



Accountability in a gender perspective: professional recognition of women equality editors in the Spanish news media

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. The implementation of the figure of equality or gender editors in eight Spanish newsrooms aims to demonstrate the accountability of these media on the gender perspective in their content and approaches. The aim of this research is to analyze the degree of knowledge and support of this new corporate position by Spanish professional associations and organizations, as well as to find out the opinion of journalists specializing in gender on the role and journalistic and corporation practices of this figure. **Methodology.** To this end, a questionnaire was designed and answered by 19 professional journalism associations in the country and 12 in-depth interviews were carried out with journalists who are experts in gender. In addition, the information obtained was compared with the perceptions of 10 equality or gender editors about their work. **Results.** Although the management of journalists' associations is unaware of which media outlets have a gender editor, both associations and specialists in the field support the need for this internal accountability mechanism and underline the parallel and urgent need for equality and diversity training for staff. They also call for more horizontal decision-making power, as well as material resources and time to deepen feminist approaches. **Conclusions.** Given the challenges that still exist in terms of work management and logistics, it is proposed to promote a professional statute for this figure and the development of a quality label by journalists' associations and other professional bodies for media that demonstrate their commitment to gender equality.

Keywords: gender editing; journalism; accountability; self-regulation; gender; diversity; feminism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The growing concern to combat disinformation, the spectacularism of news and the loss of credibility and trust in the media have led journalists and journalistic organizations to gradually adopt accountability as an integral part of their work (Bardoel & d'Haenens, 2004). This concept implies the commitment of the media to be transparent, responsible and accountable to society for their professional work (Rojas-Torrijos & Ramon-Vegas, 2017). In a journalistic context characterized by media concentration and digital imperatives - immediacy, visibility, superficiality, homogeneity - accountability is increasingly perceived as an extremely important condition (Harro-Loit, 2015) for achieving quality journalism. Accountability favors the process of "monitoring, controlling, criticizing and analyzing the quality of journalistic information" (Ramon-Vegas *et al.*, 2016, p. 102), and is closely linked to the media's ability to reflect the plurality of society, especially diversity and equality in informative works.

The concept of accountability is composed of three basic dimensions (Ramon-Vegas *et al.*, 2016): transparency, public participation, and self-regulation. Transparency refers to the public dissemination of corporate information (financial situation, business composition, values, organizational structure and relationships with other companies, among others aspect), as well as the explanation of the editorial processes that the media use to construct the news (Ramon-Vegas & Mauri-Ríos, 2020). Participation refers to initiatives or tools, either internal or external to the media, that seek to promote the intervention of citizens in the construction of the media narrative, either by creating, verifying or criticizing the published information (Eberwein *et al.*, 2011). Finally, self-regulation includes the codes of ethics, recommendations and other instruments developed by the media themselves or by external actors to ensure that journalistic work is responsible and respects the main ethical values of journalism: truth, responsibility, justice and freedom (Alsus, 2010). Self-regulation demonstrates the ability and willingness of media and journalists to follow norms that represent professional ethics (Fengler *et al.*, 2015).

These three dimensions are channeled through a wide range of accountability instruments, which are mechanisms promoted by companies, journalists, organizations, and citizens without state intervention (Eberwein *et al.*, 2011) to ensure media accountability and the quality of information products in a democratic state (Bertrand, 2018).

Accountability mechanisms can cover both broad and general aspects of information production, as well as more specific and specialized ones. As for the general aspects, we find tools such as the figure of the ombudsman, whose function is to mediate between the media and its public, responding to complaints, claims and suggestions about the informative content, with the aim of improving the quality and transparency of journalistic work (Enkin, 2021). Another example are the stylebooks, which are guides to the use of language, the presentation of information and the ethical principles that should guide the work of communication professionals; this ethical contract of the medium with the society to which it is addressed requires a periodic update to reaffirm and adapt journalistic commitments to the current times. This is what the newspaper *El País* did with its stylebook in 2021, given the greater "general awareness that equality between women and men is necessary in all legal and social areas" (Grijelmo, 2021, p. 13).

On the other hand, there are mechanisms that focus on more concrete and specific areas, such as deontological recommendations that provide clear guidelines for the coverage of certain sensitive or specialized topics (Ramon-Vegas & Mauri-Ríos, 2020). In this context, the role of women gender and equality editors becomes very important, by guaranteeing the ethical and democratic principles of equality and respect, as they are responsible for making gender equality and diversity visible and avoiding stereotypes in informative pieces.

The work of women gender or equality editors thus responds not only to the need to improve the quality of information from a gender perspective, but also to the media's ethical commitment to promote more inclusive and equitable journalism. Although it shares with the figure of the corporate ombudsman "an ability to call attention to journalistic injustices committed" (Meyer, 1987, p. 165), the added value of gender or equality publishing is that, in general, it acts before the information is available to the public. Therefore, the purpose of this article is twofold. On the one hand, to examine the level of knowledge and support that journalism schools and organizations grant to this figure; and on the other hand, to explore the role and both journalistic and organizational practices of women equality or gender editors, taking into account the perspective of journalists recognized for their specialization in this topic.

1.1. Promotion of equality in journalistic companies

The need to promote self-regulation to promote gender equality in journalism companies has been pointed out by academics for decades (Gallego *et al.*, 2002; Altés, 2000; Gallego & del Río, 1994; Antón, 1994). It has also been addressed in the Spanish legal framework. The Organic Law 3/2007, dated March 22nd, on effective equality between men and women in Spain, urges the media, both public (Article 36) and private (Article 39), to contribute to equality and to avoid reproducing stereotypes and discrimination. It also urges public administrations to encourage the media to adopt self-regulatory agreements.

A pioneering example in this field occurred on March 28, 2010, when *El Periódico* became the first media in Spain to introduce the figure of the equality defender. For the first time, the journalist Eva Peruga enforced the newspaper's accountability by publishing a Sunday column in which she collected "suggestions and complaints" (*El Periódico*, 2010) from readers regarding compliance with this ethical principle. In this pioneering moment, the journalist addressed the questionable value of the word of victims of sexist violence or inequality in the board of directors. However, her responsibility lasted four years and the position disappeared from the newspaper's posts (Peruga, 2014).

Self-regulation in favor of gender equality through specialized editions was extended by newsrooms around the world until October 30, 2017. The New York Times appointed journalist Jessica Bennett as gender editor after a year of reporting on complaints of gender inequality, sexual harassment and abuse (Kantor & Twohey, 2017), and a movement in the networks baptized as #MeToo (Quan-Hasse *et al.*, 2021). Bennett herself referred to this wave as a "tsunami" (Bennett, 2017), describing her role as a lens through which to observe the world through a gendered perspective that extends from feminism to issues of masculinity, sexuality, race,

and class and other issues. The wave of #MeToo not only brought this new journalistic approach to The New York Times, but also influenced other media. Next, The Huffington Post appointed Alianna Vagianos as a reporter specializing in women's issues, and in 2018, The Washington Post appointed Lena Felton as editor for gender coverage and Monica Hesse as its first columnist focused on gender issues.

Also, since 2018 and until 2023, seven media outlets in Spain have added journalists specialized in gender editing to their staffs (Table 1). Several factors have influenced this corporate decision. Among them, the awareness-raising movement #lasperiodistasparamos (Iranzo-Cabrera, 2020) stands out, in which an extraordinary number of Spanish journalists on the networks, in the streets, and in their own newsrooms demanded that gender equality be an ethical imperative in the contents and working framework of their companies. In addition, in the case of publicly owned media, Organic Law 3/2007 had already established that RTVE (for its acronym is Spanish) and the EFE Agency should adequately reflect the presence of women in different areas of social life, use non-sexist language and establish codes of conduct through self-regulation. The law also requires them to participate in institutional campaigns to promote gender equality and eradicate violence against women. RTVE and EFE are also encouraged to promote the participation of women in positions of responsibility and to work closely with associations and women's groups to identify their needs and interests in the communication field.

Table 1. Gender or equality editors in Spanish media outlets

Media	Position Name	Journalist	Appointment date	Date of termination
<i>El Periódico</i>	Advocate for equality	Eva Peruga	28/3/2010	31/4/2014
<i>El País</i>	Gender Correspondent	Pilar Álvarez	11/5/2018	31/1/2022
		Isabel Valdés	1/2/2022	
<i>eldiario.es</i>	Gender Editor-in-Chief	Ana Requena	7/9/2018	
<i>Televisión Española</i>	Editor for equality	Alicia Gómez Montano	18/10/2018	18/1/2020 (deceased)
		Carolina Pecharromán	1/3/2020	
<i>Radio Nacional de España</i>	Editor for equality	Paloma Zamorano	18/10/2018	
<i>EFE</i>	Responsible for Feminist	Patricia Crespo	1/11/2018	1/1/2020
		Macarena Baena	1/2/ 2020	
<i>Radiotelevisión Canaria</i>	Delegate for equality	Noemí Galván	1/7/2021	
<i>El Periódico de España</i>	Responsible for equality	Violeta Molina	1/9/2021	14/8/23

Source: Own elaboration based on Iranzo-Cabrera *et al.* (2023).

Despite being the country with the highest number of women gender editors, along with Argentina (Spinetta, 2022), there are currently 6 media that have a woman gender editor, while 8 had integrated them in their newsrooms. *El Periódico* and *El Periódico de España* no longer have this number, although both companies have not publicly explained the reasons for it. Ana Requena, gender editor-in-chief, points to the "resistance" they face in their daily work: "It turns out that objectivity, as Adrienne Rich said, is the name given to male subjectivity in patriarchal society" (Requena, 2020).

For her part, Teresa Vera, coordinator of the sixth Global Media Monitoring Project in Spain [GMMP], (2020), points out that "small advances" have been made towards parity in the journalistic profession in the last five years (Vera Balanza, 2021). The greatest progress towards equality has been seen in an increase in the media presence of women as spokespersons (34%) and as experts (with a striking increase from 9% to 34% in the last five years). Taking into account these advances, Vera highlights the need to include male and female editors specialized in gender or equality in the media as a fundamental step to promote approaches that encourage equality, diversity and an intersectional vision (de-Frutos-García, 2025; Ceballos-Cuadrado & de-Frutos-García,

2024). For this reason, the present work aims to situate the role that this figure has assumed or can assume in promoting not only equality, but also accountability in the media and, therefore, journalistic quality.

2. OBJECTIVES

Five years after the successive appointments of women gender or equality editors in Spain, we want to explore the knowledge and evaluation of this figure for journalistic self-regulation by the profession. To this end, this research aims to analyze, on the one hand, the degree of knowledge and support of this figure by schools and organizations of journalists; and, on the other hand, to address the role and journalistic and organizational practices of women equality or gender editors from the point of view of reference journalists for their specialization in gender.

After reviewing the previous literature and contextualizing the reasons that motivated the appointment of women gender editors, the research questions are as follows:

Q1.- Do the different professional entities know the media that have appointed women gender editors, female journalists who have held this position and the functions that fall within their competence?

Q2.- What do female journalists specialized in gender equality think about the profile of these professionals and their journalistic and organizational practices?

3. METHODOLOGY

This article has a multi-method design in three different phases. First, it is based on the research carried out in 2022 on the daily work of women gender editors with the collaboration of ten professionals who hold or have held this position (de-Frutos-García, 2025; Iranzo-Cabrera *et al.*, 2023). Through a questionnaire, in-depth interviews and a discussion group, the journalistic and organizational practices of Pilar Álvarez and Isabel Valdés (*El País*), Ana Requena (*eldiario.es*), Carolina Pecharromán (Televisión Española), Paloma Zamorano (Radio Nacional de España), Patricia Crespo and Macarena Baena (EFE Agency), Noemí Galván (Public Radio and Television of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands) and Violeta Molina (*El Periódico de España*).

Second, a survey was conducted in 2024 on the level of knowledge and support for this new editorial role. There are 11 professional associations in Spain and about 65 local, provincial or regional press associations. Most of them are affiliated or associated with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and/or the Federation of Journalists Associations of Spain (FAPE, for its acronym in Spanish). Of these, 19 colleges and professional associations - through a member of their board - answered to an online questionnaire (Jansen, 2012) with nine questions on the new professional figure still in force and on the gender perspective in journalism during July 2024. The second phase therefore focuses on the opinions of the teams responsible for these 19 journalistic entities (Table 2).

The five thematic blocks of the consultation were designed to answer the first research question: (I) level of knowledge about women gender editors; (II) assessment of the need for their functions; (III) assessment of the level of commitment of journalistic companies to the gender perspective; (IV) assessment of the level of commitment of professional organizations to the gender perspective; (V) suggestions to promote professional accountability for the gender perspective in their content and approaches.

Table 2. *Organizations and professional colleges participating in the study*

1	Basque Association of Journalists
2	Association of Catalan Journalists
3	<i>Asociación de Informadores de Elche</i>
4	Colegio Profesional de Periodistas de Castilla y León
5	Unió de Periodistes
6	Colegio Profesional de Xornalistas de Galicia
7	Asociación de Periodistas de Segovia
8	Asociación de Periodistas de Cuenca
9	Asociación de la Prensa de Málaga
10	Asociación de la Prensa de La Rioja
11	Asociación de Periodistas de Albacete
12	Asociación de Periodistas de Tenerife
13	Asociación de la Prensa de Sevilla
14	Asociación de Periodistas de Burgos
15	Asociación de la Prensa de Guadalajara
16	Asociación de Periodistas de Cantabria
17	Asociación de la Prensa de Mérida
18	Asociación de Periodistas de Aragón
19	Asociación de Periodistas por la Igualdad

Source: Own elaboration.

In the third phase of the research, between August 2023 and September 2024, 12 female gender journalists (Table 3) were interviewed. They were asked about the importance of feminist journalism (Steiner, 2024; Celecia Pérez & González Victoria, 2024) and some of whom highlighted the role of this internal accountability mechanism. We opted for a non-probabilistic convenience sample (Tamayo, 2020), which, although it does not allow us to draw extrapolable conclusions, makes it easier to obtain relevant information to identify common trends (González-Cortés *et al.*, 2023). Following García-Jiménez and Herrero (2022), as a reference, the criterion of information power was taken into account in the selection of the sample, which suggests that the greater the information power on hands of the journalists, the smaller the sample size should be in order for the results to be relevant. Three variables were taken into account in the selection of professionals for this third phase of the research:

1. Recognized feminist journalists working as freelancers or on their own account for media outlets.
2. Age, ranging from 18 to 70 years old, in order to delve into the female genealogies or herstories (Ramos & Ortega, 2019).
3. Type of media in which they work or have worked as journalists, or the consequences of this activity.

Table 3. *Non-probability sample journalists*

Journalists	Justification
Maysa Alamoudi	Journalist from Saudi Arabia, naturalized in the United States and exiled in Spain in 2023. Freelancer
Neus Rovira	Responsible for communication
Rocío Muñoz	Radio journalist for the Association of Municipal and Community Radio and Television Stations of Andalusia (EMA-RTV)
Teresa Santos	Journalist from RNE (for its acronym in Spanish) (Retired)
Maru Ludueña	Journalist founder of the Agency <i>Presentes</i>
Isabel Valdés	Gender correspondent for <i>El País</i>
Isabel Cadenas	Podcast director of We Don't Talk about That (<i>De eso no se habla</i>)

Yolanda Polo	Communications Manager of the Spanish Coordinator of Non-Governmental Organizations (<i>Coordinadora de Organizaciones No Gubernamentales de España</i> , CONGD, for its acronym in Spanish)
Carolina Pecharromán	Gender editor of Televisión Española (TVE, for its acronym in Spanish)
Patricia Reguero	Feminism coordinator of <i>El Salto</i>
Mercedes de Pablo	Journalist for the South Channel (RTVA, for its acronym in Spanish) and member of the Audiovisual Council of Andalusia.
Amparo Moreno	Journalist and university professor
Lola Álvarez	Journalist and university professor

Source: Own elaboration.

Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour, and all informants signed a consent form for the recording, storage, and dissemination of the results in a non-anonymous manner (García-Jiménez, 2022). Once the interviews were completed, the collected material was transcribed and themes and subcodes were identified and organized.

In response to the second research question, the script of the semi-structured interviews was divided into four parts: (I) definition of feminist journalism, (II) organizational practices, (III) professional practices, and (IV) agenda setting. However, these blocks were indicative and were adapted as necessary to the profiles and careers of the specialists.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Limited knowledge but massive recognition of the profession

In response to Q1, the appointments of the eleven Spanish women gender editors are unknown to 5 of the 19 representatives of the schools and organizations surveyed. Moreover, when we ask the 14 who claim to know this figure, only one management team is able to name all the media that have included this figure. This is the Press Association of Málaga. Another 10 managers mention one or two companies and 2 do not refer to any specific media. The most publicly known figures are the women editors from *El País* (n=10, 52.63%) and *eldiario.es* (n=7, 36.84%).

After informing them about the journalistic and organizational practices of women gender editors - they ensure compliance with the gender perspective in the languages, topics and approaches of the information medium, as well as in the choice of sources and in the dignification of knowledge, especially in the process of informational pre-production; they participate in the drafting of recommendations for the staff in books or style manuals and promote the training of the staff - 16 of the 19 college guidelines and professional organizations endorse as "necessary" to have professionals "who are pending compliance with gender equality". In this regard, the Press Association of Seville stresses that the journalistic practices of women gender editors should focus "both on the language used and, on the stories transmitted, because what is not named does not exist". The Basque Journalists' Association and the Press Association of Mérida do not consider them necessary, "since we already have guides on the gender perspective". And the Segovia Journalists' Association considers it "important, but not necessary".

For its part, 13 of the 19 replies obtained indicate that the promotion of the figure of the male/female gender should go hand in hand with the training in the gender perspective of the staff, "of those who practice journalism". In this line, only one organization, the Unión de Periodistas, points out that training is a requirement for management positions: "There is more and more awareness of these issues in newsrooms. However, it would be useful if the senior cadres were also imbued with this philosophy".

With regard to its massive implementation in Spain, the Guadalajara Press Association considers its appointment in local and provincial media "complicated" "in the short term" because "the staff is very depleted and the female journalists have to perform many functions and information every day, which usually goes to the detriment of the quality of the information".

In this sense, in order to promote the responsibility of gender equality and specifically the incorporation of this professional role in journalistic companies, two of the organizations point out the need to address this need from the university career. It is also proposed to carry out promotional and awareness-raising campaigns by journalist associations - there are 7 entities that recognize that they do not promote actions to make the ethical requirement of the gender perspective visible. The Association of Journalists of Aragon proposes the creation of a seal of quality that would allow the recognition of media that strive to break stereotypes and promote gender equality, not only in their content, but also in their staff. And among the accountability measures to be evaluated could be the implementation of the figure of women gender or equality s.

4.2. Women gender s from the perspective of feminist journalism

4.2.1. A "safe and comfortable" space to express opinions

With regard to Q2, professionals who defend feminism as a fundamental principle of this profession recognize the appointment of gender s as a step forward, since it allows for "safe and comfortable spaces to express opinions" and to "work by consensus" (N. Rovira, personal communication, July 25, 2023). In this sense, they welcome having a professional who "questions the focus on all issues and frequently, if not daily" (R. Muñoz, personal communication, September 15, 2023). Gender s, defined per se as people of dialogue and critical thinking, have an important role to play in promoting "a collective reflection, above the dynamics of haste, on what are we doing? are we doing it right? what should we change? Are all the voices there? when do we talk about this issue? do we include the voices that are not usually there? (R. Muñoz, personal communication, September 15, 2023). For the 12 interviewees, the constant questioning of "the system and the environments in which we live" is fundamental (Y. Polo, personal communication, January 14, 2024), because "if you keep asking these questions, you will reach places and issues that you would not otherwise reach" (Y. Polo, personal communication, January 14, 2024).

Regarding the background of the colleagues who hold or have held the position, gender journalists value that they have had training in gender equality, know the recommendations of manuals on non-sexist communication and non-normative sexualities, and know the history of feminism.

There are a lot of journalists who have specialized in this, and I think it has to serve a purpose. [...]. I have this tension between defending that it doesn't make sense that this specialization exists, and at the same time it seems to me that a lot of things are changing and that things are being written in media with a lot of scope that are thanks to the fact that these journalists exist. (P. Reguero, personal communication, September 20, 2023)

Both the new professional figure and the specialized training in gender are changes that, according to these experts, are rooted in "a movement from below that we women have largely made" (Y. Polo, personal communication, January 14, 2024), especially women journalists in Spain.

4.2.2. Journalistic practices

Regarding the tasks that gender s should assume, experts in the field insist on "the ability, sensitivity and responsibility to offer the perspectives that exist in society" (L. Álvarez, personal communication, May 8, 2024), as TVE's gender , C. Pecharromán (personal communication, September 29, 2023), explains it in more detail: "Journalism with a feminist perspective deals with what interests all people, treats all people as active subjects and treats all issues as important".

In this regard, equality s "must have an agenda that is committed not only to equality and feminism, but also to diversity: that there are migrant voices, voices of sexual diversity, functional diversity... to talk about new issues and let's not continue to create information ghettos" (R. Muñoz, personal communication, September 15, 2023).

The work of the women gender and equality editor therefore links gender equality with the human rights violations suffered by women and the LGBTIQ+ collective for other reasons. Hence, at the content level, it involves a commitment to eradicate classism, ethnocentrism, ageism and the singular representation of normative bodies in the media.

They also welcome the fact that, in most cases, they play a transversal role, since "feminism must be present in all sections of the newspaper or media in question" (Y. Polo, personal communication, January 14, 2024) and "not be based on content niches" (T. Santos, personal communication, September 18, 2024). For Patricia Reguero, the new figure has meant changes in productive routines, seeking out women as sources of information, requesting data disaggregated by gender, and reporting on sexual violence from perspectives that had not previously been addressed by journalism.

However, Amparo Moreno believes that "revolutionary change" will only come "from a knowledge that values the local and the personal" (comunicación personal, 19 de septiembre de 2023). "Understanding that there is no such thing as objectivity, for me the key to feminist journalism is not so much the issues it deals with, but the situated gaze; being aware of where you look and where you speak," says I. Cadenas (personal communication, July 27, 2023).

4.2.3. Organizational practices

However, the journalists interviewed regret that the media are still "strongly masculinized" spaces, especially in managerial positions, and with power structures that sometimes "lack commitment to this position", as the Spanish women gender editors recognized in 2022 (Iranzo-Cabrera *et al.*, 2023, p. 9) and the gender correspondent of *El País* reiterated in 2024:

Between 2017 and 2019, these figures were created in the media to make it clear to the outside world that you are a feminist media, because you were riding a wave of feminism that was sweeping everything in 2018. But when it comes to practice, it doesn't work; that is, if when something happens in a newsroom, that female journalist doesn't have the ability to move or make a decision or change anything, it's not worth it. You cannot have a figure that is a vase, which is what we have always been, a vase in a place to decorate. (I. Valdés, personal communication, September 20, 2023)

In this sense, R. Muñoz (personal communication, September 15, 2023) highlights the paradox of "being a media that qualifies as feminist, but those who make the decisions are men", which "has a direct impact on what is told, how it is told, from where it is seen and what absences there are". This is not the case, for example, in one of the media that has a woman gender editor, *El País*, and with a female journalist in the direction, Pepa Bueno:

A female director came and said, "This is how it is and this is how journalism has to be. And this issue is as important to us as the rest of the issues we cover, and it has to be an axis. Just as we treat the issues with rigor, we treat them with a feminist perspective" and that, of course, gives you a validity and a gap that is unthinkable otherwise. That's what I appreciate the most. And my goal is that there is no need for me, my niche, that there is no need for a gender correspondent in *El País*. I don't think it will be possible in 5 years, but we will try. (I. Valdés, personal communication, September 20, 2023)

They also stress that women gender editors must have the economic resources to produce reports with a diverse perspective. "If a person specialized in gender does not receive funds to do research or organize internal training, for example, she cannot be sustained," criticizes Yolanda Polo. Time is another essential element they must have: "There is little time to take care of the stories and the protagonists of the stories" (I. Cadenas, personal communication, July 27, 2023).

Regarding the lack of equality training for staff, they criticize that "feminist journalists can sometimes be perceived as the editorial police" (P. Reguero, personal communication, September 20, 2023). "If you're the one who always has to say, 'Hey, this headline or this approach...', well, I think it gets tiring," Reguero adds. As for the authority of women gender editors, R. Muñoz (personal communication, September 15, 2023) adds:

I think that women journalists feel more questioned in our work, more under the magnifying glass, with a greater self-demand, so that they do not say: 'You are there to fill a quota, not because you are worth it'. This makes us question ourselves more, so that we are often afraid to say things for fear of being questioned from the outside, of being told that we are exaggerating, that we are making it up.

For women journalists specializing in gender, and for women editors themselves, the position should be included in a horizontal decision-making structure.

You have to be another tool within an organizational chart and a structure that is a newsroom. And you also have to be a cog in which everyone can join, can plug into, to ask questions, to suggest things, to debate things. That's what really gives validity to a figure like the gender correspondent. (I. Valdés, personal communication, September 20, 2023)

5. DISCUSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The inclusion in the workforce of a management position responsible for ensuring the gender perspective demonstrates the company's willingness to ensure compliance with equality between women and men, to guarantee the gender perspective in approaches, themes and issues, and to undertake self-criticism through accountability (Ramon-Vegas *et al.*, 2016).

Since 2010, but especially since 2018, the Spanish media, but also international media, have added to the list of corporate positions a figure who protects the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ collective in journalistic content. The emergence of this accountability tool in the Spanish media is relevant and even more so if we consider that, unlike Anglo-Saxon and Northern European states, countries belonging to the polarized pluralist model - as is the case in Spain - have a less developed culture of accountability (Eberwein *et al.*, 2018).

Although each journalistic company has given it a different name, the position in question generally assumes three basic competencies: promoting new gender approaches in a transversal way in the medium; editing content; and opening up the views of the members of the editorial staff.

The first two appointments that took place in 2018, immediately after the explosion of the #lasperiodistasparamos movement, are the ones that the profession remembers best (that of Pilar Álvarez in *El País* and that of Ana Requena in *eldiario.es*.) However, the appointment of the remaining women editors has

gone unnoticed by at least 17 directives of the main colleges and entities of journalists in Spain. This fact raises a question that must be answered by new research on the reasons for this ignorance. We hypothesize that the companies that have appointed the women editors have not given them enough visibility in the profession, especially in the geographically closest associations of journalists. Its knowledge would have encouraged professional support, since 16 of the 19 respondents consider it an indispensable position today.

At this point, a greater commitment on the part of these entities of journalistic professionals to women gender editors could help to demand their presence as a self-regulating mechanism in a greater number of media and prevent the figure from being adopted as a promotional strategy for supposedly quality journalistic practices. In this sense, there is a proposal for the creation of a network of gender or equality officers, with the support of professional associations, feminist journalists and even academics, in order to standardize the status and functions of the position (Iranzo-Cabrera *et al.*, 2023). Thus, any company wishing to incorporate this mechanism of self-regulation and accountability should start with a basic model accepted by the profession.

Women editors have the support of journalists specializing in gender, who value above all that this person should have journalistic experience and specialized training in gender equality; that she should have an attitude of openness to dialogue; and that she should promote the confidence to offer new views and opinions when it comes to setting the agenda. In particular, a characteristic that has to do with the form and content of feminist journalism is constant self-reflection or self-questioning to ensure the representation of diversity.

However, journalists who hold or have held this position, as well as selected professional associations surveyed and all feminist journalists interviewed, receive greater support from media management to carry out their duties. This support is crucial for women gender editors to effectively influence news narratives, overcome cultural and institutional barriers, and promote more inclusive and representative journalism. Institutional support would enable them to participate more actively in editorial meetings where coverage approaches are decided; combat imposter syndrome, a psychological barrier that disproportionately affects women in leadership positions; and ensure that these professionals feel more confident and secure in their editorial decisions, resulting in a more autonomous and decisive exercise of their roles to ensure that content and approaches meet higher standards of equity and representation. This would not only enrich the quality of reporting but also strengthen the credibility of the media in the eyes of a more diverse and critical audiences.

Spain, along with Argentina, is the country with the highest number of women editors, currently 6. However, the vast majority of media outlets still have a male in a position of leadership. Specifically, of the 100 media analyzed by the Madrid Press Association (APM, for its acronym in Spanish, 2024), only 22 are headed by women in Spain. And of the 6 media that currently have a woman gender editor, 4 have a female journalist in a position of leadership (*eldiario.es* and EFE) or in the management of news services (TVE and RNE, for their acronym in Spanish).

In addition to the demand for horizontal authority throughout the media, which would allow women editors to exercise transversal self-regulation, feminist journalists also demand material resources and time. On this point, it should be remembered that practically half of the women editors continue to work as editors, with the consequent number of additional hours per week. This workload is exacerbated by the immediacy, now multiplied by digitalization, and the reluctance of the staff. It would also be advisable to define precisely the functions to be performed by the female equality editor in order to avoid an excessive or inappropriate workload.

Despite the challenges that still exist in terms of labor organization in the newsrooms (Requena, 2020), as well as in the personal-political sphere of these women journalists, gender editors, with regard to the profession, promote changes in the imaginary "that have an infinite substratum and that, when they sprout, represent a change that can no longer be ignored; you can try to fight it and pull it up, but the sprout is already there," as

the journalist Rocío Muñoz points out. Therefore, most of the associations and female journalists interviewed called on the media to provide a coordinated training program aimed at increasing the involvement of managing positions and male/female editors.

Among the visible stagnations, as already promoted by the GMMP in 2020, are the equal representation of women and men as subjects of information, the requirement for sources to provide information broken down by gender, and the search for new topics that include not only women, but all women, especially the most vulnerable (Hooks, 2020). Furthermore, in 2024, the departure of Violeta Molina to the EFE agency did not lead to the appointment of a new head of equality at *El Periódico de España*, nor did it happen at *El Periódico* after the resignation of Eva Peruga.

In order to professionally and publicly promote an internal accountability mechanism for equality, the Journalists' Association of Aragon has proposed the creation of a quality seal. This seal would be awarded to the media that demonstrate a genuine commitment to the gender perspective. Its purpose would be to identify those journalistic companies that deal fairly with women and men in their content and that apply internal gender equality policies in their organizational structure (Gallego *et al.*, 2002; Altés, 2000), from hiring processes to editorial decisions, including, for example, the figure of a women equality editor.

The seal would be awarded by journalists' associations and other professional organizations, in cooperation with organizations specializing in human rights and gender, such as UNESCO or the GMMP. This recognition would have a limited validity of no more than two years, which would require periodic evaluations for renewal. This recognition would encourage media companies to review their practices and bring about a cultural change, both at the organizational and editorial levels. It would also have a positive impact not only on their reputation and the perception of their audiences, but also on society in general. The ultimate goal of this initiative would be to contribute to a citizenry with a more pluralistic and equitable view of the world.

In addition to this institutional recognition, we propose concrete and feasible measures to improve the professional reputation of this figure. On the one hand, we recommend the implementation of public awareness campaigns by professional organizations and companies that value journalism with a gender perspective, for example through the organization of forums, panels and congresses that make visible the impact and experience of women gender editors. On the other hand, the design of mandatory training programs on the gender perspective for journalists and media managers, with the aim of reinforcing knowledge on the importance of the gender perspective and promoting collaboration between women gender editors and the rest of the journalistic team.

On the part of academia, research should be encouraged to measure the impact of women gender editors on the quality of reporting and to study good practices implemented by this figure in the Spanish media and in other countries. An analysis of the contents and approaches published since their appointments should be carried out in order to assess the commitment of their companies to gender accountability. At the same time, we propose to study the organizational effect that its implementation has had on the workforces. Specifically, it is proposed to explore the opinions of the management teams and editorial staffs of media that have women gender editors, in order to ascertain the perception of these female journalists regarding the lack of management support and editorial independence. All this will be deepened in the background strategy of the media that have opted for women gender editors.

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