



MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„Perception of gender-based hate speech on social media by
Slovak female politicians“

verfasst von / submitted by

Veronika Nemcová

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (MSc)

Wien, 2023 / Vienna 2023

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 066 550

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Communication Science

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Jörg Matthes

Table of content

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
 - 2.1 Females in politics
 - 2.2. The case of Slovakia and Slovak political environment
 - 2.3 Online social media platforms and Politics
 - 2.4 Hate Speech on social media current regulations
 - 2.5 Gender-based hate speech
3. Methodology
4. Findings
5. Conclusion
6. Limitations and practical implications
7. References
8. Appendix
9. Abstract (English)
10. Abstract (Deutsch)

Perception of gender-based hate speech on social media by Slovak female politicians

INTRODUCTION

How do women in politics perceive misogyny and gender based-hate speech on social media? Should the government or social media platforms be more regulated in order to control the amount of this type of speech?

This study aims to deepen the arguments and perceive how gender-based hate speech (GBHS) influences female political figures. Semi-structured interviews with Slovak female members of Parliament will be conducted on the perception and influence of this type of hate speech. Bardovič (2018) states that “currently, there is no clear consensus in the academic literature about the impact of the Internet on politics” (p. 27). In the 21st century, the usage of social media by elected or campaigning politicians is an indispensable tool for these individuals. Furthermore, celebrities, public figures, and politicians are often subjects of online attacks and hateful comments on social media (Erjavec, & Kovačič, 2012). With the endless possibilities in the cybersphere, encountering, writing or being a subject to hate speech has become a part of the daily life for many users (Waqas et al., 2019). Moreover, hate speech against women has been used in very few research activities, but such hate speech is very dangerous (Shibly et al., 2023). Many of the papers conducted by researchers and scholars have been using content analysis of social media posts and comments (Sanghvi & Hodges, 2015). This paper will use a qualitative approach to contribute to the knowledge of GBHS perceived by the one in power. This study could also add to the further development of educational materials or laws needed in order to regulate the spread of hate speech, in this case, especially of online GBHS in Slovakia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Females in politics

“Women’s full and equal participation in all facets of society is a fundamental human right. Yet, around the world, from politics to entertainment to the workplace, women and girls are largely underrepresented” (UN WOMEN, 2020). Statistically, fewer women attend the Olympic Games, fewer women won the Nobel Prize, the Oscars or received Michelin Stars (UN WOMEN, 2020). Inequality is widely seen also in the journalistic field, in academia and in politics (e.g. Baskaran & Hessami, 2018; Hagan et al., 2020; UN WOMEN, 2020). The male dominance in political positions is “among the most striking signs of unequal gender relations worldwide” (Teigen et al., 2019; see also England, 2010; Krook & Zetterberg, 2014).

Correspondingly, Van der Pas and Aaldering (2020) conducted a meta-analysis of 750,000 media stories to address whether female politicians get a distinctive amount of press coverage compared to male politicians. The researchers concluded “that there is a gender bias in the amount of media coverage in PR systems, where women politicians receive about 17 percentage points less media attention” (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020, p. 133). Visibly, gender imbalance is also present in news coverage of female politicians. Moreover, there are generally less women in the field of politics and at the same time there is less media coverage about the women who are already active in politics. These factors could have negative effects and be detrimental for female candidates or representatives (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). Female politicians are depicted in news stories with gender biases. Females are associated with family values, the fact that they are women and some aspects of their behavior is often amplified in news stories (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020, p. 133). When analyzing the press coverage of UK politician Theresa May, Yates (2019) described the “emotionalisation of female leadership” and concluded that current society presents aspects of fears and concerns when having a female leader (p. 345). One might conclude that being a woman in politics is a

harder job to enter and to execute if compared to men due to the representation imbalance and lack or emotionalisation of press coverage.

Furthermore, women active on social media are affiliated with expressing “soft/feminine topics” and on the contrary, men are affiliated with expressing more “hard/masculine topics” (Ross et al., 2019, p.325). Studies have proven that the image of traditional roles and gender stereotyping is present in politics and in political communication (e.g. Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Savigny & Scullion, 2019). Female politicians are part of news stories that feature politics, however, the front pages belong to the male actors (Ross et al., 2019, p.326). Sanghvi and Hodges (2015) researched how the appearance and gender of politicians attributes and shapes political marketing. Results show that female politicians often face adversity when trying to meet standards and expectations set by society and even minimal mistakes regarding their appearance or manner could be harshly judged in campaigning (Sanghvi & Hodges, 2015, p. 1689).

From literature and statistics, it can be deduced that females are not as equally represented as males in local, regional, national or international levels of political systems globally. Women also face inequalities when it comes to political media stories coverage. Indeed, research focused on women representation and its impact of female political leadership on society are necessary to understand how to resolve this inequality. The perception of the appearance of female candidates or representatives and the poor coverage are not the only form of inequality. In this paper, we will research further the misogyny and the perception of GBHS communication on social media.

The case of Slovakia and Slovak political environment

Slovakia is a young country situated in Central Europe. Politically, Slovakia is a parliamentary democracy that was established in 1993. State bodies consist of the parliament called the National Council of the Slovak Republic (NR SR), the Government composed of

ministers and a Prime Minister, the elected President and the legal system (EURAXESS, n.d.). The NR SR consists of 150 directly elected members. Slovakia has in the term 2020-2024 in the NR SR 31 women that serve as members of the parliament (Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, n.d.). This study will consist of semi-structured one-on-one interviews with several of these female members of parliament (MPs) of the NR SR. The number of elected female politicians in this term is the highest number in the history of the Council (TA3, 2020). Despite this record, Slovakia belongs to the countries with the lowest representation of females in the political sphere (TA3, 2020).

Looking from the European point of view, Slovakia belongs to the countries that position themselves below the European average when it comes to the number of women sitting in the national parliaments and governments (Eurostat, 2020). However, women as politicians achieved success in 2019 when Zuzana Čaputová became elected as a president of Slovakia. This electoral victory made her the first female president in the history of the country. Therefore, Čaputová also represents a symbol of change for Slovakia. According to news, Čaputová is defined as a defender of human rights and she is appreciated on the European and International levels (SME, 2019). In a post-communist country that appears to be conservative, she is considered to be a progressive liberal on the political spectrum (SME, 2019). Čaputová represents a female politician that broke *the glass ceiling* in Slovakia. The continuing support of Čaputová as a trusted head of state during her time in office is shown in *The most reliable political opinion poll*, in which she came first in the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 (Pravda, 2019; SME, 2020; TREND, 2021).

Additionally, in Latin America, Reyes-Housholder (2018) proposed a gender strategic mobilization theory, which proves and explains that “women are better at mobilizing women means that female candidates tend to invest more significant effort into cultivating a core constituency of women on the basis of gender identity” (p.69). As a deduction, the strategic

mobilization theory tested in the Central and Eastern European context could generate similar results. The 2019 presidential elections in Slovakia created a favorable environment for female politicians to achieve the highest position of power. One could conclude that the first women to become president in 2019 could have positively impacted the parliamentary elections in 2020, where a record number of female politicians got elected.

Online social media platforms and politics

Blumler (2001) states that political communication shifted from the usage of only traditional media (radio and television) to its more current cyberspace of social media platforms and online news outlets (p. 202-203). With the emerging of new technologies and advancement in the field of software engineering the political communication is progressing rapidly and differently when compared to previous decades. The current stage of political communication is defined by Chadwick (2017) as the “hybrid media system” in which the “older and newer media” intermix together (p. 4).

Politicians globally, find the usage of social media as an indispensable tool for the spread of their ideas, achievements and messages directed to the mass audience (Solovev & Pröllochs, 2022; Broersma and Graham, 2012). Social media addresses the public on a large scale and facilitates the dialogue between elected officials and voters because of its interactive and participatory aspect of it (Graham et al., 2013). The online platforms are also widely used because of its power to mobilize masses (Chadwick, 2017).

Graham and colleagues state that “social media provide politicians with, on one hand, private channels for unidirectional communication, and, on the other, they enable multi-directional communication within a network of citizens” (Graham et al., 2013, p.17). The quick connectivity of officials and citizens on social media is an emblematic aspect of the communication of the 21st century. It became ordinary for public figures to communicate through the digital social media platforms (Ekman & Windholm, 2014). As noted by Ekman &

Windholm (2014) this phenomenon seen online has become so frequent that it led journalists to spend hours online in search of news stories (p.2). Broersma & Graham (2012) defined the presence of a journalistic tendency to gather sources for the news coverage from posts, comments and tweets written by politicians.

The global trend in political communication is also present in the case of Slovakia. To understand the current environment and the political communication in Slovakia, it is necessary to mention the historical background of the country. Before the Velvet Revolution, which happened in 1989, the monopolistic regime of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia controlled all aspects of social life (Nelsson, 2021). Bardovič (2018) affirms that “the fundamental change came after 1989 when conditions for the free exchange of information began to be established when accepting the principle of pluralism of opinion” (p.29). With the global rise of new technologies, the Internet and the creation of social media platforms, Slovak political parties created official accounts on Facebook around the year 2009 (Bardovič, 2018). Study conducted by Garaj & Bardovič (2020) on the analysis of social media posts by three presidential candidates in the 2019 elections in Slovakia concluded that Facebook plays an effective and indispensable component in successful Slovak political campaign communication (p.87).

The current political landscape in Slovakia has changed dramatically to the online sphere, with politicians disseminating news and interacting electronically through social media posts (Garaj & Bardovič, 2020). Slovak news outlets affirm that in recent years politics is massively conducted on social media platforms, specifically on Facebook and Instagram (Noviny PLUS, 2021; “Slovenská Politika,” 2022). The current political environment without the usage of social media platforms would drastically change the situation (e.g. Haughton et al. 2021; “Na Sociálnej sieti,” 2022). The increase of online communication and interactions has as consequence the more frequent occurrence of online hate. KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018)

affirm that “one of the most significant and complex drawbacks of the proliferation of user-generated content, and the so-called *democratization* of access to symbolic resources, is the acutely increasing incidence of online hate or cyberhate” (p. 47).

Dolezal (2015) analyzed the usage of social media platforms for campaigning during the Austrian national elections and Dolezal concludes that further research needs to examine the consequences of online campaigning. This study will not be focusing on online campaigning, nevertheless, it will examine already elected politicians and their communication on social media being affected by hate speech.

Hate Speech on social media current regulations

A universal definition of hate-speech is lacking, which makes the battle and imposing sanctions toward its authors a hard challenge (e.g. Pejchal, 2018; Herz & Molnar, 2012; Papcunová, et al., 2021). Rosenfeld (2003) defined hate speech as “speech designed to promote hatred on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or national origin” (p.2). Hietanen & Eddebo (2022) in their paper focused on the search of a definition of hate speech, proposed “that there are four general definition modes for hate speech, given the goal of formulating definitions that are both formally coherent and possible to operationalize: a teleological, a pure consequentialist, a formal (in Platonic or Aristotelian terms), and a consensus or relativist mode” (Hietanen & Eddebo, 2022, Four Possible Definition Modes).

Many argue that regulating any type of speech, not only hate speech in this case, results to be problematic because of the restriction of a fundamental human right which is free speech. Despite that, restrictions and regulations need to be in place to enable the circulation of a healthy discussion with the spread of ideas and information. The opposite could lead to massive spread to extremist opinion, fake news and manipulation. In the times with the access to the Internet and the almost limitless possibilities of social media, spreading or encountering online hate speech became a frequent part of online communication. António Guterres, Secretary-

General of the United Nations, in 2019 expressed that “addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited under international law” (United Nations, 2019, para. 4). One could conclude that condemning and censoring hate-speech is a complex search for balance between the freedom of speech and the protection of human respectability and protection from violence.

Banks (2010) claims that “the anonymity and mobility afforded by the Internet has made harassment and expressions of hate effortless in a landscape that is abstract and beyond the realms of traditional law enforcement” (p.233). Banks (2010) also describes that “legal intervention with technological regulatory mechanisms” could help facilitate the regulation of hate speech in the online space (p. 239). Media platforms are the focal point of misogyny and sexism (Bock et al., 2017). Online hate speech currently happens on privately owned social media tech giants. The most used social media platforms worldwide in 2022 are Facebook, Youtube, Whatsapp, Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, Reddit and LinkedIn (Walsh, 2022). Regulating privately owned social media platforms poses a challenge on its own. Hietanen, & Eddebo (2022) suggest that definition of hate speech and mechanism on how to regulate the spread of this type of speech should be initiated from international agreements and multilateral treaties and not from big private technological companies.

In the past decades, in some countries, governments have been able to restrict and rarely completely shut off a social media site, which mostly happens in politically sensitive times and in countries that are authoritarian (Howard et al., 2011). However, problems with SoMe apps are present also in democratic countries. Some apps are no longer active because they have lost users, or some are used by small groups of people that have something in common, Anderson (2020) wrote some examples:

Mastodon, proposed as an alternative to Twitter with a stronger code of conduct to address hateful content; Gab, where many users who are kicked off of Twitter convene; Parler, marketed as an alternative to Twitter, associated with Trump supporters and right-wing politics; and Voat, marketed as a censorship free Reddit alternative. Many of these apps target audiences interested in less censorship and more forgiving codes of conduct than the bigger social media platforms (p. 7).

In spite of the fact that apps are being created to have less censorship, one might argue that the biggest and most popular social media apps are not doing a good job when it comes to moderating hate speech, privacy, security and safety concerns. In 2023, experts say Tik tok became a threat to national security (Fung, 2023). In 2023, the United Nations also urged and tried to create pressure on popular social media companies to create a space that holds accountable hate and discrimination speech (UN News, 2023).

In addition, the power of social media was witnessed in Slovakia on the 12th of October 2022, when a killer of 2 murders was identified thanks to his hateful tweets. A young man killed 2 queer men and hurt one woman in front of a bar known for the LGBT+ community (Aktuality, 2022). The killer was found thanks to his profile on Twitter, where he for months tweeted about hate, about committing such a hate crime toward a minority and he left an anti-Semitic manifesto before he committed suicide (BBC, 2022).

In Slovakia, regulations and laws referring to hate speech are lacking (Pejchal, 2018). The Slovak law recognizes solely the direct evidence of violence, “Slovak national legal frameworks focus more on outlawing extremism, which is a more political than legal way of conceptualizing the problem” (Pejchal, 2018, p. 59). However, in 2022 after the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the NR SR passed an amendment act which regulates speech in

cyberspace (Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, 2022). From February 2022, Národný bezpečnostný úrad (the National Security Authority) has the ability to block entire conspiracy websites, fake news websites, and sites which are a cyber threat to national security (HN Online, 2022). In the eight months, this amendment act has been passed, four websites have been blocked (Dennik N, 2022). Remišová, the Minister of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, expressed that is in the process of drafting a legislation that will induce obligations for online platforms to fight misinformation and hate speech (Ministerstvo investícií, regionálneho rozvoja a informatizácie SR, 2022).

Tackling hate speech has become a worldwide issue, debates are happening on international and national levels. The CEO of Center for Countering Digital Hate acknowledged that “social media is increasingly unsafe for Jewish people, just as it is becoming for women, Black people, Muslims, LGBT people and many other groups” (Wolfe-Robinson, 2021, para. 14). During the 2020 State of the Union addressed at the European Parliament Plenary, the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, proposed “to extend the list of EU crimes to all forms of hate crime and hate speech, whether because of race, religion, gender or sexuality” (European Commission, 2020). Researchers have acknowledged that the hate speech on social media, especially addressed to a minority group, poses a threat to democracy (Miller & Vaccari, 2020).

To combat violence and inhibit discrimination against women it has been written the principal international legal document which is the so-called Istanbul Convention (European Parliament, 2022). Even though the Convention was signed by all European member states, Slovakia is one of the six member countries that has not ratified it (European Parliament, 2022, para. 2). Extensive debate happened before the voting to ratify the Istanbul Convention, nonetheless, “the National Council of Slovakia rejected it by claiming that the convention, through its extreme liberalism, might corrode traditional values, and they wanted them to be

protected” (Kanbur, 2021, p.324). To our knowledge, impacts on the non-ratification of this convention in Slovakia have not been sufficiently researched. However, by not ratifying the Istanbul convention, there is not enough legal or direct action conducted to protect women from violence and discrimination in Slovakia.

Gender-based hate speech

The offensive discourse often addresses gender. It has been established by various organizations, for example the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that gender is an element of discrimination (Godinez et al., 2022, p.4761). The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, defined that “gender-based hate crimes are criminal offenses motivated by bias against a person’s gender” (OSCE, 2021). In 2019, Powell and Henry proposed a four-dimensional theory of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV), the fourth dimension being the gender and/or sexuality based harassment, this dimension includes GBHS. The authors have determined that further studies need to be conducted on this term (Powell & Henry, 2019). Similarly, Araújo and colleagues (2020) which conducted a literature review of articles published between 2016 and 2021 on cyber harassment against women concluded that future study should concentrate on GBHS. Therefore, this study will try to elaborate the recognition and impacts of GBHS on women politicians. The perception of this type of hate speech by the very *victims* that come in contact with this type of speech at daily bases could lead to addition of knowledge in this problematic issue.

Suzor and colleagues (2018) defined that “online gender-based violence includes a broad range of behaviors facilitated through a range of digital technologies” (p.3). Tareen and colleagues (2021) in their systematic review of hate speech affirm that GBHS often targets females more than males (p. 5290). During the 2022 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women experts said that “violence against women and girls continues to be amplified in digital spaces, particularly targeting those who are active in political and public

life, exercising their freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association” (OHCHR, 2022, para. 4). The occurrence of online misogyny is an extensive social issue that has been explored from various points by scholars around the globe (O. Alichie, 2020). However, Faith and Fraser (2018) in a review of research on online hate towards parliamentarians claims that there is “limited research directly on digital harassment of women leaders, and none assessing the effectiveness of interventions to address the issue” (p. 2). KhosraviNik & Esposito (2018) state that “gender-based discrimination becomes a new, subliminal form of digital divide, having the potential to reduce the equality and inclusivity of both on- and off-line cultures” (p.57).

Despite the fact that “female politicians have been inclined to treat sexism and misogyny in the political world as simply a 'cost of doing business,' that attitude has begun to change” (Krook, 2017, p. 74). Although much academic research still has to be conducted on this topic, few analyses have already been conducted. The few analyses conducted were done by news media or by NGOs. According to an analysis conducted by *The Guardian* women in politics are subject to higher encountering of GBHS online, “Hillary Clinton received almost twice as much abuse as Bernie Sanders on Twitter” and “former Australian prime minister Julia Gillard also received about twice as much abuse as Kevin Rudd” (Hunt et al., 2016). The conducted analysis was based on tweets that contained abusive language or words (Hunt et al., 2016). Similarly, an analysis conducted by Atlanta (2018), a social enterprise, compared tweets connected to a female and a male high status politician of three countries from around the world (UK, South Africa, and Chile). The analysis found that the number of offensive and hateful tweets were comparable, however, the women in power received three times more attacks that focus on their gender and more negative comments on their visual image and on their private life (Atlanta, 2018). Also, the themes that dominated in the tweets about the female politician were: attacking their ability to serve the office, private information and

relationships, as well as other topics that have nothing to do with the significant political work they have conducted, created or implemented (Atlanta, 2018). Another analysis, also conducted by *The Guardian*, analyzed seventy millions of comments under their articles, the results indicated that the majority of comments and of abusive comments were under articles written by eight women and two men of color, from these ten people three of the writers are also part of the LGBTQ+ community (Gardiner et al., 2016). These analyses demonstrate the presence of online hate speech based on gender and other discriminating attributes. This phenomenon can be seen worldwide. Anderson (2015) analyzed tweets in India and found that less females post on social media regarding political issues and simultaneously there are less retweets of posts written by prestigious women journalists and women politicians compared to the men colleagues. Anderson (2015) writes also that “the report highlights how women who take up space online, particularly when it involves politically charged issues, are often treated as trespassers in a male space.” (p.6).

Based on the literature review and current discourse, this study will investigate the phenomenon with the following questions.

RQ1) What are the themes and the discourse that dominates in the comments on social media platforms that female politicians encounter?

RQ2) To what extent do female politicians notice the type of hate speech appearing in their social media comments compared to the comments on their male colleague’s profiles?

RQ3) What are the personal experiences and the impact of gender based hate speech on social media perceived by female politicians?

RQ4) What strategies should be implemented when dealing with online gender based hate speech?

METHODOLOGY

A topic that has not been heavily elaborated and studied by researchers and scholars is the concept of gender as a source of hate speech (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018). To our knowledge, GBHS has not been analyzed based on vis-à-vis interviews perceiving the direct and indirect harm of affected women (Godinez et al., 2022, p. 4471). Sanghvi and Hodges (2015) affirms that “most studies about female politicians rely on content or media analysis” (Sanghvi & Hodges, 2015, p. 1691). This study looks at how Slovak women politicians perceive online hate speech which is based on their gender. The conclusions drawn from this study help to increase the understanding of this type of speech and how it is perceived by those in power. This paper could help to create bases for future regulations that would punish people who engage in GBHS.

To our knowledge, in the Slovakian environment there are no discussions about GBHS on social media. Therefore, to better understand the phenomenon, this study will use a qualitative approach of semi-structured one-on-one interviews. This research method will be used to understand the online gender-based hateful discourse perceived by women in power. Interviewing is often used by scholars and researchers to investigate a particular issue or sphere which has been recently discovered, formulated or adapted (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Jamshed, 2014). The semi-structured interview guideline with questioning route can be found at the end of the study (APPENDIX A).

The methodology will include semi-structured interviews with six female members of the NR SR. The interviews were conducted individually, in the Slovak language and were recorded. Five interviews were conducted in person and one was conducted online, all interviews were conducted between the 27th February to the 23rd of March 2023. In the NR SR in the current political term, there are four official parties (OLANO, SMER, SAS, Sme Rodina) and independent non-partisan politicians. The female politicians interviewed were from three of

the official parties and three of them were independent. Five of the politicians are elected in the office for the first term and one is in her second term. Interviewees were purposely selected with also a snowball sampling (Welch, 1975), ensuring the female politicians be of different age, background, different location (city of birth), different political ideology (e.g. liberal and conservative) and minority. The analysis and the coding was conducted in an excel sheet divided by themes with a combination of inductive and deductive coding.

FINDINGS

All the interviewed female politicians have social media presence, all of them are present on Facebook and majority on Instagram. As described above, research has confirmed the importance of the online presence of politicians and this resulted not to be different also in the case of Slovakia. Consecutively, all of the politicians interviewed have encountered some type of hate speech on social media. All of them agreed that the spread of hate speech in cyberspace is visible to everyone and has increased in the last couple of years. The increase has been also seen on how many politicians are daily active on social media platforms in Slovakia, many of the politicians interviewed concluded that being more *famous* online gives them advantage compared to politicians that are not as comprehended with technologies. All female politicians notice that most of the hate which is addressed to them on social media platforms is written by fake and newly created profiles. When comparing the amount of hate on profiles of female politicians versus male politicians, the perceptions are different by the interviewees. On the other hand, all politicians agreed that being a woman in this line of work has more obstacles when compared to men doing the same type of job. When discussing hate speech in detail, especially the GBHS, the politicians paused and had difficulties articulating their perception of this type of speech. Most of the politicians decide to use automatic detection and automatic removal of certain words on social media platforms and also most of them delete and block users that have aggressive or hateful comments, however, one politician expressed the opposite

and is convinced that people should not delete or hide comments that contains hate because that is not the answer to this specific problem of excessive hate on social media. Future strategies on how to combat GBHS were articulated by the politicians and these strategies should follow the regulations and legal work created by the European Union, should create a cyber police department and should result in educational programs that teach basic kindness. Most importantly, politicians agreed that the spread of this type of speech starts from themselves and how politicians treat each other. These results are described in more detail.

RQ1) Themes and discourses dominating on female politician's social media pages

Slovak female politicians are active on social media platforms. All of the women interviewed encounter positive and also negative feedback from their followers and non-followers on their social media pages. Predominantly, the politicians do not spend much time reading the comments sections under their posts. Firstly, because it takes much time and they are busy and secondly because if there are hateful comments, they come from fake profiles. Politicians agreed that fake profiles and trolling groups lead to less usage of SoMe for their own mental health protections. This is also the reason why the majority of politicians do not manage their pages by themselves, but have assistants that take care of posting, reading and deleting inappropriate comments or messages. It has been confirmed by many conducted analyses that many cyber troops operate on fake accounts, since it gives them the advantage of anonymity (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017). It has also been proven that these trolls and fake accounts more often target government officials and political parties, this phenomenon can be widely seen in many countries (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017). Lumsden and Morgan (2017) researched ulterior frames of trolling, the so called *silencing strategies*, which are described as “attempt to remove the individual from participation in (online) public space (such as on social media sites), or dissuade them from engaging in further public debate (by responding to or challenging an offensive 'tweet' on Twitter or photograph on Instagram)” (p.2). As described by

the politicians these could resolve to be the strategies used also on Slovak female politicians, since these *silencing strategies* target females with a misogynistic discourse.

One of the politicians has a strong positive perception about reading the comments under her posts. Her belief is that if people communicate in a polite manner, without a populist rhetoric, the feedback will be mostly positive. This politician, which is serving only her first term as MP, but has previous experience in local politics and as a journalist focused on Roma people said:

It was always interesting for me to get the feedback from others and I definitely try to learn from it and to take something that I couldn't think of on a certain topic. The opinion of other people on a topic has always interested me, overall, they can be constructive.

Many studies have shown that the following of a politician online, so how popular a politician is on social media platforms, is linked to a bigger preference votes in elections (e.g. Spierings & Jacobs, 2014; Keller & Kleinen-von Königslöw, 2018). Additionally, a study conducted by Kruikemeier (2014) confirms that the more active a politician is on social media the more votes the politician will receive. One of the interviewees expressed this occurrence also in Slovak politics, as politicians offer more of their personal lives on social media (she defined it “politicians that offer blood, sex and money”) quickly become more known and more followed in cyberspace. This makes them more attractive for political leaders of parties and can give them a better position/number on the candidate list.

RQ2) Notion of type of hate speech and comparison to male colleague’s profiles

As described above, encountering hate speech in the social media space is a daily part of the online experience. The participants stated that the growth of online hate in Slovakia increased dramatically after Covid-19 started and after the start of the war in Ukraine. This occurrence of more hate on social media as the pandemic hit all the world has been analyzed

previously. Studies have proven that the outbreak of misinformation and online hate have aggravated as the pandemic progressed (e.g. Devakumar et al., 2020; Uyheng & Carley, 2020).

All politicians interviewed agreed that their social media profiles contain hate speech by its followers and non-followers. The politicians do not notice any specific usage of discourse or repeating words. However, politicians often notice that the comments have nothing to do with the topic of the post. Often the users in the comments mention other topics, point to their personal problems, point to other societal problems or hate their party, their leader or them based on something that has happened in the past. One of the politicians, which is part of the biggest party currently elected in the NR SR states “it doesn't matter what type of posts I write or what the topic is, the hate is there and it has nothing to do with the topic I write about. Hate is mostly on my political party and my leader.” Another independent politician states that “they will use that space [comment section] to talk about what bothers them and what is their opinion on something. Often it is not related [to the type of post], so sometimes it is difficult to even react to it.” Furthermore, another politician elaborated that “people tend to need to find the person responsible for their own frustration which leads to false accusation and hate. Someone starts a rumor on a politician and immediately he is lynched on SoMe. We have a strong problem with critical thinking and reading in Slovakia.”

When discussing hate, the politician, who is serving her second term as a MP, expresses that often the hate either targets her family or her age. She is already in her retirement years and users are trying to attack her based on her age.

Between politicians there is no agreement when it comes to whether there is more hate present on social media on their profiles, or on other female politician's profiles compared to male politicians profiles. Two politicians stated that they do not read comments on posts of their male colleagues. Two stated that there is more hate present under posts of female politicians, explaining that “yes, there is a difference. Comments on women's posts are more

aggressive, people think they can attack us more,” and the other stating that “I perceive the hate towards women, both from politicians and non-politicians, to be more aggressive towards women.” Another politician claims that there is no difference in hate proportions based on the gender of the politician and one politician believes that the hate is more aggressive and more attacking on the male politician’s profiles.

RQ3) Personal experience and impact of online gender-based hate speech on politicians

When discussing the specific understanding of gender-based hate speech, politicians found difficulties to find words on how to describe this type of hate speech. As written above, since there is no academic or professional consensus yet on the definition of GBHS, this is also reflected in the answers of interviewed politicians. Politicians described GBSH as “it is basically an attack of the opposite sex”, that the basic criterion is the gender of who is writing the post and that the speech is somehow gender-dependent.

One of the politicians that was able to describe how GBHS look like, previously stated that women do not get more hate compared to men and later stated that this type of speech is not as present among the younger generation and is not present in the western countries and in the Scandinavian countries and that this problem with hate affected by gender is more typical for Slavic or Muslim countries.

On the other hand, all politicians agreed that being a woman in politics is harder compared to being a man active in politics. The female politicians agreed that the presence of hate is one of the main factors why not as many women in Slovakia go into politics. One of the interviewee, that comes from a party that is more conservatives also stated:

Definitely, I think that there should be significantly more women in politics.

But not women who scream, cry, who demand attention simply because they are women and not at all the kind of women who come in miniskirts and showing skin. I condemn them. But yes, but there should be more women, and

women definitely have a harder time because those guys are jealous. For them a woman must not be better than a man. Even your male colleagues will make it harder for you.

One politician, with the most experience in politics also confessed that women trying to prepare to enter politics are not even able to imagine what is waiting for them. Only once a woman enters this male dominated arena, she will realize how it is and she will have to deal with all of it.

The female politicians each have different coping mechanisms and strategies on how to deal with online hate. Some are not affected by these comments, since they come from fake profiles. One politician confessed that she has been previously bullied because of her body, therefore she created her own bubble in which hate does not have an effect on her. Another politician, the youngest MP, disclose that she is not impacted by the comments because she forgets them quickly, she said:

When I notice a comment, whether it's good or bad, it blows away [from my mind] very quickly. I probably don't have a good or bad feeling about those comments, because I'm very busy and those comments are always out of my head quickly. In my opinion, this is a very good feature to have in politics, because I am not burdened by it, for the better or for the worse.

Another politician also mentioned an old colleague, he gave up his mandate because he had multiple mental breakdowns from the hate he was getting. People active in politics have to learn how to handle the unexpected pressure and the hate towards them. Three of the politicians also expressed that they have never felt hate in real life, if they meet with citizens and other people, mostly the feedback and comments are neutral or positive. They agreed that the hate is much greater and more aggressive only in the cyber sphere. Politicians agreed that having support in your family is one way of how to deal with the hate. Also, one interviewee stated

“not everyone has to like you, it is enough if they respect you and respect is hard to achieve. There has to be work, activities, meetings and so on visible behind you. And if there is something I don't know how to react to, at least I do not harm.”

RQ4) Strategies and implementations

The politicians have different attitudes towards the action of whether to block or not to block users when users use bad words, use misleading information or spread hate speech. One of the politicians who previously had her career in journalism and started in regional politics stated “I have an ethical codex written on my Facebook page so if any racist, hateful or comments with swear words appears, they will be deleted.” Similarly, another politician explains “I have an assistant and we have some rules when it comes to comments. She also deletes some comments if they do not follow our rules. I have also automated the deleting of comments on Facebook. For example, if they use just an image as a comment or the profiles /users are newly made.” The youngest politician expressed that if she is posting about a topic that could lead to a bigger discussion or is in some way a controversial topic, she turns off the comments on that specific post. She also believes it is really hard to put any type of regulations in practice when it comes to restricted any cyber hate because it collides with the right to freedom of speech. Despite that, all female politicians agreed that the ability of automatic deleting of certain words, especially swear words, is a great feature on social media sites.

On the other hand, one interviewee, strongly believes the comments should not be deleted, she explained:

I am of the opinion that I do not hide comments at all. I do not delete them and I do not block anyone at all, because I just want people to see what other people are capable of. But then again, as for my Facebook page, my assistant manages it for me and for my mental health. Because sometimes there are very

hateful comments and I don't even know what they are, because we agreed that he [the assistant] will only tell me a part of them. I do know that sometimes there were also death threats and that the comments are very ugly and rude.

Debating about further regulations that could serve as a solution to the problem of gender based hate speech or as hate speech in cyberspace, politicians mentioned the creation of cyber police departments or to find legal measures “especially by following examples and strategies from the European Union.” One politician articulated “if the whole society doesn't realize that there is so much hate and anger, then we won't move anywhere. For me, the most important thing is education... Already in kindergarten, we should start talking about how we should treat each other. Of course, politicians must lead by example.” The politicians expressed concerns towards the massive hate that is on social media in Slovakia and some of them agreed that the hate spread in the online space will not change if the politicians themselves will not start to behave with more respect towards each other. One of the interviewee summed up how to reduce hate:

It depends on the bigger politics, it always goes from up to down. For example, how the president and the prime minister, then the ministers and the MPs express themselves, they actually determine the discourse in society. If the speech doesn't change, or the responsible people and publicly active people will continue with these populist steps, which we witness every day, where everyone only pushes their own ideology, it will be very difficult to change and lower the amount of hate speech. Also, celebrities and famous people, we all actually determine the setting and the values in society. Not many people realize the responsibility in relation to society and to the people. Therefore, we are all guilty. So that's a big problem, because even today we have a very

polarized society and we see the hate that has reached our families, where there are families divided because of politics. Here in the parliament we are 150 politicians and the most recognized ones are the most aggressive ones, the ones that divide the society and scream the most, and they are also the ones with the most followers and the most likes on SoMe. For me this is not an achievement or success.

CONCLUSION

The online space serves as a way of communication for the people of various professions, for adolescents and even for government officials. This open space and quick connectivity on social media has been shifting in the last couple of years to be an environment that can be harmful, violent, aggressive and hostile toward certain groups or individuals (Castaño-Pulgarín et al, 2021). Nockleby (2000) described that hate speech is “any communication that disparages a person or a group on the basis of some characteristic such as race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or other characteristic” (p.1278). Social media platforms are currently facing hard times to moderate the massive spreading of hate speech (Johnson et al, 2019). This study explored the understanding of one type of hate speech, the gender-based hate speech. Using a qualitative approach, a group of female members of the Slovak National Council has been interviewed using semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

The women politicians interviewed clearly acknowledge the presence of hate on social media that targets political figures. Posts written by politicians are particularly more likely to receive hate if they are written by women politicians (Solovev & Pröllochs, 2022). The interviewed female politicians didn't not articulate the same opinion when discussing if hate speech is more present under posts of female politicians versus male politicians. This could be

caused by the fact that many of the comments containing hate get deleted or blocked by people that manage their social media sites or by the fact that the politicians do not spend much time browsing the replies and comments to their posts. Supporting this fact, a study conducted in the UK that analyzed hate tweets towards MPs and non-MPs concluded that between MPs there is no difference between the amount of hate women MPs get versus men MPs (Agarwal et al, 2021).

To our knowledge, there is no debate happening in Slovakia around hate speech that uses gender as the discriminating factor. The study shows that GBHS in Slovakia remains an unknown and unnamed topic in this society. However, all of the female politicians acknowledged that the amount of hate speech and the fact of being a woman is a determining factor for many other females not to enter in politics. All females have their own strategies on how to deal with the encounter of such speech.

Future steps on how to address GBHS on social media remains a problematic and complex issue. In 2022, the Council of Europe approved a recommendation on fighting online hate speech which was addressed to the Ministers of Member States (Council of Europe, 2022). This document serves as a guideline on how to identify, treat, educate, and legally gasp online types of hate speech. According to the female politicians, Slovakian society is still in the beginning of this process of even identifying the types of online hate speech.

LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has limitations, firstly, the interviews were conducted with a small sample of active women politicians, therefore, it is hard to generalize it. Women that are longer active in politics could have a stronger opinion of the matter, as well as politicians that served in the European Parliament or in higher international institutions. Secondly, this study was also conducted only with female representatives and therefore a male's perspective on gender-based

hate speech is missing. Future study should also elaborate and analyze the male's perspective of GBHS. Thirdly, the study was conducted in Slovakia, which has a specific set of a cultural and societal background. Replicating this study in other European countries could extend the knowledge and perception of GBHS by politicians and could compare the notions of this phenomenon across cultures. Fourthly, this study used a qualitative approach and therefore results are purely subjective and could not be supported by hard data. Future study should also take into consideration using a quantitative approach by textual and visual analysis of comments and the GBHS discourse on social media, to provide insight on the proportion of this type of speech in the online environment in Slovakia and also in other countries.

Despite the limitations, this study shed light on the perception of the discussion happening on social media, the understanding of online hate speech, the comprehension of gender based hate speech, discusses personal experiences with this type of speech and states future steps by Slovak female politicians. Despite the fact that the European Council and the European Parliament are taking steps to draft recommendations on how to combat gender-based hate speech in cyberspace (Council of Europe, 2022; European Commission, 2020), the public and private sector as well as the government in individual countries need to extend the discussion further. Legislation and regulations that address GBHS should be drafted in individual countries. Once the specific types of hate speech present in the online environment are recognized and apprehended by politicians and the whole society, then future steps to combat this type of speech can be implemented.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, P., Hawkins, O., Amaxopoulou, M., Dempsey, N., Sastry, N., Wood, E. (2021). Hate Speech in Political Discourse: A Case Study of UK MPs on Twitter. In Proceedings of the 32nd ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media (HT '21). *Association for Computing Machinery*, New York, NY, USA, 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3465336.3475113>
- Aktuality. (2022). *Vražda zo Zámockej: Našli mŕtve telo pravdepodobného páchatel'a*. <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/AsGBYHd/vrazda-zo-zamockej-nasli-mrtve-telo-pravdepodobneho-pachatela/>
- Anderson, S. (2015). India's Gender Digital Divide: Women and Politics on Twitter', *ORF Issue Brief*. https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ORFIssueBrief_108.pdf
- Araújo, A. V. M. de ., Bonfim, C. V. do ., Bushatsky, M., & Furtado, B. M. A. . (2022). Technology-facilitated sexual violence: a review of virtual violence against women. *Research, Society and Development*, 11(2), e57811225757. <https://doi.org/10.33448/rsd-v11i2.25757>
- Atlanta (2018). *(Anti)Social media: the benefits and pitfalls of digital for female politicians*, <https://tinyurl.com/yxe6lew2>
- Banks, J. (2010). Regulating hate speech online. *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, 24(3), 233–239. doi:10.1080/13600869.2010.522323
- Bardovič, J. (2018). POLITICAL COMMUNICATION OF MPS OF THE PEOPLE'S PARTY – OUR SLOVAKIA IN DIGITAL AREA. MARKETING IDENTITY: *Digital Mirrors – Part I*, Trnava: FMK UCM v Trnave.

- Baskaran, T., & Hessami, Z. (2018). *Does the Election of a Female Leader Clear the Way for More Women in Politics? American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 10(3), 95–121. doi:10.1257/pol.20170045
- BBC. (2022). *Slovakia LGBT attack: Thousands gather at vigil outside Bratislava bar*.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63267451>
- Blumler, J. G. (2001). The third age of political communication. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 1(3), 201–209. doi:10.1002/pa.66
- Bock, J., Byrd-Craven, J., & Burkley, M. (2017). The role of sexism in voting in the 2016 presidential election. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 119, 189-193.
doi:10.1016/j.paid.2017.07.026
- Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. (2017). Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation. In Computational Propaganda Research Project (pp. 1–37). *Oxford Internet Institute*.
- Broersma, M. and Graham, T. (2012). Social media as beat: tweets as news source during the 2010 British and Dutch elections, *Journalism Practice*, 6(3): 403–19. doi: 10.1080/17512786.2012.663626
- Castaño-Pulgarín, S. A., Suárez-Betancur, N., Vega, L. M. T., & López, H. M. H. (2021). Internet, social media and online hate speech. Systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 58, 101608. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2021.101608
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). Basics of qualitative research (3rd ed.): Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. *SAGE Publications, Inc.*,
<https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452230153>
- Council of Europe. (2022). *Combating Sexist Hate Speech*.

- Dennik N. (2022). *MediaBrífing: Štát chce opäť blokovať konšpirátorov, vláda schválila novelu.*
<https://dennikn.sk/3092104/mediabriefing-stat-chce-opat-blokovat-konspiratorov-vlada-schvalila-novelu/>
- Devakumar, D., Shannon, G., Bhopal, S. S., & Abubakar, I. (2020). Racism and discrimination in COVID-19 responses. *The Lancet*, 395(10231), 1194.
- Dolezal, M. (2015). Online Campaigning by Austrian Political Candidates: Determinants of Using Personal Websites, Facebook, and Twitter. *Policy & Internet*, 7(1), 103–119.
doi:10.1002/poi3.83
- Ekman, M., & Widholm, A. (2014). Politicians as Media Producers. *Journalism Practice*, 9(1), 78–91. doi:10.1080/17512786.2014.92846
- England, P. (2010). The gender revolution. Uneven and stalled, *Gender and Society*, 24(2): 149–66.
doi: 10.1177/0891243210361475
- Erjavec, K., & Kovačič, M. P. (2012). “You Don’t Understand, This is a New War!” Analysis of Hate Speech in News Web Sites’ Comments. *Mass Communication and Society*, 15(6), 899–920. doi:10.1080/15205436.2011.619679
- EURAXESS. (n.d.). *Researchers in Motion - Political system and state bodies.*
<https://www.euraxess.sk/en/main/info/living/slovakia-in-brief/political-system>
- European Commission. (2020). *State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary.*
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655
- European Parliament. (2022). *EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women ('Istanbul Convention').*
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-new-push-for-european-democracy/file-eu-accession-to-the-istanbul-convention>

Eurostat. (2022). *Seats held by women in national parliaments and governments*.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_05_50/default/bar?lang=en

Faith, B. and Fraser E. (2018). *Digital Harassment of Women Leaders: An Annotated Bibliography*, VAWG Helpdesk Research Report No. 209. London, UK: VAWG Helpdesk.

Fung, B., (2023). *Lawmakers say TikTok is a national security threat, but evidence remains unclear*.

CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/21/tech/tiktok-national-security-concerns/index.html>

Garaj, M., & Bardovič, J. (2020). Slovak 2019 Presidential Election and E-communication. In book:

Marketing Identity Covid-2.0 (pp.78-88). Trnava: Faculty of Mass Media Communication,

University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava.

Gardiner, B., Mansfield, M., Anderson, I., Holder, J., Louter, D., Ulmanu, M. (2016). *The dark side of Guardian comments*, The Guardian,

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/apr/12/the-dark-side-of-guardian-comments>

Godinez, Rico, S., & Sarikakis, K. (2022). Gender-Based Hate Speech: Contributions to the Global Policy Debate From Latin America. *International Journal of Communication (Online)*, 16, 4758.

Graham, Broersma, M., Hazelhoff, K., & van 't Haar, G. (2013). BETWEEN BROADCASTING POLITICAL MESSAGES AND INTERACTING WITH VOTERS. *Information, Communication & Society*, 16(5), 692–716. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.785581>

Hagan, A. K., Topçuoğlu, B. D., Gregory, M. E., Barton, H. A., & Schloss, P. D. (2020). Women Are Underrepresented and Receive Differential Outcomes at ASM Journals: a Six-Year Retrospective Analysis. *mBio*, 11(6), e01680-20. <https://doi.org/10.1128/mBio.01680-20>

- Haughton, T., Rybář, M., & Deegan-Krause, K. (2021). Leading the way, but also following the trend: The Slovak National Party. *Politics and Governance*, 9(4), 329-339.
<https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4570>
- Hietanen, & Eddebo, J. (2022). Towards a Definition of Hate Speech—With a Focus on Online Contexts. *The Journal of Communication Inquiry*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01968599221124309>
- HN Online. (2022). NBÚ by mohol škodlivý online obsah blokovat' aj v budúcnosti, so súhlasom súdu. <https://strategie.hnonline.sk/news/media/27638630-nbu-by-mohol-skodlivy-online-obsah-blokovat-aj-v-buducnosti-so-suhlasom-sudu>
- Howard, P. N., Agarwal, S. D., & Hussain, M. M. (2011). When Do States Disconnect Their Digital Networks? Regime Responses to the Political Uses of Social Media. *The Communication Review*, 14(3), 216–232. doi:10.1080/10714421.2011.59725
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/sexist-hate-speech#%7B%2263583504%22:%5B0%5D%7D>
- Huddy, L. and Terkildsen, N. (1993). Gender stereotypes and the perception of male and female candidates, *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(1): 119–47. doi: 10.2307/2111526
- Hunt, E., Evershed, N., Liu, R. (2016). From Julia Gillard to Hillary Clinton: online abuse of politicians around the world, *The Guardian*,
www.theguardian.com/technology/datablog/ng-interactive/2016/jun/27/from-julia-gillard-to-hillary-clinton-online-abuse-of-politicians-around-the-world.
- Chadwick. (2017). The Hybrid Media System. *Oxford University Press*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190696726.001.0001>
- Jamshed, S. (2014). Qualitative research method-interviewing and observation. *Journal of basic and clinical pharmacy*, 5(4), 87–88. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0976-0105.141942>

- Johnson, N. & Leahy, Rhys & Restrepo, N. & Velasquez, Nicolas & Zheng, Minzhang & Manrique, Pedro & Devkota, Prajwal & Wuchty, Stefan. (2019). Hidden resilience and adaptive dynamics of the global online hate ecology. *Nature*. 573. 1-5. 10.1038/s41586-019-1494-7.
- Kanbur, N. (2021). Istanbul convention: Commitment to preventing gender-based violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(2), 354-355.
- Keller, T. & Kleinen-von Königslöw, K. (2018). Followers, Spread the Message! Predicting the Success of Swiss Politicians on Facebook and Twitter. *Social Media + Society*. 4. 205630511876573. 10.1177/2056305118765733.
- KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 14(1), 45–68. doi:10.1515/lpp-2018-0003
- Krook, M.L. (2017). Violence Against Women in Politics. *Journal of Democracy* 28(1), 74-88. doi:10.1353/jod.2017.0007.
- Krook, M.L., & Zetterberg, P. (eds) (2015). Gender quotas and women's representation: New directions in research, *Abingdon: Routledge*.
- Kruikemeier, S. (2014). How political candidates use Twitter and the impact on votes. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 34, 131–139. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2014.01.025
- Lumsden, K., & Morgan, H. (2017). Media framing of trolling and online abuse: silencing strategies, symbolic violence, and victim blaming, *Feminist Media Studies*, 17:6, 926-940, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2017.1316755
- Miller, & Vaccari, C. (2020). Digital Threats to Democracy: Comparative Lessons and Possible Remedies. *The International Journal of Press/politics*, 25(3), 333–356.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220922323>
- Ministerstvo investícií, regionálneho rozvoja a informatizácie SR. (2022). *Vicepremiérka Remišová na Globsecu 2022: Sociálne platformy musia prebrať väčšiu zodpovednosť za škodlivý obsah*,

ktorý šíria. <https://www.mirri.gov.sk/aktuality/podpredsednicka-vlady/vicepremierka-remisova-na-globsecu-2022-socialne-platformy-musia-prebrat-vacsiu-zodpovednost-za-skodlivy-obsah-ktory-siria/index.html>

Na sociálnej sieti je najsledovanejší Pellegrini, Blaha preskočil Fica. (2021). SME. Retrieved September 24, 2022, from <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22769752/na-socialnej-sieti-je-najsledovanejsi-pellegrini-blaha-preskocil-fica.html>

Národná rada Slovenskej republiky. (2022). *Možnosť blokovania webov sa predĺži do 30. septembra.* <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=udalosti/udalost&MasterID=56077>

Národná rada Slovenskej republiky. (n.d.). *Abecední zoznam poslancov.* <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/default.aspx?SectionId=60>

Nelsson, R. (2021). Czechoslovakia's Velvet Revolution - archive, November 1989. *The Guardian*. Retrieved September 23, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/from-the-archive-blog/2019/nov/13/czechoslovakia-velvet-revolution-november-1989>

Nockleby, J. T. (2000). Hate Speech, in *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution* 2nd ed., edited by Leonard W. Levy, Kenneth L. Karst et al., New York: Macmillan pages 1277–1279.

Noviny PLUS (2021). *Michal Novota o komunikácii politikov: Stieranie hraníc im vyhovuje, niekedy je konflikt cieľom.* Noviny PLUS. <https://plus.noviny.sk/619057-michal-novota-o-komunikacii-politikov-stieranie-hranic-im-vyhovuje-niekedy-je-konflikt-cielom>.

O. Alichie. (2022). "You don't talk like a woman": the influence of gender identity in the constructions of online misogyny. *Feminist Media Studies*, ahead-of-print, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2032253>

- OHCHR. (2022). *Ending violence against women and girls key to tackling global crises and achieving prosperity*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-key-tackling-global-crises-and>
- OSCE. (2021). Gender-Based Hate Crime. *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/480847>
- Pejchal, V. (2018). Hate speech regulation in post-communist countries: Migrant crises in the Czech and Slovak republics. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 7(2): 58-74. DOI: 10.5204/ijcjsd.v7i2.500.
- Powell, & Henry, N. (2019). Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence Victimization: Results From an Online Survey of Australian Adults. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(17), 3637–3665. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516672055>
- Pravda. (2019). *Prieskum: Čaputová je najdôveryhodnejším politikom, počtom percent predbehla premiéra*. <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/526650-prieskum-caputova-je-najdoveveryhodnejším-politikom-predbehla-premiera/>
- Reyes-Housholder, C. (2018). Women Mobilizing Women: Candidates' Strategies for Winning the Presidency. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 10(1), 69-97.
doi:10.1177/2F1866802X1801000103
- Rosenfeld, M. (2003). Hate speech in constitutional jurisprudence: A comparative analysis. *Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School*, 24(4), 1523–1567. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.265939>
- Ross, K., Jansen, M. and van de Wijngaert, L. (2019). Gender, politics and the tweeted campaign: tweeting about issues during the UK's 2017 general election campaign, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, vol 2, no 3, 323–344, DOI: 10.1332/251510819X15662922007747
- Sanghvi, M., & Hodges, N. (2015). Marketing the female politician: an exploration of gender and appearance. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31(15–16), 1676–1694.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1074093>

- Savigny, H. and Scullion, R. (2019). The politics of normalising gendered violence: feminised austerity and masculinised wealth creation, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, vol 2, no 3, 363–379, DOI: 10.1332/251510819X15644997182264
- Shibly, F.H.A., Sharma, U., Naleer, H.M.M. (2023). Automatic Detection of Online Hate Speech Against Women Using Voting Classifier. In: Gupta, D., Khanna, A., Bhattacharyya, S., Hassanien, A.E., Anand, S., Jaiswal, A. (eds) *International Conference on Innovative Computing and Communications. Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*, vol 473. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-2821-5_62
- Slovenská politika sa robí na Facebooku. Do reklamy najviac investovali OĽaNO a poslanec Blaha. (2022). *HNonline*. Retrieved September 24, 2022, from <https://strategie.hnonline.sk/news/media/20609735-prieskum-slovenska-politika-sa-robi-na-facebooku-do-reklamy-najviac-investovali-olano-a-poslanec-blaha>
- SME. (2019). *Liberálka, aktivistka, zen-budhistka, zahraničné médiá píšú o Čaputovej prejave*. <https://svet.sme.sk/c/22146103/liberalka-aktivistka-zen-budhistka-zahranicne-media-pisu-o-caputovej-prejave.html>
- SME. (2020). *Focus: Čaputová je naj dôveryhodnejším politikom, verí jej čoraz viac ľudí*. <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22321494/prieskum-focus-kto-je-najdoveryhodnejssi-politik-januar-2020-caputova.html>
- Solovev, K. & Pröllochs, N. (2022). Hate Speech in the Political Discourse on Social Media: Disparities Across Parties, Gender, and Ethnicity. In Proceedings of the ACM Web Conference 2022 (WWW '22). *Association for Computing Machinery*, New York, NY, USA, 3656–3661. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3485447.3512261>
- Solovev, K., & Pröllochs, N. (2022). Hate Speech in the Political Discourse on Social Media: Disparities Across Parties, *Gender, and Ethnicity*. arXiv.org. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3485447.3512261>

- Spierings, N., Jacobs, K. (2014). Getting Personal? The Impact of Social Media on Preferential Voting. *Polit Behav* 36, 215–234 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-013-9228-2>
- Suzor, N., Dragiewicz, M., Harris, B., Gillett, R., Burgess, J., & Van Geelen, T. (2018). Human Rights by Design: The Responsibilities of Social Media Platforms to Address Gender-Based Violence Online. *Policy & Internet*. doi:10.1002/poi3.185
- TA3. (2020). *Do parlamentu sa dostalo 32 žien, je to historické maximum*. <https://www.ta3.com/clanok/170820/do-parlamentu-sa-dostalo-32-zien-je-to-historicke-maximum>
- Tareen, M. K., Tareen, H. K., Noreen, S., & Tariq, M. (2021). Hate Speech and social media: A Systematic Review. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(8).
- Teigen, M., Skjeie, H. and Karlsen, R. (2019) Framing and feedback: increased support for gender quotas among elites, *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, vol xx, no xx, 399–423, DOI:10.1332/251510819X15639713867651
- TREND. (2021). *Najdôveryhodnejším politikom je prezidentka Čaputová, tvrdí prieskum*. <https://www.trend.sk/spravy/najdoveyrodnejším-politikom-je-prezidentka-caputova-tvrdi-prieskum>
- UN News. (2023). 'Urgent need' for more accountability from social media giants to curb hate speech: UN experts. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132232>
- UN WOMEN. (2020). Visualizing the data: Women's representation in society. *UN Women*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2020/2/infographic-visualizing-the-data-womens-representation>
- United Nations. (2019). *Hate speech versus freedom of speech*. <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/hate-speech-versus-freedom-of-speech>

- Uyheng, J., & Carley, K. M. (2020). Bots and online hate during the COVID-19 pandemic: case studies in the United States and the Philippines. *Journal of Computational Social Science*, 3(2), 445–468. doi:10.1007/s42001-020-00087-4
- Van der Pas, D. J., & Aaldering, L. (2020). Gender Differences in Political Media Coverage: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Communication*. doi:10.1093/joc/jqz046
- Walsh, S. (2022). The top 10 social media sites & platforms 2022. *Search Engine Journal*.
<https://bit.ly/3ACnK6k>
- Waqas, A., Salminen, J., Jung, S., Almerexhi, H., Jansen, B. (2019). Mapping online hate: A scientometric analysis on research trends and hotspots in research on online hate. *PLOS ONE*, 14(9): e0222194. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0222194>
- Welch, S. (1975). Sampling by referral in a dispersed population. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 39(2), 237–245.
- Wolfe-Robinson, M. (2021). A ‘safe space for racists’: antisemitism report criticises social media giants. *The Guardian*.<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/aug/01/a-safe-space-for-racists-antisemitism-report-criticises-social-media-giants>
- Yates, C. (2019). ‘Show us you care!’ The gendered psycho-politics of emotion and women as political leaders. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 2(3), 345–361.
<https://doi.org/10.1332/251510819X15646233470674>

APPENDIX A

Semi-structured interview guideline with questioning route

PERIOD	THEME	POSSIBLE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
Opening	Introduction	Tell us your name and from which political party you are. -How long have you been a member of the Slovak parliament (NR SR)? -Are you present and active on social media platforms?
Exploration of current state	Themes and discourse in their soc.media comments.	Think about the comments you get on social media platforms. -What is your perception of these comments? -What words do users use in these comments? -What type of discussion is present under your post?
Exploration of type of speech	Gender based hate speech	-What type of hate speech comments do you notice on your social media? -What difference is between hate comments on your profile versus the one of your male colleagues?
Exploration of effect	Personal impact	-What do you perceive as gender-based hate speech? How would you define this term? What is your understanding of this phenomenon? -If you came across gender-base hate speech, can you tell me an example? -What is your personal experience with gender-based hate speech? -What type of effect does this speech have on you? -If you come across gender-based hate speech, how do you cope with this type of speech?
Future steps	Strategies against gender-based hate speech	-How should we treat this type of speech? -(if respondents acknowledge the problem of gender-based hate speech) How should this type of speech be regulated? What type of strategies should be implemented when dealing with this type of speech.
Ending	Additional comments	We would like you to help us understand the current problem with gender-based hate speech on social media perceived by Slovak female politicians. Is there anything we missed? Is there anything you would like to add?

Abstract (English)

Encountering online hate speech has become an indispensable part of the daily usage of social media. Hate speech on social media is often based on discriminating factors such as race, religion, nationality, sexuality or gender. The last one has not been substantially researched. This study aimed to define and comprehend gender-based hate speech. Women active in politics are prone to be the subject of this type of hate speech. Therefore, a qualitative approach with semi-structure one-on-one interviews with female members of the Slovak National Council were conducted. The female politicians affirmed the massive presence of hate speech on their social media, discussed their personal experiences and strategies on how they deal with this type of speech. Further, the interviewees articulated future steps towards limiting gender-based hate speech on social media. However, a clear and united understanding of gender-based hate speech is absent. The study concludes by indicating points for future research.

Keywords: Gender-based hate speech, social media, political communication, female politicians, Slovakia

Abstract (Deutsch)

Online-Hassreden sind zu einem unverzichtbaren Bestandteil der täglichen Nutzung von sozialen Medien geworden. Diese basieren vor allem auf diskriminierenden Faktoren wie Rasse, Religion, Nationalität, Sexualität oder Geschlecht. Dabei ist darauf hinzuweisen, dass der letzte Faktor des Geschlechts noch nicht umfassend erforscht wurde. Das Ziel dieser Studie war es, die geschlechtsbezogene Hassrede zu definieren und das Verständnis dieses Begriffs zu fördern. Da insbesondere Frauen, die in der Politik tätig sind, anfällig für diese Art von Hassreden sind, wurde ein qualitativer Ansatz mit halbstrukturierten Einzelinterviews mit weiblichen Mitgliedern des slowakischen Nationalrats durchgeführt. Die Politikerinnen bestätigten die massive Präsenz von Hassreden in ihren Profilen in sozialen Netzwerken. Demnach wurden die persönlichen Erfahrungen, der Umgang mit dieser Art von Sprache, sowie die Strategien zur Bewältigung diskutiert. Darüber hinaus formulierten die Befragten zukünftige Schritte zur Minderung von geschlechtsspezifischen Hassreden in sozialen Medien. Dabei ist es jedoch wichtig zu erwähnen, dass ein klares und einheitliches Verständnis von geschlechterbezogenen Hassreden fehlt. Die Studie wird mit einem Ausblick über zukünftige Forschungsarbeiten abgeschlossen.

Stichworte: Geschlechterbezogene Hassreden, soziale Medien, politische Kommunikation, Politikerinnen, Slowakei