



A bibliographic study of public relations in Spanish media and communication journals, 2000–2012



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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the trends and visibility of research on public relations in the most relevant Spanish media and communication journals between the years 2000 and 2012. Bibliometrics and content analysis are used to show the reduced presence of articles on public relations in these publications. A trend towards gender parity in authorship is confirmed in the sample, as well as a plurality of universities and a variety of research themes. The study also proves preference for generic questions rather than for specialised topics. Another finding is that almost one fourth of the specific articles on this discipline do not contain the term “public relations”. This can hint towards the need to have a specific high-impact publication on public relations to bring together and provide visibility to the contributions of researchers in this field.

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1. Introduction

Scientific communication is a key step in the generation of knowledge. As Masip (2011) argues, “researchers must disseminate their ideas, show them in public debate and subject them to peer review, so that their theories are accepted or rejected by the academic community”, and so that, if the case arises, they are legitimated as useful research and can contribute to the progress of societies.

Academic communication can be channelled through different media. One of these channels are scientific journals, which, since they first appeared in the first half of the 17th century (Castillo-Esparcia, 2011a: 137) have been the most important discussion forum for the research community.

Castillo-Esparcia (2011a: 150) mentions several reasons motivating researchers to publish in scientific journals. Communication (to make the work known), funding (through publication the financial support of a body of whichever kind is justified), or prestige are some of the reasons mentioned. Others are reasons related to their academic career and financial rewards in terms of research productivity. At least in the Spanish case, these last two factors have greatly influenced the relevance that scientific journals have acquired in fields such as the Social Sciences and the Humanities, where monographs used to be the preferred form of publication (Masip, 2011).

In this sense, we should highlight that faculty and researchers of Spanish universities have to comply with the criteria of different accreditation and assessment agencies in order to make progress in their academic career, or to obtain

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financial rewards linked to research quality. When analysing the research activities of an individual, both the ANECA (Spanish Agency for Quality Assessment and Evaluation), as well as regional quality agencies or CNEAI (Spanish Commission for the Assessment of Research Activities, in charge of granting six-year bonuses), pay special attention to the articles published in scientific journals of proven prestige. Therefore, publishing in such journals becomes a priority for researchers in all fields, as described by [Giménez-Toledo and Alcaín-Partearroyo \(2006\)](#):

“The decision where to publish research outcomes is one of the most important concerns of Spanish faculty and researchers. In the past, this decision was either randomly made or due to subject matter and personal preference for some journals, but it has now become more of a planned exercise, so that the personal CV is assessed in a better light. Spanish assessment agencies have slowly developed their criteria to assess scientific publications.” ([Giménez-Toledo & Alcaín-Partearroyo, 2006: 107](#)).

Publications of proven prestige are those that are indexed in databases whose inclusion criteria guarantee, in principle, the quality of such a publication.

Some such criteria, necessary for the journal to be included in the database, are purely formal (periodicity, publication norms for the authors, etc.) Others have to do with the selection procedures for articles, generally based on peer review that should guarantee the quality of scientific knowledge published in them. However, the criteria that defines not only inclusion, but the importance of a publication in a particular database, has to do with its impact factor, as described by [Garfield \(1998, 2003\)](#) for publications in science and psychology.

Thus, researchers must not only strive for a publication that adapts to their field of study according to specialisation, but they must also look for a publication with a high-impact index, which means, as [Baladrón-Pazos and Correyero-Ruiz \(2012: 35\)](#) indicate, “a key factor in the demand of some publications against others”.

In the specific case of public relations, we should highlight that until the year 2011, Spain had a single medium for publication in this field – the proceedings of the annual or two-yearly conferences organised by the Association of Public Relations Researchers (AIRP). Since its inception in 2004, the AIRP has worked hard for the visibility of the discipline, and it has also advocated for the use of the term “public relations”, in clear decline in Spain ([Arceo Vacas, 2005](#); [Urzáiz & Fernández del Castillo, 1997](#); [Xifra, 2005](#)). The association demands, for example, the use of this term in all texts submitted to the conferences they organise.

Taking the experience of AIRP into account, a group of lecturers at Málaga University, members of the association, created the Institute for Public Relations Research (IIRP) with the aim of bringing together “research and studies that contribute to an improvement of the knowledge and practice of this discipline” ([Castillo-Esparcia, 2011b](#)). They started publishing the *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas* in 2011. This is the only scientific publication in Spain for this subject matter. However, as it was recently created (2012), it does not have a strong impact factor, neither has it been considered for the widely accepted databases.

Therefore, researchers in this field who want to disseminate their outcomes in high-impact scientific journals must go for international publications listed in the Journal Citation Reports (JCR), such as *Public Relations Review*, or Spanish journals in the field of media and communications included in the IN-RECS (impact index of Spanish journals for the Social Sciences, drafted until 2011 by the research group EC3 of the University of Granada), or they can also go for journals with a high H index according to Google scholar Metrics. While such publications may not have so much repercussion as international publications, at least they create space for more concrete or specific topics that may be of interest for the development of a field in a particular country.

A clear example of the concern in the field of media and communication studies around scientific journals and their impact is the publication of studies analysing different aspects of this topic. In this sense, we could mention recent international works related to bibliometrics and focusing on aspects such as citation analysis, impact factors or the national diversity of publications ([Beatty, Feeley, and Dodd, 2012](#); [Feeley, 2008](#); [Lauf, 2005](#); [Park & Leydesdorff, 2009](#)). We can also quote several bibliometric studies specifically for public relations, such as the ones by [Pasadeos and Renfro \(Pasadeos & Renfro, 1989, 1992; Pasadeos, Berger, & Renfro, 2010; Pasadeos, Renfro, & Hanily, 1999\)](#) or those by [Morton and Lin \(1995\)](#), [Ye and Ki \(2012\)](#) or [Kim, Choi, Reber, and Kim \(2014\)](#).

In the Spanish scenario, in comparison to the field of media and communication studies in general, there are several relevant bibliometric or content analysis studies around what is published in scientific journals ([Castillo-Esparcia & Carretón Ballester, 2010](#); [Castillo-Esparcia, Rubio, and Almansa, 2012](#); [Fernández-Quijada, 2011a, 2011b](#); [Martínez Nicolás & Saperas Lapiedra, 2011](#)). Such studies go deeper into the role of these publications and that of assessment and accreditation agencies in their development ([Castillo-Esparcia, 2011a](#); [Masip, 2011](#)). They also analyse the development or situation of particular journals ([Colle, 2009](#); [Roca-Correa & Pueyo-Ayhan, 2012](#)), or perform forecasts, such as those by [Baladrón-Pazos and Correyero-Ruiz \(2012\)](#).

However, there are hardly any more specific studies looking into the concrete situation of the discipline of public relations in Spanish media and communication journals. In this sense, we can find an approximation to this subject in [Míguez-González \(2011\)](#), with an analysis of the public relations articles published in the ten highest ranking journals in INRECS between 2008 and 2010.

The goal of this study is, precisely, to expand this above-mentioned study and to present an overview of the situation of public relations in the most important Spanish media and communications journals of the 21st century.

2. Methodology

In order to accomplish this objective, bibliometric and content analysis have been performed on a universe of issues and volumes published between 2000 and 2012 in the 12 scientific journals in media and communication studies that have been in the first or second quartile of INRECS for at least two years for the period 2000–2011. In January 2014 the group EC3, who was in charge of drafting the IN-RECS, released a notice (<http://ec3.ugr.es/in-recs/COMUNICADO.pdf>) informing that their activities were stopped due to lack of funding, and the index for 2011 became the last report published. Despite all this, this impact indicator has been the most relevant at Spanish level for many years, and that is the reason why it has been used in our study. The H Google Scholar Metrics index has not been used for the selection of publications, as it only has data available since 2007, therefore neglecting a large part of the study period.

According to such criteria, the selected journals were *Ámbitos: revista internacional de comunicación*, *Anàlisi: quaderns de comunicació i cultura*, *CIC: cuadernos de información y comunicación*, *Comunicar: revista científica iberoamericana de educación y comunicación*, *Comunicación y sociedad*, *Doxa Comunicación: Revista Interdisciplinar de Estudios de Comunicación y Ciencias Sociales*, *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico*, *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, *Questiones publicitarias*, *Sphera Pública*, *Trípodos* and *Zer: revista de estudios de comunicación*. Special issues such as the publication of conference proceedings including a significantly larger number of articles usually published in the journal per issue have been excluded from the study.

Within this universe, the content criterion has been used to select two types of articles. On the one hand, articles clearly dealing with public relations from any point of view. On the other, articles including matters related to the discipline or profession of public relations, even if this was not the specific theme of the article in question. For example, some articles deal with the training of media and communication professionals in all fields, while others list media trends including information on this field, amongst others, even when public relations are not the essential purpose of their studies.

In order to delineate the criterion of content, and to determine which elements fit the scope of this research, several classical theoretical contributions have been taken into account. Another element used has been the type of content chosen by international journals specifically dealing with public relations, such as *Public Relations Review* or *Journal of Public Relations Research*, as well as the theme categories considered in different conferences on public relations at both national and international level. Finally, in order to visualise the outcomes in a clearer way, these categories have been adapted depending on the content found in the analysis. In this way some of the categories drawn *ex ante* have been left out, as they were not present in any of the works, while others had to be grouped. Thus, the selected articles have been grouped into studies on research on the general discipline (theory and history of public relations, evaluation, metaresearch); on the profession (training, structures or professional sector); on corporate, institutional, political or third-sector communications; and on some more specific themes such as crisis communications, internal communications, on-line communications, event management and protocol (traditionally part of this field in Spain) or media relations.

Those articles looking into the subject from a completely alien perspective or an excessively generalist perspective have not been included in the analysis, even if they address some of the aspects typical of public relations.

The whole article selection process has been subjected to revision by the three researchers in order to avoid potential biases, and to unify the decisions to include or exclude texts, and their categorisation. As a consequence of this process, some of the articles included in Míguez-González (2011), especially several related to political communication, have been removed from the analysis, as their adscription to the discipline of public relations was unclear after detailed content analysis. The adjustments performed for the selection of sample articles and the readjustments performed in theme categories hinders comparability with the previous study in these aspects. However, it allows for a more adjusted view of this reality and corrects some deficiencies detected in prior research.

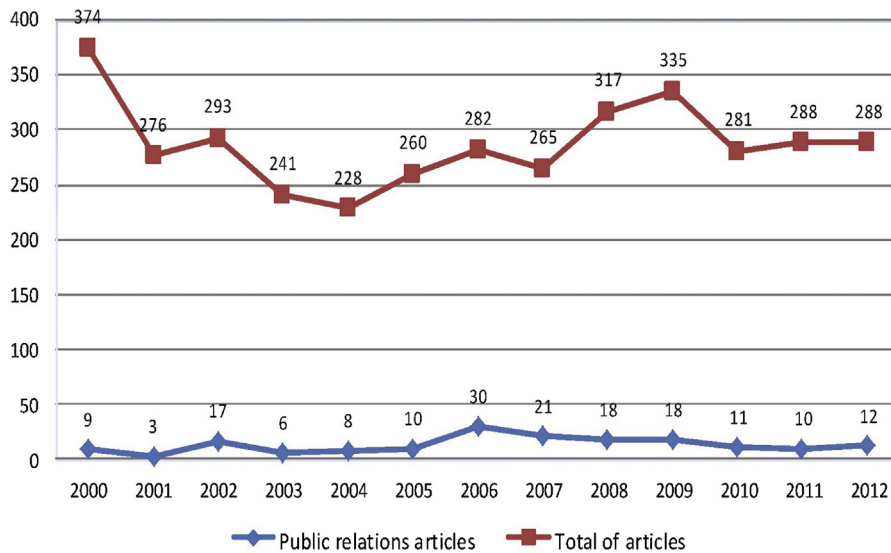
Our analysis also includes some aspects related to authorship, such as the number of authors, gender and affiliation, as well as the impact index of the publications where the articles were published. These outcomes are indeed comparable to the study by Míguez-González (2011). Apart from that, the study incorporates additional information related to the geographical scope of the article, sector and professional field.

Finally, following Míguez-González (2011), the presence of the concept of “public relations” in itself in the titles, abstracts, keywords, texts and bibliography of the articles is analysed. This last aspect aims at proving whether the lack of prestige or deterioration of the term “public relations” in Spain, and its replacement by other concepts (partially analysed in Míguez-González, 2013) is present in the scientific production in the field.

3. Results

3.1. Presence of articles on public relations

The journal sample included 3728 articles published, out of which 173 (4.6% of the total) address public relations. We should highlight that out of these 173 articles, 153 specifically address questions related to public relations, while the remaining 20 include questions related to the discipline or profession, even if that is not their specific subject matter. In any case, for most of the indicators we have performed a joint analysis of all the texts selected, as there were no significant variations in the outcomes if they were analysed separately. This distinction was only made for theme-based indicators, and those related to the use of the term “public relations”.



Graph 1. Number of articles on public relations and total number of articles per year.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the yearly distribution ([Graph 1](#)), the year 2006 was the most prolific one, with 30 articles published on public relations, although 21 of these 30 articles are found in issue 34 of the journal *Análisi*, a special issue on public relations. The journal *Sphera Pública* also published a special issue on public relations in 2007, with 12 articles, and *Trípodos* did the same for their issue number 24 in 2008, with 6 articles. As a consequence of this, the years 2006 to 2009 amount to 50.3% of all articles published on public relations, while the remaining 49.7% is distributed across nine years.

These years, with 2002, are those showing a larger percentage of articles on public relations against the total number of articles published per year. Thus, in 2006, 10.6% of the works published were in this field.

This peak and the presence of three consecutive special issues can be linked to the activities of AIRP, as it was founded in 2004, and during their initial years they worked hard to promote and disseminate the discipline.

The worst year for the discipline in the study period was 2001, with only three articles related to it, 1.1% of the total of articles published that year in the sample journals.

On the other hand, between the years 2010 and 2012, the trend in the number of articles published on this topic becomes stable, even though the trend is on the decrease in comparison to previous years.

The four journals showing the largest number of articles on public relations in absolute terms are *Análisi* and *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, with 35 articles each, followed by *Zer* with 29, and *Sphera Pública* with 27. However, the *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social* publishes a large number of articles per year, therefore the publications showing more space for the discipline, in terms of percentages, and a higher orientation towards these topics are *Análisi* (13.8% of their articles) and *Sphera Pública* (11.6%). Both, as we have already highlighted, published special issues on public relations, and are then followed by *Zer* (8.5%).

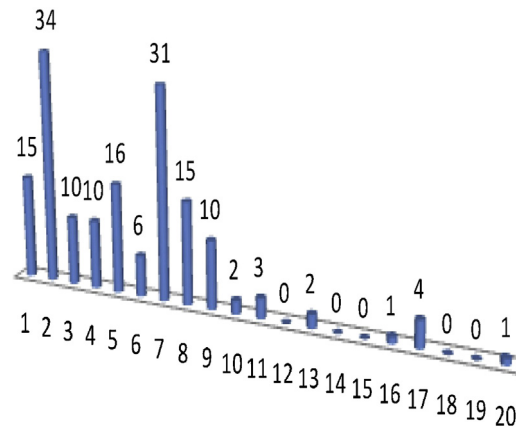
We have to consider that all journals in this study are generic publications on media and communications, and they are expected to include diverse topics. Some of them focus on specific aspects, such as audiovisual communications or advertising, and it is therefore only logical that they do not include so many articles on public relations. Still, data show that none of the publications grants much visibility to this discipline.

Another significant question for the visibility of studies on this discipline is the impact index that the journal has in the year the article was published. In this sense, the data are quite positive if we interpret that the IN-RECS has been the reference to measure impact of Spanish scientific journals for years. Almost 50% of the papers selected between 2000 and 2011 (there are no available data for articles in 2012) were published in journals that, in the year in question, ranked in the five first positions in media and communications journals as per their impact index according to INRECS, which ensures acceptable dissemination at national level ([Graph 2](#)).

However, only 8.1% of articles were published in the three sample journals currently in the JCR (*Comunicar*, *Estudios sobre e mensaje periodístico* and *Comunicación y Sociedad*), i.e., first ranking publications also at international level.

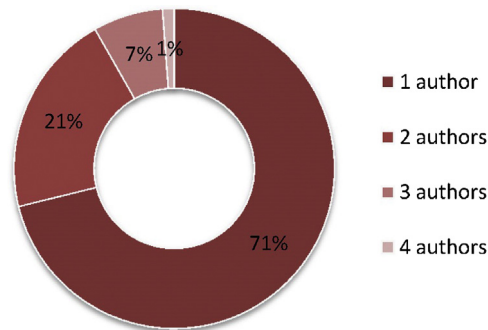
3.2. Authors: gender and affiliation

Regarding the number of authors signing the papers ([Graph 3](#)), the sample shows the usual procedure in media and communications journals in Spain, which rarely publish works of more than three authors. Thus, 71% of articles are signed



Graph 2. Number of articles according to the journal's position in INRECS.

Source: Prepared by the authors.



Graph 3. Percentage of articles according to the number of signing authors.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 1

Authors by gender and number of articles signed.

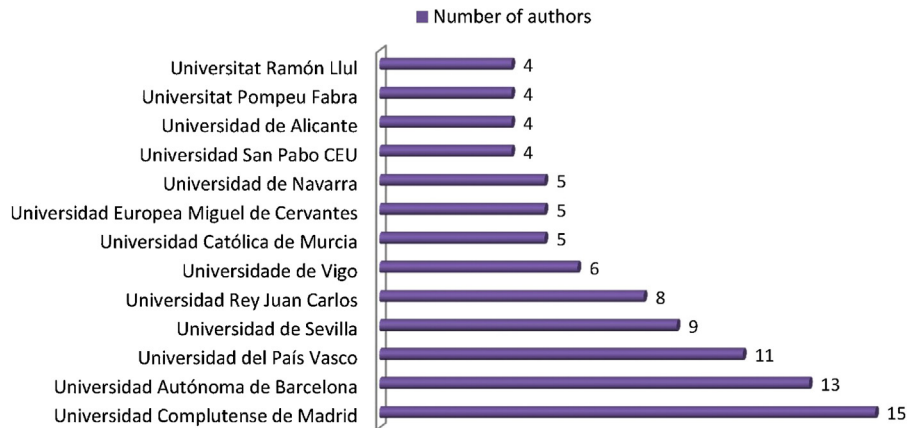
Number of articles	Male authors		Female authors	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Signing 1 article	75	43.1	60	34.5
Signing 2 articles	12	6.8	13	7.5
Signing 3 articles	5	2.9	4	2.3
Signing 4 articles	1	0.6	2	1.1
Signing 5 articles	1	0.6	0	0
Signing 9 articles	1	0.6	0	0
Total	95	54.6	79	45.4

Source: Prepared by the authors.

by a single author and 21% by two. Such data, furthermore, are clearly consistent with those gathered by Míguez-González (2011) for a sample of 10 journals for a three-year period, with 68.29% of articles signed by a single author and 26.83% by two authors.

In total, the set of articles includes 174 different authors who, in most cases (77%), only sign one of the articles in the sample, be it as individual authors or co-authors. The remaining 14.4% sign two articles, and 5.2% sign three articles. There are only two authors signing more than three articles: an author signing 5 and another one, 9 (Table 1).

These data, which are consistent with those produced by Míguez-González (2011), leads us to two conclusions. First, that there is much diversity of authors working on the discipline of public relations or that, at least at some point, have published works that have to do with it. Second, that there are one or two significantly relevant persons, or persons with special activities in this field, and some ten additional authors of some relevance. In any case, we should highlight that the journals studied are not the only vehicle for the transmission of research for researchers in this field. Other media include the publication of conference proceedings, international journals -though few publish outside Spain-, and non-indexed journals, therefore of low impact.



Graph 4. Spanish universities with four or more authors.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding gender (Table 1), we can claim that parity is achieved to a high extent in terms of the gender of authors, as 55% of them are men and 45%, women. A different matter would be to see whether such percentages represent the research population in public relations in the country, or, even, if the percentage of male and female researchers reflects the reality of the student population of Advertising and Public Relations courses, who are mainly women.

There are no significant variations between men and women in terms of the number of articles signed. We should only highlight that the two authors with the largest number of articles signed (five and nine articles) are men.

Regarding the affiliation of the total 174 authors, most of them (71%) belong to Spanish universities, although one fourth are academics from foreign universities and a small percentage (4%) belong to other non-university bodies, generally linked to the professional world. These percentages are also similar to those presented by Míguez-González (2011): 68% come from Spanish universities, 22% from foreign universities and 10% from other bodies.

Within Spanish universities (Graph 4), the most widely present in terms of number of authors is the Complutense University of Madrid, with 15 different authors. This figure matches that in Míguez-González (2011), although the fact that our study takes into account a longer time frame makes other universities change positions in the ranking, with the Autonomous University of Barcelona, with 13 articles, and the Basque Country University with 11, ranking second and third respectively. In total, 13 universities have four or more authors in the sample and 13 more have three, two or one author. There are, therefore, 26 Spanish universities present in the sample. This, including researchers from some foreign universities and those coming from outside the academia, indicates significant diversity.

3.3. Themes

Generic research topics such as theoretical, historical or meta research questions are the most common topics in the sample, with over 23% of articles if we include articles specific on public relations and related topics. After that, we have institutional communications, with 14.5% of the articles in the sample (all of them specific) and communication in crisis (10.4%). The remaining topics include 9.8% of topics related to the professional world (training, structures and professional sector), even if in this case 4% of articles are on topics not only or strictly related to public relations (Graph 5).

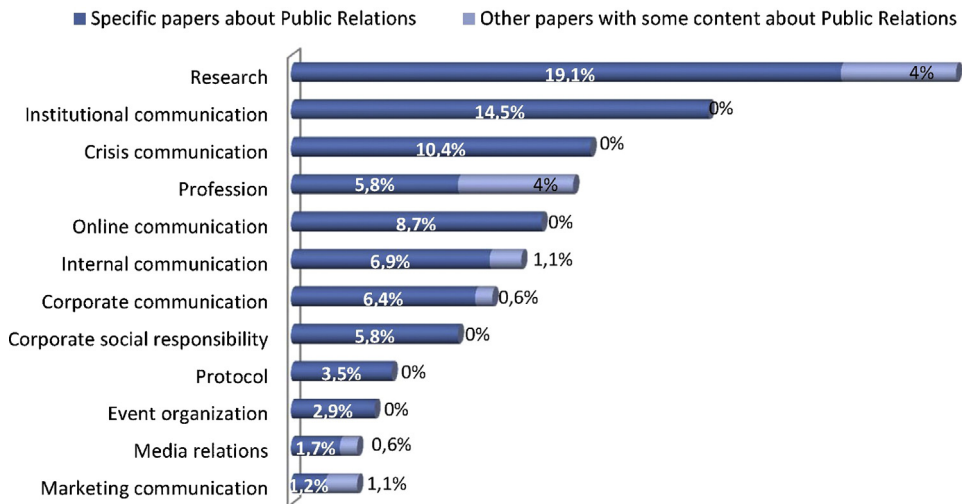
8.7% of articles address on-line communications, which is a low percentage if we consider the current relevance of this topic, although this can be understood if we consider that the sample starts in the year 2000. In fact, it is only in 2005 that the first articles on this subject appear in the sample.

There are also other topics that have appeared or gained relevance in the period in question. Thus, in 2007 there were no articles on non-profit communication. Likewise, only 5 of the 40 articles on research were published between the years 2000 and 2004.

On the other hand, some topics seem to have lost momentum with time. Only two of the 18 papers in the sample on crisis communication were published since 2009. In the case of corporate social responsibility, for example, after an article published in 2000, we have to wait until 2005 to see the topic again in high-impact journals in this field. After this point, it becomes a recurring concern.

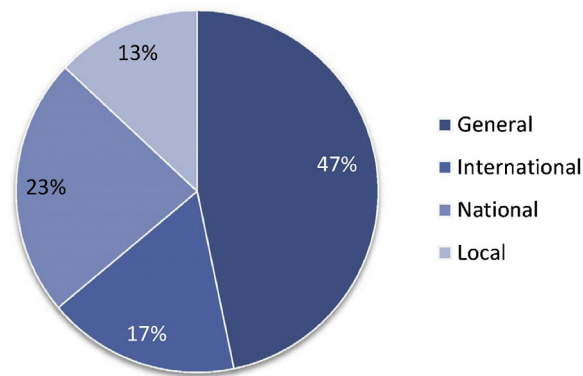
3.4. Geographical scope of research

Almost half of the articles in the sample (47%) deal with general aspects, not geographically circumscribed, while the remaining 36% include specific research on aspects that have to do with the Spanish reality, be it at state (23%), local or regional (13%) level. The remaining 17% is research on aspects that incorporate international elements, be it because they



Graph 5. Percentage of articles per topic.

Source: Prepared by the authors.



Graph 6. Geographical scope of research.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

are studies on the reality of another country, or because they address aspects that involve or affect more than one country (Graph 6).

3.5. Most widely studied sectors

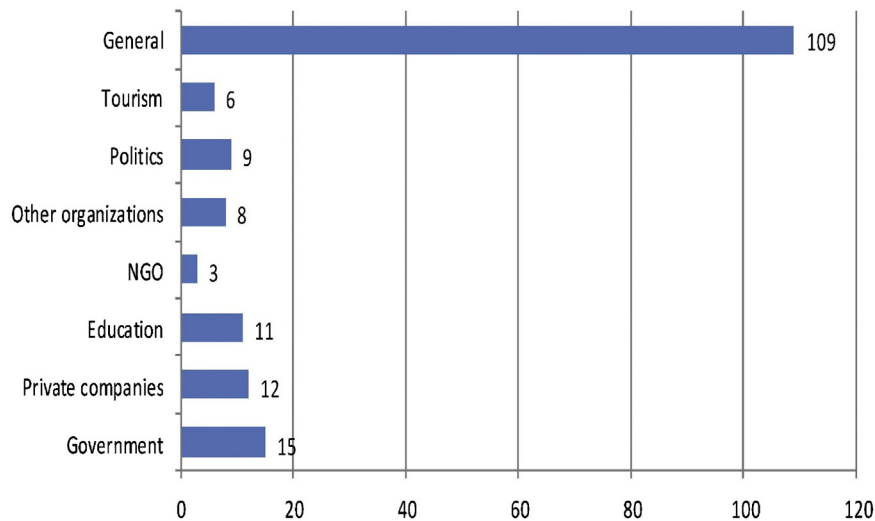
The majority of articles in the sample (63%) do not carry out research on specific organisations. However, there are specific studies on some particular sectors. Thus, 9% of articles are studies related to some instance of the public administration, or governmental bodies, while the remaining 7% target private companies in different specific sectors (food, energy, finance, computer services, communication. . .). The sample further includes several articles studying institutions in the educational field (6%) and the non-governmental political sphere (5%). Last, 2% of articles in the sample deal with non-governmental organisations, and 3% undertake specific research on non-profit organisations of different kinds, such as sports associations, organisations in the field of science and technology, health organisations, the army or the church (Graph 7).

3.6. Usage of the term public relations

Graph 8 shows the use of the term “public relations” in any of its forms (with the use of common abbreviations or in English) in different parts of the 153 papers specifically addressing topics related to this discipline.

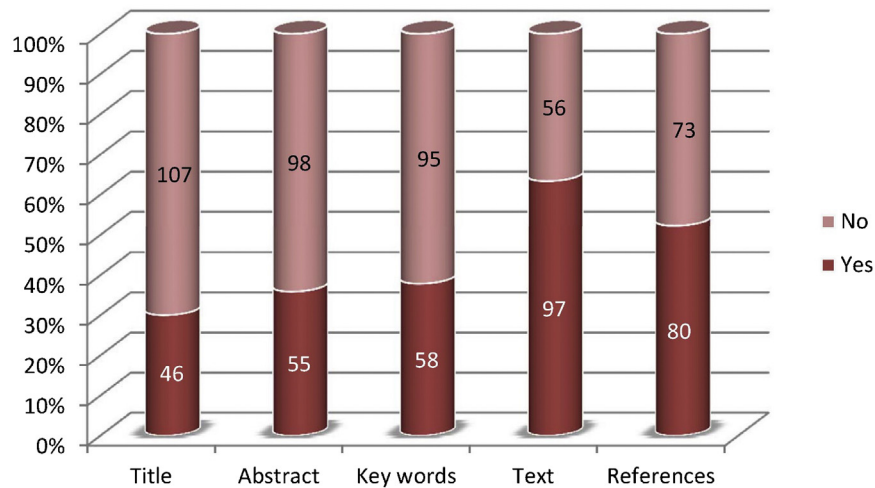
63.4% of the 153 papers do mention the concept in the text and 52.3% mention it in their bibliography. However the number or percentage of articles including the term in their keywords, abstract or title, that is, precisely where its visibility would be higher, is significantly reduced (37.9%, 35.9% and 30.1% respectively).

In general, our research shows that 54.9% of the 153 articles specifically dealing with public relations do not include this concept neither in the title, nor in the abstract or keywords. If we consider that the first contact readers have with a scientific



Graph 7. Number of articles per sector or organisation.

Source: Prepared by the authors.



Graph 8. Presence of the term "public relations" (number of articles) in specific articles.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

text before they fully read it is through these three elements, the fact becomes remarkable, as more than half of those articles will not be clearly associated with this discipline at first sight or through searches that do not include the text.

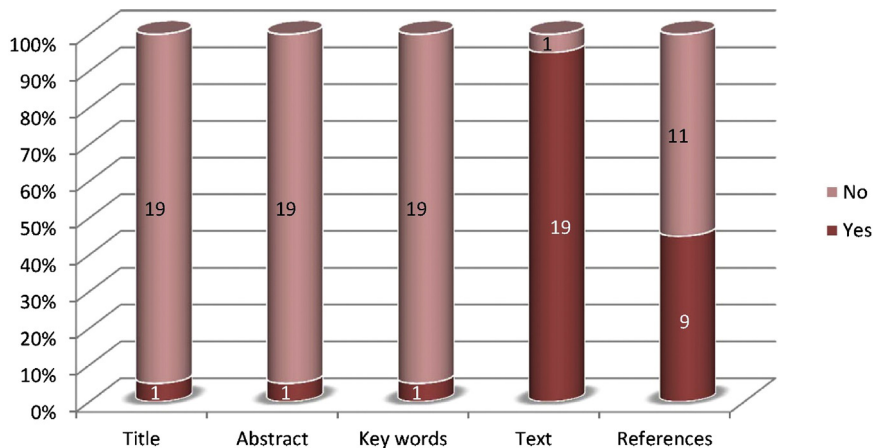
Furthermore, 38 of these 153 articles do not only avoid mentioning the term in the title, abstract or keywords, but they refrain from doing so later in the text or the bibliography. That is to say, 24.8% of all articles clearly dealing with public relations issues do not use the expression "public relations" at any point. Most of these articles do however use other concepts such as corporate communications, institutional communications business communications, communication management or organisational communication.

These data further worsens the already negative results gathered by Míguez-González (2011), as the percentage of articles not including the concept of public relations (from 13.6% to 24.8%), or those that do not include it in the title, abstract or keywords (from 36.4% to 52.9%) increases dramatically.

All this confirms the recently developed Spanish scenario that the AIRP tries to counterbalance through different measures, such as demanding from researchers who submit their work to their conferences that they include this concept.

For articles dealing with public relations, although in non-specific ways, we could expect a lower presence of the concept, and even if data do meet this expectation for the titles, abstracts and keywords, the same thing is not true for texts (Graph 9).

In fact, the term public relations is very much present in almost all the texts in the sample (95%) and almost half of their bibliographies (45%). Only one article uses the term in the title and it is this same article that shows it in the abstract and



Graph 9. Presence of the term “public relations” (number of articles) in articles partially dealing with questions on this matter.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

keywords. However, we can also only list an article that does not use the term public relations at all at any point, which means 5% against 24.8% of the articles specifically on public relations.

4. Conclusions

This study tries to present an overview of public relations research published in Spanish high-impact communication journals at national level.

This analysis helps conclude, first, that public relations are a secondary topic for such journals, with a very low presence in terms of percentages, even if theme diversity in such publications can explain this outcome. Likewise, most articles published on this discipline in the analysed period are found in journals that are well positioned in terms of national impact, although not in journals included in the JCR, something that would grant them more visibility.

If we also take into account that the IN-RECS has not been compiled since 2012, the only state-level publications in the field of media where researchers can see their studies on public relations considered by the relevant bodies assessing research activities, are those in the JCR, or, at least, in Scopus. However, the only Spanish journal specialising in public relations, the *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas* is not indexed so far in any of these databases. Besides, the few generic communication journals that are in the JCR or Scopus publish very few articles on public relations. These include 4 of the 11 journals analysed here, and we should add *Historia de la comunicación social*, an ISI publication not analysed because it did not make a relevant ranking in IN-RECS during the study period. Taking all this into account, the current scenario for the dissemination and visibility of public relations publications in Spain is rather bleak.

Second, public research in Spain is proven to be decentralised, and therefore not only present in some universities or authors. In fact, both the variety of authors, amongst which gender parity can be found, as well as the diversity of universities they come from, are seen as positive elements that ensure plurality in research.

Third, such diversity may be seen as well in the variety of themes addressed, even if authors tend to address more generic topics instead of studies on specific topics. This is the reason why many studies are not constrained to a specific geographical area or sector. However, although diversity can be understood as a positive point in terms of scope, it also means that there is an absence of scientific discussions on particularly relevant concrete aspects in such publications.

In fact, a hypothesis we could work with is whether Spanish authors in the field of public relations avoid using this term and choose other more popular options to pave the way to publish their work in generic communication journals.

Finally, we can see that, in line with previous trends in the professional world, the use of the term “public relations” in the articles studied is scarce. This goes against the visibility of the discipline in the framework of publications that are, in themselves, highly heterogeneous. In a nutshell, we could conclude that theme diversity in the field of media and communications, as well as the scarce use of the concept of public relations by the researchers themselves, creates invisibility for research in this field, despite its wealth and plurality in terms of themes and authors. Such research is thus diluted and loses relevance amongst other more recurring themes. In this context, the need to give more weight to the *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas* is further emphasised, as this is the only specific support to provide visibility to this discipline. This journal should become an impact publication researchers show preference for in order to disseminate their results.

A key aspect in this framework is the effort of the journal's editors, who are responsible for complying with all quality parameters a journal of this kind should have so that it can be indexed at world level. Since this publication was first launched, they have worked hard in this direction, and therefore almost since the beginning, according to their website (www.revistarelacionespublicas.uma.es), the journal has fulfilled all the necessary quality criteria to be included in Latindex (for journals published in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal). It also ranks fifth in the CNEAI criteria for the

total 40 communication journals included in the RESH (information system for Spanish Journals of the Social Sciences and Humanities), while it reaches an internationality index of authors of 33%.

However, in order to access reference indexes such as JCR, the willingness and effort of the researchers themselves is of paramount importance. It is the authors in this field who can contribute to the development of the *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas* by publishing the outcome of their studies there. Besides, they should access and be aware of the research undertaken by other colleagues and published in this journal, and, above all, quote its articles whenever possible, as it is the number of citations, apart from the usual formal and quality criteria, that determines whether a publication can even be included in the JCR or what H-index it will achieve.

To conclude, we would like to mention once again that the objective of this study was to have an overview of the situation of public relations in the most important Spanish media journals of the 21st century. The fact that the study focuses on such publications in itself implies certain limitations. In order to obtain a complete overview of research on public relations in Spain that reliably confirms issues such as the preferred topics by Spanish researchers in this field, or the problems related to the use of the term, this study should be enlarged to include other non-INRECS indexed publications, such as the *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas* itself, and scientific conferences on the topic that have been developed in recent years under the auspices of the AIRP and the most important communication conferences held in Spain.

This study could be further enriched with the analysis of articles published by Spanish authors in specialised international journals on public relations such as *Public Relations Review* or *Journal of Public Relations Research*, or in other generic international journals in media and communications studies. This would also allow for an analysis of internationalisation, to see whether it influences the habits and publication topics or even the use of the term.

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