WOMEN SHOWRUNNERS IN SPAIN (2019-2024)
Tasks, Obstacles and Leadership

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Woman Showrunner *Screenwriters* *Executive Producers* *Series* *Female Leadership*	*This article focuses on the role of female showrunners in Spain, from 2019 to the present. The main objective of the research is to examine whether female showrunners play the same role as their male counterparts, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and to identify their tasks, obstacles and leadership. The methodology is based on semi-structured interviews with five Spanish female showrunners. The conclusions point out that while men are involved in all the tasks, including the choice of the people in charge of the different technical areas or the equipment, the women interviewed are involved in the management functions that are more closely linked to the script.*

1. Introduction

There are 12.4 million households in Spain that subscribe to a platform (González and Sunnebo, 2022), with an audience penetration of 62.8% of individuals (Asociación para la Investigación de Medios de Comunicación [AIMC], 2023; cited in Izquierdo Castillo, 2023, p.15). The Spanish audiovisual industry has experienced the arrival of platforms as a revolution in two main aspects: an increase in the demand for content and a transformation of work processes, mainly in the field of scriptwriting (Cascajosa, 2018; Higueras-Ruiz, 2019, Higueras-Ruiz et al. 2021). These two changes are leading to a diversification of narratives, genres and stories, as well as changes in the representation of women. Content is being produced that is further away from the traditional female stereotype, offering more complex representations of women, with a wider range of characters, professions and ages, who embody the protagonist roles and pursue their own goals outside the couple or the pursuit of love (Bartolomé, 2017; Bonavitta & Garay Hernández, 2019; Cuenca-Suárez & Martínez-Amado, 2020, Jungitu-Angulo & Osuna-Acedo, 2024; Ruffinelli, 2014). These new portraits are, for the most part, the product of a female creator: women behind the camera have been found to produce more realistic and diverse representations of women (Higueras-Ruiz, 2019). It can therefore be assumed that the arrival of platforms has changed the employment landscape of the Spanish audiovisual industry, with more women being employed. These companies are characterised by a commitment to equity and inclusivity, with the number of female executives rising to 51% at Netflix, 48.8% at HBO and 46% at Amazon Prime Video (Izquierdo-Castillo, 2023, p. 19). Recent research on female leadership (O'Brien, 2017) shows that women in leadership positions promote gender equality in media organisations. However, the increase of women behind the camera in Spain is limited (Izquierdo-Castillo & Latorre-Lázaro, 2021; Izquierdo-Castillo, 2023; Cuenca, 2023). If we analyse the credits of the main platforms, between 2019 and 2022, female creators and workers in fiction represented 36% in Netflix, 37% in HBO and 33.6% in Amazon Prime Video (Izquierdo-Castillo, 2023, p. 19). Furthermore, if we look at the gender hierarchy, there is a "preference for employing men in positions of maximum strategic and managerial responsibility, while women are chosen for subsequent supervisory and organisational roles" (Izquierdo-Castillo and Latorre-Lazaro, 2021, p. 874).

The changes in the creation of fiction on VOD focus on the transformation of writers' rooms. In linear television, teams of up to fifteen scriptwriters were needed to feed the weekly one-hour series demanded by the networks, which followed one season after another. The series that are starting to become popular on the platforms are better made, with a cinematographic aesthetic characterised by generic hybridisation and high production and writing standards, which has been called quality television or the third golden age of television (Carrión Domínguez, 2019; Cascajosa Virino, 2016; García-Martínez, 2014; McCabe&Akass, 2011; Muñoz-Fernández, 2016). One of the keys to achieving these levels of quality is the consolidation of the figure of the showrunner. One of the key factors in achieving these levels of quality is the consolidation of the role of the showrunner. This role combines scriptwriting with executive production, with the scriptwriter assuming complete control over the entire production process, from the initial draft of the script to its promotion. This enables the scriptwriter to leave their own distinctive imprint on the series, which in cinema is traditionally referred to as authorship (Jensen, 2017; Krauß, 2020; Singwell, 2022). The showrunner is the author of a series which, if successful, can be a promotional lure for the audience in their next works, i.e. they can add the legend "from the creators of..." to new productions in order to attract viewers (Junke, 2020).

This article is part of a line of research that reviews the state of the cultural industries and aims to analyse the figure of the showrunner in the current Spanish media ecosystem. For this reason, a first article was published in which the functions of the showrunner were defined, following a bibliographical review and a series of interviews with fifteen Spanish showrunners, all men (Fuentes and Del Castillo, 2023), who exercised these functions between 1998 and 2021. In this article, we would like to continue investigating this figure, but specifically among female showrunners who have been working as such since 2019.

Our main research objective is to examine whether women showrunners perform the same roles as their male counterparts, both quantitatively and qualitatively. We also want to describe how they exercise their leadership, and whether they perceive themselves to have a different leadership style

than their male counterparts. Finally, we want to know whether they have encountered any difficulties or resistance in their journey as women, what these were and how they have overcome them.

To achieve these objectives, we will apply the showrunner's task chart (Fuentes and Del Castillo, 2023), developed from interviews with male showrunners, to their female counterparts. We will check whether the indicators extracted from the first research correspond to the female case. On the other hand, we focus the interviews on their perception of leadership and difficulties or resistance.

2. Methodology

This research is a continuation of a previous study on the figure of the Spanish showrunner in the era of major platforms (Fuentes and Del Castillo, 2023). In this first analysis, a table of indicators of the functions performed by Spanish showrunners was constructed. To develop these indicators, interviews were conducted with fifteen Spanish showrunners and executive producers of twenty-three series released between 1998 and 2021. The methodology to achieve our objectives, both in this first research and in the present one, is qualitative, specifically through semi-structured interviews with exclusive informants, as defined by Hanne Bruun (2016), who argues that the purpose of production analysis is to understand the inner workings of the media and to gain access to the 'behind the scenes' of media organisations. From this kind of non-public knowledge, the aim is to "offer explanations of the characteristics and developments of media content that neither media systems analysis nor textual and audience analysis can provide" (Bruun, 2016, p. 135). To achieve this access, it is necessary to use irreplaceable, 'exclusive' informants whose information only they can provide, a figure beyond the 'expert' because they are irreplaceable.

Another reason why we have chosen the in-depth interview as a methodological tool is the moment of change in which we find ourselves. The functioning of the media is characterised by a high degree of randomness and improvisation in its organisation, strategies and planning (Bruun, 2016), which is accentuated in periods of innovation such as the one we are currently experiencing. The figure of the current showrunner is an adaptation of the script coordinator to new production needs (fewer seasons, higher quality content...), which are taken on by certain people in response to the demands of a specific context. Therefore, "oral and person-to-person approaches are much more fruitful in media production studies" (Bruun, 2016, p. 141). This type of methodology helps to discover how these professionals work and serves the researcher to take advantage of "the central features of the value system in the media industry, where personal professional networks and the appreciation of individual creativity and professional skills are considered extremely important" (Bruun, 2016).

This research is a continuation of a previous study on the figure of Spanish showrunners in the era of large platforms (Fuentes and Del Castillo, 2023), which proposed some task indicators to define and specify their participation and leadership. Through an exhaustive bibliographic review, four main areas of work have been identified (script, production, direction and distribution), which are subdivided into five functions or tasks in the case of script, three in production, nine in direction and three in promotion (see Table 1).

Table 1. Table of tasks for a showrunner in Spain

SCRIPT AREA	Creator of the original idea
	Bible development
	Writing the pilot chapter
	Writing other chapters
	Coordination of the script team: coordination, proofreading, re-writing
PRODUCTION AREA	Budgeting
	Direct interlocutor with the chain
	Production coordination: planning, monitoring, modifications
MANAGEMENT AREA	Participation in the creation Technical script (visual concept design)
	Choice of locations
	Election of team leaders
	Choice of technical equipment (based on visual concept and/or budget)
	Casting choice
	Filming set
	Coordination of the management team
	Direction of actors (rehearsals, set, etc.)
	Participation in the editing and post-production process: colour grading, colour treatment, choice of music, graphic line, etc.
PROMOTION AREA	Supervision of promotional elements (audiovisuals, press kits, posters, etc.).
	Planning the communication strategy
	High profile public presence as part of the series' communication strategy

Source: Prepared by the authors (Fuentes and Del Castillo, 2023).

After the interviews, it emerged that the functions carried out by these showrunners on the series mentioned were limited to fourteen of the twenty functions mentioned, i.e. those in grey: coordination of the script team; direct dialogue with the broadcaster; planning, supervision, changes in production; participation in the creation of the technical script or, where appropriate, the visual concept; choice of locations, team leaders, technical equipment (based on the visual concept and/or budget) and casting; presence on the set; coordination of the directing team; direction of the actors (rehearsals, set, etc.), Participation in the editing and post-production process: colour grading, colour treatment, choice of music, graphic line, etc.; supervision of promotional elements (audiovisuals, press kits, posters, etc.); and quality publicity as part of the series' communication strategy.

The initial research was conducted on male showrunners only, for a very practical reason: almost all of these initial figures between 1998 and 2021 were men. It was only with the expansion and consolidation of platforms that female showrunners began to emerge. This was motivated, as we previously stated, by the growing demand for content and the need for new visions of female representation. For this reason, the following research focuses on the period 2019-2024. It begins with the emergence of female showrunners in Spain and continues to the present, which is characterised by a greater diversity of content and a more competitive landscape. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with Laura Sarmiento, Verónica Fernández, Manuela Burló, Ruth García and Coral Cruz. The

series discussed in the interviews were Intimacy (Netflix, 2022), Ser o no ser/To Be or Not to Be (RTVE Play, 2022-2023), One Way or Another (HBOMax, 2020-2023), and Paraíso/Paradise (Movistar, 2021-2022). These professionals hail from diverse backgrounds. Laura Sarmiento is a scriptwriter who has written for series such as Crematorio/Crematorium (Sanchez-Cabezudo, 2011), Isabel (TVE, 2012), La zona/The Zone (Sanchez-Cabezudo, Movistar, 2017), and has acted as showrunner for Intimacy (Sarmiento and Fernández, Netflix, 2022) and the recent Burning Body (Netflix, 2023). Additionally, she has served as a showrunner for Intimacy (Sarmiento and Fernández, Netflix, 2022) and the recent Burning Body (Netflix, 2023). Verónica Fernández has a long career as a writer, screenwriter, producer and showrunner. She currently works as a fiction director for Netflix Spain. Coral Cruz is a screenwriter, teacher and showrunner. Manuela Burló became known as the director of the short film Pipas (Manuela Burló, 2013). Ruth García is a scriptwriter for Los protegidos/The Protected Ones (BoomerangTV, 2010-2012), El internado/The Boarding School (Globomedia, 2010-2023), Los hombres de Paco/Paco's Men (Globomedia 2005-2021), among others. She is also the creator and executive producer of Paraíso.

For reasons of confidentiality, we have concealed the source of each statement by assigning an interviewee number to their statements.

3. Results

3.1. Tasks

In accordance with the task indicators for the definition of Spanish showrunners proposed by Fuentes and del Castillo (2023), five female showrunners were queried as to whether they had performed each of the functions in question. As previously stated, these tasks are categorised into four distinct areas of work: scriptwriting, production, directing and promotion. The questions that were carried out are shown on the horizontal axis (X) of the attached tables. The number of affirmative responses is displayed on the vertical axis (Y-axis). The maximum score is five, corresponding to the number of questionnaires completed.

The results of the survey with regard to the script area are as follows:

**Figure 1.** Tasks in the script area
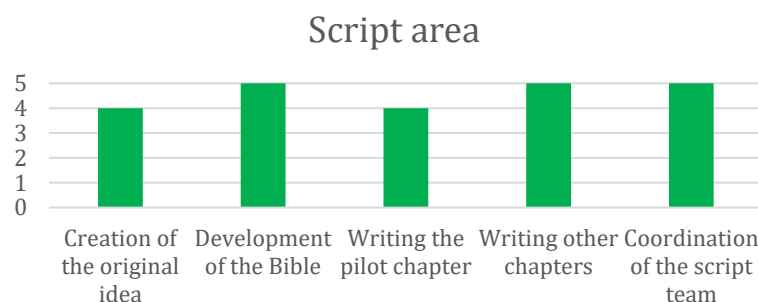
Source: Own elaboration, 2024

In this domain of scriptwriting, the five female showrunners interviewed are responsible for the majority of the task indicators specified in the area. In the case of interviewee 1, the response to the question of creating the original idea and writing the pilot episode was negative. The interviewee assumed responsibility for a project that had been initiated by another individual. However, once she assumed control of the project, she assumed a leadership role in its production. The remaining showrunners were involved in all stages of the series' writing and in coordinating the remaining episodes. This aligns with the assertion that "the individual occupying the role of showrunner is the most accountable for the success of a series, and is ultimately responsible for the script" (ALMA, 2019).

The interviews also revealed a shift from script teams comprising up to fifteen individuals (required for weekly hour-and-a-half-long content) to a smaller number of scriptwriters, with one, two or three being the most common. As asserted by interviewee 3, series were previously filmed with multiple

cameras, with "the editor ultimately determining the final cut". The emergence of the role of the showrunner can be attributed to the cessation of the use of the multiple-camera system.

A recurring theme throughout the interviews is that, in their capacity as script coordinators and/or creators of the series, they have fulfilled the functions of showrunners without receiving the recognition they believe they deserve. The previous approach involved an unofficial and unacknowledged role, without any official recognition or credit (interviewee 1). As interviewee 3 notes, "at that time the position did not exist (...), but I was effectively a showrunner, even though the title was not used. The argument put forth is that it is important to defend the idea that things should be done in a certain way, even when one lacks the power to do so. This is particularly pertinent in instances where one is in a position where they were not initially granted the authority to make decisions, but instead had to advocate for it. Furthermore, the interviewees indicated that there was a greater apprehension regarding the figure of the scriptwriter than any other aspect". One of the interviewees expressed a similar opinion, stating that "there are instances where the title of executive producer or showrunner is misleading. In numerous series in which they have been involved, they have never held either of these titles, yet they have effectively exercised them or co-exercised them with others".

Figure 2. Tasks in the production area.
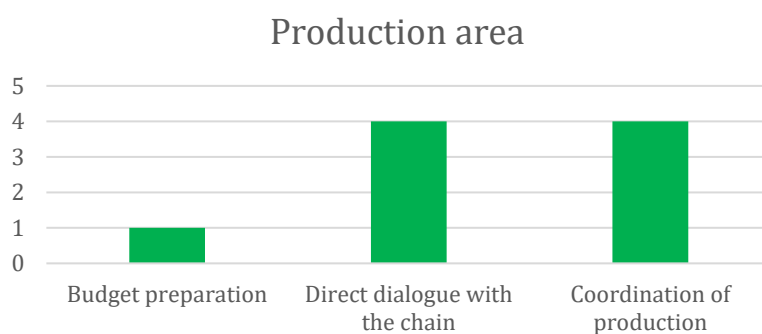

Production area

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

In the domain of production, a single indicator emerged in which only one of the five women interviewed was directly involved in the preparation of the budgets. In this instance, the inquiry was not primarily concerned with whether the individual had drafted the budgets directly, but rather with their capacity to influence and provide input on the distribution of budget allocations. As previously stated, this occurred in only one instance.

> The role of the executive producer or showrunner is to oversee the shooting plan, the script and the budget. Consequently, when one is a scriptwriter, one must adopt the role of a scriptwriter, whereas when one is an executive producer, one must relinquish the role of a scriptwriter and assume the role of an executive producer. It is essential to manage a budget, as any cuts must be made in a logical and systematic manner. This ensures that the narrative remains coherent and that the financial implications of the cuts are considered. (Interviewee 3)

Conversely, with regard to the dialogue with the chain and the coordination of production once it was underway, four of the five respondents indicated that they had engaged in such activities. The sole interviewee who did not respond in the affirmative was Interview 4, who stated, "I desired to be involved in all these aspects, but the production company did not permit me to participate in them."

Figure 3. Tasks in the direction area.

Management area
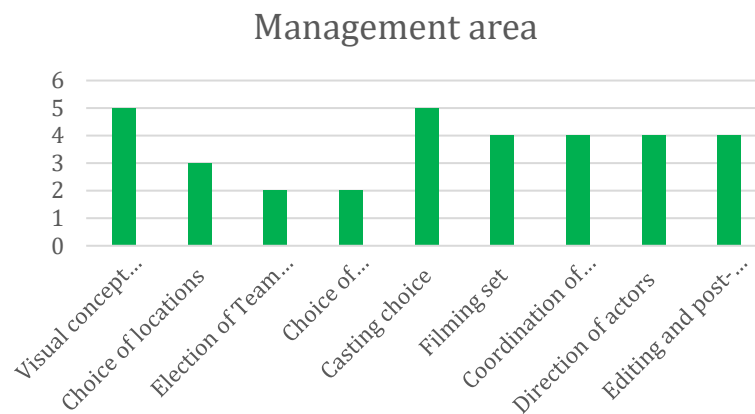
Source: Own elaboration, 2024

The field of directing encompasses a multitude of responsibilities. In addition to directing and coordinating the activities of the team leaders, the role of the director encompasses the direction of actors and actresses, encompassing the entire process from casting to rehearsals and finally, directing on set.

The five women interviewed unanimously agreed that they had participated in the following areas: the design of the visual concept and the choice of casting. The visual design process begins with a series of preparatory meetings with the management team, during which the visual aspects of the product are defined. In this phase, all the interviewees also indicate that the participation of the director of photography is of great importance. With regard to the selection of the cast, all five interviewees emphasise that this is an area in which they have been particularly active participants.

Another crucial aspect of filmmaking is the director's presence on the film set, where they oversee the performances of actors and actresses, coordinate the activities of the directing team, and oversee the editing and post-production stages. The film set offers a diverse range of experiences, from those who have effectively directed the series to those who have only been present at pivotal moments, such as the first visit to an important location or filming of a particularly significant scene. Interviewee 3 states "I did not attend filming sessions because I had my own schedule of script deliveries. I only attended if the director required my presence to view a specific item. Otherwise, I would observe the daily rushes at the conclusion of each shooting day."

With regard to the direction of actors, the significance and prominence of this aspect during the rehearsal phase is highlighted. Another crucial aspect is the coordination of the directing team (in the event that there is more than one individual directing the series and it is not the showrunner herself who is directing the series). In the context of directing coordination, the significance of the showrunner's role is highlighted. As the individual responsible for overseeing the entire series, the showrunner possesses a comprehensive understanding of the narrative arc, extending beyond the confines of a single episode. Furthermore, interviewee 2 notes that, "given the involvement of multiple directors in their series, it was crucial to ensure that no information was overlooked, that all parties were fully apprised of the situation, and that the intentions were clearly understood". In order to execute this task correctly, it is essential to prepare the filming well with prior conversations and rehearsals (interviewee 1). It is therefore evident that communication between the showrunner and director is fundamental.

With regard to the editing phase, all but one of the interviewees indicated that they were able to view and provide feedback on all previous edits of the chapters. The third interviewee was not involved in the editing phase, as this was the responsibility of the director.

Finally, with regard to the choice of technical equipment and the choice of team leaders, only two of the interviewees participated in a relevant way. The remaining respondents indicated that they had not participated in this aspect of the project. Those who did participate in the communication of the project across all departments, including wardrobe and make-up, stressed the importance of such communication. Furthermore, interviewee 1 emphasised that trust in a team is contingent upon the

ability to select team members. "In my view, the initial phase of the process involves establishing confidence and equilibrium with control. This entails selecting a candidate with conviction."

Figure 4. Tasks in the promotion area.
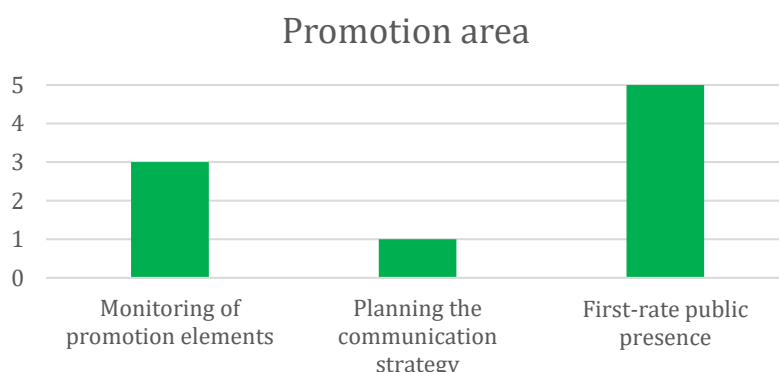
Source: Own elaboration, 2024

The area of promotion comprises three questions with markedly disparate responses. With regard to the formulation of the communication strategy, only one individual indicated that they had been actively involved. Conversely, three of the respondents indicated that they supervised the promotional elements utilized, including posters, slogans, and sales synopses. The five interviewees concur that they were highly visible in the promotion, with extensive media coverage and notable attendance at premieres. Some of the interviewees have noted that their own presence has not been as significant as that of the principal actors and actresses. As interviewee 1 observed, "there are festivals where the concept of adapting the model for series is not yet fully understood. This is particularly evident in the case of series where the main creator-screenwriter is involved". Another interviewee (3) acknowledged that it is understandable that channels prioritize promoting content that is most appealing, regardless of whether the actors or creators are involved. "Ultimately, the issue at hand concerns visibility. Alex Pina is not concerned with whether he is a scriptwriter or not. He is comfortable with the fact that he is an Álex Pina series and that this already provides a guarantee". It is already a factor in sales. One might posit that a series by Coronado is more likely to be successful if the actors involved are well-known. Furthermore, the distinction between the platforms with regard to the promotion of showrunners as opposed to directors or actors is highlighted. In this context, it is asserted that Netflix is a platform that enhances the visibility of showrunners in promotional activities, despite the fact that all five have been involved in these tasks.

3.2. Women's Leadership: Benefits and Obstacles

One of the key objectives of this manuscript is to elucidate the nature of leadership exercised by women showrunners. In contrast to the position of women in the audiovisual industry, which is determined by a structural masculinisation (Izquierdo-Castillo, 2023), the results of the semi-structured interviews indicate that the five female showrunners have internalised the importance of internal and external communication, active listening and teamwork to lead the project and strengthen coherence.

In contrast to rigidity and distance, all five agreed on leadership based on the generation of trust and motivation. Given the creative nature of this sector, the five female showrunners concur that trust, active listening, and effective communication are fundamental to the generation of high-quality content. "I select individuals who hold opposing views and who are sufficiently confident in my abilities to express their disagreement," stated interviewee 3. She further likened the script room to a psychologist's office, where absolute trust is essential. Consequently, it is imperative to cultivate the capacity to be a perceptive listener and to rethink ideas in light of new information. "I am relatively flexible, but I have occasionally doubted whether my flexibility was sufficient to enable me to effectively lead. However, I believe that I am a flexible leader of the kind that is required in this context" (interviewee 2). They demonstrate a self-awareness of a novel form of flexible and communication-based leadership. According to interviewee 1, her primary objective is "to ensure that all team members are aware of their roles and responsibilities".

The response underscores the significance of skills and the utilisation of prior knowledge, strategies, and experience. A number of key elements can be identified in this approach to team building, as evidenced by the following statements: The interviewees identified a number of key elements that contribute to effective team building, including the following: "Involving" (Interviewee 2); "Respecting the work of others" (Interviewee 5); "I give space for people to feel reflected" (Interviewee 3); "I am quite enthusiastic and passionate and try to involve everyone very much" (Interviewee 4) The concept of autonomy and self-regulation (Corno, 2008; Zimmerman, 2002) is linked to a set of cognitive strategies for organising and transforming information and managing one's mental processes in order to know how to adapt. In this context, the capacity for dialogue and flexibility is of paramount importance for the individual to adapt to the new position and to develop their leadership skills and sense of empowerment within the team. As a consequence of their capacity to assume responsibility for the ultimate decision in high-pressure situations, they assume complete control, which is another defining feature of their leadership style.

Indeed, four of the five respondents indicated that they found it challenging to delegate, citing a preference for supervising and assuming multiple tasks. One respondent (4) asserts that they are a "control freak," while another (5) claims to have always been a "one-woman band" in their projects. Nevertheless, they are all aware that delegation is crucial, and they all convey the idea that it is important to instil confidence in the ability of one individual to complete a task effectively, and that uncertainty is an acceptable aspect of the process. Interviewee 2 acknowledges that:

> I experienced a significant degree of imposter syndrome. Nevertheless, there came a point when I came to understand that it was largely a matter of attitude and insecurity. It was not that those who assumed responsibility were more knowledgeable than I was; rather, they did not subject their knowledge to the same degree of scrutiny.

From this reflection, the concept of embracing insecurity emerges, encompassing the acceptance of the potential for mistakes to be made, initially within oneself and subsequently in others. The remaining interviewees acknowledged the potential for the team to make errors, yet they rejected the notion of laziness or excuses, which they perceived as counterproductive to team-building.

With regard to the imaginary feminine ideal of complacency and the perpetual smile that hinders assertiveness (interviewee 2), one interviewee acknowledges the importance of not avoiding difficult conversations. In a previous study (Fuentes and Del Castillo, 2023), male showrunners asserted that it is not primarily about assertiveness, but rather about the capacity to foster collaboration and to convey the essence of the series' narrative. In contrast, the female showrunners interviewed placed greater emphasis on the importance of persuasion, communication, and leadership, as well as the necessity of assuming responsibility in collaboration with the entire team.

Furthermore, there is a reoccurrence of the notion that these functions had already been accomplished previously. The knowledge previously acquired as script coordinator (interviewee 5) means that her new status as an institutionalised figure as showrunner has a different value. "We scriptwriters have felt disempowered in general, so it is challenging to ascertain whether the current situation is a result of my gender or my role as a scriptwriter" (interviewee 3).

The majority of the interviewees did not perceive themselves as disempowered due to their gender (three out of five), yet they acknowledged that numerous female colleagues had experienced significant challenges (interviewee 5). Indeed, one of the interviewees reported a pervasive sense of being overlooked and disregarded, with comments such as "she has her period" or even changing the layout of the shot when she was not looking, which forced her to take photos of the combination to ensure that her orders were respected. This phenomenon did not manifest when the individual in charge of the area was a woman. As she recounted, she was required to supervise in a manner that led to accusations of being overly meticulous, while men were labelled perfectionists. Another interviewee (number 3) acknowledges that the insecurity or impostor syndrome she may have suffered from stems from the dearth of role models of women in positions of responsibility: "I have been observing the Oscars throughout my lifetime and I have only observed men collecting awards." Consequently, it is challenging to envisage one's own position and it is all too easy to assume that one's tenure is somewhat precarious.

It can be argued that quotas have an impact on perceptions of leadership or competence. Two of the five interviewees acknowledged that they had been approached because of their gender. It is what many define as "make-up": "They are requesting that a female be included on every script team, but this is almost at the

level of mere representation. If a male is in charge, the project is likely to suffer as a result." Such initiatives fail to recognise the intention of writing for women, which is to seek out new stories and ways of telling them, rather than merely as an exercise in appearance. The interviewees expressed a desire for complex female characters, whose complexity is not defined by past traumas, and who are not at the service of male characters (interviewee 3). In this regard, interviewee 3 posits that women are more inclined to portray characters in a sympathetic light. We don't have the audacity to write so freely about men.

4. Conclusions

In accordance with the main objective set out at the beginning, we must conclude whether the functions performed by male and female showrunners are the same. If we compare the roles of male and female showrunners, we find significant differences (see Table 2. Tasks highlighted in grey). While showrunners are only the same as script coordinators, female showrunners are more writers than men, as they are the creators of the bible in all cases, coordinating and writing all its chapters. With such a small sample, we cannot conclude that this is due to their status as women or that it is rather a consequence of the current production moment, but it is true that all the women interviewed respond more strictly to the definition of showrunner provided by the screenwriters' union ALMA (2019), according to which the latter must primarily write. We could conclude that female showrunners are more likely to be writers because that is their professional background; that is, there are many female scriptwriters and the logical conclusion is that they are increasing their tasks in addition to writing. It is true that in the cases interviewed, four out of five developed their careers as scriptwriters, while one was always a director, even if she wrote her own stories. However, there are not more female scriptwriters than male scriptwriters in the Spanish audiovisual sector, not even in the same proportion, since they barely account for 33.4% of scriptwriters, and the majority female teams barely account for 9% of audiovisual productions (Torres-Martín et al., 2022, p. 237).

With regard to the production area, the duties of the showrunners remain consistent with those previously outlined in the research. These include the coordination and communication tasks with the platform, although they are not responsible for the preparation of the budgets. It is noteworthy that the series in question was produced during the global pandemic, resulting in a multitude of last-minute alterations to the filming schedule (e.g., positive Covid-19 cases). This placed a significant burden on the individuals with the deepest knowledge of the series, namely the scriptwriters/creators, who played a pivotal role in coordinating the filming, narrative, and props. They also had the authority to modify the budget. It would be of interest to ascertain, in the course of further research, whether the current showrunners continue to bear this responsibility in the post-pandemic era.

A further distinction between the showrunners was observed in relation to the more technical aspects of directing. While they were involved in all tasks, including the choice of personnel in charge of the different technical areas or equipment, the women interviewed were more closely involved in directing functions related to the script, such as casting, rehearsal, and directing actors, as well as the aesthetic approach, which is designed from the script itself (dark environments, dramatic elements, etc.). The choice of locations can also be another element to coordinate if it is related to the script. This can result in changes being made, but it is not a task that all of them have carried out. In essence, there is a distinction between the more technical aspects of directing, which are typically the domain of male showrunners.

The defining function of the showrunner is usually to assist on set. Traditionally, the scriptwriter is forbidden to be on the set and it is the showrunner who is given access to the set, mainly to ensure the continuity of the story, as there are 'many things that are not said in the dialogue and you have to make sure that it is sown with a subtle look, not too obvious so that it is not revealed to the viewer, but that it is sown to reap in chapter 16 (...) these are things that only the writer knows' (interviewee 3). All but one of the interviewees were present during the filming or watched the recorded material (the daily) on a daily basis in order to adjust it. The promotion, in contrast to what happened before, means that the showrunners, the scriptwriters, are finally in the front row.

Table 2. Comparative table of tasks by gender

	Men	Women
SCRIPT AREA	Creator of the original idea	Creator of the original idea
	Development of the Bible	Development of the Bible
	Writing the pilot chapter	Writing the pilot chapter
	Writing other chapters	Writing other chapters
	Coordination of the script team: coordination, proofreading, re-writing	Coordination of the script team: coordination, proofreading, re-writing
PRODUCTION AREA	Budgeting	Budgeting
	Direct interlocutor with the chain	Direct interlocutor with the chain
	Production coordination: planning, monitoring, modifications	Production coordination: planning, monitoring, modifications
MANAGEMENT AREA	Participation in the creation Technical script (visual concept design)	Participation in the creation Technical script (visual concept design)
	Choice of locations	Choice of locations
	Election of team leaders	Election of team leaders
	Choice of technical equipment (based on visual concept and/or budget)	Choice of technical equipment (based on visual concept and/or budget)
	Casting choice	Casting choice
	Filming set	Filming set
	Coordination of the management team	Coordination of the management team
	Direction of actors (rehearsals, set, **etc.**)	Direction of actors (rehearsals, set, **etc.**)
	Participation in the editing and post-production process: colour grading, colour treatment, choice of music, graphic line, **etc.**	Participation in the editing and post-production process: colour grading, colour treatment, choice of music, graphic line, **etc.**
PROMOTION AREA	Supervision of promotional elements (audiovisuals, press kits, posters, **etc.**).	Supervision of promotional elements (audiovisuals, press kits, posters, **etc.**).
	Planning the communication strategy	Planning the communication strategy
	High profile public presence as part of the series' communication strategy	High profile public presence as part of the series' communication strategy

Source: Own elaboration 2024

With regard to the leadership exercised by these professionals, it is worth noting that they concur on the importance of fostering trust within the team, yet simultaneously, they retain control over all aspects of the work. Furthermore, it was reiterated that all of them had previous experience performing similar tasks, though without recognition. They all considered this to be a legitimising factor, enabling them to face the difficulties of a film shoot, which are increased by the clearly macho opposition towards some of them (interviewee 5) or their own insecurities, such as "the impostor syndrome" (interviewee 2). Another common observation is the importance of not avoiding conflict, a behavior that they identify as having been learned by women and which they have had to correct.

The challenges faced by women are perceived differently, often contingent on the level of experience, recognition, or hierarchy. They lack references and believe that their inclusion in teams of scriptwriters is motivated by gender stereotypes or quotas. However, they are aware that, although they are few in number, they are more numerous than before. In all the interviews, the interviewees (1-5) consistently emphasised the significant weight of responsibility and visibility they bear, even going so far as to cite privilege as an issue that their showrunner colleagues have chosen to ignore. "I am privileged to be able to choose, to be responsible for that choice, and to help those who are unable to do so," states interviewee 5.

The implementation of platforms is predicated upon the generation of a substantial corpus of content, which provides an opportunity for the emergence of new voices. Should these voices prove successful, they will serve to perpetuate the cycle of opportunity. The economic logic of the industry has historically favoured the visibility of screenwriters in their role as executive producers. "There is a profile of a scriptwriter who has a much greater ambition, which is to create their own stories and see them through to the end, which can be more similar to the impulse of a film director" (interviewee 5). In this context, we are witnessing the emergence of a new generation of female directors who are successfully producing diverse and inclusive films (such as 20,000 Species of Bees, The Girls and Esperanza) that offer the potential to tell different stories and generate significant revenue for producers and distributors. It is important to monitor the evolution of the sector, as the greater the number of women in creative management positions, the greater the potential for hiring women, and the more references for future generations. The greater the audience, the greater the business potential and the greater the possibilities for relying on stories from a female perspective. These stories can provide the next generation with a sense of representation in all the nuances that characterise humanity.

5. Acknowledgements

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