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Perception and analysis of the university community in terms of the current system of communication research in Spain

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Abstract

[ES] **Introducción.** Este artículo explora las prácticas sociales de la investigación en Comunicación en España. Recoge los resultados de una encuesta dirigida al profesorado en activo censado en las universidades españolas con titulación de Grado y Postgrado en Comunicación, a investigadores afiliados a las comunidades científicas y a los doctorandos de Comunicación. **Metodología.** Se ha invitado a participar a un total de 2418 investigadores con acceso al cuestionario mediante un link, siendo 838 los que respondieron a las preguntas. **Resultados.** El estudio muestra un cierto desfase entre lo que son las políticas institucionales académicas y la percepción que tienen los investigadores sobre ellas. **Discusión.** Se advierte la escasa relación que en el campo de la Comunicación existe entre la empresa y la universidad, una relación que debiera implicar un modelo de generación de conocimiento transferible al ámbito social y laboral como forma de obtener valor añadido.

[EN] Introduction. This paper explores the social practices of Communication research in Spain. It gathers the results of a questionnaire targeted to actively working professors included in the census of Spanish universities with Graduate and Post-Graduate studies in Communication, researchers members of scientific communities and doctorate students in Communication. **Methodology.** A total of 2,418 researchers were invited to participate and were granted access to the questionnaire by clicking a link, being 838 the number that completed the questions. **Results.** The study shows a certain mismatch between academic institutional policies and the perception of researchers about them. **Discussion.** There is noticed the scarce relationship between companies and university in the field of Communication, a relationship that should entail a model of generation of knowledge transferable to the social and labour context as a means for obtaining added value.

Keywords

[ES] Investigación sobre comunicación; proyectos de investigación; tesis doctorales; información científica; universidades.

[EN] Research on Communication; research projects; doctoral theses; scientific information; universities.

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[EN] 1. Communication research: a young and underdeveloped area. 2. Approach towards the study object. 2.1. The role of Associations. 3 Methodological process. 4. Analysis and Results. 4.1. Sociodemographic profiles of respondents. 4.2. Experience as principal investigators of the R+D projects. 4.3. Personal Experience in Research activity. 4.4. Participation of researchers in the different project categories: international, national scope, autonomic and competitive by university. 4.5. Research objectives, study areas and techniques used to elaborate and interpret data. 4.6. Research experience and profitability. 4.7. Assessment of weaknesses and strengths of Communication research. 5. Discussion and Conclusions. 6. Notes. 7. List of references

Translated by **Yuhanny Henares**
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1. Communication research: a young and underdeveloped area

The number of studies and researches that generate knowledge about the situation of Communication research in Spanish universities is progressively increasing. The total of studies conducted up until recently was insufficient for finding a serious and complete information about the reality of this discipline. In fact, authors like De Moragas-Spà (2011, 2008), Bustamante-Ramírez (2018), Piñuel-Raigada (2010), Piñuel-Raigada, Gaitán-Moya, Caffarel-Serra and Lozano-Ascensio (2017), Almirón (2007), Castillo-Esparcia *et al* (2012), Martínez-Nicolás (2009), Rodríguez-Gómez (2018), Hoyos (2017), Tato-García, Tato-Jiménez and Castillo-Díaz (2014), Peñafiel-Saiz *et al* (2017) and Caffarel-Serra, Gaitán-Moya and Lozano-Ascensio (2018), among others, insist on the need to generate a methodological reflection that analyses and informs about the characteristics displayed by Communication studies in Spain. It is necessary to point out that the study object has been institutionalized as a discipline area, but this does not mean it includes a detailed study about projects, groups, lines, objects and methods that compose it.

The previous studies indicate the officerization and bureaucratization of the Spanish university professors as one of the threats to which our academic system is exposed to, just like other European countries according to *Academic Manifesto* (Halffman and Radde, 2015). In addition, there is focus on the situation of young researchers outcast to subsidy situations or condemned to abandon their researches due to lack of expectation for professional development, lack of funding in the form of scholarships and the difficulty for achieving a satisfactory labour-academic match.

On the other hand, it seems evident that the funded Communication studies must offer some contribution to the society in such a way that the opportunity for funding is understood. It is important to assess the contribution of these studies to the social innovation demands and their reach at public level. It is also necessary that the Communication studies show applicable results and of social value, in such a way that their funding is understood and accepted. Regarding the doctoral theses, it is also observed how their scores talk about their ‘excellence’. The problem is that most of doctoral theses elaborated are scored *cum laude*, which represents the highest level of excellency. Following the question formulated by the professor Díaz-Nosty “is this a true indicator of the excellence of doctorate researches? Are there enough signs to question that those filters (controls and evaluations stablished) offer quality, novelty, scientific utility and social profitability in our area of knowledge” (2017, pp. 93-94).

The field of communication research studies in Spain is relatively young and therefore, underdeveloped. When performing the comparative analysis versus other geographic areas worldwide, it is observed how the United States hoard most of the scientific production in this field and thus, it can be confirmed in Peters (2014, p.28) and Gingras and Mosbah-Nathanson (2011). Additionally, most of scientific journals can be found in this country. Europe is relegated to a relevant second place in terms of production, but the situation of Spain inside the continent is weaker still. This is noticed when observing the language in which the results of the researches are published, being English the most used language, followed by German and French, leaving the papers written in Spanish language in the fourth place. This coincides with the references available regarding citations in the most relevant journals, whereas the United States and Europe occupy relevant positions among the most cited journals (Jorge and De-Frutos, 2017).

The object of this paper is to discover the way the social representations of academic researchers are configured around projects, groups, lines, study objects and research methods in terms of Communication research practices in Spain.

2. Approach towards the study object

Communication as a study object is under continuous transformation. To this reality, there joins the fact of being a science interrelated to other akin disciplines in the areas of education, art, culture, sociology, psychology, economy, linguistics, politics or advertising, just to mention some of them (Peñafiel et al, 2017). All this, at an international level and often with scarce support, based on the observations of Hamelink and Nordenstreng (2016: 47)

The stories of the emerging field of mass communications [...] in continental Europe since the end of the 17th century and forth, allow us to recognise the scarce and late role of international institutions in modelling communication research. [...] It is only after the 20th century that we can find some systematic research exchange of international scope, built by means of particular structures like international meetings or associations between relevant scholars.

Its consideration by Science and Culture institutions, like UNESCO, is rather contradictory. In 1946, UNESCO proposed the creation of an International Institute for Press and Information, that promoted the education of journalists and the study of Media-related problems worldwide, which was considered a relevant matter due to the role media played on international affairs during the war. In 1948, Article 19 on Freedom of Expression and Information was incorporated to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1952, the UNESCO opened two reference lines: establishment of educational centres for journalists and the foundation of an international organization for the promotion of scientific research on mass communication. In 1956, the Centre for Higher Education in Journalism was founded. The following year, the Association IAMCR/AIECS/AIERI was founded, with the institutional baselines already set forth and with the support of UNESCO.

Considering what was observed until now, it can be deduced that UNESCO firmly supported the development of the journalistic field, favouring the education and research at international level. However, they have missed specific details that refer to its inclusion among scientific classifications, and that left the field of Communication research in oblivion, which denomination in the European Higher Education Area positions around the specialties of Journalism, Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations. It is a relevant matter for visibility, considering that the UNESCO classification is the greatest nomenclature of international reference that currently exists. Alberich-Pascual and Martínez- García (2017: 143-144) believe that these specialties

Appear unattached and out of focus, if not directly unattended in different and significant categorizations of science and technology, like the case of the UNESCO Classification [...] which hinders to a high extent, the adequate visibilization of the national scientific production on Communication [...] Communication Sciences are not among the great two-digit areas [...] not even among the four-digit ones. [...] The only appearances of the term 'Communication' in the UNESCO classification, appears as a sub-area of Sociology (Social Communications), Psychology (Social Psychology of Symbolic Communication) and Political Science (Public Opinion: Mass Media). [...] Another sample is the non-existence of the term 'Advertising.'

2.1. The role of Associations

This study object has led to the development and consolidation of organizations and international and national associations that introduce themes and study lines through their own Work Groups and research teams, and reflect the tendencies available in the area of Communication. Some of the main ones are presented as follows.

2.1.1. International Associations

IAMCR. - International Association for Media and Communication Research / *AIECS.* - *Asociación Internacional de Estudios en Comunicación Social* [International Association of Social Communication Studies] / *AIERI.* - *Association Internationale des Études et Recherches sur l'Information et la Communication*

Founded in 1957, it is a professional global association of media and communication, which general objective is *to support and develop research on media and communication worldwide by studying the socio-political, technological, political and cultural processes* [1]. Their members include individuals and institutions of more than 100 countries around the world. Officially affiliated to the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization, it currently includes 15 Thematic Sections and 17 Work Groups. The latter are responsible for most of the contents of the IAMCR conferences, as well as the publication of books or journals. For Hamelink and Nordenstreng (2016, 63-64), the IMCR/AIECS/AIERI has played a decisive role in mobilizing the international-scope dimension of the field, especially during the early decades: *It seems improbable that any other entity could have promoted in a more effective manner, the international contacts in a field so deeply rooted on the national conditions of politics, economy and culture.*

For Nordenstreng (2008, p.225, 229), international institutions have not intervened in the composing of the Communication research until the constitution of AIERI/IAMCR/AIECS, promoted by UNESCO with a transnational scope from the start:

IAMCR had a wide basis, even global, by affiliating institutions and individuals of all continents. There is no doubt that the initiative of creating IAMCR was dominated by European, but there also intervened colleagues from countries like Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Egypt, Israel, India, Indonesia, Japan, Australia, United States and Canada. The new Eastern Europe, behind the so-called Iron Curtain, was represented by academic leaders coming from Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union [...] crossing both the Eastern-Western gap, as well as the North-South gap.

ICA. - International Communication Association.

Founded in 1950 in the United States as the National Society for the Study of Communication, began as an organization of researchers from United States and now it includes members in more than 85 countries. Since 2003, ICA has been officially associated with the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization. It contains 9 Work Groups that develop 22 thematic divisions, as well as different Committees for the organization of activities. On their website [2] *specify that they are an academic association for scholars interested in the study, teaching and application of all aspects of*

the human and mediated communication. Its main objective is to progress in the academic study of Communication.

ALAIC. - *Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación / Latin-American Association of Communication Researchers*

Founded in 1978 [3], it emerged to gather the Latin-American researchers, in an attempt to include Latin America in the world community of researchers on communication sciences (Krohling, 2004). Its main objective was promoting the development of Communication research in Latin America, together with the consolidation of an academic community.

Fuentes-Navarro (2016) considers *ALAIC* as the most important among the academic associations on Communication in Latin America, in terms of the functions performed, and includes a summary of its history in the words of José Marqués de Melo (1991: 100), its president between 1989 and 1992: *The main achievement of ALAIC was the legitimation of the new area of knowledge in UNESCO and international agencies for scientific promotion. Up until then, Communication researches were confused with the studies conducted under the guidelines of social sciences, mainly Sociology.*

In 1988, the reconstitution of the Association was initiated, representing a strengthening process. Like Fuentes-Navarro (2016) states:

The reconstituted ALAIC, has performed functions more commonly recognized as characteristic from an international academic organization [...]like the extension of joint projects with other associations of the area (IAMCR, ICA, ECREA and others), the biannual organization of international congresses and seminars, and the sustenance of two scientific journals, Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencias de la Comunicación, in Portuguese and Spanish since 2004 and Journal of Latin American Communication Research, in English, since 2011.

The Association includes 19 Thematic Groups for the academic tasks of its members around sub-fields of knowledge within the specialty.

FELAFACS. - *Latin-American Federation of Faculties of Social Communication / Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social*

Created in 1981 *in order to contribute to the development of teaching and professional practice of Communication on its different areas. [...] The education, research, international cooperation, information [...] are the strategic lines of work of our Federation, as well as all those initiatives contributing to improve Communication in a perspective of global development in Latin America* [4].

It is described as an international entity of non-governmental character that groups more than 258 faculties and communication schools from 23 Latin-American countries and other regions and recognized by UNESCO since 1987.

CONFIBERCOM. - Ibero-American Confederation of Scientific and Academic Associations of Communication/ *Confederación Iberoamericana de Asociaciones Científicas y Académicas de Comunicación.*

Founded in 2009, its main objective is to strengthen Communication as a field of knowledge. In its website [5] it mentions that its mission is focused on *promoting and debating Ibero-American scientific production in the area of Communication Sciences, both at national and international scope, considering the relevance of the languages and cultures of countries.*

In this Confederation there are included the following national Associations and Federations of Researchers on Communication:

ABOIC (Bolivia), ACICOM (Colombia), AE-IC (Spain), ALAIC (Latin-American), AMIC (Mexico), INCOM (Chile), ASIBERCOM (Ibero-American), FADECCOS (Argentina), FELAFACS (Latin-American), INVECOM (Venezuela), LUSOCOM (Portuguese speaking region), SEICOM (Ecuador), SOCICOM (Brazil), SOPCOM (Portuguese), ULEPICC (Latin).

ECREA. - European Communication Research and Education Association.

Founded in 2005. It is an academic association dedicated to the development of Communication research and higher education in Europe [6]. Among its objectives, we highlight building a community of scholars on Communication by providing spaces for the exchange of ideas and research methodologies and supporting the development of research on Communication or Education. It currently includes 21 Permanent thematic sections, each one developing a distinctive field of communication studies, and 3 permanent networks that represent specific sociodemographic categories of scholars. It includes 9 Temporary Work Groups focused in emerging fields or insufficiently represented areas. The Networks group specific sociodemographic categories of scholars.

2.1.2. National scope associations

SEP.- The Spanish Society of Journalism. Founded in 1989, is an association of professionals of higher education and scientific research on Journalism, offering the following considerations [7]:

The SEP has consolidated into an institution that is always attentive about the core affairs of Journalism, its practices, its professional standards, transformations, diversity of languages used to express itself, the profile of those practicing Journalism, the media and modes it is conducted. [...] All the university professors on Journalism addressed by those issues, will find the doors of the SEP open, an integrating and plural association of scholars.

Since its foundation, it has held a total of 24 international congresses in many other Communication Faculties. Among other activities it offers, in a biennial basis, the *Lorenzo Gomis* Doctoral thesis Awards and publishes the scientific journal *Textual & Visual Media* since 2008. Since this same date, it is a member affiliated to the Federation of Journalists Associations of Spain.

AE-IC. - Spanish Association of Communication Research. Founded in 2006, on its website [8] it sets forth, as main objectives, to potentiate communication research in terms of scientific policies, to facilitate cooperation and to create social networks of exchange of information between researchers, to establish a cooperation policy with international research associations, especially with those specialized in communication in the European or Latin-American scope and to collaborate with the different organizations and entities, both public and private that share the principles and objectives of the general promotion of the scientific knowledge and democracy in terms of communication. It develops 7 thematic sections around strategic and organizational communication, communication and digital culture, communication structure and policies, studies on audience, studies on discourse, production and circulation of contents and theories and research methods on Communication. It includes 5 Work Groups affiliated to the Sections.

In 2011, this Association requested its Commission of Scientific Policy, to elaborate a map of the state of the art of social practices on Communication so to prepare a White Paper on Communication. Between 2013 and 2017 the research project MapCom was conducted: *The research system in Spain about social practices on Communication: projects' map, groups, lines, study objects and methods*. In the presentation of the project [9] there is an emphasis on the experience of application of two international online questionnaires conducted by *Grupo MDCS* and promoted by *AE-IC*, *FELAFACS* and *ECREA*, launched in European and Latin-American countries. The results (Piñuel-Raigada, 2011) offered a panorama where the study object was analysed in terms of a high scientific interdisciplinarity. The results of the project completed in 2017, will be a reference to apply to the convocation of projects, as well as to encourage research networks.

3. Methodological Process

The method of this analysis has been developed by means of a quantitative methodology, using an online questionnaire targeted to researchers of Spanish universities and scientific societies operating in the area of communication studies, among them there are the PIs, directors of doctoral theses, researchers on Communication and doctorate students with ongoing doctoral theses.

To complete said questionnaire, there were invited a total of 2,418 men and woman researchers on Communication around the country. They were sent an email with access to the questionnaire by clicking a link. Out of the total, 1,254 researchers entered the questionnaire, being 838 (34.66%) of the census, the respondents who completed the questions. The research universe was divided into three well differentiated groups: in the first group there were considered all researchers included in the census of Communication faculties in Spain; the total of PhDs included in the payroll of every university. In the second group, there were researchers' member of Scientific Societies that, despite being PhDs, they do not teach at universities, and even though they are members of these societies, they are not included in the payroll of any university. The third group is composed of researchers' students of doctorate programmes. The access to these researchers was done through requests to doctorate programmes coordinators using their census.

The survey was launched on 1 May and finalized on 31 August 2017. The survey process was conducted by means of a mixed-type questionnaire design, with questions essential for the research such as: researcher profile, professional registration as researcher, researcher experience, strengths and weaknesses observed on communication research, incorporation in the sociodemographic profiles of the census of communication researchers. There were included questions related to professional and

academic identity, merits or awards received, the affiliation to consolidated research groups, as well as projects, scientific societies, six-year research periods, the perception about the research career developed. In addition, the questionnaire studies other subjects such as the affiliation to research centres or scientific societies, either of national or international scope, the participation in R+D national or international projects; research lines, objects and techniques used, influence of funding, the selection of themes, research payback, etc.

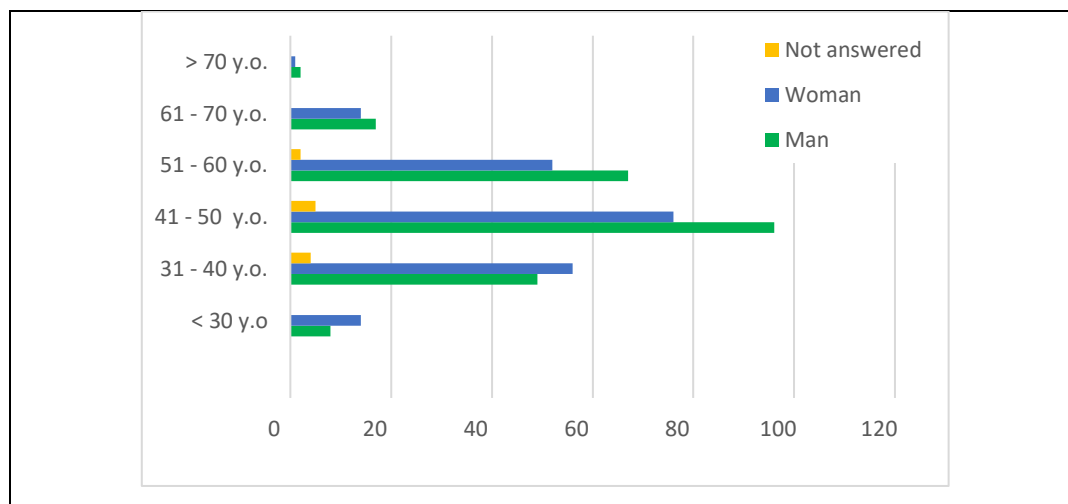
It is a wide content survey that has offered relevant results related to Communication studies, collectives working therein, their labour and academic situation, perception of respondents about the strengths and weaknesses. Finally, a research map in Spain was elaborated, indicating the development of communication research and that works as a mirror for other countries.

4. Analysis and Results

4.1. Sociodemographic profiles of respondents

The sociodemographic profiles of the census of communication researchers follow age and gender ranges which, as observed in Graphic 1, gather more than 50% of researchers older than 41 years old and younger than 60 years old. A fourth part are younger than 40 years old and among the senior, or older than 61 years old, there is only one out of every 10 researchers. Regarding gender, as the age range increases, the proportion of women reduces, and the younger the age range, the higher is their number. There is a glass ceiling after 40 years old. If these variables in the database are crossed by Autonomous Communities, it can be confirmed that there appear relevant differences. Among the most outstanding differences, there is the Basque Country, which proportion of women is always higher than men, for all age ranges.

Graphic 1. Sociodemographic profiles of age and gender



Source: MapCom 2017

The evaluation of the previous education uses the following areas as references: Social Sciences, Humanities, Natural Science and Mathematics and Technology. The Social Sciences and Humanities are the best valued in the graduate and post-graduate education studies.

Regarding the results about income for the total of researchers, they show that almost 25% earn between 2,000 and 4,000 Euros, with the greatest percentage, a 18%, for those earning between 2,000

and 3,000 Euros. About 8.1% of researchers earn less than 1,000 Euros, and 16% between 1,000 and 2,000 Euros. These data indicate that almost half of researchers earn less than 3,000 Euros, an amount that is not related to the workload that has been progressively added to professors as a consequence of the reform resulting from the Bologna Process and the cuts caused by the economic crisis.

To reflect the research profile of participants, information about four aspects was gathered: a) access to the PhD programme or PhD seniority b) research experience based on the number of times researchers have participated in R+D international, national, autonomic scope projects, within consolidated research groups c) tutorship of *TFM* [Final thesis to complete master's studies], *TFG* [Final thesis to complete graduate studies], etc. and d) the six-year research periods granted, among some details.

Out of the 838 respondents nationwide, 14% are not yet PhDs and are still researchers under training, 40% bear a seniority of 10 to 30 years as PhDs and only 3% has a seniority longer than 30 years.

In terms of research periods (six-year periods) that recognize the research of quality linked to high impact publications, the percentages point out to a research weakness in university professors. It is observed that 51% do not have six-year periods; 15.5% have one; 11.3% only two and with three six-year periods or more there is only 6%. In the age range from 31 to 40 years old, 79% do not have any six-year periods. This might be due to the limited offer of Spanish journals indexed in the reference catalogues (JCR and Scopus) as one of the main causes of the low percentages of six-year periods. The need to publish in this sort of media to obtain six-year research periods causes a volume of works that could hardly be assumed by journals.

4.2. Experience as principal investigators of the R+D projects

When asking about the number of times respondents have had experiences as principal investigators of R+D projects (of international, national, autonomic scope, etc.) in the universe of Spanish researchers, 44.4 mention to have never been a PI, 14.3% at least once, and 12.5% from 2 to 5 times. The fact of participating as a member in research teams is somewhat more frequent, considering that still 16.9% leave this question unanswered and 8.1% mentions never. More than half researchers, 56.3% have participated in this experience at least once (18%) and 38.3% from 2 to 5 times. With these data, there are validated the problems in the research dimension of the Spanish university professors, although the sudden slump in the convocations of competitive projects by public administrations must be considered.

On the other hand, results indicate that 33.9% have never tutored a doctoral thesis and 14.6% of researchers have never tutored a *TFM* or a *TFG*; Almost 50% of respondents have tutored more than 10 works of this kind.

The men and women researchers of Spain highlight in every case, the “use” of Databases and Collaborative Networks (more than 60% of respondents), over the “non-use” (less than 20%) of international and national research registries, although the most repeated frequency of consultation is “ever” (about 30% of respondents). Regarding the participation in Scientific Societies, both of national and international scope, five out of 10 respondents leave the question unanswered and almost 30% manifest not to use them, especially if they are international societies.

Regarding the question about what is the affiliation, whereas the respondent recognises him or herself as integrated in the research census, 4 out of 10 respondents manifest a contractual relationship either

indefinite (20.8%) or temporary (21.2%), while full and chair professors, either intern or in payroll, sum another four out of ten, even though chair professors hardly reach 6.3%.

4.3. Personal Experience in Research activity.

The questionnaire included the research lines, first and then around objectives of research experience and study objects by thematic fields.

In terms of research lines, it is noteworthy that 479 out of the 838 respondents offered keywords to describe research lines. Since it was an open-ended question, the column that contained the keywords for research lines needed to be recoded. The following 26 categories shown on Table 2 were useful for this recoding. The coloured font inside the cells of the table express the crosstabs following the order of keywords for research lines by fields.

TABLE 1: Crosstab by order of keywords for research lines by fields of study

FIELDS OF STUDY	Mediatic Communication	Organizational Communication	Communication of Groups	Interpersonal Communication	Theory and Epistemology	Methods and Techniques
Mediatic Communication	General Mediatic Comm.	Mediatic Organizational Comm.	Mediatic Comm. of Groups	Interpersonal Mediatic Comm.	Mediatic Comm. of Theories.	Mediatic Comm. of Methods
Organizational Communication	Mediatic Organizational Comm.	General Organizational Comm.	Organizational Comm. of Groups	Interpersonal Organizational Comm.	Organizational Comm. of Theories.	Organizational Comm. of Methods
Communication of Groups	Mediatic Group Comm.	Organization. Group Comm.	General Group Comm.	Interpersonal Group Comm.	Group Comm. of Theories	Group Comm. of Methods
Interpersonal Communication	Mediatic Interpersonal Comm.	Interpersonal Comm. Organizations	Interpersonal Comm. Groups.	General Interpersonal Comm.	Interpersonal Comm. of Theories	Interpersonal Comm. of Methods
Theory and Epistemology	Mediatic Comm. Theories	Organizational Comm. Theories	Group Comm.Theories	Interpersonal Comm. Theories	General Comm. Theories	Methods Theory
Methods and Techniques	Mediatic Comm. Methodology	Organizational Comm. Methodologies	Group Comm. Methodology	Interpersonal Comm. Methodology	Methodology of Theories	General Methodology

Note: the categories in red include at least one case, and the categories in purple do not have any cases

Source: MapCom 2017

4.4. Participation of researchers in the different project categories: international, national scope, autonomic and competitive by university

The participation in the different categories of projects and contracts regulated by article 83 offers results where the high percentage of researchers that do not respond is noteworthy. The article 83 of the Organic Law of Universities establishes that research groups and professors can sign contracts with individuals, universities or public and private entities to execute tasks of scientific, technical or artistic nature.

It is also representative the weak presence of researchers in international projects and the low participation in contracts under article 83, a typical instrument of transfer and collaboration with the private sector.

- In terms of international projects, 46.5% do not answer the question and 33.3% say none. And with some experience thereof, 12.1% mention only one, therefore, barely 8% of respondents have experience in more than one.
- In terms of national projects of State scope convocations, 41.4% of respondents do not answer the question, and 16.3% have not participated in any. There is 42.3% in total with some experience.
- In terms of autonomic projects, 43.4% of respondents do not answer and 22.7% say they have not participated in any. There is a total of 33.9% with some experience, within a range from one to more than six projects.
- 45% do not answer the question about the participation in university projects; 21,8% mention not to have them. A total of 33.3% respondents, similar to the prior parameter, mention having some experience in a range from one to more than six.
- Given the case of contract projects by means of article 83, 47.7% do not answer the question and 31.0% lack of them. There is 21.2% with some experience in a range of one to more than six.

4.5. Research objectives, study areas and techniques used to elaborate and interpret data

The study objects preferably adhere to the field of ‘Mediatic Communication’. Within this field, all objectives have a relevant consideration, whereas ‘Describe’ (classify) outstands and the least usual is ‘Intervene’. At a long distance behind, there follows the field of ‘Organizational Communication’, which main objectives are to ‘Intervene’ and ‘Describe’. In this same field ‘Evaluate’ is also significant. To contrast/validate models involves a wider mastering from the researcher. The rest of objectives in the successive fields is testimonial, except for the free field, where the percentages increase slightly. On table 3 the research objectives by fields are clearly appreciated.

TABLE 2. Research Objectives by fields in Spain

OBJECTIVES	Mediatic Communication	Organizational Communication	Group Comm.	Interpersonal Communication	Other field
DESCRIBE: to register, classify, catalogue, introduce and/or define communication practices.	65.84%	15.96%	4.99%	4.94%	8.98%
EXPLAIN: to stablish relationships between characteristics of the study object suggesting causes, effects, correlations and/or the evolution of the study object.	65.10%	16.90%	5.00%	5.24%	9.76%
EVALUATE or assess: test, contrast or validate models.	63.85%	14.87%	7.58%	4.96%	8.75%

INTERVENE: to use known models to change behaviours or social processes of creativity.	52.20%	20.13%	11.64%	6.29%	9.75%
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Source: MapCom 2017

Regarding the question “Techniques and fields of study in your research experience” the main study object repeats, which belongs to the field of Mediatic communication.

In terms of the application of the techniques considered in the rest of fields, the most used is Organizational communication with experimental techniques. The percentages granted to the rest of fields in each of the techniques, are clearly lower.

TABLE 3. Techniques in relation to study objects by fields in Spain

TECHNIQUES	Mediatic Communication	Organizational Communication	Group Communication	Interpersonal Communication	Another field, to be specified
CONVERSATIONAL: Interviews. Group Discussion. Focus Group. Group Dynamic of Intervention. Phillips 66. Delphi. Various.	56.39%	17.78%	13.61%	8.06%	4.17%
DOCUMENTARY: Content analysis. Discourse analysis. Documentation analysis. Various.	73.57%	11.90%	5.95%	2.62%	5.95%
QUESTIONNAIRE-RELATED: Opinion survey. Attitudes survey. Various.	55.40%	16.6 0%	13.90%	8.79%	5.15%
EXPERIMENTAL: Subject, group, fieldwork experiments. Various.	51.01%	18.63%	13.69%	9.51%	6.46%
OBSERVATIONAL: Self-observation. Systematic observation. Participant observation. Various.	49.01%	18.21%	11.59%	14.57%	6.62%

Source: MapCom 2017

4.6. Research experience and profitability

The data of the questionnaire show that the indexed journals have a special relevance when selecting where to publish the results of studies. In the main consideration there is the ‘Funding Framework’.

TABLE 4. Assessment about the extent the publication criteria on indexed Social Sciences journals in Spain (JCR, Scopus, Scholar Metrics...), influence research

	Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
Funding framework sustaining researches	41.03%	36.67%	15.90%	6.41%
Selection of Objects and Fields of study	34.26%	54.41%	8.56%	2.77%
Theoretical contextualization	24.48%	56.96%	15.21%	3.35%
Selection of methods and empirical techniques	41.13%	43.70%	10.80%	4.37%
Assessment of results and applications	32.39%	56.30%	6.94%	4.37%

Source: MapCom 2017

The ‘Assessment of results and applications’ is also noteworthy, which is the highest percentage in the niche of ‘Very’ and, at the same time, achieves the lowest score of all options for the lowest score. Merging the two main evaluations, this option reaches a score closer to ‘Selection of objects and fields of study.’

In the non-indexed journals, their scores are rather low. However, this changes in the criterion ‘Very’, where there outstand ‘Selection of objects and fields of studies’ and ‘Assessment of results and applications’. In this context of non-indexed journals, the “Funding framework sustaining researches” is scored as ‘somewhat.’

The books and monographs receive a low score in terms of ‘Funding framework sustaining researches’. The best evaluations in this context are granted to the criteria ‘Selection of objects and fields of studies’ and ‘Theoretical contextualization’, in the option ‘Very.’

Lastly, the Congress Proceedings have scarce consideration among researchers. However, general results grant them non-negligible percentages in ‘Very’, especially in ‘Selection of objects and fields of study’ and ‘Assessment of results and applications.’

The second question is the benefit obtained as a payback of the research production and activity. The results show high percentages referred to the same kind of payback and the same objectives. Also, there is a high percentage of ‘Presentation / Congresses’ in terms of the objective ‘Describe’. With a lower percentage, but undoubtedly high as well, there is this payback and this objective in the general results. The payback by ‘Dissemination/ Education’ has only some presence referred to the objective of ‘Intervene’.

TABLE 5. Assessment about the extent criteria for publication in books and monographs in Spain, influence research

	Extremely	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
Funding framework sustaining researches	12.60%	31.76%	39.63%	16.01%
Selection of Objects and Fields of study	8.90%	50.26%	31.68%	9.16%
Theoretical contextualization	5.90%	49.60%	35.66%	8.85%
Selection of methods and empirical techniques	3.22%	38.34%	45.04%	13.40%
Assessment of results and applications	5.32%	40.16%	43.62%	10.90%

Source: MapCom 2017

A third question is the value of what is published and investigated in terms of the professional activity. The contracts with companies and institutions outside the university are not considered. Among the options proposed ('Not important at all', 'Somewhat important', 'Very important' and 'Extremely important') the greatest percentages are granted to the first two, being 'not important at all' the one in first place. Between 'not at all' and 'somewhat', they sum 68%, thus being 32% those who consider 'very and extremely important' this sort of contracts as a payback of the value of research.

There is not much score in 'Academic evaluations: six-year periods'. In the questionnaire, researchers score 'not at all' with almost 36% that, together with the 'somewhat', they offer a percentage of 47.61% of poor opinion. In this case, the best valued (28.57%) is 'extremely important' that, together with 'very' provide a favourable opinion of 52.38%.

4.7. Assessment of weaknesses and strengths of Communication research

The last topic introduces three questions: the material conditions, the organizational conditions and the institutional conditions to which the research activity has been subjected to in Spain. To assess them, a Likert scale is established, whereas -3 is an extremely negative evaluation and +3 extremely positive.

From the perspective 'Material conditions' it is observed that almost half of researchers grant scores positioned on the negative side of the scale (between -3 and -1) except regarding facilities and laboratories, coinciding with the scores of the general questionnaire.

Regarding the second question, the organizational conditions the research activity has been subjected to in Spain, there is a mostly negative evaluation of the convocation requisites (more than 75%). There is also confirmed a negative trend in the evaluation of methodological training programmes (78.61%). In the general report of Spain, the tendency towards the negative evaluation is not dominant in terms of organizational conditions of research processes. The positive evaluations appear less often when judging the requisites requested by public convocations and methodological training programmes; the

positive evaluations appear to a higher extent when the Cooperation and knowledge networks are assessed, as well as Human resources in teams.

The third and last question, the institutional conditions the research activity has been subjected to in Spain, highlights an evaluation of the compatibility between teaching and research, whereas 76% of researchers grant negative evaluations, as well as in terms of the activity of evaluation agencies, with a percentage of responses on the negative side of the scale around 76%.

There is a balance in the analysis of the relationship with the companies tending towards a less negative evaluation (21.4%). The activity related to congresses is considered adequate, very similar to the general evaluation, as well as the dissemination through the indexed scientific journals as quality parameters of the research production (about 50%).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The conclusions that the data of this study lead to, show among many things, on the one hand, the state of the art of communication in terms of the sort of research developed around it and, on the other, the perception and assessment of Spanish researchers towards the discipline. According to professor Díaz-Nosty (2017: 108) the results of the MapCom project encourage an analysis about the causes of an scenario of lacking in the field of communication studies in Spain. In this sense, it is necessary to establish the relationship there might be between those scarcities and the situation of communication research in Spain.

The numbers shown in this paper talk about a discipline, the communication studies, still young and underdeveloped in our country. Indeed, 79% of Spanish men and women communication researchers position in the age range between 31 and 40 years old; whereas 40% bear between 10 and 30 years of PhD seniority and only 3% exceed the thirty years of seniority; 44% of researchers have never been Principal Investigators and most of them do not have any six-year research periods in their academic record. Clearly, it is observed that the scientific community of men and women communication researchers is still taking off and this will entail consequences in other aspects of the activity, specifically methodological aspects.

Thus, one of the questions that research proposes, is the proliferation of studies of very similar characteristics in terms of the methodological design. The most usual objective found in the review of R+D projects and Doctoral Theses is description, being action the least frequent. The most managed fields in these Projects and Theses were Mediatic Communication and Organizational Communication.

These last two questions are of vital relevance, since they talk about studies on communication research that find a clear fit within the business sector, either regarding mediatic companies, or regarding those areas of communication that help the development of the business management, like the case of studies about Organizational Communication. However, the relationship between the research projects and contracts with companies do not reflect this circumstance. It is with good reason that 68% of respondents state that the signing of contracts with companies has barely taken place in their researches and grant little relevance to their existence; 68% of respondents consider that contracts with companies are not relevant at all or somewhat relevant in their activity. Therefore, they should be considered as theoretical researches without applicability.

Here, there appears a significant lacking in relation to what was explained during this study. Communication research needs an application, a social justification that advocates its funding by the

Administration of the State. In this sense, it would be necessary to conduct studies that contribute, both to the social as well as the business fabric. However, in addition to the results about the relevance that men and women researchers grant to contracts with companies, we find the low presence of research for action. Like we said earlier, while research to describe is the most popular among projects and theses analysed, research for action is the least common. The university must not close in itself, but instead open its knowledge to the exterior helping the social and economic development. In fact, we mention once more, the fact that the results obtained in communication research, must offer a contribution to society, and perhaps it is from these alliances that this objective could be fulfilled best.

The results obtained also discover a denounce of researchers about the scarce recognition that research receives compared to teaching. Curiously, it is the research activity and its results, the aspects generating evaluations of the research career and the quality of study degrees taught. Like said earlier in this paper, there is underlying evidence that the studies of communication funded have the need to contribute something to the society, in such a way that the opportunity for funding is understood. Thus, it is relevant to assess the contribution that these studies offer to the demands of social innovation and their reach at public level. Along with these appreciations, it is convenient to mention that the study shows a certain mismatch between the academic institutional policies and the perceptions of researchers about them.

In addition to the problems mentioned, there is the issue about the perception of the research staff in terms of the management for the development of the discipline made by the Administration. The communication research does not find the required support in Spain. This is something that generally happens with social science, which has much less protagonism than pure sciences and that, therefore, it is less funded, subsidised and aided. Furthermore, there also should be added some questions like the scarcity of large scale projects, or the profile of scientific journals edited in Spain, of which few are positioned in relevant indexation categories, which leads to the fact that studies need to be translated into English to be published in journals meeting those features, which generally belong to foreign universities and scientific societies. Perhaps this datum might seem of lesser importance since English is the language of research, but addressing foreign journals as only alternative, increases the cost of effort since it is performed on competitiveness. Regarding salaries, the perception is not positive either.

In conclusion, the communication research in Spain is still growing, which generates the effect of the snake biting its own tail: there are no relevant infrastructures for its development, which contributes to not offering excessive opportunities to the research staff, which at the same time causes no relevant infrastructures to be created. Curiously, the research curriculum of Research and Professor Staff is shown as incomplete despite the officerization and bureaucratization of the collective, quite criticized issues and that should contribute, at least, to the increase of its productivity. Nevertheless, there are many areas of action showing relevant scarcities, like the fact that most do not have six-year research periods or have never had a role as PIs in a research.

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Programme for Generation of Knowledge, in the category of Coordinated Projects.

6. Notes

- [1] <https://iamcr.org/>
- [2] <https://www.icahdq.org/>
- [3] <https://www.alaic.org/>
- [4] <https://www.felafacs.org/felafacs/quienes-somos/>
- [5] <http://confibercom.com/>
- [6] <https://ecrea.eu/>
- [7] <http://www.periodistica.es/>
- [8] <https://ae-ic.org.es/>
- [9] <http://www.mapcom.es/investigacion/presentacion>

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