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Insults and prejudices against Kosovar women politicians that are present in the media

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Abstract. Offensive and sexist statements against women politicians in Kosovo and women in general are no longer unknown, especially when they are made public, either through various media or through statuses on various social networks. But, in Kosovo, recently there have been insults against Kosovar women politicians by their colleagues, Kosovar men politicians, which insults clearly tend to increase. These statements contain the following epithets: dealing with their body weight, calling them 'cows', 'beautiful', 'prostitutes', and even inviting them on a date. Also, in the media several times and recently, bias has been noted regarding women's jealousy by calling them jealous, even of those fighting for human rights. In this paper, content analysis is used, where the contents of some media are analyzed, such as television and some online media. The contents of the messages written against the Kosovar woman politician were analyzed. Offensive statements and prejudices against Kosovar women politicians were pointed out to be very harmful, because this could damage the chances of women politicians to be successful and could contribute to the woman being further qualified only on the basis of her beauty and not to be treated according to its wisdom.

Keywords. Politician woman, politician husband, insulting and offensive statements

Introduction

It is undeniable that in the media are often noticed how journalists or the media in general portray the Kosovar woman politician with stereotypes, sexism and offensive words. But, these portrayals in Kosovo have recently taken another direction, such as the insulting statements that Kosovar men politicians address to their colleagues, Kosovar women politicians. These statements of Kosovar men politicians were also present during the last election campaign in Kosovo on February 14, 2021, where in these elections many women ran and voted with merit, without the help of the legal quota.

Methodology

Content analysis was used in this paper, where the contents of some media and social networks were analyzed. The contents of social networks have been analyzed, because these are public and are always published in online media. The contents of some messages against Kosovar women politicians, written by Kosovar men politicians and media managers were analyzed.

Content analysis was chosen because it is a method that has been used by many researchers in studies and research related to mass communication. This method effectively analyzes quantitative data that are categorized in research. Content analysis by researchers Riffe et al. (2005) is considered to be the best research method when conducting research on the content of newspapers and media in research when conducting research on the content of newspapers and the media in general.

Study findings and discussion of results

This section explains and analyzes the insults to Kosovar women politicians by some Kosovar men politicians, a television manager and a women's rights activist. Many of these negative portraits coming from Kosovar politicians were noticed during the election campaign of the last elections in Kosovo, on February 14, 2021. In a debate during this election campaign, during a relevant show, on one of the televisions of Kosovo, a male candidate ran for deputy in the Assembly of Kosovo, Mr. Dardan Islami, with a sexist language for the current deputy, who also ran for deputy, Mrs. Duda Balje, said that if he was elected member of Parliament (MP) he would sit next to MP Duda Balje.

Also, the other offensive and sexist statement through the social network Facebook comes from the other male member of the Assembly of Kosovo, Mr. Ardian Kastrati, after in the respective elections, a woman was elected president, Mrs. Vjosa Osmani, for whom he stated and offended her very much by referring to her body weight. The other statement follows from another Kosovar man politician, from the member of the Assembly of Kosovo, Mr. Sami Kurteshi, who is elected MP and before was the head of the institution that should protect human rights, that of the Ombudsman. Thus, Mr. Kurteshi, the women politician who at that time was Minister, Mrs. Dhurata Hoxha called her a "cow". Further, follows the offensive statement of the male MP Mr. Sabri Hamiti where he insults the female MP in the Assembly of Kosovo, Mrs. Albulena Haxhiu, telling her not to shout and not to cry out. Even the other MP, Mr. Hajdar Beqa, insults his colleague by calling him a "political prostitute".

Prejudices and insults against women politicians do not come only from male MPs and certain media, they also come from highly regarded media executives. For example, the Deputy Director of Radio Television of Kosovo, RTK, Mentor Shala, reacted with unacceptable language to MP Doarsa Kica-Xhelili, being the chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on Media, in a television interview mentioned the name of the person concerned, in connection with the management of this television. Moreover, in response, Mr. Shala through a post on the social network "Facebook", calls the deputy Kica lovely and invites her on a date.

What does this sexist approach of men tell us? This speaks to how women in the media are treated differently in formal or legal terms, while differently treated in informal terms, or in practice. As evidence of this discrepancy, is the signing of the Joint Declaration between: Radio Television of Kosovo (RTK) which television is managed by Mr. Shala himself, the Agency for Gender Equality under the Prime Minister, the Kosovo Center for Gender Studies and the Independent Media Commission. This statement aims to promote gender equality in the media in Kosovo. This statement even aims to combat gender-based violence and gender stereotypes. But, in reality, a year after the signing of this joint statement followed an embarrassing language by the deputy director of this institution. The signing of this statement did not hold the deputy director in question accountable.

Normally, that a common statement does not change the patriarchal mentality of anyone who has such a culture and misogyny, because this mentality has been ingrained for years, even the person with such a mentality shows that he comes from a socializing environment that considers this mentality as normal. And, the question that anyone can ask is: how can this sexist

and offensive language of men towards women in general and that of politics in particular be stopped? This is very difficult due to the fact that in some media and social networks, anyone can write whatever they want because of the lack of editorial filters.

Despite the fact that in these social networks everyone has a personal account, this personal account cannot be called completely personal as long as it is read by thousands of people. What does it mean to be read by thousands of people? This means that those people who read those offensive messages have this misogynistic culture ingrained in their heads and above all it influences to nurture even more the negative perception of Kosovar women politicians. This perception can cost a woman a lot when running in elections, because people thinking in this way would not vote for women who are not considered worthy to be politicians, but are considered worthy only to invite them on a date, or to insult them in different forms. In this line of argument, researchers Van der Pas and Aldering (2020) also point out that these messages can undermine the electoral chances of female candidates and at the same time threaten the long-term careers of women in politics (Van der Pas & Aldering, 2020).

These insults being spoken and written by those who should stop these statements, the question normally arises: how is this explained, when all these men who insult their female colleagues with misogynistic and sexist language come from those political entities that aim empowerment of Kosovar women politicians and women in general? In fact, we are seeing these statements very often and they clearly tend to increase, and they continue to be practiced, because we have such a statement recently. Of course, that tends to increase, because the position of women politicians with the recent government has improved significantly. And, now many women are involved in decision-making positions, that in the past there were not many women ministers, not even a woman has been the chair of any parliamentary committee. Thus, women having these positions have the opportunity to criticize men for certain political problems, as they enjoy many decision-making positions. In the past, Kosovar men politicians have not offended their colleagues, Kosovar women politicians, not because they have spared them, but because women did not have the opportunity to criticize them and reveal their political problems. Now, women criticize certain political problems. Men politicians in Kosovo, not being used to receiving criticism from their female colleagues, annoy them because the shortcomings of their work are revealed to public. And these insults, male politicians address only women politicians who hold decision-making positions, while no insults have been done to women politicians who do not have relevant positions. This shows that men politicians are annoyed by women politicians when they have decision-making positions!

But these male politicians should not be allowed to continue to offend their colleagues, female politicians. If such a thing were not stopped, it would become a practice. Moreover, insults and verbal offenses will make it impossible to create equal social relations. The only way to stop these offensive insults is to punish the offenders, because all these cases mentioned in this paper, no one have been punished. The culture of impunity is nothing but allowing and approving such insults. And, punishment comes only through the drafting of concrete law that would prohibit these forms of insults.

Offensive statements against women politicians have always influenced the creation of misperceptions about them. Consequently, these perceptions are deeply rooted in the cultural context of Kosovar society. Therefore, recently I encountered this prejudiced perception of women by a woman who fights for human rights, as prominent activist for women's rights as well, in a TV show, Mrs. Igballe Rugova, who for women in politics and the woman in general was emphasizing in stereotypical way considering that women should have more solidarity and help each other to push it forward because they are jealous of the wisdom of other women. To portray women as jealous is a very stereotypical approach. What a paradox, this woman who

actually fights for women's rights, portrays her with stereotypes calling her jealous. Jealousy, like curiosity, interest, greed, are traits of human nature, but this has nothing to do with gender, and these arguments are very vain.

The discourse on women politicians should not be reduced to the level of insult and jealousy, but to the level of the quality of the role of women in Kosovo politics, which in the last elections of February 14, 2021, triumphed with full merit. We as a society need to be encouraged to continue voting for women. Through this form of action, it would be influenced to empower women even more and change the long-standing prejudices about them, as the Albanian sociologist Zyhdi Dervishi emphasizes that prejudices and stereotypes about women have oversaturated the whole atmosphere of Albanian society and as a gelatinous invisible mass hinder the engagement of girls and women in political life (2011, p. 18). In this way the improvement of the society as a whole would be realized, just as the Latin saying was used: "What man is a man who did not make this world better!"

Given the fact that politics today is highly mediated, public prejudice against women that they are jealous of women is quite harmful because it has the effect of discouraging girls and women, as researchers Haraldsoon and Wangnerud (2018) point out the relationship that sexism has in the media in relation to the participation of women running in politics is so narrow that it has the effect of extinguishing the ambitions of girls and young women who tends to be part of politics. If girls and young women have only thought about entering politics once, the presence of prejudicial statements in the media against women would make them hesitate and stop thinking about entering politics. Kosovo needs to work harder to empower women politicians and encourage young girls and women to enter politics.

Conclusion

As noted, in the media and on various social networks, Kosovar men politicians publicly insult their colleagues, women politicians, using a very misogynistic, shameful and extremely discriminatory language. Offenses are always addressed to women who hold decision-making positions, because women, having the opportunity to be appointed to these positions, criticize men, who are present in every decision-making process. And, the insults come from those men whose criticism of women highlights their political problems.

Among other things, these offensive statements are in deep contradiction with any legal norm in force in Kosovo. The only way to stop these insults is to create a law that would punish those who offend.

Consequently, the use of these prejudices by women's rights activists should be eliminated and the general society, women and girls should be educated in the spirit of the basic values of democracy. Thus, all of us, we would influence the development of society and Kosovo in general.

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