

# Gender differences in practices and interactions in news commentaries in the online newspaper Emol.com

*Diferencias de género en las prácticas e interacciones en los comentarios del diario online Emol.com*

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## Abstract

This study addresses gender differences in practices and interactions in participatory discussion forums for readers in online press, particularly in news commentaries in the digital newspaper www.Emol.com. According to the objectives and the nature of the corpus of this research, content analysis was conducted as a technique to describe and unveil gender differences, taking note that, despite the availability of new tools of participation in digital press, which are geared at enriching public discussion about social and political affairs and also fostering the incorporation of citizens into the public arena. These tools reinforce gender inequalities and stereotypes.

**Keywords:** *Gender differences, Participation, Interactions, Online press.*

## Resumen

La investigación aborda las diferencias de género en las prácticas e interacciones en los espacios de participación del lector en la prensa *online*, específicamente, en los comentarios a las noticias del diario *online Emol.com*. De acuerdo a los objetivos propuestos y a la naturaleza del corpus de este estudio, se recurrió al análisis de contenido como técnica para describir y develar las diferencias de género, constatándose que, pese a la existencia de nuevas herramientas de participación en la prensa *online* que buscan enriquecer el debate público sobre asuntos sociales y políticos y asimismo, fomentar la incorporación de los ciudadanos/as en la esfera pública, estas herramientas más que aportar a la plena incorporación de las mujeres en el espacio público, refuerzan las desigualdades y los estereotipos de género.

**Palabras claves:** *Diferencias de Género, Participación, Interacción, Prensa online.*

## 1. Introduction

Together with the development of the internet and information technologies, the press has been exposed to continuous transformations as socio-technological changes have gone affecting the industry. One of the most relevant transformations is the incorporation –in its online issues– of spaces that promote participation and interaction of readers with content and each other. These “reader participations spaces” (Raimondo, 2012) add a new dimension to the field studies of the online press that, with gender perspective, that have shown the role of the woman as a working professional and as object and subject of information. Although online press studies that include the gender variable have existed for over a decade, online press studies and specifically those that ask the question about gender differences in comments about news –whether in regards to content or participation– recently began to be discussed in 2015 with the study by Emma Pierson in the online version of *The New York Times*, where it was observed that only 28% of the comments posted on this platform were by women (Pierson, 2015).

Nevertheless, due to the concern of a male over-representation in production spaces, and for the debate and diffusion of discourses within a democratic society that should aim for equal representation of opinions of all its members, this research’s objective is to show the differences in gender in the practices and interactions of the readers and based on participations levels – frequency of the opinions issued by men and women – in the comments of the Emol.com online newspaper in the news categories such as education, science and technology, economy and politics. The choice of these topics was made mainly to address the very subjects of the public space –one historically configured by men– and with direct implications in the development of the country and the quality of life of its inhabitants.

In addition, four specific objectives were established: (1) Determine and establish with what frequency the readers comment on the news in the Emol.com online newspaper; (2) Recognize and determine on which of these categories of national news (politics, education, economy, and science and technology), the readers of the Emol.com online newspaper commented most frequently; (3)

Recognize, compare, and determine whether the comments of the readers on the Emol.com newspaper express different points of view on a specific topic; and (4) Identify, verify and determine the frequency and nature of the sexist discourses present in the comments of the online newspaper as responses to the opinions of other readers.

## 2. Background information

The online press, facing the risk of being dethroned by social media where individuals are capable of exercising freedom of expression, began to adapt to new communicational challenges of the digital era. It incorporated tools on its websites that allow (to a certain degree) people to participate and interact with the medium, with the content and with each other.

Within these new participation tools, there are reader participations spaces, understood as those instances of an online newspaper where reader activity takes place (Raimondo, 2012) and in which they “can discursively participate, producing statements, as occurs, for example, in letters to the editor, blogs (...), forums and comments on the news” (Raimondo, 2014, p. 185).

However, the online press and, specifically, reader participation spaces, by allowing communication online that is voluntary, asynchronous and public, ascribe as an object of study in the field of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC is probably one of the most well-known areas of the internet and one of the most used by users via synchronic communication systems, on one hand –chats, role play and instant messaging–, and asynchronous communication systems, and on the other – email, blogs and discussion forums – (Gómez & Galindo, 2005; Herring & Stoerger, 2013; Yates, 1997).

In the early 90s, when the first field studies commenced in the field of CMC which incorporated the gender variable, there was the hope that online forums could increase gender equality by allowing people to choose pseudonyms and express themselves in a purely written medium, avoiding the signs (body language, age, race, gender, socio-

economic level, etc.) that, in face-to-face communication, lead to the forming of social prejudices and stereotypes (Henry, 2008; Morahan-Martin, 2000; Pierson, 2015).

Unfortunately, these expectations were not fulfilled, the results of the first research one –and until today – sustain that these tools, far from contributing to full incorporation and participation of women, reinforce gender inequality (Castaño, 2005; Sánchez, 2010; Yates, 1997). Firstly, this is due to the less access women have to the internet. A study carried out by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC] (2013) showed that women's internet use rate is on average 8.5 percent less than that of men's in 10 countries. And despite women being equal to men in terms of access, they show a clear disadvantage in regards to use.

Secondly, and even when women manage to have equal access as men, gender equality continues to be a pending issue. The work of Henry (2013) and Morahan-Martin (2000) indicated that women are expelled from forums via aggressive tactics and harassment. In addition, gender constructions continue in the online space: women tend to be politer, are less assertive than men and prefer products according to gender stereotypes.

Consequently, it was observed that online forums reproduce power inequalities observed in offline interactions. A study performed by Herring (1992) in an online forum belonging to the Linguistic Society of America showed that women were under-represented in relation to their participation in society and that the messages posted were shorter and received fewer responses, and that on the contrary, men wrote longer messages, and were capable of defending their opinions more assertively, showed persistence in their arguments even when their comments did not receive responses, and that also, they opened and closed debates.

Finally, and in the context of gender studies in the online press, publication of a study performed by Pierson (2015) on the participation of readers in the comments on The New York Times showed that women had only written 25% of the comments, despite comprising 44% of the total number of readers of this medium. And that they only wrote more

comments than men on those posts that centered on parenting and family (79% participation), on wedding and fashion (63%), on cooking (53%) and articles written by women.

It is worth noting that the New York Times, like many other web platforms, uses a system of algorithms to recommend similar content to those read beforehand, contributing to perpetuating the differences and gender stereotypes in the consumption and access to content. In this sense, the author of the study indicates that in an era where code affects millions of people, algorithms have social implications of not only reflecting reality, but also shaping it.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1. Gender Category

Gender as a category of analysis undoubtedly proposes us with a notion of relation. It is impossible to think of studying women in a world isolated by men. For this reason, it is used to name the social relations among the sexes. Although the concept of gender has evolved over time thanks to the contributions and reflections of various disciplines that have adopted it, it was developed based on the definition proposed by the anthropologist Joan Scott (1990) where gender is the set of interrelated elements inside two great propositions: the gender concept as a constitutive element of social relations based on the differences that distinguish the sexes, and as a primary form of power relations. The use of this concept, implicitly carries the rejection of biological determinism as possible explanation for inequality, transforming into "a form of referring to the exclusively social origins of subjective identities of men and women" (Scott, 1990, p. 28).

On one hand, Amorós (1990) would say that the dichotomy –public/private– constitutes a structural invariant that shapes societies and gives hierarchy to the spaces of both the man and the woman, and that this division, beyond its historic differences, presents characteristics that are recurring, which are, the most socially valued activities and those of highest prestige are performed by men in practically almost all societies, and these are mainly

those that comprise the public space, the space of logos (Amorós, 1990).

On the other hand, and based on the statement “the personal is political”, Pateman (1996) sustains, from a feminist position, that the personal circumstances are structured by public factors—by laws on rape and abortion, by the status of wives and with it, the politics of taking care of children and the sexual divide of the domestic chores and tasks done outside it— and that therefore: “personal problems can only be resolved via media and political action” (16).

One of the many practices that have allowed for the perpetuation of the structure of male dominance of the public space and in communication media is the sexist and discriminatory behavior towards women (Byerly & Ross, 2006; Henrry, 2013; Morahan-Martin, 2000). The theory of ambivalent sexism proposed by Glick and Fiske (1996) created a framework to understand just how the benevolent and hostile attitudes are a mechanism of coercion for those women who do not comply with the stereotypes required by patriarchal societies (Cruz, Zempoaltecatl & Correa, 2005), that in this way, jeopardize their full incorporation and participation in public space.

### **3.2. Communication and Gender**

The MacBride Report (1980) indicates that although social communication media are not the main cause of female subordination, given that its causes are deeply-rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural structures, these have to a certain degree the ability to stimulate or delay certain social changes. Moreover, they are considered to be an unbeatable platform to study the gender variable, contributing to eliminating prejudices and stereotypes, accepting the new role that corresponds to the woman within society, and promoting their integration in the development process of social equality (Franquet, Luzón & Ramajo, 2006). Therefore, it is possible to indicate that communication media:

appear as a means in itself, influencing places of representation where images and a new sensitivity are offered as to equality of the sexes, and they show the creativity and expressions of women. They are also a means to achieve other purposes, vehicles destined to facilitate the public debate on broader social problems and concerns (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996, p. 22).

In terms of online communication media, the Network of Researchers for the Life and Liberty of Women (Red de Investigadoras por la vida y la Libertad de las mujeres) (2008) indicate that in this industry and in general that of new information and communication technology, the diagnosis, similar to that in traditional media, is pessimistic, given that more than contributing to full incorporation of women in the public space, these tools consolidate gender inequality.

On the other hand, the theory of “communication and gender in public contexts” developed by authors Pearson, Turner and Todd-Mancillas (1993) proposed a context to understand the participation of readers in spaces created for this purpose. This, given that the facts point to the existence of certain communicative behaviors of face-to-face communication (FFC) that are also present to computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Henrry, 2013; Morahan-Martin, 2000; Selfe & Meyer, 1991). Among the public contexts analyzed by these authors, they determined that in small group interactions, men tend to speak more than women and that they tend to start conversations more than women as well and that both men and women are likely to side with the group with the majority of members. However, the reasons for which differ entre ambos different: women often do it when they feel weak, meanwhile men are at the other extreme and often do it when they feel strong. On the other hand, they indicate that individual with more status are more effective communicatively than those who have an inferior status and that there is a belief that men have a higher status than women, the act of public speaking being a traditionally masculine activity.

### 3.3. Participation in online press

According to that indicated by Martínez (2005) to understand the concept of participation, the first thing that one should consider is that user participation is defined based on interactivity: users interact with each other, with the media and the virtual supports, with contents and with the emitters of those contents.

Online media offered various users chances to participate interactively that range from the most reactive functions of interaction with the medium (subject/object interaction) to other modes of more interactive user participation with the medium, contents and the journalists, and users with each other (Martínez, 2005).

Raimondo (2012) proposes a definition and a classification for those instances in the online press where reader activity takes place, such as, the reader participation spaces. These have been taken advantage of by online media to track readers opinions and as source of information, and likewise by the readers, as a way to make themselves heard -by the media and the audience itself-, noting that

the adaption of digital issues of traditional press to a more participative journalism model has evolved gradually over time. To a certain degree, the majority of digital editions today offer formulas that promote the incorporation of citizens to a public sphere (Mendiguren, Pérez & Peña, 2011, p. 423).

Comments on news, in terms of reader participation spaces, have been incorporated by online press in the majority of the news they publish, inviting the reader to give their opinion on current events of public interest.

### 4. Methodology

A methodology was designed based on a descriptive type research project, whose corpus -in documentary format- is composed of reader's comments on news published in the online newspaper *Emol.com* during September and November 2015. Also considered are those comments that within this context emerged as response to other comments.

*Emol.com* provides a space so that readers can comment on news. This space, just like in blogs, in addition to allowing dialogic interaction, has a structure that allows users to see the development of the subject by various users. Its cascade structure is similar to that of a face-to-face dialogue in which readers debate around a news topic (Arancibia & Montecino, 2013). Plus, by not having a maximum word limit like Twitter or other social media, this space allows one to make extensive arguments as well as admit the possibility of attaching videos or links to other sources. Note that *Emol.com* states on its website that it reserves the right not to post opinions that it considers aggressive or offensive, being able to filter comments posted.

The selection of this medium was made mainly due to *Emol.com*, at the time of the study, was the fifth most visited website in Chile after *Youtube.com*, *Google.cl*, *Facebook.com* and *Google.com*<sup>1</sup>. It was also chosen for being considered, according to the First National Study on Written Media Readership carried out by Universidad Diego Portales and the consulting group Feedback (2010), as the most influencing Chilean online press medium, the one that provides the highest quality information and having the highest credibility. In terms of the audience profile, the 2015 Report by the Chilean Association of Media Agencies AG (2015) indicated that 60% of *Emol.com* readers are men, while 40% are women.

For sample construction, all documents (news links) were inventoried in a Word document during the months of the study that address the news topics established in the objectives. Then, on a weekly basis, documents in each one of the news categories with the largest amount of comments were selected and transferred to an analysis chart.

Figure 1. Analysis Chart

Ficha de Análisis nº	
1. Área temática de la noticia:	7. Sexo del autor del artículo:
2. Título de la noticia:	8. Número de Comentarios en la publicación
3. Fecha de publicación:	Total Hombres:
4. Fecha de extracción:	Total Mujeres:
5. Fuente:	Total Indefinido:
6. Resumen de la noticia:	9. Presencia de comentarios sexistas:
10. Comentarios: Traspaso del contenido de todos los comentarios, manteniendo el mismo orden cronológico de la publicación y disposición de los textos. Los comentarios que son respuesta a otros comentarios van marginados a la derecha.	
a) Nombre del autor	
b) Sexo del autor (hombre, mujer o indefinido)	
b) Fecha y hora de publicación	
c) Contenido de la Publicación	

Source: Author

To analyze the frequency of comments according to sex variable and news category, a diverse sample or one of maximum variation was used. Meanwhile, in order to establish whether the opinions of readers expressed different points of view on a same topic, a non-random sample was used, composed of comments on new on the Law of Legalized Abortion for three causes 2 that, during the period of study, was the topic that had the highest number of comments. The choice of this topic was related to the concern of a male over-representation in opinions on a topic that directly affects women and her rights regarding her body.

For data analysis, content analysis was used, which, depending on each objective, was quantitative or qualitative, or both. In order to determine the frequency of the comments according to sex and news category, the names of the authors of the comments were selected as a unit of analysis. The name of the author of the commentary corresponds to the name of their Facebook profile, and therefore we hope, given Facebook's "policy of real names", to be working the real identities. Therefore, pseudonyms, stage names and fake names identified were classified under the category of "undefined" and were not considered in the sample.

The coding was performed at one time, the sex of the authors of the comments was identified on each analysis chart, and they were assigned a color (red for comments issued by women, blue for comments issued by men and green for undefined). The process of quantification was performed in two stages: first, the number of comments made by men, the number of comments made by women and the number of comments made by "undefined" was counted on each one of the charts. Then, data on each one of the charts were transferred, grouped and quantified in one Excel spreadsheet, with the chart number, the categories (article topics) and commentary author sex.

With the data obtained from the contingency matrix, the absolute frequencies were calculated (marginals) according to sex and news category, later the total relative frequencies ( $f_i = n_i/N$ ) according to the sex variable, and the joint relative frequency, which is to say, the quotient between the absolute frequency of comments observed in each one of the attributes of the "sex" variable together with each one of the attributes of the "categories" variable ( $f_{ij} = n_{ij}/n \times 100$ ).

Figure 2. Data coding contingency matrix.

FICHA DE ANÁLISIS	POLÍTICA			ECONOMÍA			EDUCACIÓN			CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA			TOTAL
	H	M	I	H	M	I	H	M	I	H	M	I	
Ficha 1	143	22	14										179
Ficha 2				154	3	6							163
Ficha 3							49	2	10				61
Ficha 4										47	2		52
Ficha 5	97	14	6										117
Ficha 6				88	1	3							92
Ficha 7							0	0	0				0
Ficha 8										6	0		7
Ficha 9	168	29	44										241
Ficha 10				11	1	1							13
Ficha 11							61	9	7				77
Ficha 12										44	3		51
Ficha 13	21	1	0										22
Ficha 14				87	4	11							102
Ficha 15							35	4	5				44
Ficha 16										73	3		81
Ficha 17	18	1	1										20
Ficha 18				66	0	3							69
Ficha 19							52	9	5				66
Ficha 20										36	0		38
Ficha 21	209	8	13										230
Ficha 22				62	0	4							66
Ficha 23							10	1	4				15
Ficha 24										5	0		5
Ficha 25	49	16	13										78
Ficha 26				34	2	2							38
Ficha 27							37	6	5				48
Ficha28										37	2		48
Ficha29	54	1	5										60
Ficha 30				83	4	2							89
Ficha 31							41	8	4				53
Ficha 32										1	0		1
Ficha 33	49	10	5										64
Ficha 34				69	6	4							79
Ficha35							61	8	3				72
Ficha 36										5	0		5
Ficha 37	61	6	1										68
Ficha 38				16	2	0							18
Ficha 39							61	3	3				67
Ficha 40										0	0		0
Ficha 41	13	3	3										19
Ficha 42				49	8	7							64
Ficha 43							78	13	7				98
Ficha 44										4	0		5
Ficha 45	119	8	3										130
Ficha 46				72	0	1							73
Ficha 47							32	4	6				42
Ficha 48										46	0		48
Ficha 49	103	15	9										127
Ficha 50				123	5	13							141
Ficha 51							20	3	1				24
Ficha 52										7	0		9

3379

	H	M	I	H	M	I	H	M	I	H	M	I	H + M + I
TOTAL	1104	134	117	914	36	57	537	70	60	311	10	29	
TOTAL	1355			1007			667			350			3379

H= Hombre                      M= Mujer                      I= Indefinido

Source: Author

Figure 3. Joint relative frequencies distribution table of the comments issued according to the author sex and news category.

		TOTAL COMENTARIOS SEGÚN CATEGORÍAS (%)			
		POLÍTICA	ECONOMÍA	EDUCACIÓN	CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA
COMENTARIOS SEGÚN SEXO (%)	MUJER	11%	4%	12%	3%
	HOMBRE	89%	96%	88%	97%
TOTAL (%)		100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Author

In order to analyze whether the readers expressed different points of view in regards to a specific topic, the units of analysis correspond to all the phrases or paragraphs where authors of comments expressed their point of view on abortion legislation. For category definition, we used the law project that regulates legal abortion for three reasons, which are: endangerment of the mother’s life, death of the fetus, and rape. Therefore, the categories of analysis designed were: “in favor” with the unit of analysis expressed a point of view in favor of one or more reasons for legal abor-

tion, “ambivalent” for cases where a point of view in favor of one or two reasons and against one or two reasons was expressed, and finally “against” when the point of view expressed was against one or more reasons for legal abortion. Once all segments were numbered, we proceeded to classify the units of analysis in a matrix of units of analysis coding contingency, made with segments found, categories and commentary author sex.

Once all the units of analysis were transferred and classified, the amount of registers (opinions) observed were counted according to author sex, and later the total relative frequencies (marginals) were counted. Afterwards, we proceeded to count the number of registers in each category according to author sex in order to identify the predominant opinions in both cases (men and women). Finally, and with the data obtained in the table of absolute frequency distribution, the joint relative frequency was calculated.

Finally, to identify and calculate the presence of sexist discourses in comments, quantitative and qualitative content analysis was also used. The units of analysis correspond to all words, phrases, paragraphs or the comment in its entirety, that presented sexist concepts in the comments that comprised the sample. The categories and sub-

Figure 4. Unit of Analysis Coding Contingency Matrix Extract.

Nombre autor del Comentario	Unidad de Análisis (Comentario)	SEXO		A FAVOR	EN CONTRA	AMBIVALENTE
		H	M			
1. Ignacio Díaz de Yáñez	El en por Chile, una deuda social, bien acotada y donde todos los sectores fueron escuchados.	■		●		
2. Raúl Hernández	Realmente dan risa los comentarios de muchas personas, el proyecto permitirá la interrupción del embarazo en tres causas: violación, inviabilidad fetal y riesgo de vida de la madre. Ahora este primero es el que aun se encuentra en debate, por ser un tema mas moral que los otros 2, porque en ese caso no hay problemas médicos que lo justifiquen. Si se logra aprobar ese punto que es el mas causa controversia, dependerá de los valores de cada uno, si los moralistas conservadores que se creen dueños de la verdad según sus creencias religiosas, que en estos temas importan menos que un pepino, pero para los otros 2 esta totalmente justificado y si dicen que es asesinato, matar y aborto libre, no tienen idea de lo que significa inviabilidad intrauterina y extrauterina. Lean mas ciencia y menos biblia, o sino no vayan al medico y muchos otros ejemplos que les puedo dar a estos pseudo religiosos doble estándar	■		●		
3. Iván Fernández	Un gran paso hacia la decadencia moral y el total desprecio por la vida?, Hitler y el Dr. Mengele deben estar revolcándose en sus tumbas de pura felicidad, hay en Chile partidarios al igual que ellos, de eliminar mediante feticidio a los malformados o con síndrome de Down.	■			●	
4. Ildora Alvarez Rali	Que crimen !!... que pena vivir en un país así!!!... cuando una mamá está embarazada hay DOS PERSONAS con derechos. No sé que clase de ética aprendieron los doctores que lo hacen, y que entienden como fin de la medicina.		■		●	
5. Ana María Díaz	Que sabe Monckeber sobre lo que daña a una mujer. Quitarle los derechos sobre su cuerpo es dañarla. Un monton de patriarcales tratando de seguir controlando a la mujer a través de su cuerpo.		■	●		
6. María Paz Castillo Mejías	No acostumbro hablar así, pero la noticia lo amerita: "hijos de puta los que aprobaron el asesinato!"		■		●	
7. Franklin Avila	Me parece bien, ahora ojala que se apruebe el aborto por violación.	■		●		
8. Soila Muñoz	EL MISMO ADOLF HITLER FOMENTABA QUE LAS MUJERES ALEMANAS TUVIERAN HIJOS Y ACÁ HOY SE ORDENA POR LEY ASESNARLOS EN EL VIENTRE. POLITICOS COBARDES, CANALLAS, ASESINOS QUE SE LES FLUIRAN LAS MANOS POR FIRMAR TAL CRIMEN.		■		●	
9. Danilo Silva Fierro	Muy mal por Chile, una minoría corrupta que se autoproclama "nueva mayoría" - que en si no existe - con una presidencia corrupta, perdida y sin rumbo y que nadie la quiere en el poder deciden legalizar el asesinato de bebés no dados a luz con frases perfrásticas, slogans mentirosos y manipulación mediática legalizan el asesinato, ellos son los que bien describe el Libro de Romanos en su capítulo 1. Dios tenga misericordia.	■			●	
10. Franklin Avila	En este caso no se trata de una minoría, porque sobre el 70% de las personas estamos a favor del aborto en las 3 causas: muy distinto es el tema de que la madame tiene el 24% de apoyo.	■		●		
11. Samuel Enrique	Acuerdo Esto ya es una Burla... ya es Terrible que aprueben la despersonalización del Aborto... pero mas terrible es que Cualquier Medico pueda realizar un Aborto!... Esta claro que buscan el Aborto Libre... porque nunca podran controlar todo el Universo de Médicos... una Burla... Hay leyes que Protegen el Maltrato Animal... pero no hay leyes que protejan a nuestro Niños... Chile País de Carcañal...	■			●	

Source: Author



**Figure 5. Joint relative frequency distribution table according to sex and sub-categories analyzed on Abortion Law.**

	OPINIONES SOBRE LA LEY DE ABORTO			TOTAL
	A FAVOR	EN CONTRA	AMBIVALENTE	
HOMBRE	53%	46%	1%	100%
MUJER	27%	73%	—	100%

Source: Author

categories were defined according to the theoretical variables of the ambivalent sexism concept. In this way, the units of analysis were extracted, classified and quantified according to the sex of the author, the category and sub-category within ambivalent sexism.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Comments frequencies according to sex of author and news topic

Based on the proposed methodology, a total of 3,379 documents (comments) were taken from Emol.com, of which 263 were excluded for being comments from an author whose sex was identified as "undefined". In this way, the study sample was comprised of a total of 3,116 comments, of which 1,238 (40%) were issued in the political section, 950 (30%) in the economic section, 607 (20%) in education and 321 (10%) in science and technology.

Of the total of cases observed (comments) in which the author's sex could be identified, only 250 comments (8%) were written by women, while 2,866 (92%) were written by men.

In terms of participation levels according to news category, some variations were observed according to topic. Categories where there was a higher participation of women were in the comments on news about politics and education. In politics, they wrote 11% of the comments, while in education, that number rose slightly to 12%. In contrast, men wrote 89% of the comments on news about politics and 88% on education.

In news categories about economy, sciences, and technology, women's participation decreases considerably. In economy, women wrote only 4% of the comments while in science and technology, this percentage decreased to 3%. This marginal participation of women contrasts with that of men, where they wrote 96% of the comments on economy and 97% of the comments on science and technology.

The slight increase of comments made by women on news about education would reflect the daily experience of women that confirms the separation between the public and the private, noting that women tend to participate a little more as private space issues are addressed, which in this case is the discussion on children's education.

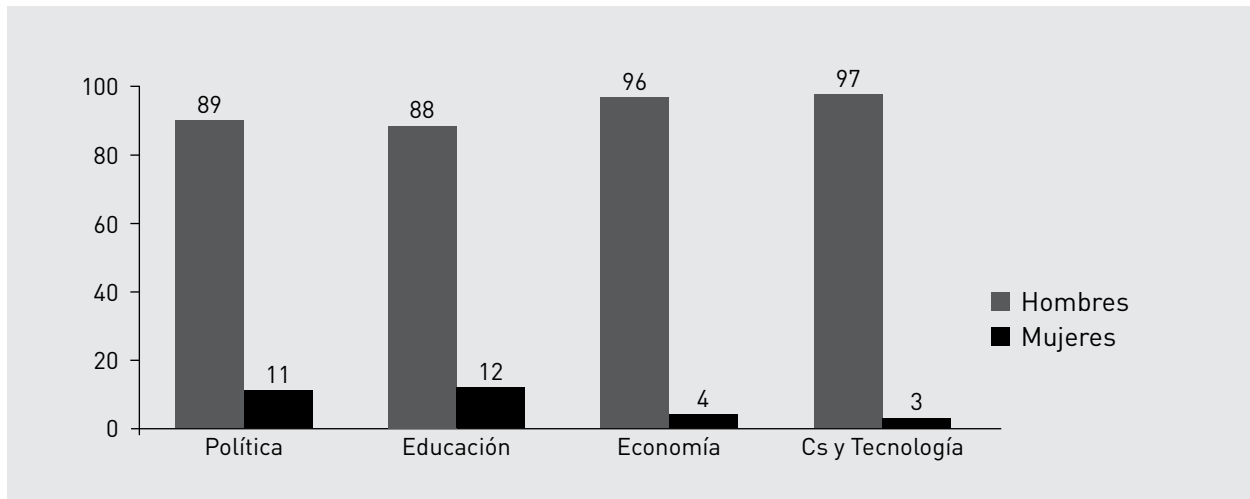
**Figure 6. Units of Analysis Coding Contingency Matrix.**

UNIDAD DE ANÁLISIS	SEXISMO BENÉVOLO			SEXISMO HOSTIL		
	PATERNALISMO PROTECTOR	DIFERENCIACIÓN COMPLEMENTARIA	INTIMIDAD HETEROSEXUAL	PATERNALISMO DOMINADOR	DIFERENCIACIÓN COMPETITIVA	DOMINACIÓN HETEROSEXUAL
(1) "Keep dreaming pussyUDlondo"						H
(2) "¡¡¡ Pobrecita tú niñita !!!"				H		
(3) "Anda a enterrarte vieja menopáusica"					H	
(4) "Anda a ver que estas quemando las camisas con la plancha."		H				
(5) "Vaya a cocina"		H				
(6) "Claudita usted es bonita y rubia ? Jajaja"						H
(7) "Vieja Q.L.I.A"						H
(8) "Yo te puedo arreglar el pasaporte..."	H					
(9) "Natalia Sofia a lo mejor tienes razón Natalie (hermosa canción de Gilbert Becaud)."			H			
(10) "Tanto tiempo q se toma sra para escribir tonteras!!!!"					H	

H = Hombre (sexo del autor del comentario)

Source: Author

Figure 7. Participation according to sex and news category.



Source: Author

## 5.2. Points of view expressed in comments according to sex of author

Based on the methodology proposed, of a total of four publications on the Law for Legal Abortion during the interval of time defined for the extraction of the sample, the news published on September 8 was used for analysis. The article reported the approval of legalized abortion in 2 of the 3 reasons<sup>3</sup>, where, of a total 415 comments extracted, there were 283 written by men and 97 by women, the latter representing 23% of the total.

Of the 380 comments written by men and women, only 223 expressed a point of view (direct or indirect) on the Law on legalized abortion for 3 reasons. Of these, 156 (70%) correspond to comments written by men and 67 (30%) written by women. Therefore, a clear male over-representation is shown on an issue directly affects women and their rights over their body.

Ahora bien, based on the categories established by the methodology (in favor of, against and ambivalent), of the 156 comments issued by men where it was possible to recognize and determine the commentary author's point of view, 53% expressed to be in favor of one or more reasons for legalized abortion, 1% showed to be in favor of one or two reasons and against one or two reasons and 46% to be against one or more reasons for legalized abortion. On the contrary, of the 67 comments issued by women, only 27% are in favor of one or more rea-

Figure 8. Image of the news extracted on September 8, 2015 from Emol.com

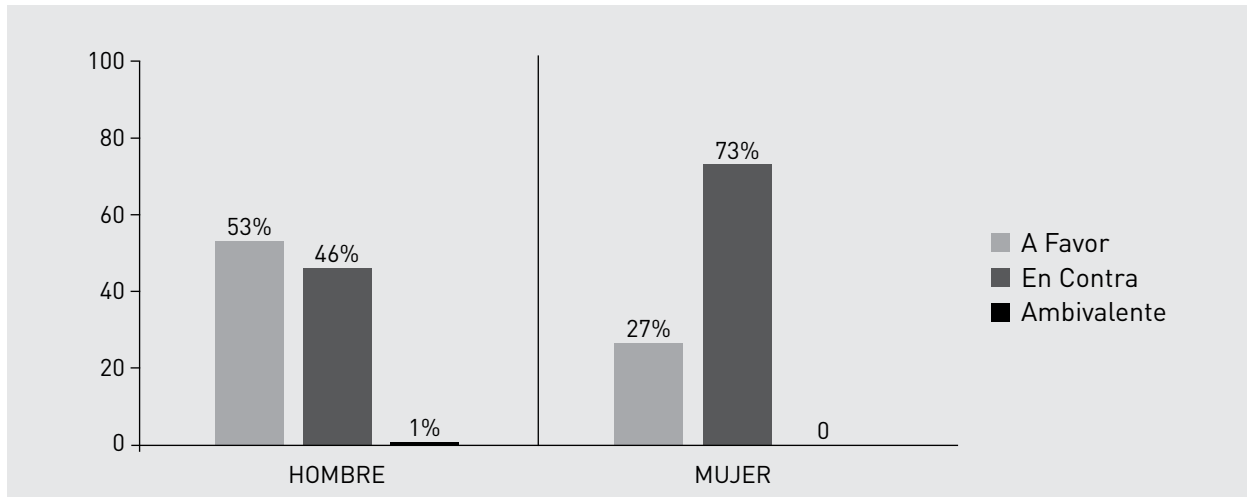


Source: Emol.com.

sons for legalized abortion while 73% expressed to be against one or more reasons for legalized abortion. In the case of women, no ambivalent points of view were observed.

According to the data observed in the categories "in favor of" and "against" according to variable of sex, it is possible to show in the case of men that you cannot see a large imbalance in the distribu-

**Figure 9. Points of view expressed on the Law for Legalized Abortion for 3 reasons according to author's sex.**



Source: Author

tion of points of view expressed. On the contrary, in the points of view expressed by women, the differences are evident, the wide majority of them are against the law, showing that the majority of the opinions exposed are Pro-life or conservative female gender roles. Finally, it was established that readers' points of view on this law differ considerably. While the majority of men show to be in favor (53%), women express to be against (73%) the law on legalize abortion for three reasons.

### 5.3. Sexist Discourses

Based on the methodological planning, of the 3,116 cases observed (comments) that comprised the study sample, the presence of sexist discourses was identified in 9 of them, written entirely by men, representing marginally 0.2% of the total sample. Note that the low number of sexist discourses observed could be due to the medium's ethical norms, which is to say, Emol.com has the right to delete those comments considered offensive or aggressive. Readers can also denounce those comments considered offensive or spam via a tool provided by the site.

Some 60% of these discourses fell in the category of "Hostile Sexism", compared to 40% in the category of "Benevolent Sexism". In the category of "Hostile Sexism" sexist discourses were seen in

all of the sub-categories, "Heterosexual Domination" being that sub-category in which showed the highest number of cases. Sexual domination refers to the hostility towards women associated to the belief that they will use their sexual attraction to dominate men and that they will use sex, seen popularly as a resource attributed to them, to manipulate men.

On the other hand, 89% of sexist discourses were found in the comments on news about politics – second highest category in terms of female participation– while the remaining 11% was found in comments on news about economy. Although these discoveries are encouraging, the low presence of sexist comments in reader participation spaces should not minimize the importance of those that were posted, given that it would be ignoring the presence of the coercion mechanism that seeks to perpetuate the male dominance structure within the public space, and that justifies its power (that of men) based on the supposed inferiority or difference of women (Loscertales & Fernández, 2009).

## 6. Conclusions

The results of this study show how gender differences are expressed in interactions and participation levels, given that men largely make use of this virtual space to express their opinions, being a

mainly male-owned virtual territory of the interactions in the news categories analyzed in this medium. In this way, it shows the under-representation of women in these virtual spaces, where they prefer to express their opinions in the midst of a large number of male comments.

These results may not only be a reflection of the large gender inequality that exists in communication media, but also, the little participation of women in the public space, whose access has been jeopardized by the values and traditions of a patriarchal structure that historically has devalued women's place in society, giving her the private space and limiting her social role as one of a producer - domestic environment, child raising, and daily tasks- (Otner, 1979).

On the other hand, it is presumed that women's limited access to power centers, as well as public institutions and to committees, could also be a factor that would demotivate women from participating in these spaces, given that at least in news categories analyzed (political, economics, sciences and technology and education), these topics continue to be "by men and for men. The low participation of women in these spaces shows the unfavorable situation of women in communication media in terms of equality and representation. Firstly, the observed feminist under-representation implies that the few women that post their opinions are not significantly reflecting what the majority thinks, leading to an adequate representation of themselves. Likewise, the opinions posted (by men and women) would not equally reflect the points of view expressed here (Pierson, 2015).

Based on the statement "the personal is political (Pateman, 1996), the observed under-representation of women in the comments on news about abortion implies that the female readers of this medium continue to see abortion as a private issue, when on the contrary, it is hoped that by being a private issue based on public factors, these topics are resolved via the media and political actions. In this sense, the importance of the internet is revealed as a essential tool for the social dynamic, given that it has the ability to legitimize the discourses and generate social recognition.

It is important to indicate that the scarce number of sexist comments observed (0,2%) in reader

participation spaces must not minimize the importance of those that were indeed posted, given that their mere presence would indicate that these coercive behaviors continue to operate seeking to perpetuate the male domination structure, belittling women and therefore, jeopardizing their full participation in communication media, where communication as a human right must comply with the full, free, thorough, and indisputable access of women to communication via any medium (Vega, 2010).

It is possible to conclude that despite the existence of new participation tools in the online press, these spaces have yet to transform into places of democratic dialogue of thoughts and ideas, that allow for enriching the public debate on social and political issues and, in addition, promote the participation of citizens in public issues.

We hope the results of this study open new inquiries and topics for research that investigate the causes of this phenomenon, as well as explore mechanisms that contribute to strengthening and promotion of women's participation and access to communication media whether as producers, users, or both, given the implications of the online media and internet in the promotion of women. This is especially important today, in a social context like Chile's, that demands more equality, justice and representatively and where the feminist movement has made substantial headway in society's recognition of its demands, thanks to the organizing tools and active role that the internet and digital media provide (Burch, 1996).

## Notes

1. Information provided by the Amazon site Alexa.com (2016)
2. In September 2017 Law No. 21.030 was ratified that regulates the legalization of voluntary interruption of pregnancy for 3 reasons: danger to the mother's life, death of the fetus, and rape.
3. Legalization is approved for fetus malformation and risk to the mother's life. (2015, September 8). Found on Emol.com. <http://www.emol.com/noticias/Nacional/2015/09/08/748937/Aborto-Se-aprueba-despenalizacion-por-mal-formacion-y-riesgo-de-vida-de-la-madre.html>

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