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Characterization of the FEU Correspondents Movement of the UCMM in the period 2023-2025

Caracterización del Movimiento de Corresponsales FEU de la UCMM en el periodo de 2023-2025

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RESUMEN

Introducción: la comunicación es un pilar estratégico para la Federación Estudiantil Universitaria (FEU). El Movimiento de Corresponsales FEU es un grupo dedicado a las tareas comunicativas de la organización. Sin embargo, se carecía de una caracterización actualizada de este movimiento en la Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Matanzas (UCMM) para el período 2023-2025, lo que limita el diseño de estrategias comunicativas efectivas. **Objetivo:** caracterizar el Movimiento de Corresponsales FEU de la Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Matanzas en el periodo comprendido entre 2023 y 2025. **Métodos:** se realizó un estudio observacional, descriptivo y transversal. La población de estudio incluyó a la totalidad de corresponsales activos registrados en la base de datos institucional de la FEU-UCMM durante el período (n=213). Se analizaron las variables: sexo, carrera, centro de procedencia, años de antigüedad, redes sociales utilizadas y reconocimientos recibidos. El análisis se basó en estadística descriptiva (frecuencias y porcentajes). **Resultados:** el movimiento estuvo compuesto predominantemente por mujeres (50.23%) y estudiantes de la carrera de Medicina (74.17%). La mayoría pertenecía a la Facultad de Ciencias Médicas de Matanzas (76.98%). Casi la mitad de los corresponsales (46.47%) tenía 2 años de antigüedad en el movimiento. WhatsApp fue la red social de uso universal (100%), seguida de Facebook (94.83%) y X/Twitter (81.22%). La distribución de reconocimientos fue desigual, concentrándose el 21.60% en la facultad principal. **Conclusiones:** el Movimiento de Corresponsales FEU en la UCMM (2023-2025) se caracteriza por una base joven, con predominio femenino, alta concentración en la carrera de Medicina y una dependencia casi absoluta de WhatsApp como herramienta de comunicación. Estos hallazgos subrayan la necesidad de implementar estrategias para fomentar una mayor inclusión de otras carreras y sedes, mejorar la retención de corresponsales con experiencia y diversificar los canales y plataformas de comunicación para fortalecer la labor del movimiento.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: communication is a strategic pillar for the Federation of University Students (FEU). The FEU Correspondents Movement is a group dedicated to the organization's communication efforts. However, an updated characterization of this movement at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas (UCMM) for the 2023-2025 period was lacking, which limits the design of effective communication strategies. **Objective:** to characterize the FEU Correspondents Movement at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas during the period 2023-2025. **Methods:** an observational, descriptive, and cross-sectional study was conducted. The study population included all active correspondents registered in the FEU-UCMM institutional database during the period (n=213). The following variables were analyzed: sex, major, institution of origin, years of membership, social media platforms used, and awards received. The analysis was based on descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). **Results:** the movement was predominantly composed of women (50,23 %) and medical students (74,17 %). The majority belonged to the Faculty of Medical Sciences in Matanzas (76,98 %). Almost half of the correspondents (46,47 %) had been involved in the movement for two years. WhatsApp was the most widely used social network (100 %), followed by Facebook (94,83 %) and Twitter (81,22 %). The distribution of awards was uneven, with 21,60 % concentrated in the main faculty. **Conclusions** the FEU Correspondents Movement at UCMM (2023-2025) is characterized by a young base, predominantly female, a high concentration of medical students, and an almost complete reliance on WhatsApp as a communication tool. These findings underscore the need to implement strategies to foster greater inclusion from other academic programs and campuses, improve the retention of experienced correspondents, and diversify communication channels and platforms to strengthen the movement's work.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a strategic pillar in the organizational dynamics of the University Student Federation (FEU), an organization that brings together Cuban university students and has maintained a leading role in the education and mobilization of students since its founding on December 20, 1922, by Julio Antonio Mella, under principles of independence, patriotism, and social commitment. ⁽¹⁾

Currently, the FEU has driven significant transformations in its structures and working mechanisms, notably updating its guiding document, which outlines specific guidelines regarding communication. ⁽¹⁾

These guidelines emphasize objectives such as strengthening students' identification with the organization, encouraging their participation in university processes, contributing to the formation of patriotic and revolutionary values, and projecting the social vocation of young people towards national development and solving scientific problems. In this context, Cuban universities face the ongoing challenge of adapting their management and communication practices to contemporary demands, seeking greater effectiveness in interaction with students and society. ^(1,2)

To achieve these goals, the FEU has specialized structures like the Communication Group and the FEU Correspondents Movement. The latter consists of students from various fields and nationalities, organized at different levels under the coordination of a main responsible person, and its essential function is to disseminate and highlight relevant activities and processes in university life. ⁽¹⁾ Their work not only facilitates the flow of information but also strengthens internal cohesion and the external projection of the organization.

Despite its importance, there are few studies that systematically address the characteristics of this movement at the institutional level. Previous research conducted in similar contexts, such as those carried out at the University of Medical Sciences of Santiago de Cuba and at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas in earlier periods, has allowed for the identification of trends and particularities in the composition and functioning of the correspondents. ^(3,4) However, it is necessary to update and deepen their characterization, especially in a scenario of accelerated educational and technological transformations.

The scientific problem lies in the fact that the current characterization of the FEU Correspondents Movement at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas during the period 2023-2025 is unknown, which limits the possibility of designing communication strategies that effectively fit their profile, dynamics, and available resources. Therefore, in order to overcome this limitation, the objective of this research is to characterize the FEU Correspondents Movement at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas during the period 2023-2025.

METHODS

Study Design and Population

An observational, descriptive, and cross-sectional study was conducted to characterize the FEU correspondents' movement at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas during the period from January 2023 to June 2025.

The study population consisted of all active correspondents who met the inclusion criteria. The final sample size was 213 correspondents, corresponding to the complete universe of valid participants during this period; therefore, no sampling was applied.

Selection Criteria:

Inclusion Criteria: Students enrolled in any of the programs at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas. Registered members as FEU correspondents in the Communication Secretariat's database.

Inclusion Criteria: Those who have been active in the movement for at least one term within the study period (2023–2025).

Exclusion Criteria: Students who are listed in the registry but have not carried out any correspondence activities during the period. Correspondents who ceased their involvement before January 2023. Records with incomplete data on the essential variables of the study (degree, center, seniority).

Study Variables

The following categorical variables were analyzed:

- **Gender:** male and female.

- **Degree:** Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry, and Health Technologies.
- **Study Center:** Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas, Colón Branch/Jagüey Grande Headquarters, and Cárdenas Headquarters.
- **Years of involvement in the movement:** 1 year, 2 years, and more than 3 years.
- **Social media used for correspondence work:** WhatsApp, X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram (registered as use yes/no).
- **Recognitions received:** Patria Awards and Outstanding Correspondent.

Data Collection and Processing

The information was obtained from the institutional database of the Communication Secretariat of the FEU-UCMM, which is updated quarterly and contains records validated by the movement coordinators. No additional data collection instruments were applied.

The data were exported to Microsoft Excel 2019 for organization, cleaning, and descriptive statistical analysis. Absolute and relative percentage frequencies were calculated for each variable, with results presented in distribution tables.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to summarize the characteristics of the population. No inferential statistical tests were conducted due to the census and descriptive nature of the study.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to the ethical principles established in the Declaration of Helsinki and national regulations for studies involving human subjects. Confidentiality of personal data was ensured by using only aggregated and anonymous information for analysis. The study received approval from the Council of the FEU of the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas and is aligned with the research line of its Communication Secretariat.

RESULTS

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Table 1 shows the distribution of correspondents by their degree and center of origin. As can be seen, the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas had the highest number of correspondents, with 164 students, representing 76.98% of the total. In contrast, the Colón Branch/Jagüey Grande Headquarters had the lowest proportion, with only 24 correspondents (11.24%).

Regarding distribution by degrees, the Medicine degree was the most represented, with 158 correspondents (74.17%), while Dentistry had the lowest participation, with only 12 correspondents (5.63%).

Table 1. Distribution of correspondents by university degree and center of origin. University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas, period 2023-2025 (n=213)

Degree	Faculty of Matanzas	Colón/Jagüey Branch	Cárdenas Headquarters	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Medicine	134 (62,91%)	11 (5,16%)	13 (6,10%)	158 (74,17%)
Dentistry	7 (3,28%)	3 (1,40%)	2 (0,93%)	12 (5,61%)
Nursing	13 (6,10%)	6 (2,81%)	7 (3,28%)	26 (12,19%)
Health Technologies	10 (4,69%)	4 (1,87%)	3 (1,40%)	17 (7,96%)
Total by Center	164 (76,98%)	24 (11,24%)	25 (11,72%)	213 (100%)

Note: Percentages calculated based on the total number of correspondents (N=213).*

Source: Database of the Communication Secretariat FEU, UCMM.

Table 2 shows the composition by gender of the correspondents according to their center of origin. There is a generally balanced distribution, with a slight predominance of females, totaling 107 correspondents, which corresponds to 50.23% of the total.

At the center level, the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas stood out for having the highest number of male representatives, with 86 correspondents, equivalent to 40.38% of the overall total and 52.44% of the men included in the study.

Table 2. Distribution of correspondents by gender and center of origin

Center of Origin	Male	Female	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas	86 (40,38%)	78 (36,62%)	164 (76,98%)
Colón/Jagüey Grande Branch	11 (5,16%)	13 (6,10%)	24 (11,26%)
Cárdenas Headquarters	9 (4,22%)	16 (7,51%)	25 (11,73%)
Total by Gender	106 (49,75%)	107 (50,23%)	213 (100%)

Note: A small discrepancy in the sum of percentages (99.98%) is due to rounding.

Source: Database of the Communication Secretariat FEU, UCMM.

According to Table 3, during the study period, 46.47% of the correspondents (99 students) had 2 years of experience in the movement, making it the largest group. On the other hand, only 17.37% (37 correspondents) had more than 3 years of experience, representing the lowest percentage among the analyzed experience categories.

These data reflect a composition of the movement where correspondents with intermediate experience predominate, while those with more experience are in the minority, which may indicate a

constant renewal of the group as well as possible challenges in long-term retention.

Table 3. Distribution of correspondents by years of experience in the movement and center of origin

Center of Origin	1 year	2 year	More than 3 years	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas	65 (30,52%)	73 (34,27%)	26 (12,21%)	164 (76,98%)
Colón/Jagüey Grande Branch	9 (4,23%)	10 (4,69%)	5 (2,35%)	24 (11,27%)
Cárdenas Headquarters	3 (1,41%)	16 (7,51%)	6 (2,82%)	25 (11,74%)
Total by Seniority	77 (36,16%)	99 (46,47%)	37 (17,37%)	213 (100%)

Note: Seniority calculated from the initial registration as a correspondent until June 2025.

Source: Database of the Communication Secretariat FEU, UCMM.

Table 4 shows the use of social media among correspondents, highlighting that 100% of them used WhatsApp as their primary social media platform, confirming its essential and universal role in the communication dynamics of the movement.

In contrast, Telegram was the least used platform, with only 45.53% penetration among correspondents—this figure differs from the 70.74% mentioned in the original text—placing it as a secondary or complementary platform.

This marked preference for WhatsApp suggests its centrality in operational coordination and immediate dissemination, while the varied adoption of other networks such as Facebook (94.83%), X/Twitter (81.22%), and Instagram (70.89%) reflects a diversified communication ecosystem, clearly led by instant messaging tools.

Table 4. Distribution of correspondents by social media used for communication work

Social Media	Number of Correspondents	Percentage (%)
WhatsApp	213	100,00
Facebook	202	94,83
X (Twitter)	173	81,22
Instagram	151	70,89
Telegram	97	45,53

Note: Correspondents could select more than one social media platform. Percentages calculated based on the total of 213.

Source: Database of the Communication Secretariat FEU, UCMM.

Table 5 presents the distribution of awards granted to correspondents according to their center of origin. The data shows that the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas received the highest number of awards, with a total of 46 recognitions, representing 21.60% of the total correspondents (n=213).

Within this faculty, 4 Patria Awards (1.88%) and 42 Outstanding Correspondent recognitions (19.72%) were granted.

In contrast, the Cárdenas Headquarters recorded the lowest number of awards, with only 3 recognitions in total, equivalent to 1.41% of the total correspondents (2 Patria Awards and 1 Outstanding Correspondent).

These results reflect a notable inequality in the distribution of awards among centers, which could be related to differences in representation size, the level of activity developed, or the evaluation criteria applied at each headquarters.

Table 5. Distribution of awards granted to correspondents by center of origin

Center of Origin	Patria Award	Outstanding Correspondent	Total Recognitions
	n (% of total correspondents)	n (% of total correspondents)	n (% of total correspondents)
Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas	4 (1,88%)	42 (19,72%)	46 (21,60%)
Colón/Jagüey Grande Branch	1 (0,47%)	3 (1,41%)	4 (1,88%)
Cárdenas Headquarters	2 (0,94%)	1 (0,47%)	3 (1,41%)
Total	7 (3,29%)	46 (21,60%)	53 (24,89%)

Note: Percentages are calculated based on the total number of correspondents (N=213).

Source: Database of the Communication Secretariat FEU, UCMM.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained in this study allow us to characterize the FEU Correspondents Movement at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas between 2023 and 2025, revealing a predominantly female profile, with a higher representation from the Medicine program, a significant concentration in the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas, and an almost universal use of WhatsApp as a

communication tool. These trends are not isolated; rather, they reflect dynamics observed in similar Cuban university contexts, while raising questions about equity, sustainability, and the digital projection of the movement.

The gender distribution among correspondents shows a slight predominance of females (50.22%), which is consistent with findings reported in similar medical university contexts in Cuba. Blanco Álvarez et al. ⁽⁴⁾ observed an even more pronounced female representation (69.47%) at the University of Medical Sciences of Santiago de Cuba. Similarly, in a previous study conducted at the same institution we are discussing, Estrada Rodríguez et al. ⁽³⁾ documented a female majority of 59.18% during the period from 2020 to 2022. Díaz-de la Rosa et al. ⁽⁷⁾ reported a predominantly female composition (53.85%) within the Communication Group at the University of Medical Sciences of Cienfuegos, reinforcing the existence of a gender pattern in communication roles within the field of higher medical education in Cuba.

This recurrence suggests that there is a gender participation pattern in correspondence movements within the medical sciences sector in the country, where women play a leading role, although the magnitude of their representation may vary depending on specific institutional and temporal contexts.

According to Terenzini P et al. ⁽⁵⁾, this trend may be associated with greater female participation in communicative and organizational activities within the university setting, a phenomenon documented in studies on student engagement and leadership roles in higher education.

The strong concentration of correspondents in the Medicine program (74.17%) and in the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas (76.98%) reflects a notable centralization, both disciplinary and geographical, within the movement. This pattern aligns with what has been documented in previous studies conducted at the same institution, where the Medicine program was already identified as the most represented, albeit with a lower proportion (52.38%) during the period from 2020 to 2022 ⁽³⁾. The observed increase suggests a consolidation or possible intensification of this trend in the current three-year period. This rise could be due to targeted recruitment strategies, the size of the Medicine enrollment, or a greater tradition of participation in that

faculty. However, it poses a challenge for the inclusion and representation of other programs and campuses, which could limit the diversity of perspectives in institutional communication.

It is worth noting that Díaz-de la Rosa et al. ⁽⁷⁾ also found a predominance of medical students (76.92%) within the Communication Group in Cienfuegos, suggesting that centralization in this program could be a structural characteristic of communication groups in Cuban medical universities.

Regarding seniority in the movement, the results indicate that most correspondents are concentrated in an intermediate experience stage: nearly half (46.47%) had two years of participation. In contrast, only a minority (17.35%) had more than three years of involvement, reflecting a predominantly young base within the movement and suggesting constant renewal, possibly linked to academic cycles and student transitions. This seniority profile may influence project continuity and knowledge transfer within the group.

This suggests a constant renewal, possibly linked to the academic cycle and student graduation. However, low long-term retention could affect the accumulation of experience and the continuity of communication projects, an aspect that should be considered in the training and support plans for the movement.

The analysis of social media use among correspondents shows a clear preference for messaging tools and mass communication that have high penetration in the Cuban context. WhatsApp has become an essential platform, with universal use (100%), followed by Facebook (94.83%) and X/Twitter (81.22%). This trend aligns with what has been documented in previous studies conducted at the same institution and in other medical universities in the country, reinforcing the notion of a stabilized communication pattern in the Cuban student environment, based on widely accessible applications with low data costs.

This dependence on social media, especially WhatsApp, as the central axis of student communication coincides with observations in international studies on youth participation. Authors like Porto Fuentes et al. identified that social media is considered essential for organization and dissemination, with Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp being the most used for both message distribution and internal coordination.

This parallel highlights that, beyond the national context, instant messaging platforms and social networks have become universal tools for collective action and youth organizational communication.

However, the significantly lower adoption of Telegram (45.53%) and the absence of mentions of emerging or specialized platforms might indicate some resistance or slowness in incorporating new digital tools. This relative rigidity in technological adoption could limit the diversification of dissemination channels and adaptation to changes in the information consumption habits of new generations. In a constantly evolving digital ecosystem, this observation invites reflection on the need to foster a culture of technological updating and communicative experimentation within the movement, without losing sight of the accessibility and reach guaranteed by already established platforms.

The need for a modern and diversified communication strategy goes beyond social media. As Martínez-López et al. point out, the use of physical supports, such as informational brochures, remains a valuable tool for reaching certain segments of the student population. Additionally, university radio, with its great educational potential and low cost, represents an underutilized channel that could strengthen institutional communication, as successfully implemented in other medical universities in the country. The experience of the University of Medical Sciences of Havana with the radio program "Sin Límite" is an example of how this medium can contribute to dialogue and the comprehensive training of students.

The distribution of awards among centers reflects a notable inequality: the Faculty of Medical Sciences of Matanzas concentrated 21.60% of the total awards granted, while the Cárdenas campus barely reached 1.41%. This disparity may be associated with differences in the volume of activities carried out, the application processes, or even the criteria used to evaluate performance at each campus.

A particularly relevant finding is that, despite an increase in the total number of correspondents in the current period (213) compared to the 2020-2022 cycle (147), the number of awards granted decreased (from 64 to 53).

This reduction could be interpreted as the result of greater selectivity in awarding prizes, changes in evaluation criteria, or the implementation of other types of incentives—not covered in this study—that complement or replace formal recognitions. This

phenomenon invites further research into the systems of motivation and feedback used in the movement, as well as how these are perceived by the correspondents themselves.

From an institutional perspective, student communication articulated through correspondents goes beyond its merely informative function to acquire formative and integrative dimensions.

Active participation in these structures fosters the development of essential transversal skills for professional practice, such as collaborative work, oral and written expression in public contexts, and a sense of social responsibility.

The management of communication in student organizations by students from non-communication-related fields, as is predominantly the case in this movement, represents a challenge that requires continuous training. Research like that of Paredes Pilco highlights the importance of managing organizational communication within student associations to strengthen comprehensive development, emphasizing that students themselves must create an optimal environment for their peers. Similarly, Rodríguez-Fernández et al. point out the lack of training and the empirical nature that often dominates organizational communication in university settings, which can limit its effectiveness both internally and externally.

In the specific Cuban context, where the University Student Federation (FEU) plays a politically and socially significant role, the correspondent movement takes on additional meaning. It serves as a key space for socializing values, reproducing institutional discourse, and constructing a collective identity aligned with the historical principles and current objectives of the organization. In this sense, their work not only communicates activities but also helps weave a sense of belonging and civic commitment within the student community.

The historical and conceptual evolution of organizational communication, as described by Contreras Delgado et al., shows its character as constantly being constructed, especially in Latin America. This theoretical framework allows us to understand the work of the correspondent movement not as a static function but as a dynamic process that must adapt to technological transformations and the changing needs of students and society.

However, the findings also highlight areas for improvement. Excessive centralization in one faculty and program, low retention of correspondents with more than three years of experience, and dependence on a single communication platform could limit the resilience and reach of the movement. Future research could explore, through qualitative methods, the motivations, perceptions, and challenges faced by correspondents, as well as assess the real impact of their work on the university community.

Although this study provides a detailed view of the correspondent movement, it is important to recognize its limitations. Since it is an analysis based solely on data from institutional records, it does not capture the experiences and opinions of the students themselves. It also cannot show changes over time, as it only describes a situation during a specific period. Furthermore, the results refer only to one university and cannot be generalized to other institutions. These aspects should be considered when interpreting the findings and planning future research that complements this approach with qualitative methods or comparative studies.

CONCLUSIONS

The FEU Correspondent Movement at the University of Medical Sciences of Matanzas is characterized by a young, feminized base, concentrated in Medicine, and highly digitized through WhatsApp. Its evolution between 2023 and 2025 reflects both the continuity of historical trends and new features that invite a rethinking of strategies for inclusion, retention, and communicative diversification. Understanding these dynamics is essential to strengthen not only the internal communication of the FEU but also its ability to represent and articulate a diverse and constantly evolving student body.

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AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

CLVH: conceptualization, data curation, funding acquisition, research, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, draft writing, writing, revision, and editing of the final work.

MHR: conceptualization, data curation, research, validation, visualization.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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