

DOI: 10.25990/socinstras.pss-18-2.g916-8674

EDN: IAMFGE

УДК 323.2-055.2:316.647.8



КАРИНА СЕРГЕЕВНА БАБУРИНА

Национальный исследовательский университет

«Высшая школа экономики»

Санкт-Петербург, Россия

ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ НАСИЛИЕ В ОТНОШЕНИИ ЖЕНЩИН-КАНДИДАТОВ В ЭЛЕКТОРАЛЬНОМ ДИСКУРСЕ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ МЕКСИКИ)

Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена исследованию психологического насилия в отношении женщин-кандидатов на мексиканских выборах в 2024 г. Анализируется научная литература в области политологии и социологии, которая рассматривает подходы к изучению политического насилия в отношении женщин и контекст Мексики. Ключевым подходом становится подход НОЖ (насилие в отношении женщин), потому что именно он определяет роль гендера в проблеме и предлагает типологию насилия, включающую психологическое. Данное исследование дополняется также применением теорий гендерных стереотипов и амбивалентного сексизма, которые позволяют объяснить роль женщины в политике и ее восприятие обществом. Для проведения эмпирического исследования был применен метод качественного контент-анализа текстовых и визуальных публикаций пользователей социальных сетей о женщинах-кандидатах. В результате исследования выявлено, что «символическое насилие» (в трактовке П. Бурдьё) в отношении женщин-кандидатов на мексиканских выборах проявилось в онлайн-среде — в текстовых и визуальных инструментах, а также воспроизводилось через враждебный сексизм и гендерные стереотипы.

Ключевые слова: психологическое насилие, политическое насилие, подход НОЖ, выборы, Мексика

Ссылка для цитирования: Бабурина К. С. Психологическое насилие в отношении женщин-кандидатов в электоральном дискурсе (на примере Мексики) // Петербургская социология сегодня. — 2026. — Т. 18. — № 2. — С. 28–55. — DOI: 10.25990/socinstras.pss-18-2.g916-8674; EDN: IAMFGE

Introduction

The problem of political violence against women is very serious and has been on the agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean for years. According to the GIWPS (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and

Security) statistics, Latin America and the Caribbean region became the worst in the absence of security and political violence against women in 2023¹. In addition, the Latin culture of ‘machismo’ and ‘marianismo’ strengthens the social roles of men and women, subordinating the latter and reinforcing the hypermasculinity of the former. The issue is particularly aggravated in Mexico, where the level of violence becomes higher during elections, as there were more than 500 political candidates’ assassinations for 20 years [1]. Indeed, Mexico has laws that criminalise violence against female politicians and defend their political rights, for example, there is law “Parity in Everything” that mandates equal numbers of seats for women and men in politics since 2019 [2]. Also, in 2023, Mexico adopted “Regional Declaration on the Eradication of Gender Stereotypes in Public Spaces that Translate into Symbolic Violence and Political Gender-Based Violence”². Despite existing measures in Mexico to regulate and criminalise violence against women, violence still remains high in elections and women are often discriminated against and excluded from politics. A relevant example is the recent 2024 Mexican election, in which at least two female presidential candidates were attacked by male politicians and the public [3].

This leads to the phenomenon of political violence against women (VAW), which states that the violence perpetrated against women is done to exclude them from the political sphere [4]. Although there are a sufficient number of approaches to the study of this phenomenon, such as the Traditional Political Violence approach and Intersectionality, the present analysis favours the VAW approach. The latter offers a clear typology of violence that distinguishes not only physical and sexual violence, but also psychological one [5]. Psychological violence aims to demoralise and discredit women in politics through insults, ridicule and the creation of fake information [6]. Today, social networks play a significant role, and psychological violence against women is particularly prevalent in these networks. Thus, everything that is written above leads to the main research question — how has psychological violence against women candidates been used in 2024 Mexican elections? The relevance of this study is both that female candidates subjected to psychological violence more, and they do not have legal protection, and the particular growing role of ICTs and the virtual environment, in which the spreading of misinformation leads to the psychological pressure on women [7]. In addition, the recent Mexican

¹ “Security,” GIWPS, October 20, 2023, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/index-dimension/security/>.

² “Measures | UN Women Data Hub,” UN Women, 2023, <https://data.unwomen.org/global-database-on-violence-against-women/country-profile/Mexico/measures>.

election in 2024, where violence is high, as previously noted, is the first time a woman became a president, although she was also under pressure. This also adds to the relevance of the study because there is lack of research on the topic of violence against women in the Mexican elections in 2024. Therefore, the focus here is on psychological violence against women candidates. The research subject is tools and forms of psychological violence used against women candidates in the social network X¹ during Mexican elections, the aim is to identify those tools and forms.

Approaches to Study Political Violence against Women

In order to observe psychological violence and how it is used against women candidates, first, it is necessary to understand political violence against women itself and what approaches to studying this phenomenon exist. It is worth starting with the Traditional Political Violence Approach, which is rarely called as such in research papers on political violence, but is by default assumed to be so. This name for the approach is mentioned by Gabrielle Bardall, Elin Bjarnegard and Jennifer Piscopo (2019), who in their work on gendered political violence distinguish studies of political violence into those that are gendered and those that are not. These authors identify the main features of this approach: timing, actors, motives, etc. [8]. First, scholars of the Traditional Approach usually study events during elections and after elections, i. e., “election-related violence or post-election violence” [8]. Gianmarco Daniele and Gemma Dipoppa, in their article on Italian electoral violence, also address this periodisation of political violence adopted within the Traditional Approach. They propose periods before election and after, as the first one is used “to minimize the adverse selection of politicians” and the second one is used “to minimize the moral hazard from politicians” [9]. In any case, this leads to the general concept of electoral violence, which aims to change and/or influence the outcome of elections. Within electoral violence, in addition to the standard periods of violence (pre- and post-election), for example, Kristine Höglund (2010) distinguishes one more — “the day or days of the election,” Second, The motive within electoral violence is obvious — it is to influence the electoral process. But Höglund would not agree with such point; she calls influence on the electoral process the purpose of violence, and the motives, she says, can range from reluctance to hold elections to protesting against the existing authorities [10]. Third, within electoral violence, forms of political violence, vary with the targets, at whom

¹ Banned on the territory of the Russian Federation.

or against what the violence is directed [10]. Höglund (2010) identifies four targeting groups: electoral stakeholders, electoral information, electoral facilities, and electoral events; and activities can range from intimidation of electoral stakeholders to political assassination, and tactics are chosen according to the goal. Francisco Gutierrez-Sanin and Elisabeth Jean Wood (2017) also consider violence, but do not focus on electoral violence, rather on mass and organised violence that may not only be directed at politicians; however, they also promote the idea of a diversity of repertoires (forms of violence), from homicide to forced displacement. Because of this diversity of activities, researchers of the Traditional Approach work with quantitative data, as cases are well recorded and captured very often in large databases such as the ACLED. However, it is difficult to collect data on political violence directed at women, which Conway Henderson also criticises, because this approach excludes gender and “privileges men’s experiences.” [8, 11].

There is another, but no less important, approach to the study of this phenomenon, which is called Violence against Women Approach (VAW). Other names can also be encountered, such as Violence against Women in Politics Approach (VAWIP) or Electoral Violence against Women Approach, which is more specific the type of violence used against women. Authors such as Mona Lena Krook and Juliana Restrepo Sanin define the VAWIP “as the physical and psychological aggressions deployed by party bosses and other actors, in order to resist women’s presence and role in public life” [4]. These authors, studying the specificities of the phenomenon in Latin American countries, also give the example of an existing Law 238 in Bolivia called Political violence and political harassment towards women (*i. e. Violencia política y acoso político hacia las mujeres*) [5]. The law defines specific acts of ‘political harassment’ and ‘political violence’ and indicates that the actions taken “target women as women to leave politics by pressuring them to step down as candidates or resign a particular political office” [5]. Thus, the definitions that form the concept of violence indicate — firstly, violence is gendered and directed at women because they are women; secondly, the goal is to exclude women from politics; thirdly, the forms of violence used are also partially mentioned. In fact, in order to define gender-based violence, at least one of the important elements (gendered motive, form, or impact) must be present in an act of committed political violence. In other words, political gender violence may be directed (*motive*) at maintaining gender roles in politics; it may take a *form* that is used against a particular gender (e. g. rape often aims to undermine a woman as a woman, a mother, a wife and/or a politician);

the act of violence committed may be interpreted (*impact*) according to the gender of the person it was directed against [8].

Although the focus on gender bias in this approach is criticised by some researchers. For example, Jennifer Piscopo fully disagrees with the work of Mona Lena Krook and Restrepo Sanín, saying that the approach overlooks the context of Latin America, which calls into question the gendered nature of violence. In her opinion, the categorisation of VAWIP proposed by the founders of this approach fails to address an issue of violence because of its framing. In the author's view, this approach institutionalises sexism, which undermines women's political rights and, as a consequence, makes it more difficult for legal response [4]. Mona Lena Krook (2020) identified the following types of violence: *physical violence* (includes a wide range of physical impacts on a person); *psychological violence* (harms a person's psychological state and health); *sexual violence* (is an unwanted impact on a person's sexuality); and *economic violence* (places financial hardship and control over a person). While it's debatable, Krook (2020) singles out *semiotic violence*, or *symbolic violence*, which includes the use of visual, symbolic, textual and other means aimed at subjugation and harm. Looking at this typology, it is difficult to clearly define acts of violence as gender-based, as they can equally apply to male politicians. In such a case, then, it is worth referring to the scheme of Bardall et al. according to which gender-based violence becomes such if the motive, form or perception has a gendered aspect and is directed specifically against women.

Psychological Violence against Women

Political violence has a typology or type of activity directed against women politicians. Among them, it is worth noting psychological violence, which can also be called as symbolic or semiotic violence. To understand the gist of psychological violence, it is better to turn to Mona Lena Krook as she has described in detail all types of gendered violence. Initially, Krook (2017) described the types of violence in an article "Violence Against Women in Politics", within which she distinguished psychological and symbolic violence. She claimed that "psychological violence entails hostile behavior and abuse intended to cause emotional damage," while symbolic violence means "abuse and aggression at the level of portrayals that seek to deny women's competence as political actors" [7]. That is, among psychological violence there are threats, stalking, destruction of the reputation of a female politician, etc., and symbolic violence is only about images that undermine a woman's reputation stand out. Importantly, Krook's definition of symbolic

violence is not entirely complete since images that portray a woman as a sexualised object and/or undermine her reputation cause psychological and emotional damage to the victim, i. e., psychological violence itself. In addition, the actions that Krook identified as psychological violence can essentially include the same negative images directed at women, as this is associated with stalking, threats, and reputation. Thus, it is inappropriate to present these two types of violence as separate from each other. Significantly, later in her own book on political violence against women, Krook kept these two types of violence separate, but changing the name symbolic violence to semiotic one. The author expanded the forms of psychological violence to include not only threats, harassment, etc., but also illegal interrogations, bullying, “cancellation” campaigns, and others; she also added that violence could be carried out in a virtual environment, i. e., on social networks, by phone, and by mail (Krook 2020). And the level of online abuse, according to the IPU’s report, is one of the highest, and female politicians deal with it by blocking and deleting social networks [6]. As for semiotic (symbolic) violence, the author explained it much more than in her previous work. First, it expanded the forms of this violence from images to words and body language, in fact to anything in which a certain narrative of the humiliation of women can be found [6]. Secondly, the actions are aimed at shaping public opinion, i. e. *gendered impact*, as Bardall wrote. The goal is to eliminate women from politics and to emphasize that women in politics do not correspond to their intended social role [6]. In fact, semiotic violence can be represented in all forms of violence, especially in psychological one, because they have the same goal — to demoralize and humiliate a woman. Therefore, it is worthwhile to combine these two concepts, as Bardall (2013) did, “informal means of control [and] includes systematic ridicule, ostracism, shame, sarcasm, criticism, disapproval, exclusion and discrimination.”

Returning to the idea that psychological violence occurs also in the virtual online environment, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play a crucial role in the latter. These technologies can be used “as a tool of intimidation by threatening or inciting physical violence against women candidates, voters or representatives” [12]. Defining violence in online, Shazia Akhtar and Catriona M. Morrison also note that abuse occurs on the basis of religion, gender, race, political beliefs, and includes “one form of online threatening behaviour” [13], which only confirms the Krook’s definition of psychological violence. These ICTs are one of the simplest ways to discredit a politician — firstly, because there is no law or punishment for this, and secondly, it is the most accurate way to convey information to the masses. The question is not whether women or men

are more subject to online abuse, the problem is that male politicians are more likely to be attacked because of their policies, and female politicians are more likely to be attacked because they are women [13]. When such violence is directed at women, it is called “online/digital misogyny” or “online violence against women in politics (OVAWP)”, and usually it “takes the form of gendered and sexualised attacks on their appearance or character that objectify, belittle, and disrespect them” [13]. At the same time, there are researchers like Louise Richardson-Self who distinguished between misogyny and sexism, which significantly influences the theoretical framework and conceptualisation of the phenomenon. She noted that sexism is “the subordination of women as a group to men as a group” and it is accompanied by stereotypes about women, whereas misogyny divides women into “good” and “bad” according to social roles, and marginalises the latter [15]. Therefore, it is not worth generalising online abuse as misogyny. Anyway, the exclusion of women from the political sphere is the goal of violence through discrediting them and thereby causing moral harm in the online environment, which is psychological violence. However, in the question of forms of online (psychological) violence, we need to turn to semiotic violence: words, pictures, body language. All of this is also used in the online environment, it just has slightly different names, for example, hate speech, misogyny, or deep-fakes. The most common form of abuse is hate speech on social platforms such as the X¹ (earlier Twitter) and Facebook². Gabrielle Bardall also notes the significant role of X (Twitter), as it is the short and ridiculous posts there that represent violence against women and are quickly reposted [12]. So, as Louise Richardson-Self (2018) mentioned, hate speech is used to “silence, malign, disparage, humiliate, intimidate, incite violence, discriminate, vilify, degrade, persecute, threaten.” As for visual materials, Eleonora Esposito (2023) claimed that it is characterised by “image manipulation and false identity attribution” which represented in the distribution of false and, usually, sexualised photos of women. Progress in AI technology plays an important role, as it allows making AI-generated fake photos and video. Another name for this is “deepfakes”, which are generated photos or videos with “famous figures whose face have been believably mapped onto the bodies of others, engaging in pornographic or sexually explicit acts” [7]. The dissemination of deepfakes may have the potential to destabilise the political situation, change electoral votes, etc., and is also a major threat to female politicians as it undermines their professionalism

¹ Banned on the territory of the Russian Federation.

² Banned on the territory of the Russian Federation. Belongs to Meta Corporation, whose activities are recognized as extremist and banned in Russia.

and privacy (Soto Santana 2022). Summing up, psychological and semiotic violence in the online environment should be considered as a single concept, which has one goal — to cause moral damage to women and push them out of politics. ICTs contribute to the spread of violence in its various forms, the most common are short hate speeches and deepfakes.

Context of Latin America and the Caribbeans

The Latin American region is quite violent and unsafe towards women, as GIWPS statistics show³. However, countries in the region have been working to improve the status of women for several decades. The history of the struggle dates back to 1981, when the first meeting of feminists and human rights activists took place in Bogotá, during which the problem of violence against women was recognized and discussed (Sagot 2008). But it was not until more than a decade later that this problem was recognized internationally. In 1993, a world conference was held in Vienna, the result of which was the creation and recognition of a UN declaration signed by many states [16]. The declaration, which was called “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW)”⁴, for the first time, established the responsibility of the state for the violence against women that occurs. Probably the consequence of this declaration was the reaction of the Latin region, in which this violence is so great. A year later, in 1994, the Inter-American Convention (or in other words the Belém do Pará Convention) was concluded, which also made states responsible for crimes against women and obliged them to take measures to combat violence⁵. Femicide, the horrific murders of women because they are women in the 2010s that led to its subsequent criminalization, played a major role in the fight for women’s rights. Despite the long process of criminalisation of femicide, at least 17 countries in the Latin region have laws on the subject [17]. In fact, 13 types of femicide have been established by the Latin American Protocol [18]. In addition, women’s political freedom, which had been limited for centuries in the region, was also put on the agenda. Thus, Colombia became the first country in the region to begin addressing the

³ “Security,” GIWPS, October 20, 2023, <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/index-dimension/security/>.

⁴ UN General Assembly, “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,” 1993.

⁵ Organization of American States (OAS), “Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (“Convention of Belem do Para”),” 1994.

problem of political violence since the 2000s, but in fact, the law was only passed after the murder of local councilwoman Juana Quispe [5]. Bolivia's Law 234 criminalised political violence and harassment against women, and defined the first one as "acts and/or threats of physical, psychological, or sexual violence, aimed at shortening, suspending, impeding, or restricting the exercise of a woman's political position, or inducing a woman, against her will, to commit an act or fail to do something related to her political mandate." [5, 19]. Subsequently, women politicians in a number of countries have begun to propose bills on political violence: in 2012 in Mexico it was proposed by senator Lucero Saldaña, in 2013 in Peru and Costa Rica it was by congresswoman Verónica Fanny Mendoza Frisch and deputy Pilar Porras Zúñiga respectively [5]. In addition to protecting women from political violence, states have been increasing women's representation in government since the 1990s. The most common initiative was the quota law, which allocates a certain number of seats to women in parliament or government. Most Latin American countries, including Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, etc., have a quota law with about 25–20 per cent of seats for women [20]. Despite the criticism of this law by authors such as K. Wylie, D. Marcelino, and P. Santos (2019) because of existing schemes to manipulate quotas (as in Brazil), other authors such as M. Buvinic and V. Roza (2004) argue that the laws are effective because they allow educated women to enter politics. Thus, the Latin American region has shown itself to be committed to combating severe violence against women, and is constantly developing laws to protect women in all spheres of life, including politics.

Even despite the relevant work in the field of protection of women and their social, political, economic and other rights, the level of violence remains high. The debate on the cause of the existing violence against women is focused on the historical-social factor and the unworkability of laws and the state. In terms of the failure of existing laws to address the problem, it is worth noting the high level of impunity, especially in electoral violence where cases are not heard by a criminal court [4]. Also, as other authors add, the failure of laws (including quotas) lies in sexist thinking [21]. Violence against women is the result of several factors such as: social norms, male material domination and cultural conceptions of masculinity [22]. In other words, violence is at the heart of socially constructed reality, in prescribed and shaped gender-behavioural scripts. In Latin American culture, there is a term 'machismo' that refers to macho men who treat women badly [23]. Ashley Rogers (2019) also supports this notion and explains it as "hypermasculinity and aggression." That is, machismo culture perpetuates the idea of patriarchy and aggressive and violent behaviour

towards women, which is a consequence of the region's colonial past and the unequal treatment of women. Another Latin American term 'marianismo' is added to this culture. Despite the more religious characterisation of the term, referring to Our Lady of the Virgin Mary, in modern reality the term stereotypes the image of a woman, the opposite of the 'macho' image of a man. As Evelyn P. Stevens (1973) noted, the term characterises Latin woman as semi-divine (i. e. ideal), self-denying and sacrificial; Ana Marina Tzul Tzul and Serena Cosgrove (2022) added that woman, according to this belief, should be submissive and suffer. Thus, the dichotomy of machismo and marianismo reinforces the images of men and women in society and their gender hierarchy, which is subsequently institutionalized and exists in everyday practice. The Latin American context, where violence and the struggle for women's rights coexist, provides good background for understanding Mexico as a country that is part of this region.

Case of Mexico

There are a number of factors why Mexico is unsafe. First, for a very long time, law enforcement and judicial authorities were unable to reduce violence due to institutional problems such as lack of resources, corruption and inefficiency [24]. It is also noted that after 2000, political assassinations remained unpunished. Secondly, drug smuggling has also played an important role in political processes and beyond. Attempts to fight drug cartels led to even more mass killings that law enforcement agencies could not prevent and punish. It is important that the killing of political candidates still persists, for example, about 48 candidates were killed in the 2018 elections [25]. This means the difficult electoral culture in Mexico.

When it comes to women and their participation in politics, it is worth noting that women received full political rights in 1953, and in 1974 men and women were legally recognized as equal [26]. And while Mexico has made strides in women's political representation today, Mexican women have had a difficult struggle in this area and still face violence to this day. Many studies provide the following statistics on women's representation in government bodies up to 2018: a woman was not a president (although there were candidates), a woman became governor only 9 times, only 23 women were in the 236-member cabinet, etc. [27]. These figures only confirm the difficulty of women entering politics and point to the existing obstacles. Alberto Espejel Espinoza and Mariela Díaz Sandoval identify four levels at which women in Mexico may encounter violence: in the party, in the electoral process, in the executive and legislative branches [26]. When it

comes to the party, it is important to remember that until 2014, the party actually decided everything, and for example, presidential elections and other positions were exclusively nominated by the party, which suggests possible internal restrictions for women. Women in executive and legislative positions also face political harassment and any other form of violence in the workplace. During the electoral process, women also face pressures, both in competing with other candidates and parties that exert pressure against own female candidates.

To move on to laws on equal representation in politics, it is worth noting first the main national laws on gender equality in Mexico. Since 2006 General Law on Equality between Women and Men (*Ley General para la Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres*) is to “guarantee equality between women and men in public and private spheres and to promote the empowerment of women”¹. In fact, the law obliges the state to create programs and other laws to make gender equality in all spheres of life, i. e. it holds the state responsible for existing inequality and discrimination against women. A year later, in 2007, another General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence (*Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia*) was also introduced that defined violence against women in the public sphere, namely in the workplace, and banned all forms of this violence. As for quotas, gender equality in political representation took a long time: from 1996, when the Code of Political Parties (*Cofipe para que los partidos*) provided for no more than 70% of candidates of the same sex to be nominated [26]; until 2019, when an amendment to the Constitution was approved, the law called “Parity in Everything” (“*Paridad en todo*”), implying the representation of 50% women and 50% men [2]. Also, the Chamber of Deputies in 2017 approved and included “political violence against women” in several legal systems, namely: in the General Law on Electoral Institutions and Procedures (*la Legipe*), in the General Law on Political Parties (*la Ley General de Partidos Políticos*), in the General Law on Electoral Offences (*la Ley General en Materia de Delitos Electorales*) and in the General Law on the Electoral Disputes System (*la Ley General del Sistema de Medios de Impugnación en Materia Electoral*) [26]. The reason for these changes was the repeated pressure and violence against women, the purpose of which was to prevent women from gaining power. Although women were given political rights in the 20th century and had the right to participate in politics, the very idea of a woman having power and governing somewhere was unacceptable

¹ Natividad Cárdenas Morale, “Mexico Case Study: Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Public Administration” (UNDP, 2012), <https://www.undp.org/>.

to society and some male politicians. In Mexico, similar to Brazil, there was a method of circumventing quotas. This phenomenon was called “Las Juanitas” (or “Las Juanitas de San Lázaro”) and involved replacing women in the Chamber of Deputies with men, with women giving up their seats for their brothers, husbands, friends, and colleagues [27]. The same story repeated itself in 2018, when the phenomenon was called “Las Manuelitas” (or “Las Manuelitas de Chiapas”), because local women deputies were also forced to give up their seats because of men deputies [27]. In fact, such situations only prove the A. Espejel Espinoza and M. Díaz Sandoval’s idea that women face political pressure both during and after elections.

However, despite the struggle for women’s representation in politics and the introduction of the concept of political violence into laws, there also remained an external threat against women, which was particularly acute during elections. Illegal drug trafficking schemes and existing drug cartels had a direct role in organising crimes against politicians. Women politicians were no exception to the victims of their crimes. In 2018, during the Mexican Drug War, women politicians (and their relatives) suffered a lot. In addition to the 110 politicians murdered overall, there was also an increase in sexual assaults with female candidates for president, governor, etc. [26]. At the same time, Víctor Antonio Hernández Huerta (2020) examined the killings of candidates in 2018 and concluded that the killings occurred mainly in the most criminal municipalities, where there was a need for a criminal gang to put pressure on a candidate; and against candidates who are least protected from attacks. It is worth noting that the author does not specifically draw conclusions about gender influence in the killing, but it should not be forgotten that existing forms of violence (such as rape) are usually used against women.

Theoretical Framework

Gender Stereotypes

Theories of stereotyping are different as they are used in different studies, namely, in political science, psychology, sociology, and etc., in this paper the theory of stereotyping is used with the help of socio-cultural approach. Within the framework of this approach, it is stated that society and culture influence the process of stereotyping, producing and legitimising it [28]. In addition, the theory of social roles points to the role of stereotyping, which assigns social roles to people [28]. There are social roles in society that dictate people’s behavior. Very often, these roles are determined by gender, which

can be defined as “the set of rules established socially for each sex” [29]. In the framework of the social psychological theory, gender is especially important because it shapes the reality of the relationship between men and women and their roles in society [30]. When one talks about stereotypes, it should be understood that regardless of the theory of stereotyping, any of them indicates the mutual perception and definition of another group and one’s own (i. e. “self” and the “other”). As Lippman noted, stereotypes are necessary within the broader social world; other authors such as Backman and Stewart have also noted that stereotypes can be “general expectations” about a person and/or based on the personal perception of another [31]. It is gender stereotypes that are among the most persistent [32].

Despite the long-term exclusion of women from politics, they currently have significant representation in this field, although not in all countries. However, politics is not a place where there are no gender stereotypes, rather, on the contrary. Stereotypes can be both descriptive and prescriptive, i. e. they are a tool for evaluating what a man or woman should be like and whether he corresponds to his role [32]. If we transfer this to the sphere of politics, it means that a woman or a man will be evaluated by voters and rivals according to their gender characteristics and how they correspond to them. It is argued that if a woman does not match the “feminine” qualities, then she is more likely to be less attractive as a candidate [33]. At the same time, it is worth considering that politics is considered a men’s sphere in which “masculine” qualities prevail and are encouraged, which creates a contradiction for women. So, it is necessary to define gender stereotypes (qualities) of men and women in politics:

- As for men, they are defined as people who are suitable for agent roles and whose expected priorities are work and personal tasks [34]. Men are usually characterised as competent, national, determined, assertive, aggressive, and tough (i. e., the best for politics) [35]. It should also be noted that it is believed that a man is good in certain areas of politics — economics, crime, defence and foreign policy [36]. As for Latin American men, they are characterised by hypermasculinity, i. e. qualities such as aggressiveness, dominance and rigidity are enhanced.

- As for women, they exist for a community and to care for others (including family) [34]. That is why it is believed that women are the most competent in social policy, demography and child protection, since this is associated with the role of housewife and mother [36]. A woman is characterised by such qualities as warmth, tenderness, passivity, affectionateness, responsiveness, beauty, etc. (i. e. not so good for

politics) [35]. Within Latina American marianismo, the woman is presented as more feminine and hardy.

As noted earlier, a woman is in a difficult position in the political sphere: 1) she must conform to the social role that society prescribes for her; 2) her “feminine” characteristics may not be the most suitable for politics. So, Tatiana Riabova’s research on gender stereotypes in Russian politics shows that voters usually prefer politicians with more “masculine” qualities, namely intelligence, honesty, responsibility, decisiveness, activity, etc. [28]. In general, people still consider politics as a male sphere. And if one pays attention to the policy areas that are divided into male and female, one can also realise a gender barrier to the representation of women in higher political positions [28]. Accordingly, it can be concluded that if a woman tries to get a higher position, for instance, the position of president or governor, she probably will meet more resistance from society, as she will not be as good as a man, or, on the contrary, she will have the qualities of a man and will not fulfil her social role of a woman.

Accordingly, a woman is not excluded from politics, but rather included in it. However, despite existing research suggesting that a candidate’s gender does not play a role in elections, or that a woman who exhibits more masculine personality traits becomes preferable as a candidate, it is worth paying attention to the context and conditions of the country in which the elections are taking place. Mexico has a strong dominant culture of machismo and marianismo, where men and women share gender roles. Accordingly, we should expect that gender stereotypes matter in elections. Previously, it was argued that psychological violence has various forms and its purpose is to inflict moral damage on a woman (undermine her personality and authority as a candidate and a woman) and oust her from politics. One should expect that gender stereotypes will play a significant role in psychological violence, i.e. one should expect statements and/or visual material addressed to a female candidate that characterises her not as warm and sympathetic, and incompetent, and also highlights her appearance in one way or another.

Ambivalent Sexism theory

A significant addition to the theory of gender stereotypes will be the theory of ambivalent sexism, developed by researchers such as Peter Glick and Susan T. Fiske (1997). This theory is also based on the acceptance of the idea that the social world of relationships is a hierarchy of power, or rather a patriarchal society in which there is a gender dominance of men over

women. The idea of ambivalent sexism arises from the fact that there are also intimation and sexual reproduction in the relationship between a man and a woman, which means that these attitudes cannot carry a one-sided hostile attitude of a man towards a woman. In other words, in a patriarchal society, there are gender roles — the man is in charge and the woman is dependent on him, but at the same time, the man cannot be without the woman. That is why a man cannot treat a woman exceptionally badly, but can also exalt her, while maintaining his control over her. Hence, the following concepts should be considered:

- Hostile sexism (HS). The authors defined this sexism “as antipathy and [it] reflects the hostile derogation of women who pose a threat to the gender hierarchy” [37]. That is, this sexism openly justifies male power and humiliates a woman.

- Benevolent sexism (BS). This sexism means “a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling” [37]. In other words, this sexism has less harsh and do not directly reinforce a woman’s weaker position.

Since this is a theory of ambivalent sexism, both hostile and benevolent sexism are complementary, i. e. “two sides of a sexist coin” [38]. HS and BS work together, and usually if a person is committed to one type of sexism, they are automatically committed to the other type as well. To be more precise, the HS punishes a woman for disobeying and not accepting her gender patriarchal role, while the BS rewards her for obedience and fulfilment of the traditional role of a woman [38]. This returns to the paradox of the difficult position of women in politics that was described in the previous section — the female politician does not conform to the gender role, for which she is penalised and becomes disfavoured. Glick and Fiske also made their theory of ambivalence wider and extended it to women’s political participation. There is a correlation with gender stereotypes that force a woman to conform to the male sphere — politics — and have “masculine” qualities [37]. And at the same time they are punished for it (Hostile Sexism), i. e. they are insulted, negatively objectified and sexualised. It also makes the female politician less attractive, but it is worth noting that she is unattractive only to those who remain committed to the ideas of hostile and benevolent sexism (i. e., people who do not accept these attitudes simply sought to accept a politician who has “masculine” qualities) [39]. Benevolent sexism, in turn, supports women who match their feminine characteristics through praise or comparison with other women [37]. However, this does not mean that she becomes attractive as a candidate. As for politics, a woman receives

a symbolic award, but remains in her place and does not advance higher. Also, the application of BS to women in politics has a significant impact on the consolidation of gender stereotypes, for example, incompetence [37].

Method and Methodology

Method and coding

Content analysis allows using and analysing different data formats — from text to images [40]. Quality content analysis allows any data format to be read and interpreted [40]. It is worth remembering that semiotic violence refers to the format that contains violence against women in the online environment — image, video, text, i. e. the formats that can be used for content analysis.

The coding scheme is created within the framework of gender stereotype theory and ambivalent sexism theory. To perform this study, a two-level coding is proposed, i. e. the element will be assigned the first code and then the second — the corresponding sub-code. The first level of coding is created based on the ambivalent sexism theory and includes two categories — ‘*Hostile Sexism*’ and ‘*Benevolent Sexism*’. Thus, each element (text or image) will be assigned one of these codes. To be coded as ‘*Hostile Sexism*’, the element must contain a negative characterisation of the female candidate; more specifically, the negative characterisation of the female politician is manifested in openly hostile narratives due to gender and social role incongruence. In contrast, element of those narratives still contain a woman’s gender role, but seem to reward her for conforming to that role (including in comparison to another woman), will be coded as ‘*Benevolent Sexism*’.

Next, the second stage of encoding — subcoding (or second level encoding) — will take place. This coding is formed on the basis of gender stereotype theory. Earlier, gender stereotypes attributed to women and women in politics were presented. Since a woman has a difficult position in the political sphere — she does not correspond to a woman’s gender role in the social world and/or does not correspond to a man’s gender qualities, which are most welcome in politics — codes of gender stereotypes will be formulated in accordance with this ambiguity. As part of the code of ‘*Hostile Sexism*’, the following subcodes were created: “*Incompetent*” (elements that characterise a woman as unsuitable for politics, stupid, without education and dependent from a man), “*Unladylike*” (elements that indicate a lack of femininity in a woman’s appearance and behavior), “*Bad wife/mother/woman*” (elements indicating that a woman is not coping with her social

role), “*Emotional/Aggressive*” (elements indicating excessive emotionality in a woman’s reaction or an overly harsh and rude reaction corresponding to male behavior), “*Authoritative*” (elements that contain a denial of a woman’s altruism and openness to people), and “*Ugly/Negatively Sexualised*” (elements with denying a woman’s beauty or putting her in a submissive sexualised position). As for the code of ‘Benevolent Sexism’, there are only three subcodes: “*Beautiful and Sexual*” (elements that emphasize a woman’s beauty and sexuality, especially comparing to another woman), “*Feminine/True Woman*” (elements that emphasize femininity in behavior or characterise her as a woman corresponding to her gender and social role), and “*Intelligent*” (elements that emphasize a woman’s mental abilities in comparison with another woman).

Selection

Content analysis will be used to analyse text and image data taken from the social network X¹ (formerly Twitter). Since the focus is on the electoral period, the best option would be to take the period one month before the election, as the level of violence usually increases during this period. In Mexico, the elections were on June 2, 2024, respectively, the period from May 1 to June 1, 2024 will be set for filtering published posts and comments. The language of posts will also be used for filtering — Spanish, since there is one of the national languages. The data will be selected in accordance with the fact that textual and visual material should reflect demoralisation and/or psychological pressure on a woman candidate. According to Bardall, this is often reproduced through “systematic ridicule, ostracism, shame, sarcasm, criticism, disapproval, exclusion and discrimination”². Thus, the comments are interpreted for the presence of any demoralisation and discrimination of the woman, and then selected accordingly.

As for the variables, these are the female candidates in the 2024 Mexican General Election. As part of the General Elections, the president, the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies and nine state governors were elected³. The key variables will be female candidates for the Presidency. The selection will also be expanded by including female candidates for the Gubernatorial in nine states. The chosen variables should be considered in more detail.

¹ Banned on the territory of the Russian Federation.

² Bardall, “Gender-Specific Election Violence,” 2.

³ “Elecciones 2024 — Instituto Nacional Electoral,” Instituto Nacional Electoral, n.d., <https://ine.mx/voto-y-elecciones/elecciones-2024/>.

As for the female presidential candidates, there were two — Claudia Sheinbaum and Xóchitl Gálvez. Claudia Sheinbaum is a representative of the ruling left-wing “Morena” (*Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional, or the National Regeneration Movement*) party, previously served as First Secretary of the Environment, and was Mayor of Mexico City in 2018–2023⁴. Claudia Sheinbaum has been nominated as the presidential candidate of the ruling coalition Sigamos Haciendo Historia (a coalition composed of parties of “Morena”, “PT” (*Partido del Trabajo, or Labour Party*), and “PVEM” (*Partido Verde Ecologista de México, or Ecologist Green Party of Mexico*))⁵. Claudia Sheinbaum became the first female president in Mexico, winning nearly 60 per cent of the vote⁶. As for Xóchitl Gálvez, she is a former senator and became the presidential candidate of the opposition coalition Fuerza y Corazón por México (a coalition composed of parties “PAN” (*Partido Acción Nacional, or National Action Party*), “PRI” (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or Institutional Revolutionary Party*), “PRD” (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática, or Party of the Democratic Revolution*))⁷. Xóchitl Gálvez was not the winner, but came second in the presidential race with about 27 per cent of the vote⁸. The final amount of data included 50 and 46 respectively units for coding.

As for women candidates for governor in nine states: Jalisco, Morelos, Tabasco, Chiapas, Veracruz, Puebla, Yucatán, Guanajuato, and Mexico City⁹. Pueblo State is excluded from the sample because there were no female candidates there. Starting with Mexico City, there was one woman candidate, Clara Brugada, who won the election. She is from the Morena Party and in 2018 she was the governor of Iztapalapa¹⁰. For coding, there were 10 units about her. Olga Luz is a candidate in the state of Chiapas,

⁴ Carolina Millan, Jason Kao, and Yasufumi Saito, “Mexico Election 2024: Results,” *Bloomberg*, June 2, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2024-mexico-election-results/>.

Shannon K. O’Neil, “Mexico’s 2024 Elections: What to Know,” Council on Foreign Relations, May 24, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/mexicos-2024-elections-what-know>.

⁵ “IFES Election Guide | Elections: Mexican Presidency 2024 General,” Electionguide.org, 2024, <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/4311/>.

⁶ “Cómputos Distritales 2024,” Instituto Nacional Electoral, 2024, <https://computos2024.ine.mx/presidencia/nacional/candidatura>.

⁷ “IFES Election Guide | Elections: Mexican Presidency 2024 General,” Electionguide.org, 2024.

⁸ “Cómputos Distritales 2024,” Instituto Nacional Electoral, 2024.

⁹ “Elecciones 2024 — Instituto Nacional Electoral,” Instituto Nacional Electoral, n.d.

¹⁰ “Conóceles,” Instituto Electoral de la Ciudad de México (IECM), 2024, <https://sirec.iecm.mx/conoceles/resultados>.

a representative of the opposition coalition¹. She did not win the election and lost to the Morena candidate. The data collected about her were not included in the final sample because they were insufficient in quantity and quality. In the Guanajuato, there were three female candidates — Libia García (a representative of coalition “Fuerza y Corazón por Guanajuato” and a winner of elections), Alma Alcaraz (a representative of the Morena Party) and Yulma Rocha (a candidate of the Movimiento Ciudadano)². Total number of units for coding: 11, 9 and 9 respectively. In the state of Jalisco, there were two female candidates — Claudia Delgadillo from the ruling party and Laura Haro from the opposition party — but neither won the election³. The final sample for them included 13 and 12 units respectively. Margarita González (Morena), Lucía Meza (PRI) and Jessica Ortega (MC, or Movimiento Ciudadano) were candidates in the state of Morelos, and the former won⁴. Their data were not included in the final sample due to a lack of necessary data in the specific period. The same situation occurred with the lack of necessary data on women candidates in the remaining states: in Tabasco, with Inés de la Fuente Dagdug (MC) and Lorena Beaurregard (PRI)⁵; in Veracruz, with Rocío Nahle (Morena)⁶; and in Yucatán, with Vida Gómez Herrera (MC)⁷.

Findings

Women Candidates for the Presidency

A review of the results of the two presidential candidates will be done separately, with Claudia Sheinbaum first and Xóchitl Gálvez after. According to the results, the politicians were subjected to the Hostile Sexism the most, with Benevolent Sexism at a lower level. Within Hostile Sexism, the

¹ “Conoceles,” Instituto Electoral y Participación Ciudadana de Chiapas (IEPC), 2025, <https://conoceles.iepc-chiapas.org.mx/>.

² “Candidatas y Candidatos, Conóceles 2023–2024,” Instituto Electoral del Estado de Guanajuato (IEEG), 2023, <https://conoceles.ieeg.mx/#/gubernatura/entidad/candidaturas>.

³ “Candidaturas En Jalisco,” Instituto Electoral y de Participación Ciudadana de Jalisco (IEPC), 2024, <https://www2.iepcjalisco.org.mx/proceso-electoral-2024/cargos-a-elegir/>.

⁴ “¡Candidatas Y Candidatos, Conóceles!,” Instituto Morelense de Procesos Electorales y Participación Ciudadana (IMPEPAC), 2024, <https://conoceles.impepac.mx/#red>.

⁵ “Conóceles,” Instituto Electoral y de Participación Ciudadana de Tabasco (IEPC), 2024, <https://conoceles.iepct.mx/>.

⁶ “Candidatas Y Candidatos Locales 2024,” Instituto Nacional Electoral, April 4, 2025, <https://ine.mx/voto-y-elecciones/elecciones-2024/candidatas-y-candidatos-locales-2024/>.

⁷ “Resultados Electorales,” Instituto Electoral y de Participación Ciudadana de Yucatán (IEPAC), 2024, <https://mail.iepac.mx/micrositios/resultados-electorales>.

gender stereotypes most assigned to women are incompetence and negative appraisals of appearance and sexualisation. In terms of Benevolent Sexism, women's gender conformity in appearance and their sexuality are most noted.

It is worth considering in more detail what has been found about Claudia Sheinbaum. 43 units of Hostile Sexism and 8 units of Benevolent Sexism were coded about her. So, it has already been noted that the code assigned the most was 'Incompetent', namely 25 times, followed by the code 'Ugly/Negative Sexualised', i. e. 13 times. Speaking of Claudia Sheinbaum's incompetence, there have been comments about her lack of ability in governance and that Mexico's future will be under threat under her rule. Examples of such statements are, "Votar por Sheibaum es votar por su clara incompetencia para gobernar" (*To vote for Sheinbaum is to vote for her clear incompetence to govern*) or "Votar por ti sería ver como destruyes las instituciones que rigen nuestra democracia" (*To vote for you would be to watch how you destroy the institutions that govern our democracy*). Units containing an assessment of the candidate's mental ability were also coded in the same way, e. g., "NO ES LAS QUE UNA BUFONA DEL BIENESTAR, RECITANDO NECEDADES A NIVEL DE NIÑA DE PRIMARIA" (*IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A WELFARE BUFFOON, RECITING NONSENSE AT THE LEVEL OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL GIRL-CHILD*). Special attention should be paid to comments that point to the candidate being run by a male politician and her inability to do things on her own, "La señora Claudia es un títere de Lopez obrador porque el le dice lo que debe hacer y si llegara a ganar el que va a gobernar el país va hacer López obrador" (*Mrs. Claudia is a puppet of Lopez obrador because he tells her what to do and if she wins, the one who will govern the country will be Lopez obrador*). The subordination and puppetry of the candidate is particularly evident in images and caricatures (and sometimes even of a pornographic kind), as in the examples of the Images 4, 14 and 15. Speaking of the code 'Ugly/Negative Sexualised', it usually manifests itself in the publication of images that distort the candidate's appearance or show an unfortunate shot, as in the example Images 3 and 9; also the code indicates the hypersexualisation of the female candidate and denigrates her dignity, as in the example image 10. Next in terms of the number of codes are gender stereotypes 'Authoritative' (8 units), 'Unladylike' (5 units) and 'Emotional/Aggressive' (4 units). Comments coded 'Authoritative' indicate arrogance and the importance of the candidate's personal ambitions, "Ahora es la descarada defensora de un régimen autoritario, corrupto y abusivo, cuyo único propósito verdadero es la acumulación y conservación de poder" (*She is now the unabashed defender of an authoritarian, corrupt and abusive regime, whose only real purpose*

is the accumulation and retention of power). Under ‘Unladylike’, feminine gender qualities like kindness and sincerity may be denied, e. g. “No sólo es CORRUPTA, también es mitómana, narcisista, PREPOTENTE, desalmada, etc, etc” (*She is not only CORRUPT, she is also a mythomaniac, a narcissist, PREPOTENT, heartless, etc., etc.*), while under ‘Emotional/Aggressive’, aggressive behaviour is more noted, e. g. “Está siendo ignorante y grosera con los votantes!!” (*She is being ignorant and rude to the voters!!*).

As for Benevolent Sexism, only Claudia Sheinbaum has been subjected to it, when Xóchitl Gálvez has no units with this code. The ‘Beautiful and Sexual’ and ‘Feminine/True woman’ codes are on the same level (4 units for each), and there are only 2 units for the ‘Intelligent’ code. Mostly this is evident in images and photoshopped images that compare Claudia and Xóchitl, extolling the former in beauty, sexiness, dedication, and intelligence. Claudia is portrayed as more beautiful, slimmer, and as a sexualised warrior, while Xóchitl is shown as fat and ridiculous. Examples of this are the Images 2 and 8. The importance of the future president’s beauty is also emphasised, for example, “Si la presidenta es mujer, que sea tan hermosa como ella” (*If the president is a woman, let her be as beautiful as she is*).

The same analysis is done for Xóchitl Gálvez, excluding only the Benevolent Sexism code due to lack of data. So, this candidate was subjected to the same gender stereotypes as Claudia at the level of the first code of Hostile Sexism. Xóchitl Gálvez has been accused of incompetence 33 times, and her appearance has been insulted about 18 times. In fact, speaking of incompetence, the factors here are the same as Sheinbaum’s, i. e., her uneducation and lack of knowledge in governance, “No es ingeniera, ni idea tiene de lo que es ser un ingeniero. Con su nula capacidad no podría superar ni el primer semestre de la carrera, es muy primaria” (*She is not an engineer, she has no idea what it is to be an engineer. With her lack of ability, she couldn’t even get past the first semester of her degree, she is very elementary*). There are even direct insults against this candidate, such as “Eres una ruin, corrupta, payas, tonta sin cerebro” (*You’re a mean, corrupt, clownish, brainless fool*). She is also accused of being a puppet of male politicians and is not capable to do something. This is evident both in text comments like “La cara de Xóchitl Gálvez cuando le dicen en su cara que solo la están usando unos machos como alito y marko entre otros” (*The face of Xochitl Galvez when she is told that she is only being used by macho men like Alito and Marko among others*), as well as in images like 22 and 31. As for the code ‘Ugly/Negative Sexualised’, her appearance is constantly mocked, noting that she is fat and ugly. For instance, “jajajaja

la presidenta es una gorda” (*hahahahaha the president is a fat woman*) and “Pink OLD woman mentirosa” (*Pink OLD woman liar*). More rarely, she was accused of being overly emotional/aggressive or authoritative (2 units each, respectively). More attention is paid to the code ‘Unladylike’, when it was noted that she was unclean as here “XochitlGalvez es una mujer SUCIA, ANTIHIGIENICA, CORRUPTA, IGNORANTE” (*XochitlGalvez is a DIRTY woman, UNHYGIENIC, CORRUPT, IGNORANT*), and disgusted by her behaviour like here “Notaron que Traía el chicle pegado atrás de la oreja? Cuando termina de decir lo del chicharo se lo echa a la boca... guácala!! que mujer tan puerca” (*Did you notice that she had a gum stuck behind her ear? When she finishes of saying about the chicharo, she throws it in her mouth... this woman is so dirty*).

Women Candidates for the Gubernatorial

Describing the results obtained for additional variables, i. e. for female candidates who ran for governor, it shows that none of them were exposed to Benevolent Sexism. Since the level of hostile sexism remains high for each of them, the gender stereotypes for this code will be considered separately. In general, there is a general trend that women are most often accused of incompetence and least of all of excessive emotionality/aggressiveness (with exceptions) and authoritativeness.

Starting with the code “Incompetent”, there are about 5–7 units with such code, what is the highest number of all. This was most noted for candidates such as Libia García, Yulma Rocha, and Claudia Delgadillo. Libia García received comments such as “Si votan por esta mujer, luego no se quejen que hay tantas masacres y violencia en su estado” (*If you vote for this woman, then don't complain that there are so many massacres and violence in your state*) and “eres una política inútil” (*you are a useless politician*) that pointed to her inability to govern the state well. Yulma Rocha has also been subjected to insults that focus on her illiterate speech, “Necesitas ir a clases donde te enseñen a hablar. Muy pobre tu discurso. Expresiones muy... Fuera de lugar” (*You need to go to classes where they teach you how to speak. Your speech is very poor. Expressions very... Out of place*). There were more aggressive comments about Claudia Delgadillo, which were probably related to the publication of a video from a party where she was under the alcohol, “La señora ClaudDelgadillo solo sabe organizar buenas pedotas, de gobernar no sabe nada” (*Mrs ClaudDelgadillo only knows how to organise good alcohol parties, she knows nothing about governing*).

As for the “Bad wife/mother/woman” code, which was applied to absolutely all female candidates at the gubernatorial election level, it is better to consider Laura Haro and Alma Alcaraz as the most susceptible to this gender stereotype (4 and 3 units respectively). Laura Haro was accused of a woman’s role in politics, separately emphasizing that she did not behave like a real woman and vice versa that she behaved like a typical woman: “Pues muy dulce no eres Laura, interrumpiste, manoteaste, levantaste la voz, también ofendiste, tú si puedes por ser mujer o cómo??” (*Well, you’re not very cute Laura, you interrupted, you groped, you raised your voice, you also offended, you can because you’re a woman or why?*) and “Clásico de las mujeres en la política y en casi todos lados..ellas si pueden ofender calumniar y agredir a un hombre pero si tantito les dices algo les respondes pummm violencia de género agresión abuso...clásico” (*Classic of women in politics and almost everywhere..they can offend slander and attack a man but if you say something to them, you answer them pummm gender violence aggression abuse...classic*). Alma Alcaraz was also accused of supporting the government, highlighting the fact that she was a woman (and should not have acted in such way), “Dan vergüenza y lo peor es que seas mujer y apoyes a un gobierno que nos ha dejado solas” (*Shame on you, and the worst thing is that you are a woman and support a government that has left us alone*).

Four of the six candidates were coded by “Authoritative”. For example, it was said about Libia García, “Si así busca el poder cegada por la ambición como será en persona” (*If this is how she seeks power, blinded by ambition, what will she be like in person?*). The other three women were also accused of being arrogant and interfering with the management of the state. Even fewer women were exposed to insults of appearance and sexualisation, only two of them — Clara Brugada (5 units) and Alma Alcaraz (2 units). In fact, Clara Brugada became the only woman whose appearance was compared to “ugly” cartoon characters like the Images 32 and 33, and was also reproached for using Photoshop to be more beautiful. Despite the fact that this applies to almost only one candidate wife, it is necessary to specify the code “Emotional/Aggressive”. So, Laura Haro received 8 coded units, the narratives of which were that she was too rude and did not know how to control her emotions. For instance, “Laura Haro pierde los estribos y se enfrenta a periodistas. La acusan de frivollar la violencia de género, y ella responde súper agresiva” (*Laura Haro loses her temper and confronts journalists. They accuse her of frivolous gender violence, and she responds super aggressively*). Excessive aggression against the candidate about her

emotionality was associated with rather harsh responses to reporters at the debate, which the voters did not like.

Conclusion

The analysis was aimed at the problem of psychological violence against women candidates during 2024 Mexican elections and finding tools and forms of such violence in the social network. Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that the VAW approach has a significant advantage in studying the phenomenon of political violence against women. This approach proposes psychological violence, which is the subject of the present study. It was also proposed to combine semiotic violence and psychological violence under the name of the latter, because, as it turned out, semiotic violence has the same direct goal — to inflict moral damage on women and push them out of politics — as psychological violence. An important contribution of semiotic violence is the tools of violence — text, image, and others. Moreover, with the growing popularity of information technology and virtual communication platforms, psychological abuse has moved into the virtual environment, where value judgements, misinformation and fake news about female politicians spread rapidly.

Also, based on the literature review, it is possible to infer a violent and hypermasculine culture of both the entire Latin American region and specifically Mexico. Despite significant work in criminalising political violence against women, women politicians continue to feel pressured and threatened by both society and male colleagues. The example is exactly what has been studied here, the Mexican election in 2024, which resulted in a woman president for the first time, although she and other female candidates were discriminated. The findings show that female politicians were subjected to a greater extent of hostile sexism, i. e. being ‘punished’ for either not conforming to the female gender role or the male gender role as required in politics. In terms of gender stereotypes, women were most condemned for being ‘incompetent’, ‘ugly’, ‘emotional’, and were negatively sexualised.

Thus, returning to the research question that was stated at the beginning of this paper, psychological violence against female candidates in the Mexican elections was used in an online environment using textual and visual tools. This violence was reproduced in the form of hostile sexism (to a greater extent) and benevolent sexism (to a lesser extent), as well as through gender stereotypes about women in politics. In this way, Mexican female candidates were discredited both as politicians and as women.

*Сведения об авторе***Бабурина Карина Сергеевна,**

Национальный исследовательский университет

«Высшая школа экономики»;

Санкт-Петербург, Россия.

kbaburina@hse.ru

Статья поступила в редакцию: 03.04.2026;

поступила после рецензирования и доработки: 12.04.2026;

принята к публикации: 26.04.2026.

KARINA S. BABURINA*HSE University**St. Petersburg, Russian Federation***PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
CANDIDATES IN ELECTORAL DISCOURSE:
THE CASE OF MEXICO**

Abstract. This paper is devoted to the study of psychological violence against women candidates in the 2024 Mexican elections. The paper analyses the scientific literature in the field of political science and sociology, which examines approaches to the study of political violence against women and the context of Mexico. The VAW approach (Violence against Women) becomes the most influential approach, because it defines the role of gender in the problem and offers a typology of violence that includes psychological one. This research is complemented by the application of theories of gender stereotypes and ambivalent sexism, which explain the role of women in politics and their perception by society. To conduct an empirical part, the method of qualitative content analysis of textual and visual social networks users' publications about female candidates was applied. As a result, it was found that psychological violence against women candidates in the Mexican elections was used in the online environment through textual and visual tools, and reproduced more through hostile sexism and gender stereotypes.

Keywords: psychological violence, political violence, VAW approach, elections, Mexico

For citation: Baburina K. S. Psychological violence against women candidates in electoral discourse: The case of Mexico. *St. Petersburg Sociology Today*. 2026. Vol. 18 No. 2. P. 28–55. DOI: 10.25990/socinstras.pss-18-2.g916-8674; EDN: IAMFGE

References

1. Gutiérrez-Romero, Roxana, and Nayely Iturbe. 'Causes and Electoral Consequences of Political Assassinations: The Role of Organized Crime in Mexico'. *Political Geography* 115 (1 November 2024): 103206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2024.103206>.
2. Nava, Felizardo Carrera. 'Violencia política contra las mujeres en México'. *RD-ICUAP* 7, no. 19 (15 January 2021): 79–90. <https://doi.org/10.32399/icuap.rdic.2448-5829.2021.19.506>.
3. Calderón, María. 'Political Violence in Mexico's 2024 Elections: Elections Gender-Based Political Violence against Women', March 2024.
4. Piscopo, Jennifer M. 'State Capacity, Criminal Justice, and Political Rights: Rethinking Violence Against Women in Politics'. *Política y Gobierno* 23, no. 2 (2016): 437–58.
5. Krook, Mona, and Juliana Restrepo. 'Gender and Political Violence in Latin America: Concepts, Debates and Solutions'. *Política y Gobierno* 23, no. 1 (1 January 2016): 127–62.
6. Krook, Mona Lena. 'Violence Against Women in Politics'. *Journal of Democracy* 28 (1 January 2017): 74–88. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2017.0007>.
7. Soto Santana, Miosotis. 'Justice for Women: Deep Fakes and Revenge Porn', 2022. <https://www.dpublication.com/abstract-of-3rd-womensconf/27-10177/>.
8. Bardall, Gabrielle, Elin Bjarnegård, and Jennifer Piscopo. 'How Is Political Violence Gendered? Disentangling Motives, Forms, and Impacts'. *Political Studies* 68, no. 4 (18 September 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719881812>.
9. Daniele, Gianmarco, and Gemma Dipoppa. 'Mafia, Elections and Violence against Politicians'. *Journal of Public Economics* 154 (1 August 2017). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2017.08.004>.
10. Höglund, Kristine. 'Electoral Violence in Conflict-Ridden Societies: Concepts, Causes, and Consequences'. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 3 (29 June 2009): 412–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550902950290>.
11. Henderson, Conway. 'The Political Repression of Women'. *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1 November 2004): 1028–49. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2004.0044>.
12. Bardall, Gabrielle. 'Gender-Specific Election Violence: The Role of Information and Communication Technologies'. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, no. 3 (1 November 2013). <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.cs>.
13. Phillips McLennan, Lisa, Michele Pathé, and Troy McEwan. 'Gender Differences in Stalking, Threats and Online Abuse Reported by Victorian Politicians'. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 30, no. 6 (23 January 2023): 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2022.2142975>.
14. Koch, Luise, Raji Ghawi, Jürgen Pfeffer, and Janina Isabel Steinert. 'Online Misogyny Against Female Candidates in the 2022 Brazilian Elections: A Threat to Women's Political Representation?', 16 March 2024. <http://arxiv.org/abs/2403.07523>.
15. Richardson-Self, Louise. 'Woman-Hating: On Misogyny, Sexism, and Hate Speech'. *Hypatia* 33, no. 2 (23 January 2018). <https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12398>.
16. O'Hare, Ursula A. 'Realizing Human Rights for Women'. *Human Rights Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1999): 364–402.
17. Kuperberg, Rebecca. 'Intersectional Violence against Women in Politics'. *Politics & Gender* 14 (13 November 2018): 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000612>.
18. Caicedo Roa, Monica, Lourdes Bandeira, and Ricardo Cordeiro. 'Femicídio e Feminicídio: Discutindo e Ampliando Os Conceitos'. *Revista Estudos Feministas* 30 (19 September 2022). <https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-9584-2022v30n383829>.
19. Rogers, Ashley. "'But the Law Won't Help Us": Challenges of Mobilizing Law 348 to Address Violence Against Women in Bolivia'. *Violence Against Women* 26, no. 12–13 (19 September 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219870613>.

20. Buvinic, Mayra, and Roza. 'Women, Politics and Democratic Prospects in Latin America'. Sustainable Development Department Technical Paper Series WID-108 (2004). <https://www.bibalex.org/baifa/en/resources/document/455710>.

21. Sabino, María Jordana Costa, and Patrícia Verônica Pinheiro Sales Lima. 'Igualdade de Gênero No Exercício Do Poder'. *Revista Estudos Feministas* 23, no. 3 (2015): 713–34.

22. Sagot, Montserrat. 'Strategies to Face Violence against Women: Latin American Feminists' Reflections'. *Athena Digital. Revista de Pensamiento e Investigación Social*, 1 September 2008, 215–28. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/athenea.571>.

23. Tzul, Ana Marina Tzul, and Serena Cosgrove. 'Latin America: Introducing the Region'. In *Gendered Lives: Globa Issue*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2022. <https://iastate.pressbooks.pub/workshopdemo/chapter/chapter-7-latin-america-introducing-the-region/>.

24. Schatz, Sara. *Murder and Politics in Mexico: Political Killings in the Partido de La Revolucion Democratica and Its Consequences*. Vol. 10, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-8068-7>.

25. Hernández Huerta, Víctor Antonio. 'Candidates Murdered in Mexico: Criminal or Electoral Violence?' *Política y Gobierno* 27, no. 2 (December 2020). http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S1665-20372020000200008&lng=es&nrm=iso&tlng=en.

26. Espinoza, Alberto Espejel, and Mariela Díaz Sandoval. 'Violencia Contra Las Mujeres En Política En México: Una Propuesta de Análisis Desde Las Caras Partidistas.' *Revista Apuntes Electorales*. 18, no. 60 (1 January 2019).

27. Corral Limas, Dra. Lizbeth Gabriela, Master Alma Yolanda Morales Corral, and Master Verónica Ofelia Lozano Sandoval. 'Gender-Based Political Violence in Mexico: A Complex Assignment'. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 5, no. 8 (20 August 2020): 400–417. <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhs.2020.v05i08.003>.

28. Riabova, Tatiana. 'Pol Vlasti: Gendernye Stereotypy v Sovremennoj Rossijskoj Politike'. *Ivanovskij Gosudarstvennyj Universitet*, 2008.

29. Vidales, Paola, and Carlos Muñiz. 'Women Stereotyping in Political Advertising. Analysis of Gender Stereotypes in Electoral Spots during Election Campaign of Nuevo Leon 2015'. *Comunicacion y Sociedad*, no. 29 (1 January 2017): 69–91.

30. Dolan, Kathleen. *When Does Gender Matter?: Women Candidates and Gender Stereotypes in American Elections*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

31. Van Langenhove, Luk, and Rom Harré. 'Cultural Stereotypes and Positioning Theory'. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 24, no. 2 (December 1994). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.1994.tb00260.x>.

32. Heilman, Madeline. 'Description and Prescription: How Gender Stereotypes Prevent Women's Ascent Up the Organizational Ladder'. *Journal of Social Issues* 57 (1 December 2001): 657–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00234>.

33. Bauer, Nichole. 'Emotional, Sensitive, and Unfit for Office? Gender Stereotype Activation and Support Female Candidates'. *Political Psychology* 36, no. 6 (1 May 2014). <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12186>.

34. Ellemers, Naomi. 'Gender Stereotypes'. *Annual Review of Psychology* 69, no. Volume 69, 2018 (4 January 2018): 275–98. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011719>.

35. Huddy, Leonie, and Nayda Terkildsen. 'Gender Stereotypes and the Perception of Male and Female Candidates'. *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (1 February 1993): 119–47. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111526>.

36. Aalberg, Toril, and Anders Todal Jenssen. 'Gender Stereotyping of Political Candidates: An Experimental Study of Political Communication'. *Nordicom Review* 28, no. 1 (1 May 2007): 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0198>.

37. Connor, Rachel, Peter Glick, and Susan Fiske. 'Ambivalent Sexism in the 21st Century'. In *The Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

38. Glick, Peter, and Susan Fiske. 'Ambivalent Sexism Revisited'. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1 September 2011): 530–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684311414832>.

39. Geus, Roosmarijn de, Elizabeth Ralph-Morrow, and Rosalind Shorrocks. 'Understanding Ambivalent Sexism and Its Relationship with Electoral Choice in Britain'. *British Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 4 (11 February 2022): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123421000612>.

40. Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. SAGE, 2013.

Information about the author

Baburina Karina S.,
HSE University;
St. Petersburg, Russian Federation.
kbaburina@hse.ru

Received: 03.04.2026;

revised after review: 12.04.2026;

accepted for publication: 26.04.2026.