MEDIA AND PUBLIC AGENDA IN THE IGUALADA ASSAULT (SPAIN). RAPE MYTHS

MEDIA AND PUBLIC AGENDA IN THE AGGRESSION OF IGUALADA (SPAIN). MYTHS ABOUT RAPE

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Summary

The diffusion that a news item can have has grown substantially due to social networks. In the same way, they allow people to share and comment on the news, generating discussion and public debate. This can have a significant impact on public opinion and on the perception of the news. If we add that it is an event of violence that directly affects a specific group of society, the spread of information increases considerably and social networks function as a loudspeaker for the groups that organize around these cases. This research analyzes the coverage made by traditional media and digital natives, through their social networks (Twitter and Facebook) through a methodological triangulation: bibliographic research, number of publications and discourse analysis. The results show that the media have structured their media narrative around three axes: the place of the event, that the victim was a minor and the victim's mother's criticism of the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, and the Minister of Equality, Irene Montero. The case has been characterized, therefore, by its politicization. In conclusion, it is noted that the subjects of the information in the news headlines were, on most occasions, the mother and the victim.

Keywords: media; public agenda; social networks; rape; aggression.

Abstract

The diffusion that a piece of news can have has grown substantially due to social networks. In the same way, they allow people to share and comment on the news, generating discussion and public debate. This can have a significant impact on public opinion and the perception of the news. If we add that it is an act of violence that directly affects a specific group in society, the spread of information increases considerably and social networks function as a loudspeaker for the groups that organize around these cases. In the present investigation, the coverage that traditional media and digital natives have carried out through their social networks (Twitter and Facebook) is analyzed through a methodological triangulation: bibliographical research, number of publications and analysis of speech. The results show that the media have structured their media narrative around three axes: the place of the event, that the victim was a minor and the criticism of the victim's mother to the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, and the Minister of Equality, Irene Montero. The case has been characterized, therefore, by its politicization. In conclusion, it is pointed out that the subjects of the information in the news headlines were, in most cases, the mother and the victim.

Keywords: Media; public agenda; social networks, public agenda, rape, aggression.

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1. Introduction

In the early morning of November 1, 2021, a 16-year-old girl is raped in Igualada, a municipality located in Catalonia, Spain. A few hours later, she was found unconscious. In addition to the crime of rape, the assailants may have committed attempted homicide by beating the girl and abandoning her in an open field at a temperature of 3 degrees Celsius. At that moment, and with no one arrested or accused, a group of women launched the campaign 'XTúXTotes' to demand greater security and news about the investigation.

In more than 40 countries, violence against women is not punished *(RTVE*, 2018). The Ministry of the Interior's 2018 *Crime Balance Sheet* notes that, in Spain, a rape is reported every five and a half hours (Borraz and Ordaz, 2018). The number of reports of abuse and assault has increased by 30.7% in six years (López Trujillo, 2019). This reality is produced by the rupture of silence propitiated by the feminist movement, which represents the materialization of the fourth wave (Cobo, 2019). Social change begins in third wave feminism, in the 1970s, with the conceptualization of sexual violence, and is again denounced in the context of cyberfeminism, with anti-rape activism and the culmination in #MeToo.

Social networks serve a dual function. On the one hand, they act as a loudspeaker for a movement that challenges the patriarchal system, by allowing women to conjugate as a 'we'. On the other hand, by echoing patriarchal culture, it becomes a channel for the reproduction of rape myths, which favors reactive discourse (Castrillo, 2018). However, in Spain, March 8, 2018 and the case of 'La Manada' represent the turning point that propitiates the fourth feminist wave. The protests are the rebellion against the silence, which has kept the aggressors free of blame (Abdulali, 2020).

Among the demands, the criticism that the statement of rape survivors is often questioned, is in the spotlight. This is how secondary victimization occurs: the process by which victims do not file the complaint for fear that they will not be believed or that in the Courts they will be blamed for the crime committed on them (Bernal, 2019; Canto, Perles & San Martín, 2017; Doherty & Anderson, 1998). This is a construction of the crime of rape that responds to a constant: blaming the victims and exempting the aggressors from responsibility.

2. Objectives

From the methodological point of view, the general objective of this research is to analyze the media agenda proposed by the media. For this purpose, the repercussion of the publications related to the object of study that have had the official accounts of the media in the social networks Twitter and Facebook has been measured. In order to give content to this objective, the following specific objectives are proposed:

OE1. To establish a diagnosis of the words and expressions used by the media in the headlines of publications that include the term "Igualada" in reference to the municipality of Catalonia and the object of study analyzed.

OE2. Identify the frames of reference that the media have generated in publications, as well as their evolution.

OE3. Determine the symbolic elements and myths about rape presented in publications.

3. State of the art

3.1. Victims of Sexual Violence

Until the 1970s, women did not denounce rape for fear that their story would not be believed, out of shame and also out of guilt (Martínez Delgado, 2019). There was not the social, political and cultural context for the reaction to a denunciation to be an 'I do believe you'.

The anti-rape activism of the third wave feminist movement, as well as media campaigns that favor greater social awareness, represent the origin of the denunciation, but have not put an end to the black figure (*La Vanguardia*, 2019). Sexual violence is a crime that is difficult to pinpoint, assumed and legitimized. For this reason, most cases of sexual violence are not reported.

Women survivors of sexual violence are victims of the assault and are again victims of the system when seeking justice. The judiciary is not outside of public opinion: jurisprudence contributes to the process of cultural production (Andersson & Edgren, 2018).

Based on data from the Ministry of the Interior (2019), it can be concluded that crimes of sexual abuse and sexual assault or rape are, within the typology of crimes against sexual freedom, the most frequent. Putting the focus on the victims, it is perceived that they are on most occasions women, representing approximately 85% of the total (Ministry of the Interior, 2019). Specifically, the first age range in which crimes against sexual freedom occur is between 0 and 17 years. That is, girls are the most vulnerable to sexual violence (Ministerio del Interior, 2019).

With regard to the space in which the crime occurs, it is necessary to begin by pointing out that violence against women is a structural issue. This means that the acts are not sporadic, but systemic: they respond to the patriarchal system (Millett, 1995).

Thus, the criminal act is not restricted to public space, although the rape narrative is configured on the dangerousness of the streets (Leo, 2017). However, the data show that homes, i.e., private space, are the first place where crimes against sexual freedom are committed (Ministry of the Interior, 2019).

According to Tajahuerce *et al*. (2018), there is an urgent need to work on education with a gender perspective. Training must be provided to guarantee the right of women to occupy all spaces, physical and virtual; which go beyond the school or university, reaching the mass media that are fundamental for their influence in the construction of frames of reference for youth.

The study by Parra-Martínez *et al*. (2021) adds that this need may stem from university spaces in specific faculties where the evolution of the gender perspective and its introduction in teaching seems to have been left to the voluntarism of the faculty.

3.2. Digital anti-rape activism and myths

Feminist mobilization cannot be understood without alluding to the digital context, which favors the international and intergenerational movement. Social networks are central in the articulation of narratives of denunciation and solidarity with women (Aránguez, 2019). However, popular feminism is answered, in the United States from 1990 onwards, by misogyny from anti-feminist groups such as *Men's Rights Activists* or *Pick-Up Artists,* driving the manosphere*.*

Likewise, feminism and anti-feminism coexist in social networks, giving rise to a social and political polarization around feminism (Villar and Pecourt, 2021).

The credibility of rape survivors is articulated on the dichotomy of *victim* and *non-victim* built on gender stereotypes. If she does not conform to rape myths, she will be a *non-victim*. Patriarchy thus articulates the idea of the ideal victim (Aguado, 2019). The social and cultural construction of 'male' and 'female', the tool of patriarchal oppression that we have conceptualized as 'gender', has profound consequences on our social patterns and behaviors.

Gender not only oppresses us from the outside and determines a specific space in society: it also constructs the 'self'. This is what authors such as Millett (1995) have defined as inner colonization: the acceptance of gender stereotypes, which determine the articulation of subjectivity. Being a man means being strong, brave, powerful, issues that are reproduced through sexuality (Triviño, 2016). This is how in the collective imaginary males are the subjects of pleasure, while women are the object of desire (Bernárdez and Padilla, 2018).

Men must be sexually active and women must restrict their sexuality and be obedient (Sanyal, 2019). Violence is eroticized and women are dehumanized, turning them into bodies dissociated from their subjectivity. This idea has repercussions on the conceptualization of consent, starting from an idea of sexuality that dates back to Classical Antiquity, in which women, even if they say 'No', will always end up saying 'Yes' (Pateman, 2019; Sanyal, 2019).

3.3. The rape narrative

The media have favored the patriarchal system to grant women a place in society: the private space (Tajahuerce and Padilla, 2015). In the context of the fourth wave of the feminist movement, the media generally point out that sexual violence is a social injustice that violates Human Rights (Istanbul Convention, 2011). Although in the same way as society as a whole, they continue to incur in myths about it (Bohmert *et al*., 2019).

The monster stereotype is very frequent in the media treatment, as well as putting the focus on the wrong place by pointing out issues such as migration, nationality and the difficulties of the aggressors to adapt to the culture (Andersson and Edgren, 2018). It is common when framing rape by putting the focus on the perpetrators that the perpetrator is defined as mentally ill, lonely or rare (Nilsson, 2019). Rape is not an anecdotal act committed by a freak: rape is found in everyday life (Greer, 2019).

This approach has particularly negative consequences, because it leads to the idea that only 'strange', i.e., stereotypical, men can commit rape, causing ordinary men to disappear from the narrative (Nilsson, 2019; Bohmert *et al*., 2019).

On the other hand, when framing gang rapes, they are reported in suburbs or by males with traditional categories of social exclusion, such as class, ethnicity or race (Miyares, 2017). This continues to incur in the idea that rape is an act that has nothing to do with a structural social problem (Nilsson, 2019).

> Once again it seems to have become important to keep patriarchal society in a state of cultural anesthesia. As a consequence, the symbolic violence necessary to facilitate cultural anesthesia causes the "ordinary" men involved to disappear from the narrative. Instead, it is the victims who emerge (Nilsson, 2019, p. 1186).

Women must fulfill the roles that are expected while the criminal act takes place, and also after it. These are, among others, saying 'no' from the beginning to the end of the rape, with no possibility, in full freedom, to change your mind; staying away from males and dark spaces; or the need to explicitly resist for the crime to be considered rape (Greer, 2019).

Similarly, women are not expected to occupy public space freely after the crime, i.e., they are not expected to rebuild their lives; or to articulate a narrative in which there are no nuances

from the denunciation to the end of the judicial procedure, because post-traumatic stress is ignored (Veselka, 1998).

With regard to the attribution of responsibility, the patriarchal system favors the conceptualization of the crime. Instead of emphasizing the aggressor, it is pointed out that the victim was walking alone, in dark spaces, had ingested alcohol, delayed reporting or did not seek help at the time of the criminal act (Bohmert *et al*., 2019).

The system constructs a narrative that blames the victims and exonerates the aggressors of responsibility, by pointing out the dangers women face in public space (Leo, 2017). Their 'freedom' is thus called into question, and they are relegated, apart, to a historical patriarchal mandate: that they remain in private space (Tajahuerce and Padilla, 2015).

3.4. Dissemination in social networks

Social networks, understood as common spaces about which there are numerous suggestive scientific research studies, stand out for the engagement they generate and the relationship they establish with different audiences (Ortega *et al.*, 2021). The research community generally agrees that the first social network in the world was *Six-Degrees*, born in 1997, to create lists of friends. It was centered on the Six-Degrees Theory of separation, which asserts that it is possible to connect with anyone in the world in just 6 human connections (Bai *et al*., 2020).

The collaborative and explicit nature of media and technology that enable interactivity, in addition to the ability they offer users to participate in the creation and publication of content of all kinds within digital communities of affinity, is fundamental to understanding the role of social networks (Verwey, 2015; Scolari, 2018; Fuentes Cancell *et al*., 2021).

This panorama presents ample possibilities for self-expression, as well as unlimited opportunities for participation in determining and influencing the narratives that are being developed at any given moment.

In this sense, social issues tend to have a wide reach on these platforms. Although, in some cases, immediacy has repercussions on the superficiality of comments and the ephemeral nature of relevant information. Núñez and Sell (2021) conducted a study focused on the power of speech in the social networks Twitter and Facebook. Their analysis is focused on hate speech and word management, stating that the fourth wave of feminism is driven by the use of these tools for the social exchange of ideas:

> The 21st century is the century of the Internet, a tool that is not without its lights and shadows. It is evident that interpersonal relationships have changed greatly as the Web has become the mediating channel. They can be intense, fast, open, asynchronous and synchronous. And to these facilitating components we can add others such as speed, flexibility or freedom due to the control over time and the possibilities granted by anonymity (Núñez and Sell, 2021, p. 257).

On the other hand, citizens use social networks as a source of information. According to Statista (2021), 66% of Spaniards use these platforms for information, ranking as the third option below entertainment (81%) and interaction (72%). This figure shows how the news, headlines, comments and opinions posted on social networks can affect the population that uses them.

The *Annual Study of Social Networks* (IAB, 2021) points out that the highest frequency of use among Spanish users is led by Twitter (97%), Instagram (83%) and Facebook (72%), highlighting that 66% seek information and, within this percentage, 49% comment on current affairs on these platforms. Hence the relevance of the analysis of mass media in specific cases such as the object of study of this research.

4. Methodology

In order to meet the objectives of this research, a methodological triangulation has been carried out. Multiple methods, both qualitative and quantitative, have been used for the study and analysis of the case. Therefore, the research is based on three correlative pillars, which seek original, unpublished results that can be extrapolated to other works of the academic community in the area:

- Bibliographic research, where the concepts related to the study are reviewed: victims of sexual violence, anti-rape digital activism, *rape myths* and *rape* narratives. It has been carried out through first level bibliographic sources: *Journal Citation Reports (Social Sciences), SCImago Journal Country Rank, Dialnet, Elsevier online, SAGE Journals, Taylor and Francis online*, Buscador Cisne UCM and Academia.edu.

- Quantitative analysis of the publications made by the selected media on Facebook and Twitter. We selected general print media, both traditional and digital natives. The selected newspapers and the division made among them (see Table 1) follow the methodology of research such as Pedrero Esteban *et al*. (2021). The time frame analyzed runs from the day on which the violation occurs, November 1, 2021, to November 30, 2021. Although the initial period covered more time, the analyzed media stopped publishing news regularly after the fourth week. In total, 148 publications on Twitter and Facebook related to rape in Igualada have been counted. With this sample we have studied the discourses disseminated, as well as their repercussion in several Spanish media, achieving a solid and representative corpus.

- Qualitative content analysis of the publications made by the selected media on Facebook and Twitter. A content analysis is performed through word clouds, with the headlines of the traditional press and digital natives in both social networks. Subsequently, a file is completed to specify the content analysis, with the aim of detecting the narrative established by the media. The questions chosen for the elaboration of the analysis sheet, with the aim of detecting the rape myths and the media treatment of the case, are: *subject of the news*; *concept used to name the*

victim; *variables of social exclusion* that may cause a stereotyped coverage that incurs in the revictimization and exoneration of guilt of the aggressors; *conceptualization of the crime*; *adjectives* used to describe the act and the *pattern or treatment*, following Entman's (1993) framing functions that are aimed from the headlines of the news.

As mentioned above, the selected newspapers were separated by traditional generalist press and digital native generalist press. The justification for the selection of media combines several criteria: the first is that the media had verified profiles on Twitter and Facebook. These social networks were selected because of their great acceptance among users for commenting and sharing news.

The *microblogging* social network is the public space par excellence, where debates are generated and different problems and points of view are presented (Moernaut *et al*., 2020; Rauchfleisch *et al*., 2021; Bernárdez-Rodal, *et al.*, 2021). For its part, Mark Zuckerberg's photo and video social network maintains the first place with the largest number of users in the world, with more than 2.9 billion users (IAB, 2021; The Social Media Family, 2022; We are Social & Hootsuite, 2021). The second criterion is its penetration in terms of audience (Barlovento, 2021) and its area of diffusion (statewide).

Finally, in order to select the traditional generalist press and the digital native generalist press, information on the evolution of the audiences of generalist newspapers and cybernauts was taken into account based on data from *Comscore*. Likewise, the profiles of the media on Twitter and Facebook were analyzed. The division was as follows:

Traditional Press:

El Mundo

El País

ABC

La Vanguardia

La Razón

El Periódico

Digital native press:

El Confidencial

elDiario.es

okdiario

Vozpópuli

20minutos.es

The sample selected for this research consisted of 148 messages published on the social networks Twitter and Facebook. The division was as follows:

Traditional press - Twitter: 69

Traditional press - Facebook: 30

Digital native press - Twitter: 35

Digital native press - Facebook: 9

The tool used to extract the publications was *Fanpage karma*. It is a powerful online *software* for analysis and monitoring in social networks that allows examining an unlimited number of profiles on various platforms (Gmiterek, 2021; Escusol et al., 2021; Guevara et al., 2021). Founded in 2012 in Berlin, it also provides information on posting strategies and performance of profiles on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or TikTok. In addition, it features a real-time content update that allows you to find trends, *influencers* and posts from the period you want to analyze. Finally, the tab used for qualitative analysis contains the following sections:

Tabla 1. Ficha empleada para el análisis del discurso					
Sujeto de la noticia	Concepto empleado para denominar a la víctima	Variables de exclusión social asociadas a los agresores	Denominación del crimen	Adjetivos	Pauta o solución del problema

Source: Own elaboration.

5. Results

## 5.1. Quantitative analysis

5.1.1. Twitter analysis

When analyzing the *microblogging* social network in the indicated period (November 1, 2021 until November 30, 2021), a total of 104 publications were found that refer to the case under study. The traditional press totals 69 publications (67%) and the digital native press a total of 35 publications (23%). When detailing the traditional media with the most publications, it is observed that *La Vanguardia* accounts for 17.31% of the total number of publications, ranking first, followed by *El Mundo*, with 10.58%. Among the digital natives, *20minutos.es* reaches 12.50% of the total number of tweets published on this topic, followed by *okdiario*, which reaches 8.65% of the publications.

The days with the highest number of tweets published coincide for traditional and digital native media, November 3 and 4, with 25 publications (traditional) and 13 publications (digital natives).

Tabla 2. Número de publicaciones realizadas por los medios de comunicación en Twitter			
Tipo	Medio	Número de publicaciones	% de publicaciones sobre el total analizado
Prensa tradicional	El Mundo	11	10,58%
	El País	4	3,85%
	ABC	13	12,50%
	La Vanguardia	18	17,31%
	La Razón	10	9,62%
	El Periódico	13	12,50%
Prensa nativa digital	El Confidencial	3	2,88%
	elDiario.es	6	5,77%
	okdiario	9	8,65%
	Vozpópuli	4	3,85%
	20minutos.es	13	12,50%

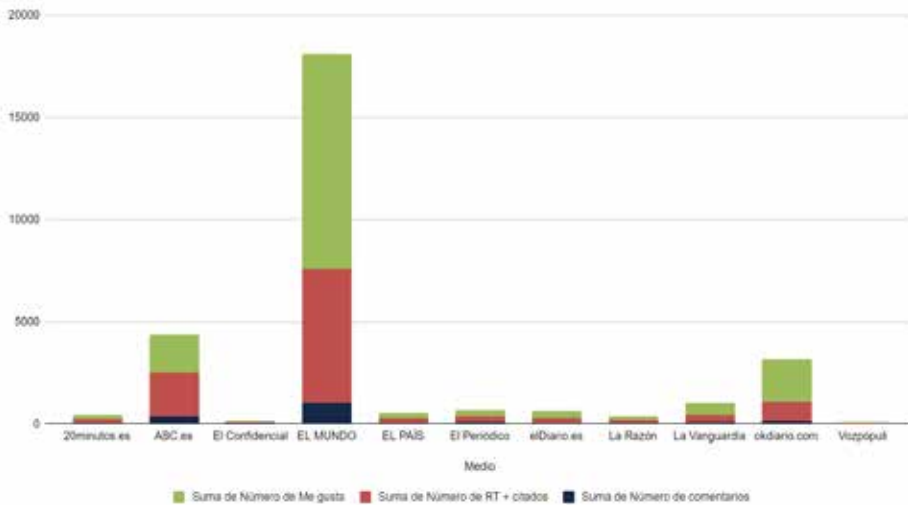**Source:** Own elaboration.

Figure 1. Distribution of publications on Twitter during the period analyzed.
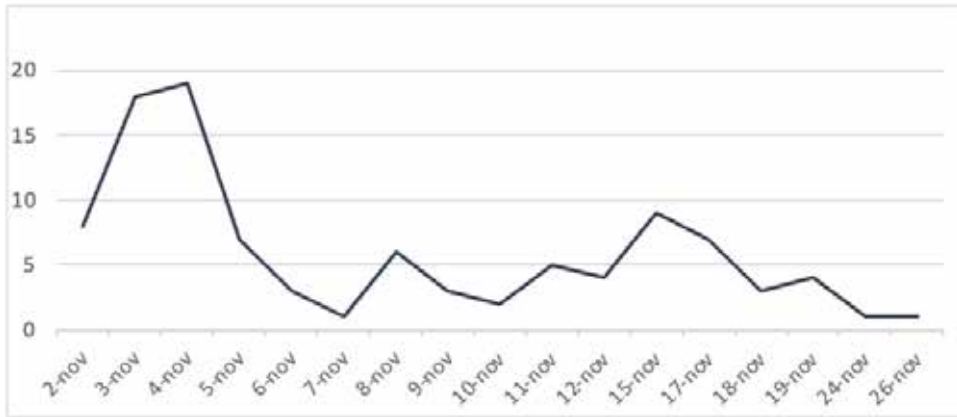
Source: Own elaboration.

With respect to the interaction of each media outlet through Twitter, *El Mundo* stands out with respect to the number of Likes (10,518), Retweets (6,557) and Comments (1,053) that are derived from the main news item and that were exchanged in this channel. In second place was the newspaper *ABC* with 1,841 Likes, 2,124 Retweets and 409 Comments; and finally the digital native *okdiario* with 2,035 Likes, 945 Retweets and 155 Comments in the period in question. The rest of the traditional and native media have few impacts of this type, compared to the three at the top of the list (Graph 2).

Figure 2. Total number of Likes, Retweets and Comments on Twitter by media.

Source: Own elaboration.

5.1.2. Facebook analysis

A total of 39 publications were published on Meta's social network in relation to the analyzed event. Of these, 30 correspond to the traditional press (77%) and 9 to the digital native press (23%). If we look at the media that have published the most, the newspaper *El Mundo* occupies 28% of the total *posts*, followed by *La Vanguardia* and *La Razón* with 12% (see Table 3). In total, traditional media are responsible for 3 out of 4 publications (77%) compared to 23% of digital native media.

In this social network it is also observed that November 4 and 15, 2021, are the days that accumulate the most publications, reaching 9 and 6 publications respectively (see Graph 1). The day that concentrates more media attention is due to the publication of the letter from the mother of the young girl who was raped to the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez. On that day, November 4, 2021, the media that picked up the news were: *El Mundo* (2), *El País* (2), *La Vanguardia* (1), *La Razón* (2), *elDiario.es* (1), *20minutos.es* (1). Later, in section 5.2 we will analyze qualitatively the informative treatment that each media outlet proposed.

| Tabla 3. Número de publicaciones realizadas por los medios de comunicación en Facebook			
Tipo	Medio	Número de publicaciones	% de publicaciones sobre el total analizado
Prensa tradicional	*El Mundo*	11	28,21%
	El País	4	10,26%
	ABC	1	2,56%
	La Vanguardia	5	12,82%
	La Razón	5	12,82%
	El Periódico	4	10,26%
Prensa nativa digital	*El Confidencial*	1	2,56%
	elDiario.es	2	5,13%
	okdiario	2	5,13%
	Vozpópuli	3	7,69%
	20minutos.es	1	2,56%

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 3. Distribution of publications on Facebook in the period under analysis
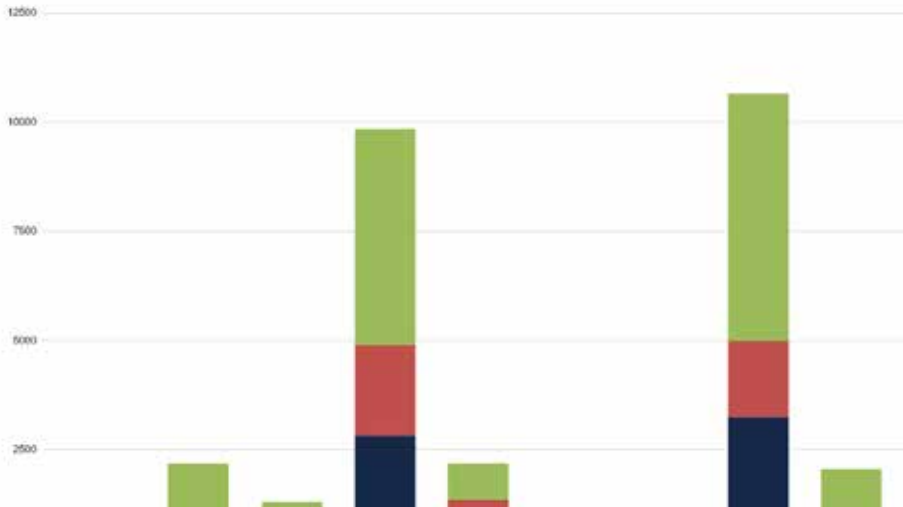
Source: Own elaboration.

If we study the interaction achieved by each media outlet, there are two that stand out above the rest: *La Vanguardia* and *El Mundo* (see Graph 4). The newspaper belonging to the Godó family achieved 3,253 comments (1st), 5,674 likes (1st) and 1,732 dislikes (2nd). On the other hand, the newspaper founded in 1989 by Pedro J. Ramírez got 2,820 comments (2nd), 4,942 Likes (2nd) and 2,069 Me Enfada (1st). Among the native digital press, *okdiario* stands out with a total of 1,049 comments (3rd), 4,165 Likes (3rd) and 94 Me Enfada (7th). In total, the traditional media accounted for 76.76% of the interactions compared to 23.24% of the digital natives.

Figure 4. Total number of Likes, Dislikes and Comments on Facebook by communication medium
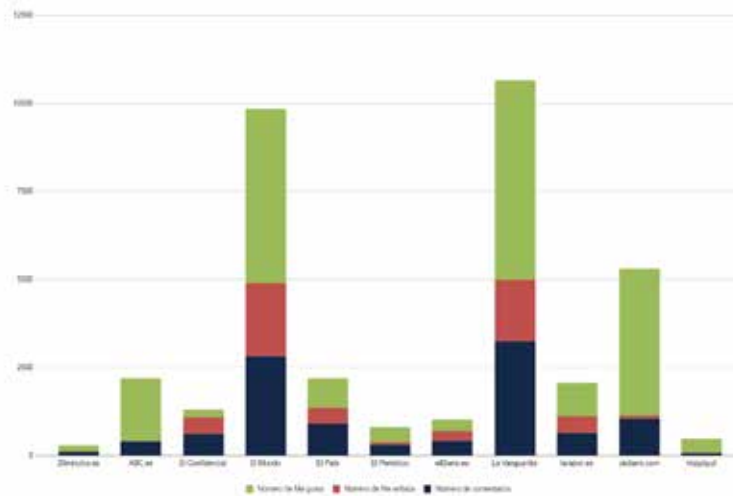
Source: own elaboration.

Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative content analysis, the headlines of the selected traditional media (*El Mundo*, *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *La Razón*, *El Periódico* and *ABC*) and digital natives (*Eldiario.es*, *20minutos.es*, *vozpópuli*, *okdiario.com* and *El Confidencial*) on the social networks Facebook and Twitter were taken as a sample. Firstly, a content analysis was carried out, through word clouds, with the headlines of traditional and digital native press, Twitter and Facebook.

In these pieces of the corpus, the media coverage was focused, on the one hand, on the brutality of the criminal act. On the other hand, of central importance was the victim's mother, who undertook a criticism of the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, and the Minister of Equality, Irene Montero, for not taking more measures against sexual aggressors. In this sense, the most prominent keywords in the description of the Igualada rape are the place of the event, that the victim was a minor and the letters from the mother to the president and the minister.

Figure 5. Word cloud with headlines from traditional and digital native media on Facebook and Twitter.

Source: nubedepalabras.es.

Likewise, a file has been made to specify the content analysis. The intention has been to detect the story about the rape in the Igualada case, with the aim of determining what have been the frameworks of interpretation of this rape, as well as the myths that could be characterizing the media treatment, incurring in a revictimization of the minor and an exoneration of guilt of the aggressors. For this, it is considered central to analyze where the focus is placed in the headlines, i.e., who is the subject of the information, since this is the place where the reader's attention will fall.

With regard to the subject of the news item (Figure 6), it can be seen that most of the information in the media studied focuses on the reaction of the mother and the family, who criticize the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, and the Minister of Equality, Irene Montero. The victim also plays a fundamental role, which poses a problem; the subjects of the information should always be those who carry out the violent act, in this case the aggressors. However, their presence is anecdotal.

Figure 6. Subject of the action in traditional and digital native media news headlines, on Twitter and Facebook.
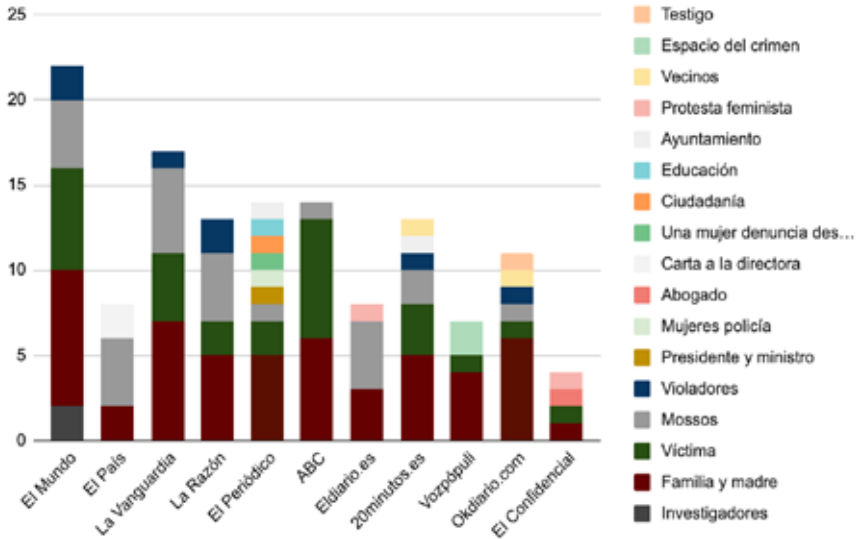
Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, it is understood that it is essential to pay attention to the name of the victim (Figure 7). To this end, the way in which the media referred to the victim was analyzed. Likewise, it has been verified, in most of the occasions, that 'minor' is the concept most used in the media of the study. Concepts such as 'girl' or 'young' have less importance.

Figure 7. Victim's name in the headlines of traditional and digital native media, on Twitter and Facebook.
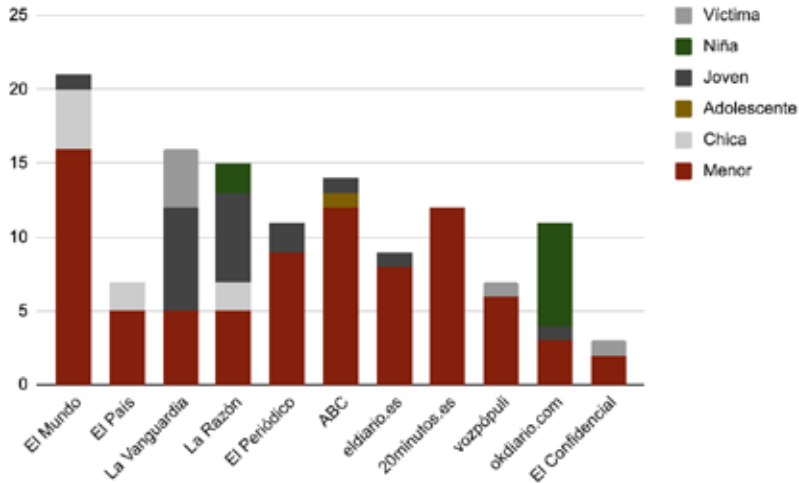
Source: Own elaboration.

With regard to the story about the aggressors, only one piece of information concerning the victim's lawyer was found in *El Confidencial*, in which they are defined as "savages" who show contempt towards the woman.

The conceptualization of the crime, that is, the way in which the criminal act has been denominated, has been another of the objectives of this study. The use of the concept of 'rape' has different nuances from that of 'abuse'. For a crime to be considered rape, explicit violence or intimidation is required. Likewise, 'aggression' may generate confusion in the reader, since it is, in legal terms, a generic term for 'rape', which is an aggravating circumstance (Article 179 of the Spanish Penal Code). In this sense, it is perceived that all the analyzed media, in most of the occasions, use the concept 'rape'.

In the case of *20minutos.es*, *La Vanguardia* and *ABC*, *vozpópuli* and *El Confidencial*, the pattern or treatment of the information consists of the mother's request to the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, for "tougher measures" against the aggressors. The criticism of the President of the Government and the Minister of Equality, Irene Montero, is central in the call to action; in the pattern or treatment of the Igualada rape.

On most occasions, allusion is made to the mother, in particular, and the family, in general, of the victim, pointing out the need for measures and institutional commitment to the victims. Also mentioned, as already happened in the media case of 'La Manada' (Brandariz, 2022), are the

failures of the judicial system and the need for feminist education; the right of women to occupy public space without fear: the right to a life free of violence. Besides, this case is related to the social reaction of the citizenship, that is, with its link to the feminist movement.

Regarding the *story about the victim*, a news item from *Okdiario.com* has been detected in which allusion is made to the fact that the minor "got into a car with a hooded man". This is inadequate information, since the focus is placed on the victim's behavior. Similarly, it has been observed that, in a news item in *La Razón*, a *variable of social exclusion* that constitutes a myth about rape is used, by mentioning that the aggressor of a rape was of Moroccan origin.

Finally, an analysis was carried out to detect the adjectives used to describe rape, as well as the consequences of the act, with the intention of seeing how the reality of rape is constructed in the media. The intention has been to see if superlative adjectives are used, which incur in the morbidity of this crime. As shown in Figure 8, the story has been built on concepts such as *brutal*, *savagely*, *naked* or *animals*.

Figure 8. Adjectives and consequences of the Igualada rape

Source: Own elaboration.

6. Conclusions

In the conclusions of the quantitative analysis, it is noted that Twitter has been the favorite place for the media, ahead of Facebook, to share news. In addition, it is the traditional media who published more information, specifically the newspapers *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*. As for the busiest days, it is on November 3 and 16, 2021 that the most publications are collected. The first one, due to the request for help to the citizens of Igualada by the victim's family to locate the aggressors; the second one, due to the campaign to collect signatures against sexual assaults and rapists that was also initiated by the victim's family.

The media with the greatest impact were the newspapers *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia* on Twitter and Facebook, respectively. The former had more than 10,500 Likes, 6,500 Retweets and 1,000 comments in the period analyzed. *La Vanguardia* reached 5,600 Likes on Facebook, 1,700 Likes and 3,200 comments. *El Mundo* issued a total of 22 publications between Twitter and Facebook and *La Vanguardia* totaled 23.

In the conclusions of the qualitative analysis of this study, it has been perceived, firstly, that the media have structured their story around three axes: *the place of the event*, that the victim was a *minor* and the *criticism of the victim's mother* to the President of the Government, Pedro Sánchez, and the Minister of Equality, Irene Montero. Regarding the place of the event, the media must make an exercise of critical pedagogy (Baker and Rodrigues, 2020). Rape cannot appear to be associated, unanimously, with the public space, since the first spaces in which it occurs are the home. The crime of rape does not depend on the patriarchal public - private divide: it is a structural issue (Nilsson, 2019; Leo, 2017). Moreover, in the narrative about this rape, it is emphasized that the victim is a minor, an issue that links directly to the data: the first victims of sexual violence in Spain are minors (Ministerio del Interior, 2019). Likewise, the discourse has been configured on the mother's criticism of political power; the case has been characterized, therefore, by its politicization.

The subjects of the information in the news headlines were, on most occasions, the mother and the victim. This again leads to a problematic media treatment of the case; the subject of the action should always be the perpetrator of the violence, i.e., the aggressors. In the story of the aggressors, a stereotypical treatment of the aggressors has been recognized: they are described as *savages* (Andersson and Edgren, 2018; Greer, 2019). On another occasion, in a news story in *La Razón*, a correlation was made between a sexual aggressor and his Moroccan origin. The cause of sexual violence against women is not that they are *savages*, since it would be relating violence to the anecdotal and to an act that requires explicit violence, and the notion of consent must be defined attending to contexts: to patriarchal power relations (Greer, 2019). The adjectives used to define the crime are *brutal*, *savagely*, *nakedly*, and *animalistic*. These concepts link to the reader's emotions, and move us away from a rational and structural treatment of what sexual violence against women is (Caraballo, 2021).

Regarding the victim's story, one of the reports mentions that the minor "got into the car with a hooded man". This is inadequate information, which incurs in secondary victimization, by implicitly indicating that her behavior could have been the cause of the rape. It is implicitly stated

that if the woman had not gotten into the car, she would not have been assaulted. This media treatment encourages victim-blaming and exoneration of the aggressors from responsibility.

On most occasions, the concept of *rape* is used to define the case. The media should avoid using the term *abuse*, which differs from *rape* in that the latter requires, as stated in the Penal Code, physical or explicit violence; this should not be the dividing line that determines what is rape. On the other hand, *rape*, which is an aggravating factor of *aggression*, is a term that can generate confusion in readers, as they do not recognize that they are practically similar concepts (Article 179 of the Spanish Penal Code). In this sense, the use of the term *rape* is more appropriate. Finally, with regard to the pattern or treatment provided by the media studied, mention is made of the right of women to a life free of violence, relating the case, once again, to the social reaction of the feminist movement.

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