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The working conditions of media internships: an empirical study

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Abstract

Introduction. This article describes the conditions of interns in media companies and their degree of satisfaction with such conditions. **Methods.** The study is based on a survey conducted in 2015 among all journalism students doing internships in newspapers, radio stations and news agencies in the city of Málaga. Data were subjected to statistical analysis. **Results.** 85% of the interns affirm they systematically work overtime. Their workload is comparable to that of senior professionals. Despite these conditions, satisfaction among interns is high, and it increases when they perceive the company values their overtime. However, interns’ satisfaction diminishes as their experience increases. **Conclusions.** The results question the formative role of internships and indicate that students’ behaviours and attitudes could be explained by their expectations of job placement in the medium.

Keywords

University; news media; internship; students; interns; working conditions, journalists, education.

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1. Introduction

Media internships as part of university degree programme have become consolidated as one of the main routes of access to the journalistic profession. Moreover, media internships have acquired a vital educational role due to the fact that they are carried out at a particularly sensitive time for the development of future information professionals.

The annual reports on the journalistic profession that the Press Association of Madrid (APM, 2006-2011) has produced over the years, reflect the evolution of the number of journalists who have performed internships during their university studies. The comparative analysis has shown that in the first year of the report, only 13.3% of the surveyed journalists had been interns at the medium where they were currently working (APM, 2006). This figure doubled in the last annual report, to 25.9%, that is, almost one of every four active professionals (APM, 2011). In fact, according to the latest report (APM, 2016), up to 93.1% of the senior journalists did internships in at least one media company before reaching their current position.

Internships, as mentioned, are the first contact with the exercise of journalism and a basic tool for learning the profession. Thus, they “form the basis” on which future communicators “configure their view of the world” and “conceive ideas about the profession” (Pestano, Rodríguez Wangüemert and Delponti, 2011: 401-402). In other words, they function as a powerful socialising agent that shapes the novice's identity and system of values (Cotter 2010; Cohen-Scali, 2003). This configuration of the student's journalistic culture, which begins in the classroom (Mellado et al., 2013) and continues in the newsroom (Wu and Weaver, 1998; Zhu et al., 1997), also affects the acceptance of a series of routines and customs (Gravengaard and Rimestad, 2014) and will be key in their long-term professional consolidation (Hall, 1976).

In recent years, interest in internships has significantly increased. The Press Association of Madrid, which studied this phenomenon for the last time in 2010 -when 35.1% of journalists considered that one of the main problems of the profession was that interns ended up replacing paid writers (APM, 2010)- has included once again items related to internships in its annual reports. In one of the most recent reports, the APM (2015) stated that “the working conditions of this group have worsened to some extent”. Around three quarters (77.6%) of young people has carried out work as an intern in a media company, and 68.4% has opted to extend the duration of the initial period established in the internship agreement, despite the fact that only half of respondents received some form of remuneration or stipend for the work performed (APM, 2015, 2016).

In line with the findings of the APM (2015), in recent years a series of news articles have placed the spotlight on the so-called instrumentalisation of internships by companies seeking to replace personnel. *El País* [1], *El Mundo* [2], *ABC* [3] and *Cadena SER* [4], among others, have participated in this denunciation, which in some cases has been settled with the intervention of the Ministry of Employment and Social Security [5]. It was precisely this Ministry which warned, months ago, that the number of interns in Spain had gone from 20,000 to 70,000 between 2013 and 2015, which is a 350% increase in just two years [6].

The implementation of the Bologna Process, which brought into force BA degrees that included internships in the curricula, and especially the Statute of the University Student (RD 1791/2010) and the Royal Decree 1707/2011, which regulates the external academic internships of university students, aimed to further regulate these training activities. Given that the previous legislation dated back to 1981, the “elapsed time” justified the need for a new legislation to further “develop and clarify some of the aspects considered” in the previous decree. These norms established the first distinction between curricular internships (“academic, regulated and supervised”) and extracurricular internships (“voluntary” and “not included in the plans of study”).

Five years after the implementation of the two main regulations responsible for business internships, this research study aims to examine, based on the analysis of the major media companies operating in the city of Málaga, the current state of media internships after the enactment of such measures, as well as the degree of correspondence with the agreements, based on students’ observations and degree of satisfaction with this pre-professional experience.

1.1. State of the art review

There is a low volume of studies that specifically address the figure of the media intern. Usually, interns are considered part of the staff, which is observed holistically in journalism studies, so parameters are rarely extracted specifically for this group. Although so far, this type of approach has allowed us to know certain aspects about interns, in our view, they wrongly consider interns as part of the population of professional journalists when, in fact, they are mostly students at an early stage of their professional socialisation (Cotter, 2010; Gravengaard and Rimestad, 2011).

1.1.1. Dimensions of the phenomenon

Previous studies only allow us to outline the dimensions of this large group. Between 1994 and 1999, the University of the Basque Country generated on its own an average of 200 new interns per year, an abundance of applicants, which provoked that, in certain media companies, the number of students even exceeded the number of hired writers (Cantalapiedra *et al.*, 2000). Years later, Blanco (2005) estimated that the weight of interns in the editorial structure of the media in Spain was between 17% and 20% of the total number of employees, although this figure would also include other professional profiles in precarious employment conditions.

Beyond these data, we could say that the reality in Spain is that the vast majority of journalists has been an intern: between 2007 and 2011, 80% of all journalists associated to the Federation of The Press Associations of Spain (FAPE) acknowledged this fact (APM, 2007, 2011). The figure has remained constant over the years, and the latest published data still highlight this generality: nine of

every ten journalists surveyed by the APM were interns during their university studies (APM, 2016). This situation corresponds to the enormous amount of vacancies that are made available to students at the national level: between May and July 2014, only the Complutense University of Madrid published 1,396 internship vacancies (Ortiz-Sobrino, Peinado-Miguel and Zapata-Palacios, 2014; Pérez-Serrano, Rodríguez-Barba and Rodríguez-Pallarés, 2015).

1.1.2. The figure of the intern

Without a doubt, one of the most important landmarks in the study of this group refers to the conditions in which they carry out their work in the newsroom. On this subject -which will be addressed later- it is necessary to make some precisions. The intern is currently a figure regulated in the Royal Decree 592/2014, of 11 July. In no way is the intern part of the workforce of a news medium: it is a student, who cannot even be given the title of *apprentice or employee in internship*, which would require an employment contract in accordance to our labour legislation, nor can be given attributed dual nature of the *student-employee* type. In short, the intern is just a student.

As we will see in this article, the scientific literature warns us of the improper use of the figure of the intern by the media. However, in its denunciation the literature uses - in our view - concepts which lead to confusion over the nature of the figure of the intern. For example, these studies refer to the hours dedicated by students as “working time”, and describe the “working conditions” of interns when there is no working relationship between the students and the media company where they develop their internship.

Both the Royal Decree 1707/2011, of 18 November, and the specific regulations of universities – hence exemplified by the case of the University of Málaga - make it clear that internships in no way “will derive in obligations typical of an employment relationship, nor their content can give way to the replacement of the job benefits that are characteristic of job positions” (RDL 592/2014, 11 July: 60.503; University of Málaga, 2014a: 2). Likewise, with regards to extracurricular internships, which is the main object of our study, the legislation makes provision for the monthly payments labelled as scholarship or study aid, but these payments “in no way case will be considered as remuneration or salary for the work carried out because there is no contractual relation” (2014: 8).

1.1.3. Conditions of the internship agreements

In relation to interns’ shifts and timetables and their compatibility with the rest of the academic activities, 2011 saw the publication of what is perhaps the most relevant decree, insofar as most of its content continues current and has served as a basis for the successive regulations drafted afterwards by different universities. The Royal Decree of 1707/2011 of 18 November, updated the Decree of 1981. It included new articles like article 5.2, which stipulates that the timetables “*will be [7] compatible with the academic and formative activities (...) developed by the student at the university*”, although there must exist “prior communication, in advance to the collaborating agreement”, to avoid possible collisions of interests. This aims to protect the rights of the student without causing harm to the companies that train them.

In addition, the Decree set the rights and obligations of the student who must follow the instructions of the tutor assigned by the company -always going through the filter of the “academic supervisor”

(*responsable académico*), whose figure was already introduced in 1981 as the person responsible for the student- and “report any incidents”, “meet the timetable” and “respect the operation norms” of the media company. The most relevant tasks include “maintaining confidentiality with regards to the internal information of the host company and keeping professional secrets of their activities during and after the internship”, as well as behaving to “safeguard the good name of the University”.

The Royal Decree of 1707/2011, of 18 November, was complemented three years later with the Royal Decree 592/2014, of 11 July. However, it apparently only corrected some formalities, leaving intact most of the text. Some articles suffered some changes, but they were decisive for the development of internships or at least to introduce relevant clarifications. Article 5.2 from the previous decree established that “in all cases *efforts will be made* to make timetables compatible with the academic, educational and representation and participation activities developed by students at the university”. The term “will be” is replaced with “efforts will be made”. This formula is repeated in other articles such as article 17.2: “in the organisation and development of internships *efforts will be made* so that they involve the least economic strain for students”.

The duration of the extracurricular internship, for example, in the case of the University of Málaga (2014b: 6), ranges from two to six months, although it can be extended up to nine months. The distribution of the internship timetable is established in accordance with the characteristics and availability of the media company. The regulation recommends no more than five hours a day or 100 hours per month, being the media companies who distribute the working hours and publish the start and end of a workday. The medium should pay a minimum of 360 euros per month in the case of this university.

In the only analysis performed so far on internship offers, Ortiz-Sobrinó, Peinado-Miguel and Zapata-Palacios (2014) and Pérez-Serrano, Rodríguez-Barba and Rodríguez-Pallares (2015) found out that most of the offers issued by the Complutense University of Madrid established a duration of two to four months with a workload of four to seven hours a day, five days a week. Students would receive around 200 euros per month during the duration of the agreement, even though the provisions across different media were very uneven.

The Spanish model of internships is in some respects similar to those of other Western societies. The crisis of the print media triggered the use of interns in the newsrooms and has put them in a delicate position (Perlin, 2012). In Germany, students “work a larger number of hours in irregular shifts, often for less money, while trying to build up a reputation” (Gollmitzer, 2014: 834), although the amounts are not specified. Salamon (2015: 446) detects this same situation in Canada and provides specific figures: while one sector is particularly hurt and receives no remuneration for the internship, other sectors perceive up to 2,000 dollars per month, which are considered “insufficient financial support for interns”. The author, in fact, adopts a critical perspective even towards the scholarships of 1,150 dollars per week that are usually granted by some media during the summer to cover for the absences of senior professionals (Salamon, 2015).

In other countries, like Denmark, students do 1.5 year-long internships. As part of the internship, students carry out a series of tasks almost “identical” to those carried out by journalists on the payroll and therefore receive a “salary” of 2,700 euros per month (Gravengaard and Rimestad, 2014: 81).

After this stage as interns, students return to the university with the skills and knowledge they acquired to complete the last year of their studies.

1.1.4. The empirical study of media internships

After having analysed the relationship between the host institution (media company) and the intern, and the conditions laid down by the law and the offers published by universities, it is time to review the problems detected by scholars in the operation of media internships.

At the end of the 1990s, a research study focused on Basque journalists detected three very relevant obstacles (Cantalapiedra, Coca and Bezunarte, 2000):

First, the breach of the conditions of the internship. Interns' workday exceeded the agreement. Second, the responsibility and workload given to interns was similar to those given to a journalist on the payroll, to the detriment of the formative development of students. Third, the instrumentalisation of this figure by media companies to cut costs in human resources, by replacing professionals with interns, which has been considered a "real working fraud" by the authors (Cantalapiedra, Coca and Bezunarte, 2000: 169).

There are no empirical studies that allow us to generalise these findings to the whole of the Spanish territory during the 1990s. However, it seems that it was the case. In fact, over the next decade there were two studies that confirmed quantitatively and qualitatively the persistence of the dysfunctions noted in different parts of the Spanish geography (Blanco, 2005; Lamuedra, 2007).

The work carried out by Blanco (2005) for the Press Association of Madrid pointed out that more than two-thirds of the interns surveyed in Málaga (n=40) admitted breaching (by excess) the timetable established in the agreement by more than three hours. A similar percentage perceived "labour abuse" by the media company. The study also tried to document how the companies' instrumentalisation of the internships: 87.5% of surveyed interns said that, in practice, they performed the functions of a writer (Blanco, 2005).

Lamuedra's study (2007) detected similar impressions in the analysis of the oral testimonies of the evaluation sessions and written memoirs of journalism students (n=100) of the Carlos III University of Madrid, who had completed their degree programme's curricular internships. According to Lamuedra's analysis, the transgressions to the work timetable and functions attributed to interns end up generating malpractice among students (e.g. lack of fact checking and manipulation). Even worse, throughout the internships, interns gradually interiorised a legitimising discourse of the "vices of journalism" at the expense of the journalistic principles taught at the university (Lamuedra, 2007: 207).

The academia has also been critical of the role played by the university. Here it is necessary to remember that, in the various regulations, schools become responsible for "guaranteeing the normal development of internships, quality assurance and, when appropriate, the adoption of measures to achieve their objectives" (University of Málaga, 2014: 1). However, Udías (2006: 4) considered that the agreement was an "academic loophole that serves as a strainer for anomalies". Lamuedra (2007: 204) admitted that the labour absurdity had "the permission of the university", while Pérez-Serrano, Rodríguez-Barba and Rodríguez-Pallares (2015: 211), after analysing more than one thousand

internship offers in companies, demanded the real implementation of “supervision and quality control systems” to prevent “unpaid work disguised as an agreement with an education centre”. The latest report of the Press Association of Madrid (APM, 2016: 28) pointed out that 4 of every 10 associates doing internships “did not have a tutor during their internship, which undoubtedly constitutes an irregularity”.

In short, based on the review of the literature (Cantalapiedra et al., 2000; Blanco, 2005; Udías, 2006; Lamuedra, 2007; Ortiz-Sobrino, Peinado-Miguel and Zapata-Palacios, 2014; Perez-Serrano, Rodríguez-Barba and Rodríguez-Pallares, 2015), we can highlight three negative consequences derived from the performance of internships in media companies during the last fifteen years:

1. The adulteration of the labour market, which damages the quality of the journalistic work.
2. The decrease in the quality of the journalistic product itself.
3. The inappropriate learning, the acceptance of vices and malpractice in the students doing internships.

1.1.5. Interns’ point of view

Despite the irregular operation of internships, the various works that collected students’ opinions towards them have reached similar results: ‘interns’ are satisfied with the internship experience. 97% of the journalists surveyed by the Press Association of Madrid valued internships positively (APM, 2007-2010). What are the causes?

After analysing the scientific literature, we can pinpoint several reasons:

1. Internships are a real means of accessing the labour market. As seen, about four of every five currently-employed journalists completed an internship, and, one out of three did the internship in the same medium they currently work for (APM, 2006-2011). In this context, students stand situations of insecurity, probably, motivated by promises of “a payroll and a stable job” at a prestigious media company (Segarra et al., 2012: 45).
2. By doing an internship in a journalistic company, students feel they fulfil their need for professional practice, which is an area that has been shown to be insufficiently attended during the study programme. In fact, the lack of practical content in the study programme was the most mentioned (34%) negative aspect among journalists who graduated in four different decades (Gómez Calderón and Roses, 2013), while the students of five Spanish universities that had done internships in media companies valued worse the journalism degree programmes that did not include internships in their curricula (Humanes and Roses, 2014).
3. Students feel “proud” and “motivated” when they assume the responsibilities, workload and timetables of a senior professional, even when knowing that this is not their responsibility, since they experience “the sensation of occupying the position of a real writer” (Lamuedra, 2007: 206-208).

1.2. Objectives and hypotheses

After making clear the relevance of the phenomenon under study, the guidelines established by the agreements and the findings of previous empirical studies, in order to expand the knowledge of this phenomenon, it is important to consider the following research objectives and hypothesis:

O1. Describe the work timetables of interns and extract a general idea of how their workday develops in the media, with the ultimate goal of checking to what extent it conforms to pre-established agreements and the very concept of internship, understood as a supervised training activity.

O2. Determine whether the number of news pieces written by students in an internship day can be equated with the work developed by a senior writer with a full-time contract in Spain, which generally amounts to five or more journalistic pieces per day (Túñez and Martínez Solana, 2014), and hence whether interns end up becoming substitutes for employees.

O3. Measure the levels of overall satisfaction of students performing internships and, as a differential variable, their satisfaction with the conditions of the internships.

O4. Determine whether there are significant differences in the variables concerning the situation and the conditions of the internship based on independent variables such as the characteristics of the host medium, the area of work or conceptions of interns.

Based on the previous objectives, we have formulated the following hypotheses:

H1) Most students do split-shift and many-hour-long internships that in a considerable proportion of cases exceed the time initially established for an educational activity.

H2) In this sense, it is expected that, based on the number of hours, the type of timetable and the number of pieces written daily, the work carried out by an intern ends up practically substituting that of a consolidated professional, especially during the summer holidays (the time of the survey), when the medium tends to have a smaller number of active personnel.

H3) Finally, it is likely that interns, despite feeling certain disaffection with the conditions of the internships at the host company, end up valuing positively the internship experience, among other reasons, because they believe it is an opportunity for job placement in the medium in question.

2. Methods

This study adopts a quantitative methodological approach based on a survey and its statistical analysis.

The sample for this study is composed of all students doing internships during July and August in the main media companies in Málaga. It is, therefore, a purposive non-probabilistic sample of the universe of interns in media companies in Spain. However, purposive sampling is commonly accepted in exploratory studies dealing with novel subjects (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 1998) and measuring correlation between variables (Wimmer and Dominick, 1996; Hayes, 2005).

In any case, Málaga has a series of characteristics of interest for the study. First, the media ecosystem is varied, with representation of the main national media groups and all platforms. Second, it has two universities that offer journalism degrees with their corresponding internships: the public University of Málaga and the private Autonomous School of Business Administration (EADE). The University of Málaga is, along with the University of Seville, the only public institution offering journalism degrees in Andalusia, which attracts students from the entire community. Finally, the number of newsrooms in Málaga is considerably similar to that of other regional and provincial capital cities and is in line with its total population (it has the sixth largest population in Spain).

The selection of the news media companies is based on the main indicators that determine their number of visits on the web, as well as the audience volume (Comscore, 2015, 2016; AIMC, 2015, 2016; OJD, 2015, 2016). All of them are, currently and at the time of the survey, in the top positions of the aforementioned indicators. The nine media outlets include radio stations, newspapers and news agencies. Television stations were left out of the study: in the case of the national and regional stations because they do not incorporate interns during the months of study; and in the case of the local TV stations because they do not meet the audience criteria and do not belong to a media group with representation in other territories, which prevents us from comparing them with other provinces. All companies in the sample operate in the traditional and online environments and, despite being local, they belong to national or regional communication groups (PRISA, A3Media, Vocento and Unidad Editorial, among the most important). The identity of the participating media companies and students, as in Lamuedra's work (2007), is not revealed to protect their confidentiality.

The selected population of media interns stands at 38, according to the census carried out after contacting members of the media organisations. The study only took into account those students who had to write information pieces as part of their production routines, and thus excluded those who did not perform the most purely journalistic function of the profession (photographers, news site designers, editors, technicians, etc.). The study did not distinguish between students doing extracurricular and curricular internships (voluntary and obligatory) nor between their universities of origin. The questionnaire was given to all those who met the criteria, getting a response rate of 86% (n=33). Questionnaires were delivered via electronic media. The field work was carried out in the first two weeks (3 to 13) of August 2015, to give students at least one month to adapt themselves to the routines of the host medium and form an idea of their role in it (many of them started the summer internship on 1 July).

The design of the questionnaire, the methodological tool used to measure the conditions of the internship and the degree of satisfaction, took into account the contributions of previous questionnaires used for this purpose, including the one created by the Press Association of Madrid (2005-2014), the Sociological Research Centre (2010, 2014), Weaver (1998), Andrés Rodríguez (2003), Lim (2013) and Túniz and Martínez Solana (2014). The rest of the variables that were excluded in previous studies were operationalised *ad hoc*. The most relevant variables of the study are the following:

- Internship experience time. Refers to the time in the current medium and the cumulative total time, in number of months (1=less than three months; 2=three to six months; 3=six months to one year; 4=one to two years; 5=two to four years; 6=more than four years).

- Income level in the current company. Students were asked to disclose the amount of money they received per month (1=nothing; 2=1 to 100 euros; 3=101 to 200 euros; 4=201 to 300 euros; 5=301 to 400 euros; 6=401 to 500 euros; 7=501 to 600 euros; 8=over 600 euros).
- Shift type. Classified in two categories (1=split shift; 0=continuous shift).
- Time dedicated to internship. Measured in number of hours a day.
- Frequency of overtime. Measured ordinally (6=every or almost every day; 5=several times a week; 4=at least once a week; 3=once a month; 2=less frequently; 1=never).
- Number of written pieces. Total number per day.
- Level of satisfaction. In general terms and with the conditions of the internship (0=very dissatisfied; 10=very satisfied)
- Attitudes towards overtime. Based on the degree of agreement to the following statements, with a five-point scale (1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree): “I work overtime”; “My company values positively my overtime”; “It is legitimate for my company to require me to work overtime”; and “I understand my company requires me to work overtime”.

The questionnaire also investigated demographic variables and others relating to the characteristics of the medium. The questionnaire was pilot tested by a focus group of journalism students who had done the same type of media internships.

It should be noted that some of the variables outlined in this study, such as the number of hours dedicated to the number of written pieces, have been previously analysed from the point of view of the professional routines (Autor1 and Autor2), to try to understand the implications of these routines in the evolution of the profession and the professional profiles on demand. On the other hand, this work adopts an eminently work-focus approach that aims to assess the situation and conditions of the internship, and therefore has a number of original variables that allows us to contextualise the obtained data to a greater extent.

The data extracted from the survey was debugged and subsequently statistically analysed with SPSS.

3. Results

3.1. Description of the sample

Of the surveyed students, 60.6% were men and 39.4% were women. The average age was 23, with a standard deviation of 2,136 and a mean of 22. The minimum age was 20 and the maximum was 29, although both ages were represented only by one student each. The age of the bulk of respondents ranged between 21 and 25.

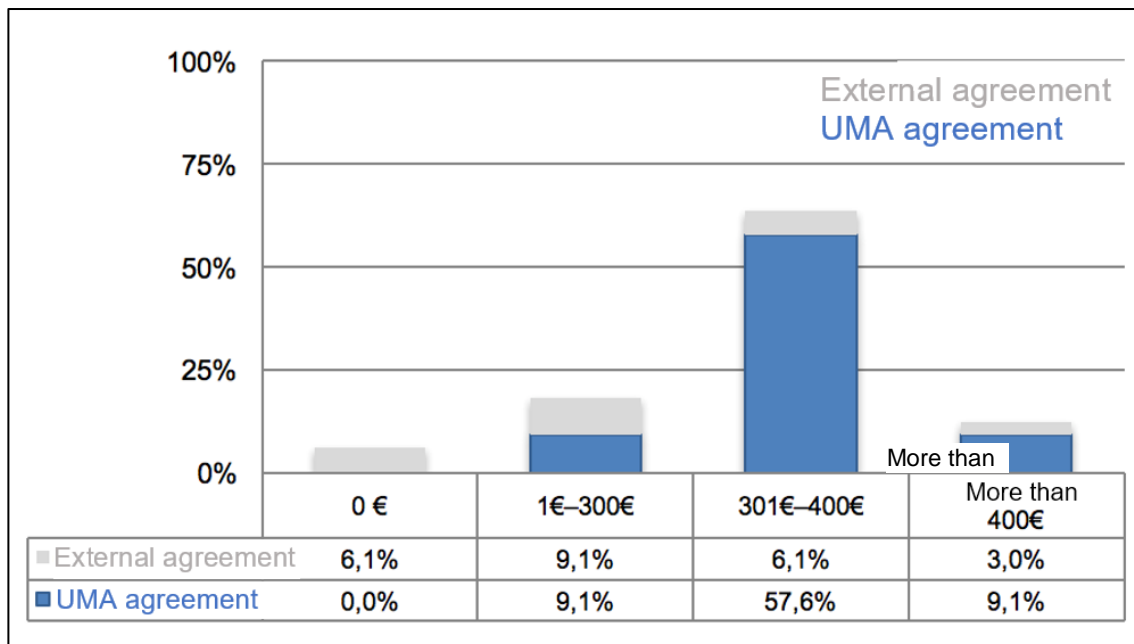
More than half of the students in internships (51.6% of the total) had already obtained their BA degree in 2014 and 2015 (27.3%) or were a few credits away from obtaining it (24.3%), which may reflect the desire to not finish the studies to be able to continue doing internships. Of the remaining students, 24.3% had completed the fourth year of the degree programme, 18.2% had concluded the third year, and 6.1% had completed their master degree. 78.8% of the surveyed students were linked with the University of Málaga.

Most interns were linked to print media companies (57.5% of the total). Radio occupied the second place with 24.2% of students, while news agencies were in third place with 18.2%. 57.6% of the

respondents regularly worked in the same section in the newsroom, being Local the most common (76.5%), above Culture (32.4%) and Sports (20.6%). Therefore, 42.4% performed tasks in two or more sections.

With regards to the amount of money received, most students (63.6%) received between 301 and 400 euros each month for their internships. After this range, the most common amounts, although in a much smaller proportion, were: ‘201 to 300 euros’ (15.2%), ‘401 to 500 euros’ (9.1%) and ‘zero income’ (6.1%). Within the University of Málaga, the number of students who received between 301 and 400 (9.1%), which covers the amount established in the agreement, and the number of students who performed unpaid internships, which are characteristic of external agreements, is the same (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Amount received as scholarship



Source: Authors’ own creation based on survey to interns in Málaga

A large proportion of surveyed students were undertaking the first period of internship within the current company, since 70% had accumulated three months or less of internship time in that medium. The internship time of the rest ranged from three months to one year. The analysis of the total internship time indicates a more proportionate distribution: although the student with three months or less of experience was predominant (27.3% of cases), the difference is barely perceptible in comparison to those who had performed internships for three to six months (24.2%), one and two years (21.2%) and six to twelve months (18.2%). In any case, it is observed that three of every four students had undertaken more than one internship, since they usually do not extend beyond three months.

In essence, the summary of the means provides the following prototypical profile of the respondent: a male aged 22 to 23 years, who had just graduated at least one year ago –or were just a few credits

away from graduating— from the University of Málaga, perceived financial support of 301 to 400 euros, located in the Local section of a small newspaper that belong to a national media group.

3.2. Conditions of internship

Our first objective (O1) is to describe the types of timetables and workdays experienced by interns to determine to what extent they conform to the pre-established agreements and to the very concept of internship, understood as a supervised training activity.

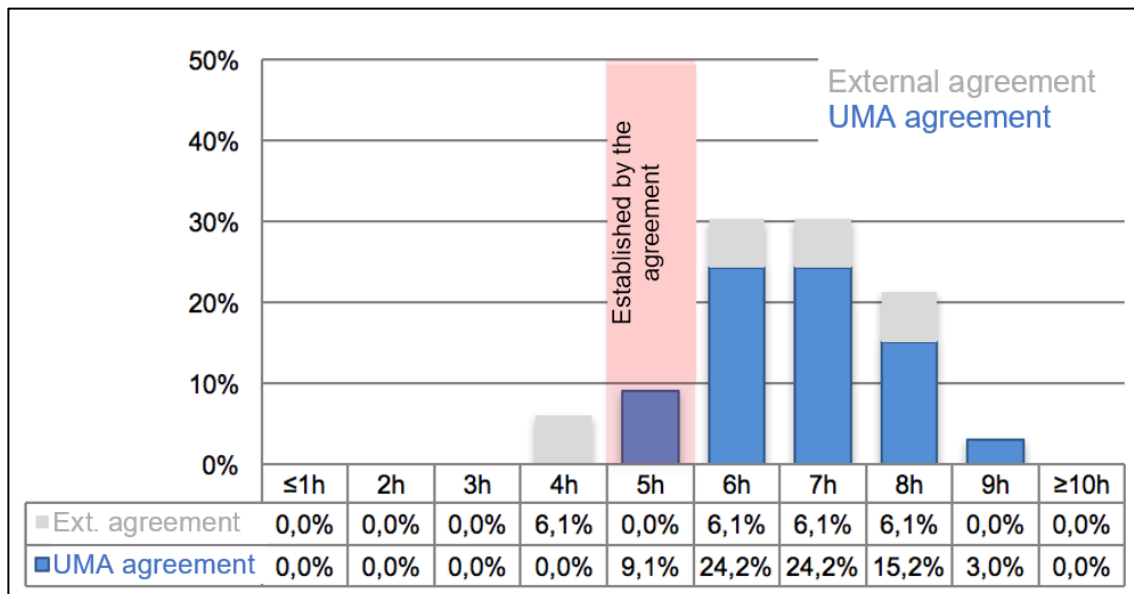
In view of the data, most students (57.6%) had split shifts -i.e., they worked both in the morning and the afternoon-, while the rest claimed to work only during the morning or the afternoon depending on the shift agreed upon with their company. The morning or afternoon shift was common in radio (62.5%) and above all in newspapers (68.4%). On the other hand, only one student had a morning and afternoon shift in news agencies. There was no apparent correlation between the number of writers and the shift type of interns in the same company, although there was a correlation with the total number of interns: split shifts were more common in companies that hired three or more interns, while continuous shifts (either morning or afternoon) were more common in media companies that hire a lower number of interns.

In any case, almost four of every five students claimed to have a flexible timetable in their workday, with the possibility of adapting the hours - either to reduce them or increase them. Only 21.2% of the surveyed students had start and end hours that could be considered fixed. In radio and print media flexible schedules were predominant, while in news agencies both types were common. There were no clear patterns with regards to the type of hours and size of the company or the number of interns.

With respect to the number of hours devoted to internships, the average is 6.61 hours per day, more than 1.5 hours above the 5-hour standard set by the University of Málaga (2014). 81.8% of the students claimed to work over the time established in the agreement. The standard deviation is one hour and 12 minutes. The mean is located between six and seven hours (30.3% of the cases in each of the ranges, i.e., 60.6% of the total in both cases), followed by the equivalent of the full eight-hour workday (21.2%). There were very few cases that establish the minimum (four hours) and maximum (nine hours) of the complete series. These results also indicate that 85% of students devoted more than the five hours stipulated by the agreement of the University of Málaga. In addition, if we limit the results only to the students who performed their internships through the University of Málaga, it turns out that only 12% of students devoted the stipulated five hours; while all others worked over time (see Figure 2). In the cases of students who spent around four hours a day, they performed their internships through other external entities and received a remuneration of 201 to 300 euros. This results contrast with the finding that four of every five students considered that they work over the stipulated time.

The average number of hour was 6.95 in the written press, 6.13 in radio and 6.17 in news agencies. However, in the light of the results of the comparative analysis of means, there were no statistically significant differences. There were no significant differences depending on the size of the company, the placement section, the number of interns per company, income level, sex or age.

Figure 2. How many hours do you usually dedicate to the internship per day?



Source: Authors' own creation based on survey to interns in Málaga

Along the same line, the results of the survey show that 30.3% of students in internship stated that they worked over the time established every day or almost every day, and that 42.4% worked overtime several times a week. Of the remaining 27.3%, those who work overtime at least once a week (9.1%) or once a month (another 9.1%) predominate over those who work overtime less frequently or never work overtime (both with a single case). There were statistically significant differences according to media platform [Welch's $F(2, 10.95) = 4.67, p < 0.05$]: radio interns worked overtime more frequently ($M=3.63$) than news-agency interns ($M=5.60$), being these differences statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) based on the data obtained with Dunnett's Post Hoc Tests. This could imply, observing the mean differences, that timetables are more stable in radio companies but that they exceed the preferable number of hours, while in news agencies there are longer workdays that widely exceed the recommended hours. There are no differences with regards to other independent variables such as sex, year of study or age, size of the newsroom, section, number of interns in the same media company or the type of internship agreement.

Thus, when asked about their degree of agreement with the statement "I work over the stipulated time" on a scale of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), 81% completely agreed with this statement ($M=4.03, DT=1.03$). Direct correlations were established with Spearman's rho between this variable and the size of the company ($r_s = 0.46, p < 0.01$), the number of interns in the newsroom ($r_s=0.44, p < 0.05$) and the internship experience ($r_s = 0.36, p < 0.05$). This indicates that, paradoxically, the bigger the size of the newsroom and the number of interns in the newsroom, the greater is students' degree of agreement with the statement "I work over the stipulated time". Considering the fact that there were no real but only apparent differences in the number of hours depending on the size of the medium, this could mean that the interns in larger media companies believe that they work overtime to a greater extent than their counterparts from smaller media companies, or perhaps

that media companies with less staff have a closer contact that alleviates interns' impression of working overtime.

Likewise, interns' perception that the terms of the agreement are being violated increase as their internship time increases, which could be associated with the burnout syndrome (Reinardy, 2011), which starts in this pre-professional stage and increasing as endemic among senior journalists (Monteiro, Marques Pinto and Roberto, 2015). While the average score seemed to indicate that newspaper interns agreement with the statement to a greater extent ($M=4.4$) than new-agency interns ($M=4.0$) and radio interns ($M=3.1$), Welch's F was not significant, so we would have to assume that there are no statistical differences across the different types of media companies.

On the other hand, when asked for their degree of agreement with the statement "my company values that I work overtime", on a scale of 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree), students agreed on average ($M=3.37$, $DT=0.94$). However, 43.8% of respondents indicated some degree of conformity with the statement, while only 9.4% expressed disagreement. Due to the low variance in responses, we found no statistical differences or associations with other variables from this block.

3.3. Workload

The second objective of this work (O2) is to determine whether the number of journalistic pieces written by interns per day is close to or same as the number written by senior journalists with full-time contract, who normally write around five pieces per day, according to Túñez and Martínez Solana (2014). This would imply that interns would be subject to the same workload as senior journalists.

According to the collected data, more than half of the surveyed students wrote more than three pieces of information each day, while the remaining 47% wrote one or two ($M=2.72$, $DT=1.27$). These figures would apparently indicate that the workload assigned to interns is lower than the one assigned to senior journalists. However, if we establish a relationship of proportionality based on the stipulated working hours (five in the case of students and eight in the case of professionals), we observe that students who write three or more pieces per day (53% in our study), are subjected - proportionally to their work time- to the same workload as a staff journalist.

Data also shows that the workload of interns is directly correlated with two variables: internship experience ($r_s= 0.35$), $p<0.05$) and the frequency of overtime ($r_s=0.40$, $p<0.05$). This indicates logically that the longer the experience accumulated in successive internships the larger the number of pieces written by interns. In addition, the workload is correlated with the frequency with the frequency of overtime, which suggests that students who write a larger number of pieces are those who work more hours a day. Students with a total of three or less months of internship experience produce in average 2.22 pieces per day; those with three to six months of experience, 2.38; those with half to two years of experience, 3.00; and two to four years of experience, 5.00. As we can deduce, students who perform internships for more than six months begin to assume a workload similar to that of professional journalists in proportion to the duration of their workday.

However, there were no statistically correlation between the number of pieces and other variables such as the type of medium, its size, number of interns in the newsroom, interns' sex, completion of studies or the amount paid they receive monthly for the internship.

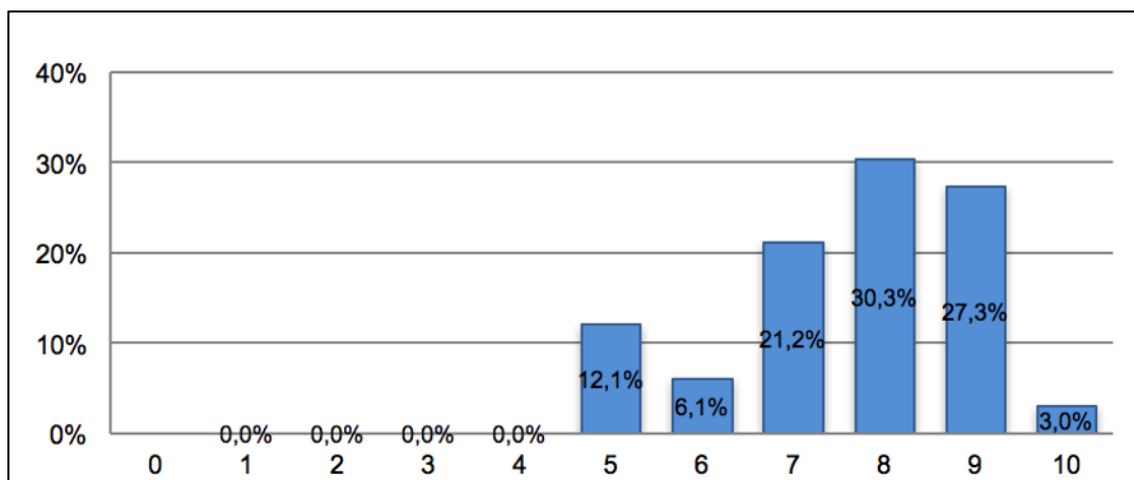
45.5% of the surveyed students usually have one hour or less to write each piece, one-third of the interns has between one and two hours for each piece, and the remaining 21% may spend more than two hours on each piece. According to the data, the greater the number of pieces written in a normal workday, the lower the time given to students to write them ($r_s = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). In summary, there are two profiles: one of an intern who is more inexperienced, with a lower news production, who devotes more time to each piece of information and often exceeds with less regularity the timetable, and other of a more experienced intern, which produces information pieces more quickly and more frequently works over the time established in the agreement.

3.4. Degree of satisfaction

The third objective of the article (O3) is to measure interns' degree of satisfaction with internship and, specifically, with the conditions under which it is developed.

The average score of satisfaction with the internship was 7.64 (DT=1.37) on an 11-point scale (minimum satisfaction=0; maximum satisfaction=10) (Figure 3). No of the students rated their satisfaction below five -which stands as the minimum score in 12.1% of cases-. The most common assessment was 8 (30.3% of the total), followed immediately by 9 (27.3%).

Figure 3. In general terms, how satisfied are you with the internship?



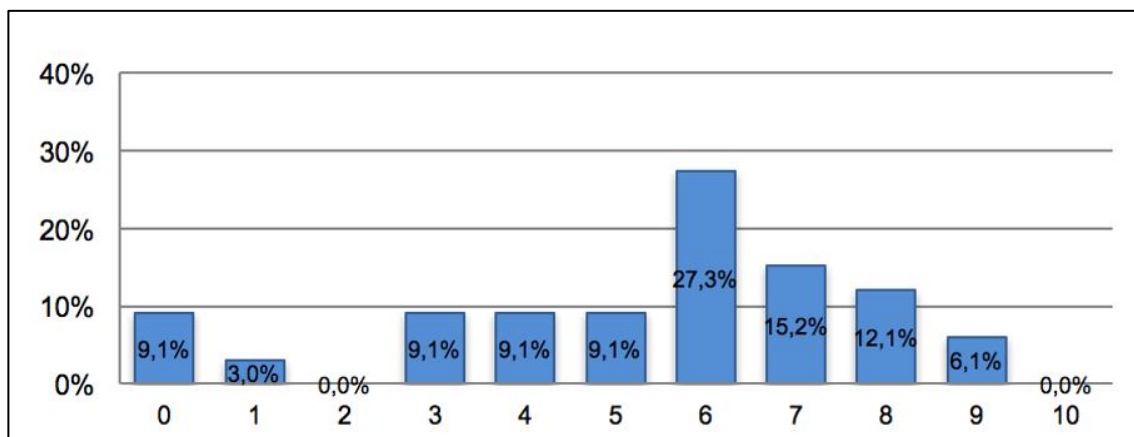
Source: Authors' own creation based on survey to interns in Málaga

The ANOVA showed statistically significant differences according to the type of media company in which internships were performed [$F(2,30)=7.33$, $p < 0.05$]. Tukey's HSD test indicated that the students who performed their internship in radio companies were more satisfied ($M=8.7$) than newspaper interns ($M=7.4$) and news-agency interns ($M=6.8$), and that these differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, the average satisfaction of interns in newspapers and news agencies was not statistically different.

On the other hand, we found a direct correlation between the overall satisfaction with the internship and the satisfaction with the conditions of the internship ($r_s= 0.46$, $p<0.01$), that is, the greater the satisfaction with the conditions, the greater the general satisfaction. Interestingly, the overall satisfaction with the internship is also directly correlated with the perception that “my company values when I work over the stipulated time” ($r_s= 0.38$, $p<0.05$). Thus, when students perceive that the company appreciates their sacrifice and their overtime they also feel more satisfied.

The results about interns’ satisfaction with the conditions of the internships are certainly worse. Although only 30% of all students gave a failing grade to their situation, the average satisfaction falls more than two points to 5.33, with a standard deviation of 2.50 points. The mean stands 6, followed by 7 and 8 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. In general terms, are you satisfied with the conditions under which the internship is performed?



Source: Authors’ own creation based on survey to interns in Málaga

Satisfaction with the conditions of the internship decreases as the internship experience time increases: going from 7.22 among students with a total of three months or less of internship experience to 4.50 among those who have six to twelve months of internship experience, and to 0.50 among those with two to four years of experience. We found a statistically significant correlation in this regard ($r_s=-0.55$, $p<0.01$).

Apparently, women were significantly less satisfied with the conditions of their internships (4.92) than men (5.60), although we found no statistical significance. According to the assessment of the conditions, radio remained in first place (6.50) followed by news agencies (5.17) and newspapers in last place (4.90) despite being in second place in overall satisfaction. Again, the assessment of the situation seemed to be considerably worse among interns from the largest companies (3.33 in companies with more than 50 members) than in the interns from the smallest companies (6.19), with the rest in intermediate stages. However, none of these cases was significant in statistical terms.

Undoubtedly, there is a significant correlation ($r_s=-0.48$, $p<0.01$) between working overtime and the degree of satisfaction with the conditions of the internship: the more interns work overtime, the lower their degree of satisfaction. Despite this, it can be said that students’ assessment of the

internships is, in general, positive. The reasons to understand the fact that the long and intense workdays of internships do not necessarily imply a negative assessment may be, again, that 42.4% believe that their company values positively their overtime, against only 9.1% of students that differs from this premise -most of the remaining students move in the spectrum of indecision-. Therefore, there are statistically significant correlations between both types of satisfaction -with work and the working conditions- and the feeling of being appreciated in the company ($r_s=0.38$, $p<0.05$).

On the other hand, only 27.3% of the students stated that they understand that their medium required them to work overtime for the sake of the company, against 60.6% of students who disagreed with this idea. Finally, 81.8% of students considered that it is illegitimate to require interns to work overtime, while in two cases, students agree with companies requiring interns to work overtime.

4. Conclusions

Our research results allow us to identify through the case study of the city of Málaga the most common habits and attitudes in relation to internships that, according to the existing scientific literature, seem to be extended in the Spanish media.

The first hypothesis (H1), which expected internships to involve considerably long workdays and to exceed the provisions of the agreements -even up to seven and eight hours in most cases- is supported by the data. Interns work over the time established in the regulations almost every day in most newsrooms, regardless of the news platform. The cases in which the timetable recommended by the agreements is respected are exceptional. In this sense, it is striking that 85% of the surveyed students work more hours than the number recommended by the agreement of the University of Málaga. The breaches identified by Blanco ten years ago (2005) do not appear to have been resolved.

Despite the intensity of this type of workdays, you could say that the second hypothesis (H2) -which proposed that, in practice, the work of an intern ends up replacing the work of a consolidated professional- is partially refuted, since the length of shifts and the number of pieces written per day, in general, are not equivalent to those of consolidated professionals. One in four students works or exceeds the eight working hours established in the current job contract: it is a very high proportion but cannot be compared to the workload of senior professionals. This does not mean, logically, that the content of internships fulfils their eminently formative role: the current state of internships in media companies and news agencies is too far away from their function. This semi-professional performance of the tasks of the journalist is reflected in the fact that more than half of the students have already obtained the number of credits needed to finish their study programme but remains linked to the programme through internships, and the fact that one of every four students acknowledges that they enrol in optional subjects to continue with the open enrolment.

Although there are student profiles that conform to the theoretical prototypes - apprentice students on one end and professional students at the other- most interns end up adopting an intermediate role between the senior journalist and what should be the student in the company-based training stage. The preference towards the first type or the second depends on the characteristics of students. There is clearly a sector of senior interns with more than one year of experience representing nearly one-third of the total population, despite the agreement of the University of Málaga (2014) contemplates a duration of up to six months, expandable in exceptional cases to nine months. Given the

transversality of the study, it is not possible to know whether the “newbies” who experience less intense routines will experience in the future the conditions of the most experienced interns. In addition, it is striking that while 72.8% of the students has done more than one internship, only 30% repeats the internship in the same medium, which indicates that students rotate across different media companies.

The third hypothesis (H3), which expected interns, despite being unhappy with the conditions of the internships, to end up appreciating the experience, was largely proven correct. The overall satisfaction with the internships is very high despite all the facts exposed in this work. The satisfaction with the conditions of internships, on the other hand, is lower but still acceptable in general terms according to the arithmetic mean. The association between the degree of satisfaction and the superiors' appreciation of interns' work -the more appreciated they feel, the better the conditions are perceived- can be interpreted in labour terms: a good esteem from the newsroom can lead, in the future, to a job offer. As Segarra et al. (2012) points out, the mid-term promise of a payroll can motivate students to withstand hardly justifiable conditions and to rate them better. In this respect, the most experienced interns are more critical of the workload and the number of hours dedicated to the internship, which can be seen as a symptom of the burnout syndrome or as the loss of illusion to achieve a job contract, either due to the loss of interest or, with the passage of time, this is seen as a distant promise. In any case, the low score and the fact that 30.3% of students gave a failing grade to the assessment of the internship invites us to reflect on the current state of this type of training stays.

Although we consider that the results draw a particularly attractive paradigm about the state of internships based on the case of Málaga, this research has faced obvious difficulties to apply statistical analysis to a reduced sample. An older population would have allowed us, perhaps, to give statistical significance to the apparent differences of our case. The possibility that this type of internships is reproduced in the rest of Spain, allowed by the consent or neglect of the university, urge us to carry out an analysis that expands to other media and territories to provide more representative results and allow for a global conception of the phenomenon.

Another line of research that is suggested by this work is the study of the role of academic and professional tutors in this training phase since their function is to monitor and ensure the internships complement the university education and are developed in accordance with the established rules.

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5. Notes

[1] “Trabajo multa a ‘El País’ con 160.000€ por el “abuso” laboral a los becarios”:
<http://vozpopuli.com/economia-y-finanzas/2470-trabajo-multa-a-el-pais-con-160-000-por-el-abuso-laboral-a-los-becarios>

[2] “El Mundo despide 164 redactores y los suple con 90 becarios”:

<http://prnoticias.com/hemeroteca/10052225-los-sindicatos-denuncian-el-mundo-despide-a-164-personas-y-los-suple-con-90-becarios>

[3] “ABC despide a cinco trabajadores de su página web y los sustituye por becarios”:

http://www.elconfidencialdigital.com/medios/ABC-despide-trabajadores-sustituye-becarios_0_2160383944.html

[4] “Inspección laboral en Cadena SER: los becarios ‘vitalicios’ deben abandonar la emisora”:

<http://prnoticias.com/radiopr/20134306-inspeccion-laboral-en-cadena-ser-los-becarios-vitalicios-deben-abandonar-la-emisora>

[5] “Trabajo multa a ‘El País’ con 160.000€ por el “abuso” laboral a los becarios”:

<http://vozpopuli.com/economia-y-finanzas/2470-trabajo-multa-a-el-pais-con-160-000-por-el-abuso-laboral-a-los-becarios>

[6] “El número de becarios aumenta un 350% con la ‘recuperación’:

<http://www.elmundo.es/f5/campus/2016/03/29/56fac94922601da5208b467b.html>

[7] The text in *italics* in the regulations corresponds to the authors’ emphasis.

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