



THE IMPACT OF IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONING ON THE COMMUNICATIVE STYLES EMPLOYED BY GOVERNMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyses the relationship between ideological self-positioning and leadership styles communicated on Instagram by twelve female politicians. The research employs content analysis of 1,290 posts made during 2023. The present study examines the correlation between the politicians' self-perceived ideological positioning and the following variables: 1. the nature of the information communicated (soft information/politainment vs. hard information/political), 2. the projected leadership style (conciliatory/soft vs. firm/hard), and 3. the level of personalisation in their communications. The findings indicate that female government leaders who align with the right-wing ideological spectrum tend to utilise a greater number of politainment strategies, adopt a more conciliatory leadership style, and employ personalised communication techniques.

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1. Introduction

The manner in which women politicians in high-level elected governmental executive positions communicate is a subject of interest in the field of political communication. However, research on digital communication and leadership, specifically the particularities of the presence and communication strategy of these women leaders on digital platforms, such as Instagram, is scarce. The present study focuses on analysing the differences in the communication styles of a selection of female political leaders on this social network, considering their impact on the public perception and the construction of their public image.

As demonstrated in preceding studies, women in political roles occupy a variety of positions within the governmental sphere. However, their communication continues to be influenced by gender stereotypes, which limit the perception of their leadership abilities. Consequently, they are frequently assigned roles that are oriented towards empathy and emotional closeness, in contrast to the traditional image of authority and determination that is associated with men in the exercise of power. These stereotypes are reflected in the assumption that female politicians tend to privilege the communication of soft content over hard content. This may have an impact on how citizens perceive their leadership and decision-making abilities (Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020).

This research constitutes an element of the broader domain of political communication studies, which involves the analysis of the discursive and symbolic strategies employed by female leaders to cultivate a sense of proximity with the electorate. In particular, it examines how certain mechanisms, such as the humanisation of public figures, emotion management, storytelling and the use of politainment, contribute to strengthening the 'illusion of intimacy' between politicians and citizens (Brader, 2006; Colomina, 1996; Combs, 1980; Cundy, 1986; Edelman, 1988; Garramone, 1983; Graber, 1987; Gutiérrez Rubí, 2019; Haime, 1988; Hellweg, 2004; Izurieta, 2001; Keeter, 1987; Lang, 1991; Luke, 1987; Marcinkowski & Greger, 2002; Schwardtzenberg, 1978; Sullivan et al., 1990; Waisbord, 1995) and in this context, Instagram emerges as a pivotal milieu for the formation of political identity and the consolidation of civic engagement. The visual nature of this platform, coupled with its direct interactive dynamics, enables the implementation of communication strategies that are personalised and emotionally charged. This, in turn, gives rise to novel forms of leadership and relationships with the electorate.

The study also assesses whether the use of political communication strategies considered most effective for connecting with citizens on digital platforms such as Instagram—including personalisation, storytelling, politainment and soft information—varies according to the self-perceived ideological positioning of elected officials in government executive positions.

1.1 Instagram as a Key Platform in the Image Building of Political Leaders

In recent years, Instagram has emerged as a significant platform for political communication, exhibiting a notable increase in the scope of its political discourse. In April 2024, it reached 2 billion monthly active users, consolidating its position as the fourth most used social network worldwide, behind Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp. A recent study by DataReportal revealed that 62.3% of users are below the age of 34, with the 18-24 age group being the most represented, followed by the 25-34 age group.

In the countries where this research is located, most of the population in 2023 is comprised of Instagram users (Una Vida Online, 2024):

- In 2022, the number of Instagram users in Spain was 23.8 million, constituting approximately 50% of the total population (INE, 2023).
- In the United States, the number of Instagram users in 2024 was 143 million.
- In Italy, the number of Instagram users was approximately 35.7 million, constituting around 59% of the country's total population.
- France had approximately 31.4 million Instagram users, representing approximately 48% of the country's total population.
- In the Netherlands, the number of Instagram users was approximately 7.3 million, constituting approximately 42% of the country's total population.
- Finland's Instagram user base was approximately 2.6 million, constituting around 47% of the nation's total population.

- Hungary has approximately 3.5 million Instagram users, representing approximately 36% of the country's total population.
- Specific data for Scotland is not available, as it is generally included within UK statistics.
- In Uruguay, the number of Instagram users was approximately 2.1 million, constituting around 61% of the country's total population.
- In Chile, the number of Instagram users was approximately 11.5 million, representing approximately 60% of the country's total population.
- In Colombia, the number of Instagram users was approximately 17.9 million, constituting around 35% of the country's total population.

Instagram is a social network on which the humanisation of politicians has become crucial (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2023; Gómez & Méndez, 2023). This phenomenon is characterised by the presentation of the personal and emotional aspects of political leaders in digital communication. As asserted by the Berrocal-Gonzalo et al. (2022), the increasing utilisation of social networks has been identified as a contributing factor to the escalating trend of humanisation among rulers and the personalisation of politics. The strategy enables politicians to present themselves as approachable individuals, thereby facilitating a more direct connection with the electorate.

Metz et al. (2019) conducted a study of political leaders' use of social media. Their findings indicate that humanisation strategies, when employed within the framework of personalisation, are effective in increasing connection and engagement with the electorate. In a similar vein, Enli and Skogerbø's (2013) research on the utilisation of Twitter by European prime ministers to personalise their communications and evoke emotions emphasises that personalisation and emotions are pivotal strategies for establishing a connection with citizens in the digital age.

With regard to the interaction with citizens, Caro-Castaño et al. (2024) focus on Isabel Díaz Ayuso's political communication on Instagram and highlight the use of strategies to humanise the image and generate interaction with followers. In a similar vein, Pineda et al. (2020) examined the portrayal of prominent Spanish political leaders and the propagandistic utilisation of Instagram, concluding with the personalisation and humanisation of politicians on this platform. With regard to the target age segment, López Rabadán and Domenech-Fabregat (2018) posit that this personalisation strategy has the potential to mitigate political disaffection, particularly among the youth demographic, by presenting politicians in a more authentic and relatable manner.

The utilisation of Instagram by political parties is subject to variation, with conventional parties and right-wing groups exhibiting a higher frequency of posting (Pineda et al., 2020). However, Moreno Cabanillas et al. (2024) contend that more recent political formations tend to employ Instagram features in a more strategic manner. With regard to the utilisation of this platform in the context of electoral campaigns, research findings suggest that there are no substantial disparities in the employment of Instagram during electoral and non-electoral periods (Pineda et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the humanisation and personalisation of politics on Instagram is not without its challenges. As Quevedo-Redondo and Portalés-Oliva (2017) have observed, the platform's emphasis on visual content has the effect of contributing to the celebrification of politicians, thereby resulting in a merging of their public and private facets. As posited by Mazzoleni and Bracciale (2019), there exists a risk that excessive personalisation has the potential to deflect attention from substantive political issues. García Beaudoux et al. (2023) posits that the manifestation of humanisation may vary depending on the gender and ideological orientation of the politician, thereby introducing a degree of complexity to its implementation and analysis. In conclusion, humanisation and personalisation have become fundamental elements of modern political communication. Despite the challenges it poses and the need for meticulous calibration, its capacity to nurture a connection between leaders and citizens renders it a valuable instrument in the contemporary politician's communication repertoire.

In this domain of employing personalisation as a communication strategy, female politicians encounter contradictory expectations with regard to their self-presentation. On the one hand, there is an expectation that they will demonstrate competence and strength in areas that are traditionally considered to be "masculine". Conversely, they are expected to exhibit 'feminine' qualities such as empathy and warmth. This duality exerts a significant influence on the manner in which female politicians approach the concept of humanisation in their communication.

1.2 Politainment and Emotions in Digital Political Communication

Politainment refers to political communication that incorporates elements of entertainment in the dissemination of information about politics (Berrocal, 2017). Instagram is a social network that is particularly relevant for the study of politainment, as its visual nature favours the personalisation of politics (Gómez-García et al., 2019), allows for a direct and intimate style of communication (Metz et al., 2019) and facilitates the dissemination of content that combines the playful with the political. In this sense, Instagram in general, and videos in particular, contribute to the spectacularisation of politics, encourage politainment, promote the use of simple narrative styles and techniques, reinforce polarisation and appeal to emotions (López Rabadán & Domenech-Fabregat, 2018). In short, the humanisation of leaders and personalisation in politics have been on the rise alongside the increasingly widespread use of social media (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2019), which rely on closeness and the foregrounding of personalities when communicating political content (Dader, 2012).

Politainment includes the spectacularisation of the information communicated and arouses emotions in users. Emotions are central elements in government communication and are used to mobilise the electorate. They are considered essential for maintaining voter interest and participation, making messages stick in the memory and more effective (Fischer & Lelkes, 2023). Female political leaders use emotions to inspire, motivate and connect with their followers; in particular, they use empathy and compassion as effective leadership tools (Singh et al., 2023).

One technique for mobilising emotions is storytelling, as it helps to establish connections with voters. Stories can strengthen a campaign and make it more effective. Arceneaux (2024) points out that the use of narratives and metaphors is crucial to making political communication more compelling and empowering. In fact, this author asserts that female leaders used these tools to convey complex messages in an understandable and emotionally resonant way, helping to maintain public confidence and calm during times of crisis.

The impact of politainment and storytelling on Instagram is evident not only in the simplification of political messages, but also in the amplification of citizen interaction. By prioritising content that is both attractive and accessible, politicians can expand their audience and foster two-way communication with users (Chadwick, 2020). However, it should be noted that certain studies have expressed concerns that this trend may result in a superficialisation of political debate, wherein the emphasis is placed on sensationalism rather than the substantive content of proposals (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). Notwithstanding the challenges previously mentioned, the capacity of social media to engender political engagement and participation remains a pivotal factor in the evolution of digital political communication (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2018).

The personalisation and humanisation of politicians on Instagram has transformed communication strategies, enhancing the impact of messages and redefining the relationship between governments and citizens. As the concept of politainment continues to gain traction within the digital landscape, it is imperative to undertake a continuous examination of its ramifications for the calibre of public discourse and democratic engagement.

1.3 Political Self-Positioning and Political Communication Strategies

The relationship between political self-positioning and various communication strategies on social networks has been a subject of interest in contemporary literature. However, there is no consensus on whether right-wing or left-wing parties are more effective communicators, nor on the majority strategies employed by these factions, as these questions are country and formation specific. However, it should be noted that research has concentrated more on the examination of citizen political internet users than on leaders. In their seminal study, Huszár et al. (2021) analysed the dissemination of political content on the social network Twitter. Their findings revealed a striking phenomenon: in the majority of the countries under scrutiny (6 out of 7), the traditional political right received a disproportionate level of algorithmic amplification in comparison to the political left. Concurrently, Interian and Rodrigues (2023) investigated the phenomenon of polarisation during the 2022 Brazilian elections, concluding that right-wing internet communities exhibited extreme isolation and a superior capacity for achieving coordinated communication. Conover et al. (2012) examined partisan differences in the digital political activity of 18,000 US Twitter users and found differences between those on the left and those on the right. Indeed, the authors concluded that right-wing users exhibited higher levels of online

political activity, a more interconnected structure, and a communication network topology that facilitated the rapid and wide dissemination of political information. Casero-Ripollés (2020) analysed the Spanish case and stated that politicians with progressive ideologies tend to employ a more participatory approach based on dialogue with citizens, while those with conservative orientations tend to prioritise more structured messages focused on traditional values.

Recent studies have begun to examine the impact of self-positioning strategies on electoral behaviour. Research has indicated that leaders' political self-identification exerts a significant influence on the structuring of their discourse and the rhetorical devices employed to establish a connection with their audience. Leaders with a clearly defined ideological position tend to tailor their communication strategies more effectively to their electoral base, thus maximising their reach and impact (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In the context of social media platforms such as Instagram, politicians modulate their discourse in accordance with the characteristics of their respective audiences, thereby reinforcing their ideological identity and distinguishing themselves from their opponents. This segmentation of discourse has been demonstrated to engender voter loyalty, whilst concomitantly maximising the impact of their messages, thereby engendering higher levels of interaction and visibility in digital environments (Stier et al., 2018). In this context, perceived authenticity emerges as a pivotal factor. Leaders who project an image consistent with their political self-positioning generate greater trust and engagement among their followers, thereby minimising the risk of losing support in the event of changes in the political agenda (Enli & Rosenberg, 2018).

In a similar manner, personalisation on social media platforms has been demonstrated to enhance the emotional connection with the audience. The integration of personal elements into political publications has been demonstrated to engender heightened levels of interaction, thereby reinforcing the perception of closeness and accessibility among the electorate (Campos-Domínguez, 2017). This phenomenon is linked to the growing spectacularisation of politics, where emotional narratives and storytelling become fundamental tools to capture the public's attention. In this sense, the utilisation of politainment – a portmanteau combining the words "politics" and "entertainment" – enables political leaders to consolidate their ideological identity and leverage social media algorithms to augment their reach (Van Aelst et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, these communicative dynamics also foster polarisation on social media. The strategy of ideological reaffirmation has been shown to reinforce the segmentation of audiences, thus contributing to the formation of information bubbles and the dissemination of content that is aligned with the ideological affinity of each group. Consequently, digital spaces are created where exposure to alternative political views is restricted, thereby strengthening party loyalty while impeding pluralistic debate and the confrontation of ideas (Tucker et al., 2018). Notwithstanding the attendant risks, these strategies have been shown to be highly efficacious in mobilising voters, particularly within a media ecosystem characterised by immediacy and information oversaturation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

2. Method, Sample and Procedure

The central aim of this study is to ascertain whether there are discrepancies in the utilisation of the most efficacious political communication resources for establishing a connection with citizens on digital platforms such as Instagram: personalisation, the employment of storytelling, politainment, and the use of soft information, contingent on the self-perceived ideological positioning of elected officials in executive government positions. The objective of this study is to provide an answer to the following research question: Is there a difference between female leaders who self-identify as right-wing or left-wing in terms of the frequency with which they utilise resources such as empathy, closeness, emotions, familiarity or humour in their political communication?

The following specific objectives are congruent with the aforementioned general objective.

Objective 1. To analyse whether hard or soft political leadership communication varies according to the self-perceived ideological positioning of elected officials in executive government positions.

Objective 2. To examine whether the communication of hard/properly political information, or soft/politainment information, varies according to the self-perceived ideological positioning of elected officials in executive government positions.

Objective 3. To establish whether there are differences in the degree of personalisation manifested in the communication of women elected to executive government positions in the sample analysed, according to their self-perceived ideological positioning.

In order to address these objectives, a descriptive cross-sectional study is presented. The research strategy employed is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The method employed for the analysis of the posts in the selected sample is content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). The present study examines the social media activity of 12 female political leaders in executive government positions in 10 countries in Europe and America. The analysis focuses on posts made on the verified Instagram accounts of the leaders. Spain, the Netherlands, Finland, Italy, Hungary, Scotland, Uruguay, the United States, Chile and Colombia. The following list comprises the subjects in question: Ada Colau (during her term as Mayor of Barcelona), Carolina Cosse (Mayor of Montevideo), Isabel Díaz Ayuso (President of the Autonomous Community of Madrid), Femke Halsema (Mayor of Amsterdam), Irací Hassler Jacob (Mayor of Santiago de Chile), Kathy Hochul (Governor of New York), Lori Lightfoot (Mayor of Chicago), Claudia López (Mayor of Bogotá), Sanna Marin (during her term as Prime Minister of Finland), Giorgia Meloni (Prime Minister of Italy), Katalin Novák (President of Hungary), and Nicola Sturgeon (during her term as First Minister of Scotland).

The universe under consideration consists of all posts made on Instagram by the aforementioned female leaders. The sample consists of 1,290 units of analysis, selected based on five criteria: 1. The posts in question were those made between 1 January and 31 March 2023, inclusive. 2. The posts were made by women who, at that time or at any time between 1 January 2023 and 31 March 2023, were holding elected executive government office. 3. The posts were made by women with verified Instagram profiles. 4. The women used this digital platform to communicate directly with citizens. 5. The women exercised their leadership in populations of more than 850,000 inhabitants.

The Lemish and Tidhar (1999) model was utilised for coding. The process involved two individuals and necessitated consensus between the coders: both had to agree on a single classification category for each variable in the posts selected as units of analysis. Prior to commencing the final classification, a pilot test was conducted in which each coder individually classified the same 10% of cases. The inter-rater reliability of this group of publications was subsequently calculated, resulting in a value of 0.97 on Cohen's Kappa coefficient (κ) (Cohen, 1960). Subsequent to the conclusion of the testing stage, the judges initiated the coding of all units of analysis. In instances where consensus could not be reached on the categorisation of the information, a third coder served as judge.

Table1. Female leaders, executive positions, countries, Instagram accounts, age and ideological positioning.

Leader	Position	Country	Instagram profile URL	Age (generation)	Ideological position
Ada Colau	Mayor of Barcelona	Spain	instagram.com/adacolau	49 (Generation X)	Left
Carolina Cosse	Mayor of Montevideo	Uruguay	instagram.com/cossecarolina	62 (Baby Boomer)	Left
Isabel Díaz Ayuso	President of the Autonomous Community of Madrid	Spain	instagram.com/isabeldiazayuso	43 (Generation X)	Right
Femke Halsema	Mayor of Amsterdam	Netherlands	instagram.com/burgemeesterfemkehalsema	57 (Generation X)	Left
Irací Hassler Jacob	Mayor of Santiago de Chile	Chile	instagram.com/iracixstgo	33 (Millennial)	Left
Kathy Hochul	Governor of New York	United States	instagram.com/govkathyhochul	65 (Baby Boomer)	Centre
Lori Lightfoot	Mayor of Chicago	United States	instagram.com/lightfootforchi	61 (Baby Boomer)	Centre
Claudia López	Mayor of Bogotá	Colombia	instagram.com/claudiolopezcl	53 (Generation X)	Left

Sanna Marin	Prime Minister of Finland	Finland	instagram.com/sannamarin	38 (Millennial)	Left
Giorgia Meloni	Prime Minister of Italy	Italy	instagram.com/giorgiameloni	46 (Generation X)	Right
Katalin Novák	President of Hungary	Hungary	instagram.com/katalin.novak	46 (Generation X)	Right
Nicola Sturgeon	First Minister of Scotland	Scotland	instagram.com/nicolasturgeon	53 (Generation X)	Left

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

The following is the conceptual and operational definition of the four variables related to the specific objectives set out in this work.

Variable 1: The nature of the information communicated. The nature of the information conveyed was delineated in a binary manner: firstly, hard, public, and strictly political information, and secondly, soft, politainment information, which was therefore frivolous and superficial, with an element of spectacle or satire.

In the first category, designated as 'hard information', publications pertaining to the agendas and activities of public, community, social and political content were classified. Operationally, these are publications that refer to political situations, social and political leaders and collectives, decision-making processes, government measures and programmes, or electoral campaign actions, and which are framed in a serious format.

The second category, soft information, encompasses publications that primarily feature entertainment content, as opposed to informative or political content. Operationally, it classifies publications that allude to the activity of political actors in non-political spaces; as well as to their personal lives and the telling of anecdotes, emotional states and hobbies (García Beaudoux et al. 2023; García Beaudoux & Slimovich, 2021).

Variable 2: Communicated leadership style. Leadership style is defined as a "way of doing and saying" (Steinberg, 1998). The leadership style was defined in a binary way: a style characterised by the communication of hard skills versus one characterised by the communication of soft skills.

The hard style places significant emphasis on the technical, professional skills and strategic decision-making capabilities of political actors. Operationally, publications are classified in this category on the basis of indicators such as decision communication, management, leadership, administration, strategic planning, operational team management, and/or resource management.

The soft style emphasises socio-emotional skills such as active listening, interpersonal intelligence, and the ability to cooperate and work in teams. Operationally, it is defined by the following indicators: aspects of intimacy of political actors, communication of emotions, empathy with citizens, and/or close relations with the work team (García Beaudoux et al., 2020; García-Beaudoux et al., 2023).

Variable 3. The personalization of communication. The variable is conceptualised as communication in which organisations, public institutions, measures and political decisions are embodied and represented by political leaders who give them a face and a voice in the eyes of the public (Marcinkowski & Greger, 2002). Operationally, this category encompasses publications in which the physical image of women leaders is present and/or in which government actions are presented as personal achievements. The variable under consideration was coded dichotomously: The presence or absence of personalisation is a key consideration.

Variable 4. Self-perceived ideological positioning. Conceptually, this variable is indicative of the self-definition of political leaders in relation to the right-left ideological spectrum, as manifested in public declarations at specific points in time. As a general rule, such self-definition is typically associated with party affiliation, or with the individual's own positions on issues such as the economy, the role of the state and government, and rights, among other matters. In operational terms, the classification was based on occasional statements made by the women leaders themselves in public spaces, such as political events, social networks or the media. Given the susceptibility of this variable to change over the course of the women leaders' political careers, self-positioning within the timeframe of this study was taken into account.

3. Results

The primary objective of this study was to analyse whether the communication of a hard or soft leadership style varies according to self-perceived ideological positioning. For this purpose, given that these were categorical variables, a chi-square test (χ^2) was performed. As demonstrated in Table 2, a comparison between the groups reveals that women leaders who self-perceive as right-centred tend to adopt a softer leadership style, in contrast to those who self-perceive as left-centred and exhibit a harder leadership style. The statistical analysis yielded a result that was statistically significant ($p = .002$), indicating that the observed difference is unlikely to occur by chance.

Table2. Differences in leadership types according to the ideological tendency of women leaders.

Leadership Type	Ideological Positioning	Observed frequency	Expected frequency	Corrected typified residuals	χ^2	Gf	Sig.
Soft	Left	246	273,6	-3,5	12,465	2	.002
	Centre	67	54,2	2,3			
	Right	96	81,2	0,2			
Hard	Left	617	589,4	3,5			
	Centre	104	116,8	-2,3			
	Right	160	174	-2			

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

The second objective was to analyse whether the preference for communication of hard/political information or soft/politainment information varies according to the self-perceived ideological positioning of women government leaders. In this particular instance, the chi-square test reveals that there are observable differences between female leaders who self-identify as left-wing and those who self-identify as right-wing. A further analysis of the data, presented in Table 3, indicates a clear tendency among self-perceived left-wing leaders to prioritise the communication of hard information, while self-perceived right-wing leaders demonstrate a preference for the dissemination of soft information. In this second experiment, the statistical analysis yielded a p-value of .005, indicating a high degree of statistical significance. This finding suggests that the observed difference is unlikely to occur by chance.

Table3. Differences in preference for communication of *hard/properly* political or *soft/politainment* information according to the ideological tendency of women leaders.

Type of Information	Ideological Positioning	Observed frequency	Expected frequency	Corrected typified residuals	χ^2	Gf	Sig.
Soft information/politainment	Left	182	204,3	-3,1	10,602	2	.005
	Centre	45	40,1	0,9			
	Right	77	59,6	2,9			
Hard information/properly political	Left	678	655,8	3,1			
	Centre	124	128,9	-0,9			
	Right	174	191,4	-2,9			

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

The third specific objective seeks to establish whether there are differences in the degree of personalisation that the women leaders in the sample analysed show in their communication, according to their self-perceived ideological position. The chi-squared test indicates that female leaders who self-identify as right-wing utilise personalisation more frequently compared to their left-wing counterparts. Additionally, the statistical analysis in Table 4 indicates a highly significant result ($p = .002$), suggesting that the observed discrepancy is improbable to be a mere chance occurrence.

Table 4. Differences in the degree of personalisation according to the ideological tendency of the women leaders.

Degree of personalisation	Ideological Positioning	Observed frequency	Expected frequency	Corrected typified residuals	χ^2	Gl	Sig.
Yes	Left	598	630,9	-4,4	32,180	2	.002
	Centre	122	125	-0,6			
	Right	223	187,1	5,6			
No	Left	265	232,1	4,4			
	Centre	49	46	0, 6			
	Right	33	68,9	-5,6			

Source: Own elaboration, 2024

4. Conclusions

The twelve women leaders analysed in this study have in common the fact that they have attained elective governmental and executive positions. While communication is not the sole factor that enables electoral success, it is nevertheless an instrumental element in achieving and maintaining power. The findings of this study offer substantiation for the proposition that the efficacy of right-wing women leaders in contemporary society may be attributable, at least in part, to the superior utilisation of resources in their communication with citizens. These resources encompass soft information, personalisation, and emotionally close leadership.

The present study utilised a sample of approximately 1,300 publications on Instagram profiles by elected female heads of government in the initial quarter of 2023, employing the chi-square test to ascertain a statistically significant relationship between the ideological self-positioning of women leaders and communication characteristics. These communication characteristics, as previously outlined in the initial section, have been identified as effective by academics in the domain of political communication. A study of female leaders who self-identify as right-wing revealed the following three communication traits to be most prevalent:

1. A propensity for disseminating information characterised by a blend of political engagement and personal anecdotes, encompassing both the private lives of individuals and governmental actions and policies. Conversely, female leaders who self-identify as occupying the left of the ideological spectrum tend to favour publications that contain hard or strictly political information, i.e. referring to issues, events, regulations, objectives, interests or activities related to political decisions.

2. A soft leadership style, characterised by an emphasis on interpersonal and social skills, emotional intelligence, empathy, and aptitude for cooperation and teamwork, is a distinctive attribute of right-wing female leaders. Conversely, those on the left prioritised a robust leadership style that emphasised technical and strategic competencies.

3. Right-wing female leaders exhibited a more personal communication style in comparison to their left-wing counterparts. The former were significantly more prominent in terms of the communication of government actions and personal achievements. Conversely, left-wing female leaders opted for a different approach, choosing to refrain from appearing in their publications, thereby affording greater visibility to other political and social actors, or communicating in a non-personalised manner.

Two decades ago, Lakoff (2004) posited the notion that, in comparison to progressive political communication, conservative politicians demonstrated superior capacity in their ability to discern the emotional and cognitive responses of citizens, tailoring their communications to resonate with their target audience. Empathy and emotional closeness enable the construction of political narratives by the government that communicate common challenges, nurture the connection between those who govern and their followers, and inspire new visions in them (D'Adamo & García Beaudoux, 2012). The politics of the intimate, the personal and the quotidian; the politics of proximity that engenders leaders appealing directly to citizens; the activation of emotions through political communication; simplicity and radicalism in the presentation of ideas and proposals: all of these factors serve to strengthen certain types of government leadership (Gutiérrez Rubí, 2019; D'Adamo, et al., 2021). This theoretical

framework may offer a means to interpret the observed variations. The construction of political narratives is predicated on the mobilisation of elementary sentiments that concomitantly instigate the formation of political identities (D'Adamo & García Beaudoux, 2017). Networks function as conduits for the dissemination of these messages, rendering them particularly well-suited to the enhancement of personalised leadership styles.

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