

CCS proposal for adding a battery on harassment and intimidation towards political candidates

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Abstract: There is growing concern about hostility toward candidates in election campaigns. For women, in particular, this may explain why they are reluctant to engage in election campaigns. Scholars have started to focus both on violence toward women in politics and, as politics becomes more divisive and uncivil, harassment of both men and women on the campaign trail. This proposal includes a set of five questions to be included in the comparative candidate survey that seeks to capture and explore cross-nationally the experiences of sexism and harassment among candidates.

Rationale:

Until now, due to its pervasive nature for regime change and democratic consolidation, the research on electoral violence has focused on contexts where institutions are weak and violence of other nature is high (Höglund 2009; Ponce 2019; Richani 2013). One key element of this literature is that electoral violence towards candidates and voters is intertwined with other forms of violence prevalent in the country. That makes it possible to attribute a rise in electoral related violence to a worsening of the national political conditions, either by civil unrest, weak institutions or the raise of violent interest groups (Kleinfeld and Barham 2018; Mares and Young 2016).

Recently, the issue of harassment and intimidation of women politicians in long-established democracies is emerging as an international source of concern (Collignon and Rüdig 2020; Herrick et al. 2019; Krook 2018; Kuperberg 2018). Regional and international organizations have taken the lead to implement actions taken to prevent violence directed to women in politics (Krook 2017, 2020; Krook and Restrepo Sanin 2019; UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women 2018). But the majority of efforts have focused on the conceptualization and definition of violence against women in politics or gendered political violence (Bardall 2020; Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo 2019), with less emphasis on understanding the empirical implications of this problem.

Despite emerging global attention and international efforts to tackle the problem of abuse of female political actors, there are still some challenges. First, current research focuses on women but without comparing their experiences to those of men (Bjarnegård 2018)). Second, they refer to anecdotal evidence and testimonials but lack of systematization to allow comparisons over time and between vulnerable groups (Kuperberg 2018, Bjarnegård 2018, Ballington 2018). Third, the lack of comparative research makes it difficult to understand how violence against women (and men) in politics travel between different national contexts (Collignon, Sajuria, and Rüdig 2019).

This proposal presents a set of questions focused on acts of harassment and intimidation committed towards candidates during the electoral campaign and gendered violence. They are based on recent research that has found that harassment and intimidation towards Parliamentary candidates, particularly women, are more widespread than previously thought (Collignon and Rüdig 2020), that it manifests differently in developed and developing countries (Collignon, Sajuria, and Rüdig 2019) and have deep consequences for the political participation of women (Håkansson 2018) and on the experience gained on the ground by UN women while making efforts to tackle this issue.

There have been some efforts among members of the CCS team to implement questions on this topic on some of the country surveys (see Javier Sajuria in Chile, Wolfgang Rüdig in UK and Germany and Sofia Collignon in the UK and Mexico). Therefore, question-wording has already been piloted and successfully adopted by researchers and practitioners. Including such questions formally on the CCS questionnaire will allow researchers to measure and understand experiences of harassment, intimidation and violence across a large number of countries, analyse gender differences in these experiences and how other aspects of campaigns and candidate characteristics explain them. In addition to this proposal, an ERC advanced grant application is being submitted by Prof Banducci. If awarded, the grant will help national teams with the translation of the battery and will fund a workshop to disseminate the results.

Questions proposed not currently on CCS questionnaire:

Q1 During election campaigns, some candidates may feel safe while others may be worried about their personal safety. Using a scale where 0 means 'very safe' and 10 'very unsafe', how safe did you feel during the **XXX** election campaign?

Using a scale where 0 means 'very safe' and 10 'very unsafe', where would you place yourself?

Very safe Very unsafe
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q2 During election campaigns, some candidates may experience harassment, intimidation and threats to their security. How often did you **personally** experience any of the following **during the XXX election campaign?**

Answer: (1) no, (2) once or a few times and (3) several/many times

During the election campaign, somebody ...

- Physically attacked you, hit you or thrown something at you?
- Threatened to harm you, your family, campaign staff or others close to you?
- Interfered with your property or campaign assets (e.g. car, campaign office and materials)?
- Posted offensive sexual comments, pictures or videos in relation to you or used hate speech in relation to your gender on social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc)?
- Posted other abusive, insulting or threatening comments on social media?
- Belittled and insulted you as a person, in meetings, public events and debates?
- Touched, hugged or kissed you against your will or forced you sexually to do things you don't want?

Q3. During the campaign, some candidates are portrayed in a stereotypical, offensive or humiliating way. Has any of the following happened to you during the XXX campaign?

Answer: YES/NO

- Media mainly focused on your appearance (clothes, hairstyle, makeup) instead of your campaign and ideas
- Campaign messages by opponents presented you as inferior or unfit to lead because of your gender
- Voters were less likely to see you as a good political leader because of your gender
- Some members of your party suggested during the selection process that you did not have the right qualification or were not qualified enough to be a candidate

Q4. Which, if any, of the following things have you done during the XXX election campaign for reasons of personal security? Answer: (1) no, (2) a few times and (3) frequently

- I avoided face -to-face campaign activities (political meetings, rallies, canvassing)
- I avoided using social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, ect) for campaign purposes
- I avoided campaigning on my own

Q5 Please indicate how much do you agree with the following statements on harassment, intimidation and hate speech in politics?

Answer: Strongly disagree (1); Disagree (2); Neither agree nor disagree (3); Agree (4); Strongly agree (5)

- Abusive and intimidatory speech are part of being in politics and there is nothing to be done about it
- Enforcing rules against abuse, harassment and intimidation means interfering with politics

- Candidates speaking publicly about the harassment and intimidation they have experienced are perceived as strong

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