

<https://doi.org/10.23913/ride.v16i32.2945>

*Scientific articles*

## **Violencia política de género: narrativas digitales y discursos de odio en Iberoamérica**

*Gender-based political violence: digital narratives and hate speech in Iberoamerica*

*Violência política contra as mulheres: narrativas digitais e discurso de ódio na América Latina*

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### **Resumen**

El estudio sobre violencia política de género en entornos digitales en Iberoamérica muestra que las agresiones y ataques contra mujeres que participan en la vida pública y política no son hechos aislados, sino prácticas sostenidas que responden a lógicas patriarcales y racistas fuertemente arraigadas en los sistemas políticos de la región. La investigación identifica tres ejes principales: deslegitimación, criminalización y sexualización, que afectan de manera particular a quienes ocupan cargos de mayor visibilidad, por ejemplo, presidentas, vicepresidentas o alcaldesas, estos ejes se intensifican cuando las víctimas pertenecen a grupos históricamente discriminados por su origen étnico, orientación sexual o ideología



política. Estas agresiones circulan y se amplifican en redes sociales sin respetar fronteras nacionales; no solo dañan la reputación y credibilidad de las mujeres, sino que además envían un mensaje disuasorio a quienes aspiran a cargos de poder, reforzando estructuras de exclusión. En este contexto, el trabajo subraya la urgencia de fortalecer los marcos normativos y los mecanismos de denuncia, exigir mayor responsabilidad a las plataformas digitales en la moderación de contenidos y promover un cambio cultural de fondo que elimine estereotipos de género, asegurando que las mujeres puedan ejercer su liderazgo político con respeto, seguridad e igualdad efectiva.

El estudio operacionaliza el discurso de odio como expresiones sostenidas y dirigidas que estigmatizan a las mujeres por género, etnia, orientación sexual o afiliación política, y analiza su prevalencia, marcadores lingüísticos y mecanismos de amplificación en redes sociales; los hallazgos muestran que dicho discurso actúa como motor central de deslegitimación, criminalización y sexualización, por lo que se evaluaron indicadores automatizados y la capacidad de moderación de plataformas, concluyendo que su contención exige respuestas técnicas específicas y políticas públicas coordinadas.

**Palabras clave:** Violencia política, Género, Redes sociales, Violencia digital.

## Abstract

The study on gender-based political violence in digital environments across Ibero-America demonstrates that attacks against women participating in public life are not isolated incidents but sustained practices rooted in deeply entrenched patriarchal and racist structures within the region's political systems. The research identifies three main patterns—delegitimization, criminalization, and sexualization—which disproportionately affect those holding high-visibility positions, such as presidents, vice-presidents, or mayors, and intensify when victims belong to groups historically discriminated against based on ethnicity, sexual orientation, or political ideology. These forms of aggression, which circulate and are amplified on social media without regard for national borders, not only harm women's reputations and credibility but also send a deterrent message to others aspiring to positions of power, thereby reinforcing exclusionary structures. In light of this reality, the study highlights the urgent need to strengthen legal frameworks and reporting mechanisms, demand greater accountability from digital platforms in moderating harmful content, and

promote a profound cultural shift to dismantle gender stereotypes, ensuring that women can exercise political leadership with respect, safety, and genuine equality.

The study operationalizes hate speech as sustained, targeted expressions that stigmatize women based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or political affiliation, and analyzes its prevalence, linguistic markers, and amplification mechanisms on social media; findings show that such speech acts as a central driver of delegitimization, criminalization, and sexualization, prompting the evaluation of automated indicators and platform moderation capacity and concluding that containment requires specific technical responses and coordinated public-policy measures.

**Keywords:** Political violence, Gender, Social media, Digital violence.

## Resumo

O estudo sobre violência política de gênero em ambientes digitais na América Latina mostra que as agressões e os ataques contra mulheres que participam da vida pública e política não são incidentes isolados, mas sim práticas contínuas que derivam de lógicas patriarcais e racistas profundamente enraizadas nos sistemas políticos da região. A pesquisa identifica três eixos principais: deslegitimação, criminalização e sexualização. Esses eixos afetam particularmente aquelas que ocupam posições de maior visibilidade, como presidentes, vice-presidentes ou prefeitas. Eles se intensificam quando as vítimas pertencem a grupos historicamente discriminados com base em sua etnia, orientação sexual ou ideologia política. Esses ataques circulam e são amplificados nas redes sociais sem levar em conta fronteiras nacionais; eles não apenas prejudicam a reputação e a credibilidade das mulheres, mas também enviam uma mensagem intimidatória àqueles que aspiram a posições de poder, reforçando estruturas de exclusão. Neste contexto, o estudo destaca a necessidade urgente de fortalecer os marcos regulatórios e os mecanismos de denúncia, exigir maior responsabilização das plataformas digitais na moderação de conteúdo e promover uma mudança cultural fundamental que elimine os estereótipos de gênero, garantindo que as mulheres possam exercer sua liderança política com respeito, segurança e igualdade efetiva. O estudo operacionaliza o discurso de ódio como expressões sustentadas e direcionadas que estigmatizam mulheres com base em gênero, etnia, orientação sexual ou filiação política, e analisa sua prevalência, marcadores linguísticos e mecanismos de amplificação nas mídias sociais. Os resultados mostram que esse discurso atua como um fator central de

deslegitimação, criminalização e sexualização. Portanto, indicadores automatizados e a capacidade de moderação das plataformas foram avaliados, concluindo-se que seu combate requer respostas técnicas específicas e políticas públicas coordenadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Violência política, Gênero, Mídias sociais, Violência digital.

**Date Received:** October 2025 **Date Accepted:** May 2026

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## Introduction

In recent years, the digital space has ceased to be a mere means of exchange and has become an arena of political dispute. Social networks, and Twitter in particular, have reshaped how public opinion is formed and, simultaneously, how gender-based political violence is exercised. However, it is important to clarify that public opinion regarding women's political performance does not necessarily constitute gender-based political violence, except when it adopts systematic patterns of gender-based delegitimization—defamation, threats, sexualization—that seek to exclude or silence dissenting voices.

Digital violence against women involved in politics is not simply a series of random attacks; it is part of a strategy to discourage and restrict women's participation in public life. These attacks, in addition to directly harming their victims, send a warning message to other women: holding a position of power has symbolic, emotional, and, in some cases, physical costs. In this context, social media plays a dual role: on the one hand, it makes women visible; on the other, it becomes a mechanism of control that reinforces the *sociocultural structures* that have attempted to limit their participation.

The findings of this study and recent research demonstrate that digital political violence manifests itself through delegitimization, criminalization, and sexualization. Delegitimization seeks to question abilities and merits; criminalization resorts to unfounded accusations that damage reputations; and sexualization shifts the political debate toward the body or appearance, diminishing the value of women's experience and trajectory.

In Latin America, structural inequalities persist due to the interaction between gender, ethnicity, social class, and political ideology. The case of Indigenous women, Afro-descendant women, or women with gender-diverse identities shows how violence intensifies when different forms of discrimination intersect.

This article employs a mixed-methods approach (qualitative empirical review and quantitative content analysis): a corpus of 506 publications containing violent language against women in Ibero-American politics was constructed using content mining and natural

language processing (NLP). Automated techniques were applied to this corpus to identify frequencies and co-occurrences, and, complementarily, a qualitative analysis was conducted using manual thematic coding (with double coding and consistency verification) to define and specify analytical categories, such as delegitimization, criminalization, and sexualization, and their intersectional factors (ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and ideology). Ethical considerations regarding anonymity and platform bias were also incorporated.

This research does not simply count how many times these terms appear. It focuses on analyzing their political meaning and social impact. Experience shows that greater visibility leads to more intense attacks: female presidents, vice presidents, and mayors face more organized and persistent aggression. This makes it clear that this is not merely a consequence of media exposure, but rather an obstacle designed to hinder and suppress women's leadership.

On the other hand, analytical frameworks limited to the national scale are insufficient, because social networks erase borders and facilitate the circulation and reinforcement of hate speech beyond any geographical limits; hence the importance of building coordinated perspectives and actions at the regional and international levels, both in the legislative and institutional fields.

Gender-based political violence in the digital world has become one of the greatest challenges for Latin American democracies. Recognizing its patterns and the logic that fuels it is the first step in confronting it. Achieving full and equal political participation for women requires transforming not only laws, but also the practices, political cultures, and digital cultures that, for decades, have endorsed or normalized their exclusion.

The article includes six sections: Political violence against women and social networks; Methodology; Data analysis and characterization of violence; Discussion; Conclusions; and Future lines of research.

### **Political violence against women and social media**

In recent years, social media has become an indicator of public life: it measures the strength of women's voices, but also the resistance that attempts to limit their visibility. Digital violence has become more complex; it is no longer just about sporadic insults, but about strategies that appeal to sexist, classist, and racial prejudices in order to erode credibility and discourage participation. It is no coincidence that UN Women (2018) has



forcefully warned: “Online violence against women in public life intensifies when identities such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or political position intersect” (UN Women, 2018). This intersection of inequalities multiplies the risks and significantly reduces the possibility of influencing the public sphere.

It is necessary to differentiate between the national and local spheres because gender-based political violence takes on different connotations depending on the scale: at the national level, coordinated disinformation campaigns and mass attacks predominate, seeking to shape agendas and discredit public figures (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021), while at the local level, aggressions tend to be more personalized and proximal—combining digital harassment with pressure and rumors in closed networks and community environments—which makes it difficult to make visible and respond to, and makes its effects on participation and leadership more direct and sustained (UN Women, 2018).

The most recent international data shows that this problem is not isolated, but rather part of a systematic strategy aimed at removing women from the center of the debate. Hate and disinformation campaigns are designed to maximize their impact and minimize their detection. Among all platforms, Twitter—or X—remains a particularly sensitive arena due to its speed, politicized tone, and capacity for immediate amplification. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has clearly documented this: “half of the female parliamentarians surveyed reported having suffered humiliating or sexist attacks on social media” ( *Inter-Parliamentary Union, Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments, 2021* ). These patterns make the platform a prime location for analysis using text mining and linguistic processing tools, which allow researchers to track not only the frequency of attacks, but also their origin, logic, and persistence.

From this perspective, the challenge is not only to identify the forms that digital violence against women politicians in Latin America takes, but also to understand the cultural and political structures that allow its reproduction. The goal is to identify the discourses that seek to marginalize them and to demonstrate how these attacks directly affect their participation, presence, and leadership in the spaces where power is truly contested.

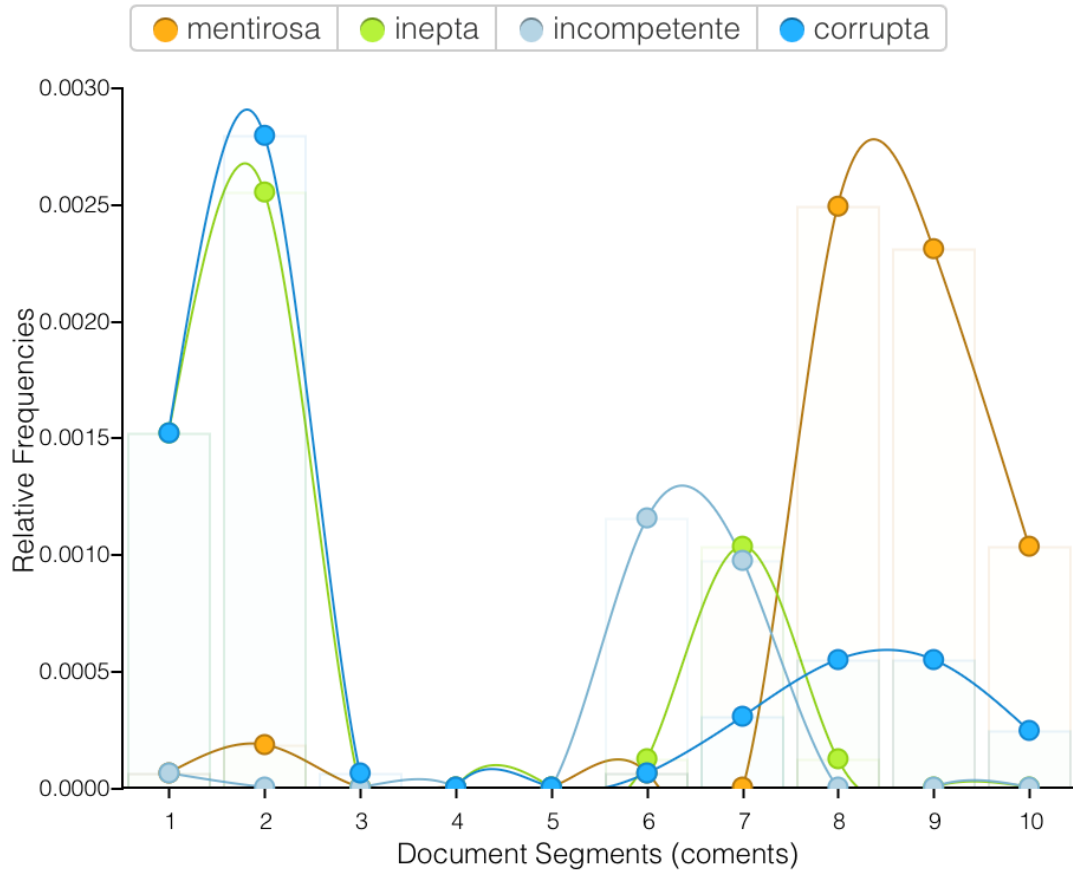
## Methodology

To carry out this analysis, two files were created containing the databases and graphical representations with the formulas used throughout the document.

1. Database File “Women in Politics in Ibero-America” : This file contains detailed information on 238 women who currently hold or have held public or elected office. Key variables include country, age, ideology, political party, term in office, and data on allegations of harassment or violence. It is important to emphasize that, in most cases, there is no publicly confirmed information on allegations, which does not necessarily imply the absence of violence. Many situations remain private, as women often choose not to make their allegations public to avoid repercussions in their political and professional lives. This limitation is addressed by the table of recognized cases, described in the document, which includes testimonies and documented background information, although many do not appear in official records or media reports.
2. Database file “Collection of hashtags and hateful messages towards female politicians” : This file compiles data obtained through automated scraping techniques using the Octoparse tool, grouping various public messages on Twitter that contain derogatory or violent terms directed at female politicians. To build this database, combinations of keywords were designed, including terms such as “incompetent,” “corrupt,” “doesn’t know how to govern,” and other expressions with sexual or classist connotations. Since it is not always possible to find certain hateful messages publicly, a thorough analysis was conducted to identify the discursive lines of digital violence against female candidates. This database allows for the analysis of digital exposure and the types of aggression suffered by women in different countries and time periods.

Both files were used together to correlate digital exposure, women's political and personal characteristics, and the type of violence or aggression they experienced, including cases without public reports. Through text analysis techniques, natural language processing (NLP), and tools such as Voyant Tools, the study seeks to characterize the digital narratives of hate and disinformation that contribute to the delegitimization of women's presence in politics.

**Figure 1.** Hate messages against women politicians



#	Términos	Contar	Relativo	Tendencia
1	mentirosa	101	6,133	
1	corrupta	100	6,073	
1	inepta	88	5,344	
1	incompetente	36	2,186	

Source: Prepared by the author using the database “Compilation of hashtags and hate messages towards female politicians” 2025.

In an analysis of a database of 506 social media posts containing offensive or derogatory language toward female politicians in Latin America, four terms stood out due to their high frequency of use: “liar” (101 mentions), “corrupt” (100 mentions), “inept” (88 mentions), and “incompetent” (36 mentions). These terms were extracted using motion regression analysis applied to a bar graph, allowing for observation of the temporal evolution and concentration of these discourses. The systematic use of these words reveals linguistic patterns that not only seek to question women's political capacity but also to undermine their moral and public credibility.



## Data analysis and characterization of violence

Using a database compiled with Octoparse, which includes detailed information on 20 cases of Ibero-American women politicians who have denounced gender-based political violence on social media, a comprehensive analysis was conducted to identify the main patterns of hate speech. This analysis focused on detecting specific sets of keywords, linguistic formulas, and recurring hashtags that allowed for tracking and classifying groups of violent or discriminatory messages. Thanks to this methodology, it was possible to identify the main directions of hostile discourse, although it was not possible to precisely attribute each comment to a specific country. This is because many of the messages disparage women of different nationalities in a generalized way, making it impossible to establish specific percentages by country—whether Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Brazil, or others. Despite this limitation, the resulting database allows for a deeper analysis of the regional dynamics of gender-based political violence in digital environments.

Five hundred messages collected between 2019 and 2024, containing attacks directed at female politicians in Latin America, were analyzed and classified according to:

- Country of origin of the attack
- Political position of the woman attacked
- Gender-based political violence (GBV) — including misogynistic and sexualized manifestations, professional delegitimization, and unfounded accusations of corruption, among others.
- Frequency by country and political office

This mixed-methods approach, which combines quantitative analysis with qualitative review, follows methodologies recommended in recent studies on gender-based political violence in digital environments, where the importance of identifying both linguistic and contextual patterns is highlighted (Llanos & Barreto, 2021; Montero et al., 2020). Symbolic discrimination and the reproduction of misogynistic stereotypes in public discourse constitute forms of violence that affect women's political participation (López & Álvarez, 2019).

**Table 1.** Political gender violence by country

Country	Most outstanding women	Tactics	Gender-Based Political Violence (GBV)
Peru	Dina Boluarte (President) – 45 messages (9% of the total). Terms: “murderer”, “traitor”, “Fujimorista” .	The association with deaths and the use of labels like “genocidal” is part of a narrative that criminalizes the presence of women in high-risk political positions (International IDEA, 2021). Furthermore, racialized attacks are emerging that reproduce historical ethnic hierarchies.	80% of the messages contained racialized insults, a pattern that confirms that gender and ethnic origin are intertwined as risk factors (OAS, 2022).
Colombia	Claudia López (former mayor of Bogotá) – 50 messages (10%). Terms: “incompetent”, “failure”, “Petro supporter” . María Patricia Arce – 10 messages (2%). Terms: “terrorist”, “coup plotter” .	Attacks are used to delegitimize their governing capacity and political affiliation, a frequent mechanism to limit women's access to strategic positions (UN Women & UNDP, 2021).	55% included violent language with direct threats, evidence of the relationship between symbolic violence and risks to the physical integrity of women politicians (UN Women & UNDP, 2021).
Mexico	Claudia Sheinbaum (President) – 120 messages (24%). Terms: “Narco-Candidate”, “corrupt”, “inept” . Xóchitl Gálvez – 90 messages (18%). Terms: “liar”, “hypocrite” . Olga Sánchez Cordero – 30 messages (6%). Terms: “inept”, “sellout” .	The fabricated link to organized crime operates as a strategy to erode reputation and credibility, a tactic widely documented in the region (International IDEA, 2021). Attacks on Indigenous identities and women's status amplify intersectional violence (OAS, 2022).	78% reproduced gender stereotypes; 45% included accusations of corruption without evidence, a form of political criminalization against women (UN Women & UNDP, 2021).
Argentina	Cristina Fernández de Kirchner – 60 messages (12%). Terms: “corrupt”, “murderer”, “mafia member” . Gabriela Michetti – 20 messages (4%). Terms: “corrupt bitch”, “traitor” .	The manipulation of judicial discourse as a symbolic weapon appears as a recurring pattern in contexts of political polarization (UN Women & UNDP, 2021). Traditional roles, especially motherhood and private life, are also invoked to undermine public authority.	62% of the messages associated women with dishonesty or moral incapacity, reflecting the normalization of gender-based political violence based on stereotypes (OAS, 2022).

Country	Most outstanding women	Tactics	Gender-Based Political Violence (GBV)
Chili	Michelle Bachelet – 40 messages (8%). Terms: “incompetent”, “traitor”, “Chavista” . Karol Cariola – 15 messages (3%). Terms: “extremist”, “violent” .	Their careers and achievements are discredited, a form of symbolic violence that persists even in consolidated democracies (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021). Reducing their decisions to ideological labels functions as a mechanism for marginalization.	70% contained questions about their intellectual capacity, reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes and patterns of political exclusion (International IDEA, 2021).

Source: Prepared by the author using information from the authors and organizations cited in the table

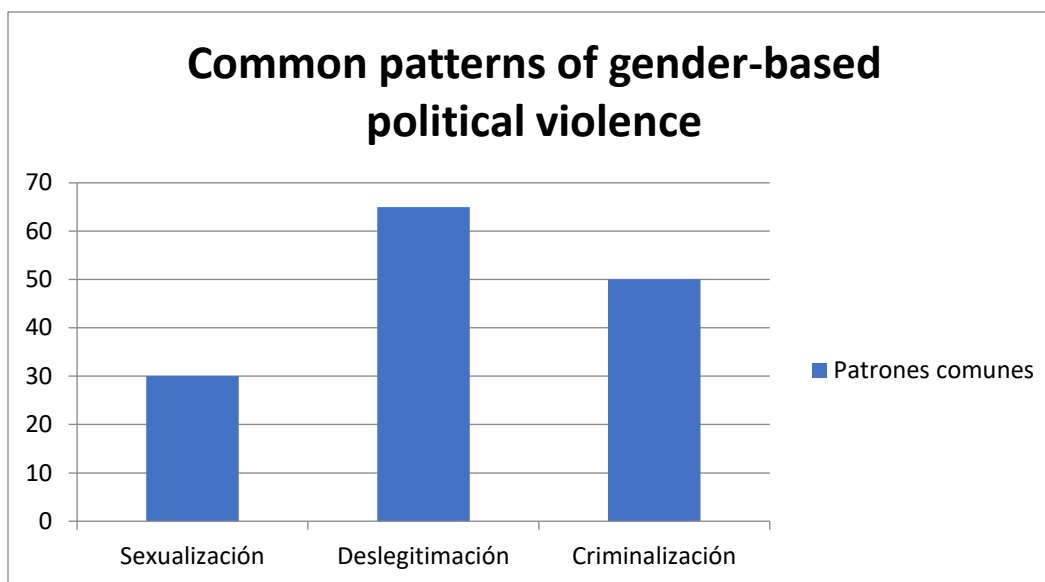
The quantitative and qualitative analysis of messages denoting gender-based political violence (GBP) in Latin America. While data collection using automated tools like Octoparse allows for a broad approach to hate speech, this methodology faces significant limitations regarding the cultural and political contextualization of attacks. The inability to definitively attribute the geographic origin of messages, a product of globalization and the transnational nature of social media, undermines the nationalist analysis that often predominates in the interpretation of GBP. This scenario raises a key question: is it valid to analyze gender-based political violence solely from national frameworks when its reach transcends those borders? More than a local problem, it is a phenomenon that circulates and strengthens globally, requiring a transnational perspective capable of explaining how misogynistic and racist narratives spread and reinforce each other beyond state boundaries, as noted by Crenshaw (1991) and Morales & González (2022).

In turn, the recurrence of practices such as sexualization, delegitimization, and criminalization demonstrates that these are not isolated incidents, but rather manifestations of symbolic violence deeply rooted in patriarchal and racist structures that permeate much of the region's political systems. Far from being mere statistics, these dynamics reveal power dynamics that seek to restrict women's participation by imposing negative and dehumanizing images of their role in politics.

Violence ceases to be understood as a momentary response and reveals itself as a constant mechanism that sustains and reproduces gender and class hierarchies. Hate speech not only erodes the image and credibility of women, but also validates exclusionary practices

that reduce their real opportunities for democratic participation, creating a terrain in which symbolic violence acts as a prelude to and reinforces physical and political violence.

**Figure 3.** Patterns of Gender-Based Political Violence



Source: Prepared by the author using information from the database “Collection of hashtags and hate messages towards women politicians” 2025.

These patterns identified in Figure 3—delegitimization (65%), criminalization (50%), and sexualization (30%)—align with empirical evidence from recent studies analyzing digital discourse against women politicians in Latin America. For example, an analysis of 1,200 tweets against Mexican female candidates in 2021 revealed that 62% contained professional delegitimization and 48% unfounded criminalization, patterns that coincide with those observed in our database of 506 posts (Ríos Sierra, 2019; Llanos & Barreto, 2021). Similarly, a 2023 regional mapping documented that sexualization accounts for 25–35% of online attacks, intensifying in highly polarized contexts such as presidential elections (Piscopo, 2022; International IDEA, 2021).

The most frequent form of violence is delegitimization, which manifests as attacks designed to question their qualifications, experience, or personal integrity. This form of violence not only undermines the authority of those who suffer it but also reactivates patriarchal prejudices that portray them as lacking the skills to hold public office. As López and Álvarez (2019) point out, this practice reinforces structures of male domination and

weakens public trust in female leadership, sending a message that can discourage other women seeking to become involved in political life.

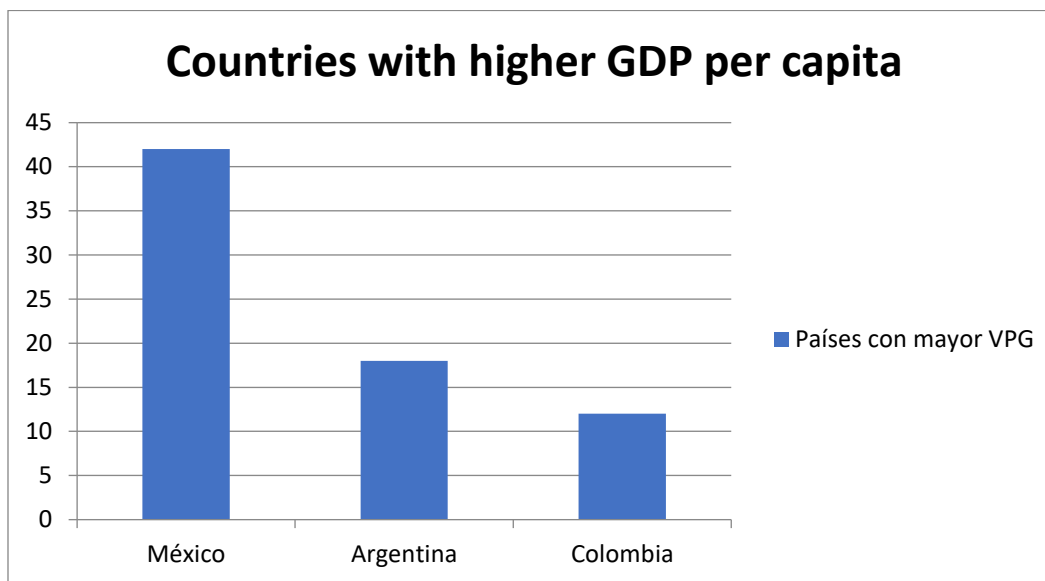
The second pattern is criminalization (50%), which takes the form of unsupported accusations, ranging from calling them “corrupt” to associating them with alleged illicit activities, with the aim of damaging their reputation and isolating them from the public sphere. This tactic is part of a repertoire of symbolic violence that, without any evidence, seeks to tarnish their record, undermine their credibility, and promote their political isolation (Celis et al., 2018).

Sexualization (30%) operates through objectification, reducing women to their physical appearance or sexual attributes. This type of attack stems from a patriarchal view that diminishes their work in politics and shifts the focus of the debate from their abilities and proposals to their bodies.

The information presented in the graph shows how these symbolic mechanisms intertwine to suppress, discredit, or exclude women from the political sphere. The persistence of such patterns confirms the urgent need for robust legal frameworks and effective institutional policies that recognize and punish gender-based political violence as a serious human rights violation.

The consistency of these findings is strengthened when compared with transnational research: Rheault et al. (2019) analyzed 100,000 global tweets and found that female politicians receive 2.5 times more moralizing and sexualized attacks than their male counterparts, while in Latin America, studies from 2023-2025 confirm similar percentages (65% delegitimization) for figures such as female presidents and mayors, corroborating the persistence of these symbolic mechanisms despite legal frameworks such as the Belém do Pará Convention (UN Women & UNDP, 2021; Krook, 2020).

**Figure 4.** Countries with the highest levels of gender-based political violence



Source: Prepared by the author using information from the database “Compilation of hashtags and hate messages towards women politicians” 2025

The chart “Countries with the Highest Rates of Gender-Based Political Violence” shows the proportion of reported cases per nation, placing Mexico first with 42%, followed by Argentina with 18% and Colombia with 12%. These figures reveal significant differences between countries and demonstrate how this form of violence continues to be an obstacle to women's political participation, as well as an indicator of the gaps in the effective protection of their political rights.

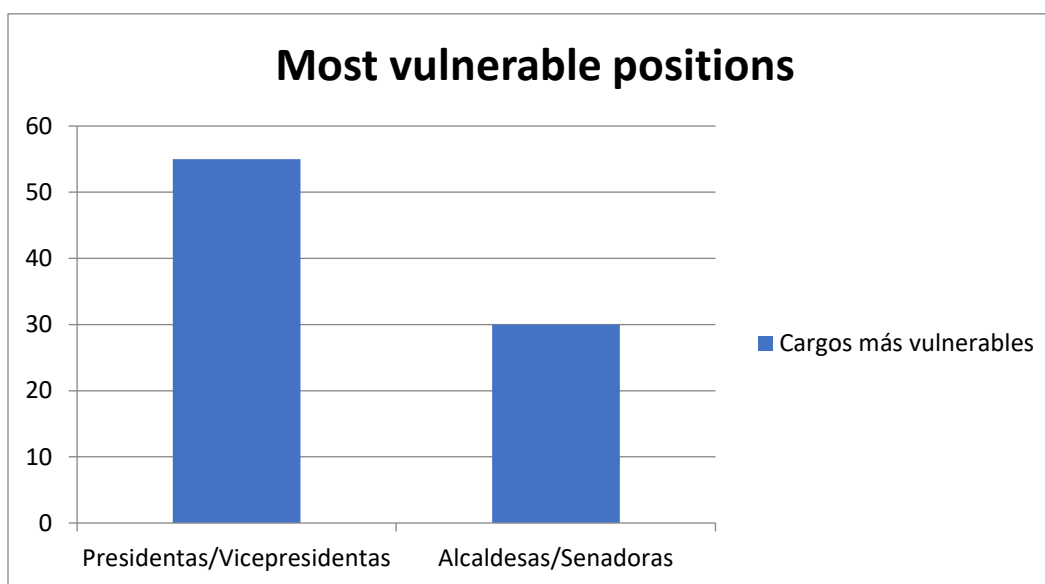
In the Mexican case, the high percentage coincides with what has been documented by various studies: despite having laws that guarantee parity, systematic practices of harassment, threats, and smear campaigns against women holding public office persist (Ríos Sierra, 2019). This scenario is due, on the one hand, to the persistence of deeply rooted patriarchal structures and, on the other, to insufficient institutional capacity to prevent and punish such aggressions.

In Argentina and Colombia, although the percentages are lower, gender-based political violence remains a significant problem and a challenge. There, attacks often take the form of messages and narratives that question women's capacity, authority, and legitimacy in the exercise of their roles. This type of discourse reinforces gender stereotypes and limits the possibilities for political participation on equal terms (Freidenberg & Caminotti, 2018). This geographical distribution of violence also reflects asymmetries in

regulatory frameworks, the integration of protection policies, and the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms. As Biroli (2018) indicates, violence against women in politics is rooted in sexist values, practices, and institutions. As a reaction to the presence of women in public life, it targets both those who compete in electoral processes and hold representative positions, as well as activists. Its dynamics target women's bodies as much as their voices and public identities—that is, their physical, moral, and material conditions for being political and participating in public action.

The results presented in Figure 4—with Mexico having the highest percentage of detected cases—are consistent with studies documenting the persistence of systematic campaigns to discredit and harass women politicians in contexts where formal parity does not translate into effective protection. These dynamics are explained by both enduring patriarchal structures and institutional gaps in prevention and punishment (Ríos Sierra, 2019; International IDEA, 2021). Comparative research also indicates that national variations reflect asymmetries in regulatory frameworks, the inspection capacity of electoral bodies, and digital platform moderation strategies—factors that intensify the visibility and impact of symbolic violence in countries with higher levels of media polarization (Piscopo, 2022; UN Women & UNDP, 2021).

**Figure 5.** Gender-Based Political Violence: Most Vulnerable Positions



Source: Prepared by the author using information from the database “Collection of hashtags and hate messages towards women politicians” 2025.

The graphic titled “*Most vulnerable positions*” This reflects the percentage distribution of gender-based political violence according to the type of position held by women in the public sphere. The data shows that 55% of attacks are directed at women holding the positions of President or Vice President, while 30% affect female Mayors or Senators. This difference reveals a significant trend: the higher the rank and political visibility, the greater the exposure to forms of symbolic and discursive violence.

From a theoretical perspective, this relationship can be interpreted as an expression of the structural resistance women face when accessing historically masculinized spaces of power. Gender-based political violence is rooted in sexist values, practices, and institutions. Its purpose is not only to affect the woman who suffers it, but also to limit women's political participation in general, questioning their legitimacy as interlocutors and sending a warning message to other women who might aspire to public office (Biroli, 2018, p. 681). These aggressions not only harm those who receive them, but also send a warning signal to other women considering running for high-level positions. The fact that the highest levels of violence are concentrated against women in executive or high-profile positions reveals that this violence is not a collateral effect, but rather a mechanism of symbolic control. It seeks to undermine their legitimacy, question their authority, and discourage their leadership, not only for themselves but as a collective warning to all women who might aspire to those spaces (Bardall, 2019).

The issue goes beyond a specific political dispute: it is a struggle to redefine power from a gender perspective. The figures are not merely objective statistics; they reveal a deep-seated structure where gender becomes a factor that increases the vulnerability of those who assume political responsibilities, conditioning their leadership capacity and their legitimacy in the eyes of society.

Given this reality, it is essential that institutions and legislation intervene, establishing conditions that guarantee that women can fully participate in public life, without facing violence or discrimination of any kind.

## Discussion

The results obtained confirm that gender-based political violence in digital environments not only persists but also operates with greater complexity. The repeated use of terms such as “liar,” “corrupt,” “inept,” and “incompetent” reveals a structural pattern of delegitimizing women. This finding aligns with the work of Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2020), who demonstrate that violence against women in politics is rooted in deeply ingrained stereotypes that systematically question their suitability. Similarly, comparative studies in Latin America (Piscopo, 2022) have noted that these narratives are reproduced regardless of ideology or level of government, reinforcing their structural nature.

Analysis of the collected messages reveals that delegitimization and criminalization are the most frequently used mechanisms to erode women's public credibility. This aligns with the findings of Rheault, Rayment, and Musulan (2019), who demonstrated that women are subjected to more moralizing attacks associated with alleged misconduct, even without evidence.

The intensification of attacks against female presidents, mayors, and high-profile women leaders reaffirms the point made by Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo (2020): greater power leads to greater violence. This correlation is explained by the resistance to recognizing female leadership in historically male-dominated spaces, as shown by studies on institutional masculinization and dynamics of gender exclusion. Likewise, our results align with those identified by Hayes and Lawless (2016) in the United States and Spain, where digital attacks increase when women's presence in public debates grows.

International comparisons reinforce the transnational dimension of online harassment: regional studies show consistent patterns—smear campaigns, the construction of alleged technical incompetence, and the use of gender-based insults as a silencing strategy—that are fueled by disinformation, algorithmic dynamics, and persistent misogynistic discourse. This indicates that what is observed in the region also stems from supranational structural processes and not just local circumstances (ECLAC, 2024). The results align with this diagnosis: the normalization of online attacks and the limited capacity for sanctions perpetuate a cycle of impunity that various studies—for example, Biroli, 2018—have already identified as a structural obstacle.

These convergences and contrasts allow us to precisely define the scope of the study. On the one hand, it corroborates trends widely described in the international literature; on the other, it provides detailed empirical evidence on the intensity, language, and logic of attacks

in Ibero-American contexts. Furthermore, the analysis reveals still relatively unexplored areas, such as the relationship between algorithms, political emotionality, and the escalation of hate, opening new avenues of research to understand how these discourses are transformed in a digital ecosystem that is increasingly hostile to women.

The patterns identified in this study make more sense when placed within the dynamics of public opinion formation and mediation: *agenda-setting processes*—the process by which the media and actors prioritize issues that are perceived as relevant—and *framing*—the selection and emphasis of certain elements of reality to guide the public interpretation of an issue—determine which issues and which interpretive frameworks prevail, while algorithmic architectures and platform moderation decisions condition which aggressions are amplified and how they are socially perceived (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993; Gillespie, 2018). In contexts of high polarization, the confluence between media narratives, fragmented information ecosystems and disinformation circuits facilitates the institutionalization of delegitimization, criminalization and sexualization campaigns as constitutive elements of the public agenda, increasing the symbolic and material damage towards women politicians (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Tufekci, 2015).

## Conclusions

In the digital sphere, forms of gender-based political violence manifest themselves, such as systematic *trolling*, defamation and delegitimization campaigns, *doxxing*, threats, sexualization, dissemination of non-consensual intimate content, and the use of *deepfakes* and fake profiles to discredit women in politics. Artificial intelligence plays a central role in amplifying and sophisticating these attacks—through *bots*, recommendation algorithms that viralize misogynistic content, and tools for generating synthetic material—increasing their scale, speed, and personalization capabilities. In response, the Model Law of the Organization of American States—developed by the Inter-American Commission of Women—constitutes an essential normative framework that recognizes these practices as human rights violations and proposes responsibilities for platforms and states, as well as prevention, sanction, and redress mechanisms adapted to the digital dimension. The analysis reveals that the most frequent aggressions—delegitimization, criminalization, and sexualization—are not solely the result of ideological disputes. These practices stem from patriarchal and racist structures that remain prevalent in the region's political systems. Associating women with supposed incompetence, corruption, or a lack of moral integrity not

only damages their image but also undermines public trust in their leadership. These strategies, repeated across different countries and levels of government, operate as a symbolic control mechanism to maintain power in male hands.

One of the most worrying elements is that the intensity of the violence increases as women rise to positions of greater visibility. Presidents, vice presidents, and mayors are targeted with attacks that combine personal attacks with challenges to their institutional legitimacy. This suggests that gender-based political violence is not a side effect of electoral competition, but rather a deliberate tool to hinder women's advancement and progress in positions of power.

The intersectional dimension of the problem (an approach that understands inequalities as part of a “matrix of domination” in which race, gender, class, and other categories intertwine to produce unique experiences of oppression or privilege) further exacerbates this situation. Indigenous and Afro-descendant women face forms of violence where gender intertwines with racism, homophobia, or classism. This intersection of discrimination demonstrates that not all women face the same intensity or the same forms of aggression, and that response policies must consider these differences to be truly effective.

Added to this is the transnational nature of social media, which transcends any analysis based solely on national borders. Hate speech travels unchecked and finds a response in multiple countries, requiring the development of international cooperation mechanisms to track, report, and punish this type of behavior. Limiting our focus to national indicators risks minimizing a problem that thrives on narratives shared across geographical boundaries.

There are normative and operational responses to digital gender-based political violence: inter-American frameworks such as the OAS-CIM Model Law (MESECVI, 2016), national reforms and laws that include social media, and rulings that recognize and sanction it (for example, SRE-PSC-240/2024 of the Mexican Electoral Tribunal; ruling of the Supreme Court of Spain, 2023). In addition, there are community guidelines from platforms (Meta, X/Twitter, WhatsApp) and practical manuals (INE Mexico, Friedrich Ebert Chile, UNDP) that provide guidance on reporting, preserving evidence, and protective measures, combining regulation, jurisprudence, platform policies, and support tools.

It is advisable to strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks so that gender-based political violence in the digital sphere is recognized as a serious human rights violation and a direct threat to democratic principles. This requires precise laws, accessible and effective

reporting procedures, and clear commitments from digital platforms to remove or penalize content that endangers the dignity and integrity of women.

However, the response cannot be limited to the legal sphere. A structural cultural transformation is needed to promote equality in education, eradicate stereotypes, and guarantee safe environments where women can exercise their leadership with respect and without fear. A truly inclusive democracy cannot allow women's participation to be an exception; it must embrace and protect it as a central element of political life and the full exercise of citizenship.

A comprehensive and operational approach is proposed: harmonizing and updating legal frameworks with rapid reporting and redress protocols; requiring platforms to be transparent, accountable, and subject to external audits on content moderation and removal; implementing digital literacy and gender-based violence prevention programs for officials, campaign teams, and judicial authorities; creating specialized inter-institutional units with an intersectional perspective to investigate and punish transnational attacks; funding psychosocial support networks and legal assistance for victims; promoting technical standards that mitigate the algorithmic amplification of hate; and establishing public regional observatories that measure incidence, evaluate policies, disseminate best practices, and facilitate cooperation between states and civil society.

### **Future lines of research**

The analysis reveals key points that need further exploration. One of these is the transnational nature of the attacks: digital violence travels without borders, and although the patterns are clear, the coordination, replication mechanisms, and actors involved in this circulation remain to be understood. This phenomenon requires methodologies that allow for real-time tracking of narratives and distinguish between organic trends and deliberate actions aimed at discrediting specific leaders.

Another necessary line of inquiry is the in-depth study of the automation of violence. Although the analysis identified consistent linguistic patterns, the true impact of fake accounts, *bots*, or networks programmed to amplify hate could be studied more precisely. A more technical analysis, combining data mining with network analysis, would allow for the identification of nodes, coordination chains, and moments when violence is artificially triggered. Understanding this structure is the first step in confronting digital impunity.

It is also necessary to thoroughly analyze the emotional, political, and professional impact that these types of attacks have on the women who experience them. The platforms reveal the symptoms, but not the consequences. Qualitative research is needed to document the internal experience of the violence: what strategies are activated to cope, what costs are paid, and how it influences the decision to continue, resign, or withdraw from the public sphere. This approach would allow us to understand the magnitude of the harm.

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