

Influence of hybrid feminist activism on gender parity in the opinion sections of Catalan media: the #OnSónLesDones case

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Abstract

This article analyses the influence of the #OnSónLesDones (OSLD) [Where Are Women] group in achieving gender parity in the opinion sections of the major Catalan media. It does so with a mixed methodology that combines situational analysis, of a qualitative nature, and social network analysis, of a quantitative nature.

Firstly, results show that through the diffusion of the hashtag #onsónlesdones on Twitter, OSLD has contributed to make the underrepresentation of women in the public sphere visible, although the hashtag has been broadly shared by users with profiles similar to those of the group's activists. Secondly, that when reflecting on parity and opinion, the media take into account the postulates of the group. The conclusions point to the importance of studying the role of feminist activism in the transformation of journalistic routines and in the adoption of activist practices by the citizens.

Keywords

Hybrid activism, feminist activism, cyberfeminism, feminist journalism, opinion journalism, parity, public opinion, communication and gender.

Resum

L'article analitza la influència del grup #OnSónLesDones (OSLD) en l'assoliment de la paritat de gènere als espais d'opinió dels principals mitjans catalans. Ho fa amb una metodologia mixta que combina l'anàlisi situacional (situational analysis), de caràcter qualitatiu, i l'anàlisi de xarxes socials (social network analysis), de caràcter quantitatiu.

Els resultats mostren, primer, que mitjançant la difusió de l'etiqueta #onsónlesdones a Twitter, OSLD ha contribuït a visibilitzar la infrarepresentació de les dones a l'esfera pública, si bé l'etiqueta ha estat compartida, a grans trets, per usuàries amb perfils semblants als de les activistes del grup. Segon, que els mitjans, a l'hora de reflexionar sobre paritat i opinió, tenen en compte els postulats del grup. Les conclusions apunten a la importància d'estudiar el rol de l'activisme feminista en la transformació de rutines periodístiques i en l'adopció de pràctiques activistes per part de la ciutadania.

Paraules clau

Activisme híbrid, activisme feminista, ciberfeminisme, periodisme feminista, periodisme d'opinió, paritat, opinió pública, comunicació i gènere.

Received: 11 July 2025 / Reviewed: 9 October 2025 / Accepted: 14 January 2026

How to cite:

Roqueta-Fernández, M. (2026). Influence of hybrid feminist activism on gender parity in the opinion sections of Catalan media: the #OnSónLesDones case. *Quaderns del CAC*, 52, 19-30. doi: <https://doi.org/10.60940/qcac52id9800232>

1. Introduction

Nowadays, activism has a hybrid nature in much of the world: people carry out protest actions, disseminate communication campaigns or establish forms of organisation that are developed, simultaneously or complementarily, in physical and digital spaces (Ardizzoni, 2017; Clark-Parsons, 2022; Treré, 2019).

Feminist journalists and activists have used hybrid forms of organisation, communication and political actions to reclaim a feminist perspective in news and in labour relations in newsrooms. The Spanish movement Las Periodistas Paramos [We Female Journalists Go On Strike] and its Catalan version, Les Periodistes Parem, are an example of this. Formed by professionals from all over Spain, it was born in 2018 to join the feminist strike on 8th March that year (Bernal-Triviño and Sanz-Martos, 2020; Florés Paredes, 2021; Iranzo-Cabrera, 2020).

Grouped around Telegram channels, they promoted a manifesto to demand job improvements and played a relevant role in disseminating the strike calls and giving public visibility to the demonstrations (Bernal-Triviño and Sanz-Martos, 2020; Florés Paredes, 2021; Ideograma *et al.*, 2019; Iranzo-Cabrera, 2020; Iranzo-Cabrera and Gozávez Pérez, 2022). Les Periodistes Parem contributed to Catalan female professionals joining the strike, organised a protest in Barcelona and denounced the discriminations suffered with the Twitter hashtag #ProuPeriodismeSexista [Enough Of Sexist Journalism] (Florés Paredes, 2021).

Another example of hybrid feminist activism in the field of communication is #OnSónLesDones [Where Are Women] (OSLD, by its Catalan initials). It was born in 2016 after some Twitter users used the hashtag #onsónlesdones to denounce the absence of female participants in a debate panel in TV3 .cat show. Seeing the impact, some of the female users, most of them from journalistic, university and cultural fields, organised themselves online to periodically recount the number of women who published their opinion in the main newspaper, digital, radio and television outlets in the country. The group also used hashtags such as #onsónlesdones or #primeradona [first woman] to highlight the role of women in public spaces and in professional fields that had previously been male-dominated.

Different studies on hybrid activism have asked to what extent this new form of political action helps achieve the goals of social movements (Clark-Parsons, 2022; Sampedro, 2021; Treré, 2019). Treré (2019) points out that it is only effective when there is a combination of social, political and cultural factors that favour it. Sampedro (2021) remarks that digital actions can change social perceptions about certain issues, but to promote institutional transformations it is necessary that it leads to forms of collective organisation sustained over time.

In the case of Las Periodistas Paramos, some effects of the movement were the creation, on the part of the media, of roles such as equality publishers or gender-specialised editors; the formation of new women journalists organisations, or the promotion of self-regulation mechanisms, in the form of manuals to inform on sexist violence, or Twitter accounts to denounce sexist news coverage and praise feminist news coverage (Iranzo-Cabrera, 2020; Iranzo-Cabrera and Gozávez Pérez, 2022).

In this line, the research aims, firstly, to analyse the impact of the hybrid activism of OSLD in achieving gender parity in the opinion sections of Catalan media recounted by the group; and, secondly, to address the Twitter echo of the OSLD content and the hashtag #onsónlesdones.

2. State of the matter

Mattoni and Treré (2014) divide activist practices into four categories. *Participatory practices* aim to involve other people in activist projects. *Organisational practices* serve to plan the actions that will be carried out and the operation of the group. The third category includes the practices that are carried out in the context of *protests*, actions and campaigns, while *symbolic practices* include the development of discourses and the creation of meanings and interpretations on the issues addressed. Thus, this research analyses the protest and symbolic practices of OSLD.

As much of the group's actions have been developed online, it is necessary to review which forms of digital activist practices have been identified in the academic literature. George and Leidner (2019) group them according to the degree of user involvement and the digital skills necessary to do them.

The first level comprises *digital spectator activities*. According to the authors, they represent most actions of digital activism and are those that generate a higher degree of involvement from the rest of online users. It is, for example, *clicktivism* –giving a like to a content, following activists profiles, etc.–, *metavoicing* –sharing content, republishing it, commenting on the content of others– and *assertion* –the creation of content on social media.

The second level comprises *transient activities*, such as the online purchase of goods and objects aligned with the ideals of the individual (*commodity activism*), the signing of petitions to governments and other institutions, the fundraising through online platforms, or the use of bots to promote political action (*botivism*).

The third level described by the authors includes the *gladiatorial activist practices*, which require a higher degree of involvement and computer knowledge: data activism, the dissemination of confidential information or hacking.

In addition to classifying actions according to the digital competencies to carry them out and the degree of involvement required, George and Leidner (2019) divide them according to the impact they seek to generate: *cognitive impact* is the one intended to influence the opinion of individuals; *emotional impact* is intended to generate an emotional response; *financial impact* is seeking either to penalise or reward economically; *reputational impact* is based on recognising or pointing out individuals and organisations; and *power construction* seeks to increase the degree of authority and control exercised by an individual or organisation.

Other researches focused on how online practices are developed. Xu and Saxton (2019) identify two types of tactics to make the message reach as many key users and key actors as possible. *Content-based tactics* consist of defining what will be said, when it will be said and how it will be said, either by sharing links, using images, quoting someone or sharing tags. *Connection-building tactics* seek to involve specific users. The authors conclude that the content-based tactics that works the most are those that disseminate messages accompanied by tags, links, images or videos. Likewise, they suggest that the tactics to weave contacts are focused on users who are outside the sector in which the organisation or activist group operates (Xu and Saxton, 2019).

In this line, hashtags collect messages scattered in the social media and channel them into a single conversation, so that they become a meeting point between users, activists and organisations with common interests (Nacher, 2021; Tynes *et al.*, 2016; Xu and Saxton, 2019). Some research shows that the way in which campaigns around the diffusion of a hashtag are conceived determine what kind of discussion is created around it.

For example, an analysis of Twitter conversations on the #Cuéntalo and #LaManada hashtags concludes that in the discussion generated by the #Cuéntalo hashtag, opinions of both known users with many followers as well as those of anonymous users stood out, something that did not happen with that of #LaManada, where the conversation was led by the most influential users (Robles *et al.*, 2019).

According to Robles, Gómez and Atienza (2019), the difference lies in the fact that #Cuéntalo was an organised campaign and encouraged all types of women to talk about their experiences of abuse. However, the authors explain that the conversations channeled through the hashtag #LaManada emerged spontaneously. This caused, firstly, that the discussion was monopolised by figures of great public relevance; secondly, that the conversation was highly polarised and, finally, that the conversation deviated from the group rape of a girl during the celebration of the Sanfermines of 2016 and went on to discuss other current issues (Robles *et al.*, 2019).

3. Research questions and methodology

The study poses three research questions. The first question is: **"What kind of digital practices does OSLD do, what impact do they seek, and what narrative resources are used to disseminate them?"**. In order to answer it, the study analyses the content of the OSLD blog and the reports they write about the presence of women in the opinion sections of the Catalan media, and fourteen activists of the group are interviewed.

The information is analysed following the qualitative methodology of situational analysis (Clarke *et al.*, 2017). It is a variant of the grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2015) specially designed for studies on social justice issues (feminist, anti-racist, queer, etc.), which aims to x-ray the relationships between human and non-human actors of a specific casuistry (*the situation*), the influence of certain conditioning factors (cultural, time, etc.) on the situation and the main discourses and discussions that define it.

Thus, the semi-structured and with open questions interviews and other documents have been analysed through a codification process that has identified recurring themes, classified in the categories "discursive constructions of the human and non-human actors", "sociocultural conditions that affect the situation where OSLD operates, which is the conflict around parity in opinion sections", "economic conditions", "political conditions", "time and space elements that affect the situation".

The fourteen participants were the ones who responded to the interview request made to the group by email. Their profiles are varied, and include the two founders, the activists that manage online communication and the coordinator of the group's organisation.

In addition, a selection of tweets from the OSLD Twitter account, published between 1st January 2022 and 31st March 2022, is analysed. The activists interviewed identified this corporate social media as the most relevant for their activity, apart from being the space where the group was created. Beyond discourse analysis using situational analysis, and following the methodology of Xu and Saxton (2019) to assess content-based tactics, a quantitative analysis is made of the number of tweets emitted during the period studied and the links, videos, *gifs* and images they contain. To study connection-based tactics, the number of actors targeted by tweets is taken into account and in what way they do so (mentioning, answering, citing, etc.). As Pavan (2017) observes, a frequent use of mentions and answers indicates a willingness to question and talk with other users, the use of hashtags is associated with the intention of contributing to discussions by providing content, while a greater use of retweets denotes a tendency to retransmit messages from others.

The second question is: **"Which is the scope of the group's online activity on Twitter?"**. To answer it, on the one hand, a group ego network is created from the interactions they established with other users from 1st October 2021 to 31st March 2022. Ego networks are formed around a particular actor (Crossley *et al.*, 2015). The central actor is called *ego*, and the *alters* are the users with whom he/she has ties. In the case of Twitter, the ties between *ego* and *alters* can be retweets, *likes*, answers, quotes or mentions made from the *ego* to the *alters* and from the *alters* to the *ego*, without necessarily having correspondence. The *alters* have been classified into the categories "OSLD", "politics", "media", "civil society", "academy" and "feminisms". These are the areas identified by the participants as relevant in their fight. In order to classify the *alters*, the information and images present in their biography on Twitter have been considered.

On the other hand, the *whole network* (Crossley *et al.*, 2015) of the hashtags #OnSónLesDones, #OnSonLesDones, #onsónlesdones and #onsonlesdones is created, in order to show the role of OSLD in its dissemination. The period analysed spans from 1st January 2013, the year when it was created, until 31st March 2022. In this type of network, the nodes are Twitter users and the ties are retweets: there is a tie between node A and B if A retweets B.

Following the methodology of Venturini, Jacomy and Jensen (2021), a first visual analysis of the network is made. Then it is organised using the ForceAtlas2 template in its default Gephi form, with the *non-overlap* function. This algorithm creates a representation of the network in which, among others, the proximity between nodes indicates similarity in terms of connectivity (shared neighbours, density of interactions) and *clusters* of nodes are formed, which allow to distinguish regions of interest in the network. The resulting network contains 26,680 nodes and 48,947 ties. The study only takes into account the *giant component*, formed by those nodes that are connected to the centre of the network. The giant component has 25,259 nodes. In order to make the analysis of clusters in this network easier, a community detection algorithm is used (Louvain method).

The difference between the periods analysed in the Twitter analysis is due to the availability of data, conditioned by the social network API. In triangulating the results of this section with qualitative analysis, it has been considered that the disparity of dates, although it is a limitation, allows to draw relevant conclusions from the case study.

Finally, the third question is: **"What has been the influence of OSLD on the adoption of an equal representation of men and women in the opinion sections of the Catalan media?"**. In order to discover it, between 2022 and 2023, seventeen editors, section heads or directors, nine women and eight men, of the media outlets and programmes recounted by OSLD were interviewed through semi-structured and open questions interviews: *Ara*, *El Periódico*,

El Punt Avui, *La Vanguardia*, *El Món*, *El Nacional*, *Nació Digital*, *Vilaweb*; *El matí de Catalunya Ràdio*, *Catalunya migdia* (Catalunya Ràdio), *El suplement* (Catalunya Ràdio), *El món a RAC1*, *No ho sé* (RAC1), *Els matins* (3cat), *Tot es mou* (3cat), *Més 324* (3cat) and *Bàsics* (betevé). The host of the radio show *Via lliure* (RAC1) could not be interviewed, due to schedule conflicts.

All research participants signed informed consents and their answers have been anonymised so that they cannot be identified (e.g.: *activist1*, *journalist3*). The data to perform the OSLD ego network has been processed with the R programme. Qualitative (situational analysis) and quantitative (network analysis) methods have been combined for triangulation reasons (Wald, 2014): the data obtained from the analysis of online activity has been contextualised and contrasted with the answers of the activists and journalists interviewed, and vice versa.

4. Results

4.1. OSLD Hybrid Practices

The main activity of the group is the periodic counting of the number of women in opinion columns or panels in the main Catalan media. Each volunteer is assigned one media outlet to audit during the counting period, which can last a week, a quarter or a year. Every day, the volunteers, self-named *recouters*, publish the result of the media outlet they have been assigned on the blog, and disseminate it on the group's Twitter account. The data dissemination tweets cite the recounted media, and they are congratulated or reprimanded for the results. Once the recount is finished, the data is collected and a report is prepared, which is sent to the recounted media and uploaded to the blog and social media profiles of the group. These reports are presented in public events, whether in the form of press conferences, performances in public space or debate panels with journalists.

As for the analysis of content-based tactics and connection-building tactics (Xu and Saxton, 2019), between January and March 2022 OSLD posted 54 tweets on its Twitter account. Of these, 18 were created by the group, the rest were retweets. In other words, during that period, OSLD had a tendency to relay messages from others (Pavan, 2017).

Fifteen of the eighteen tweets had to do with the count on the occasion of 8th March that year. However, the tweet with the most reactions, 19 retweets and 51 *likes*, shows a photograph of some members of the group at the Women's Day demonstration held in Barcelona (image 1). In the text accompanying the image, the hashtag #onsónlesdones, which identifies both the group and its objective, and the hashtag #8M2022, one of those used on Twitter to disseminate information about the feminist strikes that year.

Image 1. Most widespread OSLD tweet during the analysed period



Source: @onsónlesdones Twitter account.

The second tweet with the most retweets, eight, refers to the intervention of the group in the Catalan Parliament, and the third echoes the participation of an OSLD member in a radio programme. Thus, the tweets that disseminate the results of the count are the ones that generate the least retweets. In the case of the *likes*, the situation is a bit different: the second tweet that has the most retweets, fourteen, comments on the results of *El món a RAC1*, and the third, with nine, comments on those of *Més 324*.

Tweets that spread the results of the count use content-based tactics and connection-building tactics (Xu and Saxton, 2019). One example is the hashtags that identify the count (#8M2022), key concepts such as #paritat [parity] or the nicknames that activists give to the media that have less female opinion-makers (#ElVanguardia). There are also links to blog posts detailing the results of a media outlet; a gif or an image, and what activists call "the traffic light", a succession of circles where the green ones indicate the number of female opinion-makers and the red ones indicate the number of male opinion-makers (image 2). The connection-building tactics consist of citing the media outlet analysed and its director, a fact that, according to Pavan (2017), aims to directly question specific users.

Of the 36 retweets made by OSLD during the months studied, seven are retweets coming from members of the group, two of whom comment on the frustration generated by being a recount of media outlets that usually present low results. Thirteen retweets are to journalists or media outlets, half of which refer to OSLD appearances in the media. One of the retweets is about a recount made by *betevé's* works council on the number of women and non-

Image 2. Dissemination tweet of the results of a media outlet recounted by OSLD



Source: @onsónlesdones Twitter account.

binary people who appear as panelists, contributors or expert sources in the TV network's programmes.

Other retweets are of press articles about the presence of women in different work areas, some of which are titled "On són les dones?" ["Where are women?"] (image 3). As several interviewed activists said, "spreading the vice of recounting" women in management teams, round tables, governments, music festival posters, awards, etc. is one of the group's goals.

All OSLD retweets to political actors, five, are from members of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya. Three of these tweets comment on the results that OSLD detailed during its speech in the Catalan Parliament's Committee on Equality and Feminisms. The group demands that private media outlets that do not achieve parity in their opinion sections should not receive public subsidies, under the protection of article 25 of the Catalan Law 17/2015 on effective equality of women and men. In order to achieve this, the interviewed activists explained that they had met with representatives of institutions such as the Catalan Audiovisual Council (Consell de l'Audiovisual de Catalunya), the Department of Equality and Feminisms or the Secretariat of Communication and Media of the Catalan government. At the time of ending this research, the demand of the OSLD had not been met.

Image 3. Retweet of an article on women's visibility



Source: @onsonlesdones Twitter account.

Image 4. Retweet to a user that mentions @onsonlesdones



Source: @onsonlesdones Twitter account.

The group retweeted five tweets from Twitter users. Some mention @onsonlesdones. For example, a female user denounces that the Spanish press ignores that Rafael Nadal is not the first tennis player to win twenty-one *Grand Slams*, because three women had achieved it before. Another tweet that mentions @onsonlesdones complains that, in the list of the best sports moments of the year 2021 made by Movistar+, there is no feat with a woman as the protagonist (image 4).

4.2. Scope of OSLD Online Activity

The OSLD ego network on Twitter has 615 *alters*. Of these, 39% belong to the field of civil society (activists, organisations, anonymous individuals); 29% are users linked to journalism (media outlets, professionals); and 14% to feminist activism (individuals or organisations). 6% of *alters* belong to the world of politics. The accounts linked to ERC are majority, seven; followed by those of the CUP (three), En Comú Podem (two), Junts per Catalunya (one) and PSC (one). Thus, the OSLD ego network is mostly left-wing and pro-independence. The rest of *alters* are university profiles (8%) or OSLD activists profiles (4%).

As we can see in Table 1, of the twenty users that mention OSLD most often, only three belong to media-related accounts; two accounts linked to journalism are among the twenty users who most *like* the group's tweets, and no other *alter* from the media world cites OSLD.

Table 2 shows how only five journalists are among the seventeen accounts that have answered the group; no account linked to a media outlet or journalist is among the twenty *alters* that retweet OSLD. By contrast, in both tables we see how the accounts belonging to civil society, and the feminist and university fields are the ones that are most predisposed to interact with the group. We also see the predisposition of OSLD activists to spread the main account content.

Interviews with the activists indicate that contact with universities, women's associations or other civil society entities is rather sporadic, limited to specific campaigns. One example is the presentation, together with migrant women's associations, of a complaint to the Catalan Ombudsman (Sindic de Greuges) regarding the underrepresentation of women, especially racialised women, in media opinion sections. For *activist10*, the Catalan Ombudsman's performance "did not make sense". As this activist explains, the Catalan Ombudsman asked the CAC about its work and asked the Col·legi de Periodistes [College of Journalists] if there was labour discrimination in the opinion sections: "[The Ombudsman] should have turned to the media outlets [...] to know what they were doing to straighten the situation of inequality".

Apart from the activity in the ego network, if we take a look at the network around the #onsónlesdones hashtag we see that, taking into account the composition of the

Table 1. Users who mention, like or cite OSLD the most. Accounts belonging to the media sector are highlighted

Mentions		Likes		Cites	
User	Field	User	Field	User	Field
Minobiscarme	Civil society	laura_laurae	Civil society	JudithU64	Civil society
Lamacarella	OSLD	CluaLeonor	Civil society	carmepovedal	Feminisms
Rosaurajx	Civil society	AlamoAmor	Civil society	Raqini	Universities
annamanso	OSLD	mrosabuxarra	Universities	la_garsi	Civil society
BetCat73	Civil society	Dialmantine	OSLD	laura_laurae	Civil society
deyzaguirre	Civil society	Sherrercat	OSLD	dialmantine	OSLD
sherrercat	OSLD	Rosaurajx	Civil society	belbosCK	Civil society
laura_laurae	Civil society	Laiateruel	Media		
LauraHuergaRV	OSLD	questio982	Civil society		
JudithU64	Civil society	loteruelo	Civil society		
JordiVillaroda	Media	Marinavivo	OSLD		
martaroqueta	OSLD	llambordes	Universities		
Catinformació	Civil society	ester_morante	Civil society		
FlorenScience	Feminisms	msarrias30	Media		
silviamural	Politics	annabelmia	Universities		
Viktorbir	Civil society	nohihamesqueara	Civil society		
maiaviaditque	OSLD	LluísCasanovas3	Civil society		
Trinitro	Politics	lamacarella	OSLD		
Txellbq	Media	MoVallve	Feminisms		
lineamarilla	Media	MariaThorson	Feminisms		

Source: Own elaboration based on Twitter API data.

Table 2. Users who answer or retweet OSLD the most. Accounts belonging to the media sector are highlighted

Answer		Retweet	
User	Field	User	Field
Minobiscarme	Civil society	laura_laurae	Civil society
oscarcatradio	Media	elenafonts	OSLD
annabelmia	Universities	martaroqueta	OSLD
Eliduvina	Feminisms	MartaAymerich	Universities
monserdadenou	Media	annamariasastre	Civil society
lauragrandej	Media	Artal181Artal	Civil society
elisendacarod	Media	susaniye	OSLD
Estacadebares	Feminisms	dialmantine	OSLD
Gracul	Civil society	lamacarella	OSLD
Elenafonts	OSLD	Totaltupper	OSLD
Davidgonrub	Media	Arrosambllet	OSLD
lamacarella	OSLD	marinavivo_	OSLD
Som_dones	Feminisms	sherrercat	OSLD
AlamoAmor	Civil society	nohihamesqueara	Civil society
GougesOlimpia77	Feminisms	vampyCATman	Civil society
lorenaescandell	Feminisms	Adriagm	Universities
dialmantine	OSLD	questio982	Civil society
		holasoclasandra	Feminisms
		Calsojorn	Civil society
		giselaro55	Civil society

Source: Own elaboration based on Twitter API data.

network (figure 1), the resulting conversation does not seem excessively polarised. It is a network similar to that of #Cuéntalo (Robles *et al.*, 2019), except that in it there are female users who lead the conversation.

The giant component of the network of the #onsónlesdones hashtag has 25,259 nodes and contains four main regions (A, B, C and D). The green group (A) is the largest and is located in the centre. Among the most retweeted users are the @onsonlesdones account and some of its members (@BelOlid, @lizcastro, @taniaverge). The composition of the group suggests that this community is the most interconnected and interactive, because it has very short distances between nodes: it means that there is quite a lot of internal cohesion and a strong flow of information.

The orange group (B) is made up of left-wing and pro-independence parties and female politicians. It is a well-connected and dense group, but separated from the green group (A). The most retweeted users of Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya are the former president of the Parliament Carme Forcadell (@ForcadellCarme) and the former minister Dolors Bassa (@dolorsbassac). The most retweeted users who at that time belonged to the

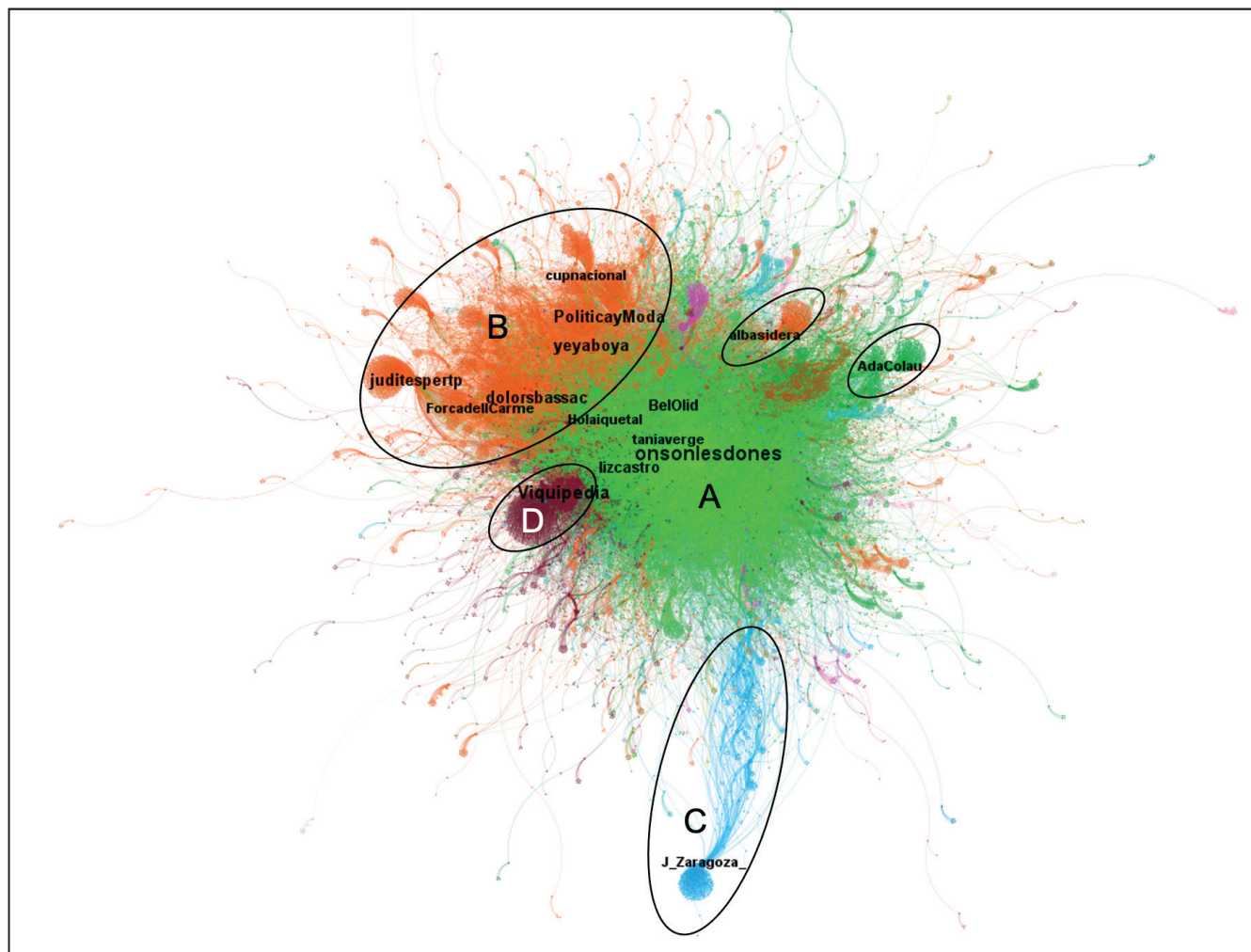
Candidatura d'Unitat Popular were the party account, @cupnacional, and Mireia Boya (@yeyaboya). Another notable user is Patrycia Centeno (@PoliticayModa), a journalist specialising in political communication.

The blue group (C) is separated from the rest of the network and is grouped around José Zaragoza (@J_Zaragoza_), at that time a member of the Spanish Congress (Congreso de los Diputados) for the PSC (Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya). The long queue that leaves the main network in the downward direction could indicate that it is a closely connected community, in which the nodes interact more with each other than with the rest of the network.

The maroon group (D) is articulated around the Viquipèdia account (@Viquipedia). This may indicate that the #onsonlesdones hashtag was based on disseminating data and facts. Smaller and more peripheral nodes also stand out in the network, such as the account of the former Mayor of Barcelona Ada Colau (@AdaColau) or the correspondent in Italy for several media outlets, Alba Sidera (@albasidera).

Finally, it should be noted that the network follows a structure of centre and periphery, in which the OSLD group

Figure 1. The network around the #onsónlesdones hashtag



Source: Own elaboration, with the support of Dr Emanuele Cozzo, based on Twitter API data.

(green, A) dominates the conversation. Group C (blue) does not have many strong connections with the rest of the network, indicating that it is an isolated group. Group B (orange) does interact with the green group (A), but it is different from it.

Answers from participants indicate that the composition of the OSLD ego network and the network around the #onsonlesdones and similar hashtags reflects the ideologies and contacts in the off-line world of the group members: some of them are members of or identify with Catalan left-wing parties, especially the pro-independence parties.

Activists explained that the contacts of some members of the group were used to invite relevant figures to the group's events; collect signatures for the founding manifesto; book spaces for assemblies; request legal advice; request that they disseminate certain content, and organise meetings with key actors. "In the presentation events [of the recounting reports] I have made many phone calls. To political contacts, trade unions, etc. I brought [name of a mayor] because she wanted to meet [name of an OSLD activist]", activist7.

4.3. Relationship of OSLD with the media

Except for one case, all the interviewed journalists knew OSLD. They all answered they would have no problem meeting with them and discussing their claims. Some interviewed people knew some of the activists, either because they worked with them, had spoken with them in private or had been invited to some event of the organisation. For example, *journalist5* explained that she participated in a round table on women with positions of responsibility in the media organised by OSLD:

"I wanted to [participate in this event] because I felt totally questioned. On both sides, because I think they are absolutely right and because I believe that as a person in charge, as people who have some power of decision in the media, the message goes to us too."

At the beginning of OSLD, the digital *El Nacional* published an article responding to the demands of the group. In that article, titled "On són les dones d'El Nacional? ("Where Are the Women of *El Nacional*?" (Piqué, 2017), the media outlet recognised that OSLD was fighting for a "just cause", but said some of the criticism that the group directed at the media outlet was not entirely so, because they had many women who worked there as journalists and editors, so they decided what was newsworthy or not: "In *El Nacional*, women, in addition to giving opinions, manage the company and elaborate the news".

In this vein, *journalist14* and *journalist17* considered that the fact that OSLD only focused on the number of women in the opinion sections simplified the work that their respective media outlets, a newspaper and a radio

programme, did to introduce a feminist perspective into the content.

"If they only knew how much work is done here so that women are represented at all levels, in dealing with issues that any other newspaper would not deal with [...], we have the most equal number of readers in the country. To ignore all this seems to me to be a simplification that fails to consider that our work is very combative, very conscious, and very hard." *Journalist14*.

Journalist11, from a digital media, and *journalist13*, from a radio programme, disagreed with OSLD's criteria for recounting women in opinion sections. *Journalist13* did not understand why they did not count a woman who had a daily opinion section. *Journalist11* suggested that, instead of counting the number of women on a daily basis, OSLD should look at the total of men and women in the media's opinion sections, because there were men who opined more often than women.

Journalist4, *journalist5*, *journalist9*, *journalist16* and *journalist17* explained that either they or other members of the editorial department were aware of the OSLD count when thinking about parity in their opinion sections. The interviewees described the group as a "lobby" (*journalist17*), an association "with people who are influential in their sectors and of recognised prestige" (*journalist10*) "a critical media observatory" (*journalist9*), a public media audition that acts "as a mirror effect and as a reminder" (*journalist5*) or a group "that keeps us awake" (*journalist1*).

Some interviewees pointed out that, within their media outlet, there were women who insisted on improving female representation in news content. Those working at the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals [Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation] placed gender parity within the framework of policies to improve the representation of women adopted by the institution from 2022. Finally, *journalist10* observed that the demands of OSLD had made an impact thanks to the growing social sensitivity around feminist issues.

"Not only within [name of the media outlet] has there been a change, but also at the social level. It is obvious that society is increasingly for parity and for defending the rights of women, and everybody is increasingly aware that many times the media have not been plural enough."

5. Conclusions

The first research question is: "What kind of digital practices does OSLD do, what impact do they seek and what narrative resources are used to disseminate them?". The periodic counting of the number of women in the opinion sections of the main Catalan media is an example of crowdsourcing in the field of data activism,

a belligerent digital practice (George and Leidner, 2019). Following the classification of George and Leidner (2019), we can conclude that, by disseminating the daily results of the count on Twitter and mentioning the media outlet in question in each tweet, OSLD expects to cause an impact on the reputation of the tagged media, and generate an emotional and cognitive response to the rest of the social media users, making them participants in the indignation or joy generated by the results. The ultimate goal of OSLD is operationally impact the media, forcing them to take measures that guarantee gender parity in opinion sections.

Considering the number of retweets and *likes* obtained by the content created by OSLD during the period analysed, we could conclude, unlike Xu and Saxton (2019), that the wealth in connection and content tactics does not guarantee further interactions. The fact that the tweets that generated a higher number of interactions were those that talk about activities such as going to demonstrations or participating in radio shows, suggests that OSLD generates more interest when it does other things that are not recounting. Following Pavan's observations (2017), the use of hashtags such as #8M2022 suggests that the group places its demand in relation to the Catalan feminist movement.

As for retweets, the group spreads messages about the experience of being a recounter. With this, it can seek to generate an emotional impact, of empathy, on Twitter users (George and Leidner, 2019) and, also, to recognise the work of activists.

Thirteen retweets were to journalists or media outlets, half of which referred to OSLD appearances on the media. This can be valued as a way of highlighting the group's notoriety in order to gain *power* (George and Leidner, 2019), in this case power of pressure, underlining that the media, the actor that the group intends to influence, recognise it as a source of authority. Likewise, disseminating the study on the presence of women and non-binary people in *betevé* programmes can be a way of disseminating data, connecting with *betevé* journalists, or highlighting that the work of OSLD is important, since there are journalists who also do it.

As Mattoni and Treré (2014) explain, activists can develop symbolic practices in order to create discourses, meanings and interpretations about the issues addressed. The tweets on the count create a way to represent the discrimination of women in the opinion sections (the traffic light) and to identify in a clear and direct way the problem of the underrepresentation of women (a hashtag, #onsonlesdones, which also gives the group its name). They also try to create an interpretation, using *gifs* and ironic hashtags, such as #ElVanguardio, on the reported problem.

The second research question raises **the scope of the group's activity on Twitter**. In relation to the ego network, we can see that most *alters* belong to the field of civil society, journalism or feminist activism. The predominance

of these three user profiles can be attributed both to the group's objectives –to reprimand or congratulate the media and make the role of women in the public sphere visible– and to its feminist ideology. However, if we analyse the interactions (*likes*, mentions, citations, retweets and responses) established between OSLD and the *alters*, we see that, although the group's strategy is based on questioning the media, there is a clear difference between who the messages are addressed to and who participates in the conversation.

Attending to the cluster composition of the network around #onsonlesdones, it can be concluded that this has been promoted mostly by women who are either activists or identify with the feminist cause; belong to left-wing political parties, preferably pro-independence parties, or are journalists. In addition, the presence of users with a high degree of centrality (in-degree), that is, they are very connected to the rest of the nodes, indicates that the network is governed by a dynamic based on influence, in which a few key users define the conversation. Most of them are women, except for @Viquipedia, @cupnacional and @J_Zaragoza_.

Both the network around the #onsonlesdones hashtag and that of the group's ego reflect the ideological preferences of activists, mostly left-wing, mostly independentist, and with a predominance of users who identify as women. Likewise, the fact that the most influential users within the OSLD group of activists (A) are the non-binary writer Bel Olid, the former Minister of Equality and Feminisms, Tània Verge, or the digital and pro-Catalan activist Liz Castro, indicates that having influence both online and off-line can be an important element to disseminate a hashtag.

Finally, the third question referred to **the influence of OSLD on the adoption of an equal representation of men and women in opinion sections**. With the strategy of appealing to the reputation of the media, with online communication, events in the physical sphere or personal exchanges between activists and media in private spaces, OSLD has become a "lobby", "a public media observatory" or an auditing agent, in the words of the interviewed journalists. The analysis of the interviews shows that the editors of the recounted media know the group (except for one case), that some have felt challenged by their claims, others have taken them into account, others have disagreed with the OSLD counting criteria, and one media outlet has answered them, publicly, in writing.

According to data from the last OSLD recount, corresponding to the first half of March 2025 (#OnSónLesDones, 2025), of the nineteen opinion sections audited, thirteen had reached parity –in 2016, only two of the sections studied had reached parity. All the recounted sections of the CCMA, those of *betevé* and of TVE Catalunya, two of the three of RAC1, and the media outlets *El Nacional*, *Vilaweb* and *El Punt Avui*, had reached it. The audited opinion sections that remain to

achieve parity are from private companies (*La Vanguardia*, *Ara*, *El Periódico*, *Nació Digital*, *El Món* and *El món a RAC1*) and the vast majority are either newspapers on paper or digital media.

Some of the interviewed journalists pointed out that the demands of OSLD had found a place in a Catalan society that, at least until the reactionary onslaught, was sensitive to feminist issues. Others explained that within their media there had been initiatives, either at individual level or at corporate level, to increase the presence of women in content.

Thus, the data in the report and the observations of journalists suggest, in line with the observation of Treré (2019), that the effectiveness of hybrid activism is marked by its social and political context, since the strategy of OSLD, especially in the beginning, converged with a rise of the feminist movement and with the efforts within the newsrooms to make the role of women visible.

6. Discussion

The case analysis of OSLD draws two interesting conclusions for the debate on the impact of feminist activism on journalistic routines and the generation of public conversation on feminist issues.

The first is the importance of studying feminist activism considering the interrelation between the digital and physical spheres in the development of their actions and the evaluation of their impact. This requires the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to triangulate the results.

For example, quantitative analysis of the interactions that OSLD establishes with Twitter users, as well as the number of retweets in the publications of the results of the count, could lead us to conclude that the media do not feel challenged by the demands of the group, since they tend to interact little with it, and that parity on the media does not interest much at general level.

However, interviews with the editors of the media outlets recounted by the group show that most of them know it, some have spoken with activists in the organisation, and others have even participated in the events organised by the group. On the other hand, while interviews with activists have revealed that contacts with agents from the fields of academia, civil society or feminisms are not a priority, these audiences are the ones who most interact with the online content published by the group.

The centrality of OSLD in the dissemination of #onsónlesdones hashtag shows that the group is also perceived as an agent that fights to make women visible beyond opinion sections. However, the data show that this visibility is limited, largely confined to communities with characteristics similar to those of the group's activists.

On the other hand, the fact that there are users who have

joined the initiative to count women suggests that the group has encouraged the adoption of activist practices. That is, there are activist and protest practices that can generate a participatory effect (Mattoni and Treré, 2014) and that can contribute to changing social perceptions on certain issues (Sampedro, 2021). This suggests a possible line of research: to what extent the digital practices of feminist activism contribute to the media literacy of citizens.

The second conclusion is that feminist activism cannot be read only as a relationship of pressure towards certain actors isolated from any political, economic or social context, easily reduced to online and other off-line strategies: in this case, of direct pointing on Twitter and using the prestige acquired at the activist and organisation level to exert pressure in events or meetings, either public or private.

This is where the main limitation of the study should be mentioned. The media recounted by OSLD represent a small sample of the Catalan media system: most of them are based in Barcelona and are of Catalan scope. A future line of research could analyse the impact of certain feminist initiatives on regional or local media. This would provide very relevant knowledge, because the results of this study suggest the need to place feminist activism in the journalistic field in relation to the dynamics and relationships within journalistic newsrooms, attending to their business policies; to identify which professionals in each editorial board can be allies to promote changes, and to detect possible alliances with actors outside the media –in universities, in civil society, with other feminisms.

Aknowledgements

To Dr Jörg Müller and Dr Emanuele Cozzo for their support in exploiting data from the Twitter API and creating graphics.

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