

# Latin America on public relations research. Analysis of three scientific journals (2000-2023)

## América Latina en la investigación en Relaciones públicas. Análisis de tres revistas científicas (2000-2023)

### *América Latina na pesquisa em relações públicas. Análise de três periódicos científicos (2000-2023)*

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**ABSTRACT** | Through a content analysis of all academic papers published between 2000 and 2023 in three of the main public relations journals –*Public Relations Review* (PRR), *Corporate Communications* (CC) and *Journal of Public Relations Research* (JPRR)– we studied the presence of cases from Latin America in 39 articles, identifying, among other variables, authors, objectives, topics, institutional affiliation, networks, countries, methods, results and conclusions. The above, to assess the situation of research on Latin America in the field of public relations. The study concludes with suggestions for further research and a general proposal for the subcontinent. The results are not encouraging.

**KEYWORDS:** public relations research, content analysis, Latin America, literature review.

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**RESUMEN** | *Mediante el análisis de contenido de todos los artículos publicados entre 2000 y 2023 en tres de las principales revistas del campo de las Relaciones públicas –Public Relations Review (PRR), Corporate Communications (CC) y Journal of Public Relations Research (JPRR)– se examina la presencia de casos de América Latina en 39 artículos, identificando, entre otras variables, autores, objetivos, temas, afiliación institucional, redes, países representados, metodologías, resultados y conclusiones. Lo anterior, para evaluar la situación de la investigación sobre América Latina en las Relaciones públicas, la Comunicación estratégica y la Comunicación corporativa. Se concluye con sugerencias para investigaciones futuras y una propuesta general para la investigación en el subcontinente: los resultados no son del todo alentadores.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *investigación en Relaciones públicas, análisis de contenido, América Latina, revisión de literatura.*

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**RESUMO** | *Através da análise de conteúdo de todos os artigos científicos publicados entre 2000 e 2023 em três dos principais periódicos da área de relações públicas –Public Relations Review (PRR), Corporate Communications (CC) e Journal of Public Relations Research (JPRR)–, examina-se a presença de casos latino-americanos em 39 artigos, identificando autores, objetivos, temas, filiação institucional, redes, países representados, metodologias, resultados e conclusões, entre outras variáveis, para avaliar a situação da pesquisa sobre América Latina em relações públicas. Se conclui com sugestões para pesquisas futuras e uma proposta geral de investigação no subcontinente: os resultados não são inteiramente encorajadores.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *pesquisa em relações públicas, análise de conteúdo, América Latina, revisão da literatura.*

## INTRODUCTION

The academic study of modern Public Relations is relatively young, having begun almost five decades ago (Botan & Taylor, 2004; Holtzhausen, 2002; Ihlen & Van Ruler, 2007; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2007). Public Relations is simultaneously a professional practice and a subfield of Communication that has its own research base and theories and can be considered an academic discipline with specialized journals, professional and academic associations, and a broad network of collaborative relationships (Botan & Taylor, 2004).

Indeed, academic research on Public Relations is as diverse as the profession itself. Each year, academic journals on Communication and related fields publish an enormous number of articles describing Public Relations practices in different parts of the world, challenging common notions and assumptions about the practice in a specific culture as the dominant model (Jain et al., 2014).

The academic world of Public Relations consists of a wide range of topics and subjects, which is indicative of a healthy diversity (Gregory, 2012; McKie et al., 2012).

However, our knowledge of the history of academic research on Public Relations is very limited (Meadows & Meadows III, 2014), and this is even more critical in the case of Latin America, where there are relatively few studies documenting the evolution and characteristics of academic production (Angel et al., 2017). Compared to the United States and much of Western Europe and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand) (Lee & Yue, 2020; Elgueta-Ruiz & Martínez-Ortiz, 2022), Latin America is one of the least researched geographical regions in this field (Jain et al., 2014), in addition to other areas such as Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

In the past, bibliometric analyzes of dissertations and other postgraduate work in Spanish universities have been carried out, both at master's and doctoral level, for the period from 1965 to 2017. These studies show a thematic transition from the practice of Public Relations to Corporate

Communication, including the incorporation of new technologies and the communication media derived from them into professional practice (Castillo & Xifra, 2006; Cuenca-Fontbona et al, 2017, 2019; Xifra & Castillo, 2006).

On the other hand, Latin American researchers have shown a growing interest in the study of Organizational Communication, Strategic Communication and Public Relations in the subcontinent (Álvarez-Nobell, 2022; Angel Botero, 2013; Angel et al, 2017; Labarca & Mujica, 2022; Labarca & Sadi, 2022; Marroquín, 2015; Molleda et al, 2017; Moreno et al, 2022, 2023; Salas Forero, 2011; Suárez-Monsalve, 2022; Thelen, 2021; Vásquez & Marroquín Velásquez, 2016; Vásquez Donoso et al, 2018; Yue & Thelen, 2023).

What is striking here is the distancing of the field from its parent disciplines (Public Relations and journalism), which leads to a change in the theoretical perspectives used; the positivist focus thus gives way to others, such as interpretative, critical and constructive ones (Vásquez & Marroquín Velásquez, 2016; Vásquez Donoso et al., 2018). In fact, Moreno and colleagues (2023) report a significant increase (29%) in the number of such studies from 2016 to date. In this field, corporate Communication, strategic Communication, Public Relations and source journalism are used as synonyms (Aced, 2013), because “although some terms are broader than others ... all refer to the same reality: the management of relationships with the public, a much more accurate translation of *public relations* than Public Relations” (Aced, 2013, p. 25).

Vásquez and Marroquín Velásquez (2016) point to the growing development of academic and professional initiatives, such as postgraduate and master's programs, associations, congresses and thematic groups with international conferences that contribute to the institutionalization of Organizational Communication in Latin America, with Mexico, Brazil and Chile standing out. In the Brazilian case, for example, there are authors who have made a significant career, such as Porto Simões (1995), who proposes the theory of the political function of Public Relations, or Margarida Kunsch (2003), who deals with the modernization of Public Relations based on its integration with Organizational Communication. Publications such as ORGANICOM should also be highlighted. Since 2003, this journal has continuously published topics related to Public Relations, organizational Communication and educational processes on the subject. As for the Chilean case, the Association of Researchers in Communication (Asociación de Investigadores en Comunicación, INCOM Chile, <http://incomchile.cl/>) has created the thematic group on Strategic and Organizational Communication, Advertising and Marketing.

Academic journals are usually a good indicator of what is happening in a field and one of the main means of disseminating it (Míguez-González et al., 2014). Consequently, examining all publications on Latin America in these three journals between 2000 and 2023 can give us an indication of what is happening in this field in our subcontinent and what it looks like at the international level.

The importance of this focus lies in the fact that the articles submitted to academic journals give us an idea of the topics on which scholars spend their time and energy, as well as the very small number of professionals who submit articles to these peer-reviewed publications (Gregory, 2012).

In this case, only 1.29% of the articles published over 24 years in these three scientific journals refer to Latin America or originate from one of its countries.

Therefore, we posit the following questions:

RQ1. What is the status of research related to or originating from Latin America in articles published in PRR, CC and JPRR between 2000 and 2023?

RQ2. What are the topics or subjects of the articles mentioned between 2000 and 2023?

RQ3. Who are the authors publishing academic research on Latin America or one of its countries in the journals analyzed between 2000 and 2023?

RQ4. What methods are used to research the articles that refer to or originate from Latin America?

RQ5. What are the results and conclusions of the studies mentioned?

And, above all,

RQ6. What are the contributions and challenges of Latin American Public Relations research in 24 years of academic publications in PRR, CC and JPRR?

This forces us to reflect on the role that the Latin American university, understood as a typical or natural institution for scientific research in any field of study, plays in academic research.

To date, there is virtually no academic production in the field of Public Relations that deals with Latin America. Only 39 of the 3050 articles published in PRR, CC and JPRR in the last 24 years come from or deal with this region or some of its countries. However, the changes in the region's education systems make us optimistic, at least in terms of a certain increase in scientific production in this area (Buquet, 2013; Hernández Asensio, 2014).

Among the changes and challenges faced by higher education systems and their protagonists in the region, which certainly affect the what and how of Latin American Public Relations research, are (Balán, 2008; Balbachevsky, 2008; Hernández Bringas et al, 2015; Junqueira & Pimenta, 2008; Mayorga, 1999; Schwartzman, 2008; Soto Arango & Forero Romero, 2016; Vessuri, 1997):

- Globalization.
- Professors and students are integrating and utilizing new technologies for educational purposes, which has been exacerbated by the recent pandemic.
- The increasing introduction of accreditation and certification procedures as tools for the continuous improvement and development of institutions, their teaching staff and their various academic offerings.

- The increasing demands from our bosses and leaders to present research findings in indexed journals, congresses, books or book chapters.
- The absence or lack of institutional support for competitive funding for basic and applied research projects in the region in the Social Sciences in general and in Communication and Public Relations specifically.
- The presence or absence of economic incentives for scientific publications, the excess of research articles and results that few read and practically no one is interested in, the presence or absence of a clear framework and criteria that facilitate or encourage career advancement and professional teaching.
- The existence of a greater number of professionals in the field of Communication or other areas of education with postgraduate degrees (master's or doctorate) in Communication and Public Relations or Corporate or Strategic Communication in universities in Latin America or other countries, especially American and European, who are trained and called to replace research on the subject, etc. All of these are certainly factors that influence the what and the how of Latin American research on Public Relations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Of the total number of academic articles published between 2000 and October 1, 2023 (n=3050) in *Public Relations Review* (PRR, n=1898), *Corporate Communications* (CC, n=745) and *Journal of Public Relations Research* (JPRR, n=407), – this study identified those articles that were related to Latin America (n=39), regardless of their topic or country of origin. The articles were then subjected to an in-depth review using a content analysis based on a predetermined set of criteria or categories. The selection of these journals was based on the criteria for bibliographic studies proposed by Ki and colleagues (2023) and Ivanitskaya and Erzikova (2023). They highlight these journals because they publish continuously during the study period (2000-2023), have a blind peer-review policy and are indexed in WoS and Scopus.

From the total number of articles published, those related to Latinos and Latin America or some of its countries were identified, whether by thematic content or country of origin. This collection was then subjected to a content analysis by category. Editorials, letters to the editor, reviews and commentaries on articles and books, biographies and possible academic announcements of other kinds were excluded.

The categories analyzed were:

1. Journal name
2. Volume
3. Number
4. Year
5. Pages
6. Title
7. Author(s)
8. Author's/authors' affiliation
9. Author's/authors' faculty or department
10. Country where the author or authors university or institution is located
11. Keywords, present only from 2004 on in PRR and CCIJ, unregistered in JPRR
12. Objectives, using a double classification to determine the degree of complexity of the studies, whether by each criterion separately or together:
  - a. By type (Hernández et al., 2010):
    - i. descriptive
    - ii. correlational
    - iii. causal
  - b. By complexity (Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956):
    - i. know
    - ii. understand
    - iii. apply
    - iv. analyze
    - v. summarize
    - vi. evaluate
13. Hypothesis, also with a double classification to investigate the complexity of the hypotheses formulated:
  - a. Degree of complexity (Méndez, 1998):
    - i. first degree
    - ii. second degree
    - iii. third degree

- b. Type (Hernández et al., 2010):
  - i. descriptive
  - ii. difference between groups
  - iii. correlation
  - iv. causal
14. Research questions
15. Methodologies, that could be:
  - a. qualitative
  - b. quantitative
  - c. mixed
  - d. experimental
  - e. theoretical-bibliographic
16. Type, that could be:
  - a. descriptive
  - b. explicative
  - c. exploratory
  - d. mixed
  - e. experimental
  - f. theoretical-bibliographic
17. Techniques, that could be:
  - a. surveys
  - b. interviews
  - c. focus groups
  - d. case studies
  - e. life history
  - f. content analysis
  - g. textual or discourse analysis
  - h. theoretical- bibliographical analysis,
  - i. experimental or quasi experimental
18. Results
19. Conclusions
20. Topics identified from a combination of two thematic classifications: Public Relations Division of the International Communication Association -ICA-PRD-, (45 terms) and Public Relations Society of America -PRSA- (44 terms), resulting in a total of 65 topics to choose from.



21. Information graphics that define their absence or presence, scope and element.
- a. photo
  - b. design
  - c. photo-design
  - d. photo montage
  - e. infographic
  - f. graph
  - g. table
  - h. pictography
  - i. other
22. Type of investigation, that could be

- a. introspective
- b. practical
- c. theoretical

These categories were organized in a database using Excel and SPSS.

Once the preliminary analysis was completed, the authors conducted a second, independent review to verify or correct (if necessary) the insertion of the previously identified data. Any differences in criteria were resolved through discussion and mutual agreement, comparing the analysis and resolving differences through discussion with a higher degree of intersubjectivity. Due to the small sample size, this was more practical.

## RESULTS

### **RQ1. What is the status of research related to or originating from Latin America in articles published in PRR, CC and JPRR between 2000 and 2023?**

The analysis was divided over the almost five-year periods of this century, with the three journals showing a trend of increase in the number of publications (table 1). Between 2000 and 2023, the number of publications of Public Relations Review increased from 168 articles in the first five-year period to 361 in the second, 508 in the third, 500 in the fourth and 361 in the last (still in progress and not finalized). There was a similar growth in articles published on Latin America over the same period: from one in the first five-year period, five in the second, nine in the third, four in the fourth and nine in the last (although it is still possible that this number will continue to rise). In the case of Corporate Communications, the number of publications is very low and tends to be stable. However, there has been a significant increase in publications on Latin America since 2021. In the case of the Journal of Public Relations Research, the number of publications remains low

and stable in the first three five-year periods. In the meantime, there have been no more publications on Latin America since 2014.

The revised articles were listed with identifying information to recognize which journal they belonged to, the publication date, title, and number of pages. The complete list can be found in table 2.

Period	PRR		CC		JPRR	
	Total	L. America	Total	L. America	Total	L. America
2000-2004	168	1	134	1	66	2
2005-2009	361	5	134	1	96	1
2010-2014	508	9	122	0	111	1
2015-2019	500	4	174	0	79	0
2020-2023	361	9	181	5	55	0
TOTAL	1898	28	745	7	407	4

**Table 1. Total number of articles compared to the total number of articles on Latin America in PRR, CC and JPRR 2000-2023**

Source: Own elaboration.

N	Journal	Vol.	Issue	Year	Author(s)	Title	Pages
1	PRR	29	3	2003	Juan Carlos Molleda & Andréia Athaydes	<i>Public relations licensing in Brazil: Evolutions and the view of professionals</i>	9
2	PRR	31	1	2005	Juan Carlos Molleda & Ana María Suárez	<i>Challenges in Colombia for public relations professionals: a qualitative assessment of the economic and political environments</i>	9
3	PRR	31	1	2005	Melissa A. Johnson	<i>Five decades of Mexican public relations in the United States: from propaganda to strategic counsel</i>	10
4	PRR	32	2	2006	Juan Carlos Molleda & Angeles Moreno	<i>Transitional socioeconomic and political environments of public relations in Mexico</i>	6
5	PRR	35	1	2009	Karina Penalzoa de Brooks & Damion Waymer	<i>Public relations and strategic issues management challenges in Venezuela: A discourse analysis of Crystallex International Corporation in Las Cristinas</i>	9

Table 2 - continues ►

6	PRR	35	4	2009	Christine Daymon & Caroline Hodges	<i>Researching the occupational culture of public relations in Mexico</i>	5
7	PRR	36	2	2010	Eileen M. Searson & Melissa A. Johnson	<i>Transparency laws and interactive public relations: An analysis of Latin American government Web sites</i>	7
8	PRR	37	4	2011	Claudia Mellado & Folker Hanush	<i>Comparing professional identities, attitudes, and views in public communication: A study of Chilean journalists and public relations practitioners</i>	8
9	PRR	38	3	2012	Claudia Mellado & Sergio Barría	<i>Development of professional roles in the practice of public relations in Chile</i>	8
10	PRR	38	4	2012	Caroline Hodges & Janice Denegri Knott	<i>Transforming the city: The potential for urban ethnographies of PR The case of Latin America</i>	12
11	PRR	39	1	2013	Maria De Moya & Rajul Jain	<i>When tourists are your "friends": Exploring the brand personality of Mexico and Brazil on Facebook</i>	7
12	PRR	39	1	2013	Vanessa Bravo, Juan Carlos Molleda, Andrés Felipe Giraldo Dávila & Luis Horacio Botero	<i>Testing Cross-National Conflict Shifting theory: An analysis of Chiquita Brands' transnational crisis in Colombia</i>	3
13	PRR	39	5	2013	Angela Preciado Hoyos	<i>The role of public relations in corporate social responsibility programs in the Colombian electricity sector</i>	3
14	PRR	40	1	2014	Nathaly Aya Pastrana & Krishnamurthy Sriramesh	<i>Corporate Social Responsibility: Perceptions and practices among SMEs in Colombia</i>	11
15	PRR	40	5	2014	Maria Del Mar Gálvez Rodríguez, Carmen Caba Pérez & Manuel López Godoy	<i>Facebook: A new communication strategy for non-profit organizations in Colombia</i>	3
16	PRR	43	1	2017	Danny Moss, Fraser Likely, Krishnamurthy Sriramesh & Maria Aparecida Ferrari	<i>Structure of the public relations/ communication department: Key findings from a global study</i>	11
17	PRR	43	2	2017	Ángela Preciado Hoyos, Adriana Marcela Nivia Flórez & Juan Pablo Correales Rivas	<i>The strategic orientation of communications consulting firms in Colombia</i>	11

Table 2 - continues ►

18	PRR	43	5	2017	Juan Carlos Molleda, Angeles Moreno & Cristina Navarro	<i>Professionalization of public relations in Latin America: A longitudinal comparative study</i>	10
19	PRR	44	2	2018	Maria del Mar Gálvez Rodríguez, Alejandro Sáez Martín, Manuela García Tabuyo & Carmen Caba Pérez	<i>Exploring dialogic strategies in social media for fostering citizens interactions with Latin American local governments</i>	12
20	PRR	46	2	2020	Cristina Navarro, Angeles Moreno, Juan Carlos Molleda, Nadia Khalil & Piet Verhoeven	<i>The challenge of new gatekeepers for public relations. A comparative analysis of the role of social media influencers for European and Latin American professionals</i>	11
21	PRR	46	4	2020	Geah Pressgrove, Cristobal Barra & Melissa Janoske	<i>Using STOPS to predict prosocial behavioral intentions: Disentangling the effects of passive and active communicative action</i>	10
22	PRR	47	4	2021	Pablo Miño & Adam J. Saffer	<i>Networks of international public relations production: the case of Latin American organizations connections to U.S agents</i>	12
23	PRR	47	4	2021	Patrick D. Thelen	<i>The status of public relations research addressing Latin America: A content analysis of published articles from 1980 to 2020</i>	10
24	PRR	48	1	2022	Patrick D. Thelen & Alejandro Formanchuk	<i>Culture and internal communication in Chile: Linking ethical organizational culture, transparent communication, and employee advocacy</i>	12
25	PRR	48	2	2022	Alvaro Elgueta Ruiz & Javier Martínez Ortiz	<i>Public relations in the New Millennium: towards a synoptic view of fifteen years on research in Public Relations Review in the 21st century (2000-2014)</i>	17
26	PRR	48	2	2022	Geah Pressgrove, Cristóbal Barra & Carolyn Kim	<i>Identifying a credible spokesperson for corporate social responsibility initiatives: Findings from a cross-national study</i>	11
27	PRR	49	1	2023	Cen April Yue & Patrick D. Thelen	<i>The state of internal communication in Latin America: an international Delphi study</i>	10
28	PRR	49	5	2023	Ángeles Moreno, Clara Eugenia Argüello González, Noelia Zurro Antón & Andreia Athaydes	<i>The state of public relations research addressing Latin America: Analysis of published articles in the region's official languages between 1980 and 2020</i>	9

Table 2 - continues ►

29	CC	9	2	2004	Roseli Fíguro Paulino	<i>Reception study: the labor world as a communication mediator</i>	14
30	CC	16	3	2010	Eraldo Carneiro, Marcos André Costa & Mario Mendes Neto	<i>Petrobras' study of publics: a step towards achieving the company's strategic vision for 2020</i>	12
31	CC	25	1	2020	Ivana Monnard & Krishnamurthy Sriramesh	<i>Public relations for peacebuilding: case study from Colombia</i>	19
32	CC	25	2	2020	Angela Preciado-Hoyos	<i>Strategic communication practices by consultants in Colombia</i>	16
33	CC	26	5	2021	Paul Capriotti, Ileana Zeler & Andrea Oliveira	<i>Assessing dialogic features of corporate pages on Facebook in Latin American companies</i>	16
34	CC	28	2	2023	Luis M. Romero-Rodríguez & Bárbara Castillo-Abdul	<i>Digitalization of Corporate Communications: a multi-stakeholder approach</i>	4
35	CC	28	2	2023	Refael Ravina-Ripoll, Esthela Galvan-Vela, Deisy Milena Sorzano-Rodríguez & Missael Ruíz-Corrales	<i>Mapping intrapreneurship through the dimensions of happiness at work and internal communication</i>	19
36	JPRR	14	1	2002	Derina R. Holtzhausen & Rosina Voto	<i>Resistance from the margins: the postmodern Public Relations practitioner as Organizational Activist</i>	28
37	JPRR	16	4	2004	Juan Carlos Molleda & Mary Ann Ferguson	<i>Public Relations roles in Brazil: Hierarchy Eclipses Gender Differences</i>	24
38	JPRR	20	1	2008	Juan Carlos Molleda	<i>Contextualized Qualitative Research in Venezuela: Coercive Isomorphic Pressures of the Socioeconomic and Political Environments on Public Relations Practices</i>	22
39	JPRR	26	1	2014	Qi Wang, Lan Ni & Maria De la Flor	<i>An Intercultural Competence Model of Strategic Public Relations Management in the Peru Mining Industry Context</i>	22

**Table 2. Identification of the journal, volume, number, year, authors, title and number**

*Source: Own elaboration.*

## **RQ2. What are the topics or subjects of the articles mentioned between 2000 and 2023?**

As far as the most frequently analyzed topics in the publications are concerned, 28 topics related to the ICA and PRSA thesauri were identified. The top topics are Internal Communications (n=8), Strategic Communications and Social Media

(n=5), Data Analysis and Public Relations Consulting (n=4), Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethics, Government, Research and Public Relations (n=3), and Public Affairs, Communications – as a Discipline, Corporate Communications, Case Studies, Crisis Management, Reputation Management, Measurement and Evaluation, Social Communications and Community Relations Media (n=2). The remaining eight topics were only discovered once (1).

### **RQ3. Who are the authors publishing academic research on Latin America or one of its countries in the journals analyzed between 2000 and 2023?**

The 39 articles were written by a total of 68 authors (27 men and 41 women). The majority of the articles (64.10%) have one or two authors, while 35.90% have three or more authors. More specifically, 15.38% (n=6) were authored by one author, 48.72% (n=19) by two authors, 20.51% (n=8) by three authors, 12.82% (n=5) by four authors, and 2.56% (n=1) by five or more authors.

The authors with the most publications are Juan Carlos Molleda (8), Ángeles Moreno (4), Ángela Preciado-Hoyos, Krishnamurthy Srirameh and Patrick D. Thelen (3), Andréia Athaydes, Carmen Caba Pérez, Caroline Hodges, Claudia Mellado, Cristina Navarro, Cristobal Barra, Geah Pressgrove and Melissa A. Johnson (2). The remaining authors have submitted 1 publication.

In terms of authorship, three situations can be observed: 1) sole author; 2) lead author (leader of a group) and 3) co-author (member of a group with a lead author). Juan Carlos Molleda, the most prolific author in this analysis, is the main author of six of his eight published articles and co-author of the remaining two. The second most prolific author, Ángeles Moreno, is the main author of one article and co-author of three articles. Ángela Preciado-Hoyos has published two articles as sole author and one as lead author. Patrick D. Thelen has published one article as sole author, one as lead author and one as co-author. And finally, Krishnamurthy Srirameh appears in all of his articles as co-author. The remaining authors are distributed across the three possible categories.

### **RQ4. What methods are used to research the articles that refer to or originate from Latin America?**

In terms of methodology, 38.46% (n=15) of the articles on or from Latin America are quantitative, 28.21% (n=11) are qualitative, 25.64% (n=10) are mixed – qualitative and quantitative – and 7.69% (n=3) are theoretical-bibliographical analyzes.

Regarding the type of research, 41.03% of the articles (n=16) are descriptive-explanatory research, 28.21% (n=11) are purely descriptive research, and 12.82% (n=5) are purely explanatory research, 7.69% (n=3) were theoretical-bibliographical analyzes, 5.13% (n=2) were descriptive-exploratory studies, 2.56% (n=1) were experimental studies and 2.56% (n=1) were purely exploratory studies.

Finally, in terms of the techniques used, six of the quantitative studies used content analysis, six surveys, two surveys with multivariable analysis and one survey with multivariable analysis and segmentation. The qualitative studies used five semi-structured interviews, two content analyzes, one case study with an ethnographic study, one case study with a content analysis, one semi-structured interview, one survey and one Delphi method. In the mixed studies, four interviews with surveys, two content analyzes, one content analysis with a survey, one content analysis with a case study, one semi-structured interview with a survey and a focus group and one semi-structured interview with a survey and a discourse analysis were conducted. Finally, there were three theoretical-bibliographical analyzes.

### **RQ5. What are the results and conclusions of the studies mentioned?**

The articles were classified according to the focus of the study and then reviewed for common aspects. In this sense, according to the original classification by Ferguson (1984), then adopted by Sallot and colleagues (2003) and later used by Sisco and colleagues (2011), the articles can be classified as 1) introspective, 2) practical, or 3) theoretical, or a combination thereof, among others. In our case, we found purely practical (n=22), practical and theoretical (n=7), theoretical-introspective (n=5), purely introspective (n=2), practical-introspective (n=2), and purely theoretical (n=1).

The purely introspective studies (articles 23 and 27) consist of a bibliometric study on the status of scientific publications on Public Relations at regional level and a Delphi study on the status of Internal Communications in Latin America. The bibliometric study concluded that publications in Latin America are limited due to the language barrier. Research conducted in official languages such as Spanish and Portuguese do not have the same impact as studies published in English, as they have less influence than the average indices such as JCR and SJR. This idiomatic factor can be explained by the high concentration of articles in Brazilian and Colombian universities (Thelen, 2021). The Delphi study on Internal Communication concludes that its influence has increased in the last ten years and has been favored by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is not a significant field of study at the universities that offer Public Relations, even though it is a developing field in organizations.

As for the studies with a purely practical orientation or application (articles 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35 and 36), cases of local and national professional realities are documented, considering the legal framework, the existence and application of professional rules or ethical codes, the degree of autonomy of professionals according to the type of company or organization in which they work and the surrounding communities. These studies focus on the



perspectives of Public Relations professionals reporting on their experiences in the field and how the rules and characteristics of their work environment positively or negatively influence their degree of autonomy or decision-making. In general, the studies conclude with practical projections and proposed solutions to the identified realities, taking into account the state of control of the communication media and the different types of academic training.

The only study with a purely theoretical orientation was article 34, an analysis of WoS publications related to the digitalization process of jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study concluded that research articles on telecommuting increased exponentially during confinement and documents the organizations that enabled these changes permanently by expanding space and time management options.

The introspective and practical studies (articles 37 and 38) present local case studies that have been reviewed from a practical perspective. Legal and ethical aspects as well as the professional status of Public Relations professionals in Brazil and Venezuela were examined. In the Brazilian case, the professionals were compared according to gender and hierarchical position. The results show that there is no difference in roles between men and women in the upper hierarchical positions in the organizations studied. However, the differentiation is accentuated in the lower positions of the organizations, showing that women's roles are preferably associated with employee welfare, while men have roles associated with harmonization in State organizations, community welfare and ethics and social responsibility. In the Venezuelan case, it was found that professionals tend to censor themselves so as not to cause problems in the country's existing unstable political and social environment. The study concludes that more planning and care is needed to visualize future scenarios in order to ally with communities and reduce social pressure.

The results of the introspective and theoretical studies (1, 16, 18, 25 and 28) mainly show the professionalization process, new trends in management and studies on research trends aimed at finding out how these new theories are taken up by companies and organizations. In most cases, the findings are based on in-depth interviews and surveys of managers and workers who responded based on propositions and assumptions from a theoretical perspective and could give an idea of the adaptation to new ideas such as gender parity, social responsibility and professional development through postgraduate studies and certifications. The conclusions are highly localized and vary depending on the country in which the study was conducted, showing that interests differ depending on the professional, ethical and legal context. The trend studies highlight the themes and theories explored in scientific publications at a regional and global level, allowing the identification of trends in the articles.



Finally, the results of the practical and theoretical studies (2, 3, 21, 24, 26, 33 and 39) show how the practical applications of the new theories are addressed in each case. Articles 2 and 3 analyze the need for professional licensing in Public Relations and how the roles of professionals have evolved over time, based on the analysis of laws and the application of theories of Public Relations and Strategic Communication. They conclude that the evolution of these concepts has not been adopted in the profession, which is mainly focused on public affairs management and press management. However, there are signs of improvement in those organizations that have placed an emphasis on strategic Communication. Articles 21, 24, 26 and 33 have revised specific strategies for engaging with the public, including influencers and social media, appealing to principles of social responsibility, transparency and outward speech strategies. In Article 39, a multivariable analysis model was used to determine the qualities a Public Relations professional should have in order to intervene at a cross-cultural level. This model was validated and found to be sound, with the conclusion that it can be used for future research on cross-cultural studies.

#### **RQ6. What are the contributions and challenges of Latin American Public Relations research in 24 years of academic publications in PRR, CC and JPRR?**

Our findings on contributions and challenges show that there is a need to increase the quantity and diversity of publications on Public Relations in the subcontinent, both thematically and geographically, and to elaborate, disseminate and legitimize distinct theories that are more appropriate to the sociocultural and political context of the area under study. Although there is an extensive academic production in the field, published in regionally indexed journals and in the official languages of Latin America (Moreno et al., 2023), in the case of mainstream journals such as those analyzed in this study, publication is practically nil (compared to total publication), possibly due to language barriers or a lack of access to more prestigious citations such as JCR or SJR. From a critical perspective, we can therefore conclude that while the contributions made so far are necessary and represent important progress, they are sparse and limited in scope, reinforcing the idea that Latin America remains one of the least researched areas in the world in our field (Jain et al, 2014), that there is a gap in research (Yue & Thelen, 2023), and that Public Relations theory and practice are dominated by North American and European concepts and trends (Morton & Lin, 1995; L'Etang 2008a, 2008b; Culbertson & Shen, 2013; Davidson, 2015, among others).

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

Regarding the state of research in the field of Public Relations, of the 3050 articles published, only 39 deal with Latin America or one of its countries (1.29%).

Although there has been an increase in the general volume of publications, it cannot be confirmed that publications on the region are following this trend, as their relative value is extremely low. Latin America is practically absent from the scientific journals surveyed. In other words, the level of research dealing with Latin America or originating from Latin America is poor in the three journals examined. This result is to be expected given the studies by Angel and colleagues (2017) and Jain and colleagues (2014).

The topics identified can be linked to the priorities identified by Watson (2008), so it can be argued that the topics examined do not deviate greatly from global research trends.

As for the authors, they are in some way related to the region. Juan Carlos Molleda (8) works in the United States but is from Venezuela; Ángeles Moreno (4) is Spanish but has published with Latin American authors – as have the other authors who have no connection to the region, and Ángela Preciado-Hoyos (3) is Colombian. In other works, the limited number of authors corresponds to the writing examined.

As for the methods used, there are no experimental studies. The most commonly used techniques are content analysis, surveys and interviews, which shows a certain methodological intersubjectivity and triangulation.

As far as projection is concerned, it is possible to enrich this analysis by including doctoral theses, congress reports, books or book chapters, and other journals.

### **Study limitations**

The main limitation of our study is the very small sample size, as only three journals were included (PRR, CCIJ and JPRR). To get a more complete picture, perhaps the next step would be to identify all Communication and Public Relations journals that have published an article in our field about Latin America or one of its countries, as well as books or book chapters and presentations at various congresses organized each year.

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