



Racism, sexism, classism and lookism in the Peruvian television comedy programs*

Racismo, sexismo, clasismo y lookismo en los programas cómicos de la televisión peruana

Rubén Darío Alania Contreras**, Cryst Marynes Pecho Reyes***, Zayuri Karim Gutiérrez Gala****, Daniela Isabel Dayan Ortega Revolo*****

Received: June 24, 2019.

Accepted: February 17, 2020.

Cite this:

Alania, R.D. et al. (2020). Racism, sexism, classism and lookism in the Peruvian television comedy programs. *Espiraless. Revista multidisciplinaria de investigación científica*, 4(33), 18-27.

* Original article derived from the research project entitled: "Racism, sexism, classism and lookism in the comedy programs of Peruvian television." Funding entity: Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú, held between December 2018 to September 2019.

** PhD in Education. Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú, Huancayo, Perú.
E-mail: ralania@uncp.edu.pe
ORCID: 0000-0003-4303-1037

Google Scholar

*** Master in Public Management. Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú, Huancayo, Perú.
E-mail: cpecho@uncp.edu.pe
ORCID: 0000-0002-1562-1489

Google Scholar

**** Bachelor of Communication Sciences. Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú, Huancayo, Perú.
E-mail: zgutierrez@continental.edu.pe
ORCID: 0000-0002-2881-081X

Google Scholar

***** Student of Communication Sciences. Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú, Huancayo, Perú.
E-mail: danisarev@hotmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-2586-5556

Google Scholar

Abstract

With discriminatory subtlety, the television media in Peru tend to highlight the country's social or ethnic differences. Comedy programs are the ones that most resort to such forms, as a common resource for easy laughter. The aim of the research was to determine the level of discriminatory content of Peruvian TV comedy programs. The study, of simple descriptive design, had as sample 24 editions of two programs broadcasted at a national level, released between April and June 2019. The Discriminatory Content Analysis Sheet, designed for this research, was used as a tool. It was found out that discriminatory content occupies 51.6 % of the comedy programs studied, with the predominance of direct messages and with hierarchical and heterophobic nature; in addition, the content is related to the ethnic group or socioeconomic status of the character they discriminate against. The research concluded that there is a high level of discriminatory content in Peruvian TV comedy programs; the most frequent is the racist and classist content.

Key words: Racism, sexism, classism, lookism, discrimination, comedy sketches.

Resumen

Con sutileza discriminatoria, los medios televisivos en el Perú tienen la tendencia de remarcar las diferencias sociales o étnicas del país. Los programas cómicos son los que más apelan a esas formas como común recurso para la risa fácil. El objetivo de esta investigación fue el de determinar el nivel de contenidos discriminatorios de los programas cómicos de la televisión peruana. El estudio de diseño descriptivo simple tuvo como muestra 24 emisiones de dos programas de emisión nacional, difundidos entre abril y junio de 2019. Como instrumento se aplicó la ficha de análisis de contenidos discriminatorios, diseñado para la investigación. Se halló que los contenidos discriminatorios ocupan el 51,6 % de los programas cómicos estudiados, predominando los mensajes directos y con carácter jerárquico y heterofóbico; además los contenidos están relacionados con el grupo étnico o nivel socioeconómico del personaje al que discriminan. La investigación concluyó que existe un alto nivel de contenidos discriminatorios en los programas cómicos de la televisión peruana, siendo los más frecuentes los contenidos racistas y clasistas.

Palabras clave: racismo, sexismo, clasismo, aspectismo, discriminación, comedia de *sketches*.

Introduction

The media have assumed the role of dynamizing agent within today's culture, being the main instructor of lifestyles, aspirations and values in the new generations. Discrimination through the media occurs in a process based on motives such as ethnicity, economic position, social status, sexual orientation and others, building stereotypes that, when disseminated by the media, are received in the collective imaginary.

Racism, sexism and classism are recurrent cultural phenomena. Cerda (2004), maintains that, in Latin American countries, racial prejudice commonly takes the form of class prejudice, with the division of classes corresponding to the division of races or ethnic groups, this close relationship with color prejudice being it is because in advance it is thought that an Indian or a black belongs to the lower class, which is why in several countries money is laundered. Bastide (as cited in Cerda, 2004), affirms that in South America, skin color is more a class prejudice than a race prejudice. According to the Fowks (2018), in a study carried out in Peru, "28% of people attributed discrimination to their skin color, 20% believed that it was due to their income level, and 17% expressed that the cause was his facial or physical features."

The racial classification of the human being is ideological or aesthetic, not a scientific truth: Races do not really exist. Despite this, racial discrimination is a common fact in all ethnic groups, becoming racial prejudice is a cultural issue that occurs even within the same group (Parra, 2014). Classism is analogous to racism; it differs from it in that it is based on socioeconomic situation or status.

Sexism is the discriminatory attitude due to sex or gender differences and promotes stereotypes and social roles that establish the differences; lookism, is discrimination based on the physical aspect of the person based on aesthetic reasons, unlike other discriminatory forms, it can be an involuntary and automatic reaction, which may obey unconscious aspirations of beauty canons validated by advertising and the media (Torres, 2019).

In Peru, day by day it is observed that television discourse has become a constant source of discriminatory content, which implicitly or explicitly appeals to racism, sexism or classism; contents that actually reflect prejudices fed through many centuries in Peruvian society and are cyclically fed back by the mass media, which legitimize their coexistence in society. According to Ardito (2014): "Despite the fact that the white population with European features is a minority in our country, it has a marked predominance on Peruvian television" (p. 8), and it is they who are presented as models of beauty.

Always controversial, the comedy-type comedy sketches, for several decades have led the television rating, however, looking back over the years, it is observed that the comedy resources remain the same, in them prejudices, stereotypes and discriminatory forms are directly or subjectively concealed in humor. They are the formats that are perhaps most loaded with discriminatory content, which are subjectively covered in the joke; its language and images denote through parodies or symbolic speeches, stereotypes and prejudices that are deeply rooted in Peruvian society, displaying an empathic and often violent humor.

Due to their content, these programs have been included in the so-called "junk television" group by various civil society groups, between February and March 2015, they organized massive marches at the national level, calling for the implementation of regulators that limit the excesses of television content. Today these controversial programs are still on the screen, leading the tune and with a broad economic return that justifies the support of the pragmatic television broadcaster.

There is a need to improve television content, due to its strong educational and cultural role; however, the path of censorship is unsustainable, anachronistic and undemocratic. In this context, self-regulation through education at all levels is presented as an adequate alternative that develops media competence in citizenship (European Commission, 2009). This competence is understood as the ability to perceive, analyze and enjoy the power of the messages, images, stimuli and sounds that are perceived by the media.

The discriminatory, racist, sexist, classist and look-based contents of the comedy programs are the subject of study; subjectively concealed in humor, they reflect the aspirations and biases of the collective imagination of Peruvians.

According to Loewenstein (as cited in Parra, 2014), the human brain is designed to form prejudices, stereotypes and other cognitive biases because it filters the large amount of information it receives. Almost always unconsciously and immediately. However, when these biases are institutionalized, legitimized and violently practiced, preventing an adequate coexistence of individuals within a society, limiting their aspirations; a worrying social problem is generated, which could deeply undermine the social structures and destiny of a country.

In this sense, the research sought to answer the problem: What is the level of discriminatory content of comedy programs on Peruvian television? Aiming to determine the level of discriminatory content of comedy programs on Peruvian television.

Taking as background the studies by Cerda (2004) carried out in Chile who concluded that racism in Chile has been mainly hierarchical and heterophobic; Alarcón and Torres (2016), who concluded that the stereotypes of the Andean woman from the humorous programs of Peruvian television are negative basically due to the physical appearance and the intellectual appearance that is made of them; Cassano (2014) concluded that in the Peruvian soap opera, the female representation of the character Natacha, version 1970 and 2010, gender systems operate in different ways in different times and societies.

The study aims to be a starting point, from which proposals for the development of media competencies are prepared in the face of the mass media and promote inclusion, tolerance and healthy coexistence in society.

Materials and Methods

Research according to its purpose was basic, according to Ñaupas et al. (2014), because it serves as a foundation for applied research and is essential for the development of science. The level is descriptive, according to Sánchez and Reyes (2006). The research design was non-experimental, transectional, simple descriptive, according to Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2014).

The population was made up of broadcasts in 2019 of the comedy sketches “El Wasap de JB” of Latina, produced by Jorge Benavides and “Oe... ¿Es en serio?” of ATV, produced by Carlos Álvarez, both broadcast on Saturdays between 8:00 p. m. and 10:00 p. m.

The sample consisted of 24 broadcasts of the comedy sketches, 12 of each of them, broadcasted between April to June 2019.

As a research technique, systematic observation was applied and as a data collection instrument, the Discriminatory Content Analysis Sheet was designed for this investigation. The instrument aims to measure and analyze discriminatory in comedy television programs, consists of 21 items, which address four dimensions: racism, sexism, classism and lookism.

The validity of the instrument was evaluated through the judgment of nine experts, as a result an Aiken V coefficient of agreement of 0.9 was obtained, which meant high validity.

Results

Frequency distribution of the information obtained

Table 1. Frequency of discriminatory content

Discriminatory content	Frequency (%)		
	Wasap de JB	Oe... ¿Es en serio?	Total
Racism	11.9 %	14.8 %	13.35 %
Sexism	12.7 %	16.2 %	14.45 %
Classism	13.6 %	12.5 %	13.05 %
Lookism	9.3 %	12.2 %	10.75 %
Total	47.5 %	55.7 %	51.6 %

Note: Level of discriminatory content: low: 0 to 25, average: 26 to 50, high: 51 to 75, very high: 75 to 100.

Source: author's own elaboration.

Table 1 show that the total accumulated discriminatory content frequency in percentages is 51.6 %, which places it at a high level. It is also observed that the dimensions of the discriminatory contents have similar frequency, with sexism being more predominant (14.45 %), and lookism being less frequent (10.75 %). It is also observed that the program with the highest discriminatory content is Oe... ¿Es en serio?

Table 2. Characteristic of the discriminatory message

Intentionality of the message	Frequency (%)		
	Wasap de JB	Oe... ¿Es en serio?	Total
Direct	18.45 %	26.75 %	22.6 %
Offensive	6.7 %	11.82 %	9.6 %
Ambiguos	22.35 %	17.13 %	19.74 %

Source: author's own elaboration.

Table 2 show that direct discriminatory messages are the most frequent (22.65 %), especially in the program “Oe... ¿Es en serio?” Ambiguous discriminatory messages have a similar frequency (19.74 %), this type of message being more frequent in the program “El Wasap de JB.”

Table 3. Particularity of the discriminated character with whom the discriminatory content is related

Character peculiarity	Frequency (%)		
	Wasap de JB	Oe... ¿Es en serio?	Total
Ethnic group	10.32 %	9.8 %	10.06 %
Language	5.7 %	5.3 %	5.45 %
Socioeconomic level	10.6 %	8.5 %	9.55 %
Intellect	4.3 %	7.2 %	5.75 %
Lifestyle	7.9 %	3.02 %	3.66 %
Ugliness	1.3 %	6.5 %	3.9 %
Body	4.78 %	5.4 %	5.09 %
Manners	3.5 %	5.3 %	4.4 %
Age	5.5 %	6.4 %	5.95 %
Sexual choice	5.6 %	5.9 %	5.75 %
Others	3.4 %	5.2 %	4.3 %

Source: author's own elaboration.

Table 3 show that the particularity of the character to whom the discriminatory content is directed is predominantly related to the ethnic group (22.65 %) and the socio-economic level they represent (9.55 %).

Discussion

The results of the investigation reveal that there is a high content of discriminatory messages in the comedy programs of Peruvian television. It can be deduced that discriminatory forms such as racism, sexism, classism and lookism have a hierarchical and heterophobic nature, since differences are evaluated inferiorly and negatively, thus coinciding with the findings of Cerda (2004) in Chile, who also found those characteristics. Racism and classism have a continuous relationship in the analyzed contents, reinforcing long-standing stereotypes with negative representations of the physical and intellectual aspect of the Andean population. Sexism is another discriminative form that also occurs on a social continuum, relegating in many of the sequences of the programs to the role of a complementary woman or sexual object, homophobic contents that are usually the most offensive must also be considered in this discriminatory way. Lookism or discrimination by physical appearance increasingly appeals to more direct messages and is related to racism and classism, confronting in many of the stories to Caucasian characters of high class or socio-economic level and physically attractive, against half-blood, indigenous or black people, of low socioeconomic level, naive or careerist and physically grotesque (Bruce, 2007).

The problem is not only due to the irresponsible attitude of some comedians; to understand the phenomenon, it is necessary to deepen into the dynamics of the social structure and ideas. The results obtained call for reflection on social imagery, through which differences in Peru are perceived, and the reinforcing role played by the mass media, where truths and aspirations are encrypted in comedy. The discriminatory contents of comedy programs are actually ideological representations that reflect the social unconscious of a weak national identity and the common representation of repressed elements; the backgrounds of this social character go back centuries, through events and social conflicts that the post-truth of official history has underestimated.

In Peru, 84 % of the media are centralized in Lima and in the hands of only three groups, Latina and ATV are two of them. Taking as a reference to what was stated by Thompson (1984), comedy sketches in Peru reinforce the status quo that is sustained in an ethnocentric social structure, where the differences of those with the least influence are prohibited. According to Adorno (1975), class consciousness is reflected in classism; in the capacity to explicitly or hiddenly show one's own condition and that of another class, it is generally understood from the dominant class towards the dominated and not the other way around.

Gramsci (2017), warned that the media, which have achieved cultural hegemony, justify the social, political and economic status quo, as if it were natural, inevitable and beneficial; attitude that is instrumentalized by the agreements and interdependence relations that the media maintain with the economic and political powers. With this hegemony, the media system has the capacity to fix senses and ideologies, since it selects what should be seen, read and

heard by the public (De Moraes, 2015); in this sense, discriminatory contents contain latent messages that, in tacit consensus between the media and the audience, acquire ideological significance that is nourished by differences, polarizing the idealized with the discriminated. The media choose the social actors that represent them.

Ardito (2014), when studying discrimination in Peru's programs, recommends that the media have an ethical committee that prevents the transmission of programs that humiliate people because of their physical appearance, place of origin, surname, sexual orientation or social class. The Peruvian state, through the Radio and Television Advisory Council, has implemented in 2016 the Observatory of Diversity in Media; and in 2017 the observatory Alert against Racism, through the Ministry of Culture. Both have had valuable contributions and important actions; however, as the present investigation shows, regarding comedy programs, discriminatory contents are still very present on Peruvian television, hidden in the rhetoric of humor.

In the current context, determined by the hegemony of the media, "media discourses are committed to the selective control of information, opinion and value judgments that circulate socially" (De Moraes, 2015). There is undeniable the need for an education appropriate to the new media contexts, since there is an inability to reason the media content in a large part of the population, leaving them to shape aspirations, values and intellect.

Is it possible then a democratized social reduction, regarding tolerance with ethnic, social, sexual differences and representations of beauty?

It is a possibility that can be achieved starting from the conciliation of interests between the media, power groups and civil society; Peru is a diverse country and that diversity is its greatest possibility for development. Turning off the TV, blocking the website or censoring the media are not the solution, only the development of media competence in the population is sustainable, this implies training in the person, abilities to interact critically and creatively with the media, both consuming as producing content (Mateus, 2018).

Conclusions

There is a high level of discriminatory content in the comedy programs of Peruvian television. The discriminatory contents of the comedy programs on Peruvian television are predominantly racist and classist, which is at a high level. The level of the sexist and look-based content of the comedy programs of Peruvian television is average. The discriminatory messages of the comedy programs of the Peruvian television are commonly direct.

The discriminatory contents of the comedy programs on Peruvian television are hierarchical and heterophobic. The discriminatory contents are more frequently related to the ethnic group and socio-economic level that the discriminated characters represent.

References

- Adorno, T. (1975). *Crítica de la cultura y de la sociedad*. Madrid, España: Alianza.
- Alarcón, L. y Torres, K. (2016). Cholas de pantalla: estereotipos de la mujer andina en los programas de humor de la televisión peruana. *Revista Científica Institucional. Tzhoecoen*, 8(2), 1-16.
- Ardito, W. (2014). Discriminación y programas de televisión. *Alerta contra el racismo*. Retrieved of <https://alertacontraelracismo.pe/sites/default/files/archivos/investigacion/07-consultoria-discriminacion-programas-tv-wilfredo-ardito.pdf>.
- Bruce, J. (2007). *Nos habíamos choleado tanto: psicoanálisis y racismo*. Lima, Perú: Universidad de San Martín de Porres.
- Cassano, G. (2014). *Natacha: de la domesticidad a la agencia femenina. Representaciones de lo femenino en la telenovela peruana* (graduate thesis). Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Perú.
- Cerda, U. (2004). *Razas, racismo, clases sociales y clasismo: revisión teórica y desarrollo en Chile* (graduate thesis). Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile.
- European Commission. (2009). Commission recommendation of 20 August 21011 on media literacy in the digital environment for a more competitive audiovisual and content industry and an inclusive knowledge society. *Official Journal of the European Union*, l(227), 9-12.

- De Moraes, D. (2015). *Seis cuestiones para entender la hegemonía mediática. América Latina en movimiento*. Retrieved of <https://www.alainet.org/es/active/80425>.
- Fowks, J. (29 de septiembre de 2018). El racismo y el clasismo en Perú, ante el espejo. *El País*.
- Gramsci, A. (2017). *Escritos: Antología*. Madrid, España: Alianza Editorial.
- Hernández, R., Fernández, C. y Baptista, P. (2014). *Metodología de la investigación*. Ciudad de México, México: McGraw-Hill.
- Mateus, J. (2018). ¿Qué es la competencia mediática? *EducaRed*. Retrieved of <https://educared.fundaciontelefonica.com.pe/competencia/>.
- Ñaupas, H. et al. (2014). *Metodología de la investigación*. Bogotá, Colombia: Ediciones de la U.
- Parra, S. (2014). No me gusta tu cara pero no se por qué. *Yorokubo*. Retrieved of <https://www.yorokubu.es/tu-no-me-gustas/>.
- Sánchez, H. y Reyes, C. (2006). *Metodología y diseño en la investigación científica*. Lima, Perú: Universidad Ricardo Palma.
- Thompson, E. (1984). *Tradición, revuelta y consciencia de clase*. Ciudad de México, México: Crítica.
- Torres, A. (2019). Aspectismo: la discriminación por el aspecto físico. *Psicología y Mente*. Retrieved of <https://psicologiymente.com/social/aspectismo>.