

Online violence against women in politics in Costa Rica (2022-2023). Proposal for a counternarrative to the dominant model

Violencia política digital contra las mujeres en Costa Rica (2022-2023). Propuesta para una contra narrativa al modelo dominante

Violência política digital contra as mulheres na Costa Rica (2022-2023). Proposta de uma contranarrativa ao modelo dominante

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Abstract

The online dynamic has been characterized by harassment, threats, insults, and private data violations that have become everyday practices around the world, perpetrated mainly by men against women. This phenomenon is being studied from a number of different approaches and must not be normalized or minimized in the race toward the digital transformation of the physical world. In Costa Rica alone, in the last year, 1,405,668 conversations with hate and discriminatory language were recorded, an increase of 255% compared to 2021. This research analyzes the entirety of the political social listening in Costa Rica over one year, with a volume of 495,257 public mentions not including spam from trolls and bots, using techniques that combine technology and human ingenuity. Costa Rican female politicians and leaders who participate in debates of ideas suffer the most violence for different reasons that we examine in this study, based on decisions and the current national political rhetoric, while online violence remains a structural practice that grows more intense every day with real, totalizing consequences again in the material world. We reflect on this reality in this study and provide six tactics to shape a counternarrative to the offline cultural hatred that has become ingrained in the digital world.

Keywords:

Gender violence; digitization; women in politics; hate speech; cultural model; social networks

Resumen

La dinámica digital se ha caracterizado por el acoso, amenazas, insultos, vulneración de datos privados son prácticas de todos los días en el mundo entero, principalmente de hombres contra las mujeres. Dicho fenómeno está siendo estudiado desde diferentes focos y no debe ser normalizada ni minimizada en la carrera hacia la transformación digital del mundo físico. Solo en Costa Rica, en el último año, se registraron 1.405.668 conversaciones con odio y lenguaje discriminatorio, lo que significa un incremento del 255 % en relación con 2021 (Observatorio de Comunicación Digital, 2023c). La presente investigación analiza el 100 % de la escucha digital política de Costa Rica durante un año, es decir, un volumen de 495.257 menciones públicas sin spam de *troles* y *bots*, mediante técnicas que combinan tecnología e ingenio humano. Las mujeres políticas y lideresas costarricenses que intervienen en el debate de ideas son quienes más violencia padecen por diferentes causales que se examinan, con base en decisiones y retóricas coyunturales de la política nacional, al tiempo que la violencia digital permanece como práctica estructural que se intensifica cada día con consecuencias reales y totalizantes de nuevo en el mundo material. Se reflexiona acá sobre dicha realidad y se aportan seis tácticas para cimentar una contranarrativa al odio cultural *offline* que se ha imbricado en lo digital.

Palabras clave:

Violencia de género; digitalización; mujer en política; discurso de odio; modelo cultural; redes sociales

Resumo

A dinâmica digital tem sido caracterizada por assédio, ameaças, insultos, violação de dados privados, são práticas cotidianas em todo o mundo, principalmente de

homens contra mulheres. Este fenômeno está a ser estudado a partir de diferentes enfoques e não deve ser normalizado ou minimizado na corrida à transformação digital do mundo físico. Só na Costa Rica, no último ano, foram gravadas 1.405.668 conversas com ódio e linguagem discriminatória, o que significa um aumento de 255% em relação a 2021. Esta pesquisa analisa 100% da escuta digital política na Costa Rica durante um ano, ou seja, um volume de 495.257 menções públicas sem spam de trolls e bots, utilizando técnicas que aliam tecnologia e engenhosidade humana. As mulheres políticas e líderes costarriquenhas que participam do debate de ideias são as que mais sofrem violência pelas diferentes causas que são examinadas, com base nas decisões e na retórica conjuntural da política nacional, enquanto a violência digital permanece como uma prática estrutural que é intensificando-se todos os dias com consequências reais e totalizantes novamente no mundo material. Esta realidade é refletida aqui e são fornecidas seis táticas para cimentar uma contranarrativa ao ódio cultural offline que se tornou incorporado no mundo digital.

Palavras-chave:

Violência de gênero; digitalização; mulheres na política; discurso de ódio; modelo cultural; redes sociais

1. Introduction

Online violence against women in politics is understood as any act of bullying, harassment, threats, insults, data and private information breaches, hate messages, dissemination of sexual content, and any other act carried out on social media, via email, apps, or other cyber space that threatens integrity, dignity, intimacy, freedom, and privacy (Holguín Corral & Castillo Quiñonez, 2022).

It is a widespread practice that tarnishes the digital world equally or more than the physical given the arrival of information and communication technologies (ICT), and that is approached from different intersectionalities: ethnicity or origin (Román-San-Miguel et al., 2022), class or social status (Del Manzo et al., 2023), sexual orientation (Bustos Martínez et al., 2019), and gender (Cabo Isasi & García Juanatey, 2017). This violence could tend to escalate apace with the technological

transformation of humanity and the narrowing of the gap in accessing technologies and the Internet around the world, all without functional regulation and from seemingly fragmented positions of reality (Siles, 2023).

Globally, nearly three-quarters of women have experienced some form of gender-based violence online, while almost two-thirds of those responsible are men (United Nations Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, 2015, cited by Council of Europe, 2022, p. 9). By 2020, 85% of women had experienced or witnessed technology-facilitated online violence, including 74% in Europe, 91% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 90% in Africa (Council of Europe, 2022, citing Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021).

Violent online narratives are a mirror of the physical world and of historical patriarchy, but they can also be stimuli that, in turn, affect the tangible— or offline—physical reality with a greater impact on women and girls, in forms such as physical, sexual, and psychological violence, harassment in the street or at school, stigmatization, isolation, an even femicide and suicide (Castro, 2023, para. 8). This same reality impedes women's empowerment and the development and enjoyment of human rights such as dignity, freedom of expression, personal data protection, freedom from interference with privacy, and access to justice (ONU Mujeres, 2020, para. 1).

As a consequence of these online dynamics, 28% of women who have been victims of cyberbullying have reduced their participation or presence on social media in order to avoid physical threats, sexual advances (40.3%), and/or unsolicited sexual content (32.8%) (ONU Mujeres, 2020). Moreover, after the COVID-19 pandemic, women and girls who use the Internet experience high levels of anxiety, stress, depression, trauma, panic attacks, loss of self-esteem, and a sense of helplessness in their ability to respond to abuse precisely due to the impunity of internet crime, starting with the absence of its criminalization (Donoso-Vázquez & Rebollo-Catalán, 1998, cited by Torrecillas Lacave et al., 2022).

This commonplace situation is related to the unequal access of men and women to technical knowledge and education on the benefits and applications of technology, as well as to the content and methods of teaching relevant skills and the ability of women and girls to use technology and to interact on the Internet without fear of experiencing discrimination and violence (Deligiorgis et al., 2019, p. 77).

In Costa Rica, over the last year, 1,405,668 conversations using hate and discriminatory language have been recorded, with female politicians being one of the most targeted populations (Coes Comunicación, 2023). The year-over-year increase in this practice has been 50%, whereas, as compared to 2021, it soared by 255%, with a more violent tone by men (Coes Comunicación, 2023).

In particular, Costa Rica struggles with engaging in dialogue and reaching agreements on human rights issues, insofar as these violent acts online—as a reflection of the physical reality—are signs of the inability to reach consensus on the understanding of rights, difference, and self-interaction (Tristán, cited by Carmona Rizo, 2023, para. 14). Moreover, women in political positions or the media receive the most hate because the greater their presence in online public spaces, the more they are attacked not only for what they are, but also for their physical appearance, sexuality, and for what they represent in a system of oppression and patriarchal dominance (Carmona Rizo, 2023, para. 16).

This reproduction of offline violence can be classified as either expressive or symbolic. In the case of the former, it involves the physical character in domestic and public spaces, as well as control of access to these public spaces by men; while the latter considers narratives reproducing stereotypes and inequalities, as well as the strategies of invisibilization, ridicule, and minimization (Martínez Toledo & Tristán Jiménez, 2023). Some examples are threats of physical violence and the use of images of female communicators alongside memes, impersonations, etc. Faced with this reality, 29.4% of women ignore the comment, 20.6% block the account, while the remainder check the perpetrator's account and respond (Martínez Toledo & Tristán Jiménez, 2023, p. 12-14).

The present analysis of online violence against women in politics uses as a reference point the first year of the current Administration in Costa Rica (May 2022 to May 2023) and goes beyond the mere disclosure of data regarding these practices *per se*, as a consequence of the specific historical reality. *Ergo*, it facilitates a series of tactics that contribute to: (1) a reflection on the violent reality to prevent it from becoming normalized; and (2) the construction of a counternarrative to the hatred stemming from the offline cultural dynamics that are becoming ingrained in the online arena, threatening to gain ground alongside the digital transformation on the path to the phenomenon known as technological singularity (Kurzweil, 2017).

2. Objectives and methodology

For the online political period under analysis, we obtained 100% of the social listening (Stewart & Arnold, 2017), i.e., everything that is available in text format (not images or videos) on social media with a public profile and where allowed by the network's privacy policies, in addition to news sites, public blogs, and any other website with unrestricted access.

To capture the social listening data, we used Mention® and Digital Adspend®, both specialized platforms, to run a daily search for the period encompassing May 2022 to May 2023. This search focused on mentions related to several political figures in Costa Rica, including the president, vice presidents, ministers, vice ministers, legislative representatives, and other relevant male and female figures in the national political landscape.

During this period, there were a total of 495,257 comments that incorporated predefined keywords, which included the full names of all relevant political figures, the political parties and their acronyms, and pseudonyms or nicknames commonly used to refer to these figures. Moreover, we included tags identified during the collection process that were part of the online political discourse in the country and directly related to a political party or to the members of Costa Rica's Executive and Legislative branches.

Table 1 below presents a detailed breakdown of the percentage of contribution of the different platforms used as social listening tools during the period under investigation:

Additionally, within the methodological framework, we implemented the Boolean search technique (Garijo, 2016), which uses a predefined set of keywords, social media user identifiers, digital tags, and other pre-classified elements to identify a specific actor in the online discourse. Boolean searching offers the flexibility to exclude, include, or associate terms through various possible combinations, which enriches the accuracy and completeness of the analysis. This approach allows for a more refined segmentation of the dataset, thus contributing to the study's robustness and validity.

Regarding geographical scope, the study is confined to content generated within Costa Rica and aimed to collect all mentions made on public social media

Table 1. *Percentage of data contribution by public web platform (May 2022 - May 2023)*

Public web platform	Percentage data
Twitter	34.50%
News sites	30.25%
Facebook	19.25%
TikTok	8%
Instagram	3.5%
YouTube	2.5%
Forums and blogs	1.25%
Other websites	0.75%

Source: Adspend and Mention, September 2023 (Observatorio de Comunicación Digital, 2023b)

sites over a specific period of time. Next, the data collected underwent a rigorous cleansing process by a specialized data mining team, which was responsible for eliminating elements that were considered to be “digital noise” or spam and to discard conversations originated by online trolls or bots (Mazza et al., 2022). This filter contributed to data integrity and reliability, ensuring that the analysis is based on genuine interactions relevant to the study.

The methodology also included a review of the sentiment of the online conversations, where we used a specific algorithm to categorize the sentiment as either positive, negative, or neutral. It is important to note that mentions of disapproval toward an entity or user, negative criticism, aversion to their ideas, and, in general terms, total rejection, are categorized as negative. When a mention or digital content lacks a clearly defined emotional reaction, the algorithm automatically labels it as neutral. This is the case, for example, of journalistic content that is limited to reporting an event without issuing value judgments. This multidimensional approach allows for superior adaptability and precision in the interpretation of communicative dynamics on online platforms.

Once we had compiled, cleansed, and interpreted the quantitative evidence, we triangulated it, on the one hand, with a scientific discussion of the evidence during the Media, Technology, and Society panel of the *Jornadas de Comunicación*; and, on the other hand, with a qualitative examination based on the scientific postulates put forward by the school of critical theory regarding the causes and

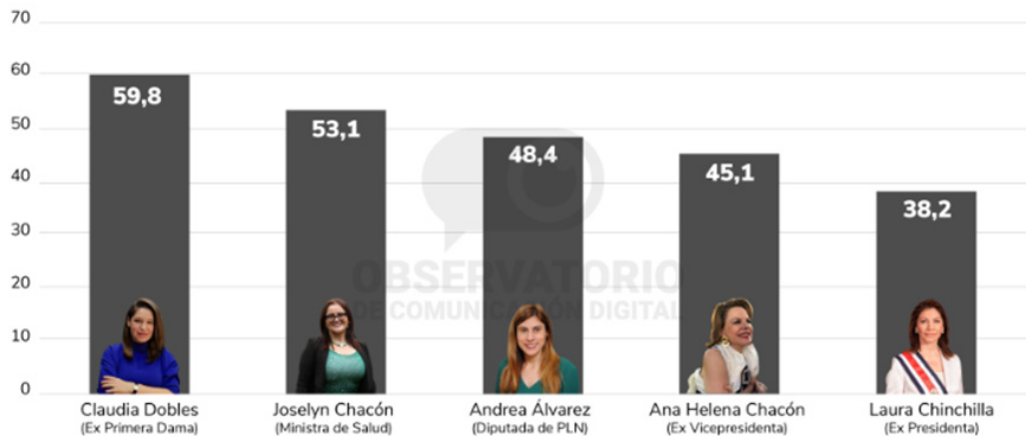
consequences of this dynamic and the volatile, transferable, and determining nature of both the online and offline political reality, in the interest of promoting a powerful counternarrative.

3. Results

Based on the four reports of the Universidad Latina de Costa Rica's Digital Communication Observatory (Observatorio de Comunicación Digital, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b) encompassing the sampled year, we categorized the negative comments made on the profiles and measured the violence against female political figures on social media.

As shown in Figure 1, the public figures that received the highest number of negative comments during the analyzed period were: former First Lady of the Republic, Claudia Dobles, with 59.8%, due to the announcement that the electric

Figure 1. Percentages of negative comments for female public figures (May 8 – August 8, 2022, OCD Report 16)

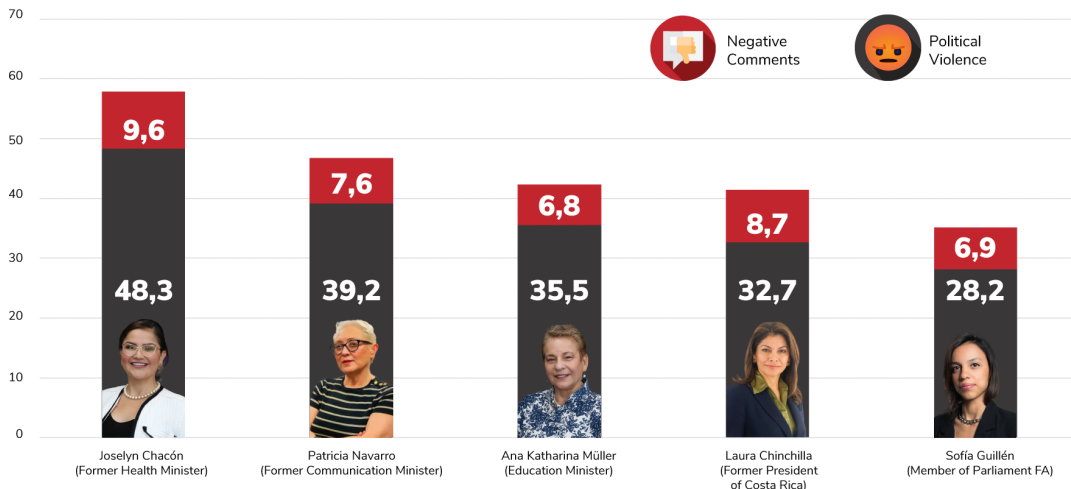


Source: Observatorio de Comunicación Digital, 2022a

train project was discarded (Arias, 2022); Joselyn Chacón, then-Minister of Public Health, with 53.1%, as a result of lifting the vaccine and mask mandate (Marrero, 2022); and representative Andrea Álvarez with 48.4%, as a result of the controversy surrounding the rental of buildings belonging to her family used to house public institutions (Redacción El Periódico CR, 2022). Next, with 45.1%, is former vice president of Costa Rica, Ana Helena Chacón, who was removed from her post as ambassador of Costa Rica to Spain (Mora, 2022); and, finally, former President Laura Chinchilla, with 38.2% after resigning from the National Liberation Party (Murillo, 2022a).

For the period of analysis detailed in Figure 2, Joselyn Chacón, former Minister of Public Health, received the highest percentage of digital violence with 57.9%. Criticism of Chacón stemmed from the use and disuse of masks and the COVID-19 vaccine requirement (Ávalos Rodríguez, 2022). Former Communications Minister Patricia Navarro received 46.8% negative comments due to being removed from her

Figure 2. Percentages of negative comments for female public figures (August 9 – November 6, 2022. OCD Report 17)



Report 16 OCD

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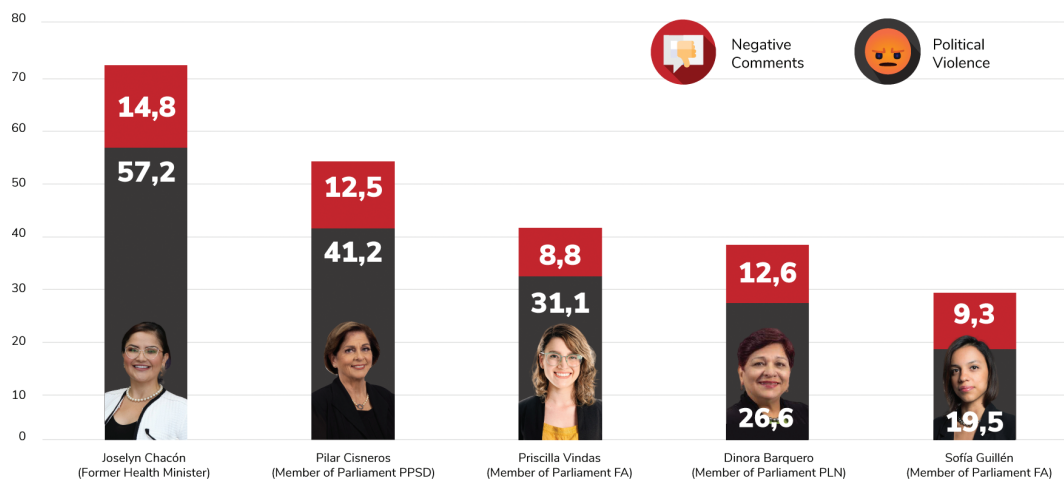
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Source: (Report 17, Observatorio de Comunicación Digital, 2022b)

post for having purchased a 4x4 vehicle in the amount of €60 million (Nacionales, 2022; Ruiz, 2022), as well as for reports from subordinates about workplace harassment (Solís, 2022). With 42.3%, Ana Katharina Müller, Minister of Public Education, received the third highest amount of online violence for having suspended lessons at primary and high schools and childcare networks for one week as a solution to slowing the transmission of COVID-19 (Condega, 2022; Villegas, 2022), as well as for her negotiation of the budget for the Special Fund for Higher Education (FEES, for its acronym in Spanish) (Madrigal, 2022). Moreover, former President Laura Chinchilla returns with 32.7%, criticized for her nomination to the presidency of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (Murillo, 2022b). Lastly, based on the data from this report, Sofía Guillén, representative of the party Frente Amplio, is in fifth place with 35.1% negative comments for her proposal against the sale of Banco de Costa Rica (BCR) and her approval of Eurobonds (Díaz Zeledón, 2022).

Figure 3 and Report 18 indicate, once again, that Joselyn Chacón received 72% negative comments. During this period, Chacón was already the former Health Minister, while the causes of the violent discourse were precisely her resignation (Muñoz Solano, 2023) and her appearance before the Finance Commission of Political Parties During the 2022 Presidential Campaign (Valverde Morales, 2023), among others. In second place is Representative Pilar Cisneros with 53.7% negative mentions, originating from her performance by not having personally proposed any new bills (Ruiz, 2023) and her participation in the Finance Commission of Political Parties During the 2022 Presidential Campaign (Arrieta, 2023a). With 31.1%, Representative Priscilla Vindas from Frente Amplio comes in third, with criticisms that address her participation in a feminist forum in Colombia where she expressed her solidarity with female victims of harassment, rape (Angulo, 2022), and other related crimes. She also sent a message that was perceived as offensive against current President of the Republic, Rodrigo Chaves (Molina Mesén, 2022). In fourth place is Representative Dinorah Barquero with 39.2% negative mentions, criticized for her role as president of the aforementioned Finance Commission (Meléndez, 2023). Lastly, with 28.8%, Frente Amplio Representative Sofía Guillén received negative comments for her participation in the political scrutiny of the threat posed by the Executive Branch to the freedom of expression, in addition to her opposition of the sale of BCR (Alvarado, 2023).

Figure 3. Negative comments for female public figures (November 7, 2022 – February 23, 2023. OCD Report 18)



Report 17 OCD

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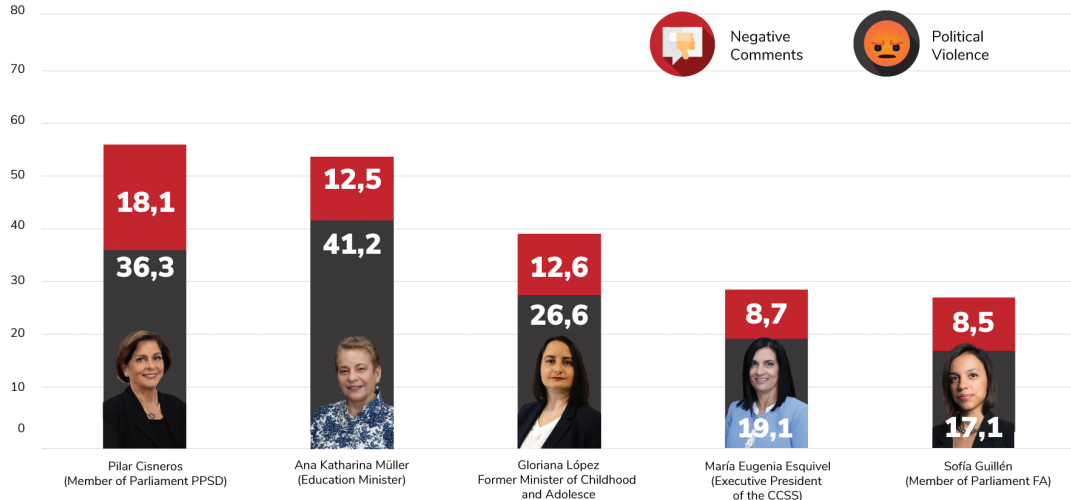


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Source: (Observatorio de Comunicación Digital, 2023a)

The analysis of the last quarter shown in Figure 4 indicates that 54.4% of users made negative comments against Representative Pilar Cisneros in relation to her resignation before the Finance Commission of Political Parties During the 2022 Presidential Campaign (Herrera, 2023), the number of bills proposed, and her current position as representative versus her past role as director of Telenoticias where she was tough on politics (Condega, 2023). With 53.7% is Education Minister Ana Katharina Müller, who received negative criticism for the termination of the agreement between the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) and the Omar Dengo Foundation (FOD, for its acronym in Spanish) (Cordero Parra, 2023; S. Mora, 2023), in addition to statements in which she referred to current students as the “Crystal Generation” and others where she spoke about bullying (Ureña, 2023). In third place is Gloriana López, Minister of Children and Adolescents, with 39.2%. She was criticized for her actions and approach in the case of a minor rape victim, who reported the disappearance of her newborn daughter (Córdoba González et al., 2023). The

Figure 4. Negative comments for female public figures (March 18 – May 31, 2023. OCD Report 19)



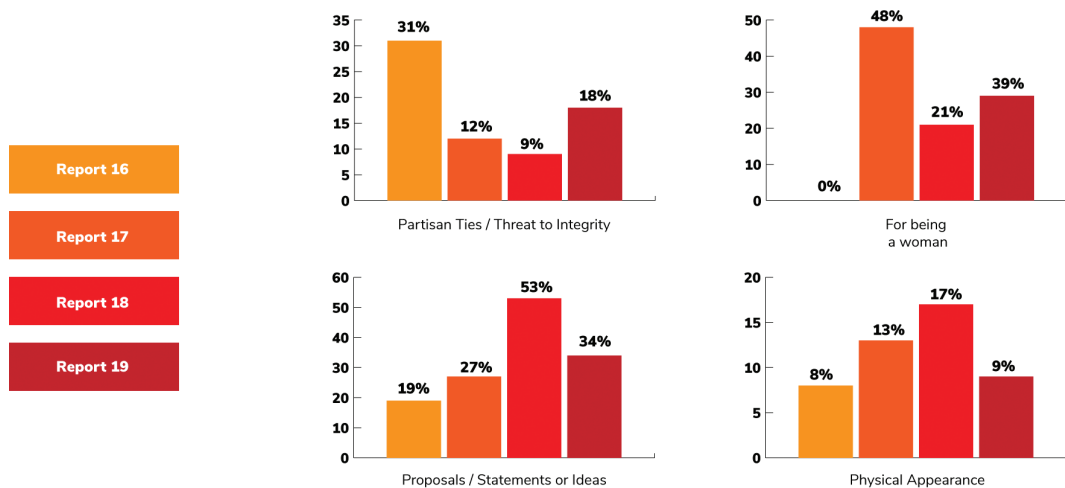
Report 18 OCD



Source: (Report 19: Observatorio de Comunicación Digital, 2023b)

fourth female figure to receive online violence is Marta Eugenia Esquivel, Executive President of the Costa Rican Social Security Administration (CCSS, for its acronym in Spanish) with 27.8%, for suspending the construction of a new public health facility (Nacionales, 2023). Lastly, Sofía Guillén, Frente Amplio Representative, received 25.6% negative comments for her participation in the political scrutiny of the threat posed by the Executive Branch to the freedom of expression (Arrieta, 2023b) and her position on the Jornadas 4x3 project (Arrieta, 2023c).

Of the comments identified in Figure 5, we were able to determine that in the four reports analyzed for the period encompassing May 2022 to May 2023, there is a higher degree of online violence shown toward female figures on the topics of budgets, statements, or ideas; disqualifying comments for simply being female; ties to political parties and threats to their integrity; and comments on their physical appearance.

Figure 5. *Negative comments toward women in politics in Costa Rica*

Negative Comments

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In terms of budgets, statements, or ideas, the most significant results are from the first quarter of 2023, as shown in Report 18 with 53% negative comments, followed by 34% in Report 19, corresponding to the second quarter of 2023. Report 17, representative of the last quarter of 2022, indicates 27%, while, lastly, Report 16 from the second quarter of 2022, reveals 19% negative comments.

A second relevant result is the observation that many of the comments made by the audience were related to the simple fact that the political figures are female. In Report 17, 48% of users made negative comments, while 39% made similar comments according to Report 18, and 21% according to Report 19.

A third finding are the negative comments made by users about the relationship of the female figure to a particular party or those that threaten their integrity. The highest percentage is represented in Report 16 with 31%, followed by 18% in Report 18, and with lower percentages, yet no less important, of 12% in Report 17 and 9% in Report 19.

The fourth indicator related to the nature of the negative comments are jokes about the physical appearance of the persons analyzed. We see in Figure 5 that

Report 18 has the highest percentage of comments of this nature with 17%, followed by Report 17 with 13%, and Reports 16 and 19 with 8% and 9%, respectively. Another important finding we were able to categorize in Report 16 were comments questioning the intellect of female figures in politics.

We can observe that over the course of the year studied, these themes have remained a focus of criticism by users toward public figures, conditioning certain patterns of behavior and thought in society toward women in politics who, for specific reasons, whether circumstantial or structural, appear in the online public sphere, as are the repeat cases of Pilar Cisneros, Joselyn Chacón, Sofía Guillén, and others (Sánchez, 2023).

To understand the violent behaviors on social media, it is essential to recognize that each individual plays a role in the exchange and patterns of behavior. Violence expressed on social media is, therefore, considered a reflection of offline society; it is a manifestation that stems from psychosocial factors.

Likewise, the phenomenon of violence on social media is the result of a combination of factors, including the socioeconomic crisis and the rational action of a specific actor. The violence is explained from the perspective of the subject who promotes an interpersonal relationship between two: the intercultural and social relationships (Wieviorka, 2001). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that violent actions are individual, while the subject is also immersed in a culture that shapes or molds their person.

In order to analyze the diverse behaviors of social media users, it is necessary to contextualize the social system, the social representations of the collective, and its sentiment. Each sector defends the position it considers to be true, that characterizes it, and is the norm in the social organization. From Durkheim's perspective, these structures ensure a dynamic balance of exchange and reciprocity (Barba, 2011). Therefore, the violent comments against female political figures are a reflection of established social guidelines and accepted expressions to refer to this political sector, which only reinforces the violence with each user comment, validated by another, thus perpetuating violence against women.

Symbolic violence is an intrinsic factor in the formation of society, insofar as it can be understood as an online construct. It is through symbolic violence on social media that imaginaries or narratives are constructed, content and messages are defined, and online roles are established, i.e., the "good" and the "bad", in

a seemingly neutral system, free of classes, and also free of conscience (Gramsci, 1986; Gutiérrez, 2005). On social media, we find those who hide behind digitalization, some are simple trolls, while others are groups acting behind what they call online “communities.”

Symbolic violence is imposed in parallel to misinformation and is legitimized in the asymmetric power relations between the various actors, since they are recognized and accepted by the structures as the established order. This legitimacy, from Weber’s perspective, is understood as the order of a set of mandates that are considered valid and binding (Martínez-Ferro, 2010).

Violence against women prevails and the power of the misogynistic cultural model is consolidated. It establishes categories based on the perceptions of those who dominate the discourse and impose their power on social media. It is precisely reflected in the “community”, under a guise of normality, without apparent physical imposition, although not exempt therefrom, insofar as it is transferable, for example, to the streets, homes, or education centers, and/or is a reflection of cultural violence (Bourdieu, 1996; Vargas Huanca, 2021).

4. Discussion and conclusions

The online narratives recorded during the study period constitute dialogic processes that are being increasingly normalized, creating digital realities against women that could stimulate more violent physical realities, which are already violent, precisely because of the intensification of online hatred, all immersed in the current cultural model: masculine, unequal, unjust, apolitical—in terms of the discussion of women’s equality and participation—and hierarchical (Chapman, 1997), spread online.

In the absence of information, the lack of training of women and girls in safe online practices, the lack of victim support services, ignorance on the part of authorities at all levels to provide guidance and not “trivialize” online violence, and national legal frameworks that hinder justice for women (Vera Morales, 2021, p. 42, citing Barrera, 2017; APC, 2017; Peña Ochoa, 2017; Van Der Wilk, 2018), it is imperative to define and communicate straightforward tactics that can be implemented both individually and collectively by women and girls, as well as

by men and other specific groups that are conscious of the physical and online realities.

Thus, online violence takes shape as a mechanism to discipline women who challenge this male digital pattern (D'Souza et al., 2019, p. 83), but also political, as evidenced by the constant attacks on Costa Rican female politicians who are acting in the national public sphere, circumstantially or systematically, on issues of relevance. Along the same lines, it is necessary to question the category of "public sphere" inasmuch as it is usually idealized, becoming an online "arena", whose rhetoric of inclusion masks the constitutive nature of exclusions, generating a distinctive culture that endorses and enables that distinction (Nancy Fraser, 1990, cited by Guerra Palmero, 2009, p. 351).

The silence of women in the face of this reality leads them to hide the violence and allow it to go unreported because they see silence as their refuge; however, at the same time, the risk of being ignored or revictimized by the judicial system itself increases (Vera Morales, 2021, p. 42 citing Abdul, 2017: p. 7; REVM-ONU, 2018, para. 68). When the Costa Rican female politicians who are victims of violence in the social listening stand up and confront the conversation, they encounter violence that transcends the underlying issue and takes aim at their position as women, their intellect, and their very abilities.

In Costa Rica, in 2013 the Legislative Branch initiated the discussion of the current law entitled *Law to Prevent, Address, Punish, and Eradicate Violence Against Women in Politics* (No. 10.325), ratified on May 3, 2022. The text seeks parity and "gender quotas" in politics with evidence of the violence suffered by women (Ley Para Prevenir, Atender, Sancionar y Erradicar, La Violencia Contra Las Mujeres En La Política, 2022). However, the text lacks clarity regarding the online arena and only mentions the digital nature as a quality of certain content on the web, resulting in a lost opportunity to be an instrument of eradication of the violent dynamics created behind a false identity, anonymity, or criminal groups organized online, not only of women in politics, but of all women.

The analysis of this scourge is multidimensional, starting from the fact that the violent narratives are social constructs resulting from an offline reality that suits some and ends up articulating the totality of the public and even private spheres (Stone, 2001). This totality includes key actors and, while it is true that states have direct responsibility, non-state entities, private entities, and civil society,

with an emphasis on women as advocates of and amongst themselves, share the obligation and can act along the same lines.

Therefore, we need training and education for women and girls to empower them to identify and manage violence of all kinds and in all spaces and times. We can begin with (a) differentiating the political relevance of the discussion from the politicized relevance of the narrative. By this we mean distinguishing between the political discussion of substance or the debate of ideas *per se*, which could be intense and respectful at the same time, and the artificial construction of narratives that are inconsequential and that are a spearhead for discrediting and online violence.

From the realm of academia, just as this research does and future scientific contributions should do, we can (b) identify and update the data related to violence, including the types, predominance, nature of the aggressor, and trends, which is fundamental for taking concrete action, both individually and in groups. Hand in hand with this is the urgent need to (c) offer fast tracks for reporting and addressing online violence by the State. For this, authorities must be made aware of the growing problem, since the normalization or minimization of confirmed or suspected acts places women in an even more vulnerable position, verging on femicide.

An understanding of the nature of the differences in the online discussion under analysis allows for reflection on the factors surrounding online violence, which leads to the (d) acknowledgment that each violent situation is unique and authentic, and thus it is possible to legitimize it as such qualitatively by studying it entirely from its origin to its final resolution, even if it goes unpunished. We should also consider the cultural identity of each woman, her individual resources, her real possibility distinct from each social group, especially in the case of a victim against an aggressor, as well as the possible end result under the law because a “law independent of gender” is a fallacy for a gendered society (Dahl & Hernes, 1988, cited by Chapman, 1997, p. 116). Thus, a dialogue about and between the differences is unavoidable, which would allow us to relate people, facts, and stories.

Concurrently, we must (e) not keep quiet and culturally deconstruct the “privatized public sphere” (Guerra Palmero, 2009) that has been created on the Internet. It is necessary to keep in mind that the discussion of the issues, political or

otherwise, on social media is a non-public discussion in the strict sense of the term, because those having the discussion are in a fragment of society with access to the Internet, with relative knowledge of the use of ICTs, among other things; rather, a large majority of people are disconnected from the Internet, lack digital literacy, and are lagging socioeconomically. In the face of this reality, women should not remain silent; on the contrary, they should build a “counter-public sphere” (Guerra Palmero, 2009) that challenges the status quo, the status of mere participants, that expands citizen engagement and elevates the differences instead of suspending them for the sake of a false consensus, a false neutrality, a single narrative that, in the end, is violent, natural, and structural.

Finally, the empirical evidence of this research is pushed toward what is considered “normal” on social media, then we need (f) to identify the “nodes of abnormality” (Guerra Palmero, 2009), a valid task in managing online violence, making an adaptive exercise of the Fraserian proposal (Guerra Palmero, 2009, pp. 357-358) on justice. Therefore, it means identifying the “what”, i.e., what is discussed in the online sphere; the “who”, i.e., who is debating, attacking, defending, being judged, or going unpunished; and the “how”, i.e., the procedure that explains the violent act and its partial or total resolution, including the legislative treatment applied. In this way, the neutral, hegemonic rhetoric of online conversation, as a reflection of offline dynamics, is called into question.

Author’s Contribution

José Pablo Salazar-Aguilar: Conceptualization; methodology; formal analysis; investigation; writing- original draft; writing- review and editing. **Adriana Orellana Fraser Ian:** Conceptualization; methodology; validation; visualization; writing- original draft; writing- review and editing. **Nazira Castillo Alfaro:** Supervision; visualization; and writing- review and editing. All authors have read and are in agreement with the published version of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there are no conflicts of interest.

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