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REVISTA DE COMUNICACIÓN Y SALUD: CONTENIDOS, INFLUENCIAS Y REPRESENTACIONES EN SUS PRIMEROS DIEZ NÚMEROS

Journal of Communication and Health: contents, influences and representations in its first ten issues

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Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo sistematizar la producción científica de la *Revista de Comunicación y Salud* en sus primeros diez números, publicados entre 2011 y 2017. Se analizan cuatro aspectos: las tendencias temáticas de los textos, el perfil de las autorías, los principales referentes teóricos del campo de la comunicación para la salud y los encuadres metodológicos. La información fue sistematizada a través del *Programa de base de datos relaciones Filemaker*, en la versión 17 Avanzada. Para el análisis de los textos, se realizó un *estudio sistemático de revisión*, con el fin de evaluar, interpretar y sintetizar los datos encontrados. La revista refleja las principales tendencias investigativas en el campo de la comunicación para la salud, en el plano iberoamericano e internacional. También corrobora que estamos frente a un campo de investigación relativamente joven, con un matiz interdisciplinar que lo enriquece como campo del conocimiento científico. Además, la revista representa un punto de atracción de la producción científica en torno a la comunicación para la salud en la región iberoamericana.

Palabras clave: comunicación para la salud, revistas científicas, estudio sistemático de revisión.

Abstract

The aim of this article is to systematize the *Journal of Communication and Health's* scientific production in its first ten issues, published between 2011 and 2017. Four aspects are analyzed: the thematic tendencies of the texts, the profile of the authors, the main theoretical models and the methodological frameworks in the health communication's field. The information was systematized through the *Filemaker*

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Relations Database Program, in the Advanced 17 version. For the analysis of the texts, a systematic review study was carried out, in order to evaluate, interpret and synthesize the data found. The journal reflects the main research trends in the health communication's field in Ibero-American and the international scene. It also corroborates that, we are facing a relatively young research field, with an interdisciplinary nuance that enriches it as a field of scientific knowledge. Beyond that, the journal represents a point of attraction for scientific production around health communication in the Ibero-American region.

Keywords: health communication, scientific journals, systematic review study.

Cómo citar el artículo

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1. INTRODUCTION

Scientific journals currently play a significant role in the production and circulation of scientific knowledge. They constitute a privileged space, as publications authorised to disseminate and legitimise fields of scientific knowledge. In the words of Callon, Courtial and Penan (1995), these journals provide consistency to science and are its *raison d'être*.

According to Guinchat, Menoy and Blanquet (1990), articles published in scientific journals constitute the most elaborate collective writing and criticism in science today. The very development of a journal not only includes a group of themes, styles, structures and research profiles, which allow it to be characterised as a publication, but also the way in which its contents have been produced, giving clues to other elements of a relational, thematic and institutional nature, which, although they can be considered external to the publication, leave their mark on how scientific knowledge is produced and reproduced.

Martín (2001), speaking of the importance of the study of scientific journals in the transfer of knowledge, asserts that they are useful for evaluating the subjects behind them, as well as their relationships and interests.

The growing interest in studying them, according to Jiménez (1992), stems from the fact that 95% of current scientific studies are published in journals or databases, which makes them a privileged space. The Journal of Communication and Health (hereinafter RCyS) has issued ten issues since its inauguration in 2011 to date. It was

born in the then International Institute of Communication and Health and later became edited by the Extraordinary Chair of Communication and Health of the Complutense University of Madrid.

RCyS was born one year after the *Revista Española de Comunicación en Salud* (hereinafter RECS), published by the Spanish Association of Health Communication and the Carlos III University of Madrid. Since then, both journals have been leading publications in the field in Ibero-America.

For the first three years, RCyS had a biannual edition, for a total of six issues, but since 2014, it has had an annual edition, so four more issues have been published until 2017. The official languages of the journal are Spanish and Portuguese, although most of the texts appear in Spanish (97%).

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS

The aim of this article is to systematise the scientific production of *Journal of Communication and Health's* scientific production in its first ten issues, published between 2011 and 2017. The hypothesis put forward is that the *Journal of Communication and Health* constitutes a reference in the field of health communication in Ibero-America, which has served to account for the state of the disciplinary field, through four aspects: thematic trends, the profile of the authors, the main theoretical references, as well as the methodological frameworks of its texts.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the systematisation of the information, a content file was elaborated in the Filemaker database programme, version 17 Advanced. Likewise, for the analysis of the texts, a systematic review study was carried out in order to evaluate, interpret and synthesise the data of the texts analysed. According to Rychetnik, Hawe, Waters, Barrat & Frommer (2004, cited in Caballero, 2006: 64), it allows "to generate a descriptive and interpretative synthesis of the findings in order to obtain a panoramic view of the evidence".

The present analysis covers all the texts published in the journal. In total, 82 texts that make up the 7 sections of the journal were reviewed, distributed as follows: Editorial (7), Original article (38), Review (9), Essay (11), Invited signature (6), Review (10) and Letter to the editor (1).

4. DISCUSSION

For the presentation of the results, the text comprises two sections, the limits of which have been set according to the analysis and the data found. The first includes the main research themes, the most recurrent terms or concepts and the areas of research interest. The second includes an analysis of the authors' variables, together with theoretical, methodological and results issues, as we shall see below.

4.1. Communication and health as categories of a scientific field

In this section, the main concepts used in the texts on SR&H are presented. They show which communication and health issues are privileged and from which approaches they are dealt with. There are three main areas of thematic interest for the journal and its authors: the institutional area, studies on Mass Media (hereinafter MDM), and research on Information and Communication Technologies (hereinafter ICTs), as the most recurrent themes in the journal's publications.

It is not by chance that research on mass media stands out, because this has been the privileged field in any field of communication studies. In fact, it was with them that communication theory emerged from Mass Communication Research in the 1920s. On the other hand, the publications found here dedicated to ICTs are also part of this migration in communication studies towards the field of ICTs, due to their impact - positive and negative- on the forms of social relations, as well as their imprint on the dynamics of information circulation.

Four categories of analysis were extracted from each text reviewed: a main one and three secondary ones. From there, groups of terms were established for codification and simplification. This analysis allows us to affirm that the concepts most used in the articles are: health communication, health communication and risk communication. They are followed by the concepts of health promotion, health communication, health education, health education, health literacy and crisis communication.

Terms from other areas such as intercultural, interlinguistic, interpersonal and persuasive communication are also brought in, but applied to the field of health. The same is true for the term health itself, which is rarely used in a generic way, but narrowed down to areas such as public health, global health, local health, or national health issues.

There are two important areas within the journal, devoted to communication campaigns and strategies, which deal with their design, implementation, actions, evaluation and effectiveness. On the other hand, the authors are interested in communication styles and models, as well as the communication needs of the subjects.

The journal discusses the importance of participatory approaches in health care, as a counterpart to the welfare approach, where the protagonism lies with the health personnel and not with the subject/patient. Concepts such as individual and collective participation, community participation, social mobilisation, patient ownership and co-production of knowledge come into play.

In the articles, it is possible to detect a recurrence of certain terms such as: community reorganisation, leadership strategies, community and intercultural mediation, training of community managers, based on community intervention methodologies and research-action-participation.

Other articles deal with the social marketing approach, the cultural and social dimension of health problems, the semiotic and anthropological-cultural approach, as well as the interconnections with social change and development. Some texts deal with the psychosocial perspective of health, social awareness strategies, and the relational perspective of communication. Others deal with discursive strategies, linguistic corpus and narrative persuasion, together with the use of audiovisual methodologies and experimental video therapy.

In line with the journal's profile, medical topics such as primary care, medicalisation, traditional medicine, ancestral knowledge, non-conventional therapies, complex epidemiological profiles, together with family, community, urban and school medicine, are highlighted. Health is also related to quality of life, environment, poverty, risk and early detection of diseases.

Among the most recurrent health issues are HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, diabetes, Ebola, dengue fever, drugs, ageing and obesity. The issue of nutrition has a significant component, specifically food industrialisation, nutrition paradigms, information on pesticides, among others.

However, the subject of greatest coverage in the journal is sexual and reproductive health, as it relates to gender issues. There are texts on models and discourses on women and the family in women's magazines, HIV/AIDS, sexual behaviour, male condoms, techno-addiction to sex, and andropause.

It is also possible to find in the articles a marked influence from the area of clinical and social psychology, from studies of perception and memory, whether of the risk of diseases such as cancer or sexually transmitted infections, or the public or social perception of crises.

Other topics addressed include the expectations and motivations of chronic patients, affective and psychosocial processes of health-illness, self-image, self-concept, personal identity, emotional intelligence, stigmatising social representations of illnesses, as well as the relationship between subjectivities and social discourses. In addition to behavioural theories, healthy behaviours, psychometric paradigms and neurosciences.

In the area of works dedicated to the institutional area, the articles that stand out are those that focus on communication in institutions, both internally and externally, their strategies, audits, management of health crises, information and knowledge management, contingency plans, etc.

There are other texts dedicated to organisational culture, work climate and communication studies, organisational innovation, transformational leadership, as well as motivation and job satisfaction. The most studied institutions are health centres or hospitals, non-governmental organisations (hereinafter NGOs), non-profit, health or socio-sanitary organisations, as they are also called.

Thus, there are texts on the relationship between health institutions and the media, the brand image of pharmaceutical companies, corporate social responsibility and the management of public funds.

They also contain theoretical critiques of health care systems, public policies and health policies, hospital services, doctor-patient communication, health care and health care, together with studies on patient opinion and satisfaction with regard to these indicators. In addition, research is carried out on the administration of health institutions, their staff, working conditions and opportunities, and decision-making.

In the area dedicated to mass media studies, the treatment and media coverage of health issues such as disability, nutrition, alcohol, HIV/Aids and autism, mainly stand out.

Studies on the construction of the news, the dissemination of medical information, the discursive organisation of media language, advertising and the pejorative uses of health terms also stand out.

Some focus on the educational function of the media, journalistic errors, advertising effectiveness, as well as the use of health issues in the media for electoral purposes. Others concentrate on the professional training of communicators and journalists, the rigour of specialisation, and the links between journalists and health workers.

Similarly, several papers relate ICTs to health, with the concept of e-health recurrently appearing in them. They work on the functions of ICTs in the era of the global village, their potential for the generation and dissemination of knowledge, and as an electronic tool for risk assessment. Other articles focus on technological management and development, the relationship between technical assistance and education, and the competencies, knowledge and technical skills involved in their use.

There are original articles on virtual spaces and communities, online platforms, web 2.0, tweets, health applications for mobile phones, video games and various computer programmes.

These findings allow us to conclude that the journal provides a broad coverage of topics that synthesise the main concepts, approaches and areas of the field of health communication in Ibero-America. The preponderance of studies on health institutions demonstrates the governmental and political influence of the area. The same is true of health issues, where diseases and epidemics whose control legitimises national governments are being better represented; this is influenced by the fact that these texts are often the result of research financed by official organisations that set the guidelines for research agendas.

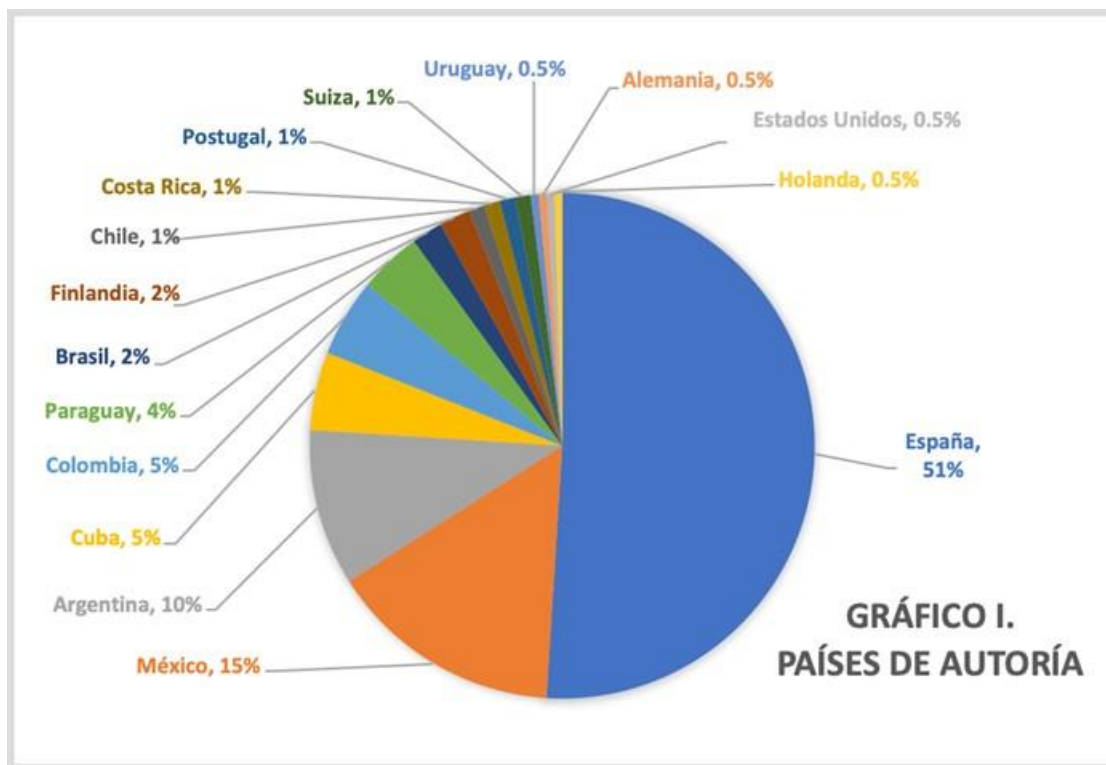
4.2. Authors, theoretical and methodological approaches and results obtained

This section presents an analysis of authorship, theories, methodologies and results. The authorship data show the representativeness of countries of publication, professional background, institutions of affiliation, as well as individual and co-authored publications, and alliances by disciplines, institutions and countries.

The theoretical review of the texts made it possible to outline the profile of the most cited authors, countries, journals, documents and governmental institutions. Meanwhile, the methodological aspects refer to the organisation of the texts, the methodologies, techniques and research instruments most commonly used, the subjects with whom they work and the results obtained. It should be clarified that only the most outstanding results are presented, the main trends in each of these variables, defined on the basis of their recurrence in the texts reviewed.

Scholars from 16 countries, most of them from Ibero-America, have collaborated in the RCyS. The list is headed by texts from Spain, with 51% of the total. This is followed by Mexico with 15%, Argentina with 10%, Cuba and Colombia, each with around 5%. Paraguay comes next with 4%, followed by Brazil and Finland, each with 2%.

Among those with the lowest number are Chile, Costa Rica, Portugal and Switzerland, each with 2 authors, representing 1%. Below 1% are Uruguay, Germany, the United States and the Netherlands, as shown in the following graph:



Source: Own elaboration.

On the other hand, the more than 140 authors who have published in the journal were searched on Google to find out the disciplinary fields from which they come. From this search, information was found for only 75% of them, i.e. 106 authors. Based on what was found, it can be affirmed that 46% of the authors come from the field of communication or related areas such as information sciences, journalism, advertising or public relations.

While 25% belong to the field of health sciences, and are mainly made up of professionals from the fields of medicine, nursing and biology. Then come the fields of psychology with 10% and sociology with 7%. There are also authors with training in other dissimilar areas such as Spanish philology, linguistics, economics, anthropology, computer science and public administration. This demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of health communication as a field of study.

It is important to highlight that many of the authors have specialisations, master's degrees or doctorates in the area of public health, regardless of their field of origin. It is common to find professionals from both the social and humanistic sciences, as well as the natural and exact sciences. This shows that the area of public health, especially at postgraduate level, is becoming a space for interdisciplinary dialogue from which alliances emerge for scientific production, as we will see below.

In the journal, there are four sections where texts can be published in co-authorship. These sections contain 28 original articles, 5 review texts, 2 essays and 1 guest author, for a total of 37 texts written in collaboration, out of the 60 that compose them. In other words, more than half of these texts have more than one author. Of these, 31 have between one and three co-authors. Only a small number (6 texts) have between four and seven co-authors, the highest number found in the journal.

However, 11 texts, i.e. about 30%, are written by professionals from more than one area of knowledge. The most common combinations are between medicine and sociology and/or communication, nursing with information sciences and/or psychology, education with nursing and/or computer science. Combinations of information science with public health, sociology, philology and/or nursing also stand out. In addition to communication with administration. These combinations are a sign of the interdisciplinary condition in which the field of health communication was born and has developed.

In turn, there are 17 texts that mix authors from more than one institution. There are relationships between faculties within the same university, between universities, and between universities and foundations, public institutes, freelancers, and hospitals.

In terms of country alliances, we find that 4 texts have been written by authors from more than one country. There are Argentina-Finland, Mexico-Brazil, Spain-Argentina, and Spain-Switzerland. In these four cases, there is also a mix of different institutions, in three cases they are alliances between universities and foundations, and the other between two universities.

However, a greater number of articles were by Joan Carles March Cerdá and Alina Danet, whose names appear in five and four of the texts respectively. It is worth mentioning that these authors are co-authors of the same texts, so their high proliferation, compared to the rest, is the result of strategic alliances between them.

On the other hand, there are the main theoretical references of the texts; to find them, all the bibliographical citations of each of the works published in the RCyS were reviewed. From there, the ten most cited texts in the journal were extracted. To do this, the variety of texts in which they are cited was taken into account, rather than the number of times they are referenced in the same text. Self-citations were also excluded.

The most cited authors are the American Paul Slovic, the Argentinian Hernán Díaz (at the time editor of the journal), the Bolivian Alfonso Gumucio, and the Spaniards Justo Villafañe, Carmen Costa Sánchez and Ubaldo Cuesta Castra; the latter two are also authors of books reviewed in the journal.

Similarly, the most cited journals are *Atención Médica* (17), RCyS itself (16), *Revista Cubana de Salud Pública* (16), *Gaceta Sanitaria* (14), followed by *Health Communication* (13) and *Journal of Health Communication* (13). The latter two are published in English and dominate publications in the field of health communication at

the international level. In fact, in the words of Aitor Ugarte (2011), RCyS was born as an Ibero-American alternative to the journals of the Anglo-Saxon world. Nevertheless, they are the pioneering journals in this field and enjoy international prestige, which is why they continue to be a point of reference for the whole world.

The countries and cities where the most cited publishers are located are Spain with 130 cited texts and the United States with 42. The most cited international organisation is the UN, which appears textually in 11 texts; or some of its agencies, such as WHO in 36 and PAHO in 15; even UNDP, UNAIDS, UNESCO and UNICEF.

The most frequently cited national agencies are the Ministry of Health of Argentina and the Ministry of Health of Mexico, both in 5 texts. References are also made to ministries of health or sanitation, education, labour and social affairs, equality, interior, environment, and rural and marine environment, mainly.

The most frequently cited document is the "Ottawa Charter", which was drawn up by the WHO during the First International Conference on Health Promotion held in Ottawa in 1986. It is followed by the "Social Communication Manual for Adolescent Health Promotion Programmes". This was produced by PAHO, together with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in 1989. This is followed by action programmes, government reports, national surveys and international declarations, mostly official information from international agencies or national governments.

This is an example of the influence of politics on the academic field of health communication and vice versa, because, for example, the population and health policies of governments are nourished by the scientific production in universities and institutes for these purposes, often financed by the governments themselves, and whose results are published in journals such as this one.

In terms of methodological analysis, it should be noted that, although the journal proposes a structure to be followed for the publication of the text, in many cases it is not followed, especially in the first issues. However, according to the RCyS website, the structure for original and review articles is as follows: introduction, research objective and hypothesis, research methodology, research results, discussion and conclusions.

Of the 82 texts that make up the journal to date, only 41% have a methodological section, 29% do not, and the remaining 30% do not apply, as they are editorials, reviews, essays, guest articles or letters to the editor.

Likewise, 22% of the texts state that they use qualitative methodology, while 18% use quantitative methodology, 12% use a mixed perspective that combines both, and 20% do not use any methodology at all.

As far as research techniques and instruments are concerned, there is a large combination of techniques and instruments. The most frequently used is the questionnaire, in 27% of the research, followed by content analysis and statistical analysis, each of which is found in 20% of the research. This is followed by review

(16%) and interviews (15%). Finally, there are focus groups and observations in 6% of the papers. Others that are used, but to a lesser extent, are discourse analysis, comparative analysis, case studies and focus groups, as shown in the following graph:



Source: Own elaboration.

At the same time, in 30% of the texts, the authors analyse documents, such as institutional or governmental reports, journalistic material and textbooks. Also, 24% of the works focus on MDM or ICTs, including studies on websites, radio, television, commercials and mobile phone applications, among others.

The results of the texts were grouped into two main groups. The first group includes empirical studies, i.e. research that produced data based on reality; this represented 43% of the texts reviewed. In the second group are the reviews or state of the art, which accounted for 29% of the total number of texts.

It is important to point out that, at the beginning, a third group was defined to limit the texts that contained a methodological reflection as a result, but due to a lack of findings, this group was left empty, which indicates that the strongest points of the articles published in the journal are to be found in their theoretical and empirical results.

In summary, theoretical papers (essays, reviews or state of the art) account for 21% of the total number of texts. However, it is also easy to find research interest in the field of health communication in specific subjects, such as health professionals (16%), communication professionals (11%), the general population (11%) or patients with

chronic diseases (10%). Other subject groups found, although to a lesser extent, are students, adolescents and young people, caregivers of the sick, farmers, migrants, women and infants, as shown in the following graph:



Source: Own elaboration.

These data corroborate the journal's coverage of countries in the region. Many of its texts are also the result of a mixture of professional backgrounds and theoretical references from different areas of knowledge, where co-authorship is a strategic alliance for greater scientific production and visibility. In another sense, the review corroborates that the field of health communication develops within the framework of relations between academic, political and governmental institutions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The systematisation of the scientific production of the first ten issues of the RCyS leads to the conclusion that it is a reflection of the main research trends in the field of health communication at the Ibero-American and international level.

Likewise, the results found here, in terms of theoretical and methodological perspectives, and the results obtained, corroborate the fact that we are dealing with a relatively young field of research, which still has a complex and diffuse appearance. Hence the proliferation of terms, concepts and categories that arise indistinctly to refer to a single phenomenon.

The texts also show that research in this area is based on theoretical references from different sciences, such as social, health, natural, exact and applied sciences, and that their interconnection has resulted in rich, broad and diverse approaches.

On the other hand, the data confirm that health communication is an area of influence between the political and academic fields, where governments and national and international organisations related to the subject come into play. Thus, it is possible to identify that, on the one hand, the research routes and fields of action are defined, while on the other, political interests are legitimised through science.

In the same way, the journal represents a point of attraction for scientific production in health communication in the Ibero-American region, in order to confront the hegemonic publications that dominate the field of study from the Anglo-Saxon world.

On the other hand, it is possible to affirm that the process of organising data, in this case through Filemaker, is always limited, in that classifying them in one way and not in another becomes arbitrary, and leads to discarding part of their richness. Nevertheless, a study of this type allows us to synthesise the complex configurations that occur in the production of scientific texts, whose academic, institutional and political nuances condition their scope and development.

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