

# TELEVISION COVERAGE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SPAIN DURING LOCKDOWN

## Television and gender-based violence

This article analyzes the presence of gender-based violence on free-to-air Spanish television (TV) channels La1, Antena 3, Tele 5, La Sexta, and Cuatro throughout their 24-h daily broadcasting, between 20 March and 20 June 2020, along with the same period for the year 2019. This article studies whether, despite the COVID-19 dominated agenda of media, coverage of gender-based violence increased or decreased, driven by government policies to protect potential victims. Also, we analyze whether any TV channels provided tools (such as the 016 helpline) to help women or were rather limited to reporting murder cases. In addition, the most predominant terms used in such coverage are identified, along with any potential difference in the behavior of public versus private television channels. The data confirm, among other issues, that coverage of gender-based violence on these television channels decreased during the studied timeframe. However, the mentions of tools aimed at supporting women at risk increased. The results of this study also reveal that television coverage of violence against women did not coincide with the dates in which gender-based murders took place and that, of all Spanish media networks, public television paid the most attention to this issue.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, Television, Machismo murder, Agenda setting, Framing

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In March 2020, home lockdown was established in Spain as a means to stop the spread of COVID-19. Some women were forced to live with their abusers and related to its situation, there was a possible upturn in gender-based violence (Lorente-Acosta, 2020; Medina-Gamero & Regalado-Chamorro, 2021). Also, the defenselessness of women forced to remain living with their possible abuser without means to leave or go to safe locations, such as health centers, increased. For this reason, the Ministry of Equality (2020a) published a contingency plan including an institutional campaign to raise awareness of gender-based violence during this period (Ruiz-Pérez & Pastor-Moreno, 2021), only two days after the announcement of the state of alarm. This campaign had two main focus points: one for the victims, using the slogan “We are with you; we will stop gender-based violence together” [*“Estamos contigo; la violencia de género la paramos unidas”*]; and another one to invite reports of gender-based violence with the slogan “We will stop gender-based violence together; we are with you” [*“La violencia de género la paramos unidas, estamos contigo”*].

Statistical results after the first state of alarm indicate that, during the months of April, May, and June 2020, both gender-based murders and formal complaints decreased. Four women were murdered during this period in 2020, compared with 15 victims in the same stage of 2019. According to data from the statistical portal of the delegation of the Government of Spain against gender-based violence, reports of violence cases went from 40.495 in 2019 to 34.576 in 2020. This means a reduction of 14.61% (Ministry of Equality, 2021). This decrease is the most significant one since 2011. As seen in Graph 1, this downward trend also occurred in 2016 during the months of October, November, and December, with 34.897 formal reports, but this decrease was still not as large as that observed in April, May, and June 2020.

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Graph 1: Number of formal gender-based violence reports and emergency calls to 016, from January 2007 to September 2020. Source: Government Delegation on Violence against Women; authors' adaptation.

In contrast to this decrease of formal complaints and murders, calls to the 016 helpline soared to their highest levels in history during the second quarter of 2020 (Graph 1). Throughout April, May, and June 2019, there were 17.285 calls, whereas in the same period of 2020 there were 25.352, which means an increase of 46.67%. There were no similar figures since the second quarter of 2016 (25.178), and this still did not reach the historic high of 2020.

The highest number of phone calls to 016 during this second quarter of 2020 took place in April, with 8.692 calls. According to data from the Ministry of Equality (2020, b), calls to 016 increased by 47.3% in the first half of April 2020, as compared with the same month in 2019, corresponding to 1.298 more calls. The internet enquiries also increased notably. These data were communicated to the media on April 16 to create a call-to-action among media professionals to increase coverage of the issue on television (TV) news agendas.

The rise in phone calls to 016 confirms the need for considerable assistance in gender-based violence cases (Vives-Cases et al., 2021). Despite this, and considering the results of the Spanish Sociological Research Center barometer, throughout the state of alarm, this problem was given less priority (2020). When asked “What, in your opinion, is the current main problem in Spain? And the second? And the third?” [“¿Cuál es, a su juicio, el principal problema que existe actualmente en España? ¿Y en segundo lugar? ¿Y en tercer lugar?”], data from 2020 revealed that gender-based violence was relegated from position 14 in March to position 36 in June, while it remained constant between positions 18 and 17 out of 40 other problems mentioned during the same period in 2019.

In this context, this article analyzes the coverage of violence against women in Spanish free-to-air TV channels during the state of alarm period, taking the days between 20 March and 20 June as a reference and comparing it with the same period in 2019. Thus, this article studies whether coverage of gender-based violence increased or decreased, despite the media agenda being dominated by the health, social, and economic crises brought on by COVID-19. It is also relevant to analyze whether this coverage complied with actions proposed by the Spanish Government to combat gender-based violence and provided tools, such as the helpline phone number 016, or whether it was limited to give information on murder cases (Galarza Fernández et al., 2016).

This study also seeks to differentiate between the coverage of gender-based violence on public versus private television channels, considering that the latter is no longer public services but of general interest ones, unlike the publicly owned media maintaining their status. Both media, public and private televisions, have different supporting sources, so it could be assumed that private televisions need advertisers and high audience ratings. For that reason, could be presumed that they do not dedicate time to those issues that do not captivate the audience (Túñez-López et al., 2020). Therefore, it is interesting to know if gender-based violence, or government policies to prevent it, are relevant in these channels.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Television is the mass media that achieved the highest share in Spain, specifically reaching 85.1% in 2020, significantly more than the press or radio. TV consumption

increased during the state of alarm and, in April, it reached a historical record (32% growth). This is a high consumption rate compared with other media such as the press, radio, or social networks (Association for Media Research, 2021). It gives television a leading role in shaping knowledge (Izquierdo, 2017) and means that in crisis management situations, audiences search for reliable sources of information. That reinforces the relevance of the theory of media dependence (Ferreira & Borges, 2020) in health crises. Also, must be taking into account the prevalence of COVID-19 on Spanish television (Casero-Ripollés, 2020; Villena-Alarcón & Caballero-Galeote, 2020), when audiences reached their high in years.

Following the agenda-setting theory (McCombs et al., 2014; Edelstein, 1993), the study of gender-based violence TV coverage is pertinent because of the notable influence of television, together with other media. Agenda-setting theories study the legitimization of policies against gender-based violence since it is how society's attention is drawn to a given topic (Colombini et al., 2016). For this study, we consider that the perception of violence against women as a problem of public interest to citizens depends fundamentally on the intensity of its media coverage (Zuloaga, 2015; Spies, 2020). Mass media can transform or create states of opinion (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2014) among viewers since, by focusing on some aspects of the situation, others are left out (Goffman, 2006). Following the analysis made by Navarro and Olmo (2018), we can say that the public visibility of a topic is not sufficient in itself to endow it with value, but it is nevertheless essential since content that does not appear in the media does not exist for the audiences. As we established before, gender-based violence is understood as a problem for Spanish society today. This concern can be extended to media professionals, also as members of society. Many of them have signed protocols with governments and other institutions to deal with this problem, while adopting the practices proposed by the Audiovisual Councils of Andalusia and Catalunya, among others. The adequate treatment of violence against women on television is addressed among the concerns of all these measures. Together with the study of the presence (or absence) of gender-based violence it is, therefore, necessary to consider how it is contextualized and framed. Framing theory, despite having evolved since its inception (Lazarsfeld *et al.*, 2021; Noelle-Neuman, 2013; McQuail, 2005; Gómez, 2016; Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015), remains valid when applied for the violence against women in the media studies (Cacciatore *et al.*, 2016; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2014). Framing analyzes how media presents topics of public interest and their interpretation (Binderkrantz, 2019; Crow & Lawlor, 2016), making it relevant to the present research. At the moment, several authors study the framing of gender-based violence in the news and its possible social effects on audiences (Richards et al., 2011). The evolution of studies that connect framing theories and information related to violence against women indicates that there is an increase in the perception of that as a social problem (Gillespie et al., 2013) In Spain, the research made by Comas-D' Argemir (2015) stand out. She made an approach of public and private televisions in Catalonia over 10 years. The study highlighted that “none of the news offers an implicit justification of the violence. Nor did they use stereotypes or clichés to minimize the violence against women” (2015: 9).

Studies on the presence and representation of gender-based violence on television in recent years have tended to focus on different formats, depending on whether they are fictional (Pinedo, 2021; Guise, 2020; Palau-Sampio and Carratalá, 2020; Tello, 2020; Sánchez-Labela, 2016), informational (Bernal-Triviño, 2019; Rodríguez and López, 2020; Jorge *et al.*, 2016), advertising (Camarero and Marcos, 2012), entertainment, or even hybrids such as docurealities and others (Palau-Sampio and Carratalá, 2020; Vega, 2020). This article, on the other hand, analyzes the coverage of this topic as a whole over

the 24 hours of television broadcasting, excluding advertising segments, thereby reflecting not only news, but also the general attention paid to gender-based violence by television networks. For this research, we assume that the presence of violence against women helps create a state of opinion about the problem, especially during the state of alarm. For instance, this is the case of entertainment programs with coverage of current events, such as “*El Hormiguero*” (Antena 3), “*Espejo Público*” (Antena 3), or “*El Intermedio*” (La Sexta). They have large audiences, so that help to construct public opinion on a topic. In the same way, the broadcasting of fictional content dealing with such issues will help to cement opinion of an event in the audience, whether this is close to their immediate reality or not. Therefore, television content creates a framework for gender-based violence in the news, opinion, and entertainment.

### 3. METHODS

For this research, we searched to identify TV coverage on violence against women in the 24-hour content broadcast by the Spanish free-to-air television channels with the highest share: La1, La Sexta, Cuatro, Antena 3, and Tele 5 (Barlovento, 2021). During March, April, May, and June of 2019 and 2020, we observed all content from these channels. For this work, we developed an experimental analysis technique for which we have the subtitles of a total of 24 hours of the five channels that are the object of study. These subtitles are intended to integrate the population with hearing difficulties and are generated in an automated way in some channels and semi-automated in others (speech to text detection plus human review).

This means that, for this study, we observed both non-fictional and fictional contents, which is interesting to know about a complete framework for gender-based in television. To create a corpus of terms related to gender-based violence, and with the help of the nVivo software, all the words spoken in one day were detected. The four researchers selected from those words a list of the expressions most frequently used to talk about gender-based violence. Once we defined the methodology, the researchers validated it. For this, all the television content of the five channels was reviewed over the course of a day and checked by searching all words related to gender-based violence. We must remember that, since the establishment of Organic Law 1/2004 on 28 December focusing on comprehensive protection measures against gender-based violence, Spanish legal regulations understand gender-based violence as violence exercised by a man against a woman who is, or has been, his wife or partner, or in an analogous relationship with him, as well as his descendants. For this type of crime, the so-called Courts of Violence against Women were created. For this reason, in common parlance and TV content, these courts are frequently referred to as “for gender-based violence”. This is relevant since it refers to judicial processes and sentences, which is considered to represent good practice according to the guidelines for the treatment of violence against women in news by the aforementioned regional audiovisual councils, as well as in the agreements between the government and television stations in 2007 (Bandrés, 2011). These recommendations for the treatment of gender-based violence coincide in considering good practice to focus on not only news about murders but also other issues, such as the aforementioned court cases or convictions of murderers, as well as the recovery of victims.

The term “machismo violence” [*“violencia machista”*] refers to any act of violence carried out on a woman by her being female, regardless of whether she has a previous relationship with the aggressor, emphasizing a relationship of domination of men over women (Castelló and Gimeno, 2018). In television discourse, both expressions are used interchangeably in some cases to avoid repetition and based on the assumption that any act of gender-based violence is, in turn, an act of “machismo” violence.

Meanwhile, domestic violence encompasses all violence against people within the family circle, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or victim. Commonly, it is distinguished from gender-based violence and “machismo” violence, and the use of the term as a synonym is usually linked to ideological issues rather than a confusion of concepts. Even so, in television discourse, issues of domestic violence also lead sometimes to others of gender-based violence, which justifies their inclusion in this study.

Then, with the help of the nVivo software, we searched the broadcast content for the terms “gender-based violence” [“*violencia de género*”], “machismo violence” [“*violencia machista*”], “domestic violence” [“*violencia doméstica*”], “machismo murder” [“*asesinato machista*”], “women’s court” [“*juzgado de la mujer*”], “court for violence to women” [“*juzgado de violencia sobre la mujer*”], “court for violence against women” [“*juzgado de violencia contra la mujer*”], “court for gender-based violence” [“*juzgado de violencia de género*”], and “016”. The selection of these terms enabled the identification of both aspects related to the victims as well as those related to recommendations, advice, and institutional instruments employed to prevent and report cases of violence against women. After identifying these terms, we added the expression “Facemask 19” [“ *mascarilla 19*”] to the study and comparisons within the year 2020. As explained above, this was part of a campaign created for the lockdown period that began in March of that year. On the other hand, the expression “femicide” [“*feminicidio*”] was initially included in the search list but later discarded as it was found to be absent.

Then, we determined the frequency of mentions of these terms in TV from 20 March to 20 June of 2019 and 2020. In this way, we verified the evolution of TV coverage of gender-based violence in both years, and whether it decreased during the lockdown period. In total, we reviewed 186 days of continuous broadcasting, which means, 4.464 hours of programming, from which advertising segments were excluded.

After we selected the audiovisual content, the approach of the television networks was analyzed on the basis of the terms that were used more frequently in the discourse, those that varied between time periods and TV channels, and which of them appeared more consistently. We paid special attention to the presence of the terms referring to tools to support women at risk, such as “Facemask 19” and “016”. In addition, we analyzed the daily evolution of mentions to violence against women and compared with days on which gender-based murders occurred, to check for a correlation.

#### 4. HYPOTHESES

The following research questions are related to the coverage of gender-based violence on Spanish television, especially during the lockdown period and the previous year. For example, did content related to “machismo” violence increase, given the seriousness of the situation of women at risk while the country was in lockdown? Did this topic disappear from television that was in 2020 concerned with reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic? Considering the policies to protect potential victims driven by the Spanish government during the state of alarm, it would be reasonable to think of an increase in the presence on television of measures to prevent “machismo” violence, compared to the previous year. Following the agenda-setting theory, it is worth asking if the presence in the television of topics related to gender-based violence increases, so the first hypothesis presents as follows:

H1: *There was an increase in the presence in the television of topics related to violence against women in 2020, compared with the same timeframe in 2019.*

Also, we must consider the relevance of the publicly-owned media in the publishing of government and health policies. So, it is relevant to ask whether there are notable differences between the private and public TV channels studied for this research when it

comes to disseminating measures against gender-based violence. Therefore, the following research question arises:

H2: *Public TV channels mentioned violence against women more than private channels.*

According to the framing theories, it is relevant to know how television confronts the problem of gender-based violence. Did television channels report on measures and tools to protect women, following ministerial recommendations? Is there more attention to the victims, or are prevention measures more present on the television agendas? This take us to the following hypotheses:

H3: *The information and assistance helpline for violence against women was mentioned more often in 2020 than in 2019.*

H4: *The concentration of coverage on violence against women in both years corresponded to the specific dates when women were murdered.*

Were there significant variations between channels in terms of reporting on violence against women? Were there significant variations in their approaches? Some of these questions give rise to the following hypothesis:

H5: *In 2020, public TV channels provided more information on protection and resources for requesting help in case of gender-based violence than private TV.*

## 5. RESULTS

The following results could be extracted from the formerly described study of coverage of violence against women:

### 5.1. Total mentions of gender-based violence and total mentions by TV channel

As we predicted, based on the COVID-19-dominated media agenda, TV coverage of gender-based violence decreased in 2020. The total mentions of the search terms were 3.160 in 2019 and 1.063 in 2020. This also means 66,36% less. La1 reduced its discourse on gender-based violence the least with 60.78% (1.145 to 449 mentions), followed by Cuatro (210 to 79 mentions, a 62.38% less), La Sexta (645 to 224, a 65.27% less), Tele 5 (740 to 210, a 71.62% decrease), and Antena 3 (420 to 101, a 75.95% less). La1 exhibited a smaller decrease and broadcast the most coverage of gender-based violence in both years. It should also be noted that La1 broadcast more hours of news content than others and dedicated a large part of its broadcasts to information on the health, economic, and social consequences of COVID-19. The pandemic, together with the reduction in official reports of, and murders due to, gender-based violence (Graph 1) meant that coverage of violence against women was confined to the background and decreased in 2020 compared with the previous year. These results therefore contradict hypothesis H1: *There was an increase in the presence in the television of topics related to violence against women in 2020, compared with the same timeframe in 2019.*

In turn, the same results confirm hypothesis H2: *Public TV channels mentioned violence against women more than private channels.* In addition, decreasing its coverage the least, La1 surpassed the next TV channel in the ranking, La Sexta. The 50.11% of the mentions of terms related to gender-based violence took place in La1 in 2020, while it was 64.62% in 2019. Therefore, and despite this abrupt decrease in coverage of gender-based violence in the public TV channel's news agenda, the difference with other channels discussing the same issue was stable in both years.

The coverage of violence against women on Tele 5 throughout 2019 was also significant (740 mentions, an average of 7.9 per day) if we compare it with the average per day in other channels. It is also relevant to the almost total disappearance of such content from Cuatro during 2020 (79 mentions in 93 days, an average of 0.84% per day). The mean

number of mentions of gender-based violence in 2019 was 34 per day, a very low figure for an issue that is among the main concerns of Spanish society. Likewise, that average in 2020 was reduced to 11.43, although this drop was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which altered the news agenda.

## 5.2. Gender-based violence on Spanish television

### 5.2.1. Frequency, variation, and constancy in mentions of terms related with gender-based violence

Once we identified the specific mentions of gender-based violence on Spanish television, we analyzed the approach of TV channels to this content. If we examine the expressions used in TV channels in 2019 and 2020 (Table 1), “gender-based violence” is the term mentioned most in both years, followed by “machismo violence”. Mentions of “gender-based violence” made up 55.47% of the total in 2019, and 54.09% in 2020. Therefore, this is the expression used most consistently in coverage of violence against women. Meanwhile, the use of the term “machismo violence” decreased from 35.75% in 2019 to only 27.46% in 2020. Because these two phrases occupy the highest positions in the rankings of 2019 and 2020, it becomes necessary to differentiate the order of the most used terms by year.

Table 1. Terms most frequently used by all the TV channels in 2019 and 2020; authors’ compilation.

The terms that were researched for this work appear, in 2019, in the following order: “women’s court” or “court of violence of or on/against women” [“*juzgado de la mujer o de violencia de o sobre/contra la mujer*”], “domestic violence” [“*violencia doméstica*”], “016”, and “machismo murder” [“*asesinato machista*”]. It must be taken into account that, of the 43 mentions to “016” that year, 32 references were on La1 (74,41%), while there were 10 on La Sexta and only 1 on Antena 3.

In 2020, mentions of “women’s court or court of violence of or on/against women” disappeared almost completely (only 3 mentions, all on La Sexta), while references to “016” were 110 (being present on all channels except Cuatro), so more than doubled than 2019. Therefore, thus ranking as the third most commonly used term, above “domestic violence” and “machismo murder”. In 2019, references to “016” accounted for 1.36% of the total terms related to gender-based violence, reaching 10.34% in 2020, which means a significant increase.

This result confirms hypothesis H3: *The information and assistance helpline for violence against women was mentioned more in 2020 than in 2019.*

In summary, “gender-based violence” and “machismo violence” were the most used terms to talk about violence against women on television. They accounted for 92% of the total terms used in 2019, and 81% in 2020. The use of “gender-based violence” was stable in both years concerning the total number of mentions. On the other hand, some elements exhibited fluctuations, such as allusions to the courts (which dropped from 3.9% of total mentions in 2019 to 0.28% in 2020) or “016” (which, as explained above, rose significantly).

### 5.2.2. Coverage of violence against women on television broadcasters and dates of women murders

Regarding the chronological evolution in the study period of 2019 and 2020 (Graph 2), March is the month with the lowest coverage of violence against women, followed by May. During the March of both years, there were no mentions of “machismo murder” or terms related to “women’s court or court of violence of or on/against women” or “016”. April 2019 (1.043 mentions) and June 2019 (1.109) were the months with the most mentions of those terms. In 2020, June (260) saw a lower result than April (391).

Graph 2. Evolution of the number of mentions of terms related to violence against women; authors’ compilation

If we compare the murders of women committed during the state of alarm (El País, 2019) with the level of coverage in the media, we can say that there is no coincidence between them. In 2020, May was the month with the highest number of “machismo” murders, but there were even more allusions to that question in April and June.

For a more detailed analysis, it is interesting to break down the dates of “machismo” murders by day, in parallel with the days with the most TV coverage on violence against women. In 2019 (Graph 3), the peaks of mentions did not coincide with the dates of murders, or the day after, except on two occasions: 11 April and 11 June. It is important to note that, on 2 April, two murders were committed on the same day, but this was not reflected in the TV coverage on that day. The same occurred on 3 June 2019.

Graph 3. Dates of “machismo” murders per month in 2019 and days with the most TV mentions of violence against women; authors’ compilation

In 2020 (Graph 4), the “machismo” murders and the number of mentions remained similar to that of 2019. May 30 and June 14 are the days when there is an increase in mentions, coinciding with two separate murders of a woman. The other dates do not overlap with any other news event.

Graph 4. Dates of “machismo” murders per month in 2020 and concentration of TV mentions of violence against women; authors’ compilation

These results also refute hypothesis H4: *The concentration of coverage on violence against women in both years corresponded to the specific dates when women were murdered.*

### 5.2.3. Public versus private television

As explained before, during the state of alarm the government reinforced the systems to facilitate support for women target to gender-based violence, such as the 016 helpline. In addition, there were other incentives independent of the central government, such as the aforementioned case of the “Facemask 19” campaign.

For the research, it is interesting to analyze the emphasis on mentioning these resources for victims of abuse of the public versus private TV channels, as well as checking whether there were differences in their compliance with actions proposed by the Spanish government to combat gender-based violence. We also aim to observe whether attention was paid to other initiatives independent of the central government, such as the “Facemask 19” campaign.



The 50% of the coverage of the terms “016” and “Facemask 19” were made in La1, with a total of 75 mentions, thus this public TV channel provided significantly more information on these reporting tools. In 2019, La1 also mentioned the number “016” the most.

This confirms H5: *In 2020, public TV channels provided more information on protection and resources for requesting help in case of gender-based violence than private TV.* This breakdown means that mentions of “016” were much higher than those of “Facemask 19” (110 versus 40, respectively). This was foreseeable, as it is a tool promoted by the central government as part of a long-standing specific campaign, in contrast to “Facemask 19,” which was created recently as a result of the state of alarm and promoted by the College of Pharmacists in collaboration with regional governments. Also, in 2020, La1 remained the channel that mentioned “016” the most, followed by La Sexta. “Facemask 19,” occupied the third position in the ranking (shared with Antena 3, since they both mentioned it four times). In Tele 5 “Facemask 19” was cited the most, followed in second place again by La Sexta. In Cuatro both terms were used the least, to the extent that the 016 helpline was not referenced once throughout the entire state of the alarm, while “Facemask 19” was mentioned only three times.

We can confirm that occurrences of “Facemask 19” began with a peak in March, especially on the 24th and 26th, then decreased throughout the subsequent months until almost disappearing in June (only one mention in that month). Otherwise, “016” was conspicuously absent throughout March, even though on the 26th, the government launched its campaign. Its presence soared in April with 70 mentions, 63.63% of the total cites to “016”, and decreased in parallel with the de-escalation of the lockdown, as with “Facemask 19”.

Furthermore, the increase in mentions of the “016” phone number in April was concentrated around two periods (Graph 5). The greatest increase occurred on the days when the government announced a significant increase in calls during the first half of the month. The same day as the announcement, the 16th, there were 9 mentions distributed among La Sexta (4), Antena 3 (3), and La1 (2), while the next day there were 17, with 16 from La1 and 1 from La Sexta. Therefore, 42.1% of the mentions of “016” on La1 were on the day after the publication of the data on the use of the helpline for victims of gender-based violence during the first fortnight of lockdown.

Graph 5. Evolution of mentions of “016” phone number and “Facemask 19” during the months of March, April, May, and June 2020; authors’ compilation

## 6. DISCUSSION

From this research on the presence of gender violence on television during the confinement caused by Covid-19, the following conclusions stand out:

TV coverage of issues related to gender-based violence during the 2020 state of alarm in Spain decreased compared with the corresponding timeframe of the previous year, despite the campaigns promoted by the government. Formal reporting of gender-based violence and “machismo murders” also decreased significantly during this period.

Even though this data could contradict the agenda-setting theories about the relevance of a particular issue coverage in the media, we consider that these results cannot be read apart from the framing theories. Both must be related to evaluating not only the coverage but also the framework of an issue on television. Therefore, the presence of the 016 phone number on television increased during the state of alarm, compared to the previous year.

At the same time, the number of calls made to that helpline also increased significantly. This means a greater concern for the prevention of “machismo” violence, instead of focusing on the victims or violence abusers. All this, without necessarily having to assume a cause-effect relationship in either direction, is a remarkable result.

We can say that there is no significant relationship between the days with the highest number of mentions of gender-based violence issues and the dates of “machismo” murders during the Spanish state of alarm, or in the same period of the year 2019. Television no longer deals with the issue of gender-based violence when there are murders, which seems to indicate that the good practices established by various conventions, protocols, and manuals on the treatment of gender-based violence in the media are being followed. That means that communicators were paying attention to other issues as specific events, different to such murders, as previous studies reported (Comas-D' Argemir, 2015).

The publicly owned television channel La1 covered issues related to gender-based violence the most, across both years and compared with private ones, and also demonstrated the highest consistency broadcasting that content. Between 2019 and 2020, it maintained a similar proportion of mentions compared with other TV channels and it decreased the presence of issues related to gender-based violence the least with the arrival of the state of alarm. In the same way, it paid the most attention to the resources available to victims of gender-based violence in both years. For this reason, the relevance of publicly owned media compared to private channels is a relevant element for the study and the enforcement of public health or social welfare policies (Túñez-López et al., 2020). When talking about violence against women, the most-used term was “gender-based violence”, followed by “machismo violence”. This could indicate that the political and legal effort, together with recommended self-regulation mechanisms and good practices, have meant that coverage of domestic violence is not used in a meaningful way when talking about violence against women based on their gender.

We deduced from this research that the volume of daily TV mentions is not very high, despite the concern about this issue in Spanish society and governmental campaigns. As remarked in the text of this article, it is predictable that in a situation of a health emergency or other global crisis, any topic that is usually on the media agenda will take a second place. However, the application of government prevention and control policies is of great importance to continue maintaining these topics in the media agenda.

The volume of daily mentions of violence-based gender on the television channel is not very high, despite the government campaigns and the concern about the issue among Spaniards. The average number of mentions in 2020 fell strikingly, predictably due to the incursion into the informative agenda of content related to the covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it can be understood that without the existence of specific campaigns to make gender-based violence visible in Spain during confinement, the issue would have practically disappeared from the mass media throughout 2020.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Regarding gender-based violence, as indicated in the literature review of this article, Spain has evolved widely in considering this as a serious problem for society. During the state of alarm, televisions have reported not only the cases of "machismo" murders but, above all, they have paid attention to government policies to prevent violence against women. Therefore, the conclusions of this article reinforce the consideration that in Spain violence against women is assumed as a matter of concern for society. But at the same

time, they indicate that this could not have taken place without the development of government prevention policies.

To complete this study, an in-depth content analysis of references to this subject in TV coverage could be carried out to determine whether the coverage approach and treatment reflect institutional recommendations, and also whether there is a political or ideological bias that could decrease or increase attention to this subject by the Spanish population.

This study suffers from some limitations. The first one is the choice of the sample. We selected only the five channels with the highest share in Spain and left aside, i.e., the regional TV channels. Those have smaller audiences but a greater penetration among older targets, so it could be interesting to know about the treatment made of gender-based violence on those channels.

Also, television is a very relevant media, but furthermore is important the presence of violence against women in social media and the internet. Comparing both media would not be fair, given the enormous production of content on the internet, but it would give us a broader and more complete perspective of the situation.

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