

Gender Representation in Subscription Video-On-Demand Spanish TV Series

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In recent years, the increasing popularity of video-on-demand (VOD) platforms has changed Spanish audiovisual consumption. The main objectives of this article are to analyze the representation of gender in VOD Spanish productions. We pay particular attention to whether there is underrepresentation of character types and gender stereotyping with respect to occupation, traits, attitudes, and conversations. In addition, we set out to verify whether the image of women is different in VOD platforms compared with generalist television channels. To this end, we carried out a quantitative content analysis on a sample of 760 characters from Spanish fiction series produced by VOD platforms, broadcast between 2017 and 2020. The results obtained prove that even though new audiovisual platforms tend to incorporate equality, the underrepresentation and stereotyping of female characters in terms of professional occupation, family, and emotions still exist.

Keywords: gender, character, Spanish TV fiction, VOD platform, content analysis

The present work expands on the analysis carried out by González-de-Garay, Marcos-Ramos, Portillo-Delgado (2019) and De-Caso-Bausela, González-de-Garay, and Marcos-Ramos (2020) on Spanish television series aired during prime time on the six main generalist channels during 2016, 2017, and 2018. Both studies detected the underrepresentation and stereotyping of women. This article aims to analyze whether there is a consistent move toward equality in the portrayal of women in VOD platforms or whether stereotypes are still present in this form of viewing. Consequently, a total of 760 characters ($n = 760$) from 38 episodes of 33 series, such as *Élite* (Movistar, 2018–19), *Las Chicas del Cable* (Netflix, 2017–19), *La Casa de Papel* (Netflix, 2017–20), *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (TVE, 2015–17; Netflix, 2018) and *Foodie Love* (HBO, 2019) were analyzed, among other series, broadcast on the streaming platforms Movistar, HBO, Amazon Prime, AtresPlayer Premium, and Netflix. The first step in this assessment was to check whether there was an unequal representation of male, female, and nonbinary characters in terms of gender stereotyping and underrepresentation with respect to occupations, topics of conversation, personality traits, violent attitudes, and character sexualization.

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On analyzing contemporary audiovisual fiction in Spain, we must consider paid streaming platforms because one of every four Spanish households has a subscription to at least one (Barlovento Comunicación 2019). According to the Estudio General de Medios (2019) “barely existing in 2015, [platforms] have come to be present in 38% of households in the final wave of 2019” (p. 13). Among these platforms, Netflix (2.2 million households) and Movistar (2 million households) are the most popular (Ruiz de Elvira, 2019). Although data about the audiences for these platforms is inconsistent, the information that is available suggests that the number of viewers is significant—for example, the first episode of the original Movistar series *La Línea Invisible* (Movistar, 2020) was watched by 596,000 viewers (Audiovisual 451, 2020). Additionally, it is also relevant to analyze the audiovisual fiction produced by VOD platforms given their increasing popularity, the importance of television fiction in socialization processes, and their influence on conditioning the behavior of viewers. Audiovisual streaming platforms have not only increased the number of audiovisual products but have also had an influence on the nonconventional content being offered with respect to aesthetics and the variety of topics (Cascajosa, 2006; Lacalle, Gómez, Sánchez, & Pujol, 2019). In general, VOD platforms have had the tradition of producing bold, avant-garde, and even taboo content. “It’s not TV, it’s HBO” (Cascajosa, 2006, p. 23) could be the slogan for such a trend. In Spain, Domingo Corral, the content manager of Movistar Original, explained that the type of TV series they aim to produce “must have a good script, but we also pay lots of attention to the characters to avoid clichés or formulas” (López, 2018, p. 45). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze whether the representation of gender or minority groups is different from that of generalist television, which would help to identify whether *genderization* still occurs. Some studies claim (Galán-Fajardo, 2007) that fictional series, rather than being entertaining, present role models of identification that could have repercussions on society, as explained in Gerbner’s (1972) cultivation theory.

Literature Review

The analysis of how gender is portrayed in audiovisual fiction has recently become a prolific area of research (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2016; Lauzen, 2017; Smith, Choueiti, & Pieper, 2014, 2017). New technologies for automating the analysis of samples of exceptionally broad content are now being used to carry out different types of studies (Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, 2016; Ramakrishna, Martínez, Malandrakis, Singla, & Narayanan, 2017). However, manual content analysis continues to be a commonly used method in this field (for a revision, see Rudy, Popova, & Linz, 2010, 2011).

Within a Spanish context, studies on streaming platforms are scarce. Nevertheless, Castro and Cascajosa (2020) analyze how subscription VOD services (SVOD) have transformed Spanish TV production and emphasize that “in 2018 the SVOD platforms offered almost the same number of seasons as Spain’s Generalist television channels—15 programs for SVODs, compared with sixteen for the broadcasters—although with fewer episodes (103 versus 202) and of shorter length” (p. 156). In June 2018, one of every three families with an Internet connection in their home paid a subscription to a VOD platform (CNMC, 2018) and the income was 1,111.84 euros, which represented an increase of 6.2% with respect to the last year and 19% with respect to free-to-air television (CNMC, 2018). Therefore, VOD is one of the viewing options that is gaining ground in society, in terms of a preference for consuming audiovisual content, and is a topic that requires further study.

Higuera-Ruiz (2019) examined the role of women in HBO series and confirmed an increase in the number of female showrunners. The results from this study show how feminist issues are becoming more prevalent in different types of series, findings that are in line with the need for creating more positive images for women in real life. Nonetheless, gender inequalities within these platforms still exist, because only 26% of showrunners are female.

Among the research studies carried out on Spanish TV productions, differences in gender with respect to the representation of aggressors and victims of violence have been explored, as acts of violence are often associated with male behavior (Fernández-Villanueva, Revilla-Castro, Domínguez-Bilbao, Gimeno-Jiménez, & Almagro, 2009; Masanet, Medina-Bravo, & Ferrés, 2018). By contrast, women are still represented through their family, home, and social relationships; their personal goals are often associated with motherhood and their professions are generally associated with lower status jobs (Álvarez-Hernández, González-de-Garay, & Frutos-Esteban, 2015; Galán-Fajardo, 2007; García-Muñoz, Fedele, & Gómez-Díaz, 2012; Lacalle & Gómez, 2016; Menéndez, 2014). Furthermore, women are sometime negatively characterized in work situations, where ambition is frowned upon and physical beauty is an attribute of power (Tous-Rovirosa & Aran-Ramspott, 2017). Fernández, Gil, and Segado (2011) conclude that women continue to be portrayed as mothers and caregivers of children; although they are also associated with positive traits that highlight their independence. Feminine stereotypes also show an overrepresentation of sexuality, as the sexual activity of female characters is determined by attractiveness and age and the fact that women must satisfy men (Lacalle & Castro, 2017). Moreover, González-de-Garay and partners (2019) found an underrepresentation of women as well as an overrepresentation of cisgender and straight characters in their research on Spanish prime time free-to-air TV shows. These findings, however, pertain not only to Spain, as various studies carried out internationally have shown that women are underrepresented in different types of media (Hether & Murphy, 2010; Matud, Rodríguez, & Espinosa, 2011; Smith, Pieper, Granados, & Choueiti, 2010). They are often sexualized (Mager & Helgeson, 2010) and are portrayed as nonprofessionals, housewives, wives, or mothers and sexual objects (Kahlenberg & Hein, 2010; Mager & Helgeson, 2010; Neuendorf, Gore, Dalessandro, Janstova, & Snyder-Suhy, 2010). Also, stereotypes still exist about the types of jobs held by women, often requiring fewer qualifications, in contrast to those held by men, who often hold executive positions. Furthermore, female characters usually have goals that are more personally related, as opposed to male characters, whose goals are more work oriented. In sum, it is essential, at national and international levels, to consider the way in which women are represented in fiction to avoid augmenting negative stereotypes, which occur worldwide and not in just one country.

Ruiz Muñoz and Pérez-Rufí (2020) differentiate two stages in the production and distribution of female ensemble cast series in Spain, including *Mujeres* (La 2, 2006), *Seis Hermanas* (La 1, 2015–17), and *La Otra Mirada* (La 1, 2018–19), among others, from the total sample of eight productions. The first stage includes the years 1991 until the first half of 2014, and the second season begins in 2014–15. The authors claim that the recent production of female ensemble casts series shows a trend in current production that may respond to a demand for specific content by an audience that wants products made according to their tastes and preferences. Furthermore, López Rodríguez and Raya Bravo (2019) recognize that from 2010 onward there have been many female screenwriters, directors, and executive producers in Spain, and “the popularity of video on demand also contributed to the increasing dispersion of Spanish viewers and the production of innovative, niche TV shows targeted at more specific sectors of society” (p. 967). They analyze

the case of Teresa Fernández-Valdés as a showrunner and conclude that her collaboration with Netflix led to the inclusion of "themes and topics rarely seen on previous TV series broadcasted by Spanish stations such as women's sorority, polyamory, and non-binary sexual identities" (López Rodríguez & Raya Bravo, 2019, p. 973). However, Castro and Cascajosa (2020) point out that "even though the popular press has linked Netflix original productions to narrative innovation and creative freedom, creators suggest that the levels of freedom are quite similar to those offered by Spanish broadcasters" (p. 159). Also, with respect to audiences, Spanish women consume more generalist channels/DTT ($p = .014$) than men, but there are no statistical differences regarding Pay TV ($p = .054$; Araújo Vila, Fraiz Brea, & Cardoso, 2019).

Based on the contributions and gaps in the theoretical corpus reviewed above, and owing to the lack of studies that analyze the fiction available on VOD, four hypotheses and seven research questions related to the narrative level of contemporary Spanish television series broadcast on platforms have been proposed:

- H1: There will be an underrepresentation of female characters compared with male characters, and, therefore, compared with the population distribution. There will also be an underrepresentation of homosexuality, bisexuality, and other sexual orientations.*
- H2: Men will significantly outnumber women in high-status positions, and female characters will focus more on personal than on work-related goals in comparison with male characters.*
- H3: Male characters will tend to exhibit more violent attitudes than female characters will, who tend to be portrayed as victims.*
- H4: Female characters will be characterized by more positive personality traits compared with males.*

This study will also attempt to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: Are there significant differences between the data collected from Spanish production series distributed on VOD platforms and of that collected from generalist television regarding gender representation and actual population demographics?*
- RQ2: Are there differences between the representation of sexual orientation and actual population demographics?*
- RQ3: Are there significant differences between the data collected from Spanish production series distributed on VOD platforms and that collected from generalist television with respect to the characters' professions, personal goals, and gender?*
- RQ4: Are there significant differences between the data collected from Spanish production series distributed on VOD platforms and that collected from generalist television in terms of violence and victimization?*

RQ5: Are there significant differences between the data collected from Spanish production series distributed on VOD platforms and that collected from generalist television with respect to the characters' personality traits?

RQ6: Do female characters experience more hypersexualization than male characters?

RQ7: Are there significant differences between the data collected from Spanish production series distributed on VOD platforms and of that collected from generalist television regarding character hypersexualization?

Method

The content analysis allows to "scientifically approach the analysis of messages (regardless of its nature), understand their genesis and formation process, and obtain accurate descriptions of their structure and components" (Igartua, 2006, p. 180).

To examine how gender is represented in Spanish production series broadcast on VOD platforms and to determine whether there is inequality in the way that male, female, and nonbinary characters are portrayed, a quantitative methodology was proposed through content analysis. The coding was done by several judges who all applied the same categories, to avoid disparate interpretations that may affect carrying out the research, leading to incorrect results (López-Noguerro, 2002).

Sample

A quantitative content analysis was carried out on a sample of 33 series broadcast from 2017 to 2020, analyzing 38 episodes and 760 characters on the following platforms: Movistar, HBO, Amazon Prime, Netflix, and AtresPlayer. The episodes were chosen randomly to avoid sampling bias (Igartua, 2006) and to ensure that uncontaminated and reliable results were obtained. To do so, one episode from two seasons for each series was randomly selected, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1. Description of the Sample.

ID	Year	Platform	Series	Episode	Characters
1	2019	Netflix	<i>Alta Mar</i>	S01E05 La tormenta	23
2	2019	Netflix	<i>Alta Mar</i>	S02E01 Casandra	27
3	2018	Movistar	<i>Arde Madrid</i>	S01E07 Dios es Dios y yo soy yo	16
4	2018	Movistar	<i>Capítulo 0</i>	S02E04 Criminal Friends	19
5	2017	Movistar	<i>Conquistadores: Adventum</i>	S01E01 Las llaves del mar	21
6	2019	Netflix	<i>Criminal</i>	S01E02 Carmen	7
7	2019	Netflix	<i>Días de Navidad</i>	S01E01 Capitulo 1	13
8	2019	Movistar	<i>El día de Mañana</i>	S01E01 Episodio 1	28
9	2019	Movistar	<i>El Embarcadero</i>	S01E04 Episodio 4	12
10	2018	Netflix	<i>El Ministerio del Tiempo</i>	S03E03 Tiempo de hechizos	21
11	2019	AtresPlayer	<i>El Nudo</i>	S01E01 Veritas Solve	20
12	2020	Netflix	<i>El Vecino</i>	S01E07	12
13	2018	Netflix	<i>Élite</i>	S01E04 El amor es una droga	29
14	2019	Netflix	<i>Élite</i>	S02E06 66 horas desaparecido	26
15	2019	Movistar	<i>En el corredor de la muerte</i>	S01E04 2008–2019	19
16	2018	Movistar	<i>Félix</i>	S01E02 Episodio 2	14
17	2019	HBO	<i>Foodie Love</i>	S01E01 Esto es Francia	10
18	2018	Movistar	<i>Gigantes</i>	S02E05 Mar eterno	27
19	2019	Netflix	<i>Hache</i>	S01E06 Marsella	24
20	2019	Movistar	<i>Hierro</i>	S01E01 Episodio 1	26
21	2019	Movistar	<i>Instinto</i>	S01E04 Episodio 4	22
22	2019	Movistar	<i>Justo Antes de Cristo</i>	S01E06 Cornelio Pison	20
23	2019	Netflix	<i>La Casa de papel</i>	S03E06 Nada tenía importancia	29
24	2020	Netflix	<i>La Casa de papel</i>	S04E03 Lección de anatomía	22
25	2018	Movistar	<i>La Peste</i>	S02E04 El esclavo	26
26	2017	Movistar	<i>La Zona</i>	S01E08 El último lobo	25
27	2017	Movistar	<i>Las Chicas del Cable</i>	S01E08 El amor	18
28	2019	Movistar	<i>Las Chicas del Cable</i>	S04E07 La felicidad	24
29	2018	Movistar	<i>Matar al padre</i>	S01E02 2004	21
30	2019	Movistar	<i>Merli</i>	S01E05 Bizitza (la vida)	16
31	2018	Movistar	<i>Mira lo que has hecho</i>	S02E02 El hijo de Berto	29
32	2019	Netflix	<i>Paquita Salas</i>	S03E04 Viral	11
33	2018	Netflix	<i>Paquita Salas</i>	S02E03 El Secreto	18
34	2018	Amazon Prime	<i>Pequeñas Coincidencias</i>	S01E04 Noche de San Juan	16
35	2018	Movistar	<i>Skam España</i>	S02E11 Fin	11
36	2017	Movistar	<i>Velvet Colección</i>	S02E03 La emperatriz	22
37	2017	Movistar	<i>Vergüenza</i>	S02E05 Distintos tipos de personas	19
38	2019	Movistar	<i>Vida perfecta</i>	S01E07 Cuando todo se derrumba	17

Materials

The character analysis focused on humans, excluding animals, aliens, fantasy, science fiction, and cartoon characters. Only those characters visually present throughout the program and engaging in dialogue were taken into account (Koeman, Peeters, & D'Haenens, 2007).

To analyze the selected sample, an 18-page code book was prepared that included a total of 92 variables distributed into 11 different groups. In addition, a coding form was prepared and used to collect the appropriate data for each of the categories according to the variables and the items included the study (Álvarez-Hernández et al., 2015; Marcos-Ramos, 2014; Neuendorf, 2002).

The main concepts analyzed in this work are (a) the gender diversity and sexual orientation of the characters; (b) their relevance in the story and the type of roles and functions they represented; (c) the environment in which their interactions and social relations took place; and (d) their main personality traits. The analysis of these concepts was used to determine how the characters were represented throughout the development of the plot.

Each character was first coded based on general data: (1.1) gender (male, female, trans, nonbinary, intersex) and (1.2) sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and other types such as asexual, pansexual, demisexual, and unidentifiable).

Another group of variables was used to quantify the narrative level of the characters. The coders were asked to determine (2.1) the *type of character* (principal, secondary, or background); (2.2) if the character had *definite goals* to achieve in the episode and if these were (2.2.1) related to their *personal environment* or (2.2.2) related to their *work*; and (2.3) *personality traits*. In addition, we used the study by Igartua et al. (1998) to verify, on a 3-point scale, the relevance of some types of character traits (good, disloyal or treacherous, aggressive, intelligent, intolerant, to which we added charismatic, irresponsible, maternal/paternal, brave, weak, fraternal, and wicked), and (2.4) *if the character was hypersexualized*. This was based on the presence of at least three concepts established by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (Smith et al., 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 interaction of the character with other characters was coded to determine (3.1) whether their interaction was mainly related (a) to men, (b) to women, (c) to nonbinary characters, or (d) to a not clearly identified gender; and (3.2) whether the character spoke with other characters of the same gender. Furthermore, the coders had to apply the following codes to the characters who talked with others of the same gender to establish the importance of the opposite sex in their conversations: (3.2.1) *female characters talked to other women about something other than men*; and (3.2.2) *male characters talked to other men about women*.

Procedure

Establishing a coding system is necessary, as this method allows raw data to be systematically transformed into units that allow a more accurate description of the characteristics of the subject matter (Abela, 2011). The coding was carried out by several judges who all applied the same categories to avoid disparate interpretations that may affect carrying out the research, leading to incorrect results (López-Noguero, 2002). The coding of the analysis units was carried out by five coders who were trained in the use of the coding instrument. This led to certain modifications in the codebook and the codes, so that the judges could better assess the different variables they had to consider.

After this process, another coder acted as the interjudge, who analyzed the reliability of the study variables by calculating the intercoder reliability. For this, 15% of the sample was used. This approach followed the recommendations of Igartua (2006), who established "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" (p. 218). Five series were coded in this analysis: *La Peste* (Movistar, 2018), *Mira lo que has hecho* (Movistar, 2018–19), *Conquistadores: Adventum* (Movistar, 2017), *Élite* (Netflix, 2018–present) and *Alta Mar* (Netflix, 2019).

Subsequently, coder agreement was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha and the observed percentage of agreement. From the first calculation, 27 of the variables considered yielded reliability outcomes above 0.75 (*SD*: 2.12); thus, the data were highly positive, and none of the variables were below 0.60. An additional 25 variables were considered using the observed percentage of agreement,¹ and only five variables were below 75%, an amount suitable for continuing with this study, as shown in Table 2. Three variables presented low reliability: He or she pursues their objectives through ethics; Personality trait—worker; and Personality trait—seducer.

¹ "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, Watson, Lacy, & Riffe, 2016, pp. 4–5).

Table 2. Relation Between Gender and Occupation.

Occupation	Gender		Total %
	Male	Female	
Manager or professional	9.7	7.5	8.8
Technician or middle management	12.9	15	13.7
Office or services employee	3.2-	7+	4.7
Small business	2.9	3.7	3.2
Skilled worker	4.4	1,9	3.4
Unskilled worker	9.4	10.7	9.9
Farmer, livestock, fishing (primary sector)	2.1	4.2	2.9
Religious	1.5	0.5	1.1
Police and/or military	21.2+	7-	15.7
Sportsperson, artist, or entertainment professional	3.8-	11.2+	6.7
Retired and/or pensioner	0.6-	2.3+	1.3
Unemployed	1.2-	4.2+	2.3
Student	9.7	14	11.4
Unpaid domestic work	0-	0.9+	0.4
No stable occupation	0.9	1.4	1.1
Criminal activities	13.2+	6.1-	10.5
Other	3.2	2.3	2.9

*Note.*² - = value statistically lower than the total percentage (standard corrected residuals analysis); + = value statistically higher than the total percentage (standard corrected residuals analysis).

Results

The results related to H1, RQ1, and RQ2 about the number of characters classified according to gender identity, sexual orientation, and demographics, and after making a frequency table to calculate the percentage of female and male representation, showed that 57.4% ($n = 436$) were male characters, 41.8% ($n = 318$) were female characters, 0.5% ($n = 4$) were characters of nonbinary gender or any other third gender, and 0.3% ($n = 2$) were unidentified, as Figure 1 indicates. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE, 2019) the Spanish population, as of July 1, 2019, was 49.02% ($n = 23,089,389$) men and 50.98% ($n = 24,011,006$) women. Therefore, our results indicate that women are underrepresented by almost 10 percentage points, whereas men are overrepresented by 8 percentage points.

² For all tables, this legend will apply.

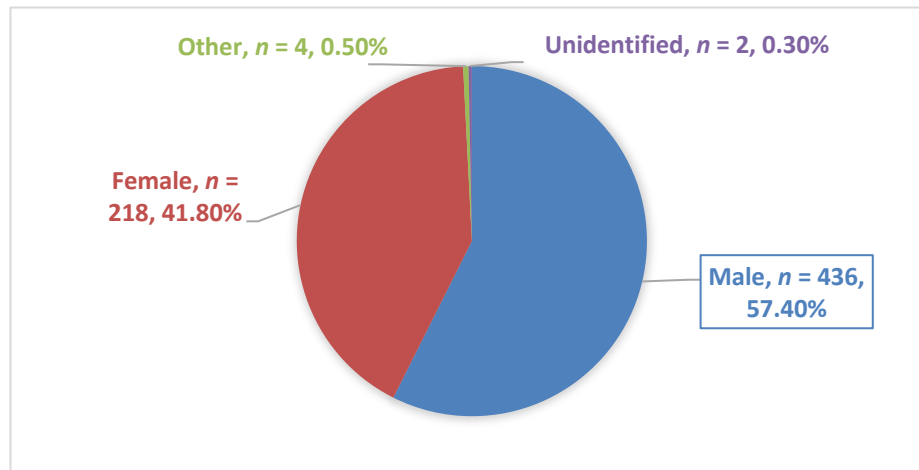


Figure 1. Gender frequency.

In the sample analyzed, 40.9% ($n = 311$) of the characters identified themselves as being heterosexual, compared with 2.9% ($n = 22$) who were homosexual characters and 0.8% ($n = 6$) who were bisexual characters, as Figure 2 shows. On the other hand, 0.3% ($n = 2$) of the characters were identified with other orientations, and 55.1% ($n = 419$) could not be clearly identified. Also, it was observed that there was an underrepresentation of nonheterosexual orientations, but only slightly since approximately 11% of the Spanish population identifies as belonging to the LGTB community (Control, 2017).

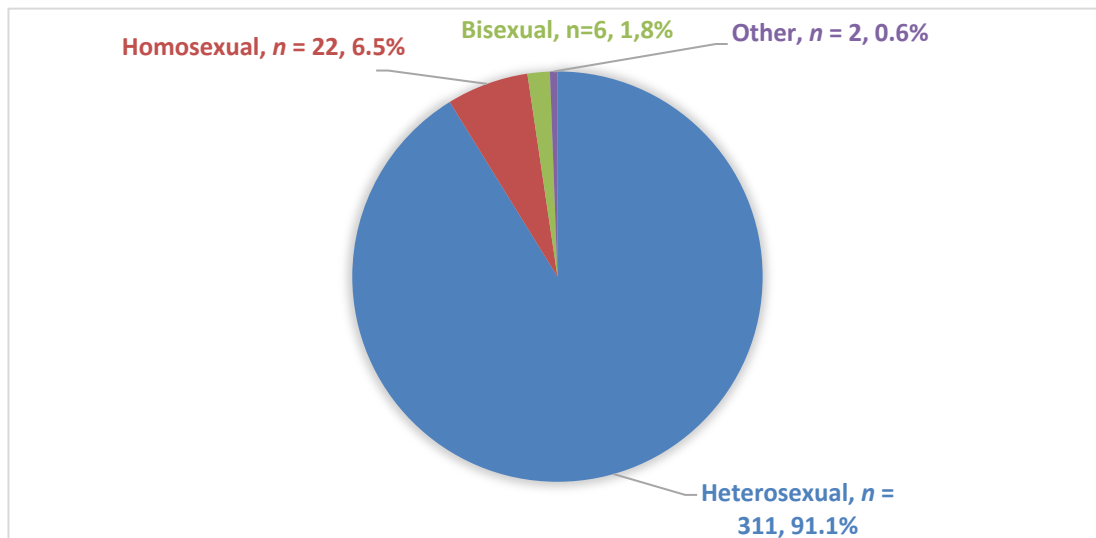


Figure 2. Sexual orientation.

González-de-Garay and colleagues (2019) have shown how there is an underrepresentation of women appearing on Spanish generalist television, which amounts to 36.8% in 2016 and the first half of

2017. Likewise, De-Caso-Bausela and associates (2020) have revealed that this figure rose to 40.7% in the second half of 2017 and 2018. Compared with what was found in this study, the series distributed on VOD platforms show a similar underrepresentation.

There were also some differences found regarding sexual orientation. While 2.5% of the characters were identified as nonheterosexual on generalist television (De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020), we found that 4% of the characters were nonheterosexual in the series on VOD platforms, which is considerably higher. However, this percentage is still below the actual demographics of Spain, according to the Control Barometer (Control, 2017), where 11% of the Spanish population identify themselves as being nonheterosexuals. Thus, among the characters whose sexual orientation could be coded ($n = 341$), 91.1% were heterosexual and 8.9% were nonheterosexual, which is approximately 2% below the demographic statistics.

For H2 and RQ3, regarding job status and work-related goals, significant differences were found when the gender variable was compared with occupation type using Pearson's contrast statistic: $\chi^2(16, n = 554) = 59.691, p < .000$. For example, there were several categories that showed a higher probability for women characters to hold certain positions such as an office worker (7% of women vs. 3.2% of men), sportsperson or artist (11.2% vs. 3.8%), a retiree or pensioner (2.3% vs. 0.6%), unemployed or underemployed person (4.2% vs. 1.2%), and an unpaid domestic worker (0.9% vs. 0%). However, the occupations with the highest professional status were not only occupied by men, as both sexes, in most cases, were found to hold these types of jobs.

In conclusion, the results obtained for the Spanish series broadcast on VOD platforms show that higher status professions are occupied by both sexes. However, the jobs requiring less professional training tend to be occupied by women.

As for personal goals, there was a statistical relationship based on gender, $\chi^2(1, n = 498) = 7.608, p < .006$, since women are more characterized as being driven by personal goals than men are. In fact, among the characters coded for this variable ($n = 498$), 70% ($n = 149$) of women had personal related goals as compared with 57.9% ($n = 165$) of men, as Table 3 shows.

Table 3. Relation Between Gender and Personal Goals.

Personal goals	Gender		Total %
	Male	Female	
No	42.1+	30-	36.9
Yes	57.9-	70+	63.1

Regarding topics of conversation, there was a significant relationship between gender and the topics of conversation such as love [$\chi^2(1, n = 754) = 7.451, p < .006$], violence [$\chi^2(1, n = 754) = 4.569, p < .033$] and work [$\chi^2(1, n = 754) = 3.856, p < .050$]. Thus, as can be seen in Table 4, gender was relevant when these types of topics were discussed. For the rest of the topics analyzed, such as friendship, sex, money, masculinity, environment, health, education, family, politics, sports, racism, immigration and empowerment, there was no relationship between gender and the topic of conversation.

As for the topic of conversation termed "love," women were more likely to talk about it, 30.8% ($n = 98$) as opposed to 22% ($n = 96$) of men. However, most of the characters do not discuss this subject, especially men: 78% ($n = 340$) male versus 69.2% ($n = 220$) female.

The topic termed "violence" was mostly related to male conversations, since 24.8% ($n = 108$) of men discussed the topic, and only 18.2% ($n = 58$) of the women talked about it. This indicated that the topic of "violence" was not mentioned by 81.8% ($n = 260$) of the women and 75.2% ($n = 328$) of the men.

The last topic termed "work" was found to be significantly related to gender, where 52.5% ($n = 229$) of men discussed work as opposed to 45.3% ($n = 144$) of women. As such, 47.5% ($n = 207$) of men and 54.7% ($n = 174$) of women were found to not discuss this topic.

Table 4. Relation Between Gender and Conversation Topics.

Topic		Gender		Total %
		Male	Female	
Love	No	78+	69.2-	74.3
	Yes	22-	30.8+	25.7
Violence	No	75.2-	81.8+	78
	Yes	24.8+	18.2-	22
Work	No	47.5-	54.7+	50.5
	Yes	52.5+	45.3-	49.5

If we compare these data to those collected from the analysis on generalist television series (De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020; González-de-Garay et al., 2019), we observed that the situation is quite similar to that of VOD platforms, since jobs requiring less professional training (unpaid domestic worker, unemployed, office staff, retired, etc.) were mostly represented by women actors. Female character also tended to have more personal related goals than men and female conversations were still oriented more toward the discussion of "love." Therefore, no major differences were found between series broadcasted on generalist channels and on VOD platforms regarding these variables and how female characters are portrayed.

Concerning H3 and RQ4, the hypothesis and research question associated with violent attitudes, significant differences between male and female characters were found regarding "Perform major physical attacks," $\chi^2(1, n = 754) = 4.027, p < .045$, and in "Perform acts of intimidation," $\chi^2(1, n = 754) = 9.039, p < .003$. Table 5 shows that the gender most related to the act of carrying out "major physical attacks" was male, because 4.6% ($n = 20$) of men carried out this type of behavior, compared with 1.9% ($n = 6$) of women. The same is true for "acts of intimidation," as this type of behavior was carried out by 8% of men ($n = 35$) compared with 2.8% of women ($n = 9$).

Table 5. Relation Between Gender and Violence.

		Gender		Total %
		Male	Female	
Major physical attacks	No	95.4-	98.1+	96.6
	Yes	4.6+	1.9-	3.4
Intimidation	No	92-	97.2+	94.2
	Yes	8+	2.8-	5.8

Therefore, H3 should be partially rejected because it was verified that men are more involved than women in some violent acts. However, it was not possible to verify that women are more frequently the victims of these acts, because none of the differences were statistically significantly.

The study by González-de-Garay and colleagues (2019) has confirmed that men are more prone to violent behavior and that women are most often their victims. Nevertheless, the subsequent study by the same authors (González-de-Garay et al., 2020) did not determine a masculinization of violence, because the violence and victimization rates were equal. Therefore, it can be concluded that the situation has improved, because the Spanish series broadcast on VOD platforms do not pigeonhole women as victims of violence.

Regarding H4 and RQ5, about personal attributes, significant differences were found associated with some personality traits and the characters' gender. As Table 6 shows, the following variables were more characteristic of men rather than women: "unfair," $\chi^2(2, n = 575) = 11.681, p < .003$, "aggressive," $\chi^2(2, n = 568) = 21.335, p < .000$, and "irresponsible," $\chi^2(2, n = 518) = 12.286, p < .002$.

Table 6. Relation Between Gender and Personality Traits.

		Gender		Total %
		Male	Female	
Unfair	Not characteristic	76.5-	87.6+	81.4
	Partially defines his/her personality	15.4+	7.6-	12
	Perfectly defines his/her personality	8+	4.8-	6.6
Aggressive	Not characteristic	77.7-	92+	84
	Partially defines his/her personality	13.8+	5.6-	10.2
	Perfectly defines his/her personality	8.5+	2.4-	5.8
Irresponsible	Not characteristic	79.9-	90.8+	84.7
	Partially defines his/her personality	13.5+	5.2-	9.8
	Perfectly defines his/her personality	6.6	3.9	5.4
Maternal/Paternal	Not characteristic	65.9+	51.5-	59.3
	Partially defines his/her personality	16.5	20	18.1
	Perfectly defines his/her personality	17.6-	28.5+	22.6

The only characteristic that stood out with respect to females was the "maternal/paternal trait," $\chi^2(2, n = 514) = 12.139, p < .002$, which is related to H4, where the result suggests that women are more preoccupied with their personal and private lives.

However, other personality traits, such as friendliness, openness (outgoing), kindness (good-hearted), disloyal or treacherous, intelligent, grateful, conflicted, racist, intolerant, seductive, weak, perverse, and courageous were not significantly related to gender.

Data from the Spanish series aired on generalist television during the second half of 2017 and 2018 (De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020) have shown that men are characterized as being "disloyal," "aggressive," "conflictive," and "irresponsible," whereas women tend to be defined as being "maternal," "intelligent," and "kind-hearted." Likewise, similar results and stereotypes were found in this study after analyzing characters in the Spanish series distributed on VOD platforms. That is to say, men are "aggressive" and "irresponsible," whereas women are "maternal."

In conclusion, some personality traits in the series broadcast on generalist television and on VOD platforms are still gender specific; although others personality traits are represented equally by both genders.

Finally, regarding character sexualization (RQ6 and RQ7), there was a statistically significant relationship between variables "gender" and "hypersexualization," $\chi^2(1, n = 742) = 5.452, p < .020$. It was observed that of the 427 men who were coded into this category, not one was hypersexualized. This was not, however, the case for the female characters shown in the Spanish series distributed on VOD platforms, because 1.3% ($n = 4$) of women were hypersexualized; therefore, the research question is answered affirmatively.

As for the series broadcast on generalist television in 2016 and the first half of 2017 (González-de-Garay et al., 2019), 3.8% of women and 0.7% of men were hypersexualized. While in the second half of 2017 and 2018 (De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020), hypersexualization involved 6.7% of women and 3% of men. Even though the hypersexualization of characters in the Spanish series distributed on VOD platforms is not that common, when hypersexualization does occur, it tends to happen to female characters (1.3%).

Discussion

This study has shown that, despite what was initially thought about the content offered on VOD platforms, that is, more heterogeneous material with greater diversity, women continue to be underrepresented in contemporary Spanish TV series broadcasted on streaming platforms. However, data on stereotyping are more promising compared with generalist television (González-de-Garay et al., 2019), as an increase in nonbinary characters has been reported (De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020; González-de-Garay et al., 2019). Nonetheless, there is still a shortage of nonheterosexual characters in the series shown on VOD platforms, although the percentage of characters whose orientation is nonheterosexual is higher with respect to previous studies (De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020; González-de-Garay et al., 2019). In general, underrepresentation persists because there are fewer nonheterosexual characters in television fiction than indicated by the statistical figures based on population demographics.

In addition, the representation of nonheterosexual characters has not been found on all VOD platforms, although Netflix Spain, for instance, is the platform that most includes LGBT characters, followed by Movistar. On the Amazon Prime platform, one character was identified as homosexual; on HBO, only two bisexual characters were identified; and on the AtresPlayer platform, no characters were identified to represent a nonheterosexual sexual orientation. A study by Carson Cook (2018) found that the representation of LGB characters increased from 1.4% (no transgender characters) in 2005–6 to 6.4% in 2017–18. In the latest report by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD, 2019), titled *Where We Are on TV 2019/2020*, we can see that 10.2% of prime-time television characters are LGBTQ. This substantial increase allows us to predict there will be an upward trend in the coming years (Smith et al., 2017), an aspect that should be analyzed in Spanish fiction television.

Regarding topics of conversation, “love” continues to be associated with the female characters shown in Spanish VOD series, with an increase of 0.2%. But in this study, “sex” does not appear to be a common topic among the conversations of men; “money,” “violence,” and “work” are topics still related to male characters; and the family continues to be related to female characters.

Unlike previous research by De-Caso-Bausela and associates (2020), females are more sexualized than male characters. However, the number of hypersexualized characters is so low that this phenomenon is statistically insignificant, although this data should be considered relevant since there has been a reduction in hypersexualization in generalist television, perhaps it is used as one more claim for the audience. As expected, there are more women than men with personal goals related to their private lives and interpersonal relationships. Also, TV characters with work-oriented goals are predominantly men. This aspect is virtually the same in Spanish fiction television broadcast on both generalist television and VOD platforms.

There is no masculinization of violent attitudes, although intimidation is mainly performed by men. These data substantiate the conclusions drawn by De-Caso-Bausela and colleagues (2020) about generalist television channels. However, they contradict those of González-de-Garay and partners (2019), as the results showed a higher rate of violence in male characters. Thus, these findings seem to reinforce the idea of separating the binomial man violence that had been propagated in Spanish fiction television.

Male characters still hold higher status jobs (such as businessman and director) and are police officers, military personnel, skilled workers, religious workers, or criminals. The data agree with previous reports about women who predominantly occupy positions such as office workers, athletes, artists, professional entertainment workers, retirees, unemployed, students and nonpaid domestic workers, as portrayed in generalist television (De-Caso-Bausela et al., 2020).

In conclusion, we observed a trend toward gender equality and more representation of the LGBT community in streaming platforms. However, there are aspects of underrepresentation, such as child rearing, or specific occupations that continue to be linked to women. On the other hand, behaviors that were once associated with men, such as violence, have also been progressively acquired by female characters, which has consequently changed the stereotypes representing women and the plots in which women are involved. It should not be forgotten that television fiction, as well as other audiovisual content, "can become an educational and entertaining vehicle for equality training" (Padilla-Castillo & Sosa-Sánchez, 2018, pp. 91, 92). Various studies have indicated that gender roles are formed in early childhood and continue to influence behavior during adolescence and adulthood (Gómez-González & Gómez-Cabrera, 2013). Although female characters are stereotyped in adolescence, stereotypes affect people from a very young age. In adulthood, stereotypes can also shape and influence attitudes and behavior. For this reason, the media should reduce stereotypes and promote realistic aspirations and behaviors to change certain attitudes and beliefs about the female gender. They should present real-life female characters in a way that promotes change within a society because "viewers will imitate the representations of the world that their favorite series offer and use the archetypes, values and how we relate to others" (Padilla-Castillo & Sosa-Sánchez, 2018, pp. 91-92). That is why it is so important to give an accurate picture of women in television series, to dissuade society from believing in stereotypes and, consequently, contributing to the custom of the underrepresentation of female characters. It has also been shown that "humans give more credibility to what we see than to other senses" (Aguilar, 1998, p. 227). Gender roles and stereotypes are deeply rooted in society, and the process of gender equality will take longer to achieve along with social change. However, television fiction can play a major role in this process. Few things seem to have changed since Tuchman coined the term "symbolic annihilation" in 1978 to refer to the media representation of women or when Mattelart in 1982 stated that the media offers a stereotypical image of women because they broadcast and promote values such as passivity and dependence. Wood (2005, p. 33), after conducting a meta-analysis, has concluded that the media have created two stereotypical images: good women and bad women. In general terms, various studies have indicated that the representation that television makes about gender in the field of entertainment reproduces normative roles, stereotypes and inequalities between men and women (e.g., Barthes, 2017; Belmonte & Guillamón, 2008; Tortajada & Araña, 2014).

Although this study only analyzes fiction produced in Spain, it should also be noted that these productions, or most of them, can be seen all over the world. Several platforms make it possible for viewers

to watch series in a language other than their own, which is the case of *La Casa de Papel* (Netflix, 2017–20), which has become a worldwide success, being “the most watched non-English speaking series on the Netflix platform, and the second most watched globally in the first 24 hours since its launch” (Millán, 2020). As Lacalle, Gómez, Sánchez, and Pujol (2019) state, “the rise of Spanish fiction in VOD is evident in the 24 premiere titles in 2018, which include 16 Spanish productions, three Mexican, a Brazilian, a Colombian, and an American” (pp. 201–202). This, in addition to giving visibility to Spanish fiction, offers an image of Spain to the world. It must be considered that many people will not travel to Spain in their lifetime, so the knowledge they may have of this country is through parasocial contact. Therefore, care must be taken when spreading the image that one wants to give of Spain, whether it is one of a diverse country or not. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the media, as it allows us to know in a scientific way whether there is a correspondence between reality and fiction as far as representation is concerned.

Limitations

Although this study was carried out using a large corpus of data (760 characters) obtained from 33 series, it still has some limitations. First, because only one episode from two seasons were analyzed, and it would have been preferable to analyze the complete production. Nonetheless, this analysis has allowed us to obtain a reasonably accurate approximation of the questions under investigation. Second, the research was centered on serial TV fiction and does not include different media formats and advertising, which also play an essential role in creating gender stereotypes. Finally, the methodological tool that was used supports descriptive statistics. Nevertheless, it would have been more enriching to combine quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative method would have generated the data and the qualitative method would have allowed for a more in-depth study on the representation of the female characters in television fiction.

In the future, it would be appropriate to carry out research comparing Spanish fiction series with American series, because, according to Asenador (2020), the most-watched series in Spain in 2019 were American productions. Also, it would be of great interest to carry out a gender study based on the present research, but in conjunction with the comparison of Spanish and American series. Finally, it should not be overlooked how important studies on gender issues in communication are, since this field has allowed researchers “to illuminate certain dimensions of reality that cannot be identified from other interpretative frameworks” (Cobo, 2009, p. 37).

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