian solutions. As one interviewee remarked, “heavy-handed initiatives become an addiction”.

The final message is one of urgency. It underscores that society cannot “start again from scratch” and that breaking the current “vicious cycle” is imperative. The future depends on whether society and government can articulate a comprehensive response that addresses the root causes of violence rather than its symptoms. The key question that remains is: “Do we have a future in this issue of insecurity?”. The experts’ answer is conditional: “Of course we do”, but only if action is taken differently and in a coordinated manner.

4. Conclusions

Based on the evidence presented, the research question can be answered in the affirmative. Both podcasts and Instagram accounts in Latin America actively engage with the issue of citizen insecurity resulting from violence, albeit through different approaches, formats and narrative purposes. The podcasts analysed, produced in Bogotá, Guayaquil and San Salvador between January 2024 and June 2025, construct narratives that go beyond immediate denunciation, providing contextualised analysis, personal testimonies, and, in some cases, concrete proposals for addressing the security crisis.

The narrative perspectives identified vary according to national context. In Ecuador, the emphasis is on everyday neighbourhood life disrupted by urban violence and organised crime. In Colombia, the perspective is more historical, anchored in the collective memory of the armed conflict. In El Salvador, the discourse centres on state control policies and the transition towards pacification. Collectively, the podcasts function as instruments of public education, fostering awareness and reflection on urban violence. However, the proposed solutions tend to be limited, focusing primarily on critical reflection rather than concrete action.

Instagram, for its part, operates as a space of immediate and emotional visibility of insecurity. The profiles analysed were @cerosetenta (Bogotá), @glasswingsv (San Salvador) and @luisantonio_ruizv (Guayaquil) and they reflect distinct logics: academic, social, and journalistic, respectively. While the journalistic approach often reproduces explicit images of violence that may reinforce fear, the academic and social accounts employ more deliberate visual strategies that invite ethical reflection and public debate.

Together, both platforms contribute to shaping collective imaginaries of insecurity, each with different degrees of depth, critical engagement and narrative responsibility.

The research confirms that audiovisual formats are reconfiguring representations of urban violence, yet they reveal a prevailing tendency towards the spectacularisation and normalisation of violence rather than the construction of constructive alternatives. The predominant narratives reinforce perceptions of insecurity and fear, with only isolated contributions that have limited impact in terms of practical solutions.

Certain limitations must nevertheless be acknowledged. The corpus reviewed serves as a baseline for future expansion towards broader regional comparisons. Moreover, the Instagram analysis was based on profiles selected according to thematic representativeness, to which the measurement of post impact could be added. Future studies might also extend the scope of comparison to traditional media, in order to contrast hegemonic and emerging narratives.

The findings open up new avenues for deepening understanding of audiovisual narratives and violence in Latin America. A priority line of research would involve the development of longitudinal studies to assess the evolution of these narratives during periods of greater social stability, contrasting them with the findings obtained amid the current crisis of violence. Further research is also required on the reception and appropriation of this content by audiences,

employing digital ethnography and reception studies to understand how users interpret, re-signify and integrate these narratives into their daily lives. It would be particularly valuable to analyse whether a correlation exists between the consumption of this content and changes in perceptions of security or self-protective behaviours.

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