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The perception of women journalists about their job. The gender variable in professional culture

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Abstract

Profession among men and women working as journalists in Spain, and the differences that separate empowered women journalists from empowered men of the sector. **Methodology:** The paper is part of a transnational comparative study based on a questionnaire targeted to a representative sample of journalists from 124 media. The research was completed thanks to data from the financed project from the Government Research Plan I+D+I CSO2016-78187R. **Results:** Women feel more than men all the pressures derived from the pursuit of business profit and feel more compelled by business decisions, censorship, politicians and groups of pressure. The least empowered women show more condescension towards political and economic power, while the minority who breach the glass ceiling gain autonomy (possibly due to their empowerment on digital media). They also advocate impartiality but show less interest for the watchdog role. **Discussion and Conclusions:** Both aforesaid situations could be associated to the need for «enabling conformism» and to the fact that women journalists tend to perceive the qualitative and deontological decline of journalism the least.

Keywords

Empowerment; woman; journalism; gender; Spain; profession.

Contents

1. Introduction and state of the art. 2. Material and methods. 3. Analysis and results. 3.1. Differences between perceptions of women and men journalists about their professional functions and ethics. 3.1.1. Professional roles by gender. 3.1.2. Interferences and recent changes in the journalistic practice. 3.1.3. Perceptions about journalistic ethics. 3.2. Features of journalistic cultures that distinguish empowered women. 4. Discussion and conclusions. 5. List of references.

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1. Introduction

Despite the legislation and policies for promoting gender equality, the progress towards a greater equality of women in the media sector is still slow. The highest positions in the hierarchy of news organizations are still being mainly occupied by men (EIGE, 2013), even though the number of university-graduate women from communication faculties, in Spain for instance, exceeds men in a proportion of 1.7 to 1 (APM, 2015). In this country, regardless it keeps reducing progressively over the years, the pre-eminence of men in managerial positions persists and the percentage of women positioned in the lowest and minor levels of remuneration among the highest positions is also greater (de Miguel & al., 2017; APM, 2015).

These indicators are only some of the arguments that have led several studies about the situation in Spain affirm that the supposed feminization of the journalistic profession is, actually, a fake feminization or pseudo-feminization (Soriano & al., 2005; Rivero & al., 2015). Previous analysis on the state of journalism in Spain confirm that, even though in the academic field there is a confirmed feminization of studies, the practice of the journalism profession maintains a situation of inequality of opportunities and female labour precariousness (Rivero Santamarina; Meso Ayerdi; Peña Fernández, 2015). This is manifested by the fact that women journalists, compared to their male peers, have a higher rate of unemployment (APM, 2015), a greater proportion of temporary contracts, and need to wait longer to achieve labour stability (Gómez Aguilar, 2009). Furthermore, some studies point out to the fact that most of these small number of employment opportunities, promotion and access to positions of responsibility (the latter considered as the great professional barrier of women by journalists) (Gómez Aguilar, 2009) are due to the absence of conciliation policies (Rivero, 2014). This leads to a high rate of abandonment from women who dedicate to the most peripheral sectors of communication or who occupy positions with less visibility (Soriano & al., 2005; Ufarte, 2007; Rodríguez, 2003).

Even so, almost two decades ago, Brescoach et al. (1998: 72) observed progresses towards equality in the most innovative expressions of media (in the incipient digital journalism), where there were opened empowerment opportunities for women as a hopeful sign of a greater hierarchical and retributive equality in the future. This is something that has also been confirmed currently in Spain (de-Miguel & al., 2017: 505).

The so-called «hypothesis of feminization of journalism» (Van-Zoonen, 1998; Soriano & al., 2005) is based on the assumption that the increase in the number of women in the journalistic profession can modify the sociodemographic and hierarchical structure of the collective and, subsequently, the contents and professional practices on media. The reason is that the journalistic culture (as will be defined later) can vary in some respects among female and male journalists. This is known as the «female journalistic empowerment» and we will focus on it.

From all the ingredients of the journalistic culture, perhaps the most evident and visible are those that condition the news production. Up to now, no consensus has been achieved among those who have studied how the inequality of opportunities and the infra-representation in key positions have an influence on routines of news production nor on the opinions and perceptions about the profession. In bibliography, results show a great dispersion. Some studies derived from surveys completed by journalists indicate that the relevance of gender differences is imperceptible in editing aspects (Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig, 2003; Ryan & al., 2008; Ryan & Mapaye, 2010). In other studies, as a result of inferences based on content analysis, the contrary is affirmed, particularly referring to stylistic nuances («feminization of journalism») (Robinson, 2008; Mahtani, 2005; Saitta, 2013) or related to contents.

The news production process starts when the news writer, based on the decisions about agenda planning made by those who are responsible for coordinating the editorial office, elaborates an informative product that must be screened by a head of section, who decides about its suitability. During the stages of the process (production, inclusion and hierarchical organisation), the pyramidal structure of media determines that it is the apex (editors in chief, sub-directors, directors or editors) who determines the value of information, its pre-eminence or its relativization. And it is precisely this managerial elite, mostly composed by men, who decides what is published or what is omitted, which would entail a great disadvantage for women journalists, considering the symbolic androcentrism of the profession. This also generates different perceptions and attitudes towards the profession (for instance, the professional roles or functions both women and men journalists must fulfil), as will be seen later in this paper.

Academic literature about the consequences of the distance of women from the cores of mediatic power, reflects a huge theoretical disorganisation. Among other reasons, Lavie & Lehman-Wilzig (2005) state that the heuristic inaccuracy of this object of study is mainly due to the lack of uniformity of research tools used (mostly surveys and in-depth interviews to female and men journalists, as well as the content analysis of its journalistic production). In addition, there is a research line that combines two apparently contradictory assumptions: that the feminization of the news depends on the greater or lesser presence of women in editorial offices (Djerf-Pierre & Löfgren-Nilsson, 2004; Ross & Carter, 2011; Chambers & al., 2004; Armstrong, 2004; Pinto-Coelho & Mota-Ribeiro, 2009); and that the «female style» is only a collateral effect of the changes journalism has experienced in the past decades, apart from discrimination or the sociodemographic inequalities (De-Bruin, 2000a; van-Zoonen, 1998). On the other hand, there is another research school that aims to unravel the mechanisms operating in gender inequality within editorial offices, based on the analysis of beliefs of female and male journalists about the practice of their profession. In this sense, van Zoonen (1998: 36) has described which are the main four areas of what he calls the «gendered nature of journalism», that affects women in the following way: they are put aside to cover light topics; adopt rather interpretative approaches (most men are fact-oriented); go more often to other women as informational sources; and value to impartiality less and at the same time they are more interested in the needs of the audience.

In this paper we understand «journalistic culture», as follows: «The idea or specific cognition of the female or male journalist on which he or she assesses and organises his or her cultural ideas, through which he or she creates his or her own significant reality that allows to form his or her professional action within collective knowledge» (Hanitzsch, 2007). According to this author, the observation of professional beliefs have resulted in two types of complementary analysis: that of roles or professional functions and that of epistemological perspectives. When they are analysed jointly, the object of research is called «analysis of the professional culture of female and male journalists». In this regard, Hanitzsch & Hanusch (2012: 259-260) detail the differentiating elements of journalistic cultures:

1. Regarding the professional functions, three dimensions of assessment are distinguished: «interventionism», defined as the relevance granted by the journalist, during the performance of his or her work, to the distancing from values (objectivism) or, on the contrary, to the social commitment and involvement (subjectivism); the «distancing from power», understood as the perception that a «watchdog journalism» is performed or, its opposite, an opportunistic, collaborative and loyal journalism («lapdog journalism»); and the «mercantilistic orientation», or the level of compliance to the idea that the journalism is aimed, first and foremost, to attracting audiences.
2. Within the construct of journalistic epistemologies there converge the dimensions related to beliefs established within the profession about journalistic ethics. Namely, the conquering of reality through the empirical method of fact-checking (objectivism) versus the representation that the surrounding world is not apprehensible, and not due to the analytical narration provided with the needed personal values and opinions (subjectivism).

Regarding these two dimensions, Hanitzsch & Hanusch (2012) analysed the subjective perceptions of female and male reporters about their functions across 18 countries (N= 1,800), with the aim of investigating whether gender serves as a determinant factor of the different journalistic cultures. Their conclusions present the following hypotheses that will be explored later in our paper: (1) women journalists tend to be less sensitive towards the needs of the audience than men (in opposition to what is advocated by van-Zoonen, 1998); (2) they value impartiality to a lesser extent than their male colleagues (in the same line as van-Zoonen, 1998); (3) they assume the function of political power surveillance («watchdog journalism») to a lesser extent than men; and (4) grant a greater relevance to subjectivity, analysis and opinion.

All in all, the issues raised by everything seen so far, are as follows:

- P1: What are the differences in the perceptions of both, women and men, about their professional functions?
- P2: What are the differences in the perceptions of both, women and men, about journalistic ethics?
- P3: What beliefs converging in the journalistic cultures, distinguish women and men occupying the highest positions of professional hierarchy?

2. Method

For this study a closed-ended questionnaire was used and completed individually by a representative sample of Spanish journalists. This survey was conducted between 2014 and 2015 thanks to the funding and collaboration provided by Thomas Hanitzsch, Professor of LM Universität München, and the members of the international research team coordinated by him, «Worlds of Journalism Study» (WJS: <http://www.worldsofjournalism.org>). There participate more than 60 countries worldwide, including Spain. This study is part of that project. The research was completed thanks to data from the financed project from the Government Research Plan I+D+I CSO2016-78187R.

In order to design the samples, there were used the data about media coming from the Report of *Asociación de la Prensa de Madrid* [Press Association of Madrid] (2015) and *Agenda de la Comunicación* [Communication Agenda] (Dirección General de Comunicación de la Secretaría de Estado de Comunicación, 2013), and the medium was considered as an aggregated unit. A total of 124 public and private media were selected (television networks, radio stations, newspapers, journals, digital media and news agencies), and they were extracted using a multistage sampling (stratified, clustered and simple randomised). Three journalists from each small-sized medium (less than 100 professionals) and five from large-sized media were randomly selected. The final sample, with an estimated population of 18,000 individuals (N=18,000) in 2014, provided 390 valid questionnaires (n=390), with a confidence of 95% and 5% of error (2 σ). A group of six interviewers conducted the interviews via phone call.

3. Analysis of results

The purpose of the analysis of results presented as follows, is the interpretation of the manifested differences in the perceptions about the journalistic profession identified among men and women practicing as journalists in Spain, as well as the search of the differentiating and similar elements that divide empowered women from empowered men in said sector. In both cases, observation of gender and occupational level was used, not from a static and fixed approach, but from a dynamic one. Thus, we understood that gender is a condition that «might impact» or «become an effect» both in the analysis of inter-gender (among journalists of different gender) as well as intra-gender social relationships (among female journalists, based on their socio-professional status).

3.1. Differences in perceptions about professional functions and ethics

In order to investigate whether there are differentiating nuances between women and men journalists when perceiving their profession, an independent samples T-test to compare means was used. To do so, gender was considered as a reference and the rest of variables of the questionnaire related to professional practice were tested. Four sets of variables that grouped 68 items of the WJS harmonised questionnaire were analysed. First, there were measured the perceptions of female and male journalists about the journalistic roles, understood as the functions that the journalist believes he or she must perform, using the question «how important are for you each of the following aspects of your work» (see Table 1); secondly, the responses of female and male journalists to the statement, «How much influence the following issues or people have on your work», regarding influences or interferences perceived in their labour (Table 4); thirdly, they were asked to express their perceptions on the changes experienced in journalism during the past five years, using the question «to what extent the following

issues have strengthened or weakened in the past five years» (Table 4); and, lastly, they were asked to express their opinion about different aspects of deontological nature (Table 5). After analysing the data, the following results shown in Table 1 were obtained, where only questions having inter-gender significant differences ($p < 0.05$) are shown.

Table 1. Differences between professional functions

Functions	<i>N</i>	Women (Mean)	σ	Men (Mean)	σ	<i>T</i>	<i>D</i>
Convey a positive image of political leadership	386	2.06	0.985	1.70	0.834	3.739***	.39
Support national development	385	3.80	1.127	3.46	1.183	2.809***	.29
Be an adversary of the government	381	2.64	1.266	2.31	1.129	2.624***	.28
Support government policy	382	2.32	1.056	2.04	1.028	2.563**	.27
Provide information people need to make political decisions	387	4.13	0.937	3.86	1.178	2.47***	.25
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	389	2.79	1.161	3.07	1.225	-2.221***	.23
Set the political agenda	387	3.27	1.121	3.04	1.137	1.997*	.20

Variables ranked by effect size (Cohen's *D*). * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

3.1.1. Professional roles by gender

The statistical analysis of the first set of variables, regarding the perceptions about roles or functions performed by female and male journalists, confirms partially the findings of Hanitzsch & Hanusch (2012) [1]. On the one hand, significant differences favouring the male gender are observed in the perceptions of Spanish female and male journalists about the importance that must be granted to news that attract the public the most ($\mu = -0.28$; $t = -2.221$; $p < 0.001$). Like these authors' study, the function of providing a sort of information that reaches the largest audience possible is more characteristic of men and, therefore, it is they who show a greater mercantilistic orientation.

On the other hand, when women are analysed separately, they do not distinguish from male journalists regarding the relevance granted to the function of political and economic power surveillance («watchdog journalism») in their profession. This result rejects the hypothesis of Hanitzsch and Hanusch (2012) about it since, even though female journalists grant a greater importance to the function of opposition to the government ($\mu = 0.33$; $t = 2.264$; $d = 0.28$; $p < 0.000$), it is also true that they understand their labour serves to support national development ($\mu = 0.46$; $t = 2.809$; $d = 0.29$; $p < 0.000$), convey a positive image of political leadership ($\mu = 0.36$; $t = 3.739$; $d = 0.39$; $p < 0.000$), support the

government's public policies ($\mu=0.28$; $t=2.563$; $d=0.27$; $p<0.001$) and set the political agenda ($\mu=0.23$; $t=1.997$; $d=0.56$; $p<0.05$). All these variables are scarcely related to the watchdog function and, when interpreted separately, contradictory between each other. However, in an aggregated form, there are significant differences in the perceptions about the professional practice between genders, and women seem to be more aware of the importance of pleasing the political power (in general) when practicing journalism (Table 2).

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix: perceptions about the functions of the female and male journalists

Perceptions	Components					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Serve as watchman/control of political stakeholders (government)	0.913					
Serve as watchman/ control of economic elites	0.893					
Set the political agenda	0.568					
Provide an analysis about current topics	0.558					
To promote tolerance and cultural diversity		0.812				
Let people express their views		0.717				
Tell stories about the world		0.638				
Provide advice, orientation and direction to citizens for daily life			0.723			
Educate the audience			0.703			
Motivate people to participate in citizen activities and political discussion			0.593			
Provide information citizens need to make political decisions			0.574			
Support government public policies				0.79		
Offer a positive image of political and economic leaders				0.737		
Focus mainly on the kind of news that attracts the largest audience possible						0.698
Provide entertainment and relaxation						0.649
Be a detached observer						0.892
Report things as they are						0.539

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Total Var. Explained:

64.65%

KMO test= 0.729; Chi-square= 1884.896; df= 136; sig.= 0.000 (Bartlett's test of sphericity)

These results confirm the findings of Berganza & al. (2017: 89-90) and we have confirmed them by executing a non-parametric correlation analysis (Kendall's Tau b), between the gender variable and six dimensions of professional roles (Table 3). Therefore, it is possible that women experience to a greater extent the need for that acquiescence towards the political and economic power (eminently masculinized) as an enabling vehicle of status within the medium.

Table 3: Correlations between journalistic and gender roles

Function	Gender
Watchdog	-0.071
Spokesmen of citizens	-0.002
Educate the audience	-0.053
Favour the <i>status quo</i>	-.154**
Entertain the audience	0.073
Disseminate objective information	0.019

**p<0.001; t=3.609; d=0.38

3.1.2. Interferences and recent changes in the journalistic *praxis*

The lack of empowerment in the medium is evidenced when the rest of significant differences among genders of the sample are observed. Leaving aside the beliefs about the informative functions, it is rather noteworthy that it is precisely women journalists who, in addition, are distinguished in their perceptions about the level of interference suffered at work due to issues of mercantile/ advertising nature ($\mu=0.28$; $t=1.979$; $d=0.22$; $p<0.05$), or who notice an increase of this sort of pressures in the past five years to a greater extent ($\mu=0.39$; $t=4.435$; $d=0.48$; $p<0.05$) as well as an editorial shift towards economic benefits and sensationalism ($\mu=0.24$; $t=2.242$; $d=0.25$; $p<0.05$). Furthermore, if we add the fact that women state their work is conditioned to a greater extent by the gaining or maintaining of advertising investment compared to their male colleagues in the editorial office ($\mu=0.28$; $t=1.979$; $d=0.22$; $p<0.05$), as well as by censorship ($\mu=0.33$; $t=2.566$; $d=0.27$; $p<0.05$), by politicians ($\mu=0.28$; $t=2.289$; $d=0.23$; $p<0.05$) and by the groups of pressure ($\mu=0.36$; $t=3.020$; $d=0.32$; $p<0.05$), it could be understood that it is women who mostly perceive all these pressures in their professional practice (Table 4).

These results could support the hypothesis, mentioned earlier, about the reasons that make them point out the importance of condescension towards political and economic powers, whereas they are also the ones who mostly perceive the pressures in that same direction. In this sense, it is worth reminding that, like Ross (2001) states, most journalists are able to notice the culture of manifested masculinity presiding over editorial offices (de-Bruin, 2000b; van-Zoonen, 1998; Melin-Higgins, 2008); or how the prominence of the corporate identity over the professional identity could serve, currently, as counterweight of female empowerment, at the same time as women journalists deploy competition strategies that empower them as «one guy more» (van-Zoonen, 1998) within institutions mostly ruled by men.

In the Spanish context, our results constitute a progress in the research initiated by Berganza, Herrero and Arcila (2016), and Berganza, Arcila and Herrero (2016) about the influences perceived by female and male journalists of the television medium and about the digital media versus conventional press, respectively. In both studies, the main interferences perceived in the informative labour were classified in the following categories according to their greater or lesser magnitude: those related to professional and organizational routines (with greater relevance); economic ones, regarding the pressures derived from the pursuit of profit and, lastly, and less relevant, the interferences by politicians and groups of pressure. The fact that the analysis performed herein shows results that point at that same direction, outstanding the disproportionality of pressures on female journalists, invites to delve into the observation of this phenomenon from an intra-generic perspective that positions the female empowerment as a dependent variable.

Table 4: Interferences and recent changes in the journalistic *praxis*

Influences in the practice of journalism							
Groups of pressure	347	2.43	1.214	2.07	1.045	3.02*	.32
Censorship	389	2.29	1.343	1.96	1.063	2.566*	.27
Politicians	388	2.59	1.255	2.31	1.171	2.289*	.23
Advertising considerations	388	3.09	1.175	2.81	1.265	1.979*	.22
Changes in the profession (past 5 years)							
Profit making pressures	348	4.04	0.992	3.52	1.159	4.345*	.48
Increasing advertising considerations	338	3.78	1.025	3.39	1.175	2.926*	.32
Ethics standards	332	2.08	0.915	2.38	1.025	-2.801*	.31
Credibility of journalism	297	2.12	0.847	2.39	1.048	-2.651*	.28
Pressure towards sensational news	348	4.04	0.992	3.80	0.961	2.242*	.25

3.1.3. Perceptions about the journalistic ethics

However, it seems paradoxical that men recognise to a greater extent that there have been changes in the ethical standards in the past five years ($\mu=-0.30$; $t=-2.801$; $p<0.05$), changes that, in addition, have reduced the credibility of journalism ($\mu=-0.27$; $t=-2.651$; $p<0.05$). See Table 4. The fact that women do not appreciate the qualitative decline in the same way could be due, theoretically, to the uneven

distribution of power inside editorial offices, in the sense that the experiences linked to this deontological deterioration could be more visible from the directive and managerial entities than from intermediate or baseline levels, where most female journalists are positioned. This assumption would be supported by the results obtained within the group of variables specifically related to journalistic ethics (Table 5).

Table 5: Perceptions about journalistic ethics

Journalistic ethics							
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgement	390	1.99	1.11	2.25	1.161	-2.235**	.23
Variables ranked by effect size (Cohen's D). *p<0.05; **p<0.01; p***<0.001							

Considering the hypothesis of Hanitzsch & Hanusch (2012) about the lesser value that women grant to informative impartiality, we observe that it would be invalidated in the Spanish case, since the women analysed do not understand that the behaviours that must guide their profession depend so much on personal judgement just like men do ($\mu=-0.26$; $t=-2.235$; $p<0.01$), as seen on Table 5. This distance from subjectivity connotes a greater observance of the journalistic deontology and, undoubtedly, of impartiality, its main principle. The only variable that could indirectly contribute to confirm the statement of Hanitzsch & Hanusch in 2012 (which states that women grant more relevance to subjectivity, analysis and opinion) is found in a questionnaire item that measures the predisposition of both male and female journalists to provide advice and orientation for daily life and, in this case, there are not significant differences observed by gender either ($d=0.05$; $p>0.05$). Hence, considering our results, Spanish women journalists do not practice a more participant and less objective approach (interventionist), the opposite to what is reported by Hanitzsch & Hanusch (2012), and van Zoonen (1998) & Melin-Higgins (2008) before them.

3.2.Features of journalistic cultures that distinguish empowered women

To investigate whether there are differences in the perceptions about the functions performed and the role assigned to women in journalistic editorial offices, depending on their level of empowerment reached on media, a T-test compared means analysis was used and a post-hoc test of the sample's effect size (Cohen's D), where the hierarchical position was used as group of reference, was done. In this occasion, in order to highlight the differences between those having greater and lesser power in the medium, it has been decided to reduce the hierarchical status to two categories: seniors and the rest of the staff (juniors and baseline positions).

On the other hand, to investigate whether there are differentiating nuances between men and women based on their organizational status, this analysis was replicated in the men's sample ($n=220$) so to identify common and differentiating aspects in the empowerment of both groups.

In table 6 there are results for the four only variables where there are significant differences common to both genders. Besides the disproportion in the number of women in managerial positions (16 women versus 31 men), at first glance it can be observed that there is a clear relationship between the level of

empowerment and the level of decision-related autonomy in editorial offices: the highest the position occupied by women in the organization chart, the greater their autonomy in editorial coordination ($\mu=1.938$; $t=4.978$; $d=1.69$; $p<0.001$), to emphasize on specific aspects of information ($\mu=0.542$; $t=2.618$; $d=0.80$; $p=0.010$) and when selecting the coverage of topics ($\mu=0.578$; $t=2.455$; $d=0.79$; $p=0.015$). When men are analysed separately, the differences between members of the leadership positions and their subordinates show an identical pattern.

Table 6: professional perceptions by professional status and gender

	Position (Women)	N	Mean	σ	<i>d</i>	Diff.(μ)	T	Sig.
Autonomy in the selection of news	Staff	143	3.73	0.927	0.786	-0.578	-	2.455
	Senior	16	4.31	0.479				
Autonomy in the emphasis of aspects of information	Staff	144	3.9	0.808	0.798	-0.542	-	2.618
	Senior	16	4.44	0.512				
Autonomy in editorial coordination	Staff	142	2.94	1.545	1.689	-1.938	-	4.978
	Senior	16	4.88	0.500				
Function of support government policies	Staff	141	2.38	1.060	0.654	0.633	-	2.303
	Senior	16	1.75	0.856				

	Position (Men)	N	Media	σ	<i>d</i>	Diff.(μ)	t	Sig
Autonomy in the selection of news	Staff	199	4.03	0.884	0.511	-0.394	-	2.390
	Senior	31	4.42	0.62				
Autonomy in the emphasis of aspects of information	Staff	199	4.11	0.846	0.932	-0.631	-	4.065
	Senior	31	4.74	0.445				
Autonomy in editorial coordination	Staff	199	3.2	1.507	1.386	-1.573	-	5.765
	Senior	31	4.77	0.425				
Function of support government policies	Staff	196	1.98	1.005	0.404	-0.429	-	2.115
	Senior	29	2.41	1.119				

Therefore, female empowerment in journalism does not differ from the male empowerment in terms of structure except for a single nuance: the variable «function of support government policies». In this case, the orientation of the relationship is inverse between empowered men and women. Senior women journalists differ significantly from the rest of women in the staff in the fact that they think that supporting governments is less relevant compared to women positioned in the lower positions of the organizational chart (μ seniors=1.75; μ staff=2.38; $t=2.303$; $d=0.654$; $p=0.023$); on the other hand, men among organizational leadership positions consider that acquiescence towards governments is more relevant than their subordinates (μ seniors= 2.41; μ staff= 1.98; $t=2.115$; $d=1.386$; $p=0.036$). These results may represent a proof of the pressure towards the «lapdog journalism» suffered by least

empowered female journalists, as noticed when analysin the differences between male and female professional perspectives.

Further still, if the senior and staff groups are considered separately, a more accurate perspective about the distribution of differential power by gender is obtained (table 7).

Table 7: Inter-gender differences by professional status

	Diff. Seniors	<i>d</i> (Seniors)	Diff.Staff	<i>d</i> (Staff)
Autonomy in the selection of news	-0.11	0.198	-0.30	0.331*
Autonomy in the emphasis of aspects of information	-0.32	0.625**	-0.21	0.254
Autonomy in editorial coordination	0.11	0.232	-0.26	0.170
Function of support government policies	-0.66	0.662**	0.40	0.387*

Women in managerial positions have less freedom when deciding what aspects of information must be highlighted ($\mu=-0.32$; $d=0.625$; $p<0.001$) and they have less condescension towards governments than the male leadership positions ($\mu=-0.32$; $d=0.625$; $p<0.001$); in the lower levels of the organizational chart, the differences are manifested in the lack of decision-making autonomy about news coverage ($\mu=-0.30$; $d=0.331$; $p<0.05$), which is more favourable for male reporters; and again, in the support of government policies, which is more relevant as an informative function among female subordinates.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The results of the empirical analysis conducted in the previous section, of exploratory nature, represent a step forward in the generalisation of some of the hypotheses on which the questions formulated in this research are based on.

When the beliefs about the practice of the journalism profession are analysed, together with the perceptions about the roles assigned to women in news production, subtle forms of discrimination show. Spanish women journalists notice to a greater extent than men, the pressures derived from the pursuit of business profit. In addition, they state that their labour as reporters is constrained by business decisions, censorship, politicians and pressure groups.

In fact, it is them who unequivocally manifest a greater condescension towards political and economic power: women journalists, especially the least empowered, are aware of the relevance of pleasing *facto* powers to practice journalism and, perhaps, of how that obeisance determines their status in the context they work in. The minority who break through the glass ceiling (possibly thanks to their empowerment on digital media), on the other hand, gains autonomy, although the male voice still prevails in the agenda setting.

Apart from the perceptions about the roles in the news production, the results obtained contradict some of the hypotheses presented in scientific literature about stylistic differences between genders.

Opposite from what was manifested by Hanitzsch and Hanusch (2012), van-Zoonen (1998) and Melin-Higgins (2008), Spanish journalists advocate the value of informative impartiality and, however, coinciding with said authors, reflect a lesser interest for in the exercise of the watchdog function. Both aforesaid situations could be connected to the need for «enabling conformism» mentioned earlier, although also to the fact that women do not notice as much as men the qualitative and deontological decline of current journalism. Despite recognizing that the information must comply with the principle of objectivity, the general deterioration of quality in the profession is invisible for the intermediate or baseline levels, where women journalists are mostly positioned.

* The survey this article refers to was conducted between 2014 and 2015 thanks to the funding and collaboration from *LM Universität München* (Germany) and the «Worlds of Journalism Study»: <http://www.worldsofjournalism.org>

Dates:

Starting date of research: January 2012

Termination date of research: December 2016

5. Notes

[1] Hanitzsch & Hanusch (2012) express their mistrust towards the findings obtained in their study regarding the transnational sample due to the scarce effect size (Cohen's D), which shows the statistically significant differences. In their opinion, most of these findings could be hardly representative considering that it is a «relatively wide» sample (p. 272). This leads them to control that effect individually by country (n=100), although they do not find a great difference between both types of analysis. On the other hand, our results double, at least, the magnitude of the effect of the gender variable among the statistically significant variables. Apart from the fact that the measure of the strength of association between variables can be conditioned by measures used (ordinal and nominal variables), there is also the possibility that the effect is more stable in our case due to the simple fact that the Spanish sample offers less variability since it represents a more homogeneous population.

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