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Portrayal of women and men in Spanish press

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Abstract

Introduction: This article examines the portrayal of women and men in Spain’s most-read national general-information daily press. **Methods:** The study is based on the quantitative content analysis of the non-advertising content of 28 issues of two of the most-read national newspapers in Spain, *El País* and *El Mundo*, selected through the constructed week sampling method. **Results and conclusions:** The results show great inequality in the representation of women and men in both newspapers. Women are under-represented, both as participants and as protagonists of the published texts and images, while the depiction of women and men is informed by gender stereotypes that attribute power and authority to men. Women are rarely represented as athletes, and are represented as victims more frequently than men. In addition, women appear less frequently than men in the press as information sources or authors of texts and photographs.

Keywords

Gender representation; newspaper; content analysis; women; men; stereotypes.

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Translation by **CA Martínez-Arcos**

(PhD in Communication from the University of London)

1. Introduction

The purpose of the research presented in this article is to expand our knowledge on gender representations in the Spanish mainstream daily press. This study is inspired by the previous works published this decade by the authors of this article, including *Gender in Spanish Daily Newspapers* (Matud, Rodríguez and Espinosa, 2011), which is based on the content analysis of *El Mundo* newspaper. This article is a breakthrough since, in addition to analysing the content of published by the aforementioned newspaper five years later, examines the content of *El País* newspaper, which increases the generalisability of the results, enables the comparison of the representations of both newspapers, and improves the previously used methods. It is a quantitative analysis of the non-advertising content of 14 issues of each of the two newspapers, which were selected through the constructed week method. The analysis of the representation of women and men is based on three aspects: 1) the presence of each gender in texts and photographs, as protagonists and participants of the events and issues addressed; 2) the presence of each gender as authors of the information pieces; 3) the references to women and men as sources of information. In addition to the analysis of the presence of people of each gender, the analysis aims to determine whether gender representations are informed by gender stereotypes.

Despite the fact that the biological characteristics that underlie sex are not dimorphic but multidimensional and multi-categorical (Moradi and Parent, 2013), the division of people into women and men is essential in all cultures and the designation at birth of one of the two categories has a profound impact on how people are treated, on what is expected from them and on how they live their lives (Eagly, Beall and Sternberg, 2004). Although there is empirical evidence that indicates that both women and men are very diverse among them and that they are similar in most of the psychological variables (Hyde, 2016), there is a belief that they are fundamentally different (LaFrance and Vial, 2016): they are gender stereotypes. These stereotypes can include physical characteristics, roles, preferences for activities and personality traits that are grouped into two broad dimensions that characterise men as active, competent, ambitious and competitive and women as warm, friendly and sympathetic (Glick, 2016). Importantly, these are not only differences, but forms of inequality since the features and attributes associated with men grant them more power and authority than those associated with women.

Evidence shows that the media, which have been regarded as powerful and omnipresent (Wood, 1994), are important sources of information in relation to gender (Kite, Deaux and Haines, 2008). Media representations contain explicit and implicit discourses about gender that tell audiences which social roles and personal characteristics are acceptable or undesirable in men and women (Kosut, 2012). This is important because the strict monitoring of gender norms limits the development of the potential of human beings and perpetuates gender inequalities. Gallagher (2015) indicates that the representation of women and men in the media is a key indicator of progress in gender equality and the achievement of human rights for women. Therefore, the periodic analysis of such representations is considered to be necessary.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Currently, the media are part of people's private life and work as entertainment, companionship and source of knowledge and interpretation of what happens in the private level. The media are important at the cultural level in three broad ways: 1) they direct the attention of people towards acceptable codes of conduct in society and direct conversations about it; 2) they tell people what and who should matter in their world and why; 3) they help people to get to know themselves and their connections or disconnections with others (Turow, 2009). The media have great influence on individuals and culture since they mediate individual experiences and work as powerful socialisation agents (Ward and Harrison, 2005). Socialisation is the way through which people learn from their culture and acquire their values, beliefs, perspectives and social norms. It is an ongoing social process since people are socialised and resocialised throughout their life (Signorielli, 2001).

Evidence indicates that, although women constitute at least half of the population, their presence in the media is much lower than that of men (Collins, 2011; WACC, 2015). Moreover, although, at least in the Western world, women have gained access to education and employment and have expanded their roles, from the traditional roles of housewife and mother to very diverse jobs, the media still represent women and men in very different and stereotyped ways (Collins, 2011; Lindsey, 2016; Matthes, Prieler, and Adam, 2016). This leads people to develop from an early age rigid beliefs about what behaviours are suitable for boys and girls and for women and men (Lindsey, 2016), which has been linked with the transmission and maintenance of gender inequality given that the media often legitimise such inequality by creating images and telling audiences which of these images are valid or not (Aulette, Wittner and Blakely, 2009).

Wood (1994) argues that the underrepresentation of women implies the fallacy that men are the cultural standard and women are little important or invisible. This author proposes that the media representation of women and men is very stereotyped and is characterised by: 1) the presentation of men in a way that is consonant with the traditional image of masculinity: to be strong, independent, active and successful. 2) The representation of men as authority figures and women as incompetent. 3) The presentation of women as the family caretaker and men as bread-winners. The association of women with family roles occurs even when women appear in the media for their achievements and professional activities. Even in these circumstances women's marriage, family life and other aspects of their traditional roles are mentioned. 4) The presentation of women as sex objects and victims and men as aggressors. Thus, the desirable image of men is aggressive and dominant while the desirable image of woman is one of a young, beautiful, sexy and vulnerable woman (Wood, 2009). And when women are involved in activities that are not consistent with traditional gender roles such as, for example, terrorism, the informative treatment is characterised by the discourse of exceptionality, which represents them as "pioneers" or "intruders" (Plaza, Rivas-Nieto and Rey-García, 2017).

The unequal treatment of women and men has been detected in all media and in all types of information, including news. According to the Global Media Monitoring Project, which since 1995 and every five years analyses the representation of women in the news around the world and documents trends in such representations, the progress in gender equality in the media has virtually come to a stall in the last five years (WACC, 2015). The results of the study carried out in 2015, based on data

collected from 114 countries and 22,136 news stories, showed that women represented only 24% of the people who appeared on the television, radio and printed news. This percentage was also obtained in 2010. But the differences in the representation percentages of women and men vary according to the geographic area of study, and depending on the subject addressed: the differences decrease in news on gender and health and increase significantly when it comes to politics and government news, where only 16% of the represented people are women.

The under-representation and stereotyped portrayal of women have also been detected in the press since long time ago, and still persists around the world, regardless of the ways media contents have been adapted to their values and cultural norms (Lindsey, 2016). An example of what happens in newspapers is a study carried out by Jolliffe (1998), who compared language and gender roles in the *New York Times* in 1885, and a century later, in 1995. He found out that, although the representation of women had not improved, in 1985 women did not receive the same space as men and both genders were represented according to traditional roles. It was rare to see women performing a job and men in their family roles.

Significant differences have also been detected in the treatment the media give to men and women in sports, a particularly relevant area since masculinity has been associated with sports and has excluded women (Aulette *et al.*, 2009). It has been pointed out that the differences in the representation of male and female athletes represent gender-based power relations and the fact that sports in the media remains to be a patriarchal institution dominated by men and made by and for them (Crolley and Teso, 2007; Calvo and Gutiérrez, 2016).

Gender inequality in the media is not limited to differences in the representation frequency and form of women and men, but also occurs in the journalistic profession, particularly in the area of information sources.

The analysis of gender differences in the journalistic profession has been considered important because there is evidence that indicates that personal characteristics may influence how news stories are covered, and one of them is gender (Craft and Wanta, 2004). It has been argued that the approach of the news could have been influenced by the fact that journalism has been widely dominated by men, given that despite the incorporation of women to the profession, men continue to occupy the positions of power (Kitch, 2015; Morinière, 2015). It is further argued that the journalistic perspective could be different to the extent that women join the profession (Peiser, 2000). However, the empirical evidence on the existence of differences in the news based on the gender of the writer is not conclusive.

Some studies have detected differences in the type of news covered. There is evidence that it is more common for women journalists, in comparison to male journalists, to write about human-interest and health-related stories, while it is more common for male journalists to report on politics (Desmond and Danilewicz, 2010). In addition, the sports section has traditionally been dominated by men, and although in recent years a greater tolerance for the presence of women journalists has been detected, men still predominate in the decision-making positions and as journalists (Calvo and Gutiérrez, 2016).

Studies have showed that the existence of systematic gender differences according to the type of news reported is another important way to maintain gender stereotypes. As Desmond and Danilewicz (2011) propose, if such differences occur, audiences can expect certain areas of information to be appropriate

for a particular gender. And if professional women are considered as valid only for certain stereotypical clichés, audiences will accept that this limitation as the norm. They also recognise that it is not good for the journalistic profession to allocate topics by following gender bias and stereotypes, instead of the degree of experience or qualifications, because the quality of the news will deteriorate.

Another relevant area in the analysis of gender differences in the news has been the gender of the sources used, which considered to be very important, not only in the construction of the news, but also in their orientation and perspective (Ross, 2007). There is evidence that it is more likely for men to be cited as sources than women (Freedman and Fico, 2005; Matud et al., 2011; Ross, 2007), especially when it comes to expert sources, although this tendency appears to decrease when the writers of the news are women. Although the evidence is not conclusive (Ross, 2007), some studies have found that women journalists use women as sources to a greater extent than their male colleagues (Freedman and Fico, 2005; WACC, 2015).

The following hypotheses we formulated based on the literature review: H1: The presence of women will be lower than the presence of men in the texts and photographs published in newspapers. H2: Women and men who appear as protagonists or central figures of the news will be represented according to gender stereotypes. H3: It will be more common to find men as the authors of texts and photographs, in comparison to women. H4: There will be differences in the portrayal of men and women across the newspaper sections based on the gender of the authors. H5: It will be more common for women to appear represented as protagonists in texts written by women than in texts written by men. H6: The presence of men as sources of information will more frequent than that of women. H7: It will be more common for women to be cited as information sources when the author of the news is a woman than when it is a man.

3. Methods

The testing of the hypotheses is based on the quantitative content analysis of the non-advertising messages of the two newspapers, except for obituaries, weather information, and television programming. Each of the news pieces and opinion articles published in the newspaper were considered as the units of study. In addition, non-advertising photographs, graphics and illustrations were analysed independently.

3.1. Sample

The analysis is based on the contents published in 28 issues of two of Spain's three most-read national daily general-information newspapers: *El País* and *El Mundo*. The constructed week method was used to obtain a representative sample of the contents published throughout the year. First, a day of the week and a month of the year were randomly selected and then the first newspaper was selected for the analysis. Afterwards, we selected one issue each month by choosing the consecutive day of the week of the previous month, until the seven days of the week were considered. Thus, we analysed 14 issues of *El País* and 14 of *El Mundo*, which corresponded to fourteen different months and each day of the week (two issues per day). The first issue was published on Monday, March 1, 2010 and the last one on Sunday, April 10, 2011.

There is evidence that the constructed week method produces better estimates than random sampling (Ryffe, Aust and Lacy, 2009) and thus it was important for the sampling of content to give the same possibilities of analysis to each day of the week since, generally, newspapers have patterns that vary depending on the day of the week.

3.2. Coding procedure and content analysis variables

Coding was performed based on the system developed by Matud et al. (2011) for the analysis of newspaper contents, as it has shown high reliability levels. These codes have been reviewed and some of their categories have expanded to collect all the information. The following variables were coded of each analysed unit:

1. The genre of the represented persons was coded as: a) woman; b) man; c) both genders.
2. The sections of the newspaper were coded as: front page, back page, opinion, national, international, society, economy, sports, culture and obituaries.
3. The occupation of the person(s) represented in a central or protagonist role. After analysing the professions it was found that they could be grouped into the following categories: a) President or senior positions; b) artists or celebrities (not included in other categories); c) people accused of terrorism or other crimes; d) writers, philosophers; e) athletes; f) politicians; g) employees; h) soldier, civil guard or police; i) bull fighter; j) religious person; k) royalty, understood as any person belonging to a Royal House; l) journalist, presenter, or photographer; m) retiree; n) activist.
4. Whether the central figure was presented or not as a victim of some event or the violent action of others. The options were: a) male victim; b) female victim; c) victims of both genders; d) not represented as victim.
5. The gender of the author of the article, which was coded as: a) man; b) women; c) man and woman; d) no identified gender; e) without signature.
6. The gender of the cited source: a) expert man; b) expert woman; c) expert men and women (M&W); d) male witness; e) female witness; f) witnesses of both genders; g) institutional, when the cited source was an institution or body and not a specific person.

A journalist trained in gender and content analysis and with previous experience in coding and media texts analysed all the material from the two newspapers, by applying the described encoding protocol.

3.3. Statistical analysis

Descriptive analysis and contingency tables were developed for the study. Pearson's chi-squared test was used to establish independence between the qualitative variables. All analyses were performed with SPSS 23.0 for Windows.

4. Results

A total of 5,260 units were included in the sample of analysis. Of these units, 47.9% ($n = 2521$) were published in *El Mundo* and 52.1% ($n = 2739$) in *El País*. Most of the units (59.2%) were texts, 34% were photographs, 3.9% were infographics and 2.9% were illustrations.

4.1. Differences in the portrayal of women and men

The analysis of the presence of persons of each gender represented in the published contents indicated that 3200 units (60% of the total) did not include any woman, while only 831 units (15.8%) did not include any man. Figure 1 shows the percentage of women and men that appear when there is one or more persons represented (up to a maximum of 13 persons). As we can see, the presence of men is far superior than that of women in all cases. These differences are more marked when the number of people is greater, with all the persons being practically men when the number of represented persons is greater than nine. And, while 6.4% of the units only include groups of men, only 1.7% of the units included only groups of women. This trend occurred in both newspapers, although there were some percentage differences of units that did not include both genders: 57.6% in *El Mundo* and 64% in *El País* in the case of women and 11.7% in *El Mundo* and 19.4% in *El País* in the case of men.

The analysis of gender differences in photographs indicates that 13.4% did not include men while 61.8% did not include women. In the exclusive analysis of the texts the percentages were 15.6% and 60.5%, respectively.

The analysis of gender representations in protagonist or central roles showed that one or more men were the protagonist of 49.1% ($n = 2583$) of the units, while women were protagonist in 7.8% ($n = 409$) of cases and that 10.2% ($n = 536$) of the units had both women and men as protagonists. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(2, N = 3528) = 2531.92, p < .001$. In the analysis of the proportions of the representation of either one or another gender as central figures the percentages were 86.3% for men and 13.7% for women. Again, these percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(1, N = 2992) = 1579.64, p < .001$. Table 1 shows the representation of each gender as protagonist in each newspaper. As you can see, the trends are quite similar in both newspapers, although the representation of both genders as protagonists is more common in *El País* than in *El Mundo*.

Figure 1. Presence of women and men in newspapers

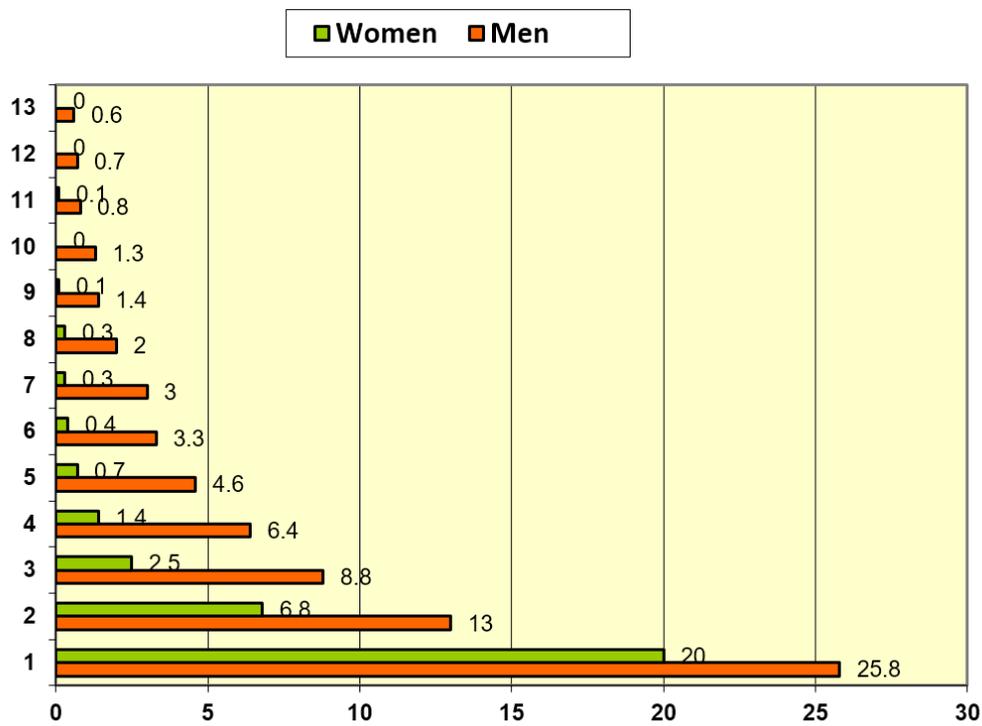


Table 1. Gender representation in protagonist roles in each newspaper

	Only men		Only women		Women & men		X ²	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
<i>El Mundo</i>	1276	50.6	203	8.1	211	8.4	1352.44	<.001
<i>El País</i>	1307	47.7	206	7.5	325	11.9	1191.89	<.001

Table 2 shows data divided in texts and photographs. As we can see, although in both cases there are statistically significant percentage differences gender differences in representations in central roles are higher in texts than in pictures.

Table 2. Gender representation in protagonist roles in each newspaper distributed by texts and photographs

	Only men		Only women		Women & men		X ²	p
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Texts	1396	75.6	172	5.5	279	15.1	1492,86	<.001
Photographs	1133	63.4	235	13.1	240	13.4	997,44	<.001

Altogether, the results show that the representation of men in the press is much higher than that of women's, although these differences seem to be slightly lower in photographs than in texts. This has allowed us to confirm the first hypothesis, which proposed that the presence of women would be less common than that of men in the texts and photographs published in the newspapers.

The second hypothesis was that women and men in protagonist or central roles would be represented according to gender stereotypes. To test this hypothesis, we analysed the occupations of the people presented as protagonists, whether they appeared or not as victims, and the section of the newspaper where they were represented as protagonists.

Table 3 shows, from higher to lower frequency, the occupations of the persons presented in central roles. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(26, N = 3232) = 499.21, p < .001$.

Table 3. Occupation of men and women represented as protagonists in the newspapers

Occupation	Men		Women		Women and men		
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>
President, senior	631	81.2	51	6.6	95	12.2	777
Athletes	735	96.6	9	1.2	17	2.2	761
Artists, celebrities	312	58.4	122	22.8	100	18.7	534
Politicians	219	60.8	42	11.7	99	27.5	360
Employees	110	65.9	33	19.8	24	14.4	167
Journalist, photographer presenters	84	57.9	38	26.2	23	15.9	145
People accused of terrorism/crimes	111	77.1	11	7.6	22	15.3	144
Writers, philosophers	91	82.0	11	9.9	9	8.1	111
Soldier, police, civil guard	64	80.0	2	2.5	14	17.5	80
Bull fighter	56	100.0	0	0	0	0	56
Royals	11	32.4	9	26.5	14	41.2	34
Retiree	14	63.6	4	18.2	4	18.2	22
Activist	20	80.0	0	0	5	20	25
Religious person	13	81.3	1	6.3	2	12.5	16
Total	2471	76.5	333	10.3	428	13.2	3232

Occupation could not be determined in 2.6% of the total number of men represented as protagonists, in 1.6% of women protagonists and 2.4% of both genders as protagonists, so such data are not included in table 3. As we can see in table 3, the most frequent occupation is senior officials, which was much more frequently when one or more men were represented as protagonists (in 81.2% of cases) than when it was only women (6.6%). Another very common occupation is athletes, an occupation where gender inequality was very high since 96.6% of the athletes were only men and only 1.2% were only

women. It was very rare to find bullfighters as protagonists of the information, but when they appeared it was always men. Great gender inequality also existed when the protagonists were writers or philosophers, religious people, activists, or members of the armed forces and security bodies, which in at least 80% of cases were one or more men. It was also very rare to find women represented as terrorists, as people accused of other crimes or as politicians.

The intragender analysis showed that when the protagonists were exclusively men, the most common occupation were as athletes and presidents/senior officials, with 29.7% and 25.5%, respectively, of the units with exclusively male protagonists. Less common occupations were artists (12.6%) and politicians (8.9%), and the least common were royals (0.4%), religious figures (0.5%) and retirees (0.6%). In units with only-women protagonists, the most common occupation were artists or celebrities, which occurred in more than a third (36.6%) of these units. Less common occupations in these units were female presidents or senior officials (15.3%), politicians (12.6%), and media professionals (11.4%), while the least frequent were women activists and bullfighters, which did not occur in any case; religious figures (0.3%) and members of the armed and security forces (0.6%). These trends were observed in the two newspapers, although in *El País* it was more common to find more artists (15.3%) than politicians (7.4%) in news centred exclusively on men, and it was more common to find politicians (14.6%) than presidents/senior officials (12.8%) in news centred exclusively on women.

The examination of gender differences in the representation of victims indicated that it only occurred in less than one tenth of the units. It was men in 170 of the cases, representing 6.6% of the male-protagonist-only units, and it was women in 10.8% (n = 44) of the female-protagonist-only units. Finally, it was both genders in 12.5% (n = 67) of the cases. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(2, N = 3528) = 26.13, p < .001$. The analysis of each newspaper showed the same trend, although it was more common to find news with only female protagonists represented as victims in *El Mundo* (12.3%) than in *El País* (9.2%), and it was more frequent to find news with both male and female protagonists represented as victims in *El País* (13.2%) than in *El Mundo* (11.4%), while in both newspapers only 6.6% of the male protagonists were represented as victims.

Table 4 shows the representation of male and female protagonists across the different sections of the newspaper. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(18, N = 3528) = 351.63, p < .001$. As we can see, more than half of the contents published in all sections were starred only by men, while the highest percentage of female-only protagonists were included on the back page and it was only 27%. The greatest gender inequality occurred in the sports section, where more than 95% of the information featured only men. The lowest gender inequality occurred in the Society section, where 51% of the pieces only featured men and 21.9% only featured women. These trends are observed in both newspapers, although *El Mundo* presented lower inequality in Society, where 47.2% of the content only featured men and 38.9% only featured women, and the back page, where 59% of the content only featured men and 35.9% only featured women. In *El País* these percentages were, respectively, 51.5% and 19.6% in Society, and 68.6% and 17.1% on the back page.

Table 4. Section and gender of the persons featured in the information units

Section	Men		Women		Women & men		N
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Culture	521	67.2	115	14.8	139	17.9	775
Sports	708	95.8	13	1.8	18	2.4	739
National	399	67.7	59	10.0	131	22.2	589
International	290	69.2	54	12.9	75	17.9	419
Society	156	51.0	67	21.9	83	27.1	306
Front page	153	76.9	27	13.6	19	9.5	199
Opinion	118	69.4	17	10.0	35	20.6	170
Economy	108	70.1	20	13.0	26	16.9	154
Obituaries	83	80.6	17	16.5	3	2.9	103
Back page	47	63.5	20	27.0	7	9.5	74
Total	2583	73.2	409	11.6	536	15.2	3528

Altogether, the results confirm the second hypothesis, because it has been found that it is much more common for men to appear as figures of power, authority and strength, associated with sporting activities, military activities and the commission of crimes, while it is more common to find women, when they are presented as protagonists, in the role of artist or celebrity, or victims.

4.2. Gender differences in authorship

Of the total of published units, 43.3% ($n = 2275$) had not author, 36.8% ($n = 1936$) were written by men, 10.3% ($n = 543$) were written by women, and 0.7% ($n = 35$) were written by both genders, and 9.0% ($n = 471$) were signed with initials which made it impossible to determine the gender of the author. Given the small percentage of contents signed by both genders, we decided to perform the analysis only on the units signed exclusively by men or by women. Of the 2479 units that met this requirement, 78.1% were signed by men and 21.9% by women. These percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(1, N = 2479) = 782.75, p < .001$. The analysis of each newspaper showed very similar trends in both cases: the percentages of contents signed by men were 77.5% in *El Mundo* and 78.8% in *El País* and of contents signed by women were 22.5% and 21.2%, respectively.

The analysis of texts and photographs found that 1398 texts (74.2%) were signed only by men and 486 (25.8%) only by women. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(1, N = 1884) = 441.48, p < .001$. The analysis of photographs showed that 454 (91.7%) of them were signed by men and 41 (8.3%) by women. These percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(1, N = 495) = 344.58, p < .001$. This confirms the third hypothesis, which proposed that it will be more common for men to appear as authors of the texts and photographs than women.

Table 5 presents data on the gender of the author of the contents and the section where they appear. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(9, N = 2479) = 91.94, p < .001$.

Table 5. Section and gender of the author of the contents

Section	Men		Women		N
	n	%	n	%	
Culture	362	84.2	68	15.8	430
Sports	305	91.9	27	8.1	739
National	364	76.0	115	24.0	479
International	223	67.8	106	32.2	329
Society	110	68.3	51	31.7	161
Front page	90	71.4	36	28.6	126
Opinion	237	81.4	54	18.6	291
Economy	146	74.1	51	25.9	197
Obituaries	49	84.5	9	15.5	58
Back page	50	65.8	26	34.2	76
Total	1936	78.1	543	21.9	2479

As Table 5 shows, the greatest inequality level occurs in sports, where more than 90% of the authors are men, followed by obituaries, culture and opinion. The sections with the lowest level of inequality are the back page, international and society, although only about one-third of the authors of these sections are women. The analysis of each newspaper revealed the existence of some differences: on the back page of *El País* the percentage of female authors was 54.3% and of male authors 45.7%, but in this newspaper had a higher level of inequality in the front page (81.7% for men and 18.3% for women) than *El Mundo*, where the percentages were 62.1% and 37.9%, respectively. Moreover, the percentage of economy contents signed by women was 36.3% in *El Mundo* and 11.9% in *El País*, while the percentages of contents signed by women in the society section were 34.9% and 18.8%, respectively. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis, which proposed the existence of gender differences in terms of authorship across the newspaper sections, is not confirmed fully since, in some sections, the differences in the presence of women or men as authors of the contents varies according to the newspaper.

Table 6 shows the contingency analysis between the gender of the protagonist and the gender of the author of the published content. As we can see, although most contents signed by women and by men only have men as protagonists. However, less than one tenth of the contents signed by men (9.0%) feature one or more women, but this percentage increases to 17.6% in contents signed by a woman. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(2, N = 1639) = 29.76, p < .001$

Table 6. Gender of authors and gender of protagonists

Protagonists' gender	Authors' gender				N	%
	Men		Women			
	n	%	n	%		
Men	1018	77.1	201	63.0	1219	74.4
Women	119	9.0	56	17.6	175	10.7
Both	183	13.9	62	19.4	245	14.9
Total	1320	100	319	100	1639	100

The individual analysis of each newspaper showed that the differences were greater in *El País*, where only 6.9% of the content written by men had a woman or more women as protagonist, while the percentage of female protagonists in content signed by women was 18.3%. In the case of *El Mundo*, these percentages were 10.8% and 16.3%, respectively. This confirms the fifth hypothesis, which indicates that it would be more common for women to appear represented as protagonists in contents signed by women than by men.

4.3. Gender differences in cited sources

Table 7 shows the data on the use of sources and the type of sources listed in each of the newspapers. As we can see, in both newspapers more than half of the sources are expert men while the presence of expert women or experts of both genders is below 10%. It is also more common for both newspapers to cite men as witnesses than women, although the difference is greater in *El Mundo*, where it is less frequent to find institutional sources, although such sources are cited more than women in both newspapers. This confirms the sixth hypothesis, which proposed that women would less frequently cited than men as sources of information.

Table 7. Sources cited in each newspaper

Sources	<i>El Mundo</i>		<i>El País</i>		N	%
	n	%	n	%		
Expert man	327	53.2	396	53.9	723	53.6
Expert woman	56	9.1	56	7.6	112	8.3
Expert M&W	43	7.0	72	9.8	115	8.5
Witness man	70	11.4	43	5.9	113	8.4
Witness woman	21	3.4	17	2.3	38	2.8
Witness M&W	11	1.8	18	2.4	29	2.1
Institutional	87	14.1	133	18.1	220	16.3
Total	615	100	735	100	1350	100

Finally, Table 8 shows the analysis of contingency between the cited sources and the gender of the author of the information. The percentage differences are statistically significant: $\chi^2(6, N = 970) = 43.51, p < .001$. As we can see, although male authors cite men experts in more than half of the cases, this does not happen when the authors are women, although the most common type of source are still expert men. It is also more common for women authors, than for men authors, to cite women as sources, although the percentage differences are low when it comes to expert sources, especially when it comes to expert women, who are cited in only 10.5% of the texts signed by women and 7.5% of those signed by men. The individual analysis of each newspaper showed that these differences were very small in *El Mundo*, with 9.9% and 8.9%, respectively, and greater in *El País*, with 11.0% and 6.3%, respectively. This confirms H7, which proposed that it was more common for women to appear represented as sources in contents signed by women than contents signed by men, although the most common type of source are expert men.

Table 8. Sources cited and gender of author

Sources	Man		Woman		N	%
	n	%	n	%		
Expert man	408	61.3	149	49.0	557	57.4
Expert woman	50	7.5	32	10.5	82	8.5
Expert M&W	51	7.7	39	12.8	90	9.3
Witness man	70	10.5	22	7.2	92	9.5
Witness woman	10	1.5	23	7.6	33	3.4
Witness M&W	11	1.7	12	3.9	23	2.4
Institutional	66	9.9	27	8.9	93	9.6
Total	666	100	304	100	970	100

5. Discussion and conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate the existence of great inequality in the representation of women and men in the Spanish press. The analysis of the non-advertising content of two of the most-read national newspapers in Spain has shown that women are underrepresented at all levels: in their presence in published texts and photographs, as protagonists or central characters of the published content, as authors of the news, and as sources, particularly as expert sources. The under-representation of women in the media has been found in studies conducted in Spain and other countries (Cf. Calvo and Gutiérrez, 2016; Collins, 2011; Mateos de Cabo, Gimeno, Martínez and López, 2014; Matud et al., 2011; Stanley, 2012; WACC, 2015). It has also been confirmed that, similar to what these studies found, the representation of women and men is informed by gender stereotypes that attribute the power and authority to men.

Although classical theories about the differences between women and men in gender roles considered that they were normal and healthy because they reflected the social standards on appropriate conducts for each gender, such assumptions do not have been tested empirically. It has been proposed that the rigid monitoring of such roles may limit the choices and the potential range of behaviours of men and women (Parent and Moradi, 2010). Studies carried out in Spain have found evidence that such monitoring is associated with lower life satisfaction and greater psychological distress (Matud, Bethencourt and Ibáñez, 2014, 2015). Therefore, the stereotyped media representation of women and men and the underrepresentation of women, based on evidence that such representations are relevant in the maintenance of such stereotypes (Coyne, Linder, Rasmussen, Nelson and Collier, 2014) and that the media use is associated with more traditional beliefs about gender roles (Giaccardi, Ward, Seabrook, Manago and Lippman, 2016), is generating and maintaining gender inequality, as well as perpetuating a set of beliefs and practices that pose a threat to the health and well-being of citizens (see, for example, Matud 2017, for a review of gender differences in health). In this regard, there is an outstanding under-representation of women in sports, which can influence the perception of sports as not a “female” feature and influence the lesser involvement of women in such activities, which is an important effect given that physical activity is associated with better mental and physical health (Brown, Pearson, Braithwaite and Biddle, 2013; Reigal, Videra, Parra and Juárez, 2012; Richard et al., 2015). Such an effect can be especially pernicious in childhood and adolescence, because it has been found that the practice of physical activity during these stages is less frequent in girls than in boys (Cf.

Khanm, Burtin and Trost, 2017; Matud, Díaz, Bethencourt and Ibáñez, 2016) and it has been recognised that it is important for physical activity to be perceived as a permanent habit (Reigal et al., 2012).

The relevance of the media in the socialisation of gender and equality between women and men has been recognised, not only by the scientific and academic point of view, but also from political and legislative perspectives. Already in 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women (United Nations, 1995) recognised the relevance of the media in the maintenance of stereotypes and gender inequality, and called on governments and the media to take measures to prevent it. This is also recognised in the Spanish legislation, particularly in the 2004 “Organic Law on Integrated measures against gender violence”, which devotes its chapter II to advertising and the media and makes it obligatory to “encourage the protection and safeguard of equality between men and women” (p. 4217); and the 2007 “Organic Law on the effective equality between women and men”, whose title III is titled “Equality and the media” and states that “all the media will respect equality between women and men” (p. 12619). However, this does not seem to have been enough to make the Spanish press to represent women realistically: they represent half of the population, their education level is equal or even superior to that of men in the tertiary level and their professional and technical training is practically equal to that of men (World Economic Forum, 2015).

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