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Prime Ministers on Twitter: Mateusz Morawiecki and Andrej Babiš during the 2019 European election campaign – two models of communication

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to analyse Twitter activity of Prime Ministers of Poland and of the Czech Republic, Mateusz Morawiecki and Andrej Babiš respectively, during the 2019 European Parliament election campaign with the special focus on their ways of creating, imposing and reproducing the campaign discourse. It examines especially the person-alization of the election campaign, namely using the election-related activities to promote their image. Also, the im-portance of hashtags as a strategy for building discursive styles is explored and ways of using political pretexts e.g. the Europe Day to introduce election themes are compared. In this context the answer to the following question pre-sents itself as a research challenge: to what extent PMs' tweets impact the course and the dynamics of the campaign and to what extent it is just dry information, a press commentary?

Introduction

The influence of social media on activities of politicians and on the social space in general has been steadily growing. The politics happens not only behind the doors of parliaments and cabinets, but also in social media. Political players share their decisions on social platforms, announce specific undertakings, while analysts and experts include in their researches and reports social media activity as a category with the potential to affect the position and stability of a given country or its government.

Twitter is one of the social platforms that revolutionized media presence of politicians and the entire social space as such (Gil, 2020). It is a medium used for direct contact between the politician and the voter, but it is also a platform for self-promotion and self-production used by public life participants, a channel for announcing decisions, such as plans to withdraw from an arrangement or to ratify an agreement (Murthy, 2013, p. 41).

The aim of the paper herein is to explore Twitter activity of prime ministers during the election campaign with the special focus on the way the campaign discourse is created, imposed and reproduced. It also attempts to define the role of Twitter activity of the PMs in the election campaign dynamics, in introducing new election-related themes and in self-production of their own political position. In this context the paper will try to answer the following question: to what extent PM's tweets impact the course and the dynamics of campaigning and to what extent it is just a dry information, a mere press commentary?

The analysis is based on a comparative study (Rusin Dybalska et al., 2019, p. 541-555). The Twitter activity of the Polish PM Mateusz Morawiecki is compared with the one of the Czech PM, Andrej Babiš. The analysis covers the period of the 2019 European Parliament election campaign. The Twitter activity of candidates was monitored between 25 April 2019 and 28 May 2019.

The applied study method is the medial and linguistic juxtaposition of tweets published by the PMs, including their discursive meaning (Klementewicz, 2010, p. 301). The conclusions were collated with the analysis of the political position of both candidates on the political scene from the perspective of political sciences to see how the way the social media campaign is run depends on the position of the prime minister on the political scene (Bodio, 2003, p. 251).

The analysis was performed using Twitter analytics tools. The *Twitonomy* application was used to map the architecture of Twitter accounts of both PMs, namely, to identify links and interactions with other users and to highlight topics tackled by both politicians during the time in question.

Morawiecki and Babiš: their position on the political scene

The position of a politician, in this case of the PM, on the political scene is crucial for the way he or she campaigns, as it relates to the problem of his or her subjectivity, i.e. the independence (Garczyńska, 2003, p. 45) of the politician as far as what he or she says and how he or she runs the campaign.

The subjectivity, its existence or lack thereof, not only affects the freedom of running and managing the election spectacle, but it is also reflected by the role the prime minister adopts in the campaign. One should bear in mind that an election campaign involves not only competition for electorate's votes, but also rivalry inside political camps. A politician whose position in his or her political camp is not strong, will often use the campaign to build his or her status inside their party: they exploit the election-related activities, which become restricted by the fact that campaigning is adjusted to what serves the standing of the politician in his or her camp best.

The upper hand of Babiš over Morawiecki in this respect is quite clear. The Czech PM is the leader and the founder of the ANO party. As such he enjoys full institutional control over the power base. Morawiecki does not have this luxury. Jarosław Kaczyński is still the leader of the ruling party, while PM Morawiecki is not even a member of the Law and Justice (PiS) party leadership. He formally exercises authority without having any real political power (Karwat, 2000, p. 185).

The position of politicians on the political scene also stems from their political activity. Here one can identify a number of similarities between Morawiecki and Babiš. They both lack the "professional politician" card, if one does not count their activism in opposition and youth wing organizations and both emerged through the *revolving door mechanism*, i.e. by a transfer from the world of business to politics. Before Babiš founded his ANO party in 2012 he had been an entrepreneur (Szczygieł, 2018). In 2013 he was ranked as the 736. richest person in the world by the *Forbes* magazine (2nd richest in the Czech Republic). The same applies to Morawiecki: before he made his way to the PiS government, he used to be e.g. the chairman of the board in one of the Polish major banks, Bank Zachodni WBK.

Now let us look at the image burden of both politicians. Babiš is often accused by the Czech opposition of his communist activity: he used to be a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and collaborated with the Czechoslovak secret state security. Morawiecki's image is burdened by his activities in the Civic Platform and Polish People's Party government where he used to serve as the economic advisor to Donald Tusk, the main political antagonist of PiS (Gadomski, 2017).

The position and the political background of prime ministers affect an election campaign. The trick of personalisation, when you build your campaign message around the dark sides of the image of your competitor, is very frequently used in politics (Fras, 2005, p. 153). However, in case of Morawiecki and Babiš and their campaigning one should remember about the subjectivity

criterion. The Czech PM definitely enjoys greater political freedom, as he does not depend on internal party frictions and processes in a way that Morawiecki does.

Twitter in election campaign

Twitter is not a typical social medium, as it is a microblog where the main goal is not to build a network of friends and maintain social relations, but to have a quick exchange of views, present positions, opinions and dynamic reactions to what is happening in different places in the world (Mistewicz, 2015, p. 55).

Twitter modified political communication. Initially, it was a medium for presenting one's views and political expression. Currently, it is a platform for conducting a permanent election campaign (Woźniak, 2015), constant contact between a politician and his electorate. Itis also a policy making platform - remember that on Twitter, politicians announce important decisions, present positions or even terminate strategic agreements.

The role of Twitter in the mediascape and in social networks domain results from its structure: the speed of exchanging messages, tweets, which, although they remain on the main page (timeline), gradually make space for newer, more up-to-date posts; and the short form of messages imposed by character limits, as a single tweet cannot exceed 280 characters.

The need to constantly react and post tweets so that they are not lost in the maze of other posts and the restraints connected with character limits define the *modus operandi* of Twitterers (Doctoroff, 2014, p. 111), namely the ongoing Twitter presence, need for relentless activity and specific format of messages that cannot be too long and should be both short and informative to make for a good punchline.

Twitter's structure makes it an ideal communication tool on the politician–voter line. Firstly, it allows for a direct contact, the one-sided communication can be transformed into an interaction: a politician can reply to taunts of the voters and the other way round; also it is an opportunity to become recognizable, independently of the regime of traditional media which select people, events and topics to fit their agenda predefined by the media brand. Thanks to the Twitter type of media opposition members, controversial or second line politicians also get their chance to shine in the political landscape.

Twitter is where you can also win votes thanks to the users of the platform. In the analysed period, i.e. in the 1Q2019 the service was used by 330 million users monthly

worldwide, with the daily traffic of 134 million users[1]. Twitter users appreciate the medium as an alternative source of information; a channel to exchange opinions and views, to find inspiration and ideas for personal development; a place where you can have a peek at your heroes (Golinowski, 2007, p. 131). It is also a platform for flaming, i.e. ongoing online arguments referred to as "online fussing and fighting" (Zappavigna, 2013, p. 64).

Olgierd Annusewicz (2017, p. 92) points to basic functions of Twitter in political communication online, i.e. the self-presentation, persuasive, informative, educational, integrating, economic function, reciprocal communication and agenda-setting function.

These functions represented by specific, peculiar messages are shifted in the campaign reality where the persuasive function is in the forefront substituting education and information (Łukomski, 2005, p. 96), together with integration, self-presentation, and most of all the agenda-setting function (Bralczyk, 2020, p. 294).

The above catalogue of functions and communication can be expanded by two more categories that are significant for the Twitter activity from the perspective of election rivalry. The first one is the ludic type. Entertainment on Twitter can serve at least two purposes. It can be a way to make one's image more fun as a form of self-affirmation, to give the audience a wink, to show that one does not take everything seriously, be a way to lose the political formal tone for a moment (Rusin Dybalska, 2011, p. 269). But it can be also used to make fun of the rival (Rawski, 2020a, p. 135), as a whip-of-laughter strategy against political competition (Karwat, 2009, p. 321).

Another campaign strategy is the distortive, or disruptive activities. They can be traced in popular phenomena of trolling and flaming as artificial generation of distortions on competitors' profiles: sending internet users to hurl insults or make fun of the profile owner; to disseminate lies and fake news. Armies of *trolls* are a social media plague, especially during an election campaign. Analysts believe that as much as every third tweet posted on the Polish Twitter is bot generated (from so called fake accounts) (Maguś, 2019, p. 63).

PMs on Twitter

Twitter activity of a user, i.e. whom they follow, how often they add new conte, with whom they usually have interactions is one thing. But there is the self-presentation layer of the account, the profile photo, the background photo, the bio and the profile of the account based on the activity.

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[1] In 2019 there were more than 6 million Twitter active users in Poland. In the Czech Republic it was almost 700,000 users. See: Statcounter.

One should also note the importance of subaccounts in social media. Both Morawiecki and Babiš have their own, personalized social media accounts, they also have accounts for their offices run by PR professionals. In Poland it is The Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland account (@PremierRP), in Czechia it is the Government Office (@strakovka)[2].

Subaccounts can serve to lighten up the personal profile. They can take over the formal publications and fulfil the need to inform the audience about events connected with running the country and activities related with the function held. PMs discount the delegation of the formal account in the area of self-production. Politicians can now have direct contact with the followers and can shape the political agenda, e.g. by posting opinion-making tweets (Adamik-Szysiak, 2018, p. 41).

Let us now focus on personal accounts. In terms of Twitter activity, the Czech PM seems to have the upper hand. Babiš started his Twitter presence in July 2012, before he really entered politics. He started off as a businessman, only to adapt his account later to the reality of becoming the leader of the Czech government.

The situation is completely different in Mateusz Morawiecki's case, who was absent from Twitter prior to his political career. Morawiecki set up his Twitter account in December 2017, i.e. after he was designated as the prime minister. During his time as the deputy prime minister and the minister of economy he was not an active Twitterer. The situation changed with his political promotion, which shows that the Twitter journey of Morawiecki is a result of the self-production strategy and the posts the PM tweets can be the consequence thereof (Karwat, 2009).

The self-production nature of the account itself is very clear already on the profile card with the profile information. When one opens the @MorawieckiM profile, the profile photo of the Prime Minister Morawiecki shows him in a formal and official pose, while the background photo shows the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland flooded in a red-and-white illumination. The colours obviously introduce the patriotic symbolism here. The same is applied in the "about me" section, where one reads: *Prime Minister* next to a red and white flag emoticon. Morawiecki's profile includes further information about the date of birth and a link to the website of the Chancellery.

The account of Morawiecki is clearly managed by professionals with attention to details. It may suggest that the goal of the account is not to have a free interaction between the politician

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[2] A difference in approach is already clear from Twitter handles. In Poland the political function was emphasised: the PM, while in the Czech Republic it is the place: Strakovka, which is the informal name of the PM's seat (Strakova Akademie).

and the surrounding world, nor any spontaneous activity, but rather a meticulous execution of a PR strategy.

If the @MorawieckiM account is an example of a professional self-presentation strategy, then the @AndrejBabis profile, which has been active since 2012 is a hybrid, where you can find both image management aspects and the elements showing the free nature of the account, which is untamed by any formal factors channel for communicating both with the world and the voters.

The first thing that stands out is the lack of the background photo. Babiš did not add any image or photo to fill in the background section. However, this is not something that really affects the reception. On the contrary, it directs the attention to the profile photo. The photo, unlike the photo of Morawiecki, is informal. What is more, it is incompatible with the office held. Andrej Babiš is pictured in a way that does not show his face which hides under a red baseball cap with a phrase *Strong Czechia* in white. It channels the *Make America Great Again* baseball cap worn by Donald Trump (Kokot, 2018).

Twitter presentation of Babiš is an attempt to steer away from the image burden of the function he holds. In the presentation section the politician leaves out the components that would disclose his position in the government. The profile card does not say that it is the Czech PM's account. Also, no links to websites or subaccounts can be found here. The only content is available in the bio where one reads: *Občan ČR*, i.e. a Czech citizen.

The *Občan ČR* bio is relational to the football cap shown on the profile photo: *silné Česko*. Together they make a coherent whole that evokes associations with political power, principles etc. in followers without highlighting the post Babiš holds.

It seems that from the political communication point of view the strategy adopted by the Czech prime minister is closer to the presumed self-presentation potential of Twitter and to the direct communication with voters than in case of his Polish counterpart and his account. It is clear that in the image building segment Andrej Babiš wants to simply remain Andrej Babiš on Twitter, while Mateusz Morawiecki wants to be the Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

PM tweets

The *Twitonomy* app allows one to monitor PMs' activity in the *retweet* category, i.e. forwarding tweets of other users, and in the *mentions by other people* category. This will help us place the accounts of Morawiecki and Babiš both on the Twitter and the real-life political landscape.

In the examined period Mateusz Morawiecki shared tweets mainly from two accounts. The first one was @PremierRP, i.e. the account of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. 56

percent of all retweets came from this account, while further 8 percent were retweeted from the Law and Justice profile (@pisorgpl). The most mentioned users were the politicians associated with the ruling camp, with the Law and Justice (PiS) party. Mentions regarding the president of the Polish Republic, Andrzej Duda (@AndrzejDuda) and the PiS account amounted to 6 percent of all mentions each, while further 5.6 percent were connected with Joachim Brudziński[3] (@jbrudzinski).

It shows that from the perspective of Twitter activity, its sources, people engaged and engaging, Morawiecki is closely affiliated with the Polish ruling political camp. What strikes is the strong correlation with the @PremierRP account, which might suggest that both accounts are affected by the suggestions and hints from PR and political communication specialists and that both profiles serve one and the same PR strategy.

No official account of the Government Office or of the ANO 2011 party profile can be found among the retweets and people mentioned on Babiš's account. The Czech PM adopts a completely different strategy to his Polish counterpart. Babiš usually retweets posts of his subordinates, namely of ministers. Most of the retweets, i.e. 30 percent, come from the Minister of Health profile @adamvojtechano; 24 percent from the deputy PM and the Minister of Finance account @alenaschillerov; 15 percent from the deputy PM and the Minister of Industry and Trade @KarelHavlicek_. These are also the users that Babiš mentions most often.

The array of PM Babiš's activity shows that on Twitter he is the boss, the coordinator and the source of information about what is happening at home and in his cabinet. What is interesting, unlike Morawiecki, Babiš only occasionally shares content from a subaccount or from his power base. As if he wanted to emphasize his political autonomy and highlight the personal nature of his Twitter profile.

Twitter campaign

The review of content added by the politicians on their timeline allows us to identify the nature of their profiles during the election campaign, to formulate answers to the question to what extent is Twitter a tool to heat up the political rivalry during the campaign and to what extent it is a social medium making use of the behind-the-scenes theme, showing the politics from the inside (Majewski, 2018, p. 78).

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[3] Deputy PiS leader, former Minister of Interior and Administration, Member of the European Parliament since 2019.

In the period in question PM Morawiecki used Twitter as a reporting tool. He shared coverage from his visits to events such as Game Jam Square; Together for Europe; Polish Top League (Ekstraklasa) games or celebrations of the Silesian Uprising anniversary. Because of the flood that hit southern Poland in May 2019, PM Morawiecki posted extensive information about the progress in the works of the crisis management centre and about help for flood victims. The situation of crisis was most probably the reason why purely campaign related content got reduced. If it had not been for the flood, it would have probably found its way to Morawiecki's profile more often.

One should point out that the PM rarely initiates any discussion. If, however, he decides to do so, then these are very scarce posts, which are added in the form of a C2A (*call to action*). Morawiecki asks his followers about their memories connected with their school leaving exams or which team they will support in the Polish Cup finals. It is clear that the politician is trying to use Twitter for self-promotion, which is supported by the coverage of PM attending various events and gatherings.

PM's activity often takes place in a non-political domain. Morawiecki likes to present himself as a politician who is active not only in places where he has to be, such as an EU Summit, but also where he wants to be. This is his take on the close-to-people politics, his self-presentation as a prime minister who takes personal interest in what is going on in the country. It is significant that Twitter is used here to post a message about a direct participation of the PM in the social and political life and to show the audience that the PM is also active in the non-political domain.

On the @PremierRP account retweets on formal activities of Morawiecki are predominant. It is interesting to see that @pisorgpl retweets from the Law and Justice profile include coverage from the conventions or political agenda declarations endorsed by PM Morawiecki. However, if you take a closer look at the PiS Twitter account in the period in question it becomes clear that it is Jarosław Kaczyński who plays the leading role here. The rift is additionally highlighted by the deficit of the party power base of PM Morawiecki who is looking for some space or area in social media where he could show his autonomy.

Babiš, just like Morawiecki, uses Twitter to report on his political activities. The Czech PM informs about a fruitful meeting with mothers petitioning for increased parental benefits; he reports on his visit to a grocery shop; informs about his EU meetings or shows the *behind-the-scenes* reality of the campaign. But the trick with the *behind-the-scenes* coverage in case of Babiš

is different than in case of Morawiecki. The Czech PM seems to be giving his followers a wink, sharing informal, tongue-in-cheek contents, such as a video of himself sleeping after the campaign tour.

Babiš posts agenda tweets, which reveal political intentions and inform about the political agenda. PM tweets about the AI development programme or the development of the Dukovany nuclear power plant. With each such tweet he never fails to mention that it is the result of the efforts of the government under his leadership. It is a completely different approach to self-presentation than what can be seen on Morawiecki's timeline.

Moreover, Morawiecki does not seem to use Twitter to confront his competition, or to address replies and responses to his political rivals (Singer & Brooking, 2019, p. 23). When during the election campaign the Czech opposition made accusations regarding the dubious business past of Babiš, he dismissed them on Twitter:

> *I am no longer a businessman thinking about his own profits. Now I am fighting only for the interests of the Czech Republic*[4] (Babiš, 2019).

Interactions with political competition intensify Twitter traffic. They are in line with the Twitter agenda-setting function that allows for the transfer of what is happening on Twitter to the traditional mediascape. The Czech PM seems to be well aware that traditional media are eager to reproduce Twitter discussions and perhaps this is why he does not hesitate to comment on and react to what the opposition and his political competitors do.

#Discussion

Hashtags are a way to increase Twitter account traffic and a recipe to dictate the discourse or initiate a discussion on the given topic. They are special links that allow other users to find a specific thread or issue in the sea of other tweets and posts.

One must not ignore the discursive meaning of hashtags. They are often marginalized due to their predominantly organizational role. But hashtags are not just hyperlinks, they are also a specific communication unit, a message with a semantic load. Thus, one should approach hashtags as a persuasion instrument in disguise which restricts, profiles and provides emotional frames for the message (Walewski, 2020). This is why political parties try to come up with

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[4] Original: „A že už nejsem byznysmen, který myslí na vlastní zisk. Já teď bojuju jen a pouze za zájmy České republiky."

occasional hashtags that are also a positive, evaluative message, e.g. a campaign hashtag of Law and Justice: #PolskaSercemEuropy (PolandHeartofEurope).

In his tweets Mateusz Morawiecki follows the imperative of using hashtags. PM's posts include such hashtags as #PiS4EU;#NaszaUniaNaszaPrzyszłość; #PiSbus; #konwencjaPiS. Although most of them are in line with the strategy of the party as a whole, the #NaszaUniaNaszaPrzyszłość (#TogetherForEurope) was a common initiative of 13 EU countries for the review and presentation of the vision of European development, alternative to the "old EU" proposition.

Andrej Babiš does not use the hashtag strategy. The only hashtag used by the PM is #EUelections2019 which he includes only in his tweets directly related to the European elections. Tweets presenting Babiš's views on the EU or his reaction to campaign activities of his competitors do not include any hashtags. As if the PM did not bother to start any Twitter discussion on the topic.

PMs on Europe and the EU

2019 European Parliament election campaign overlapped with two events that are crucial for the position of Poland and the Czech Republic within the European community and which became a pretext to introduce campaign themes in the Twitter discussion. The first was the common Polish and Czech anniversary of their EU accession (then referred to as European Community), i.e. 1 May and the 9 May which is Europe Day.

Social media love special occasions. Many social channels commemorate a special day or holiday in a way that encourages users to engage. Both the EC accession anniversary and the Europe Day together with the campaign reality are a good example of how both PMs approach the subject that is already present in social media.

Mateusz Morawiecki made no official reference to the anniversary of the Polish EU accession. He did not directly mention the significance of this day for both Poland and the Poles. On 30th April he tweeted:

> *Europe has to change, be more just, with more solidarity and innovation. This can be achieved through five public policies and goals for the EU. I believe that @pisorgpl in PE can make it happen[5]! #PiS4EU* (Morawiecki, 2019).

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[5] Original: „Europa musi się zmienić - stać się bardziej sprawiedliwa, solidarna i innowacyjna. Droga do tego prowadzi przez realizację pięciu polityk publicznych i celów dla Unii. Wierzę, że dzięki @pisorgpl w PE to się uda!"

adding a link to the interview he gave to politico.eu website to the tweet. It includes a catchy hashtag suggesting that the answer to everything Europe needs: the solidarity, justice etc. is exactly what PiS can offer. What is more, the PM does not mention the achievements and experience Poland gained thanks to its presence in the European Union. It is not a date to celebrate and demonstrate European values. Morawiecki appropriates the anniversary of the Polish accession into EU and uses it to present PiS's agenda for modernization and reforms of the EU, without celebrating and honoring the anniversary. And on 1 May the PM publishes coverage from the *Together for Europe* summit.

Andrej Babiš approached the EU accession anniversary in a different way. Although the PM attended the mini-summit *Together for Europe*, he posted a long, 5-tweet message about the anniversary[6] (Babiš, 2019).

We are celebrating fifteen years since our EU accession; the PM begins thus clearly emphasizing the 1 May is a date that not only deserves remembering but should also be treated as an opportunity to comment on European matters. And this is exactly what Babiš does: he thanks all Czechs and Czech political forces for their efforts in securing the republic's place in the community, he highlights advantages of the EU and how the Czech Republic benefited from joining it:

> *Thanks to EU we have new export opportunities, EU companies can invest here. Only our EU membership assured foreign investors that we are a politically stable, functional market economy with the rule of law. We sit at one table in the EU, nothing about us without us, we participate in decision-making.*

In his criticism of the EU Andrej Babiš mentions risks connected with migration and excessive bureaucracy. However, he refrains from the accusatory tone, he does not play the euroscepticism card, but rather approaches these risks as a challenge that the Czechs and the EU

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[6] Original: „Připomínáme si patnáct let od vstupu do Evropské unie. Zásluhy na tom nemělo jen pár jedinců a politiků. Vstup naší země do NATO i EU byl důsledek práce a zodpovědnosti všech poctivých, slušných, pracovitých a podnikavých lidí v této republice. Díky EU máme kam vyvážet a firmy z Unie u nás mohou investovat. Teprve členství v EU ujistilo zahraniční investory o tom, že jsme politicky stabilní, fungující tržní ekonomika s vládou práva. V EU sedíme u společného stolu, není to »o nás bez nás«, podílíme se na rozhodování. EU má mínusy, ale žádný z nich není důvod odcházet. Je to výzva, abychom byli aktivní. Vadí nám přílišná regulace, která přichází z Bruselu, a musíme získat větší vhled do toho, jak se rodí. Lidé pak z toho mají pocit, že se tam řeší prkotiny a nesmysly. Vadí nám nápady Bruselu a mnohých velkých zemí na přerozdělování migrantů. Zde je náš názor jasný. Chceme neprodyšnou ochranu vnějších hranic EU. Sami si budeme vybírat, kdo u nás bude žít, a azyl se bude udělovat podle našich zákonů. Naše členství v EU je návrat do Evropy, kam patříme a vždy jsme patřili. Není to téma k diskusi ani k nějakému referendu. Je to nezpochybnitelné a nezvratitelné. V EU však nebudeme jen aktivní a kooperativní, ale i kritičtí, když bude třeba."

need to face. The PM makes references to the eurosceptical factions and politicians prompting the CZECHexit idea, so that the Czech Republic leaves the European Union:

> *Our EU membership is us returning to Europe, because we have always been a part thereof. It is not up for any discussion or referendum.*

Although Poland and the Czech Republic share a similar history within the EU, in the messages of the PMs a different approach towards the common Europe issue transpires. Babiš presents his views very clearly, while Morawiecki makes references to the topic, but in an oblique, evasive way.

What is striking is the fact that the idea of POLexit and CZECHexit emerged both in Poland and in Czechia. Although the power of eurosceptics in both countries is more or less the same, nevertheless Babiš declares that there is no future for the Czech Republic outside the EU, while PM Morawiecki remains silent on the topic, at least on Twitter.

Mateusz Morawiecki in a similar oblique way makes references to the Europe Day. He posts the coverage from the European meeting on Twitter:

> *The EU needs an ambitious vision for growth and courage to face challenges. Creating a common market, wise environmental policies, fighting EU VAT gap – these are the topics we discussed today during the Europe Day at the #SibiuSummit[7]* (Morawiecki, 2019).

What is striking is the fact that the challenges Morawiecki refers to are the same as what PiS suggested during the campaign. Thus, Morawiecki again uses the date and the occasion not to contribute to a discussion or present his opinions, but to do politics and fulfil campaign goals (Rawski, 2020b, p. 303). On the other hand, Andrej Babiš does not make a note of the Europe Day at all, he does not tweet a word about it. On the 8th of May he reports on the visit of the then President of the European Council in Prague. The Czech PM and Donald Tusk made a joint declaration on their readiness to build Europe of respect, cooperation and justice.

Metaphors for Europe

In the campaign discourse metaphors used by political leaders play a special role. One should mention them especially in the persuasive context of Twitter influence. The metaphors have the

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[7] Original: „Unia Europejska potrzebuje ambitnej wizji rozwoju i odwagi, by stawić czoła wyzwaniom. Budowa wspólnego rynku, mądra polityka klimatyczna, walka z europejską luką VAT – o tym wszystkim rozmawialiśmy dziś w Dniu Europy na #SibiuSummit".

potential to impose images, consolidate associations and reconstruct knowledge and awareness of the audience (Lakoff, 2017, p. 19) in line with the needs and goals of the Twitterer.

Metaphors are a popular method in politics, well known and applied in any elections. Metaphors allow politicians to freely infuse (Lakoff, 2017, p. 31) basic campaign topics with characteristics that comply with their election strategies, goals or agendas (Kaczmarek, 2001, p. 11). Social media are especially useful in setting up and disseminating metaphors. This is mainly due to the brevity of messages, whose simplification determines the use of the language of metaphors.

The subject and the main campaign concept that the elections in question revolve around is Europe and the European Union in the sense of institutions, political entities, organizations, values, etc. Depending on the political context and even more so on the elections goal one sees different definitions of Europe.

When Mateusz Morawiecki writes about the European Union, he usually compares it to *a community; a dream; a European modernity whose fruits can be enjoyed by everyone equally*. The audience is clearly presented with a conservative discourse here with implies catalogue of values shared by conservative voters. The *community* is a value frequently recurring in PiS communication, *dreams* show aspiration and longterm plans PiS wants to fulfil, *European modernity* and the metaphor of *fruits* express objections towards exclusion and marginalization of some countries within European structures. PM Morawiecki wants everybody to enjoy the fruits, meaning advantages and development opportunities equally, without any rationing based on political values or views. Probably this is why when talking about the EU the politician applies metaphors connected with expectations and desires. Because then both him and his party can be those who know how to fulfil these dreams without destroying the order and axiological integrity. This is what Morawiecki conveys in his tweet on 2 May saying: *We want Europe where everybody feels at home*.

The home metaphor is a bridge, a link to the campaign message of Law and Justice. Europe and the EU are not a political entity here or an organization where you need to clash and compete for your own interests. It is a home and a community, where harmony, mutual respect and solidarity should prevail (Economist, 2019).

One should note here that the Twitter metaphors used by Morawiecki contradict the already mentioned narrative critical of the EU and its institutions. Probably what Morawiecki

does is a way to soften the campaign communication, to de-escalate the conflict between PiS and selected European structures.

Andrej Babiš resorts to a completely different strategy in disseminating images and metaphors of Europe. When tweeting about the European Union the politician mainly compares it to a *leader, a partner and a challenge*. Thus, he triggers associations with competition, rivalry, need for competence and collective efforts.

Europe as a leader is a comparison that evokes a high stake, a need to be a player in a team with a significant position in the geopolitical order. It is also a declaration of identity and political affiliation: we stick with the strong one. A *challenge* may be a way to invoke the logic of rivalry: both in internal Czech politics and within the EU. It is an action that needs to be faced. *Partnership*, on the other hand, is an activity that requires politicians to be professional, competent and have a vision. This takes us back to Babiš, whose political and business background makes him proficient in games and cooperation with players in Brussels on equal terms.

Andrej Babiš imaging of Europe introduces the language of professionalism, he imposes optics of competition and negotiations where the European Union is not a value, but an organization, an economic entity, where the key to success and achievement is competence and skills. Twitter metaphors used by the Czech PM are meant to affirm him as a politician, as the one who can take on challenges (Nadeau, 2001, p. 359) faced by the Czech Republic in the European Union. It is a clever strategy of escaping forward. Let us reiterate the accusations made by the Czech opposition in this context: the criticism of PM's dubious business connections. By using metaphors Babiš takes the wind out of his opponents' sails. In his crafty effort he reverses the discursive order, changes image burden into a superlative that speaks to his merit (Karwat, 2009, p. 23).

Conclusions

The review of Twitter activity of Prime Ministers Morawiecki and Babiš suggests that during the election campaign the medium is used with caution. It seems that the politicians fail to make use of the potential offered by Twitter for generating campaign discourse and establishing topics and issues that would trigger comments from followers, analysts, voters, and mainly the political competition.

Virality of tweets, i.e. how they are shared, commented, liked, thus generating the huge reach of the tweet is ignored by the PMs. Babiš tries to initiate discussion, to interact with individual players on the Czech political scene, which is not the case of Morawiecki, who uses the medium as a reporting tool and refrains from what one could call Twitter politics, i.e. he does not engage in politics, rivalry, communication with his competitors by writing emotionally marked tweets (Maliszewski, 2008). This kind of strategy is closer to what Babiš does.

Both PMs show signs of affinity towards the self-production potential of Twitter. They report on the good things happening around them. They follow the strategy of overinforming about events with a potential to consolidate and improve their political image, while ignoring anything that might rebound on their image.

The focus on image related issues during election campaign together with the limited use of Twitter for generating election discourse may come as a bit of surprise. It is very clear when looking at their opinion-making tweets or the use of hashtags (Kapuścińska, 2018). Politicians clearly steer away from the *clickbait* strategy which is supposed to attract attention of the audience with catchy phrases or exaggerated artwork (Walewski, 2020, p. 29). It may be the result of strong personalization of politics, when based on the calculation of gains politicians feel it is better to focus attention of the voters on the prime minister, to personalize the campaign rather than introduce or start a discussion on political or agenda-related issues, which may be far riskier, especially until the votes are cast.

The campaign period is marked by caution and a conservative approach. Politicians clearly refrain from any confrontational strategy entailing interaction with voters, with competition and from tweeting their own views or opinions. Here PM Babiš seems to be bolder compared to the static Morawiecki. The defensive communication may be the consequence of the risk that it involves. Such tweets may be later transferred to traditional media where the PM may be depicted as a troublemaker or a press instigator. During the campaign it pays better off for politicians to remain level-headed, conservative, even for the price of having a boring profile for a while.

When one compares the Twitter activity of Morawiecki and Babiš, it seems that the gusto with which a politician uses social media depends on his position in the party and in the political landscape. It is clear on the example of Babiš who enjoys a very strong position in his party and, unlike Morawiecki, does not have to share his social media presence with anybody.

Although social media have been revolutionizing political communication and the political domain, it seems political leaders appreciate their power. However, they are well aware that they can be used to their advantage and hurt them as well: this is why in their approach towards new media they remain conservative.

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Political Preferences of QCA Methods Institutes? A Comment on the Availability and Gender Gap Disparity Problems

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Abstract:

In this research note, I examine a set of two interrelated questions about the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) methods institutes. First, I assembled and analyzed a novel dataset that tracks every QCA related training worldwide from 2002 to 2018. My examination finds that although QCA trainings are becoming more popular in Europe, the US is still the single most frequent host country for such events. Secondly, I examine the extent to which gender gap exists among QCA instructors. My findings show that female QCA instructors are severely under-represented, which likely limits their academic and professional opportunities. Thus, the QCA research community appears to be marked by the same structural challenges to diversity and gender equality as other areas of political science. Overall, this paper should of interest to scholars interested in the impact of academic infrastructures on future research trajectories as well as those concerned about gender equality in academia.

Introduction

While the importance of qualitative approaches in political science is not as contested anymore (Bennett & Elman, 2007), teaching qualitative methods remains a challenge (Fonseca & Segatto, 2019). Emmons and Moravcsik (2019) report that 40% of top political science programs are not offering any formal training in qualitative methods. This trend holds despite the fact that some subfields in the discipline are dominated by the use of qualitative approaches (Moravcsik, 2010, p. 29). Because qualitative methods appear less structured than statistical approaches, there is even a perception that they do not need to be taught in a formal manner (Schwartz-Shea, 2003). Moreover, teaching qualitative methods is further complicated if done outside the Anglo-Saxon context (Eszter Simon, 2013; Fonseca & Segatto, 2019).

The quantitative-qualitative divide in our discipline is not new. Recently, the two camps have sorted themselves into either the Section on Political Methodology or the Section on Qualitative and Multi-Method Research, and thus their differences became semi-institutionalized (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012, p. 5). Beyond grouping political scientists according to their preferred mode of analysis, professional infrastructures also help drive methodological innovations. Collier and Elman (2010) contend that methodological institutes aided the development of qualitative approaches, while the creation of *the Journal of Mixed Methods Research* has been crucial for the spread of mixed methods research (Seawright, 2016, p. 4). Similar developments can be observed in other areas of political science. For example, the study of religion was once considered anachronistic (Gill, 1998, p. 3), but became more prominent after the founding of the journal *Politics and Religion* by the American Political Science Association's Religion and Politics organized section in 2008 (Kettell, 2012).

Purpose

If political science is indeed simultaneously experiencing a multi-method boom (Seawright, 2016) and a disciplinary crisis of teaching qualitative methods (Emmons & Moravcsik, 2019), then methods institutes will continue to play a crucial role in the evolution of our discipline. In this paper, I look at the availability of advanced trainings in Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to see where such opportunities are most readily available. I also examine the extent to which a gender gap exists among QCA method institutes' instructors. The discipline of political science is currently undergoing a variety of efforts to make it more diverse, and yet despite considerable monetary investments these programs have had a limited impact (Reid & Curry, 2019; Sinclair-Chapman, 2015). Women scholars continue to leave academia because of structural barriers to promotion and salary discrepancies (Henehan & Sarkees, 2009; Mershon & Walsh, 2015).

Findings reported in this paper contribute to mixed method research in two important ways. First, it becomes evident that approaches created to bridge the quantitative-qualitative gap, such as QCA, are being taught more regularly around the globe. Interestingly, while QCA trainings are becoming more popular in Europe, the US is still the single most frequent host country for such events. On the one hand, this state of affairs signals greater demand for

approaches that go beyond traditional statistical approaches. On the other hand, the availability of QCA trainings in some places but not in others, means that students based in North America and Europe enjoy less entry barriers than their colleagues from other regions of the globe. Second, I also find that women are severely under-represented among the cohort of QCA instructors. This suggests that female QCA experts are less likely to influence future generations of QCA practitioners and that their professional networking opportunities, including the possibility of scholarly collaboration with talented graduate students, the prospects of securing additional compensation as well as disciplinary prestige, are severely constrained. It is thus important to recognize that the benefits of a multi-method boom in social sciences should be shared with equity, while structural inequalities need to be reduced.

Methodology

Although QCA originated as a qualitative based alternative to statistical approaches (Ragin, 1987, 2000, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012), the method does in fact share important epistemological overlap with regression analysis (Paine, 2016) and has been even incorporated into a curriculum of institutes specializing in providing advanced training in quantitative methods (Tatarczyk, 2018). To see where QCA trainings are most readily available, I use the Comparative Methods for Systematic Cross-Case Analysis (COMPASSS) network's website (www.compasss.org). The network was established in 2003, in part to develop QCA courses for the European Consortium for Political Research (Marx et al., 2014, p. 125), but the first newsletters listing QCA trainings appear in 2005. I therefore supplement COMPASSS newsletter data with syllabi from the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR) for years 2002-2018.[i]

Findings

Between 2002 and 2018, 141 unique QCA trainings were offered. Eighty-two of these trainings (58%) occurred in Europe, while 53 (38%) took place in North America and only 6 trainings (4%) were held at other continents.[ii] Figure 1 illustrates that from about 2011, Europe is the primary destination for pupils interested in advanced QCA training and since 2012 the number of meetings on the European continent is increasing rapidly. However, the perception that Europe is

the primary location for QCA trainings is mitigated once we disaggregate the examination to country-level analysis.

Figure 1. QCA trainings by continent (2002 - 2018)
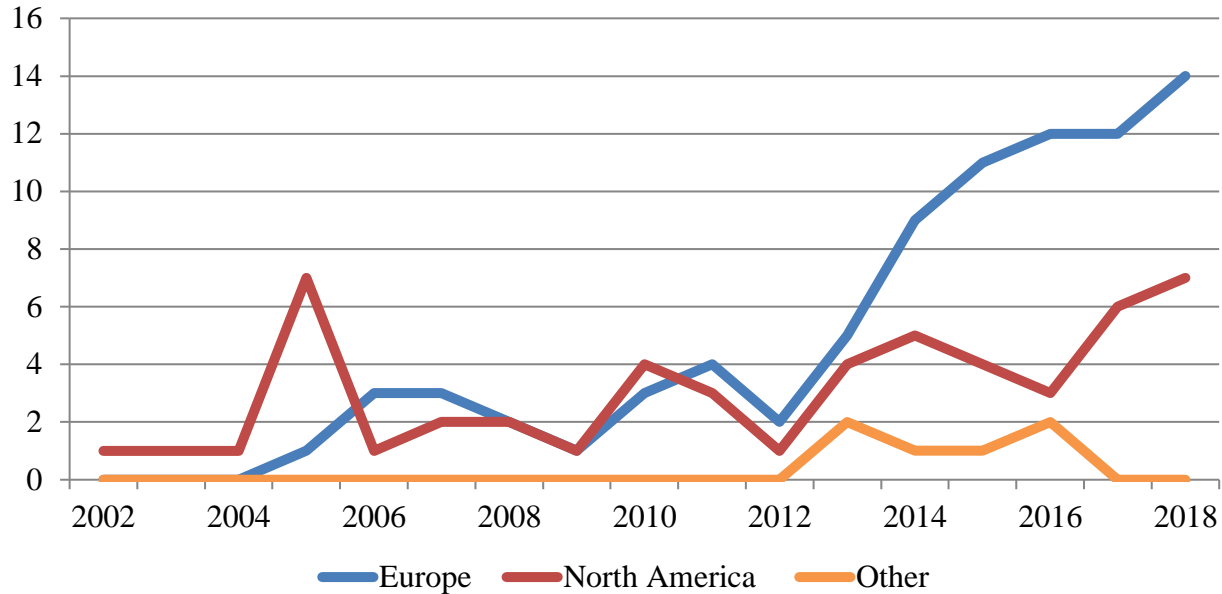
Figure 2 lists every country that held at least five QCA trainings since 2002.[iii] The US is responsible for hosting most QCA trainings, 48 out of 141 trainings (34%). In fact, the next three most popular training destinations combined (the UK, Germany, and Slovenia), offered fewer trainings than the US alone. So while at the macro-level, Europe is the most likely destination for future QCA training, the US is by far the single most frequent host country for such meetings. The fact that QCA trainings are almost exclusively taught in Europe and North America (96% of trainings combined) certainly has important implications for graduate students from universities outside of the West. At the time when resources for higher education and advanced learning are scarce, the availability of QCA trainings in some regions but not in others favors those students who already are already based in North America or Europe.

Figure 2. QCA trainings by country (2002-2018)
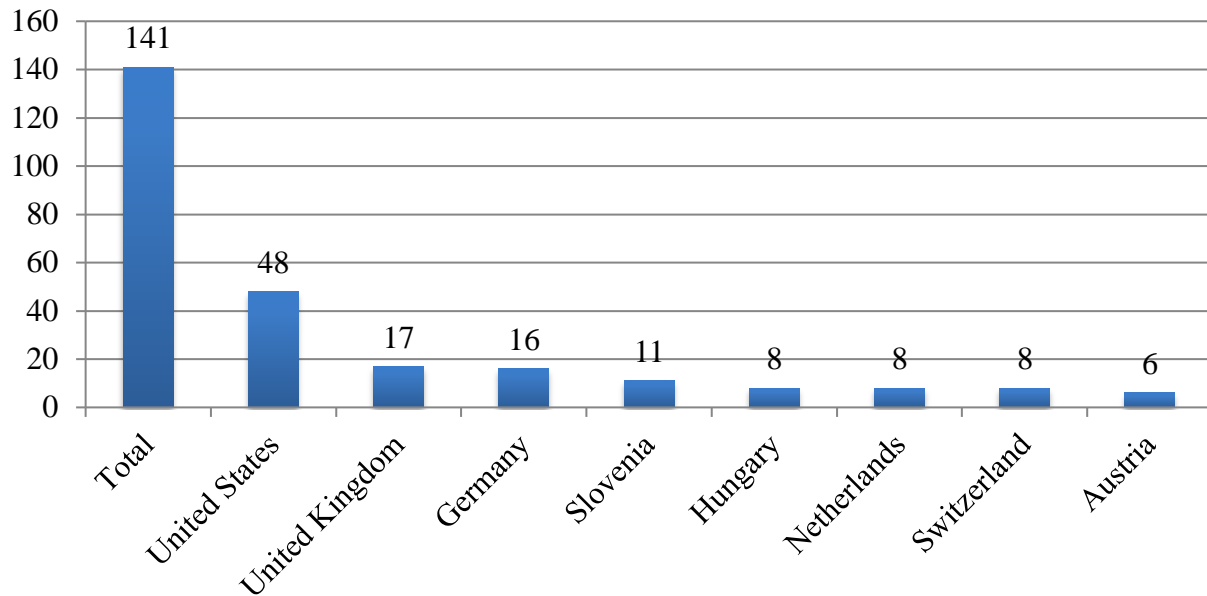
Beyond the question of availability, it is also important to look at who is teaching at these trainings because they often serve as important networking opportunities. The benefits of academic networking should not be overlooked. Sekara et al. (2018) underscore this point by demonstrating the so-called chaperone effect, which highlights the role of experience in academic publishing. The authors find that people who have not published in top multidisciplinary journals as junior faculty members are unlikely to publish in these outlets later in their academic careers. In all likelihood, academics who teach QCA during methods institutes can network and promote their scholarship, earn additional income and disciplinary prestige, and take advantage of exposure that other QCA researchers do not enjoy. At the same time female scholars from other areas of political science have been systematically excluded from participation in such professional events (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2017; Beaulieu et al., 2017).

Figure 3. Most prolific QCA instructors (2002-2018)
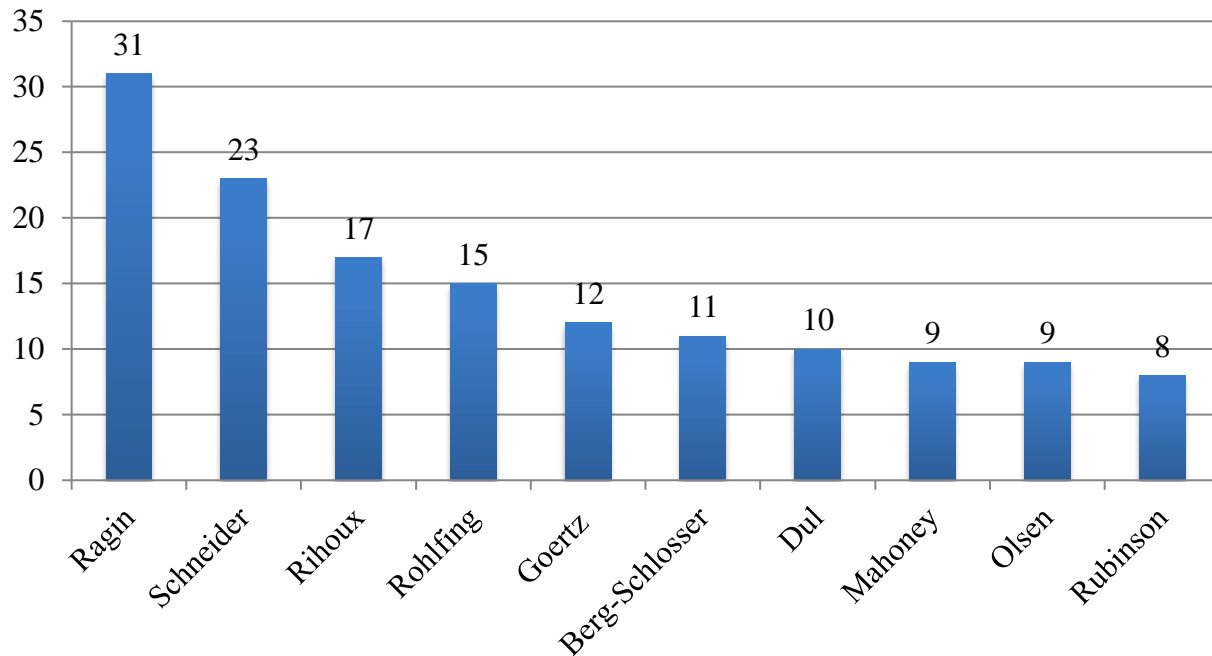
Overall, 54 different individuals have taught QCA trainings around the globe. Out of that group, 21 teachers (39%) were based in North America, while 31 academics (57%) were working for European institutions. The remaining two scholars came from Australia and Japan. Furthermore, there were only 16 female QCA instructors (30%). The 141 QCA trainings created 213 unique teaching slots, but female QCA instructors filled only 27 of them (13%). Figure 3 lists the ten most prolific QCA instructors who are also widely recognized as top QCA scholars and practitioners. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the inventor of QCA, Charles Ragin, has taught the highest number of trainings. Four members of the top ten group teach at American universities (Ragin, Goertz, Mahoney, Rubinson), the other six are affiliated with European universities. Once again women are also severely under-represented in this group as well, with Wendy Olsen (University of Manchester) being the only female QCA expert in the cohort.

Originality

The burgeoning of mixed methods research is one of the newest and most powerful trends in social sciences (Seawright, 2016) and this development includes both methodological as well as empirical studies. However, the rise of mixed methods scholarship is facilitated by the necessary

institutional infrastructure. Such infrastructure can consist of new academic outlets committed to methodological diversity (e.g., *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*) and institutes providing additional training in research methods that would be otherwise overlooked. This, in turn, suggest that methodological training and innovation do not happen in a vacuum. QCA is an example of a method that arose as an alternative to statistical methods, but is often combined with process-tracing and other within-case methods of analysis (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Today, QCA is used and taught more readily than ever before (Tatarczyk, 2018). And yet, as we have seen in the case of female QCA instructors, the resulting infrastructure perpetuates the very inequalities that many social scientists are trying to actively resists. If the rise of mixed methods scholarship and approaches related to it is analyzed holistically, then it is necessary to point out, and hopefully address, the asymmetry between men and women lecturing at QCA methods institutes.

Conclusion

Although the availability of advanced QCA trainings may seem of concern to only a small group of social scientists, it should in fact interest anyone who cares about the impact of academic infrastructures on the scholarship produced by social scientists. At the time when training in qualitative methods is declining, graduate students and junior academics are likely to increase their dependence on methods institutes. The availability of such institutes will doubtlessly shape future research trajectories. Second, my analysis corroborates previous research about underrepresentation of women in a variety of academic settings. The finding that only 30% of QCA instructors are women, shows that the efforts to diversify our discipline is still an ongoing and slow-moving process.

Endnotes

[i] Colin Elman, Director of the Center for Qualitative and Multi-Method Inquiry in the Maxwell School (Syracuse University), generously shared old IQMR syllabi with me. The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

[ii] The North America category is comprised of the USA and Canada.

[iii] Three trainings were held in Belgium, Brazil, and Canada. Mexico and Singapore each had two, while single training session occurred in Iceland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Russia, and South Africa.

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Culture of Communication of Slovak Politicians

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Abstract:

The term political culture involves a wide range of contexts and evokes a different spectrum of ideas, opinions, and definitions. Nowadays, perhaps slightly more than ever, we encounter views and statements that refer to the low level of political culture in our country. Many times, these are declarations that apply not only to specific political parties or politicians, but also to citizens, or even to the entire nation, which is (often by itself) described as having no political culture. And this notion, unfortunately, also harmfully affects the formation of our national identity as such; how we perceive ourselves, what patterns we adopt, and what standards we accept. In our paper, we focus on the culture of the Slovak political communication, while paying special attention to the linguistic utterances of selected representatives of the Slovak political scene. In this context, the language will act as a tool for communication between political representatives themselves, between political officials and citizens, but also as a tool of discussion on politics among people.

Introduction

Recently, an adjective – toxic – has also appeared in connection with the political culture. It relates to the public speeches of politicians, their manners (especially through the media and social networks) and also to the language they use. „*Politicians present behaviour models, guides of culture or, conversely, non-cultivation by their actions (today, including the way they communicate on social networks). If the crooked ways, thus such where culture and decency are absent, have been present in the public for a long time, they can just poison society, but certainly not change it for the better. The decomposition potential of such methods is much greater than it seems at first glance,"* states Balázs (2020). The decline of political culture in Slovakia is also critically perceived by Korčok, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of

the Slovak Republic, who denotes it as a long-term process. In this context, he commented on the aforementioned culture of expression by political representatives: *„I cannot call it anything else than the fact that in Slovakia, non-culture has been established in politics. It is not the responsibility of the contemporary government; however, it has not been able to suspend the long-term decline of political culture."* (Fleischmanová, 2021). His main complaint is the way of expression, folk language, utterances and politics that arouse passions, whereas he has appealed directly to all who are involved in the politics to carefully choose vocabulary. The President of the Slovak Republic Z. Čaputová, also spoke in a similar spirit about the political culture, expressing her faith that political cultivation needs less marketing and more truthfulness and authenticity, while politicians are responsible for the tone, mood and facts in their public speeches. She gave this expression when receiving the European Prize for Political Culture in 2019.[1]

Due to the fact that politics is a very large area and the relationship between language and politics is manifested in various forms and genres, we have decided to deal in more detail with the public communication of (selected) political officials on social networks – specifically on their public Facebook profiles. These, as it turned out, are not only a frequently used, but also a relatively actively monitored communication channel. As shown by a representative sociological survey conducted by the *Institute for Public Affairs* in 2016[2], almost half of the young respondents stated that they regularly monitor information about current events in society on the Internet and nearly a fifth of them are very keen on information about current affairs. Thus, these findings to some extent break the traditionally perceived stereotype of young people´s lack of interest and apathy in public happenings and matters relating to the politics as such. If we start from the premise that the features of the political culture[3] of a particular nation or country are also presented by the public behaviour of their politicians, it is interesting to

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[1] Source: SITA SR 2019

[2] Available at https://www.ivo.sk/8053/sk/vyskum/mladi-ludia-v-kyberpriestore-%E2%80%93-sance-a-rizika-pre-demokraciu

[3] Several authors deal with the issue of political cultivation in our country. For all of them, we will mention, for example, I. Dulebová, who monitors the forms of contemporary Czech and Slovak political linguistics and political discourse (2011, 2012, 2013, 2017); R. Štefančík, who also devotes to the issue of the language of politics and political communication (2012, 2017, 2019) and how important societal issues in the period from the establishment of the republic to the present have influenced political communication in Slovakia; M. Gbúrová (2009) and her political-historical analysis of the amendment to the language law, where she devotes space to the role of language in politics and also analyses the meaning of language for the formation of the Slovak identity and the Slovak nation in the history.

observe what patterns of behaviour, forms of communication and models of culture or non-cultivation offer these "idols" through their public bearing.

Political communication and political language

Language and politics are interconnected and political communication can be seen as a part of interpersonal, public communication. In this case, language itself is perceived not only as a tool of political communication or propaganda, but also as the object of politics itself (Gbúrová, 2009). The way of its discourse is related to the function and intention of communication, to the forms/ways of communication and, last but not least, to the relationships between the communication participants and their social statuses. According to Klein (2010, p. 8): „*political partakers use language in public as a means of exercising power or legitimizing claim of power by producing typical texts and speeches for individual institutions, conduct political debates, shape public discussions, by means of newscasting and their own outputs they are present in the media space and they are still trying to gain approval for their positions through arguments, slogans, or appeals*." Political institutions represent a specific type of social institutions. The purpose of each of them is to provide for the vital needs of the society. The political ones (likewise the state ones) are responsible for organizing political life and ensuring the need for security and social order (Šlosár, 2021). None of the institutions can do without a communication space, a special communication sphere, where individual communication situations, expressions and genres are formed.

The research and analysis of the political communication and political language, its means of expression stand on the border between linguistics and political science. As noted by Štefančík (2019, p. 43) „*the nature of political language is directly influenced by the environment and the officials who use the language ... the research on the political language needs to examine its role in pursuing the intentions of the political message producers as well as the target audience*." We have come across the concept of political culture quite often in recent times, not only in professional discussions, but often also from the side of journalists or ordinary citizens. According to Eliášová (2013) political culture is represented by psychological and subjective dimensions of politics, while its overall form is conditioned by several factors. Among others, for example, the intellectual and moral levels of a human, personal, but also political behaviour of the protagonists of political happenings. As pointed out by Kusý (1997, p. 167) „*The model of*

their mutual behaviour becomes a pattern of political culture for all lower spheres of the political life in the country and is transferred to the mutual relationship between the citizen and the state.“ The notion of political culture thus represents a practical link between culture (cultivation) and politics, which is also reflected in the level of political communication. The language is often deliberately used as a political tool focused not only on persuading and promoting, but also for manipulation, disqualification, or degradation, which can already be characterized as manifestations of linguistic aggression and (not only) political uncultivation.

An interesting view on the political communication is offered by Burkhardt (1996), who interprets this concept in two levels – in a narrower and broader sense. Burkhardt´s conception of the political language includes not only the language of politicians and the media themselves, but also the importance of ordinary people´s language „*whose relationship to politics is expressed, for instance, by participation in elections, active discussions on social networks, or private discussions on political issues.“* (Burkhardt 1996, Štefančík 2016, p. 30) In the context of our research, the second mentioned concept is especially interesting, which is about communication between politicians and citizens. He also distinguishes several areas of the political language. These private to partially official communication activities are collectively referred to as „talking about politics“, while this category includes discussions of ordinary people on social networks, forums, or private discussions on political topics. *„Talking about politics – private communication contains specific terms that are characteristic only to the area of politics. These are mainly terms that refer to political institutions (government, parliament, parties), or expressions about various political scandals with the intention of naming a certain phenomenon sarcastically.“* (Štefančík, 2016, p. 31). In this context, we may talk about the so-called language/verbal registers. These are related to a certain preference of language units that communication partakers choose with regard to discourse, topic/content and method/form of communication.

Fairclough (1989) understands discourse in three dimensions, namely as text, discursive practice and socio-cultural practice. He sets the role in three different spheres: 1) as a part of social activity within practice that constitutes the so-called genres; 2) as representation that gives origin to the so-called discourses; and 3) as a way of being that constitutes various styles (e.g., style of a politician or celebrity, etc.) Such presented/interpreted/set/defined three-dimensional discourse is in relation to social structures. The texts, i.e., speech, written text, visual image or a

combination of them are produced and consumed within a specific discursive practice. It is directed by its specific rules depending on the social context, or social practice. It can be stated that discourse is managed by the so-called rules of the discourse, which are influenced by the social rules. Rules in this meaning are mediators between the text and society (Fairclough & Wodack, 1997, p. 277). In this sense, Fairclough denotes the way of constructing particular domain of the social practice and genre as a way of using language within certain social practice, for example, interview. Then discourse has an impact on the structures of society on three levels: 1) social situation; 2) social institution; and 3) society as a whole (Fairclough, 1989, p. 25).

As a part of our short research sample, we decided to focus on the language as a tool for communication between political officials and citizens – namely through statuses on the social network Facebook. The texts can be perceived in three dimensions – as language of politics, as language/verbal performance of politicians and also as language about politics. We have focused mainly on the second dimension – on the language performance of selected representatives of the Slovak political scene. We are based on the premise that the political culture and political communication include those features of social life that are directly related to political morals. As we know, the public/audience closely monitors and evaluates the behaviour of politicians, and what a given society tolerates is undoubtedly a feature of the political cultivation in a given society. In the paper, we also want to point out language aggression as a form of verbal manipulation on selected linguistic material (in the texts devoted to social-political issues). At the analysis of the texts, we were based on the principles of the critical discourse analysis, while within methodological procedures we have concentrated especially on description and interpretation. Within description we investigate linguistic signs – language performance and vocabulary. We consider in more detail features of the language aggression.

Internet as a space of interest in social-political events

As in all spheres of life, the Internet has revolutionized the field of political communication. In this perspective, it is the most modern communication channel, but due to its nature and the possibilities it offers, it gained great popularity and quickly established itself. In addition to benefits, such as, reduced costs for the entire communication, two-way course of communication, fast delivery of messages, swift feedback, etc., the Internet also allows recipients to become both consumers and producers of messages (in the form of comments, blogs, own audio recordings).

The traditional line of communication is also disrupted, where communication between institutions and their representatives took place through intermediaries – traditional media and spokespersons as mediators. Tóth (2018) denotes this process as the decentralization of communication: *„The difference between official and unofficial communication is blurred, the content of social networks is also taken over by traditional media. Statuses or tweets thus replace official opinions and video blogs are a substitute for press conferences. Not only a spokesperson but also tens or even hundreds of employees communicate on behalf of the institutions."*

The Internet allows to address other target groups, especially young people – potential voters. As already mentioned, the survey conducted by the *Institute for Public Affairs*[4] showed that young people are interested in current social-political events. *„Almost a half (45 %) of young people report that they regularly monitor information about current affairs in the society on the Internet, and another half (51 %) occasionally follow them. ... Nearly a fifth of young people are very keen on information about contemporary events – they spend on average more than 2 hours a day consuming them. Another quarter devotes them 1 to 2 hours and 30 % half an hour to an hour a day."* (Velšic, 2016, p. 2). Young men declare higher attraction than young women, while education (the higher the education, the bigger the fascination), demography (greater interest is among the inhabitants of the largest Slovak cities and the region of Bratislava, on the contrary, below-average engrossment is among young people from the smallest Slovak municipalities), or also political preferences. The civic activities of young people in cyberspace are dominated by those that can be described as rather passive – especially reading posts, opinions in discussion groups or discussion forums; liking statuses and social network posts or reading other people´s blogs. Over time, Facebook has emerged as the most used and preferred social network, and Twitter and Instagram are among the larger networks in terms of the number of users.

Despite the predominance of passive forms of civic activities among young people, the impact of Web 2.0 communication tools can be considered very strong. Social networks, such as Facebook, which allows not only mutual communication, but also the expression of sympathy or networking, provides users with the opportunity to respond and communicate directly with the candidate increasing their credibility. As it turned out, if users have a chance to engage in the

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[4] Data given in the study come from a representative sociological survey carried out within a long-term analytical-monitoring project called Digital literacy in Slovakia, which was done by the Institute for Public Affairs between August and November 2016. It is the representative qualitative poll among the citizens of the Slovak Republic aged 18-39, who use the Internet.

Internet communication, their willingness to participate in the campaign also grows (Sundar et al., 2003). Qualitative changes in the Internet environment thus create an ideal space and conditions for participation in various areas and at different levels, which is represented in the virtual world of the Internet mainly by e-Democracy.[5] Naturally, political officials also adapted to these specifics if they wanted to be successful on social networks.

What does the situation in Slovakia look like in this context? The *Department of Communication* also deals with the analysis of data from social networks and the monitoring of the online space in Slovakia.[6] Among other things, they follow numbers from all Facebook profiles of Slovak politicians, all sites of ministries and political parties, while creating a comprehensive and regularly updated ranking (e.g., which politicians are currently the most popular on Facebook, which ministry communicates the most appealing topics, etc.) Within the last published results, the data have been collected since 1 January 2020 on a weekly basis. Within the survey, the number of interactions (reactions, comments and shares) on individual profiles was monitored. These, naturally, cannot be perceived as the most important parameter of the success of political communication, because interactions do not automatically mean positive feedback (some of them are of course negative comments or reactions). As the authors state: *„Nevertheless, the number of interactions can be considered an important and relevant indicator of the success of communication on social networks. They not only reflect the level of feedback from voters, but they are also directly proportional to the overall impact of the contributions, thus the number of social network users affected. Last but not least, they are the only public and measurable indicator and thus represent an opportunity to comprehensively compare all political profiles."* (Tóth, 2020). Based on these observations, the most successful politicians in terms of the number of interactions in 2020 were, as follows: Ľuboš Blaha[7] with more than 6.5 million interactions; former Slovak Prime Minister and controversial figure in Slovak politics Igor

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[5] *„e-Democracy can therefore be understood as the result of the implementation of information and communication technologies into traditional democratic processes, or in other words transferring traditional forms of democracy to its virtual shape/form. On the other hand, as a phenomenon of new processes, tools and services, which represent, for instance, blogs, discussion forums, chat boards and various other interactive elements of communication with the so-called social networks."* (Velšic, 2016, p. 10).

[6] https://katedrakomunikacie.sk/#co-robime

[7] PhDr. Ľuboš Blaha, PhD. Is a Slovak political scientist, philosopher and politician, who is a member of parliament – The National Council of the Slovak Republic for the party SMER – social democracy.

Matovič[8] (approx. 6.3 million interactions) and Peter Pellegrini[9] (approx. 5.6 million interactions). The most dominant member of the Slovak government in the Facebook area has long been Igor Matovič, where his (often controversial) contributions received thousands to tens of thousands of interactions. In this respect, he had more of them on his own profile than all the other members of the government together. What significantly helped him in this was the higher frequency of publishing posts, but probably also the confrontational style of communication and the choice of topics that significantly polarized the opinion of the society (e.g., the theme of the across-the-board testing). In the case of Instagram, the most successful politician is the President Zuzana Čaputová, who is far ahead of other Slovak politicians in this regard. She has by far the largest and strongest profile on this social network and her communication strategy makes excellent use of all the benefits of this social medium. In addition, she actively cooperates with various influencers, which significantly expands the circle of her followers and "operation". In this respect, she has no competition among other Slovak politicians. The official profile of the President on Instagram is already followed by more than 320,000 followers; the second Igor Matovič has four times fewer followers, less than 80,000. Other leaders of the political parties move in lower tens of thousands of followers. It is obvious that the team of the President Čaputová has very well managed the work on Instagram and can very well transform political messages into the forms that are natural for this social network.

Analytical part – short research sample

As it turned out, it is a highly popular and utilized communication tool of Slovak politicians, as well as institutions, which also try to adjust to the trends in this direction. When selecting the research sample, we were inspired by the results of the research already carried out by the Department of Communication[10] and we concentrated our attention on the two most successful politicians on the Facebook sites for the year 2020 – Igor Matovič and Ľuboš Blaha. Both of them reach thousands of potential voters with their communication activities and convey opinions and attitudes on the most relevant topics.

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[8] Mgr. Igor Matovič is a Slovak politician, entrepreneur and contemporary Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic. He was the Prime Minister of the Government of the SR between March 2020 and April 2021.
[9] Ing. Peter Pellegrini is a Slovak politician. In years 2018 – 2020 he was the Prime Minister of the Slovak Government.
[10] https://katedrakomunikacie.sk/kto-je-najuspesnejsim-slovenskym-politikom-na-fb/

In defining the term language aggression, we leaned on the conception of language aggression according to Petrova and Ratsiburskaya (2011, p. 76) as „a verbal expression of a negative emotional evaluation relationship to someone or something outside the ethical norm and also a satiety of the text with verbally expressed negative information, which causes information stress in the addressee." Language aggression can be perceived according to the visibility of the intention of the communication participant as hidden or open. In the case of open language aggression, the author of the text does not try to cover up their emotions and beliefs in any way and attacks the person who is the target of discredit with expressive words, open ridicule, and irony. In hidden language aggression, the communicator considers words, tries to act neutrally and objectively, avoids direct attacks, and bases their claims on apparent facts.

Within the analytical categories, we relied on the typology according to Gazda (2013, p. 86-92), who defines the following categories of language aggression: 1) statements with the intention of direct defamation; 2) statements that create a negative image through demonization and labelling; 3) statements disgracing an opponent (political or ideological adversary); 4) setting in an ironic context; 5) suggestive (anaphorically) factitious rhetorical questions. The choice of the researched material was intentional – these were public statuses, which the mentioned politicians posted on their profiles during one month (1 April – 30 April 2021).

In the context of methodological approaches to the study of media texts, several attitudes can be used – content analysis, (critical) discursive analysis, Franzosi´s quantitative narrative analysis (combination of content and narrative analyses), or a newer approach of the meaning analysis proposed by Miessler (2008). As part of our research probe, we decided on the method of content analysis, (with elements of discursive analysis) for two reasons: 1) content analysis allows the processing of a larger number of texts; 2) in the texts we searched for predetermined categories. We are aware that the disadvantage of content analysis is that although it enables the treatment of a large number of texts, however, the processing is rather superficial if compared to other methods mentioned. Nevertheless, for the needs of our monitoring (research probe), we considered it as sufficient.

We used several levels of coding in the content analysis of the texts. First of all, we took notice of the activity of the monitored politicians – the frequency of publishing posts and also the level of feedback they received. To some extent, this information also reflects the strength of the communication impact of the contributions. Subsequently, we categorized the posts according to

what they were focused on, into following categories: a) conveying information/content/topics; b) communicating on opinions/attitudes; c) building image (intentional and unintentional); d) everyday life (information from private life, hobbies, leisure time, etc.); e) attacking an opponent/adversary/the other party; f) persuasion/agitation. In the last phase, we monitored the occurrence and frequency of use of individual categories of language aggression in the opinion of Gazda (2013).

The published posts often included other materials (videos, recordings from press conferences, attached text documents, photographs, memes, etc.) However, we did not include them in the analysis and we focused exclusively on stylized language expression - text.

Summary of the results

Activity:

At the analysis of the collected material, we immediately noticed a significant disproportion between the published texts, not only in terms of their quantity, but also in respect to the size (length). In the period under review, I. Matovič published 42 posts on his profile, while a small part of them even consisted of contributions from other people (5). In the same time, Ľ. Blaha published 66 posts, while all of them were his own. In this regard, it may be stated that similarly to the last year, Ľ. Blaha is probably once again one of the most actively communicating Slovak politicians on Facebook. Matovič – 42 – 1.4 (37 – 1.2 contribution/day); Blaha – 66 – 2.2 contribution/day).

Range:

The size of the published text was even more striking than the level of communication activity. While the texts of I. Matovič had a range of about 66 words in the text, the texts of Ľ. Blaha seldom had less than 377 words. Due to its size (but also in terms of genre) his texts approached a commentary or a shorter blog. Naturally, this space allowed him to communicate/pass on a larger amount of content, to process a wider range of topics, to express himself more comprehensively to the selected issues.

Intensity/level of feedback:

In this respect, too, there was a very significant imbalance between the two politicians. The numbers showing the audience´s reactions are high for both, but the numbers for Ľ. Blaha are significantly/several times higher than the figures of I. Matovič, particularly in nearly all monitored categories. (Tab. 1)

In this section we monitored the intensity of reactions from the audience, namely following:

A/ reactions through emoticons – which reflect the personal attitude of the recipient towards the contribution, its content (sometimes also the personal stance to the communicator);

B/ comments – direct feedback from the audience, but also a joint discussion of the recipients as citizens (Burkhardt´s „talking about politics ");

C/ sharing of the contribution – degree of participation in communication; the recipient actively and voluntarily participates in disseminating the information/message.

Table 1. Intensity of feedback on Matovič 's and Blaha's profiles

	Matovič			Blaha		
	reactions	comments	shares	reactions	comments	shares
overall number	215165	36334	8775	685100	54205	129865
post on average	5815	982	237	10380	821	1968

A/The response of the audience through emoji "labels" was a relatively common form of feedback. This is understandable because it is fast and can pass on the basic reaction. It would be interesting to interpret the individual reactions in more detail depending on the degree of positivity – negativity, which they show. When interpreting the results, however, it would be difficult to estimate the level of subjectivity of the statement – given that some emoticons are difficult to interpret without knowledge of the broader context in which the recipient responded to the message (e.g., is laughing a positive reaction or is it mockery?; is anger an expression of annoyance at the writer/their person, or at the content of the post/situation which is presented? and so on). However, to a certain extent it is possible to interpret pictorial reactions of a positive nature (like, super/hard/I feel with you), which are expressions of agreement and positivity. As a matter of interest, we looked at the posts with the highest number of responses (top 5). (Figure 1)

Figure 1. TOP 5 statuses on Matovič 's and Blaha's profiles

TOP 5 statuses
reactions through emoticons
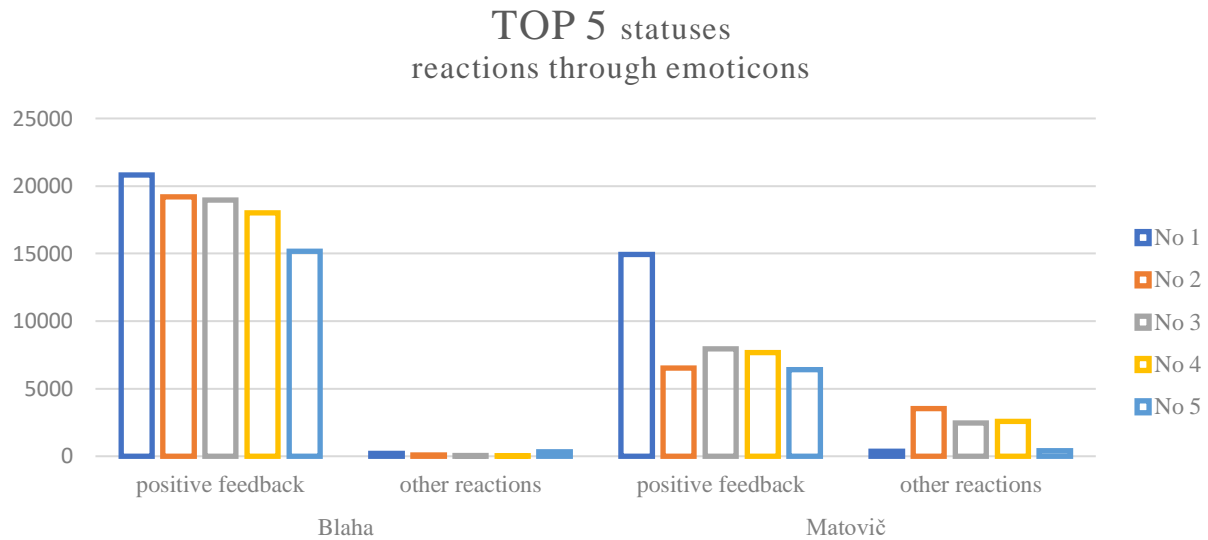
B/More intense discussion – in terms of the number of comments – was provoked by the contributions of I. Matovič. This was despite the fact that in other examined criteria his numbers were lower. In this respect, the audience reacted more actively to his posts with their own comments. The readers felt the urge to enter the communication in person and to express their views publicly. As a part of the analyses, it would certainly be interesting to follow the content of the comments in more detail – common discussion of the citizens that the posts have provoked. This in-depth analysis would be technically demanding, but it would certainly show a lot of interesting information not only about the audience´s attitudes towards the content/message, or the general „mood" of the audience. Due to the size of the group, it would be possible to monitor other topics – e.g., sociological-linguistic connection (communication bearing of the group, strategies, social and verbal cultivation of these communication forms); psychological-linguistic connection (typology of the "commentators", forms of communication deviations, trolling) etc.

C/The data in the last monitored category (sharing of the post) are also amazing – thus to what extent the respondents felt the need to forward the message further. The extent to which respondents felt the need to participate in communication is gripping. These data also refer to the reach of the communicated/passed on message, as well as the attitude of the respondents to the content. In this respect, the communication of Ľ. Blaha was undoubtedly more successful. The figure of approximately 130,000 shares a month is surely not inconsiderable.

Focus of the contributions

Due to their focus, the posts in the vast majority of cases fell into several categories at the same time. Only a few of them really had a „pure" form. Within the six areas that we defined (a-f), naturally, the most common category was (b) – communicating opinions/attitudes. We expected this result because it is political communication. Both politicians identically utilize the environment of Facebook posts most commonly for this purpose. Similarly, forms of persuasion/agitation could also be expected (f). which we delimited as a direct appeal to action sent towards the audience (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Focus of contributions on Matovič 's and Blaha's profiles

Focus of contributions
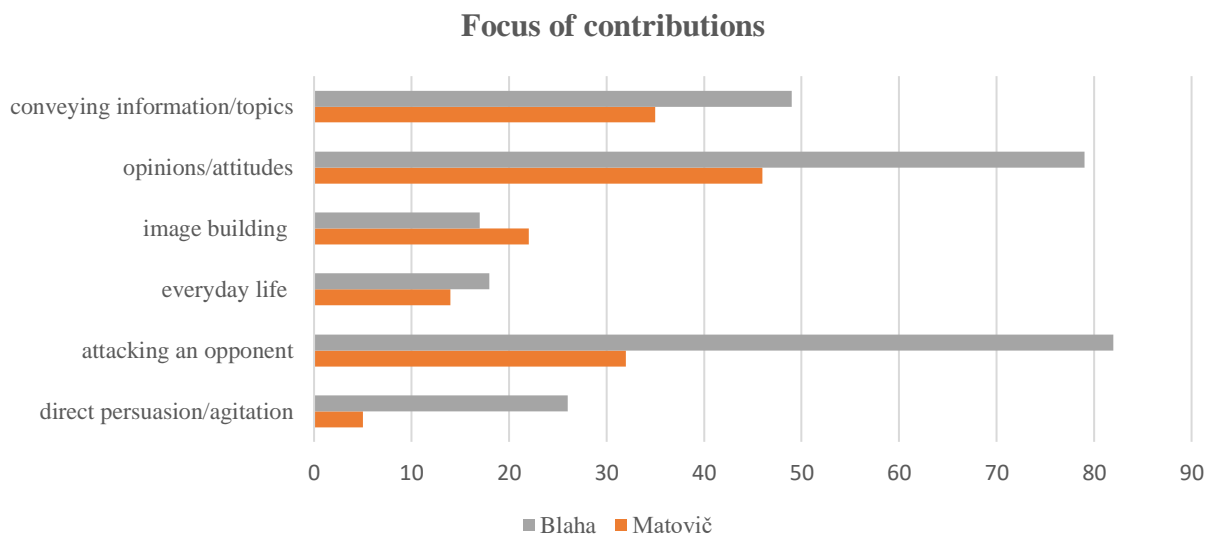
By both politicians, we also identified manifestations of language aggression – attacking the other party/adversary/opponent (f). However, there was a difference in the frequency of occurrence of this element. The vast majority of the posts by Ľ. Blaha contained elements of undisguised language aggression. One could say that they are built on it. Elements of agitation also appeared more frequently in his contributions. Communication of I. Matovič was also aggressively focused. These elements appeared in more than half of the posts.

In order to inform about events/facts (a) both of them use Facebook contributions approximately in the same way. However, Ľ. Blaha does it a bit more and deals with a wider range of topics, but his communication is primarily focused differently. In the case of I. Matovič, informing was the second most important task. I. Matovič also includes more information from

his private life in his posts (c). More often, he tries to give the impression of an "ordinary" person, one of many (Note: Thanks to contributions of this type, he also becomes a subject of frequent political jokes and creative reactions from the side of the readers).

Forms of language aggression:

As the last category, we investigated the elements of language aggression (forms and quantity) that appeared in the texts. The results show (Figure 3) which means are typical of the communication expression of each of the politicians. In both cases – identically – the manifestations most often contained elements of the opponent´s dishonesty. I. Matovič as the second "weapon" uses the creation of a negative image through labelling and demonization; Ľ. Blaha, on the other hand, likes to use an ironic context.

Figure 3. Useable forms of language agitation on Matovič 's and Blaha's profiles
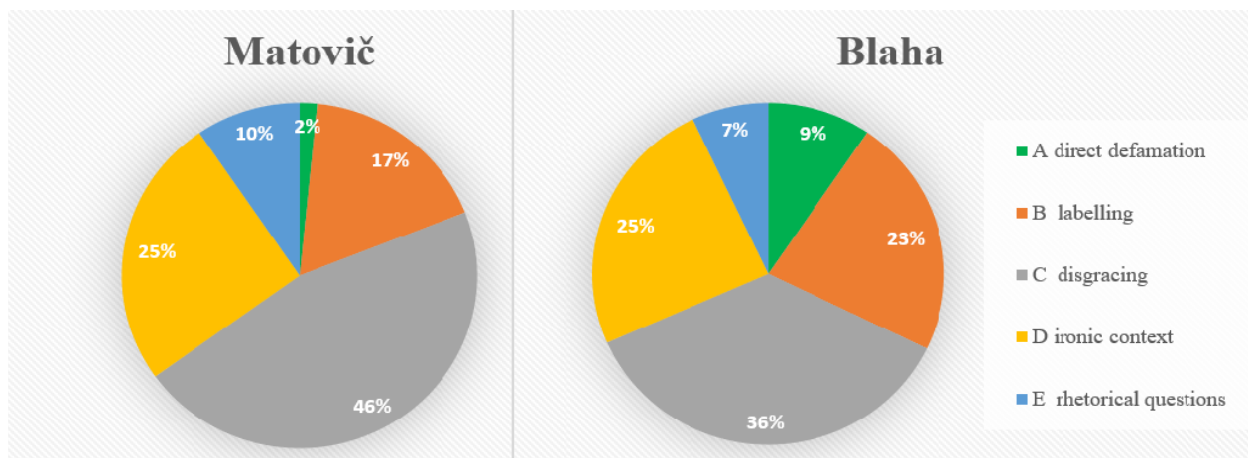
Based on the obtained data, it could be assumed that due to the large disproportion of the size of the texts and also the difference in the activity in adding posts by both politicians, in the case of Ľ. Blaha there will be more elements of verbal aggression present. In an effort to be more objective, we also monitored the data in relation to the range of the texts (how much % of the total number of words are elements of language aggression). We have reached a gripping conclusion in this regard. Although the results were indeed very close, slightly more elements of verbal aggression were involved in the posts by I. Matovič (7,5%), than Ľ. Blaha (6, 9%). This is an amazing finding due to the fact that Ľ. Blaha published about ten times more of the texts.

Communication performances of the examined politicians could be summarized, as follows:

- Posts of I. Matovič were rather short and concise texts, sometimes of a keyword nature. Mostly, they were focused on one problem/content, which they addressed than on a wider spectrum. In contrast, the contributions of Ľ. Blaha were in the vast majority of cases longer texts, which sounded like more compositionally complete statements. One contribution often dealt with several topics.

- Communication of I. Matovič could be characterized as a diary form of posting with elements of reportage. The contributions most often took the form of announcements and commenting news items, but he also used subjective and emotional statements. As part of verbal expression, he tries to standardize his language, however, he also likes using colloquial words (but also expressive even crude phrases) and dialect vocabulary (typical of the region he comes from). I. Matovič in his posts often publishes information from his private life. Much more than his opponent, he uses emoticons and hashtags (which sometimes act as a part of building the image). He strives for informal communication, which should look natural, spontaneous and relaxed. Communication is conducted in a monological way.

- Communication of Ľ. Blaha is very close to a publicist comment. Due to its stylistic presentation, it can also be described as a political lampoon. Most of the contributions focused on commenting, evaluating, or comparing. This makes them rather analytical than just informational texts. In his posts, he continuously addresses the entire spectrum of events that took place during the period under review. Ľ. Blaha obviously likes entertaining his audience, and he adapts his style of expression, but also the presentation of facts. He makes use of very specific, casual, but often quite substandard language (colloquial, expressive, even rude words). He has a liking for applying irony (idioms, comparisons, expressive metaphors, semantic opposites), which often borders on sarcasm (parody, antitheses). Communication is conducted in a contact style – he addresses readers, has a dialogue with them, asks questions, says goodbye to the conclusion, etc.

The culture of public speeches has an impact on the group addressee – it influences their ethical and aesthetic norms, ideas about what is good/appropriate. They also impact the strategies of their own language behaviour and affect their language taste. It is vital to set the rules. Language and culture are interconnected vessels. Cultivation of expression as the basic status of a public official (and a politician in particular) should be as self-evident, as their honesty.

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Activity of Political Science Researchers in Public Debate: Case Study of Poland

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Abstract:

This article has several aims. With the help of the original survey data, the article will analyse how Polish political scientists perceive the presence of members of their own scholarly discipline in public debate as desirable and what are their opinions on it. Secondly, the article determines to what extent the political changes initiated in 2015 have affected the general approach to media appearances, and assessments of their content and frequency. Thirdly, an attempt will also be made to determine to what extent the political convictions of political science researchers are correlated with the general assessment of the presence of researchers in public debate, the choice of media in which they are active, and the frequency of their appearances.

Keywords: visibility, political science researchers

Introduction

Political science researchers have been active in the media since the beginning of the systemic transformation, although there is no detailed research on their involvement in public debate. Nonetheless, the current situation is quite exceptional. Attempts at a complete reconstruction of the political system after 2015 by the Law and Justice Party in a very short time, led to a very deep polarization of society in Poland, as well as the community of political science researchers. Undoubtedly, as a result of the reforms carried out in Poland, together with the fast way in which they were implemented, in the public consciousness the main source of conflicts became the authorities themselves. According to a CBOS study conducted in 2017, almost half of Poles (47%) stated that "Polish society is today more divided and in conflict than before the elections in 2015", and only 27% said that it is "the same". The main reason in the opinion of respondents was "politics, politicians, political views" (34%); the second reason was the dispute between the two leading parties - Law and Justice and PO - between "government and opposition", "disputes

between parties" (16%); and the third (11%) was given as "failure to observe the Constitution", "capturing of the state", "despotic governments"; the latter was directed at the United Right. Political underpinnings of conflicts encompassed 65% of all opinions, while only 19% concerned issues related to material issues and poverty (CBOS, 2017). Therefore, economic inequalities have ceased to be a fundamental factor in social conflicts in Poland (Domański & Dubrow-Tomescu, 2008), a role that now the political factor has assumed.

Therefore, the aim of this article is, on one hand, first of all, to diagnose the extent to which political scientists in Poland perceive the presence of representatives of their own scholarly discipline in public debate as desirable and their opinions on it. Secondly, to determine to what extent the changes of political system initiated in 2015 have affected the general approach to media appearances, and assessments of their content and frequency. Thirdly, an attempt will also be made to determine to what extent the political convictions of political science researchers are correlated with the general assessment of the presence of researchers in public debate, the choice of media in which they are active, and the frequency of their appearances.

Research model

Taking the above analyses into account, we may assume that the decision to engage in or withdraw from public debate will result from diverse factors, often related to the political situation in the country. This has its origins in several areas. Firstly, due to the clear division of television and radio into pro-government (public) and opposition (most non-public) media coverage, commenting in mass media can be perceived as an act of support of a specific political option. Secondly, owing to both political and psychological barriers to access to media such as radio, television, and the press, this may generate greater involvement of political science researchers in social media. Thirdly and finally, evaluations of the quality of public debate and discourse with the participation of political scientists after 2015 may be significantly related to the real involvement of respondents.

In the process of study preparation, we formulated the following research questions:

1. *Is the presence of political science researchers in public debate desirable for the purpose of improving its quality?*

We consider that irrespective of their own engagement, political science researchers perceive themselves as an integral element of public debate. Their role as observers and commentators will be viewed as a mission and a sort of a duty.

2. *How has the presence of political science scholars in public debate been perceived after 2015 in Poland?*

As has been mentioned, the social and political situation in Poland since 2015 is a unique one. The sharply defined divisions among the media may constitute a factor in assessments of involvement of political science researchers in public debate. Another distinguishing factor may be the belief in political engagement of commentators.

3. *How might the perception of the political situation after 2015 influence Polish political scientists in their decision to become involved in the public debate?*

We are interested in the motives behind the degree of involvement in public debate after 2015. On one hand, these motives have been presented in an explicitly qualitative manner. On the other, this question is relevant to Question 2. We predict that respondents' own involvement in public debate in Poland after 2015 will be significantly related to their assessment of the general involvement of political science researchers. This relationship may be based on mechanisms of rationalisation. Thus, a politically motivated lack of engagement may be associated with a negative assessment of the quality of engagement by political science researchers. A negative assessment may also be associated with a stronger expression of one's own involvement in social media, which allows one to omit psychological (*I do not want to be associated with a political party*) and political (*lack of access for researchers whose tone is unacceptable to a given medium*) barriers.

Method

The survey was conducted between May and July 2019 among political science researchers in Poland. The targeted sample (N = 235) was used – invitations to participate were extended to scholars employed by universities in Poland who had certified their status as practitioners of the science of politics and administration. The sample encompassed 111 women (47.2%) and 124 men (52.8%). The youngest group, up to and including 29-year-olds, consisted of 21 participants (8.9%); the age group 30–49 consisted of 53 participants (22.6%); the largest group was that of

participants aged 40–49, of which there were 88 people (37.4%); the age group 50–59 included 36 participants (15.3%); the oldest age group of 60 and older consisted of 37 participants (15.7%). The majority of participants are engaged in research and instruction (92.3%), while a small part are employed as teachers (7.7%). As for their level of academic achievement, the largest group comprises holders of post-doctoral degrees (pol. *doctor habilitowany*) (41.3%); slightly fewer are PhD holders (35.3%); the next smallest group consists of full professors (15.3%); the least numerous are holders of a Master's degree (8.1%).

The survey consisted of three parts and a demographic section. The first part concerned the general attitude of respondents towards the participation of political science researchers in public debate. The diagnosis was focused on the general opinion on the need for political science researchers to comment on and explain to the public the processes taking place in the public sphere. In this part we distinguished 3 indicators: 1) continual presence in public debate (indicator based on two questions: "Do you think that political scientists should be present in the public debate on a continual basis to comment on current events?" and "Do you think that political scientists should explain to society the processes taking place in the public sphere?", *Crombach's alpha*: 0.74); 2) crisis presence in public debate (indicator based on two questions: "Do you think that political scientists should comment on crisis events (e.g. suspicion of breaking the law) in the public sphere?" and "Should political scientists conduct a campaign to monitor the transparency and honesty of public policy undertakings?", *Crombach's alpha*: 0.64) 3) trustworthiness of public discourse (based on two questions: 'Do you think that objective public debate requires the inclusion of political scientists in the discourse?' and 'Do you think that substantive public debate requires the inclusion of political scientists in the discourse", *Crombach's alpha*: 0.79). This part also included qualitative descriptions of four type of attitudes of political science researchers, and the respondents were asked to select the option they most closely identified with. These roles were composed based on feedback from an open pilot study conducted prior to this study. Participants could also select the option 'other' and provide their own description of the role.

The second part covered the evaluation of the presence and visibility of political science researchers in public debate after 2015 in Poland. Visibility was assessed in reference to mass media. We were also interested in the perception of political scientists' credibility in particular media and their general competence and objectivity. In this section, we distinguished two

indicators: 1) visibility of political scientists (average and for particular media outlets); 2) evaluation of political scientists (based on 3 elements: credibility, competence, and objectivity).

The third part diagnosed the presence of the individual respondent in public debate after 2015 in Poland. The questions were aimed at diagnosing the conditions of the self-reported engagement. A qualitative range of activity and passivity determinants was formulated on the basis of a pilot study conducted before the final study. Regarding the declaration of commitment, the diagnosis addressed both the form of the commitment and its directions (type of media and territorial reach).

The survey also consisted of a demographic section with questions about gender, age, position at the workplace, and academic rank/degree.

The individual parts were prepared in accordance with the principle of consistency and commitment. First, the respondents were asked to formulate general attitudes on the need for participation of political science researchers in public space. They were then asked for their opinion on the participation of political science researchers in the debate after 2015. The last part involved a diagnosis of the respondent's participation in public debate after 2015. This formulation of the series of questions aimed at establishing a general attitude towards the issue at hand, and in turn at embedding the respondents' own behaviour in it.

Results

The first part of the study was general and aimed at diagnosing the general opinion of political science researchers on the involvement of their milieu in public debate. The analysed indicators were verified against variables such as gender, age, and academic degree/rank. The results are presented in relation to statistically significant differences in the Student's t-test, one-way ANOVA variance analysis and post-hoc HSD Tukey test.

Table 1. Average values of indicators of perception of participation by political science researchers in public debate

Indicator	Average*	Standard deviation
Desired presence of political science researchers in public debate	4.12	.98
Desired presence of political science researchers in public debate exclusively in crisis situations	1.82	1.13
Credibility of public discourse with the involvement of political science researchers	3.92	1.07

*5-point scale

Respondents clearly expect political scientists to be active in public debate (Table 1). This indicator is differentiated by age [$F_{(4; 230)}=9.924$; $p<0.001$] and academic degree/rank [$F_{(3; 231)}=5.998$; $p=0.001$]. Significantly stronger expectations of representatives of political science researchers in public debate are demonstrated by their colleagues in the 30–49 age group compared to the youngest group of those aged up to 29 and those older than 50, as well as respondents with a PhD.

At the same time, there is no clear support for the thesis that political scientists should be active only in crisis situations (Table 1). This indicator is marginally differentiated by gender [$t_{(233)}=2.025$; $p=0.44$]. Involvement of political scientists only in crisis situations is significantly more often supported by women (1.98 vs 1.8).

The credibility of public discourse with the involvement of political scientists is highly rated (Table 1). This indicator is differentiated by respondents' age and academic title/rank held. Participants in the 30–49 age group perceive debate with the participation of political science researchers as significantly more credible in comparison to older respondents in the 50–59 age group, as well as researchers holding a PhD.

Figure 1. Distribution of respondents' answers concerning the expected activity of political science researchers in Poland in public debate (percentages)
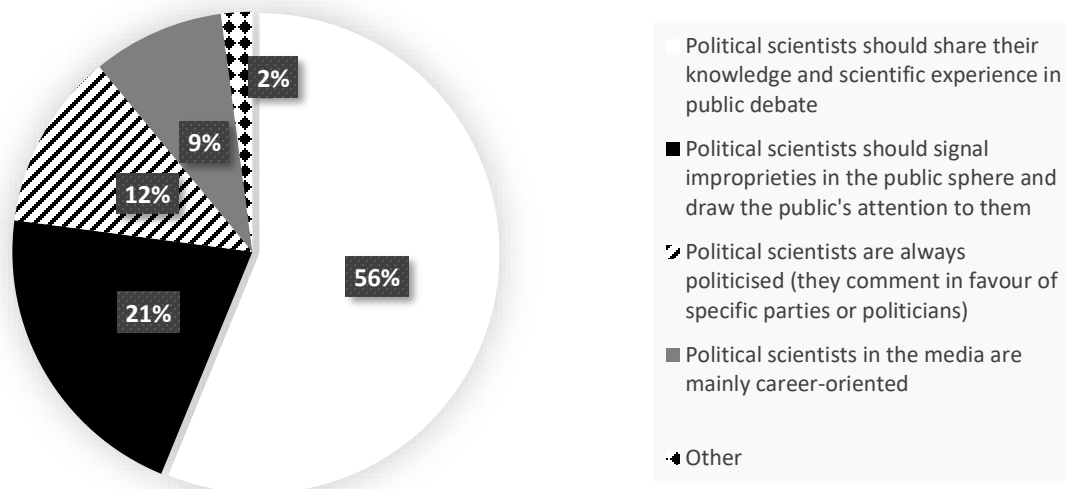
Seeking to determine the perceived role of political science researchers in Poland, we asked the respondents to respond to several statements. More than half of them (132) feel that political scientists should share their knowledge and scientific experience in public debate. One-fifth (49) are convinced that political scientists should signal improprieties in the public sphere

and draw the public's attention to them. The least numerous groups are those who believe that political scientists are always politicised (they comment in favour of specific parties or politicians) (28) and those who believe that political scientists in the media are mainly career-oriented (21).

The first part of the study demonstrates that political scientists expect members of their own milieu to participate in public debate. They consider that discourse with the involvement of experts is more credible, and they believe that it should not be limited to crisis situations only. Political scientists believe that the knowledge they possess should be employed appropriately in the public sphere to enhance the quality of discussions and decisions. This experience should also be used to draw the public's attention to improprieties in social and political processes. Importantly, a large number of people have a negative opinion about those political scientists who participate in public debate, considering them politically biased and career-oriented.

The second part of the study concerned the perception of the participation of political scientists in public debate after 2015 in Poland.

Table 2. Average values and standard deviations for indicators of perception of the presence of political scientists in public debate after 2015

Indicator	Average*	Standard deviation
Assessment of the presence of political scientists in public debate after 2015	3.50	1.00
Assessment of the visibility of political scientists in public radio	3.64	1.00
Assessment of the visibility of political scientists in private radio	3.70	.88
Assessment of the visibility of political scientists in public television	3.81	.97
Assessment of the visibility of political scientists in private television	3.91	.79
Assessment of the visibility of political scientists in social media	3.83	.98
Assessment of the visibility of political scientists in the press	3.73	.94
Assessment of the credibility of political scientists in the media in public debate after 2015	2.79	.46
Assessment of the competence of political scientists in the media in public debate after 2015	3.03	1.02
Assessment of the objectivity of political scientists in the media in public debate after 2015	2.67	1.05

*5-point scale

Respondents rate the presence of political scientists in public discourse after 2015 above average (Table 2). Their visibility in particular media was perceived as follows: private television (3.91); social media (3.83); public television (3.80); press (3.72); private radio (3.69); public radio (3.64). Media visibility is not differentiated by gender or rank/title. Significant age

differences were observed in respect of visibility in private media and television and social media. The youngest political scientists and those aged 40-49 are more visible.

Despite the visibility of political scientists in the media, their competences were assessed at an average level, while their credibility and objectivity were judged even worse (Table 2). This assessment is not differentiated by gender or academic rank/title. On the other hand, the age of respondents is distinct both in the case of competences attributed to political scientists in the media and objectivity. The most critical groups are people aged 50-59.

Figure 2. Distribution of responses by political science researchers concerning engagement of political scientists in public discourse in Poland after 2015 (percentages)
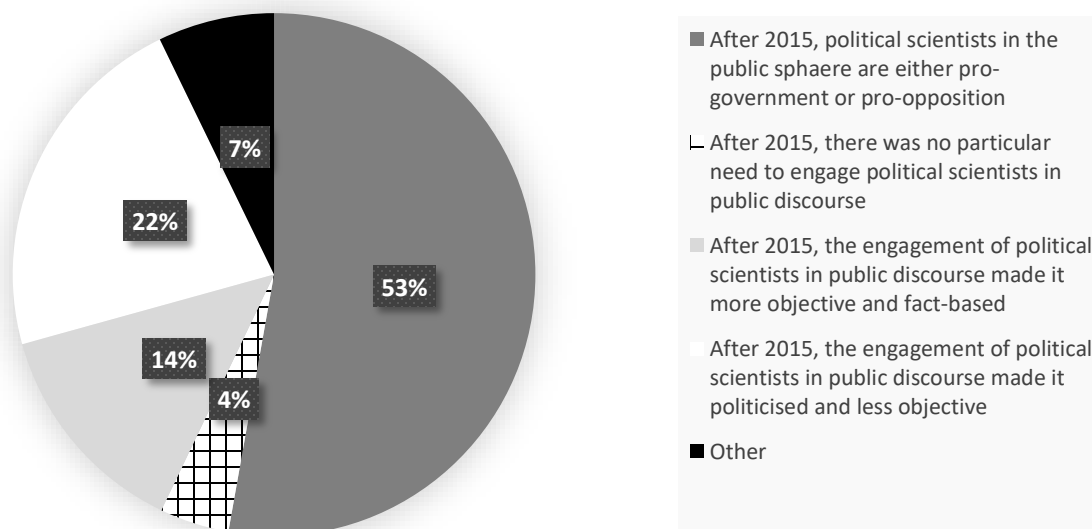
More than half of the respondents are of the opinion that after 2015 political scientists in the public sphere (Figure 2) are either pro-government or pro-opposition (124). Every fifth respondent (52) notes that public discourse has lost its objectivity and apoliticism after 2015 due to the involvement of political scientists. To sum up, political scientists were quite visible in the public discourse conducted in the media after 2015. However, evaluation of the quality of their activity was poor. A significant portion of respondents attribute politicisation to them and note that the discourse cheapened since 2015.

The third part of the survey was aimed at diagnosing the respondents' own activity in public debate.

Figure 3. Distribution of responses of political science researchers to the reasons for their inactivity in public debate after 2015 in Poland (percentages)
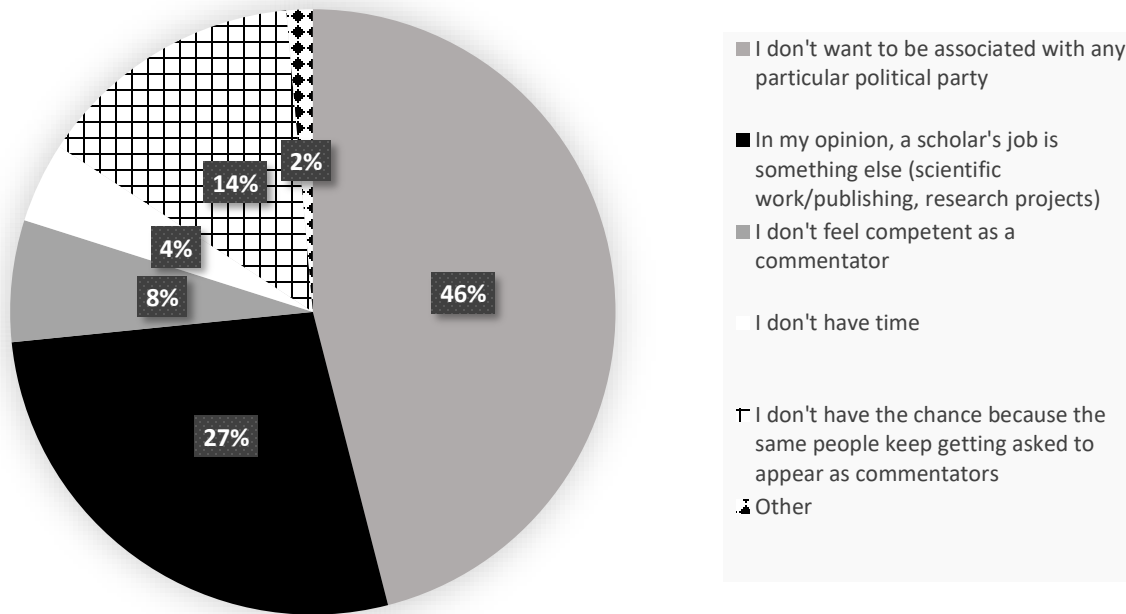
Nearly 60% of respondents declared that they did not participate in public debate (139). Nearly half of the respondents declared their reluctance to be associated with a political party as the main reason (Figure 3) for inactivity (64). Nearly one in three believe that the tasks scholars should perform are different, mostly related to publishing and research activity (38). A relatively significant percentage of respondents said that there was no opportunity, because the same people keep appearing as commentators (20). Interestingly, passivity is significantly related to the perception of the quality of community involvement after 2015 - people who assess the competence of commentators after 2015 [$\chi2(4; 235)=22.673$; $p<0.001$] and their objectivism [$\chi2(4; 235)=33.907$; $p<0.001$] poorly are more likely to remain passive.

Table 3. Reasons for declared passivity versus convictions on the role of political scientists in public debate

		I don't want to be associated with any particular political party	In my opinion, a scholar's job is something else (scientific work – publishing, research projects)	I don't feel competent as a commentator	I don't have time	I don't have the chance because the same people keep getting asked to appear as commentators	other
Political scientists should share their knowledge and scientific experience in public debate	N	30	4	5	6	15	2
	%	46.9	10.5	55.6	100.0	75.0	100,0
Political scientists should signal improprieties in the public sphere and draw the public's attention to them	N	20	7	3	0	5	0
	%	31.3	18.4	33.3	0.0	25.0	0,0
Political scientists are always politicised (they comment in favour of specific parties or politicians)	N	14	10	0	0	0	0
	%	21.9	26.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Political scientists in the media are mainly career-oriented	N	0	12	1	0	0	0
	%	0.0	31.6	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	N	0	5	0	0	0	0
	%	0.0	13.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	N	64	38	9	6	20	2
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

It is also interesting to see the association of the reasons for declared passivity with the convictions of political science researchers about the general role of political scientists in public debate (Table 3). The majority of political science researchers who declared that they do not want to be associated with any political party also declared that political scientists should be present in the public debate, sharing their knowledge and experience, and signalling irregularities. Only

every fifth passive political science researcher consistently claimed that political scientists are always associated with some political party. This could be a sign of the activation of a mechanism for rationalizing the non-involvement of political scientists, which requires further research. Among those of the opinion that the tasks of political science researchers are more closely related to scientific work, a significant portion feels that the activity of researchers in the media is career oriented.

Figure 4: Distribution of declarations of political science researchers on the form of their participation in public debate (percentages)
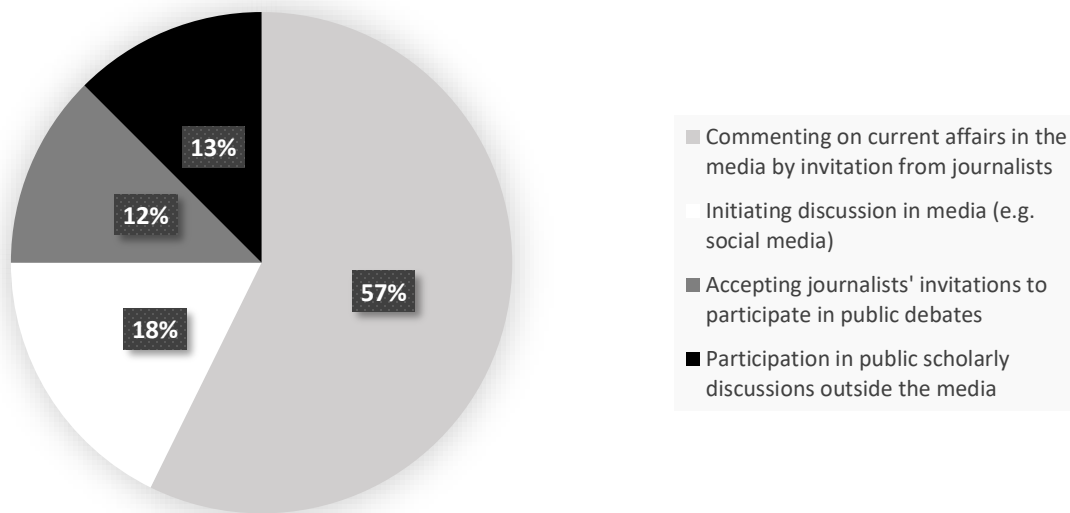
The activity of political scientists most often takes the form of responses to invitations by journalists (55) (Figure 4). Almost every fifth person initiates discussions in the media (e.g. social media) (17).

The level of declared involvement by researchers in various media is low. On a five-point scale, it is highest in social media (2.67), private television (2.27), private radio (2.25), press (2.20), public radio (2.01) and public television (1.59). In the majority of media, men present themselves as significantly more active – exceptions are social media and public radio where no significant gender differences were noted. Age, on the other hand, differentiates activity only in social media. People under the age of 39 are significantly more likely to use social media than political science researchers over the age of 40. Academic rank/title does not differentiate involvement in particular media types.

The declared engagement is the highest at the national level (2.74), slightly lower at the local (2.39) and regional level (2.29), and weakest at the international level (1.70). At almost all levels of engagement men declare significantly higher activity. The exception is the local level where no gender differences are noted. Age significantly differentiates declarative engagement at local and regional level. At the local level, significantly higher activity is declared by the youngest political scientists and those in the 40-49 age group. At the regional level, on the other hand, political scientists in the 30-39 age bracket exhibit the lowest activity. The remaining groups constitute a homogeneous set. The possessed academic rank differentiates activity only at the local level. Masters' degree holders demonstrate significantly the highest engagement among other science degrees.

Figure 5. Distribution of respondents' answers on the reasons for their involvement in public debate (percentages)
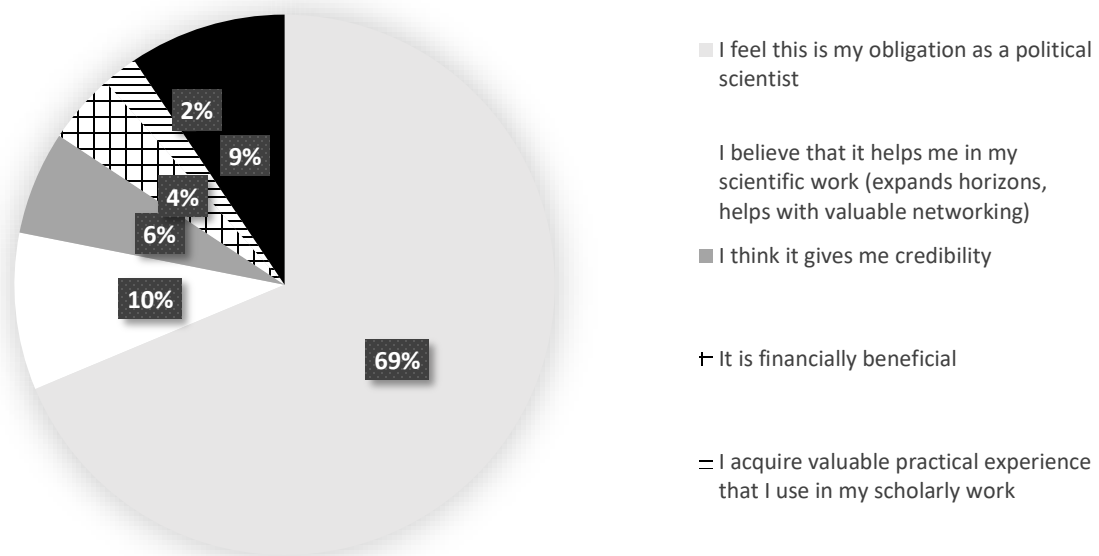
Giving reasons for their activity in the public space, the vast majority of political scientists consider such involvement their duty (66). Nearly every tenth respondent (9) considers such activity as helpful in academic work or as a form of creating an image (9).

In conclusion, the majority of political science researchers do not participate in public debate. The prevailing reason is based on the conviction that political scientists involved in public discourse are politicized. A significant part also believes that political scientists' duties are in another area, which should not be connected with public space. Among the people who are involved, activity initiated by journalists prevails – political scientists willingly accept their

invitation to comment on current events. The reactivity of political scientists is significantly stronger than their initiative. Declarative engagement is relatively weak. The range of engagement is also low, especially at the international level.

Discussion

In the course of the research, three research questions were posed. The first one was aimed at a general diagnosis of the opinion of political scientists as to the participation of their milieu in public debate. The study confirmed our hypothesis that political scientists are desired in public discourse. The role of political scientists and commentators is perceived as a mission – respondents are of the opinion that the experience and knowledge of political science researchers should be used to improve the quality of public debate. Interestingly, this attitude is most evident among people aged 30-49. One may think that these are researchers aware of their place in the public space. It can be assumed that people in this age group should also be much more often stabilised financially and in their private life, hence energy and involvement find its outlet in the professional sphere. Academic rank generally corresponds with age – more often these are people with a doctoral degree, but it can be assumed that this is a natural consequence of the stages of professional development in Poland (usually the doctoral degree is obtained at the age of about 30, while the post-doctoral degree at about 45, although the tendency is for the latter to decline).

The second research question was aimed at diagnosing the attitudes of political science researchers towards the participation of their milieu in public debate after 2015 in Poland. The results show unequivocally that the political science community is noticeable in the media after 2015, but the assessment of this involvement is not positive. Credibility, competence and objectivity were assessed no better than average at best. The responses also indicate that the activity of political science researchers in the media is perceived as politicised and it lowers the quality of public discourse. Interestingly, the youngest survey participants up to 29 and those aged 40-49 perceive political scientists active in the media better than older researches aged between 50-59, who are the most critical observers.

The third research question was aimed at diagnosing the determinants and direction of individual involvement of respondents in public debate after 2015. The perception of such activity as naturally combined with support for specific political parties was given as the main motive for passivity. A large group of people decisively separates scientific work and practical

involvement in public space, stating that the tasks of scholars are research, publications and projects. Importantly, those who declare passivity offer a poorer assessment of the competence and objectivity of commentators after 2015. This may be related to the radicalisation of discourse in the media about reforms, both public and private, and their growing political polarisation. This may be also both a mechanism to rationalise their passivity and its direct cause. The activity of researchers usually takes a reactive form – accepting the invitation of journalists. The declared engagement is quite weak – the highest in social media, the weakest in public television. Men are more active in most media, while in social media younger people under 39 are more active. Researchers more often declare involvement at the local and regional level, where the youngest researchers are more active, and researchers in the 40-49 age group The weakest activity is presented by people aged 30-39 at the local and regional level.

The above study was inspired by the PROSEPS programme (Vicentini et al., 2019), within the framework of COST Action 15210, whose authors serve as representatives of Poland in the Management Committee. The discussions conducted within the programme's framework clearly demonstrated that the role of political science researchers in public debate is perceived in various ways, and has a significant link with the cultural, social, and political context of particular countries. The relations between researchers and representatives of the media are similar. In consequence, this means that the role of political science researchers is also different in scenarios involving coping with crisis situations in various countries and their involvement in public debate. Studies conducted in Poland, which results are presented above, confirm the trends diagnosed in a European study in respect of our country. Interestingly, set against the backdrop of other European countries, Polish researchers offer similar opinions, which are nevertheless more carefully and conditionally formulated. For example, in comparison to the PROSEPS study in Poland, significantly fewer political science researchers declare participation in public debate (40.9% vs 57.5%). Among active Polish researchers, the majority agreed that such participation is a part of their role as scientists. However, this is a far smaller percentage than in the general European study (68.7% vs 95.6%). In the European study, 9 out of 10 researchers agreed that scientists should be involved in public debate, as this is a part of their social role (91.6%). This is also a popular opinion identified in the Polish study, but far more conditional here. At the national level – similarly to the European – political science researchers are visible in the public debate to a similar extent. However, in Poland they are mainly perceived as lowering the level of

public discourse, while in Europe as competent commentators, but without any real impact on the course of events.

Analysing the Polish context of the study, a caution in the formation of unequivocal judgements can be found in the political, social, and media context that Poland finds itself in. Here we should note the specificity of the Polish political science researcher community. The progressing political polarization that has accelerated since 2015 has also impacted this milieu. Furthermore, post-communist divisions remain. Some of them continue to be perceived through the lens of their affiliation with the old communist system, while there are also others aged 35-45, who still remember the communist system, but went through the phases of their career in democratic Poland. The rhetoric of the present ruling party includes numerous references to the divide between former communists and support of "free and independent Poland." This rhetoric impacts the progressing polarization among Polish political scientists, and also influences both attitudes towards the changes initiated in 2015 and the selection of media in which political science researchers choose to appear in.

Taking the above into account, it is difficult at present to indicate a clear role played by political science researchers in the public debate in Poland. Firstly, there is a large group of individuals who seek to avoid engaging in public debate, in the belief that their tasks are primarily of a strictly scientific nature (studies, conferences, etc.). Secondly, there are individuals who remain passive, justifying their lack of engagement by their negative perception of activity by political science researchers in public debate (poor assessment of their competences, associating them with putting their career before everything else, perception of their activity as politicised). Thirdly, there are political science researchers (albeit a minority) who actively share their experience and knowledge in public debate, considering it their mission and an integral element of their professional work.

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Appendix

Table 1. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test - political scientists' expectations to be active in public debate (by age)

	Up to 29 (3.57)	30-39 (4.43)	40-49 (4.17)	50-59 (3.19)	>60 (3.72)
Up to 29 (3.57)	X	I-J=0.862 p=0.011	-	-	-
30-39 (4.43)	I-J=0.862 p=0.011	X	-	I-J=1.24 p<0,001	I-J=0.704 p=0.014
40-49 (4.17)	-	-	X	I-J=0.976 p<0.001	-
50-59 (3.19)	-	I-J=1.24 p<0.001	I-J=0.976 p<0.001	X	-
>60 (3.72)	-	I-J=0.704 p=0.014	-	-	X

Table 2. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test - political scientists' expectations to be active in public debate (by degree)

	MA (3.94)	PhD (4.34)	Post-doc (3.72)	Professor (3.69)
MA (3.94)	X	-	-	-
PhD (4.34)	-	X	I-J=0.627 p = 0.001	I-J = 0.654 p=0.013
Post-doc (3.72)	-	I-J=0.627 p = 0.001	X	-
Professor (3.69)	-	I-J = 0.654 p=0.013	-	X

Table 3. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test - credibility of public discourse with the involvement of political scientists is highly rated (by age)

	Up to 29 (3.78)	30-39 (4.43)	40-49 (4.00)	50-59 (3.37)	>60 (3.77)
Up to 29 (3.78)	X	-	-	-	-
30-39 (4.43)	-	X	-	I-J=0.936 p<0.001	-
40-49 (4.00)	-	-	X	I-J=0.625 p=0.023	-
50-59 (3.37)	-	I-J=0.936 p<0,001	I-J=0.625 p=0.023	X	-
>60 (3.77)	-	-	-	-	X

Table 4. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test - credibility of public discourse with the involvement of political scientists is highly rated (by degree)

	MA (3.80)	PhD (4.25)	Post-doc (3.72)	Professor (3.77)
MA (3,80)	X	-	-	-
PhD (4,25)	-	X	I-J=0.531 p=0.005	I-J = 0.517 p=0.009
Post-doc (3,72)	-	I-J=0.531 p=0.005	X	-
Professor (3,77)	-	I-J = 0.517 p=0.009	-	X

Table 5. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test - visibility of political science researchers in private radio (by age)

	Up to 29 (4.14)	30-39 (3.36)	40-49 (3.92)	50-59 (3.61)	>60 (3.48)
Up to 29 (4,14)	-	I-J=0.784 p=0.004	X	X	I-J=0.656 p=0.02
30-39 (3,36)	I-J=0.784 p=0.004	-	I-J=0.561 p=0.002	X	X
40-49 (3,92)	X	I-J=0.561 p=0.002	-	X	X
50-59 (3,61)	X	X	X	-	X
>60 (3,48)	I-J=0.656 p=0.02	X	X	X	-

Table 6. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test – visibility of political science researchers in private television (by age)

	Up to 29 (4.14)	30-39 (3.70)	40-49 (4.16)	50-59 (3.55)	>60 (3.84)
Up to 29 (4.14)	-	X	X	I-J=0.59 p=0.04	X
30-39 (3.70)	X	-	I-J=0.46 p=0.005	X	X
40-49 (4.16)	X	I-J=0.46 p=0.005	-	I-J=0.60 p=0.001	X
50-59 (3.55)	I-J=0.59 p=0.04	X	I-J=0.60 p=0.001	-	X
>60 (3.84)	X	X	X	X	-

Table 7. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test – visibility of political science researchers in social media (by age)

	Up to 29 (4.09)	30-39 (3.64)	40-49 (4.06)	50-59 (3.80)	>60 (3.43)
Up to 29 (4.09)	X	-	-	-	I-J=0.062 p=0.005
30-39 (3.64)	-	X	-	-	-
40-49 (4.06)	-	-	X	-	I-J=0.64 p=0.008
50-59 (3.80)	-	-	-	X	-
>60 (3.43)	I-J=0.062 p=0.005	-	I-J=0.64 p=0.008	-	X

Table 8. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test - assessment of the competence of political scientists in the media in public debate after 2015 (by age)

	Up to 29 (2.57)	30-39 (3.21)	40-49 (3.19)	50-59 (2.52)	>60 (3.13)
Up to 29 (2.57)	X	-	-	-	-
30-39 (3.21)	-	X	-	I-J=0.067 p=0.015	-
40-49 (3.19)	-	-	X	I-J=0.66 p=0.008	-
50-59 (2.52)	-	I-J=0.067 p=0.015	I-J=0.66 p=0.008	X	-
>60 (3.13)	-	-	-	-	X

Table 9. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test - Assessment of the objectivity of political scientists in the media in public debate after 2015 (by age)

	Up to 29 (2.48)	30-39 (2.87)	40-49 (2.80)	50-59 (2.22)	>60 (2.65)
Up to 29 (2.48)	X	-	-	-	-
30-39 (2.87)	-	X	-	I-J=0.65 p=0.034	-
40-49 (2.80)	-	-	X	I-J=0.57 p=0.044	-
50-59 (2.22)	-	I-J=0.65 p=0.034	I-J=0.57 p=0.044	X	-
>60 (2.65)	-	-	-	-	X

Table 10. Results t-Student test - declared involvement in various media (by gender)

	Test t result	Women	Men
Private radio	t(89)= -3.587 p=0.001	1.73	2.55
Private television	t(88,944) = -6.128 p<0.001	1.45	1.74
Public television	t(88,369)= -3.493 p=0.004	1.18	1.81
Press	t(85,075) = -4.674 p=0.002	1.57	2.57

Table 11. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test – visibility of science researchers in social media (by age)

	Up to 29 (3.71)	30-39 (3.93)	40-49 (2.02)	50-59 (2.80)	>60 (2.08)
Up to 29 (3.71)	X	-	I-J=1.91 p<0.001	I-J=1.48 p=0.017	-
30-39 (3.93)	-	X	I-J=1.91 p<0.001	-	I-J=1,85 p=0.002
40-49 (2.02)	I-J=1.91 p<0.001	I-J=1.91 p<0.001	X	-	-
50-59 (2.80)	I-J=1.48 p=0.017	-	-	X	-
>60 (2.08)	-	I-J=1.85 p=0.002	-	-	X

Table 12. Results t-Student test - declared involvement in various level (by gender)

	Test t result	Women	Men
Regional level	t(89)= -2.893 p=0.005	1.84	2.55
National level	t(89)= -3.820 p<0.001	2.15	3.07
International level	t(89)= -2.159 p=0.034	1.42	1.86

Table 13. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test –declared engagement on the local level (by age)

	Up to 29 (3.86)	30-39 (1.13)	40-49 (3.42)	50-59 (3.06)	>60 (2.08)
Up to 29 (3.86)	X	I-J=2.72 p<0.001	I-J=1.40 p=0.039	-	I-J=1.77 p=0.02
30-39 (1.13)	I-J=2.72 p<0.001	X	-	I-J=1.93 p<0.001	-
40-49 (3.42)	I-J=1.40 p=0.039	-	X	-	-
50-59 (3.06)	-	I-J=1.93 p<0.001	-	X	-
>60 (2.08)	I-J=1.77 p=0.02	-	-	-	X

Table 14. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test –declared engagement on the regional level (by age)

	Up to 29 (3.00)	30-39 (1.13)	40-49 (2.45)	50-59 (2.60)	>60 (1.44)
Up to 29 (3.00)	X	I-J=1.87 p=0.002	-	-	-
30-39 (1.13)	I-J=1.87 p=0.002	X	I-J=1.32 p=0.001	I-J=1.47 p=0.002	I-J=1.28 p=0.018
40-49 (2.45)	-	I-J=1.32 p=0.001	X	-	-
50-59 (2.60)	-	I-J=1.47 p=0.002	-	X	-
>60 (1.44)	-	I-J=1.28 p=0.018	-	-	X

Table 15. Results post-doc HSD Tukey test –declared engagement on the local level (by degree)

	MA (5.00)	PhD (2.32)	Post-doc (2.43)	Professor (1.80)
MA (5.00)	-	I-J=2.67 p=0.005	I-J=2.57 p=0.007	I-J=3.20 p=0.002
PhD (2.32)	I-J=2.67 p=0.005	-	X	X
Post-doc (2.43)	I-J=2.57 p=0.007	X	-	X
Professor (1.80)	I-J=3.20 p=0.002	X	X	-

Media and Information Literacy of Students – Skills and Challenges in the Context of Political Preferences: The example of Poland

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this article is to present the link between the level of media and information literacy (MIL) and political preferences of Polish students based on empirical research. MIL is a key issue for today's societies as it equips citizens with the skills needed to use various media and information channels and exercise their basic human rights. Phenomena such as post-truth, the way people are more inclined to accept arguments based on emotions and beliefs than facts, disinformation and fake news are an important context and subject of ongoing scientific discussions. Keeping in mind the limitations of self-report methods, the authors combine the elements of students' self-assessment with the questions that test their theoretical knowledge and competences related to recognizing fake news. The research sample consists of 870 students of social sciences and journalism. The results of the research provide detailed knowledge about the level of MIL as well as political preferences of students. By that, authors hope to contribute to the global scientific discussion, offering their research conducted in the context of the declining quality of democracy in Poland.

Keywords: fake news, democracy, media, Media and Information Literacy, political preferences, survey

Introduction

Education and literacy might be perceived as preconditions for democracy. The first person who famously linked "information issues" to democracy was Tocqueville (1954) but almost two centuries later some prominent scholars and politicians (Annan, 2018; Norris, 2019) still present

issues like fake news and disinformation as a central element of discussion on the quality of modern democracy.

The newest studies shows that the number of fake news in the global public debate is increasing, but their ability to set the issue agenda for public opinion strongly depends on online partisan media (Vargo et al., 2018). In this paper we propose the approach, that examines the relation between the problem of fake news and political preferences through theoretical framework and empirical study of Media and Information Literacy (MIL).

Media are still important both for information dissemination and democracy, therefore MIL is a crucial skill in media-saturated world for all citizens and young people in particular (Wallmark, 2013, p. 399). However, MIL is a broad and complex concept, so we decided to focus only on some of its components, which cover citizens' knowledge and abilities to recognise and react on fake news. In this way, we have narrowed the aim of the paper and tackled more particular challenges to the quality of public debate in Poland.

In the paper we will discuss the results of our research on Polish students of social sciences and journalism regarding their abilities to cope with fake news based on MIL guidelines. Exploring the primary research puzzle, we will try to present to what extent the level of MIL among young, well-educated and potentially politically oriented citizens is related to their political preferences. Basing on the analysis of 870 questionaries we will try to answer the following research questions:

Q1: Are there significant differences in MIL level between students who declare themselves to be voters of different parties?

Q2: Are there significant differences in MIL level between students who are undecided voters and those clearly declaring their support in future elections?

In this way we hope to broaden area of studies on fake news impact on the quality of electoral processes and democracy as such. We will contribute to the existing state of research by presenting both the in-depth theoretical explanation and the empirical evidences proving that without proper level of media and information literacy the quality of the public debate, challenged by the level of fake news, might undermine democratic satisfaction and deepen partisan mistrust among young voters.

In the next part, we will present the current state of research on MIL and fake news and shows how our paper can expand this area. After that, we will firstly present the methodological

aspects of our research, and then discuss the final findings. In the last section, we will return to the question of the importance of our research in the context of the current political situation in Poland and some fears and concerns expressed by students involved in our study.

State of research

Carlsson (2019, p. 37), while describing MIL, noticed that it is based on a recognition that mediated societies require media-literate citizens. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stresses that "empowerment of people through Media and Information Literacy" is important in the context of securing equitable access to information and knowledge as well as in promoting pluralistic and independent media (UNESCO, n.d.). MIL could be understood as crucial competencies and skills needed by citizens in the twenty first century. UNESCO identifies three main areas of knowledge for MIL. The first includes the functions of media, libraries and other information providers, the second embraces the conditions in which news media and information providers can operate in an effective manner and the last one circulates around the performances of these functions by evaluating their content and service (UNESCO, 2011, p. 16). Over the past five decades the knowledge about media has been discussed in different fields and from different perspectives and now MIL is in an ongoing process of change in both the media sector and society (Carlsson, 2019, p. 51).

In Europe we can identify some differences in understanding of MIL. In Western European countries it is rooted in media education while in Eastern Europe understanding of MIL is closer to computer and information literacy (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017, p. 32). Poland is an example which fits this observation. When discussing Polish example some experts stressed that teaching media competences was limited to IT skills and reception of ICT messages what many specialists consider insufficient (Iwanicka et al., 2014, p. 4). The Media Literacy Index for 2021, which assesses the resilience to fake news potential in 35 countries in Europe using indicators for press freedom, education and trust in others, ranked Poland on 17th position with 56 points (Lessenski, 2021).

In case of MIL we should consider political, economic, cultural and technological factors. As Freedom House stressed, the pandemic and its consequences, like economic insecurity, have impact on democracy and its defenders have sustained heavy losses (Repucci & Slipowitz, 2021). In the abovementioned document Poland is classified as free (with score 82/100), but there is also

a note that since populist, socially conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party won the elections in 2015 it has led to a situation in which it can "increase political influence over state institutions and threaten to reverse Poland's democratic progress" (Freedom House, 2021). There are many voices arguing that democracy is under attack by populist leaders and parties. In case of Europe the threat is greater in CEE countries which do not have such long and developed tradition of independent, democratic institutions as Western European countries. They also have problems with institutional and political volatility. Moreover, in recent years, Poland has experienced a large decline in Press Freedom Index – from 18 position in 2015 to 64 in 2021 (World Press Freedom Index, 2015; 2021). It is worth noting that despite many changes in social life the role of media in the contemporary society is still important both in case of traditional and new media. However, apart from the important role of political, economic or cultural factors, there is also a significant impact of fast developing technology. In times of democratic deficits, the role of MIL seems to be especially important, because it could help citizens critically evaluate content of different media and in consequence develop informed citizenry.

When discussing the topic of political context and role of technology, it is worth referring to the problem of fake news. Fake news can be understood as containing false, discrediting or whitewashed information and their aim is to manipulate and deceive recipients in order to achieve financial or political interests (Meinert et al., 2018). Scholars also study use of the fake news discourse by political actors. Farhall et al. (2019) argued that fake news language has emerged in strategic political communication in Australia since Trump election and that this form of discourse is used rather to attack media. Moreover, the research proves that false news spreads more rapidly on the social network than real news does and humans, not bots, are mainly responsible for dissemination of false information (Dizikes, 2018). When we take into consideration the role and fast dissemination of fake news in the Internet as well as their potential to shape political communication, the role of MIL seems to be even greater. It can be considered as one of the basic skills necessary for citizens.

Ptaszek (2019, p. 223-224) claimed that algorithms are being used on a large scale not only to create and spread fake news but also to simulate, especially in social media, real interactions between people and manipulate public opinion. The same author calls this process a computational propaganda and suggests that it is one of the most dangerous technological tools that threaten democracy (see also Gorwa, 2019). It is therefore interesting what knowledge and

competencies students of social science and journalism have in this area. On one hand, young people are often perceived as having innate IT skills and knowledge about media. Also, according to the report by the European Audiovisual Observatory, in case of projects dedicated to MIL, the most common audience group for the top 145 projects were "teens and older students" despite the fact that authors excluded curricular-based projects (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2016, p. 4). On the other hand, when writing about the problem of spreading fake news many authors focused on teenagers and young people because of their very low trust in traditional media and willingness to share other types of information (Łódzki, 2017, p. 21).

We are interested not only in MIL among students, but also in their political preferences and possible links between level of MIL and political views. Wenzel (2018) studied the scale of influence of the media on party preferences. The scholar argued that there is a clear difference in consumption of media and its evaluation displayed by the electorate of governing party (PiS) and everyone else. Public broadcaster is trusted primarily by PiS voters, while other voters trust major private broadcasters (Wenzel, 2018, p. 71). The contribution of our article to the current state of research consists not only in further verification of theses put forward, for example, by Wenzel, but also of our own analysis of differences in MIL levels between students who declared clear political preferences and those who described themselves as undecided voters.

Research methods

In the article authors present in a multidimensional manner the level of students' MIL as well as political preferences based on empirical research. The first step was desk research necessary to present the state of research, outline the socio-political context and indicate the level of MIL in Poland compared to other European countries. Authors analyzed literature on understanding of MIL and differences in this area between Western and Eastern European countries to present Poland against this background. Other sources of data were reports (e.g., by the European Audiovisual Observatory) and indexes (including The Media Literacy Index). Authors also tried to analyze the determinants of the political preferences of young Poles. As Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2001, p. 322) noticed, the general advantage of using secondary data is the fact that a wide range of materials allows the analysis to be deeper than that based only on primary data from a single research project.

Secondly, the main tool used in the study was a survey which is a quantitative technique for data gathering. We believe that the article benefits from key strengths of survey such as highly structured mode of collecting data, and fact that respondents approached them in their natural environment, allowing examination of broad range of variables (Hansen, Machin, 2019, p. 203). The article presents the results of the survey conducted among students of social sciences and journalism on a sample of 870 respondents representing academic centers in various parts of Poland. Authors assumed that such students are usually credited with relatively high skills and understanding of the new media ecosystem and should have some knowledge about media functioning, information verification, problem of fake news, disinformation and other social phenomena which affect mass communication on different levels. The research period started on April 12, 2021 and ended on May 31 2021 (survey closure). In order to increase the representativeness of the sample we used official lists of universities supervised by the Minister responsible for higher education and sent our online survey to all universities which offered studies in social sciences and journalism. Web survey as well as stratified and convenience sampling techniques are often adapted in this type of research (Ashley et al., 2017, p. 84; Ojebuyi & Salawu, 2015, p. 211). We chose stratified sampling to ensure that the survey was disseminated in an online form not only to the biggest universities in the country (e.g., in Krakow, Warsaw, Poznan, Wroclaw, Gdansk) but also to smaller academic centers (e.g., Płock, Kalisz, Jelenia Góra, Siedlce). The survey was anonymized and the respondents filled it in the form of an online questionnaire. It consists of five sections: students' self-assessment of MIL, assessment of students' MIL, practical questions, trust and responsibility, respondents' personal details. Keeping in mind the limitations of self-report methods, the authors, in addition to questions encouraging to indicate the level of students' own skills, also included questions that test their theoretical knowledge and competences related to recognizing fake news.

Due to the wide range of research and the complexity of the studied field the authors concentrated on the basic elements of MIL, especially the knowledge about fake news and practical skills connected with critical thinking in recognition of false information. This is justified by both an established role of critical thinking in concept of MIL and growing number of studies and reports which show large scale of disinformation campaigns and the spread of fake news as well as vulnerability of societies to these phenomena.

Results

In the section we will discuss the outcomes of our empirical study by comparing the average results gathered by supporters of the main political parties in Poland. We will analyse the qualitative difference in responses between respondents with clear voting intentions and undecided voters. In both cases, to explore the main research puzzle we will present some basic descriptive statistics in the form of clear diagrams and tables.

During our research, we found that 11% of respondents had taken part in a course developing media and information competences ending with a certificate, what might have had an impact on our research. However, the obtained results seem to confirm the main conclusions of other similar studies (CBOS, 2021a) on the political preferences of young Poles. To further minimize the risks associated with conducting an online survey, in the part devoted to political preferences, we ask about those political forces that 1. in the previous parliamentary elections exceeded the election threshold; 2. during the research period were usually indicated in the polls (CBOS, 2021b; PKW, 2019; PAP, 2021).

Chart 1. Political preference of students of social studies and journalism in Poland
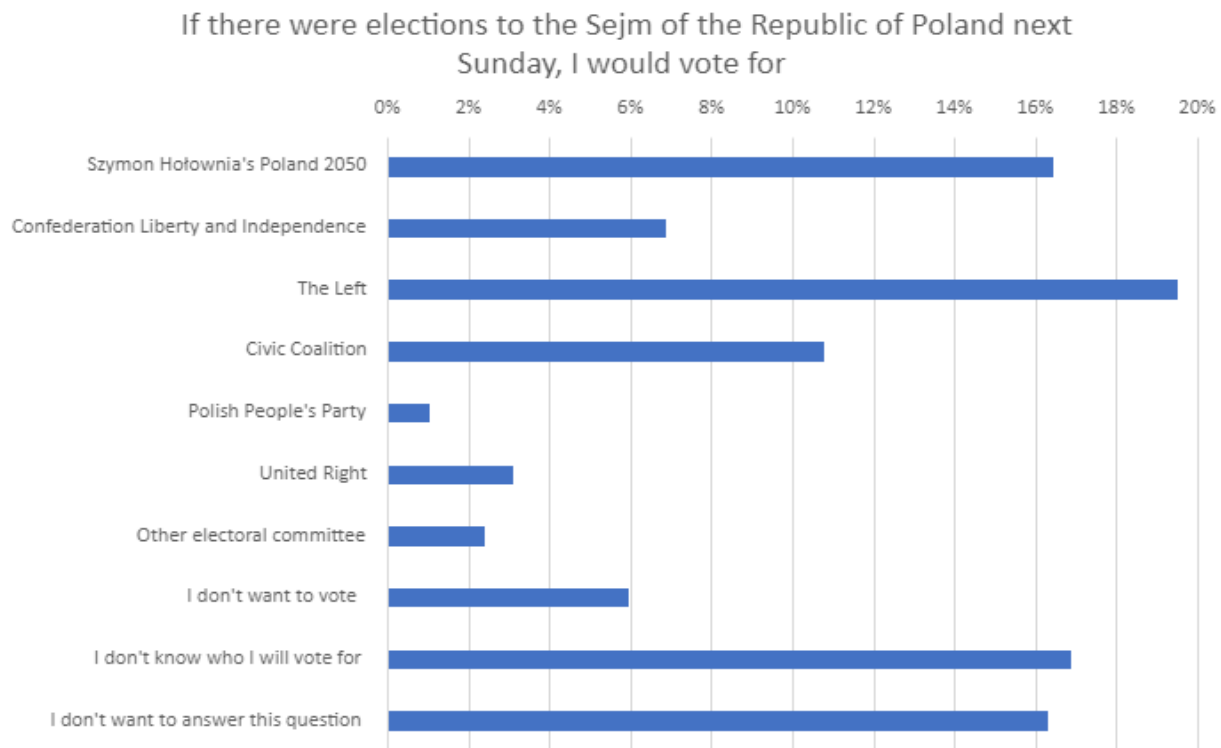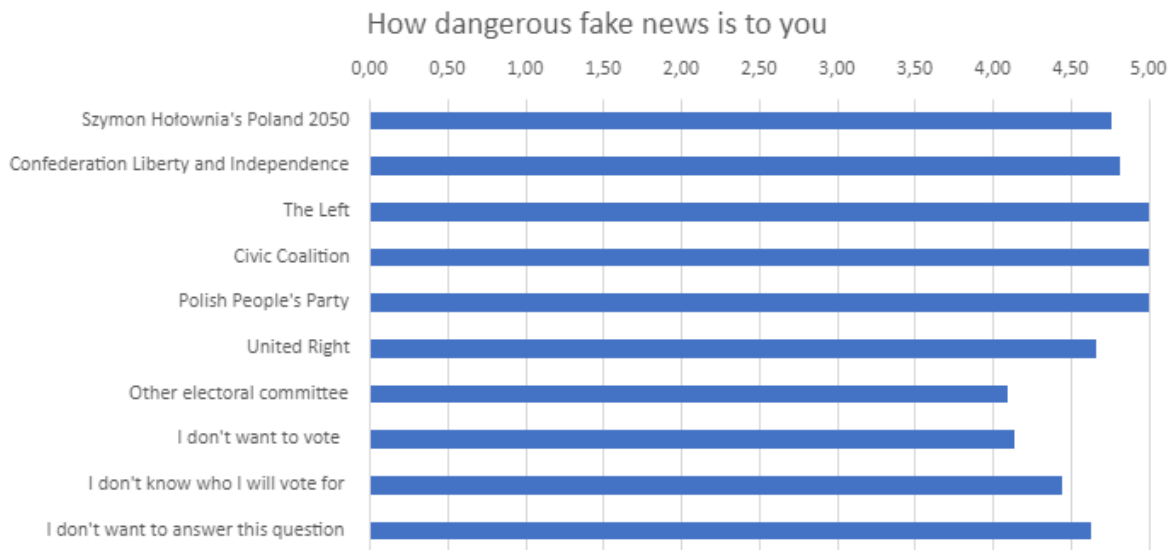

Source: Authors' calculations from the primary data gathered April 12 - May 31, 2021. Sample size – 870 people.

Respondents declared the highest support for the Left (20%) - an electoral coalition and a parliamentary club composed at the time of the research from three parties: the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD, now – New Left), Spring, Left Together. This is significantly different comparing to other nationwide surveys, where the Left usually takes 4th place with support not exceeding 8% ("Sondaże / Polska", n/d). The visible turn of the younger generation towards left-wing values, however, was confirmed by the CBOS (2021a) which helps to explain the obtained results. According to our research, the party of the well-known journalist and TV presenter Szymon Hołownia, established after the last parliamentary elections, also enjoys high support among students (16%).

The low support for the ruling PiS – only 3% – is very symptomatic. The party, which is still often trusted by older people, is often critically perceived by younger voters, participating in large numbers in anti-government protests related to the tightening of anti-abortion law (Salik, Płociński, 2020). A high percentage of respondents either do not intend to vote in the next election (6%) or still do not know who to vote for (17%). People who did not want to answer this question (16%) constitute a separate, problematic category. We will discuss the significance of this phenomenon in the last section of our article.

Chart 2. Perception of fake news among respondents with different voting preferences

Source: Authors' calculations from the primary data gathered April 12 - May 31, 2021. Sample size – 870 people. Answers on a scale of 1 - 7, where: 1 - completely harmless, 7 very dangerous.

The visible differences in the support of political parties, however, do not easily translate into a different perception of fake news as an Internet threat. The respondents who declared their

will to vote for other than the most popular political parties perceived fake news as a threat to the least extent – in average 4.10/7 points. The voters of the ruling camp are in the second place (4.67/7). Overall, however, the declared level of perceived threat was similar for all respondents.

However, the greater difference between supporters of mentioned political parties can be seen in the context of their declared experience with fake news. Only 67% of the United Right's voters were able to indicate the approximate frequency of encountering fake news which was definitely lower than the next result of Szymon Hołownia's party with almost 90% of answers indicating such frequency. The declared voters of the United Right were also the least likely to say that they encounter fake news on a daily basis (15%).

A certain deviation from the dominant pattern of the answer, containing the option "hard to say", can be seen in the case of the PSL, which, however, can be explained by the extremely small number of people who decided to vote for this party (9 out of 870 replies). The voters of "other election committees", which do not exceed the election threshold in the latest polls (e.g., Kukiz '15), responded in a similar way. These differences are greater than those existing between the majority of respondents with clear electoral preferences and those who were undecided or unwilling to answer the question.

Chart 3. Experience with fake news among respondents with different voting preferences
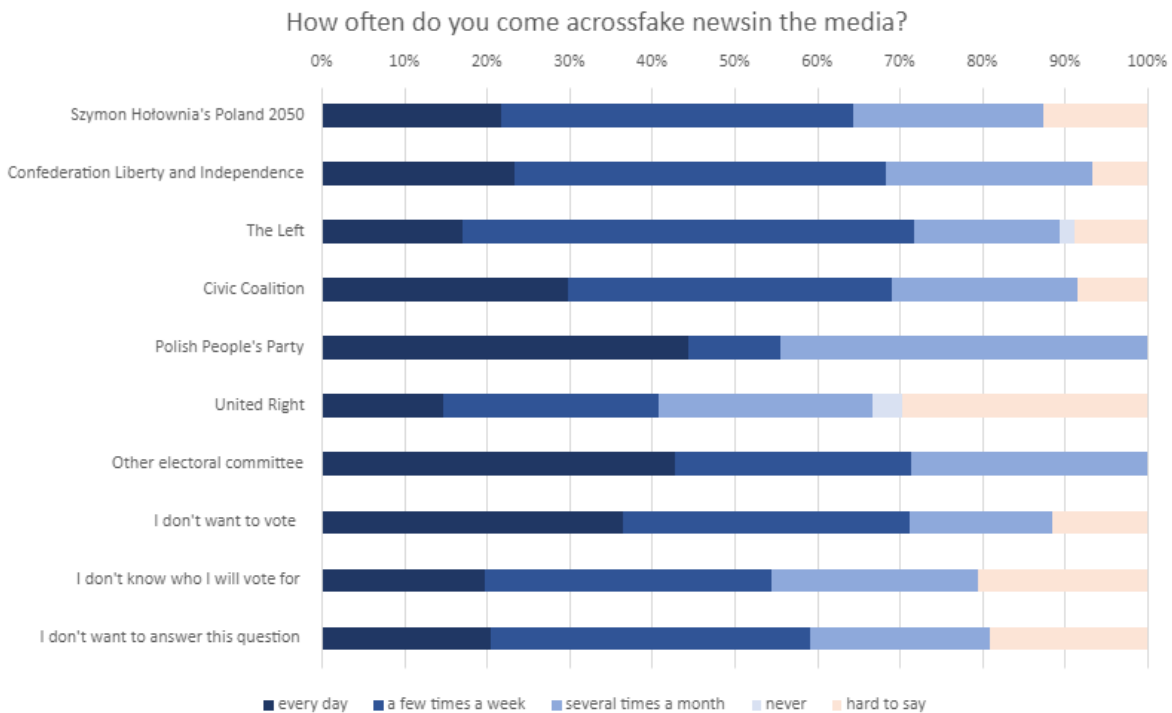
Source: Authors' calculations from the primary data gathered April 12 - May 31, 2021. Sample size – 870 people.

The report of the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom covering political independence of media in Poland (Klimkiewicz, 2020) shows that the highest risk in this area was identified by the indicator on Independence of public service media governance and funding (83% - high risk). The report of the Polish Language Council of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Kłosińska et al., 2018) also points to the fact that public media in Poland are used to disseminate pro-government propaganda, which may explain the fact why the supporters of the three main opposition groups are less likely to check all controversial information in traditional media (Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050 13%, the Left 14%, Civic Coalition 15%). In this context, the answers of people who do not want to vote are more similar to the supporters of the current ruling camp – 23% of answers – while people who do not know whom they are going to vote for or do not want to answer this question answered in line with opinions expressed by the supporters of the opposition – in both cases 12 % of answers.

Supporters of the United Right have also stated that they never verify the information provided by media more often than supporters of other parties: 7% of them indicated that they never verified information delivered by traditional media, 11% that they never do it in the context of new media. For comparison, only 2% of the supporters of the relatively recently established Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050 replied that they do not verify the information received both in the traditional media and new media. Respondents who do not know who they are going to vote for or did not want to reveal their plans responded in a manner similar to the supporters of the main opposition parties – in both cases 5% of respondents never check information provided by traditional media and 3% by new media. The most challenging is the case of 15% of people who do not want to vote and say that they never verify the news reported in traditional media. Perhaps it can be interpreted as a desire to withdraw from the classically understood public sphere, but further research is necessary to verify such a hypothesis.

Table 1. Information verification among respondents with different voting preferences

	How often do you verify information provided by the media?					
	always		sometimes		never	
	traditional media	new media	traditional media	new media	traditional media	new media
Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050	13%	22%	85%	76%	2%	2%
Confederation Liberty and Independence	18%	32%	78%	63%	3%	5%
The Left	14%	23%	83%	76%	3%	1%
Civic Coalition	15%	19%	79%	76%	6%	5%
Polish People's Party	22%	22%	78%	67%	0%	0%
United Right	22%	22%	70%	67%	7%	11%
Other electoral committee	5%	19%	90%	71%	5%	10%
I don't want to vote	23%	21%	62%	73%	15%	6%
I don't know who I will vote for	12%	27%	84%	70%	5%	3%
I don't want to answer this question	12%	24%	82%	73%	5%	3%

Source: Authors' calculations from the primary data gathered April 12 - May 31, 2021. Sample size – 870 people.

There are studies dedicated to fact-checking initiatives as promoters of MIL. In case of Poland, it was observed that fact-checking groups engage themselves occasionally in educational activities related to MIL, but at the same time some of these initiatives (usually those related to civil society groups), treat their educational activities as a priority (Kuś & Barczyszyn-Madziarz, 2020, p. 262). We asked students if they knew any fact-checking initiatives. Majority of respondents did not know any of them (88.6%) and only 11.4% were able to give an example of at least one organization. On a side note, the most frequently indicated organization were Demagog (it was pointed out by 67% of these respondents who were familiar with fact-checking initiatives), then OKO.press (23%) and Konkret24 (10%). Other initiatives (eg. Wojownicy Klawiatury, fakenews.pl or international groups) were given as examples rarely.

When we take into consideration political preferences of respondents and their knowledge about fact-checking initiatives we can see some notable differences. First of all, in case of two groups – students who would like to vote for the United Right or the Confederation Liberty and Independence – awareness of organizations active in fact-checking is tangibly lower (up to 5%) (Chart 4). All of other groups of respondents exceeded 10%, and voters of the Civic Coalition, the Left, The Polish People Party and other electoral committees exceeded the 15% threshold. Groups of respondents with the lowest level of knowledge of fact-checking initiatives also showed a lower level of ability to recognize fake news.

Chart 4. Fact-checking initiatives awareness among respondents with different voting preferences
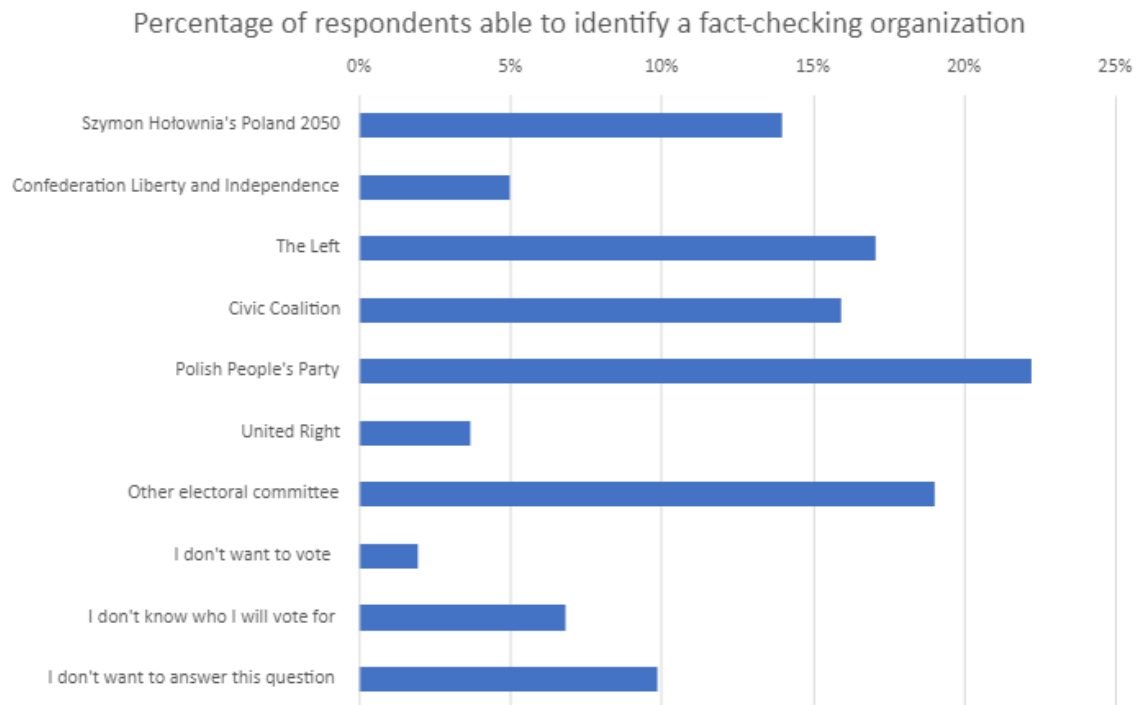
Percentage of respondents able to identify a fact-checking organization

Source: Authors' calculations from the primary data gathered April 12 - May 31, 2021. Sample size – 870 people.

In our research we used not only self-report questions, but we also gave students some practical tasks. We presented them with six news (some of them were real news and some were fake news) and asked if they had seen such information before, how they would assess the credibility of information and whether they were willing to share this information on the Internet, e.g., on Twitter or Facebook. Therefore, students had a chance to present their critical thinking skills in practice (check if there is information about author and sources, evaluate sources etc.).

First of all, we can analyze students' abilities to recognize fake news by pointing out their good ability to spot that news. We can find that four groups have similar outcomes oscillating around 80% of correct answers – supporters of Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050 (80% of all correct answers), Left (82%), Civic Coalition (80%) and Polish People's Party (81%) (Table 2). supporters of other electoral committees had a lower score (74%), then Confederation Liberty and Independence (72%) and on the last place United Right (69%). The difference between the highest score (Left, Polish People's Party) and the lowest (United Right) is not very significant, but certainly noticeable (13%). The fact that students were familiar with the information or not was not very important in case of their correct assessment. This pattern is however different when it comes to respondents' willingness to share false information.

When we look at data showing us which group of students was willing to share false information the most often we can see United Right's voters are on first place (26% of them admitted that they could share this kind of content). Voters of other electoral committees are second (24%). Regarding other respondents, in all cases less than 20% of students indicated willingness to share information which was fake news. Only one group fell between 0% and 10% and it was population of supporters of Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050 (10%). The outcomes are interesting when we look at percentage of people willing to share false information when unfamiliar with it. Generally, respondents were quite often willing to share fake news which they had seen before. In some cases the difference is significant (more than half as much) like in case of Polish People's Party (general 13% of people willing to share false information and 0% of people willing to share false information when unfamiliar with the information) or Confederation Liberty and Independence (12% and 3%) and other electoral committee (24% and 10%). We can assume that if students saw the information which we presented during our assessment before and knew it, they were more likely to treat the fact that this information had appeared in public discourse as a manifestation of its credibility.

Table 2. Responses to fake news among respondents with different voting preferences

	The ability to recognize fake news and the willingness to disseminate them			
	% of all correct answers	% of correct answers when unfamiliar with the information	% of people willing to share false information	% of people willing to share false information when unfamiliar with the information
Szymon Hołownia's Poland 2050	80%	80%	10%	5%
Confederation Liberty and Independence	72%	74%	12%	3%
The Left	82%	80%	16%	8%
Civic Coalition	80%	78%	17%	12%
Polish People's Party	81%	90%	13%	0%
United Right	69%	69%	26%	22%
Other electoral committee	74%	73%	24%	10%
I don't want to vote	74%	69%	18%	10%
I don't know who I will vote for	75%	72%	21%	14%
I don't want to answer this question	72%	73%	17%	6%

Source: Authors' calculations from the primary data gathered April 12 - May 31, 2021. Sample size – 870 people.

To sum up, our study shows that there is a potential link between MIL and the electoral preferences, by which we strengthen some previous studies delivered among others by Wenzel. We believe that our research shows that there is a visible difference between the supporters of the United Right (mostly PiS voters) and the rest of the respondents (the first research question) and that this difference is much more tangible than the difference between the decided and undecided voters (the second research question). However, what is also important our study shows the surprisingly high percentage of young citizens who simply refused to declare their political preferences present knowledge, attitudes and behaviour significantly different from those who don't not know who they want to vote for or simply decided not to vote at all, which will be discussed in the last section of this article.

Conclusions and discussion

The paper proves that it is worth looking at the level of MIL competence among students who are often perceived as understanding the new media ecosystem and related threats such as fake news better. As it was indicated, there is a persistent difference in undersign MIL between scholars from Western and Eastern Europe (Frau-Meigs et al., 2017: 32). The contribution of our work is that to some extent these differences need to be reconceptualize and reconsidered in the light of the impact of the current political situation in Poland.

The research sample used in this paper consists of 870 students of social sciences and journalism from numerous academic centres around the country. The biggest challenge in this context was however not the vast number of institutions involved in shaping MIL among Polish students but the reluctance of respondents to express their views in a form of an online questionnaire. Although our study was fully anonymised the repercussions that have arisen among some pupils and students participating in anti-government strikes could have significantly influenced the number of people who refused to reveal their political preferences in the research.

According to the Media Literacy Index 2019, Poland was 18th (53 points) and recently, along with the Czech Republic and Slovakia experienced the greatest decline (Lessenski, 2019). Our research has shown that even among the youngest voters there is a tendency of the level of MIL declining in the context of people clearly declaring support for the ruling camp. On the one hand, the large percentage of people who partially did not complete the questionnaire make these results dubious, Still, it proves that MIL is political and should be accepted as a fully-fledged subject of interest for political scientists.

Our research has some limitations also on the theoretical level, therefore in our future studies we want to support our empirical studies with broader conceptual framework of the theory of information equality and democracy. As Simpson argues: "Democracy depends not only on wealth or power resources but more on cognitive capacity and societal values" (Simpson, 1997, p. 165). We hope that in our study we show that analysing cognitive aspects of the young generation of Poles is crucial in further studies of democracy in crisis.

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