Deanship of Scientific Research

The Influence of the Media on the Perception of Endophobia

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Abstract

Objectives: The research aims to explain how media influences the perception of endophobia and contribute to construction of negative stereotypes.

Methods: This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining structured surveys conducted with 136 participants from diverse demographic groups in Ecuador to assess awareness and perceptions of endophobia, along with a qualitative content analysis of media outputs to examine framing and narratives. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS v.29 for statistical analysis and thematic analysis to understand media influence on endophobia and the formation of stereotypes.

Results: The study's results indicate a limited awareness of the term "endophobia," particularly among younger and less educated individuals. Furthermore, the media's role in exacerbating endophobia was highlighted, with significant differences in perception based on gender, age, and education level. analysis revealed that language used by media significantly affects public perception, particularly among younger individuals, and there is a general dissatisfaction with the quality of journalism regarding endophobia. The findings underscore the need for more responsible and ethical media practices, increased educational efforts to raise awareness about endophobia, and promotion of media literacy to help individuals critically assess media content.

Conclusions: The study concludes that addressing the representation of endophobia in the media is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and cohesive society. Future research should expand the sample size and geographic scope, conduct longitudinal studies, and adopt interdisciplinary approaches to further understand and mitigate the impact of media on endophobia.

Keywords: Endophobia; media influence; stereotype construction; media literacy

تأثير الإعلام على تصوّر الفوبيا الداخلية

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ملخّص

الأهداف: يهدف البحث إلى فهم كيفية تأثير وسائل الإعلام على تصوّر الفوبيا الداخلية والمساهمة في بناء الصور النمطية السلبية.

المنهجية: تعتمد هذه الدراسة على نهج مختلط الأساليب، يجمع بين الاستطلاعات المنظمة التي أجريت مع(136) مشاركاً من مجموعات ديموغرافية متنوعة في الإكوادور لتقييم الوعي وتصورات الفوبيا الداخلية، إلى جانب تحليل نوعي لمخرجات وسائل الإعلام لفحص الإطارات والروايات. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج IBM SPSS الإصدار 29 للتحليل الإحصائي والتحليل الموضوعي لفهم تأثير وسائل الإعلام على الفوبيا الداخلية، وتشكيل الصور النمطية.

النتائج: تشير نتائج الدراسة إلى وجود وعي محدود بمصطلح "الفوبيا الداخلية"، لا سيما بين الأفراد الأصغر سناً وذوي المستويات التعليمية المنخفضة. علاوة على ذلك، تم تسليط الضوء على دور وسائل الإعلام في تفاقم الفوبيا الداخلية، مع وجود اختلافات كبيرة في التصورات استناداً إلى الجنس، العمر، ومستوى التعليم. وكشف التحليل أن اللغة المستخدمة من قبل وسائل الإعلام تؤثر بشكل كبير على التصور العام، خاصة بين الأفراد الأصغر سناً، وهناك عدم رضا عام عن جودة الصحافة المتعلقة بالفوبيا الداخلية. تؤكد النتائج على الحاجة إلى ممارسات إعلامية أكثر مسؤولية وأخلاقية، وزيادة الجهود التعليمية لرفع الوعي بالفوبيا الداخلية، وتعزيز الوعي الإعلامي لمساعدة الأفراد في تقييم المحتوى الإعلامي بشكل نقدي.

الخلاصة: خلصت الدراسة إلى أن معالجة تمثيل الفوبيا الداخلية في وسائل الإعلام أمر بالغ الأهمية لتعزيز مجتمع أكثر شمولاً وتماسكًا. ينبغي على الأبحاث المستقبلية توسيع حجم العينة والنطاق الجغرافي، وإجراء دراسات طولية، واعتماد نهج متعدد التخصصات لفهم تأثير وسائل الإعلام على الفوبيا الداخلية والحد منه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأندوفوبيا، تأثير الإعلام، بناء الصور النمطية، محو الأمية الإعلامية.

INTRODUCTION

Endophobia, a neologism understood as the rejection and aversion towards individuals belonging to one's own social group (Benitez, 2011), has gained relevance in communication and sociology studies due to its increasing visibility in the media. This issue not only reflects internal tensions within specific communities (Grinchpun, 2023) but is also exacerbated and perpetuated by media discourses that often construct and reinforce negative stereotypes (Wozniak & MacNeill, 2020). In this context, it is crucial to understand how media influence the perception of endophobia and contribute to the construction of these stereotypes. Endophobia is manifested in various societal contexts and affects marginalized communities uniquely. In labor markets, for example, research indicates that endophobic tendencies may arise among ethnic minorities or groups with a shared socio-economic status, exacerbating internal divisions and limiting solidarity. For instance, a study on South African mineworkers reveals that unionized workers exhibit both in-group favoritism (endophilia) and endophobia towards non-unionized, ethnically diverse colleagues. This tendency, intensified by precarious working conditions, underscores how economic vulnerability can heighten intragroup biases, reinforcing social hierarchies and reducing collective agency within marginalized groups (Ravetti et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the prevalence of endophobia has been documented among communities experiencing socioeconomic pressures, particularly when limited resources are at stake. A study on Argentine and Chilean populations in Neuquén, Argentina, illustrates how anti-Chilean sentiment persisted despite reduced immigration rates, driven by an imagined threat to economic stability among lower-income Argentine communities. This hostility towards Chilean migrants, often viewed as competitors for scarce social services and jobs, highlights how endophobia can deepen inter-community distrust, perpetuating exclusionary attitudes even when members of the same socioeconomic group share these pressures (Cerutti & González, 2010). In educational settings, endophobic sentiments are also observed, impacting the experiences of minority students in schools. A field experiment conducted in Dutch universities showed that students from minority backgrounds often face differential treatment within their own ethnic or racial groups, fueled by perceived competition over academic resources or perceived societal status. This intra-group discrimination has lasting effects, contributing to lower self-esteem and reduced access to supportive peer networks, which are crucial for academic and social development. Addressing endophobia thus requires a nuanced approach, integrating both policy changes and community-building efforts to mitigate internalized biases and promote inclusive, equitable interactions (Feld, 2014).

The presence of endophobia in the media poses challenges to social cohesion and collective identity (Hernández, 2019). By reproducing and amplifying negative stereotypes, the media can deepen internal divisions and exacerbate rejection towards members of one's own community (Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2015). This dynamic not only affects individual perception but also has significant implications in terms of social exclusion and marginalization (Jamil & Retis, 2023). The central question that arises is: How do the media influence the perception of endophobia and the construction of negative stereotypes within a social group? In what ways do the media contribute to the perception of endophobia in different communities? How is the media representation of endophobia related to forms of social exclusion and marginalization? Ultimately, the influence of the media on the perception of endophobia and the construction of stereotypes is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, which this investigation will address by determining the effect of the media on the perpetuation of prejudices and social exclusion.

At its core, endophobia presents an intrinsic paradox: the rejection of those who share a common identity. This internal aversion is particularly problematic because it erodes internal cohesion and undermines community solidarity (Cupples et al., 2021). These manifestations have complex roots, including the internalization of negative stereotypes promoted by society at large and, worryingly, by the media themselves.

The role of the media in perpetuating endophobia cannot be underestimated. Through the selection of news, framing of events, and repetition of stigmatizing narratives, the media can reinforce internal prejudices (Entman, 1993; Parrott & Eckhart, 2021). This phenomenon is particularly notable in marginalized communities where mainstream media have a disproportionate influence on the formation of collective self-image.

Media representation of endophobia is also closely linked to processes of social exclusion and marginalization. By

amplifying negative stereotypes, the media not only affect the public perception of these groups but also legitimize and normalize exclusion practices. This is evident in contexts where endophobia intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as racism or classism. The negative portrayal of certain groups in the media can lead to the justification of policies and practices that perpetuate marginalization, such as lack of access to resources and opportunities (Fleras, 2011). Additionally, the psychological effects of media-driven endophobia should not be underestimated. Constant exposure to negative messages can lead to the internalization of these stereotypes, affecting the self-esteem and identity of individuals within the affected group. This process, known as internalized stigmatization, can have devastating consequences for mental health and well-being, exacerbating feelings of alienation and rejection (Crocker & Major, 1989).

Understanding endophobia in the context of the media requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines communication theory with studies in sociology, psychology, and political science. Researchers must examine not only media content but also the structures and power dynamics that allow these narratives to proliferate. This involves analyzing who controls the media, what underlying agendas exist, and how news is constructed, making it crucial to consider the role of new technologies and social networks, which can amplify or challenge traditional mass media narratives (Castells, 2009). In conclusion, media-driven endophobia represents a critical concern for social cohesion and justice. Investigating this phenomenon requires a holistic approach that examines both media content and the structural processes that support them.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Stereotypes in the media can shape perceptions about members of out-groups (Appel & Weber, 2021). This dynamic contributes to the perpetuation of inequalities, affecting both self-identification and public perception of individuals in the affected groups (Durante & Fiske, 2017). Media representations play a crucial role in the construction and perpetuation of these stereotypes (Gilmour, 2015). Moreover, media stereotypes can have an intersectional impact, encompassing multiple dimensions such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Bécares and Priest's (2015) research demonstrated that awareness of social stereotypes can affect the emotions of young people, especially when these identities intersect in complex ways. This highlights the need to address inequalities from a multidimensional perspective, recognizing that different forms of disadvantage can intertwine and reinforce each other (Hermes, 2010).

Ethnic stereotypes can be defined as simplified and generalized beliefs about a particular ethnic group, which can be either negative or positive but often do not reflect the diversity and complexity of the group, being overrepresented in the media (Scharrer & Ramasubramanian, 2015). As evidenced, characters representing ethnic minorities on television and in films are often portrayed in stereotypical roles, reinforcing negative perceptions and limiting opportunities for positive representation (Signorielli, 2009; Tukachinsky et al., 2015). For example, research in Serbia found that ethnic minorities are frequently represented negatively in tabloid media (Simeunović-Patić, 2021). In Mexico, television content can generate and reinforce stereotypes about indigenous populations, leading to prejudiced attitudes among viewers (Muñiz et al., 2013). In Germany, Media stereotypes of "Roma" people in Germany perpetuate an antigypsyist ideology that portrays them as a fundamentally different and socially deviant group (End, 2014). Ultimately, stereotypes are simplified generalizations that the media often use to categorize and represent social groups. The abundance of information in modern media paradoxically contributes to the use of stereotypes of ethnic minorities, as consumers rely on simplification to process the influx of impressions (Schmolke, 1990). These groups are often depicted through a negative lens, highlighting aspects such as criminality, lack of education, or dependence on social assistance (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). These representations not only affect the external perception of the group but can also be internalized, contributing to a negative self-view among group members, manifesting as endophobia. Ultimately, this construction manifests through the repetition of narratives that reinforce negative stereotypes, thus contributing to internal exclusion within social groups (Reny & Manzano, 2016). In summary, media reporting on minority groups is often based on prejudice and stereotypes, rather than promoting their rights and better coexistence (Dusić & Mesić, 2023)

Endophobia has been conceptualized by various authors in different contexts. According to Ruiz (2017), endophobia is a form of rejection towards those who share identity characteristics with one's own group but are perceived as deviant or

inferior, implying an aversion towards the cultural, social, or personal elements of a group to which one belongs. In summary, the term is used to describe a phenomenon of self-discrimination or self-hatred where individuals internalize negative prejudices and stereotypes about their own group identity (Martin & Nakayama, 2010).

In media, endophobia can be perpetuated in negative stereotypes that depict certain subgroups as problematic, deviant, or inferior (Cohen, 2017). These simplified and often negative representations can reinforce existing prejudices and legitimize discriminatory attitudes. Contemporary research on media stereotypes has shown how these can influence public perception and self-identification of individuals within the affected groups. Dixon and Linz (2000) expressed that ethnic minorities are often disproportionately represented as criminals in television news programs, which reinforces negative perceptions both in the general audience and within the minority groups themselves. This phenomenon not only affects social perception but can be particularly pronounced in high-pressure contexts, such as exams, where concern about confirming a negative stereotype can undermine the confidence and performance of affected students (Sirin, 2005). Some research has expanded the understanding of endophobia, emphasizing its impact on social cohesion and individuals' mental health. Specifically, these actions can lead to self-contempt that translates into self-esteem and emotional well-being problems, a situation evident in communities that have been historically marginalized and continue to face unfavorable media representations (Buchanan, 2011). Similarly, constant exposure to negative media narratives can exacerbate feelings of alienation and self-stigmatization among ethnic minority youth (Tigau, 2020). These stereotypes can have far-reaching consequences, influencing public opinion and potentially encouraging violent protests in some regions (Sutkutė, 2019). Media professionals bear a significant responsibility in shaping these representations and their impact on society.

In the context of endophobia, the media can play a crucial role in constructing an inclusive narrative. For example, initiatives such as positive visibility campaigns for ethnic and cultural minorities have proven effective in reducing prejudice and improving the self-image of these groups. According to a study by Smith and Choueiti (2019), the inclusion of diverse characters in positive and complex roles in films and television series can challenge negative stereotypes and promote greater acceptance and appreciation of diversity within society.

Despite the multitude of studies on media stereotypes and their global impacts, there is a gap in the scientific literature on endophobia in Ecuador. To date, no studies have explored the notion of endophobia in the Ecuadorian context or examined its intersection with media communication. This research gap underscores the importance and relevance of the current study, which seeks to investigate how media representations contribute to endophobia in Ecuador. Understanding this relationship is a first step towards developing strategies to counteract the negative influences of the media and promote a more inclusive and cohesive society. Addressing these gaps will provide insights into the unique cultural and social dynamics in Ecuador, contributing to the broader discourse on media representation and social identity. The findings could inform policymakers, educators, and media professionals about effective interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of media stereotypes and foster a more positive and inclusive media landscape.

For the following research, the general objective was established as: To analyze the perception of the role of the media concerning endophobia. To achieve this, the following specific objectives were presented: a. To review the level of audience knowledge about the term endophobia, b. To examine the role of the media in exacerbating endophobia, c. To review the audience's appreciation of the language related to endophobia used in the media, d. To examine the perception of the quality of journalism in interregional news concerning endophobia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to explore the role of media in shaping perceptions of endophobia. Mixed-method research is a research design in which researchers collect, analyze and combine, integrate or connect quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a multiphase research program (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The quantitative component involved structured surveys administered to a representative sample of the Ecuadorian population, stratified by age, education, gender, and socioeconomic status, to assess levels of awareness, experiences, and attitudes towards endophobia. The survey data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as multivariate analysis and

logistic regression to identify patterns and correlations among different demographic groups.

Complementing this, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on various media outputs, including news articles, television broadcasts, and social media content, to examine how endophobia is framed and communicated. The analysis focused on identifying recurring themes, narrative structures, and linguistic choices that may influence public perception. A coding framework was developed to categorize and interpret the data systematically, allowing for triangulation with the quantitative findings. Additionally, interviews with media professionals provided contextual insights into editorial decisions and practices related to endophobia coverage. This dual approach offers a holistic view of how media representation contributes to the construction and perpetuation of stereotypes, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying the media's influence on endophobia.

Population and Samples

For the present research, a simple random sampling design was implemented in Ecuador to ensure the representativeness and validity of the obtained results. The margin of error and the confidence level are fundamental indicators in this process. In this study, a margin of error of 5% was established, which implies that the survey results may vary by 5% more or less from the actual value in the population. This margin is commonly accepted in social research and allows for an adequate balance between precision and available resources.

Additionally, a 95% confidence level was selected, reflecting the certainty that the results obtained from the sample accurately represent the results that would be obtained if a full census of the population were conducted. A 95% confidence level is standard in social science studies and ensures a high probability that the constructed confidence intervals contain the true values of the population. The sample selection process was carried out using simple random sampling. This method ensures that each individual in the population has the same probability of being selected, minimizing biases and ensuring the representativeness of the sample. The target population of the survey included all Ecuadorian citizens over the age of 18, encompassing a diversity in terms of age, gender, educational level, and geographical region.

Where nn is the sample size, ZZ is the z-value corresponding to the selected confidence level (1.96 for a 95% confidence level), pp is the estimated proportion of the population possessing the characteristic of interest (assumed to be 0.5 to maximize the sample size), and ee is the tolerated margin of error (0.05). Applying these values, an initial calculation of approximately 384 individuals was obtained.

In this study, an initial simple random sample of 384 participants was drawn to ensure representativeness across various demographic groups within the Ecuadorian population. However, due to logistical constraints and resource limitations, a subset of 136 individuals from the original sample was ultimately used for detailed analysis. This selection was based on accessibility and availability, hence resulting in an available sample rather than strictly adhering to simple random sampling principles.

The decision to proceed with this smaller sample size of 136 participants was made to balance the study's methodological rigor with practical considerations, ensuring that the data collection remained feasible while still achieving a representative scope. The margin of error for this sample was set at 5%, with a 95% confidence level, which is widely accepted in social science research as providing reliable and generalizable results. The demographic breakdown included diverse age groups, gender, educational backgrounds, and geographical regions, which collectively supported a comprehensive analysis of perceptions of endophobia.

Research Instrument

For the determination of the data collection instrument in this exploratory study, the survey was chosen as the primary tool. This choice is based on the survey's ability to collect structured and detailed information from a large group of participants, thus facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the addressed topic. The designed survey contains a total of 13 questions, subdivided into three specific sections: demographic data, conceptualization of endophobia, and media and their relationship with endophobia.

The first section of the survey focuses on sociodemographic data and comprises 4 questions that inquire about the participants' age, gender, area of residence (rural or urban), and educational level. These questions are essential to understand the origin of the data and generate a clear picture of the sampling, providing critical information to contextualize the results and analyze possible variations according to demographic characteristics. The second section addresses the conceptualization of endophobia through 3 specific questions. These questions, designed in a dichotomous format, aim to analyze the perception and existence of this type of discrimination among participants. Using dichotomous questions facilitates the quantification and statistical analysis of the responses, allowing the identification of patterns and trends in the conceptualization of endophobia. The last section of the survey pertains to the role of the media and consists of 6 questions. These questions explore various aspects related to journalistic ethics, the quality of information, media coverage, representation, and the language used in the media. This approach allows for evaluating how the media influence the perception and dissemination of endophobia, providing a comprehensive view of their impact on society.

In assessing perceptions of endophobia and its representation within Ecuador, the survey addresses critical questions that explore awareness, discrimination, and media influence. Respondents are first asked if they have prior familiarity with the term "endophobia" and their views on the prevalence of discrimination across different regions within the country. Additionally, questions examine whether individuals have witnessed acts of regional discrimination and which specific regions are most affected. The survey also delves into the media's role, questioning whether it exacerbates endophobia and if journalism ethics education in universities sufficiently covers this issue. Respondents are prompted to evaluate the quality of journalism on interregional conflicts, as well as rate traditional Ecuadorian media's coverage of endophobia. Further, the survey seeks opinions on the representation of ethnic and regional minorities in decision-making roles within the media and the perceived impact of media language on public attitudes toward endophobia. In addition to the 4 sociodemographic questions, the questions related to the theme of endophobia and its intersection of media representation and regional discrimination in Ecuador are the follows:

1. Have you heard the term "endophobia" before this survey?
2. Do you believe there is discrimination within Ecuador against people from different regions of the country?
3. Have you witnessed acts of discrimination against people from certain regions of Ecuador?
4. Which region of Ecuador faces the most discrimination from other regions?
5. Do you believe the media has a role in exacerbating endophobia in Ecuador?
6. Do you believe that journalism ethics education in universities adequately addresses the topic of endophobia?
7. How do you evaluate the quality of journalism behind reports on interregional conflicts?
8. How would you rate the coverage of issues related to endophobia in traditional Ecuadorian media?
9. To what extent do you believe the language used in the media affects public perception of endophobia?

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 10% of the total sample, i.e., with 13 participants. This pilot test allowed for identifying and correcting potential errors or ambiguities in the questions, thereby ensuring the clarity and precision of the questionnaire. Subsequently, the instrument was validated by calculating Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, obtaining a value of 0.82, indicating adequate internal consistency of the questionnaire and confirming its suitability for application in the study. Additionally, a content validity analysis was conducted by consulting a panel of experts on the subject. These experts evaluated each item of the survey in terms of relevance, clarity, and representativeness, providing a content validity index (CVI) of 0.90, which suggests high pertinence and validity of the instrument.

The use of the survey with 13 questions, structured into three specific sections, provides an appropriate tool for exploring the topic of endophobia and its relationship with the media in Ecuador. The inclusion of a pilot test and the validation of the instrument reinforce the reliability of the collected data, allowing for valid and representative results for the analysis of the phenomenon under study.

Collection of Data

For data collection, a period of one month was established, from February 25, 2024, to March 25, 2024. During this interval, responses to the questionnaire designed for the research were received. The questionnaire was distributed and kept open-access through the Microsoft Forms platform, facilitating its dissemination and accessibility for participants. The target population was defined as Ecuadorian citizens, ensuring that the sample included a balanced representation in terms of gender (H=64) and (M=72), thus achieving an equitable proportion that allows for a more comprehensive and representative evaluation of the results.

The choice of Microsoft Forms as the platform for administering the questionnaire was due to several reasons. Firstly, the ease of use and accessibility of the platform allow for wide distribution and efficient collection of responses. Secondly, the platform offers integrated tools for preliminary data analysis, facilitating the process of collecting and managing the obtained information. It is important to note that, as an exploratory study, a large sample was not required. Instead, the goal was to gather a sufficient number of participants to obtain significant results that would allow for identifying trends and generating hypotheses for more extensive future research. The obtained sample of 135 people was considered adequate for the objectives of this exploratory study, providing a sufficient basis for analyzing the collected data.

Additionally, measures were implemented to ensure the quality of the collected data. Periodic reminders were sent to participants to ensure an adequate response rate, and responses were monitored to identify possible inconsistencies or response patterns that might indicate a lack of seriousness in participation. This allowed for maintaining quality control throughout the entire data collection process.

Data Analysis

The data extraction and collection were conducted using the Microsoft Forms platform, and subsequently, the data were exported to Microsoft Excel and analyzed with IBM SPSS® v.29. This process facilitated the compilation of audience perceptions concerning the study's three specific objectives: the conceptualization of the neologism endophobia, and the evaluation of communicational elements such as language, quality, and media coverage.

To address these objectives, various descriptive statistical analyses were applied, providing both an overview and a detailed insight into the collected data. Among the descriptive analyses conducted were measures of central tendency of the responses, offering an average value of respondents' perceptions in each section of the questionnaire and their symmetry, particularly useful in cases of skewed distributions. The standard deviation was calculated to measure the dispersion of responses from the mean, indicating the degree of variability or consistency in respondents' perceptions. Variance was used as an additional measure of dispersion, providing information on the variability of responses and allowing for a more detailed analysis of data homogeneity.

Once these descriptive analyses were obtained, the research hypothesis was evaluated through various correlation analyses. These analyses allowed for exploring the relationship between different study variables, providing a deeper understanding of how communicational elements influence the perception of endophobia. Among the correlation analyses used was Pearson's correlation coefficient, which measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. In this study, it was used to evaluate the correlation between the perception of information quality and the conceptualization of endophobia. Given that some variables may not follow a normal distribution, Spearman's correlation coefficient, a non-parametric measure, was applied. This analysis was useful for evaluating the relationship between the respondents' area of residence and their perception of the language used in the media.

Additionally, a linear regression analysis was conducted to model the relationship between a dependent variable—such as the perception of endophobia—and one or more independent variables—such as media coverage and journalistic ethics. This analysis enabled the identification and quantification of the impact of different communicational factors on the perception of endophobia. A canonical correlation analysis was also employed to examine the relationships between two sets of variables. In this case, the relationship between the set of demographic variables (age, gender, area of residence, educational level) and the set of variables related to the perception of endophobia and the media was explored.

RESULTS

Endophobia awareness

The study assessed participants' prior knowledge of the term "endophobia." The results revealed that 72.6% of the sample (n=98) had not heard the term before the survey, while 27.4% (n=37) had some prior knowledge. These findings indicate a generally limited awareness of the term within the studied population. Analyzing the data by gender, it was observed that 73.2% of women (n=52 out of 71) were unfamiliar with the term, compared to 71.9% of men (n=46 out of 64). Conversely, 26.8% of women (n=19 out of 71) and 28.1% of men (n=18 out of 64) reported having previously heard the term "endophobia." This slight difference between genders suggests a similar trend in the lack of knowledge about the term.

Regarding age, the results show that younger participants (18-24 years) had a greater lack of knowledge about the term "endophobia" compared to older groups, particularly those over 45 years old, where all participants were familiar with the term. In urban areas, 74.6% of participants did not know the term, while 25.4% did. In rural areas, 61.9% (n=13 out of 21) were unfamiliar with the term, while 38.1% (n=8 out of 21) were familiar. The data indicate that urban residents had a greater lack of knowledge about the term compared to rural residents. This difference could be influenced by various variables, such as access to information and media exposure.

Analyzing the data by educational level revealed significant variability: 55.6% of participants with postgraduate education knew the term, compared to 44.4% who did not. Among participants with secondary education, 84.6% were unfamiliar with the term, while 15.4% were familiar. Among participants with tertiary education, 77.8% did not know the term, while 22.2% did. These findings suggest that a higher educational level is associated with greater knowledge of the term "endophobia."

Overall, the results demonstrate a limited and uneven knowledge of the term "endophobia" among different demographic groups. Most participants, especially the younger ones and those residing in urban areas, are not familiar with the term.

Table 1. Awareness of the term 'Endophobia'

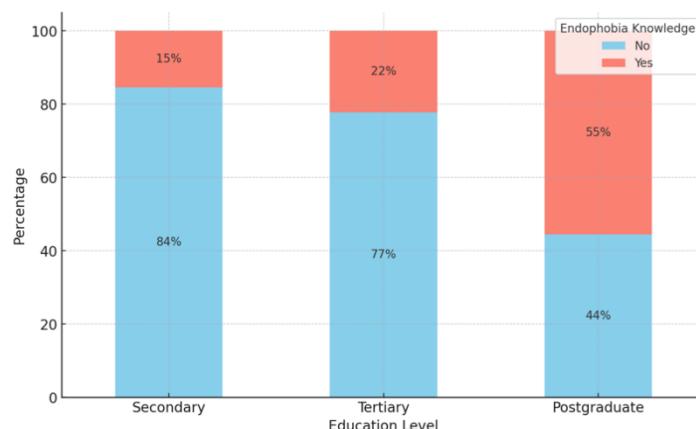| Demographic	Aware (%)	Not Aware (%)
Gender (Female)	26.8	73.2
Gender (Male)	28.1	71.9
Age 18-24	0.0	100.0
Age 25-34	27.5	72.5
Age 35-44	25.0	75.0
Age 45-54	100.0	0.0
Age 55+	100.0	0.0
Urban Residents	25.4	74.6
Rural Residents	38.1	61.9
Secondary Education	15.4	84.6
Tertiary Education	22.2	77.8
Postgraduate Education	55.6	44.4

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Figure1. Endophobia awareness in educational level

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Specifically, there is a significant negative correlation between the educational level and the knowledge of the term "endophobia" of -0.271 (p=0.0015), indicating that as the educational level of participants decreases, the likelihood of not having heard the term "endophobia" before the survey increases (Figure 1). This means that respondents with lower educational levels tend not to know the term, whereas those with higher educational levels are more likely to have heard of it. Statistically, this coefficient indicates a moderate inverse relationship, sufficient to consider that educational level influences the knowledge of the term. The p-value confirms that this correlation is not due to chance, implying that higher education programs are more inclined to include topics such as endophobia in their curriculum, or that individuals with higher educational levels have more access to information sources where these terms are discussed. This may reflect a gap in access to information and education, highlighting the importance of improving equity in these aspects.

The study's findings reveal limited awareness of the term "endophobia" across Ecuador's demographic groups, with younger participants and those with lower educational levels displaying the least familiarity. This result aligns with Ruiz (2017), who discusses the prevalence of self-directed bias but emphasizes that understanding of such terms often lacks visibility in mainstream discourse. By comparison, our findings suggest an additional layer: that endophobia awareness varies significantly with education and age, pointing to potential gaps in educational and media coverage of complex societal issues. This suggests that audiences may internalize the biases and stereotypes associated with endophobia without explicit awareness of the term itself, reinforcing cycles of exclusion and social division.

The study also found that urban participants had lower awareness than rural residents, which may be attributed to varying levels of media consumption and exposure to inclusive narratives. This differs from findings by Buchanan (2011), who posits that urbanization typically correlates with higher exposure to diverse ideas and thus greater awareness of social issues. In this context, the limited awareness in urban Ecuador points to a need for more inclusive, educational media coverage that reaches all demographic groups, not just rural or marginalized communities.

Role of the Media in the Exacerbation of Endophobia

The data analysis reveals that perceptions of the role of the media in exacerbating endophobia in Ecuador vary according to gender, age, educational level, and area of residence. Among women, 54.3% believe that the media exacerbate endophobia, compared to 62.5% of men. Regarding age, 57.5% of the 18-24 age group consider that the media play an exacerbating role, followed by 60% in the 25-34 age group, and 75% in the 35-44 age group, with a significant decrease in the 45-54 age group and those older than 54. In terms of residence, 59.6% of urban residents believe that the media exacerbate endophobia, compared to 47.6% of rural residents. Regarding educational level, 66.7% of participants with postgraduate education believe in the exacerbating role of the media, followed by 57.7% with secondary education and 55.6% with tertiary education. Men are more critical than women, and young people aged 18-34 are the most likely to

perceive a negative impact of the media, unlike the older age groups. Individuals with higher educational levels, such as those with postgraduate education, show a greater tendency to believe in the exacerbating influence of the media. Additionally, urban residents are more aware of this impact compared to rural residents. These differences underscore the need for specific communication and education strategies to effectively address endophobia among various demographic groups.

There is a significant negative correlation between gender and the perception of the role of the media in exacerbating endophobia, with a correlation coefficient of -0.244 and a p-value of 0.01 (Table 1). This suggests that the gender of the respondents is related to how they perceive the media's impact on this issue. Specifically, men tend to be more critical of the exacerbating influence of the media compared to women. However, the strength of this correlation is not very high, indicating that while there is a relationship, it is not extremely strong.

Table 2. Perception of Media Exacerbating Endophobia

Demographic	Exacerbates (%)
Gender (Female)	54.3
Gender (Male)	62.5
Age 18-24	57.5
Age 25-34	60.0
Age 35-44	75.0
Urban Residents	59.6
Rural Residents	47.6
Secondary Education	57.7
Tertiary Education	55.6
Postgraduate Education	66.7

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Table 3. Gender and Media's Role in Exacerbating Endophobia

Gender	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	No Effect (%)	Yes (%)	Pearson Correlation	p-value
Female	8.6	32.9	4.3	54.3	-0.244	0.01
Male	15.6	18.8	3.1	62.5	-0.244	0.01

Source: Author's own elaboration.

This study's results reveal that media outlets can exacerbate endophobic attitudes, with demographic variables such as age, gender, and education level shaping these perceptions. Men and individuals with higher educational levels are more likely to view media as intensifying endophobia. This finding contrasts with Fleras (2011) who argue that marginalized groups uniformly perceive heightened endophobia due to media bias, whereas this study suggests varied responses based on demographic nuances. This differential impact highlights the need for nuanced media policies that address specific audience segments' concerns.

Impact of Media Language on Endophobia

The statistical analysis conducted to explore the relationship between the perception of how media language influences public views on endophobia and various demographic variables indicates both the presence and absence of correlations. Notably, there is no significant correlation between this perception and age (p = 0.372) or place of residence (p = 0.980), suggesting that these factors do not significantly impact how individuals perceive the role of media language in shaping public opinions on endophobia. In contrast, a significant correlation was identified for gender (p = 0.018) and educational level (p = 0.014). The gender-based correlation reveals that females are more likely than males to perceive media language as significantly affecting public attitudes toward endophobia. Similarly, the correlation with educational level demonstrates

that individuals with higher levels of education, particularly those with tertiary education, tend to perceive a stronger influence of media language on public perception compared to those with lower educational levels. These findings highlight specific demographic groups where the perception of media influence on endophobia is more pronounced, emphasizing the importance of considering gender and education in future research and communication strategies.

For gender, the correlation indicates that females are more likely than males to perceive that the language used in the media significantly affects public attitudes toward endophobia. Descriptively, 62% of female respondents reported that media language influences public perception to a great extent, compared to only 45% of male respondents who shared this view. Conversely, 35% of males considered the effect to be moderate or minimal, while only 23% of females shared this opinion. This suggests a stronger awareness or sensitivity among women regarding the impact of media language on public perceptions of endophobia.

Table 4. Impact of Media Language on Public Attitude towards Endophobia

Demographic	Strong Influence (%)	Moderate or Minimal Influence (%)
Gender (Female)	62	23
Gender (Male)	45	35
Secondary Education	32	43
Tertiary Education	56	18

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Similarly, a significant correlation was found concerning educational level. Respondents with tertiary education (e.g., university degrees) were more likely to perceive a substantial impact of media language on endophobia (56%) compared to those with only secondary education (32%). Furthermore, those with lower educational attainment levels, such as secondary education, were more likely to express uncertainty or view the impact as minimal (43%) compared to their higher-educated counterparts (18%). These findings suggest that higher educational attainment is associated with a greater awareness or acknowledgment of the role of media language in shaping public views on endophobia. This detailed analysis underscores the importance of considering both gender and educational background in understanding public perceptions of media influence on social issues such as endophobia (table 2).
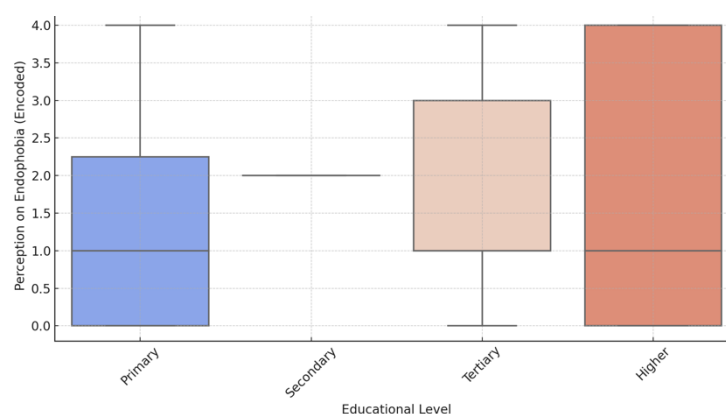

Figure 2. Impact of Educational Level on Perception of Media Language's Influence on Endophobia
Source: Author's own elaboration.

The boxplot visualizes the distribution of perceptions regarding the influence of media language on endophobia across different educational levels, providing insight into the variability and central tendencies within each group. It shows that individuals with tertiary education are more likely to perceive a significant impact of media language on public attitudes toward endophobia, as indicated by the higher median and concentration of responses towards the upper end of the scale. In contrast, those with secondary education exhibit a wider range of perceptions, from strong agreement to neutrality,

suggesting more diverse views within this group. The scatterplot overlay further illustrates the distribution of individual responses, revealing that participants with higher education levels are more consistently aligned in perceiving a strong media influence. This graphical representation reinforces the finding of a statistically significant correlation between educational level and the perception of media language's impact ($p = 0.014$), highlighting that individuals with higher education are more inclined to recognize and agree with the influence of media on public perceptions of endophobia.

The study further indicates that media language significantly influences public perceptions of endophobia, particularly among women and those with higher education levels. These findings support those of Scharrer & Ramasubramanian (2015), who emphasize the critical role of language in shaping stereotypes, but expand on them by revealing that women are more sensitive to endophobic media narratives. Such gendered responses underscore the importance of incorporating gender-sensitive language in media guidelines to mitigate the perpetuation of endophobia (Crocker & Major, 1989).

Quality of Media on Endophobia

The quality of journalism regarding endophobia was evaluated considering the respondents' age, gender, educational level, and area of residence. In terms of age, the predominant group was 18 to 24 years old, representing 54.1% of the respondents. The majority of this group rated the quality of journalism as moderate (60%), while 35% considered it low, and only 5% evaluated it as high. The 25 to 34 age group, which constitutes 33.3% of the sample, showed similar results with 55% rating the quality as moderate, 40% as low, and 5% as high. Respondents aged 35 to 44, representing 5.9% of the respondents, evaluated the quality of journalism with 50% as moderate and the other 50% as low. The smaller groups, 45 to 54 years and over 54 years, which combined make up less than 6% of the sample, evaluated the quality of journalism mostly as low (75%) and moderate (25%).

Regarding gender, women, who constitute 52.6% of the sample, evaluated the quality of journalism as moderate (58%), low (36%), and high (6%). Men, representing 47.4% of the respondents, rated the quality similarly, with 56% considering it moderate, 39% low, and 5% high. In terms of educational level, respondents with tertiary education, who make up 60% of the sample, evaluated the quality of journalism as moderate (57%), low (38%), and high (5%). Those with postgraduate studies (20%) had a slightly more critical perception, with 55% rating it as moderate, 40% as low, and 5% as high. Among those with secondary education (19.3%), 60% considered the quality moderate, 35% low, and 5% high. This minority group (0.7%) rated the quality of journalism mostly as low.

Table 5. Quality of Journalism on Endophobia

Demographic	High Quality (%)	Moderate Quality (%)	Low Quality (%)
Age 18-24	5	60	35
Age 25-34	5	55	40
Age 35-44	0	50	50
Gender (Female)	6	58	36
Gender (Male)	5	56	39
Secondary Education	5	60	35
Tertiary Education	5	57	38
Postgraduate Education	5	55	40

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Regarding the area of residence, the majority of respondents (84.4%) living in urban areas rated the quality of journalism as moderate (58%), low (37%), and high (5%). Rural residents (15.6%) had a somewhat different perception, with 50% considering the quality moderate and 50% low. The majority of respondents in all demographic segments evaluated the quality of journalism regarding endophobia as moderate, followed by a significant proportion who considered it low. The perception of high quality was consistently low across all groups, highlighting a general dissatisfaction with the journalistic coverage of these topics.

Table 6. Variables and journalism quality regarding endophobia.

Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Statistical Significance
Age	-0.097	Not significant
Gender	-0.056	Not significant
Residence Area	0.030	Not significant
Educational Level	0.094	Very low

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The relationship between the perception of journalism quality and demographic variables is generally very weak. Although the educational level shows a positive correlation (0.094), it is very low and not significant (Table 3), indicating that demographic factors such as age, gender, area of residence, and educational level do not significantly influence the perception of journalism quality regarding endophobia.

A general dissatisfaction with the quality of endophobia-related journalism emerged, with participants rating the coverage as moderate or low. This finding resonates with Entman & Rojecki's (2000) critique of mainstream media's portrayal of minorities but underscores a unique context: the Ecuadorian setting reveals a broader, cross-demographic dissatisfaction with journalistic practices, potentially driven by inadequate coverage and ethical lapses. This trend emphasizes the need for quality standards in media to prevent biased portrayals that exacerbate endophobia (Muñiz et al., 2013).

DISCUSSION

The study on endophobia and its representation in the media reveals several critical dynamics in the construction of stereotypes and their impact on social cohesion. Endophobia, defined as the rejection of members of one's own social group, manifests in a complex and multifaceted manner, largely influenced by media discourse. In this regard, it is pertinent to discuss the findings concerning the perception and knowledge of the term endophobia, the role of the media, the impact of media language, and the quality of journalism regarding endophobia.

The research results indicate a limited knowledge of the term "endophobia" among participants. This phenomenon is particularly evident among young people and those with lower educational levels. Only 27.4% of respondents had any prior knowledge of the term, suggesting a notable gap in education and awareness about this issue. This lack of familiarity with the concept of endophobia may be related to the limited media and educational coverage of the topic, which hinders a broader understanding of its implications. It is essential to develop educational programs and awareness campaigns to increase knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon. This would not only help to make endophobia more visible but could also contribute to building a more inclusive and cohesive society.

The research highlights the significant role that media plays in exacerbating endophobia. Most participants perceive that the media amplifies negative stereotypes, consistent with previous studies indicating how the media can legitimize prejudices and exclusionary practices. The perception that the media exacerbates endophobia varies according to the respondents' gender, age, and educational level. Notably, men and young people are more critical of the media's negative impact, which could reflect differences in how different demographics consume and analyze media information. This finding underscores the need to promote more responsible and ethical journalistic practices. The media has the power to significantly influence public perception and, therefore, must take responsibility for representing social groups fairly and accurately.

The language used by the media has a significant impact on the public perception of endophobia. The correlation between age and the perception of the impact of media language suggests that younger individuals are more susceptible to media influence. This highlights the importance of responsible journalism and media literacy to reduce the spread of harmful stereotypes. Stigmatizing language in the news not only perpetuates negative stereotypes but also legitimizes discriminatory attitudes. Constant exposure to negative messages can lead to the internalization of these stereotypes, affecting the self-esteem and identity of individuals within the affected group. This process, known as internalized stigmatization, can have

devastating consequences for people's mental health and well-being, exacerbating feelings of alienation and rejection.

The evaluation of the quality of journalism regarding endophobia shows a general perception that media coverage is moderate or low. This indicates dissatisfaction with how the media addresses this issue, which could be related to the lack of depth and accuracy in the representation of endophobia. Respondents pointed out that the media often resort to simplified and frequently negative representations, reinforcing existing prejudices and legitimizing discriminatory attitudes. Most participants in all demographic segments rated the quality of journalism as moderate, followed by a significant proportion who considered it low. The perception of high quality was consistently low across all groups, highlighting a general dissatisfaction with journalistic coverage of these topics.

The relationship between the perception of the quality of journalism and demographic variables is generally very weak. While educational level shows a positive correlation, it is very low and not significant, indicating that demographic factors such as age, gender, area of residence, and educational level do not significantly influence the perception of the quality of journalism regarding endophobia. This finding suggests that dissatisfaction with media coverage of endophobia is a widespread phenomenon that transcends demographic differences, reinforcing the need to improve journalistic practices in this area.

The results of this study highlight the critical intersection between media communication and social perception of endophobia. The media's influence in perpetuating negative stereotypes underscores the need for a more ethical and responsible approach to media coverage. Additionally, the correlation between educational level and knowledge of endophobia emphasizes the importance of education in promoting a more inclusive society. It is crucial that the media take a proactive role in deconstructing stereotypes and promoting inclusive narratives that reflect the diversity and complexity of social groups.

The study's findings advocate for targeted policy initiatives and media practices that mitigate endophobia's adverse societal effects. Policymakers could develop programs promoting inclusive media content and enhancing media literacy, which would empower audiences to critically assess endophobic stereotypes. In alignment with Appel & Weber (2021), the development of media literacy campaigns would help reduce the internalization of negative stereotypes and encourage audiences to challenge biased representations.

For media organizations, these findings suggest an urgent need to adopt rigorous ethical standards, particularly around language use and audience segmentation. Guidelines for inclusive language and comprehensive representation could help prevent the reinforcement of endophobic attitudes (Wozniak & MacNeill, 2020). Furthermore, training journalists in the social implications of endophobia can encourage more responsible coverage that fosters societal cohesion rather than division.

CONCLUSIONS

The study also reveals the need for greater media literacy among the population. Media literacy not only involves the ability to critically consume media content but also the skill to discern between objective and biased information. Promoting media literacy can help individuals develop a critical view of media content and reduce the internalization of stereotypes. Media literacy campaigns can play a crucial role in mitigating the negative effects of media-driven endophobia, promoting greater understanding and critical analysis of media representations.

Despite the significant contributions of this study, there are some limitations that should be considered. The sample size, although representative, could be expanded in future research to obtain a more accurate and generalizable view of the perception of endophobia in the Ecuadorian population. Additionally, most participants reside in urban areas, which could bias the results. Future research could include a greater representation of rural areas for a more balanced comparison. Moreover, a deeper analysis of specific cases and qualitative studies could enrich the understanding of the phenomenon of endophobia and its various manifestations in different contexts.

In conclusion, the research on endophobia and its representation in the media highlights the importance of ethical and responsible journalism in building a more inclusive and cohesive society. The findings suggest the need for educational programs and awareness campaigns to increase knowledge and understanding of endophobia. Additionally, the importance

of media literacy is emphasized to mitigate the negative effects of media stereotypes and promote a fairer representation of social groups. Future researchers could expand the sample and geographic scope, conduct longitudinal studies, and adopt an interdisciplinary approach for a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon. Recommendations include the development of media literacy campaigns and the implementation of more responsible journalistic practices to address and mitigate the impact of endophobia on society. Ultimately, research on media-driven endophobia provides a solid foundation for future studies and policies aimed at promoting social justice and community cohesion.

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