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DIFFERENCES IN GENDER REPRESENTATION BETWEEN MEN-DIRECTED AND WOMEN-DIRECTED SPANISH FILMS (2018-2019)

Diferencias de representación de género entre las películas españolas dirigidas por hombres y por mujeres (2018-2019)

Diferenças na representação de gênero entre filmes espanhóis dirigidos por homens e por mulheres (2018-2019)

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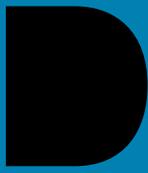
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ABSTRACT

Recently, a social movement for greater diversity in society, including cinema, has been taking place. Thus, members of minorities claim their space as content creators. Various organizations have indicated that if more women are directing films, there will be more films starring women. However, there is no scientific evidence. This study wants to check if there is a direct relation between the director's gender and the characters. The purpose of this paper is to study the representation of gender in Spanish films through the relationship between the representation of female/male characters and the gender of directors. A content analysis was conducted on 30 Spanish films from 2018 and 2019, including 468 characters (n = 468). It is concluded that there is no significant statistical relationship between underrepresentation and the gender of directors; there is still an underrepresentation of female characters. In addition, no significant statistical association was found between the gender of the director and the character's occupation or personal vs. work objectives. However, in the works of male directors, the frequency of dialogues between female and male characters is significantly higher than in films of female directors.

Keywords: Gender; Spanish cinema; women film directors; men film directors; content analysis.

RESUMEN

Desde hace unos años se viene gestando un movimiento social que reclama una mayor diversidad en la sociedad, incluido el cine. Así, miembros de minorías reclaman su espacio como creadores de contenidos. Diversas organizaciones han señalado que si hay más mujeres en la dirección de películas, habrá más películas protagonizadas por mujeres. Empero, no hay evidencia científica de ello, y este estudio quiere comprobar si existe una relación directa entre el género del director y los personajes. El objetivo fue estudiar la representación de género en el cine español a través de la relación entre la representación de personajes femeninos/masculinos y el género de los directores. Se analizó el contenido de 30 películas españolas de 2018 y 2019 con un total de 468 caracteres (n = 468). Se concluyó que, aun cuando sigue existiendo una infrarrepresentación de personajes femeninos, no existe una relación estadística significativa entre esta infrarrepresentación y el género de los consejeros. Además, no hubo una relación estadística significativa entre el género del director y la ocupación del personaje u objetivos personales vs. laborales. En comparación con las películas de directoras, en el trabajo de los directores masculinos, la frecuencia de diálogo entre personajes femeninos y masculinos es significativamente mayor.

Palabras clave: género; cine español; mujeres directoras de cine; hombres directores de cine; análisis de contenido.



RESUMO

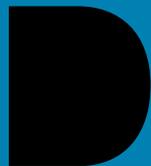
Há alguns anos vem se formando um movimento social que reivindica maior diversidade na sociedade, inclusive no cinema. Assim, membros de minorias reivindicam seu espaço como criadores de conteúdo. Várias organizações apontaram que, se houver mais mulheres dirigindo filmes, haverá mais filmes estrelados por mulheres. Porém, não há comprovação científica disso e este estudo quer verificar se existe uma relação direta entre o gênero do diretor e os personagens. O objetivo deste trabalho é estudar a representação de gênero no cinema espanhol através da relação entre a representação de personagens femininos/masculinos e o gênero dos diretores. Foi realizada uma análise de conteúdo de 30 filmes espanhóis de 2018 a 2019 com um total de 468 personagens ($n = 468$). Conclui-se que, embora ainda haja uma sub-representação de personagens femininas, não há relação estatisticamente significativa entre essa sub-representação e o gênero dos diretores. Além disso, nenhuma relação estatisticamente significativa foi encontrada entre o sexo do diretor e a ocupação do personagem ou objetivos pessoais *versus* objetivos de trabalho. No entanto, comparativamente aos filmes de realizadoras, na obra de realizadores masculinos, a frequência de diálogo entre personagens femininos e masculinos é significativamente superior.

Palavras-chave: gênero; cinema espanhol; diretoras de cinema; diretores de cinema; análise de conteúdo.

Introduction

Recently, movements have been calling for greater diversity in cinema, from #MASMUJERES in Spain to #OscarsSoWhite in Hollywood. Interest in how gender is treated has been growing in academia and the media. For this reason, it is relevant to delve into the representation of gender in cinema, a media with significant influence. Walter Lippmann (1992) confirmed in his classic study that much of our knowledge about the world comes from the media. Our perception of the world is constructed, to a large extent, thanks to the contents of the media. Therefore, it is essential to analyze their representation of reality (Van Dijk, 2003). Cinema has the enormous power to transmit relevant topics concerning life, with the great responsibility it entails, so its massive social power should not be forgotten. It can create social imaginaries and build portraits, ideas, judgments, reflections, or beliefs that endure over time. Cinema, in short, can construct a picture of social reality. In this sense, Caparrós affirms:

cinematographic art is a testimony of the society of its time, nobody doubts it today. Moreover, film can become an instrumental source of historical science, since it reflects, better or worse, the mentalities of the people of a certain period. (2007, p. 27)



Similarly, film director Martín Patino (2009) points out, citing Hegel (1835):

every creative work belongs to a time, a people, a medium [...] it is related to the representation of its time and the conditions of its moment, to its circumstances [...]. If cinema has any extraordinary capacity, it is that of being able to create invisible realities or complicit unrealities for a better understanding of the world. (p. 47; authors' translation)

Cinema has often denounced inequalities and injustices but, at the same time, has been complicit in many social realities and problems. For decades, it has collaborated with unequal gender relations beyond the Spanish context. It has perpetuated gender stereotypes, roles, and unequal representation between men and women through the presentation of characters and narratives (Martínez & Moreno, 2016; Tello, 2016; Morales, 2017). For these reasons, it is necessary to understand how recent Spanish cinema represents women because their image and representation must be cared for and shown on equal terms with men. Cinema is one of the most prestigious means of communication, so we must not forget its role as a creator of interpretative frameworks and a shaper of consciences. These frameworks' analysis is fundamental to understanding the representation of gender and, in general, of diversity, but also to vindicate the picture these groups can make of themselves and their environment through a self-led media practice.

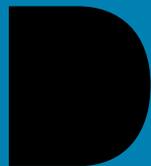
Spanish cinema has achieved enormous praise worldwide in recent years. Proof of this is the recognition of well-known directors such as Pedro Almodóvar, who has received international awards — the Oscar for Best Screenplay for the film *Hable con ella* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2003) and a nomination in the category of Best Director. Another proof is the many Spanish directors shooting movies in the U. S.; that is the case of Juan Antonio Bayona, Alejandro Amenábar, Jaume Collet-Serra, and Isabel Coixet, among the few female directors who have worked outside the national territory. Actors such as Antonio Banderas, Penélope Cruz or Javier Bardem work in countries such as France, Italy, and the United States. The Spanish audiovisual market is among the five largest in Europe. European laws protect audiovisual works with representation quotas, and Spanish cinema undeniably influences Spanish-speaking countries.

The objective was to investigate whether the image offered by films directed by women contributes to ending underrepresentation and stigmatization. Moreover, the analysis allowed studying this representation with data and approaching it from a socio-labor perspective considering the point of view of who accesses the positions of responsibility in film productions. Therefore, films directed by women and men were analyzed to determine if there are significant differences in the gender representation they offer in their characters. Cinema is not created alone; it is the product of collective work.

Theoretical Background

The Construction of Gender Identity in the Cinema

The role of cinema has been essential for constructing female gender identity as a medium capable of recreating reality by creating a specific social imagery in the viewers' minds. Studies on cinema and gender have developed considerably in recent years in the Spanish and international academic contexts and have been approached from different perspectives. Much of the research in this field has focused on analyzing audio-visual content to understand



how narratives and the construction of characters are and to what extent they can have particular social and cultural effects. Recent studies stand out, such as Bernárdez-Rodal & Padilla-Castillo's (2018), which focused on women filmmakers and studied the representation of women in Spanish commercial cinema from 2011 to 2016. They found, among other aspects, that there are still fewer women than men in leading roles in Spanish feature films. The research work also reflects great concern about issues such as the lack of parity in audio-visual direction and creation, an area in which male names continue to predominate (Cabrera, 2017; Coronado Ruiz, 2022; Corral Rey & Sandulescu Budea, 2022; Izcara, 2018; Marquès & Sánchez, 2020; McGowan & Yáñez-Martínez, 2022; Rodríguez et al., 2021).

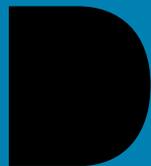
In recent years, the analysis of gender portrayal has established itself as a cultural conversation thanks to several investigations that highlight significant differences between men and women in fiction (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2014). In this regard, two special issues of the journal *Sex Roles* (2010, 2011), consisting of eighteen empirical articles, showed how women continue to be underrepresented and characterized by stereotyped roles (Collins, 2011).

An unbalanced gender representation that prioritizes the masculine is observed in the following variables: underrepresentation, sexualization, subordination, traditional roles and body image. The analysis of the data shows some important themes and aspects: Women are underrepresented in almost all media (Hether & Murphy, 2010; Matud et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2010); they are frequently sexualized (Mager & Helgeson, 2011) and are represented as non-professionals, housewives, wives or mothers, and sexual objects (Kahlenberg & Hein, 2010, Mager & Helgeson, 2011; Neuendorf et al., 2013). It is concluded that it is essential to understand how women are presented in fiction so that negative or stereotypical representations do not increase.

The Representation of Women in the Spanish Audiovisual Media

In Spanish research, gender differences in the representation of aggressors and victims (violence) on Spanish television have been studied. The exploration concludes that violence is predominantly male (de-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020; Fernández-Villanueva et al., 2009; Masanet et al., 2018). The types of goals, character and workplaces of women have also been studied, in which gender stereotypes are still perpetuated. Women continue to be represented through the family, the home and social relationships, with personal goals related to motherhood and in less prestigious jobs than men (Álvarez-Hernández et al., 2015; Galán, 2007; García Muñoz et al., 2012; Lacalle & Gómez, 2016; Menéndez, 2014). In addition, there is a diminishing characterization of women in the workplace, considering ambition as a countervalue and physical beauty as an attribute of power (Tous & Aran, 2017).

Another issue addressed regarding gender stereotypes is the overrepresentation of sexuality, in which the sexual activity of female characters is conditioned by attractiveness and age and in which women must satisfy men (Lacalle & Castro, 2017). In addition, there is a general trend of certain specific tasks for women, especially those related to child-rearing, household care and reproduction, including material and psychological care of children, the elderly, and patients (Plaza & Sangro, 2010). Moreover, feminist movements appear to be radical considering the times in which they are situated (Chicharro-Merayo, 2018; Coronado & Galán, 2015). In recent years, the Spanish academia has tried to make the work of women filmmakers visible (Arranz-Lozano, 2010; Bernárdez-Rodal & Padilla-Castillo, 2018; Feenstra, et al., 2014; Núñez Domínguez, 2010; Tello, 2016; Zecchi, 2014; Zurian, 2015).



Concluding, however, that there are a small number of female directors and that the films they direct are usually restricted to one or two productions. Many studies reflect that the lack of female representation transcends the context of acting since, in aspects such as film directing or screenwriting, the presence of women has been even more of a minority. Concretely, in the case of film directing, women currently represent 32% compared to 68% of men (CIMA, 2021). Likewise, according to the CIMA report (2021), the number of women directors of feature films has only increased by 2% in six years. However, little is known about the differences presented by their works compared to those of male directors through quantitative research. In this regard, Núñez Domínguez (2010) points out that female directors give the leading role to female characters over males.

The representation of female characters is constantly changing. Nowadays, these characters seem to have more importance in cinema, but is this true, or is it only appearance? Also, this study wanted to answer unanswered questions: what role do women play in complex communication methods such as cinema? Does cinema reproduce social stereotypes about women's characteristics and occupations, or does it change the image of women to influence society's perception of them? This research raised the following research questions:

RQ1. Is there an underrepresentation of female characters in Spanish films from 2018 and 2019?

RQ1.1. Compared to works by female directors, is there a significant difference in the number of female characters in male-directed films?

RQ2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the main sociodemographic aspects of the characters (sexual orientation, age, educational level, socioeconomic level, nationality, country of origin, ethnicity...) in male-directed films compared to female-directed ones?

RQ3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the type of occupations of the characters in male-directed films compared to female-directed ones?

RQ4. Compared with works by female directors, is there a statistically significant difference in the type of narrative objectives (personal/work goals) of female characters in male-directed films?

RQ5. Are characters more likely to be aggressors or victims of violence in male-directed films compared with female-directed ones?

RQ6. Compared to works by female directors, is there a significant difference in the interaction of female characters with other female characters in male-directed films?

Method

This research aimed to obtain conclusions about gender equality in Spanish film characters from 2018 to 2019 through content analysis. This methodology focuses on topics, information and values represented and disseminated (Cassetti & di Chio, 1999). This research methodology is widely used in social science research, as it helps to explain and apply the data in a specific context (Krippendorff, 1990).



Sample

The sample for this content analysis consisted of 30 Spanish films that premiered in 2018 and 2019.¹ These two years have been chosen to study the years before the pandemic, as they greatly influenced film production and considerably reduced the number of films made in Spain and the economic benefits. Moreover, as shown by CIMA, the number of women in the directing field has increased from 17 in 2015 (Cuenca, 2016) to 34 in 2020 (Cuenca, 2021). In fact, the number of women directors was 34 in 2018—20% of the films nominated for the Goyas that year were directed by women—and 32 in 2019—19% of the nominees. These years are also the ones in which women have intensely demanded more equity between men and women, coinciding with the rise of MeToo in other countries.

All documentaries, short films, and works produced by other countries were excluded. A total of 15 feature films directed by female Spanish directors between 2018 and 2019, and the same number of works directed by male directors, were chosen (Table 1). These 30 movies contained a total of 468 characters. The information on the selection of films came from the Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts. It was randomly selected for greater representativeness and equivalence between male- and female-directed films.

Table 1. Sample

ID	Year	Film Title	Director	Gender	Characters
1	2018	<i>Proyecto tiempo</i>	Isabel Coixet	F	14
2	2019	<i>Paradise Hills</i>	Alice Waddington	F	12
3	2018	<i>Fotógrafo de Muathausen</i>	Mar Targarona Borrás	F	20
4	2019	<i>Gente que viene y bah</i>	Patricia Font	F	15
5	2018	<i>Hacerse mayor y otros problemas</i>	Clara Martínez-Lázaro	F	23
6	2018	<i>Los amores cobardes</i>	Carmen Blanco	F	8
7	2018	<i>Mi querida cofradía</i>	Marta Díaz de Lope	F	19
8	2018	<i>Yo la busco</i>	Sara Gutiérrez Galve	F	14
9	2018	<i>Yuli</i>	Iciar Bollaín	F	15
10	2018	<i>El pomo azul</i>	Montse Bodas, Raquel Troyano	F	8
11	2019	<i>Que te juegas</i>	Inés de León	F	12

Continue

1 The choice of these two years responds to the need to study the years prior to the pandemic, which undoubtedly had an influence on film production, with a decrease in the number of films produced in Spain and a consequent reduction in box office takings: “In 2018, Spanish cinema gathered 17.6 million spectators and grossed €103.7 million, a figure similar to that of 2017, although lower than the €109 million grossed in 2016. During the pandemic, Spanish cinema gathered 7.3 million spectators in 2022, when it collected €43 million; and in 2021 it collected €42.3 million with 7.1 million spectators” (*La Información*, 2022).



ID	Year	Film Title	Director	Gender	Characters
12	2018	<i>Ana de día</i>	Andrea Jaurrieta Barriain	F	15
13	2019	<i>Bajo el mismo techo</i>	Juana Marcía Alba	F	19
14	2018	<i>Carmen y Lola</i>	Arantxa Echevarría	F	24
15	2019	<i>Elisa y Marcela</i>	Isabel Coixet Castillo	F	15
16	2018	<i>Tiempo después</i>	José Luis Cuerda	M	28
17	2018	<i>Campeones</i>	Javier Fesser	M	23
18	2019	<i>El árbol de la sangre</i>	Julio Medem	M	13
19	2018	<i>Quién te cantará</i>	Carlos Vermut	M	9
20	2018	<i>Petra</i>	Jaime Rosales	M	19
21	2018	<i>El mejor verano de mi vida</i>	Dani de la Orden	M	19
22	2018	<i>Casi 40</i>	David Trueba	M	7
23	2018	<i>Cuando los ángeles duermen</i>	Gonzalo Bendala	M	12
24	2018	<i>Durante la tormenta</i>	Oriol Paulo	M	18
25	2018	<i>El aviso</i>	Daniel Calparsoro	M	14
26	2019	<i>Lo dejo cuando quiera</i>	Carlos Therón	M	22
27	2019	<i>La pequeña Suiza</i>	Kepa Sojo	M	15
28	2019	<i>Los Japón</i>	Álvaro Díaz Lorenzo	M	11
29	2019	<i>Quien a hierro mata</i>	Paco Plaza	M	18
30	2019	<i>A quién te llevarías a una isla desierta</i>	Jota Linares	M	7

Source: Own elaboration.

Codebook

The analysis of the characters focused on humans that appear visually throughout the film and engage in dialogue with other characters—talking individuals—(D’Haenens et al., 2007). We shaped a codebook based on certain variables provided with specific modifications and variables taken from Álvarez-Hernández et al. (2015), Marcos-Ramos (2014), and Neuendorf (2002). This codebook included a total of 73 variables distributed in seven different groups: basic identification data, general character data, narrative level of the character, social sphere, violent behavior, victim of violent behaviors and conversation topics.

The main concepts studied in the present research analyzed (a) the gender diversity and sexual orientation of the characters, (b) their relevance in the story, the type of roles and functions they represent, (c) the environment in which their interactions and social relations take place and (d) their main personality traits. Each character was



first coded based on general data: gender (male, female, other: trans, non-binary, and intersex people), sexual orientation (heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, other such as asexuality, pansexuality, demisexuality and unidentifiable).

Another group of variables quantified the narrative aspects of the characters. The coders were asked to determine the type of character (principal, secondary or background) and, based on the Mastro & Greenberg (2000) typology, with readapted definitions, if the character had definite goals to achieve in the film and if these were related to their personal environment or their work and their personality traits. We used the study by Igartua (1998) to verify, on a three-point scale, the relevance of some characteristics in each character (good, disloyal or treacherous, aggressive, intelligent, intolerant, to which we added charismatic, irresponsible, maternal/paternal, brave, weak, fraternal and wicked), and if the character was hypersexualized, based on the presence of at least three concepts found by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (2014): (a) sexually suggestive clothing, (b) gratuitous nudity (partial or total), (c) female thinness / male musculature, and (d) sex-appeal, to which we added (e) Fragmentation of some erotic scene when editing or through framing.

Also, the character's interaction with other characters was coded to observe whether that interaction was related mainly to men, women, and non-binary characters or if it could not be identified. Additionally, based on criteria adapted from the Bechdel-Wallace Test (1986), we coded whether the character spoke with other characters of the same gender.

Intercoders Reliability

The coding was carried out by three judges who applied the same categories and thus avoided differing interpretations that may affect the correct development of the research and may lead to incorrect results (Igartua, 2006). The coding of the units of analysis was done by three coders trained in the use of the coding instrument, which led to certain modifications to the codebook and the coding form so that the coders could better deal with the different variables considered in this study. Several phases of work were enforced with the team of coders to acquire the necessary skills to perform good coding and for the reliability to be as high as possible to obtain solid and reliable data.

The first step they took was a careful reading of the codebook, and in a joint meeting, they addressed doubts and incidents. Subsequently, they coded a film used as a pilot, which was verified. Likewise, the reliability of this coding process was calculated to confirm the consistency of the method used. Given the high reliability, the coding of the entire corpus was completed. Once this was done, the reliability of the total sample was calculated. Another coder acted as an inter-judge to analyze the variables' reliability by estimating the intercoder reliability using the 16.89% of the corpus and following the recommendations of Igartua (2006) in this respect, including "a sample composed of 10%-20% of the units of analysis to be analyzed independently, based on the same material, by two or more coders". Three films, including 79 characters, were coded for this process.

Subsequently, the coder agreement was calculated using Krippendorff's Alpha and the observed percentage of agreement. For the first one, 50 of the variables considered yielded reliability outcomes above.60; thus, the data was highly positive. Other 23 variables were regarded as reliable using the Observed Percentage of Agreement—above.80—(Table 2). Six variables presented low reliability: "Violent behavior: hostile comments,"

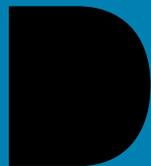


“Victim of violent behavior: intimidation,” “Victim of violent behavior: hostile comments,” “Topic conversation: Empowerment,” “Personality trait: Brave,” and “Where the character lives / with whom he lives.”²

Table 2. Intercoder reliability

Nº	Variable	Reliability	Nº	Variable	Reliability
1	Type of character	α 1	44	Topic conversation: Sex	α 0.91
2	Gender of the character	α 0.74	45	Topic conversation: Money	α 0.81
3	Sexual orientation of the character	α 1	46	Topic conversation: Chauvinism	α 0.90
4	Age group	α 0.65	47	Topic conversation: Occupation	α 0.61
5	Educational level of the character	α 0.8	48	Topic conversation: Health	α 0.62
6	Nationality	PAo 0.83	49	Topic conversation: Education	α 0.69
7	Geographical origin	α 0.90	50	Topic conversation: Family	α 0.64
8	Ethnicity	α 0.93	51	Topic conversation: Politics	α 0.77
9	Socioeconomic level of the character	α 1	52	Topic conversation: Sports	PAo 0.86
10	Religious practice	PAo 0.86	53	Topic conversation: Racism	α 0.7
11	Character’s occupation	α 0.79	54	Topic conversation: Immigration	PAo 0.92
12	Civil status of the character	α 0.74	55	Topic conversation: Empowerment	α 0.11
13	Change in character’s civil status throughout the program	PAo 0.81	56	Personality trait: friendly	α 0.75
14	The character has objectives related to the personal sphere	α 1	57	Personality trait: open (extrovert)	PAo 0.80
15	The character has objectives related to the workplace	α 0.69	58	Personality trait: good (kind-hearted)	α 0.70

2 “Another controversy involves Alpha, Pi, and Kappa and the fact that they can produce very low coefficients even when levels of simple agreement are high (Feng, 2015; Gwet, 2008; Zhao et al., 2012), which can occur when data distributions are skewed (e.g., most of the coded units are in one category; see Riffe et al., 2014). Krippendorff (2013b) labelled this ‘insufficient variation’ (p. 319), writing that such data ‘cannot be correlated with anything either, their analytical meanings are largely void, and they cannot convey sufficient information from the analyzed text to the research question’ (p. 320). That conclusion seems to ignore the fact that there have been, and will continue to be, populations with skewed distributions of categories that are nonetheless important to study” (Lovejoy et al., 2016, pp. 4-5).



N°	Variable	Reliability	N°	Variable	Reliability
16	The character pursues their objectives actively	PAo 0.87	59	Personality trait: disloyal or treacherous	αk 0.83
17	The character pursues their objectives passively	PAo 0.83	60	Personality trait: unfair	αk 0.77
18	The character pursues their goals through sex	PAo 0.93	61	Personality trait: aggressive	αk 0.94
19	The character pursues their objectives through violence	αk 0.6	62	Personality trait: intelligent	αk 0.60
20	The character pursues their objectives through ethics	αk 0.90	63	Personality trait: worker	αk 0.71
21	The character is hypersexualized	αk 0.73	64	Personality trait: grateful	PAo 0.86
22	The character has interactions with other characters	αk 1	65	Personality trait: conflictive	PAo 0.81
23	The character speaks with other characters of the same gender	αk 0.89	66	Personality trait: racist	αk 0.60
24	If the character identifies as a woman, she talks to other women about something other than men	PAo 0.8	67	Personality trait: intolerant	PAo 0.8
25	If the character identifies as a man, he talks to other men about women	PAo 0.8	68	Personality trait: seductive	PAo 0.84
26	Violent behavior: major physical attacks	αk 1	69	Personality trait: irresponsible	αk 0.74
27	Violent behavior: minor physical attacks	αk 0.64	70	Personality trait: maternal/paternal	αk 0.74
28	Violent behavior: damage to property	αk 0.8	71	Personality trait: weak	PAo 0.86
29	Violent behavior: intimidation	PAo 0.97	72	Personality trait: perverse	αk 0.69
30	Violent behavior: hostile comments	αk 0.58	73	Personality trait: Brave	PAo.64
31	Victim of violent behavior: major physical attacks	αk 1	74	The character has some kind of functional diversity	αk 1
32	Victim of violent behaviour: minor physical attacks	PAo 0.94	75	Type of functional diversity of the character	αk 1
33	Victim of violent behavior: damage to property	PAo 0.96	76	Where the character lives / with whom he lives	PAo 1.00
34	Victim of violent behavior: intimidation	αk 0.49	77	Represented by an actor/actress with functional diversity	PAo 1.00



Nº	Variable	Reliability	Nº	Variable	Reliability
35	Victim of violent behavior: hostile comments	α 0.41	78	Two or more characters with functional diversity talk to each other	PAo 1.00
36	Drinks alcohol	α 0.82	79	Bygone era	α 1.00
37	Smokes tobacco	α 0.65			
38	Does drugs	α 1			
39	Use illegal drugs	α 1			
40	Has an eating behaviour problem	α 1			
41	Love	α 0.64			
42	Violence	α 0.76			
43	Friendship	α 0.76			

Source: Own elaboration.

Results

RQ1. Is there an underrepresentation of female characters in Spanish films from 2018 and 2019?

Among the 30 Spanish films analyzed, there were 468 characters, of which 53.8% were men ($n = 252$) and 46.2% were women ($n = 216$). According to data from the National Institute of Statistics, women in Spanish society represented 50.98% of the total population in 2019. Thus, the number of female characters in Spanish films is 4.78% less than women in real Spanish society. Therefore, it was concluded that the proportion of female characters in the sample is lower than the female population in Spain. There is indeed an underrepresentation of female characters.

RQ1.1. Compared to works by female directors, is there a significant difference in the number of female characters in male-directed films?

After verifying the representation of female characters, it was validated if the gender of the director influenced the gender of the characters. The t-test for independent samples was used to compare the variable “director’s gender” with the variable “character’s gender” to test for significant differences, taking the first one as the grouping variable. After comparing the variables (Table 3), it can first be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between them ($t [486] = -0.641$; $p < 0.523$), and neither does a statistically significant relationship ($\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 0.412$; $p < 0.522$). Although the proportion of female characters in male-directed works is 2.9% lower, there is no statistically significant difference. Both the female characters in the works of male directors



(44.7%) and of female directors (47.6%) are less than 50.98% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019)—the percentage of women in the population of 2019. Therefore, it is concluded that the number of female characters in the works of male directors is not significantly different from that in works directed by women. There is also no statistical relationship between the director’s gender and the gender ratio in the film. There are different degrees of women underrepresentation in the works of male and female directors.

Table 3. Character’s gender comparison (%)

	Director’s gender		Total	
	Male	Female		
Character’s gender	Male	55.3	52.4	53.8
	Female	44.7	47.6	46.2

$(\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 0.412; p < 0.522).$

Source: Own elaboration,

RQ2. Is there a statistically significant difference in the main sociodemographic aspects of the characters (sexual orientation, age, educational level, socioeconomic level, nationality, country of origin, ethnicity...) in male-directed films compared with female-directed ones?

A statistically significant relationship was found between the gender of the director and the sexual orientation of the characters ($\chi^2 [2, n = 414] = 6.120; p < 0.05$), indicating that female directors tend to include more LGBT+ characters (6.9%) than male directors (1.9%). There was also a significant relationship between the gender of the filmmaker and the age of the characters ($\chi^2 [4, n = 468] = 24,873; p < .00$): male-directed films have more children (6% vs. 2.6%) and elders (11.5% vs. 5.2%). Regarding nationality, female filmmakers tend to include more migrants than males’ ($\chi^2 [2, n = 464] = 6,911; p < .05$), and their cast is less Spanish ($\chi^2 [4, n = 465] = 14,213; p < .005$). Concurrently, women directors include fewer Caucasian characters than men ($\chi^2 [5, n = 466] = 11,334; p < .05$). However, there was no statistical relevance between the gender of the director and other sociodemographic aspects such as educational and socioeconomic level of the characters or religious practice.

RQ3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the type of occupations of the characters in male-directed films compared with female-directed ones?

The third research question wanted to check if there is a statistically significant relationship between the gender of the directors and the job occupations carried out by the characters in the films in the sample. A crosstab analysis was made between the variables “director’s gender” and “occupation.” After comparing the occupations of female characters in the works of male and female directors, it can be observed that there is no statistically significant



relationship between the employment of female characters and the director’s gender ($\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 0.412; p < .174$). However, the following table (Table 4) shows that the proportion of technicians and businesswomen in male-directed films (15.5%) is less than that of the works of female directors (25.3%). Furthermore, among movies by male directors, the frequency of female students (22.6%) is much higher than that of films by female directors (5.3%).

Table 4. Relationship between director’s gender and female character’s occupation (%)

Occupation	Director’s gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Manager or professional	3.6	2.7	3.1
Technician or middle management	15.5	25.3	20.1
Office or services employee	14.3	6.7	10.7
Student	22.6	5.3	14.5
Unpaid domestic work	1.2	4	2.5

($\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 0.412; p < .174$)

Source: Own elaboration.

RQ4. Compared with works by female directors, is there a statistically significant difference in the type of narrative objectives (personal/work goals) of female characters in male-directed films?

After comparing the personal and work goals of the female characters in the male-directed films, we concluded that there are statistically significant differences between them ($\chi^2 [2, n = 53] = 15.373; p < 0.001$): 39% of the female characters in male-directed movies have personal goals, and 22.9% have work goals. Therefore, female characters pay more attention to personal than work goals in films directed by men.

To analyze whether this phenomenon is related to the director’s gender, a crosstab analysis was made between the variable “objectives of female characters” and “director’s gender.” Data show that there is no statistical relationship between the director’s gender and the goals of female characters ($\chi^2 [2, n = 113] = 0.002; p < 0.966$), ($\chi^2 [2, n = 112] = 0.053; p < 0.818$). Therefore, among these cases, the objectives of the female characters in films directed by men are not significantly different from that of the female characters in women-directed movies.



RQ5. Are characters more likely to be aggressors or victims of violence in male-directed films compared with female-directed ones?

The cross-table analysis between “director’s gender” and “violent behavior” (Table 5) shows that there is no statistically significant relationship between the gender of the director and the performance of acts of violence ($\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 2.951; p < 0.086$).

Table 5. Relationship between director’s gender and acts of violence (%)

		Director’s gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Acts of violence	No	74.3	83.8	79.2
	Yes	25.7	16.2	20.8

($\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 2.951; p < 0.086$)

Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, a cross-table analysis was conducted between the variables “gender of director” and “victim of violence.” According to the results (Table 6), there is no statistically significant relationship between the gender of the director and being a victim of violence ($\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 0.421; p < 0.517$).

Table 6. Relationship between director’s gender and victim of violence (%)

		Director’s gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Victim of violence	No	81.9	78.4	80.1
	Yes	18.1	21.6	19.9

($\chi^2 [2, n = 468] = 0.421; p < 0.517$)

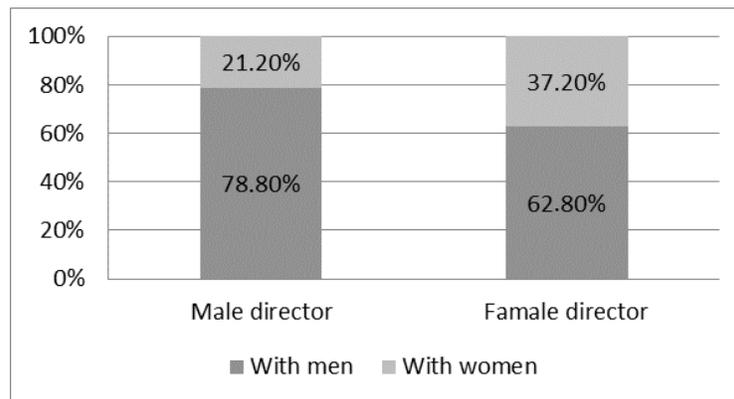
Source: Own elaboration.

It was concluded that characters in male-directed films are not likelier to be victims of violence than in the works of female directors. Thus, the directors’ gender is not related to the acts of violence of the characters.

RQ6. Is there a significant difference in the interaction of the characters with male or female characters in male-directed films compared to female-directed ones?

A cross-table analysis was applied to analyze the connection between the director’s gender and the interaction of the characters. Through data comparison, it can be said that the frequency of characters interacting mainly with men in male-directed movies (78.8%) is 16% higher than in the films directed by women (62.8%) ($\chi^2 [1, n = 448] = 13.851; p < 0.000$). Consequently, compared to the work of female directors, in the creations of male directors, the frequency of dialogue between female and male characters is significantly higher (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Relationship between director’s gender and interaction of female characters



Source: Own elaboration.

Discussion

In Spain, women represent 50.98% of the population. However, female characters in the Spanish films analyzed in this study represent 46.2%, so it can be affirmed that there is still an underrepresentation of female characters compared with Spanish society. Furthermore, female directors tend to include more LGBTQ+ characters than male directors but fewer children and elders. They also tend to portray more migrants and non-Caucasians than men. Nevertheless, no statistical significance was found between the gender of the director and the educational and socioeconomic level of the character or its religious practice.

No statistically significant differences were found between the type of work of female characters and the sex of the director. But there are substantial differences in the proportion of female characters in technical positions or as businesswomen, which remains significantly lower than in the case of female-directed films (15.5% vs. 22.6%, respectively). Despite these data, the frequency of female students is much higher in films by male directors, representing 22.6% (5.3% in the case of films by female directors). The data obtained also allow us to know how they relate to other characters, what type of actions they carry out, for what purpose or if there is any relationship with violence.



The results show statistically significant differences between female characters' personal and work-related objectives in men-directed productions: 39% have personal objectives, while 22.9% have work-related goals. These results indicate that specific structural differences are maintained in the construction of characters through work relationships and affective expressions. Moreover, the relationship between femaleness and the world of feelings or emotions persists, which includes elements such as family, motherhood, or personal relationships. Conversely, this study also shows that the masculine sphere is more frequently associated with professional development.

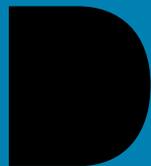
Regarding the analysis of violence, no statistically relevant data were found that relate the director's gender to the characters who are victims of violence in the films analyzed. Violence has traditionally been used as a narrative resource, and scenes in which women are victims of violence and men carry out violent acts are very common. In this case, it has been found that in the films analyzed, women do not suffer more violent attacks than men. In this sense, the same tendency is maintained as in previous studies on Spanish fiction with a gender perspective, such as the one developed by De Caso et al. (2020), in which no distinctions were found in the victimization rate.

Finally, regarding character interaction, the data show that in male-directed films, characters interact more with men (78.8%) than in women-directed ones (62.8%). These data could indicate the continuation of some patterns in the traditional film relationship between men and women, such as sex, love, or physical attraction, in which it is widespread to build female characters around a man and the emotions aroused by this relationship.

Conclusions

The gender gap is a reality in almost all areas of society. Cinema is no exception to this imbalance between men and women, and it greatly influences the portrayal of characters. In the last decade, there have been numerous advances to end this inequality. However, today women still hold far fewer positions of responsibility, especially in directing and screenwriting, two key professions in creating plots and characters. The latest data offered by the Association of Women Filmmakers and Audiovisual Media (CIMA, 2021) are alarming and show that female directors are still a minority. Of the 280 films released in 2021 in Spain, only 12% were directed by women. This report by CIMA (2021) also highlights that these figures are similar in the rest of the film professions. In 2021, women represented only 32% of the total number of professionals in the film sector, compared to 68% of men. Inequality goes further and has repercussions on aspects such as access to economic resources to produce films, as films directed by women receive half the funding of those directed by men (CIMA, 2021). This situation increases the difficulties for the professional development of female filmmakers but does not improve representativeness. As Bernárdez-Rodal and Padilla-Castillo (2018) remember, "the exclusion of women from the production and direction of movies also explains why cinema reinforces the symbolic invisibility in representation" (p. 1261). This context is not favorable for recognition and job projection. In Spain, female film directors are still a minority in the Goya nominations ("Las directoras de cine siguen siendo minoritarias", 2022). Specifically, in the 2022 edition, 46 women were nominated in 19 categories of the XXXV edition of the Goya Awards, four less than the previous year.

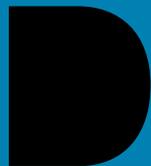
The problems addressed, such as those developed by CIMA, and the conclusions of this research reflect there is still not an egalitarian scenario, and many changes are needed. There are considerable differences in power in the cinematographic structure by gender, and the data on representation in the contents show the work that still needs to be done by the institutions and the sector itself (Marquès & Sánchez, 2020). Therefore, it is particularly



relevant to study the implications of this unequal context on the construction of stories and their protagonists, especially in assigning possible roles and stereotypical characters' representation. In other words, is the fact that there are fewer women in the construction and production of audio-visual products linked to the representation, in quantity and quality, of female characters in these stories? The development of this article has allowed us to know the state of the representation of gender differences in Spanish cinema. The results show changes in the traditional way of representing men and women in cinema, but many stereotypes and roles continue. Society demands more changes, and cinema seems to be involved. That is why it will be desirable to continue with this research field to study the representation of characters in Spanish cinema from a gender perspective closely.

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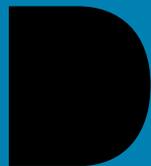
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