Twitter and abortion

Online hate against pro-choice female politicians in Chile

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This paper explores the misogynistic abuse against female Chilean politicians who openly supported a pro-choice bill that allowed the access to abortion in limited circumstances. We analysed the verbal abuse targeted at these politicians during the legislation of the abortion bill (2015–2017) and the linguistic and discursive patterns of online abuse. To that end, we collected tweets from this legislation period and created a subset with specific milestones of the parliamentary debate. Further, we undertook a corpus-assisted analysis of the data, focusing on collocations and keywords, which were then analysed in the light of van Leeuwen's (2008) framework on the representation of social actors and legitimation strategies. Results evidence that violence against women in power can take forms other than the explicit sexual, physical, and psychological threats that are commonly identified. Violence targets these women as it is claimed that they are unsuitable to legislate for allegedly having tolerated and protected crime. Therefore, the corrective function of abuse takes the form of legal actions against their crimes.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, abortion, corpus-assisted methods, Twitter, online misogyny, Chile

1. Introduction

Until 2017, Chile was one of few countries that had a blanket ban on abortion[1] (Centre for Reproductive Rights 2019). Despite the strong influence of the

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1. At the time of publication, countries that still prohibit abortion under all circumstances and without exceptions are: Angola, Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Gabon, Haiti,

Catholic Church and the opposition of Conservative parties, in 2017 the Senate passed a law that allowed abortion under three specific circumstances, namely, risk to the woman's health, unviability of the foetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape. This law was the result of years of public demonstrations led by feminist organizations and activists, which were finally taken in at the time by President Michelle Bachelet and included in her 2014 presidential program. However, the approval of the abortion law still generates conflicting reactions in the widely conservative Chilean population. For instance, President Sebastián Piñera introduced a clause to the law that allowed doctors and hospital to refuse terminating pregnancies based on conscientious objections without any legal justifications (Vivanco 2018). Similarly, in July 2018, a protest in support of abortion on request resulted in the stabbing of three women by far-right anti-abortion supporters. This polarization is also found on Twitter, in which hashtags such as #Apoyo3Casusales or #3causales (referring to the three main cases in which abortion has been made legal) flooded the social platform to voice dis/agreement during the time the law was being discussed in Congress.

The main objective of this study is to explore how pro-choice female politicians are abused on Twitter. In particular, this paper seeks to identify how these reactions target pro-choice female politicians who openly supported the law throughout its lifespan (January 2015 to December 2017). To that aim, the paper is structured as follows: first, we overview the controversial nature of abortion and relevant studies on online hate and harassment that contribute to framing this paper. Second, we explain how the data were collected and analysed in the light of a corpus-assisted discourse approach to Twitter data, using categories provided by van Leeuwen's (2008) Social Actor Approach . Finally, we explain the main results of the study, followed by some concluding remarks on methodological and theoretical issues such an analysis raises.

2.   Abortion and violence against women

Abortion is the quintessential example of a controversial cultural issue that combines political, economic, and ideological conflicting understandings of gender roles and identities. This is particularly true in Catholic countries such as Chile, in which abortion was considered, until recently, full-fledged homicide by a large majority. This religious and patriarchal view on abortion relies on the distinction of biological obligations, in which womanhood inherently (and forcibly)

Honduras, Iraq, Jamaica, Laos, Mauritania, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Philippines, Senegal and Suriname.

equals motherhood (Blofield 2006). According to this perspective, women's biological characteristics inevitably restrict women's freedom to make choices regarding their bodies and lives[2] as opposed to their male counterparts (Borchorst 1994; O'Connell and Zampas 2018). Unfortunately, this worldview has been normalized since the criminalization of abortion during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. Different democratic governments after the military regime (such as Patricio Aylwin and Sebastian Piñera's administrations) continued to normalize these patriarchal, heteronormative, and religious conceptions of women's identity and social roles. They have incessantly reproduced Catholic values in relation to abortion and thus silenced women by demoting them to second-class citizens, legally favouring their unborn children's lives over theirs (Sepúlveda 2017).

This moral and ideological construction of abortion is common in most Latin American countries and it is largely reflected in people's interventions in digital platforms (Graells-Garrido, Baeza-Yates and Lalmas 2020; Lycarião and Alves dos Santos 2017). Analysing comments on a pro-life Facebook page in Argentina, Caneva (2019) found two main arguments as to why people are against abortion. On the one hand, pro-life supporters claim that abortion is a *sin* and support those claims with analogies to biblical stories. Tradition and the status quo are among the main arguments to legitimize such a stance. On the other hand, other pro-life supporters believe abortion is a pathology and use language that conveys objectivity, resorting to medical facts and statistics to legitimize their arguments. This dichotomy shows various attempts to background religious aspects in their arguments to justify their position through legal and scientific discourses (Morán Faúndes 2017, 208; see also Vaggione 2005).

These characteristic features of debates surrounding abortion and online violence against women are the basis for this study. We set to analyse tweets on abortion expecting to find violent attacks to female politicians who vindicate women's reproductive rights in line with human rights and international conventions. This is particularly true in the case of former President Michelle Bachelet, the first female president in Latin America, whose public policies were influenced by a semblance of a feminist agenda which ultimately allowed the restricted legalization of abortion in 2017.

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2. For example, until 2000 by law, women in Chile could not have access to voluntary surgical sterilization unless they were 32 years old, had had four children born alive, and had their husbands' permission. Michelle Bachelet, the then Minister of Health, abolished the article imposed in 1975 arguing for the need to eliminate all practices which discriminated against women (Ministerio de Salud 2000). However, a report on Human Rights commissioned by the Medical Association in Chile showed that some nurses, obstetricians, and gynaecologists alike still hindered women's access to surgical sterilization (*El Desconcierto* 2016).

3.   Gendered hate and harassment online

Research on violence against women has shown that it serves multiple social functions (Jane 2016). Whether it happens online or offline, in public or private spaces, violence against women aims to exercise social control over their actions, bodies, and overall existence (Sundén and Paasonen 2018). Street harassment is a prime example of this gate-keeping hostility against women. Kissling (1991, 456), for example, argues that street harassment (or sexual terrorism) serves to punish women for trespassing into the male-dominated public space while it reinforces gender roles and dehumanizes women and subjects them to the *male gaze* (see Mulvey 1989). This strategy is grounded in the (often dismissed) fear it triggers in women by playing on insecurity, and the effects in their behaviour and social practices to avoid these violent incidents.

Disciplining and/or punishing women who challenge the male-dominated public sphere also emerges in the literature on online harassment (see Esposito, this issue 2021). Nussbaum (2010) asserts that the objectification of (publicly known) women revolves around Nietzsche's idea of *ressentiment*. She argues that people who feel inferior or powerless in relation to another group create different realities in which the former can enjoy being more powerful than the latter to feel socially adequate and validated (2010, 69). In these instances, the inversion of power roles (i.e. normalized heteronormative gender roles) works to shame and punish these women who are trespassing the male-dominated public sphere. In a similar vein, Thompson's (2018) study on violence against women on dating applications shows that violence is a result of male users' attempts to restore normalized gendered roles (see also Alam, this issue 2021). The author argues that the "almost caricatured expressions of anger and hostility may also be read as responses to appearances of emasculation from being sexually rejected by women, and loss of control in the face of shifting gender – power relations" (Thompson 2018, 84). The idea of women confidently *overstepping* into the dating sphere threatens heteronormative constructions of masculinity, triggering these violent reactions to remind women of their marginalized status and social role (see Butler 1997).

These kinds of reactions to women's participation in allegedly male-dominated spaces evidence the gendered discursive nature of this practice (see Anderson and Cermele 2014). "E-bile", as Jane (2014, 563) puts it, "frequently spikes in response to feminist activism and perceived feminist gains". However, according to the author, it also emerges in specific male-dominated online communities such as online gaming and online tech, which have sometimes resulted in women's withdrawal from those spaces. Further Jane (2014, 566) argues that manifestations of e-bile are interchangeable as they resort to "hyperbolic and sex-

ualised derision", which leads to female targets being exponentially visible online. In this context, while men are also subject to various forms of name-calling and embarrassing comments online, "young women are particularly vulnerable to more severe kinds of cyber abuse such as sexual harassment and stalking" (Jane 2016, 286).

Similarly, gendered abuse resorts to strikingly homogenous linguistic and discursive patterns which resemble the patterns of offline abuse. In particular, these attacks resort to the idea of women's inferiority, their sexual objectivation, their domestic role, and their overstepping into the public sphere (Jane 2016) to shame, scare, and silence transgressors (Sundén and Paasonen 2018). Furthermore, Jane (2014) identifies three common features and themes that emerge in online sites. First, women are regarded as individuals who cannot control their emotions, which inevitably suggests irrationality and hysteria. Second, there is the contradictory idea that women are 'whores' when they are in control of their bodies and sexuality, yet they are also "not worth fucking" (Jane 2014, 566) when they reject men and/or do not conform to normative beauty standards (see also Thompson 2018). Finally, there are other more general (often predictable) threats to women's physical (and psychological) wellbeing (see Kopytowska, this issue 2021).

In this context, abortion is positioned as the ultimate challenge to patriarchal worldviews because it defies the cultural and social constructions of *maternity* (Lagarde 2005; see also de Beauvoir 2017). Any questioning of the natural instinct of maternity and the moral duty women have to procreate constitutes a transgression to structured gendered roles attributed to women. Lagarde (2005, 761; our translation) explains that the idea of maternity responds to a subjugation to 'social relations, the conformation of subjectivities -from sexual desire to internalized social norms- and political relations'. Women who resist and challenge this subjugation can be violently attacked, often foregrounding their criminal nature on both traditional (Rohlinger 2006) and digital (Schlosberg 2001) media outlets. However, little attention has been paid to the kind of abuse these women face by those who believe motherhood is a woman's given duty. The study offers some important insights into the discursive strategies used to blame and attack women who are not only pro-choice but are also politically powerful.

4.   Data and methodology

The corpus is comprised of data extracted from Twitter downloaded during the legislation period of the Abortion Bill 21,030 (Ministerio de Salud 2017), namely, from the day the bill was introduced in Parliament (31 January 2015) through the end of the first three months the law was implemented (31 October 2017). The

data was collected through the Twitter Streaming API (Application Programming Interface) using a crawler tailored for Chilean Spanish content (Graells-Garrido et al. 2016). The crawler downloaded *tweets* that complied with query keywords related to abortion and other political issues such as migration and (political and economic) centralization. For this analysis, we restricted the search to tweets that included the word *aborto* 'abortion' and/or *abortista* 'abortionist' and were published by users who self-reported Chile as location on their profiles. Each tweet includes the screen name of the user who tweeted the message, date, and the text (including any mentions the user incorporated in the original message). It is worth mentioning, however, that the examples provided in this article have been anonymized to protect the users' identities and comply with ethical research uses of Twitter data. We only include the date and the original tweet in Chilean Spanish, which is translated into the closest meaning of the original message into English. The data was downloaded into plain text format, considering one tweet per line for its analysis on the free concordance software AntConc (Anthony 2019).

This process resulted in the corpus we called the Legislation and Implementation of Restrictive Abortion (henceforth LIRA). LIRA includes two types of interactions available in the platform: Tweets (i.e. the online content shared by a Twitter user) and Mentions (i.e. the user(s) includes someone in her/his tweet). This means that Retweets (i.e. reposting someone's Tweet so that your followers can see it, too), links, and multimodal texts were excluded from the analysis. We excluded these elements to maintain the representativeness of the corpus as intact as possible. By eliminating Retweets, we excluded repetition that might affect statistical analysis (see Zappavigna 2012). In addition, this study only considers the written content of the messages and who the targets of those messages are, as the inclusion of links and multimodal texts are beyond the scope of the methodological design of this research. In total, the corpus includes 220,815 tweets and mentions, which accounts for 4,801,809 word tokens.

Additionally, we created another corpus, called MILESTONES, to evaluate and analyse users' reactions throughout the different stages of the legislation and implementation of the law. These stages (see Appendix 1) are also correlated to rising peaks in tweet activity throughout the period, meaning that Twitter users were particularly active those days (Figure 1). Thus, we considered both the day and the day after these milestones took place, resulting in a 48-hour coverage from its occurrence. This corpus totals 38,236 tweets and mentions, which accounts for 799,999-word tokens. The distribution of Tweets can be seen in Figure 1.

Both corpora were explored in relation to online hate and misogyny against pro-choice female politicians. To this aim, we identified thirteen female politicians who actively participated throughout the legislation of the project and used their usernames to search for abuse against them (see Appendix 2). These politicians
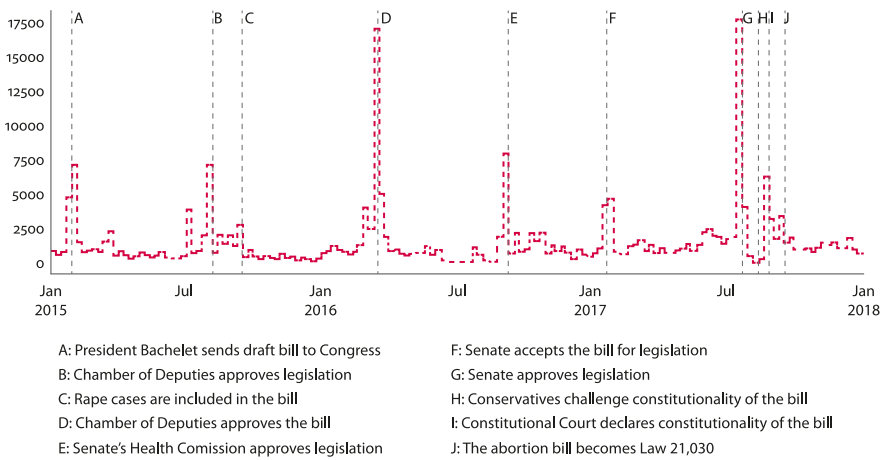
A: President Bachelet sends draft bill to Congress
B: Chamber of Deputies approves legislation
C: Rape cases are included in the bill
D: Chamber of Deputies approves the bill
E: Senate's Health Comission approves legislation

F: Senate accepts the bill for legislation
G: Senate approves legislation
H: Conservatives challenge constitutionality of the bill
I: Constitutional Court declares constitutionality of the bill
J: The abortion bill becomes Law 21,030

Figure 1. Tweets per week in the period under analysis

include former President Michelle Bachelet and Deputies who voted in favour of
at least one of the three provisions of the law, namely, risk to the woman's life (13
deputies); rape (12 deputies), and foetal anomaly (11 deputies). During this gov-
ernmental period (2013–2017), there were 140 Deputies, of which only nineteen
were female. Nonetheless, only thirteen of them voted in favour. There were also
three important female politicians that were excluded from the analysis because
they do not own a Twitter account: the former Minister of Women's Affairs and
Gender Equality, Claudia Pascal; the former Minister of Health, Carmen Castillo;
and Deputy Alejandra Sepulveda, who voted in favour of the three provisions of
the law.

We explored violence against women on Twitter as a specific social construc-
tion of reality. Hence, we took a *corpus-assisted approach* (Baker 2006; Baker et al.
2008; Partington, Duguid and Taylor 2013; Taylor and Marchi 2018) to Twitter
data. According to KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018), there are different implica-
tions to undertaking this approach. First, it means that our study is *socially com-
mitted*: it revolves around social practices and social actors on Twitter as opposed
to technology itself. Thus, we focus on the dialectical relationship between these
discursive practices and society. Second, it means that it is *problem-oriented*,
not medium-oriented. We consider how this might influence public and private
spheres of people's lives as part of the affordances of this social media platform.
Third, this approach to social media data facilitates the analysis of the evaluative
meaning words carry in specific contexts which lead to the creation of different
discourses (Baker 2006; Baker and McEnery 2005; Hardaker and McGlashan
2016; Stubbs 2001). Finally, the use of corpus methods to the study of discourse

allows for greater representativeness, reliability, and generalizability (Partington 2006; see also Taylor and Marchi 2018).

Since the objective of this study is to identify how pro-choice female politicians are abused on Twitter, we carried out a collocation and keyword analysis using the free concordance software AntConc. On the one hand, the analysis of collocations (i.e. "the tendency of words to be biased in the way they co-occur" (Hunston 2002, 68)) can help researchers identify (hidden) discursive and/or legitimising strategies that contribute to the online abuse against female politicians (Baker and McEnery 2005; Baker et al. 2008). Collocation analysis also helped to identify other terms that, although not traditionally understood as abuse, functioned as e-bile (i.e. corpus-driven approach). In this case, we wanted to identify the terms with which these female politicians are associated throughout the discussion of this bill (2015–2017) using their Twitter usernames. We explored the collocations of the most and least frequent terms of the corpus associated to them setting a minimum Mutual Information (MI) score threshold of ≥3 (see Hunston 2002). However, we set the minimum frequency of one (1) occurrence in the corpus. While this minimum frequency is usually unacceptable in large corpora, typographical errors, and abbreviations common to Twitter and the lack of a Semantic Tagger for Chilean variation of Spanish can significantly exclude verbal attacks against female politicians.

Keywords, on the other hand, allow researchers to compare and contrast two different corpora by identifying what the most distinctive terms used by each corpus are (Baker 2006; Page et al. 2014). Keywords, then, are words that are much more frequent in one corpus than another, and they can be positive (words in the smaller corpus that are statistically salient when compared to a bigger corpus) or negative (words in the smaller corpus that are statistically less frequent than expected in comparison with the bigger corpus) (see Baker 2004). We decided to include the analysis of negative keywords to account for potential "dusty corners" in our study (Taylor and Marchi 2018, 9), that is, to identify whether the absence of online abuse in this corpus challenged the assumptions of its existence. In this study, the MILESTONES corpus was compared and contrasted with the LIRA corpus. The latter was used as a *reference corpus*, that is, a bigger corpus that includes a larger selection of similar Tweets. We calculated the saliency of keywords in both MILESTONES and LIRA by using log-likelihood, with Bonferroni-corrected p-values (an option included in the software). We analysed the top 100 positive and negative keywords through concordance lines to identify whether they were being used to vilify and/or attack these politicians or not. We set the cut-off point to a $p < 0.01$ (i.e. critical value 6.63) to ensure the keywords were not the result of random choices (Hunston 2002).

A corpus-driven approach to the corpora using these methods can be useful to shed light on taboo words in the Chilean context. To date, few studies have investigated the use of taboo words and/or insults in the Latin American context (Drange 2019; Drange et al. 2014; Gómez Molina 2003; Stenström 2006). Likewise, because of the limited access to colloquial Spanish corpora, the generalisability of studies on this issue is problematic. Each Latin American country re-signifies and recontextualizes words as understood by the Real Academia Española de la Lengua, changing their semantics and pragmatics (Drange 2019; see also Hernández Campoy's (1993) study on geolinguistics). Consequently, selecting specific insults and/or attacks could not only bias the analysis and results of this study, but also hinder the possibility of identifying other discursive strategies of online abuse.

The results generated by the software (i.e. keyword lists and collocations) were then analysed using the Social Actor Approach (van Leeuwen 2008). This approach is grounded in two main concepts: discourse and recontextualization. Drawing on Foucault (1977), van Leeuwen establishes that discourse is knowledge constructed socially, which is developed and determined by specific social contexts in terms of what people do. However, knowledge is *re*presented and *re*constructed in texts to fit specific purposes, which might differ from its original conceptualization (Bernstein's (1986) concept of recontextualization). Hence, van Leeuwen (2008, 4) argues, discourse is "the recontextualization of social practices". In this process of recontextualization, social practices can be recursively foregrounded and/or backgrounded at various lengths through different strategies such as substitutions, deletions and rearrangements and it is the researcher's job to unveil the chain of recontextualization.

Consequently, the Social Actor Approach emerges as the most useful framework to analyse how these politicians are attacked and thus discursively delegitimized in relation to *who* they are and *what* they do. There are over 40 categories of analysis and we cannot provide a definition for all of them due to space constraints (for a visual representation of these categories in action, please refer to van Leeuwen 2008, 52). However, whenever these categories become relevant in the analysis, we will provide a working definition for a more thorough understanding of the results.

The way they are identified, and the actions chosen to be included as part of social actors' attributes, can also lead to (de)legitimation strategies. Broadly speaking, there are four overarching strategies to (de)legitimize social actors and their actions. First, you can foreground or undermine someone's *authority* in relation to the power they hold in certain social roles or in a community. For instance, you would expect irreproachable behaviour from legislators because of their representative role in society within the legal system. Second, you can also appeal to moral

codes or "value systems" that rule certain cultures and societies (*moral evaluation*, van Leeuwen 2008, 106). For example, manslaughter is condemned in most democratic countries, thus murderers lose their legitimation in society. Third, you can evaluate someone's legitimation by examining their social role and/or function bestowed on them (i.e. *rationalization* strategies), for instance, resorting to religious principles to condemn abortion. These strategies are similar to moral evaluations, but they can also refer to the goals and purposes of social actors, and how they abide by the status quo. Finally, social actors and their actions can be legitimized through *mythopoesis*. This is the use of symbolic meanings carried out through social narratives that are determined by each culture and society.

5.   Results

Initial exploration of the corpora suggested that there were very few instances of unequivocal abuse against female politicians in both corpora. In fact, instances such as Example (1) are rare.

Example 1.

Date	Tweet
2017-07-19	@mbachelet *HIJA DE PUTA, ASESINA*
	@mbachelet DAUGHTER OF WHORE, MUDERER
	@mbachelet 'BITCH, MURDERER'

Common words and curses in Chile such as *puta* 'slut', *concha de tu madre / ctm* 'son of a bitch' or the informal spelling of the polysemic discourse marker (see Rojas 2012) *huevón* (e.g. *weon / wn,* 'moron') were used to intensify users' opinions. Clearly, the polarization on abortion triggered instances of verbal abuse, but this abuse usually targeted specific users who had voiced their opinion on the social media platform as opposed to the women legislating in favour of the bill. However, a more in-depth analysis of the MILESTONES corpus showed that verbal abuse against these politicians revolved around *morality* and *values* shared by the digital community as evidenced in the next section.

6.   Collocations

An analysis of the most salient collocations of the Twitter accounts of the fourteen politicians showed that users utilize nouns and adjectives which are not necessarily violent to attack and delegitimise them (for the statistical information, see

Appendix 3). Specifically, most abuse seems to target former president Michelle Bachelet and Deputies Camila Vallejo and Karol Cariola. Considering the limited number of these instances, we explored the concordance lines individually and sorted them into discursive strategies (see Table 1).

Table 1. Categorization of collocations into discursive strategies

Topic/ discursive strategy	Lexical item
Psychological traits	*payasa,* 'clown'; *borracha,* 'drunk'; *ridicula,* 'ridiculous'; *atea,* 'atheist'; *wna,* 'cunt / dumb'; *ridícula,* 'ridiculous'; *ebria,* 'inebriated'; *ctm* 'son of a bitch'
Physical traits	*gorda,* 'fat'; *vieja,* 'old'
Ideology (politics and religion)	*endemoniada,* 'possessed'; *demoníaca,* 'demonic'; *comunacho,* 'commie'; *anticristo,* 'antichrist'; *comunista,* 'communist'
Morality and values	*indefensa,* 'defenceless'; *abortadas,* 'aborted'; *inconsecuencia,* 'inconsistency', *inmoral,* 'immoral'; *marihuana,* 'marijuana'
Crime	*asesina,* 'murderer'; *corrupta,* 'corrupt'; *crimen,* 'crime'

These categories work together to foreground the politicians' criminal behaviour. This is particularly true in the abuse targeted at former president Michelle Bachelet as evidenced in Example (2):

Example 2.

Date	Tweet
2017-07-20	@mbachelet *Vieja corrupta, demoníaca, pro-abortista, terminó de privatizar,* @mbachelet Old corrupt, demonic, pro-abortionist, ended.up of privatize,
	lo que le faltó a Pinocho. Corrupta, traficante de influencias what he missed to *Pinocho.* Corrupt, trafficker of influences
	'@mbachelet Corrupt old woman, demonic, pro-abortionist, she ended up privatizing, what *Pinocho* could not do. Corrupt, influence trafficker'

There are several intertextual references in this tweet. First, the user relationally identifies Bachelet by referring to the influence peddling her son and daughter-in-law were involved in 2015, which greatly affected her credibility and political career (see Simon 2019 for an account of this case and its aftermath). *Corrupta* 'corrupt' is used twice as an insult, foregrounded by the noun phrase *traficante de influencias* 'influence trafficker'. Her crime is professionalized, via references to

organized crime related to the accusations held against her son's family. Second, there is a reference to Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. This is axiomatic because not only does Michelle Bachelet currently belong to the Socialist Party, but her father was murdered during the dictatorship and, as a result, she had to live in exile in East Germany. Furthermore, Augusto Pinochet remains a controversial figure in Chilean politics: some people still defend his actions and socio-economic legacy while others demand public condemnation for his crimes against humanity. In this Tweet, we can infer that the user is critical of Pinochet's regime. The user addresses him as *Pinocho* 'Pinocchio', a wordplay that combines his last name with the Spanish translation of Pinocchio's fairy tale. This nickname is frequently used to critically identify the former dictator and foreground the deceitful nature of his character and regime. Therefore, the user equals Bachelet to Pinochet because the bills she supports are seen as perpetuating his regime. Through this *connotation* (see van Leeuwen 2008, 49), users' cultural and historical knowledge is activated negatively as, according to this user, the abortion bill is a form of privatization. Third, there are pejorative remarks on her lack of morality and values because of her support to the abortion bill. She is identified as being *demoniaca* 'demonic', which is mentioned before her identification as a pro-abortionist. Finally, there is the derisive remark on her age through the nominalization of the adjective *vieja* 'old'. This objectification strategy reduces women to their bodies and constructs youth as capital, which, when lost, diminishes their value as women (Nussbaum 1995; see also Alvares 2018). Therefore, being an old woman becomes an insult and a crime for this user (i.e. *corrupt old woman*).

The interface among different discursive topics in these attacks allows users to foreground the moral component of abortion. These insults emerge from distinctive argumentative fallacies used by pro-life supporters that condemn morally deviant behaviour, namely, women liberation and independence as well as control over their bodies (see Caneva 2019). According to these discursive strategies, the protection and legitimation of rights such as abortion or same-sex marriage are the downfall of the institution of family (see Example (3)):

Example 3.

Date	Tweet
2017-07-19	@mbachelet *Aborto, matrimonio igualitario, legalizar marihuana, reforma* @mbachelet Abortion, marriage equal, legalize marijuana, reform *educacional, etc, ES CLARAMENTE LA DIRECCIÓN DESTRUIR FAMILIA* educational, etc. IS CLEARY THE APPROACH DESTROY FAMILY *Q' ES BASE SOCIEDAD!* WHICH IS BASIS SOCIETY! '@mbachelet Abortion, same-sex marriage, legalizing marijuana, educational reform, etc, IT IS CLEARLY THE APPROACH TO DESTROY FAMILY WHICH IS THE BASIS OF SOCIETY!'

These examples foreground the creation of *moral panics* or, in other words, the use of emotional triggers to generate emotional reactions against threats to the morals and values of a community to criminalize the alleged deviant behaviour (see Cohen 2011). In these cases, a moral panic is triggered by the lack of religious affiliation of Michelle Bachelet.[3] According to some users, her atheism morally delegitimizes her as a human being and as a legislator. The implication, as seen in Example (4), is that she is pushing her own Godless agenda on the country through the approval of the abortion law.

Example 4.

Date	Tweet
2017-07-20	*Claro como Uds @mbachelet es atea no respeta la opinion y postura de* Right like you @mbachelet is atheist not respect the opinion and stance of *los demás NO AL ABORTO* the rest NO TO ABORTION 'Right[,] like you @mbachelet is an atheist [who does] not respect the opinion and stance of everyone else NO TO ABORTION'

While former president Michelle Bachelet is the target of most abusive language online, other politicians are also targeted because of their support of the bill. In the case of Camila Vallejo and Carol Kariola (younger and conventionally attractive former student leaders), online abuse does not rely on their physical traits.

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3. When she took the oath to become President in 2006 (and again in 2014), Bachelet caused mild controversy by using "I promise" instead of "I swear" as the etymological root of the latter makes reference to God (Navarrete 2014).

The abuse does, however, rely on a crime narrative, similar to the abuse directed at Bachelet.

Example 5.

Date	Tweet
2017-08-01	*@camila_vallejo @Karolcariola Payasa ridícula, el aborto es un crimen,* @camila_vallejo @Karolcariola clown ridiculous, the abortion is a crime, *pero q se va a esperar d defensores d narcotiranias q se financian* but what is to expect of defenders of drug.tyrannies that are funded *del narco trafico como ustedes* by drug trafficking like you '@camila_vallejo @Karolcariola Ridiculous clown, abortion is a crime, but what can you expect from defenders of drugtyrannies tht finance drug trafficking like yours'

In Example (5), both Deputies are accused of endorsing drug trafficking. There is an equalization of drug trafficking and abortion in the text, which intertextually and interdiscursively draws on argumentative fallacies of organ trafficking. In this case, the fact the women are legislators who abide and protect these criminal actions undermines and thus delegitimizes their authority because they lack the morality and/or values of the country. The fact that they remain in power is seen as ludicrous, which explains their identification as *Payasa ridícula* 'ridiculous clown'.

In a similar vein, users equate crime and abortion (Example (6)) with a neologism (*crimen-aborto* 'crime-abortion') to delegitimize these politicians. This parallelism highlights the alleged criminal nature of abortion, conceptualized as the murder of a child. In addition, the emphasis on the last vowel of *chao* 'bye' reproduces a common feature of spoken, informal Chilean Spanish that signals wanting someone to leave a place because they are unwelcomed. Notice that this tweet does not even include a verb to create the link between Deputy Marcela Sabat and crime. The copula *es* 'is' is implicitly embedded, which equates the Deputy and crime as a wholesome unit for which she should be relieved of her position.

Example 6.

Date	Tweet
2016-03-18	*@MarceSabat pro crimen-aborto. Chaooooooooo* @MarceSabat pro crime-abortion. Byeeeeeeee '@MarceSabat pro crime-abortion. Byeeeeeeee'

7.   Keywords

Contrary to the findings in the collocation analysis, an exploration of positive and negative keywords on the MILESTONES corpus did not show any relevant hits for misogynistic abuse. None of the top 100 keywords referred to attacks on these female politicians. The keywords do show how polarization takes place between supporters and detractors of the bill, but not on patterns of profanity (i.e. verbal abuse). The analysis on the LIRA corpus, however, included three of the collocates found in the MILESTONES corpus, namely, *crimen* 'crime', *abortistas* 'abortionists', and *marihuana* 'marijuana' (see Table 2).

Table 2. Keywords used to attack female politicians in both corpora (RF=Raw frequency)

LIRA		Keyword	Milestones	
RF	Keyness		RF	Keyness
2064	150.08	*crimen* 'crime'	133	–
988	76.51	*marihuana* 'marijuana'	61	–
1153	46.02	*abortistas* 'abortionists'	101	–

These words are more salient in the LIRA corpus because they refer to abortion within a crime narrative. Most instances, therefore, do not target these politicians but are used by those who engage in online debate. In fact, only 6 out of 4,205 occurrences of these words (i.e. 0.0014%) are new instances of misogynistic abuse against these women (see Examples (7) and (8)).

Example 7.

Date	Tweet
2017-09-04	@mbachelet *Movilh,* **abortistas,** *animalistas, grupos de extrema*
	@mbachelet Movilh, abortionists, animal-activists, groups of extreme
2017-09-04	*izquierda; etc, etc, etc, también son intolerantes. Sra. Bachelet, no*
	left; etc, etc, etc, also are intolerant. Mrs. Bachelet, not
2017-09-04	*los defienda.*
	them defend.
	'@mbachelet Movilh, abortionists, animal activists, far-left-wing groups; etc, etc, etc, also are intolerant. Mrs. Bachelet, do not defend them.'

Example 8.

Date	Tweet
2017-05-31	@KarlaEnAccion *la* **marihuana**.. *es que usted perdóneme es bien liviana de*
	@KarlaEnAccion the marijuana.. is that you excuse.me is very light of
	mollera. Si aprobó la ley proaborto Le falta decir viva chavez nomas
	head. If you.passed the law pro-abortion You miss saying hail chavez just
	'@KarlaEnAccion marijuana.. I am sorry but you are a knucklehead. If you passed proabortion law You just need to say hail chavez'

In Example (7), the former President and organizations fighting for various social causes such as the vindication and protection of the LGBTQI+ community (*Movilh*), the protection of animal rights (*animalistas*), and feminist causes (*abortistas*) are collectivized under the same extreme-left ideology (e.g. 'etc, etc, etc,') to identify them as intolerant. There is a challenge to the tolerance and diversity used by the organizations to undermine these politicians' actions. More importantly, the user demands the then president not to defend those groups. Conversely, Example (8) alludes to the moral issue of marijuana legalization to foreground the Deputy's stupidity (*liviana de mollera*), as well as her moral and ideological inconsistency. Karla Rubilar, the target, was a right-wing Deputy who voted in favour of abortion despite her party's agreement to veto the bill. This user mentions her support of the abortion bill to highlight her double moral standards: she does not support the legalization of marijuana. Therefore, the user refers to Hugo Chavez, former Venezuelan President, to illustrate what is perceived as the leftists' drive to approve the abortion law.

While these examples support the findings of the collocation analysis, the analysis of positive and negative keywords in the LIRA corpus did not show significant findings consistent with abuse based on physical traits and possible physical harm against these politicians. However, the LIRA corpus does show interesting ways in which polarization takes place among Twitter users when discussing the abortion bill, which are discussed in the next section.

8.   Discussion

Results of the analyses show that *direct* abuse targeted at female politicians who openly supported the abortion bill is not as frequent as other studies suggest (e.g. Jane 2014, 2016; Sundén and Paasonen 2018). When it occurs, however, we can see a clear distinction between sexual and hyperbolized abuse against female public figures in general. The limited number of occurrences allowed for the manual

qualitative analysis of the concordance lines which, in turn, allowed us to explore the corpora in more detail. This exploration resulted in other methodological reflections that are worth discussing.

First, there are various instances of abuse targeted at these female politicians which do not explicitly mention their accounts or their names. The ways these female politicians can be identified vary. Sometimes they are collectivized while, in other instances, they refer to their former jobs (see Example (9)).

Example 9.

Date	Tweet
2016-03-18	*Los asesinos y ladrones corruptos d la NM junta a la vieja ladrona y* The murders and thiefs corrupt of the NM along to the old thief and *corrupta* corrupt
2016-03-18	*d la doctora trucha y asesina d niños aprobaron el aborto hdp* of the doctor fake and murderer of children passed the abortion SOB 'The corrupt murderers and thieves from NM along with the old and corrupt woman the fake doctor and murderer f children passed abortion SOB'

These identification strategies heavily rely on knowledge of the national political contexts and personal lives of these politicians. In Example (9), we can only guess they are referring to former President Bachelet because the user mentions her political coalition and her medical degree (i.e. professionalization). Once her identity is recognized, we can see that discursive strategies drawing on crime and moral narratives, similarly to the results we have discussed so far, are again present. Corruption is also a key topic, as the word is repeated three times, including the word *trucha* 'trout', which conveys the idea of corruption in the Chilean variant of Spanish. However, this instance was missed from the collocation analysis because it is not possible to systematize the ways a politician may be identified in Twitter other than using her name or username.

In other cases, the intertextual and interdiscursive cues are harder to identify because they do not refer to politicians' affiliation or personal lives, but to political events they were involved in.

Example 10.

Date	Tweet
2015-01-31	"*Y a no le bastó con asesinar 500 chilenos en el 27F, ahora va por* "And it not enough with murdering 500 chileans in the 27F, now after the
2015-01-31	*vidas inocentes con el aborto. Ballena Asesina CTM"* lives innocent with the abortion. Whale murderer SOB" "And it was not enough to murder 500 Chileans on 27F, now [she] is going after innocent [lives] with abortion. Murderous Whale SOB"

If readers and researchers are unfamiliar with the aftermath of the 8.8 earthquake that occurred on February 27, 2010, it will be virtually impossible to attribute these insults to Michelle Bachelet. The former President was held accountable for the casualties caused by a tsunami in the aftermath of the earthquake as a result of the emergency systems not working. She was tried but found innocent. However, this user refers to that information to call her a murderer and further vilify her by foregrounding her physical characteristics through *somatization*, namely, calling her a murderous whale (van Leeuwen 2008, 47). Moreover, this attack against the former President does include characteristic words used to verbally abuse people (i.e. *CTM* (abbreviation for 'son of a bitch')), but it did not show up in the collocations nor keyword analyses.

Finally, there are also language affordances that are difficult to anticipate and, therefore, systematize. We have already mentioned the corruption case Bachelet's son was involved in. In Example (11), one user combines Bachelet's name with the name of the company under investigation (i.e. Caval) to emphasize her links with corruption.

Example 11.

Date	Tweet
2016-03-17	*BACHELLETESCAVAL ADEMÁS D SER CORRUPTA CINICA* BACHELLETESCAVAL APART OF BEING CORRUPT CYNICAL *MENTIROSA E HIPÓCRITA AHORA TAMBIEN SERÁ* LIAR AND HYPOCRITICAL NOW TOO WILL.BE *CRIMINAL!!NO AL ABORTO!!!* CRIMINAL!!NO TO ABORTION!!! "BACHELLETESCAVAL APART FRM BEING CORRUPT CYNICAL LIAR AND HYPOCRITICAL NOW [SHE] IS ALSO A CRIMINAL!!NO TO ABORTION!!!"

Once again, this abuse against Bachelet contains other common insults that did not emerge in the collocation analysis (e.g. *cínica* 'cinical', *mentirosa* 'liar' and *hipócrita* 'hypocritical'). We searched the entire corpus for this combination of terms and found it only occurs once and within the legislation period, but not during its milestones. Thus, the probabilities of it appearing in a manual pilot study of the corpora are low.

The language and platform affordances (typographical mistakes, abbreviations, multimodal interactions) allow for a richer construction of e-bile against women in this corpus. However, they hinder the possibility of making generalization about the linguistic patterns of verbal abuse. This is particularly true when we consider the construction of abortion as a moral panic which triggered the abuse. While there are commonalities among these (e.g. resorting to physical characteristics of the attacked female politicians), they are the exception. A strong sense of morality and adherence to shared social values are defined as key elements for the suitability of legislators to exercise their power. One of the challenges to pursue in future research is the need to explore polarization more generally to identify different ways abuse is constructed in relation to abortion.

9.   Conclusions

This paper had two main objectives. First, we sought to identify the kind of verbal abuse used against female politicians who publicly supported the legalization of abortion under three circumstances. This objective was grounded in the extensive evidence of misogynistic attacks against women in power and feminist causes (see Section 3) and our assumptions these violent practices were a norm in the cybersphere. However, our results showed that, in the case of a moral issue such as abortion, violent attacks against feminist female politicians in Twitter break away from the overtly sexualized and physical threats the literature suggests (see Kádár, Parvaresh and Ning 2019). These attacks are phrased indirectly as condemnatory opinions which position the attacker on a higher moral ground (i.e. *moral legitimation*). These female politicians are mostly blamed for supporting murder and, as a consequence, not fulfilling their legislative duties to protect all citizens. Therefore, our results suggest that their delegitimization relies on allowing criminality and transgressing the moral order imposed by their society, hence challenging women's "inevitable destiny" to become mothers (Fagetti 1986, 31; see also Lagarde 2005). According to the interactions found in the corpus, women need to be publicly shamed and condemned by their alleged deviant, rebellious, and criminal intent, instead of resorting to sexual or physical threats to be disciplined and be reminded of their marginal roles.

Second, we sought to identify the linguistic and discursive patterns in online hate and harassment against these female politicians. Language and the platform affordances hinder the analysis of such linguistic behaviour. While we were able to identify the emphasis on moral values, crime, and ideological discursive strategies, we cannot really determine the pattern in linguistic choices to verbally abuse women other than an overuse of *classification* (i.e. identifying female politicians in relation to what they inherently are; see van Leeuwen 2008, 42). These characteristics do carry negative semantic connotations. We found that the use of common curses and insults was limited in the corpus while seemingly neutral nouns such as *marijuana* were used to attack and delegitimize these politicians. Similarly, during the exploration of the corpora, we also found ways to identify these social actors that interfere with the systematization of the analysis. Typographical errors and language creativity, for example, play an important role in disregarding instances of abuse because they did not emerge in pilot studies of the corpora. However, nominalization seems to be crucial when morally delegitimizing female politicians: physical attributes are not as damaging as foregrounding the reasons why they are unfit to legislate. Similarly, accusing them of being unrepresentative because of moral differences with the community seems more effective in damaging their creditability and legitimacy.

The contribution of our study is twofold. First, it evidences that violence against women in power can take forms other than explicit sexual, physical, and psychological threats. Constructing women as morally deviant for their support to the regularization of public health policies is, in fact, a form of violence. However, their unworthiness relies on the inability to hold power because they do not legislate according to the values of their society. Second, our study foregrounds an issue (i.e. abortion) that is relatively overlooked in the literature of CDS. The right and access to abortion is regarded as a basic right in most European and Western countries. However, there are still nineteen countries which criminalize abortion under all circumstances (Centre for Reproductive Rights 2019).

The lack of research on the polarized reactions to abortion laws in the Global South can affect how people understand the actual consequences of (not) having such public health policies. It can also affect how fundamental rights are questioned because of how people in power (mostly white upper-class males) discuss these issues in the public sphere. Currently, the political arena worldwide is reproducing and normalizing a more conservative rhetoric, foregrounding traditional and nationalistic (heteronormative) values. While the consequences of this political development are manifold, we are seeing fundamental rights such as abortion under threat. Although it has been recently ruled as unconstitutional, the State of Alabama in the US issued a total ban on abortion in May 2019 (Williams and Blinder 2019) while other States were also issuing more restriction to the abor-

tion laws in their jurisdiction (Amnesty International 2019). In Chile, Sebastian Piñera's administration has also issued restrictions to the bill on abortion under three circumstances, making it difficult for women to access abortion. Thus, it is imperative to identify how we talk about these conflicting moral issues in order to protect how much has been gained in the battle of equality, and to keep moving forward towards a more egalitarian society.

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Appendix

1. *Description of milestones*

Date	Description
31 January 2015	The bill is introduced into Parliament
04 August 2015	The bill is approved by the Health commission in the Chamber of Deputies
15 September 2015	The provision on abortions in cases of rape is approved.
17 March 2016	The Chamber of Deputies approved the law
06 September 2016	The Health Commission in the Senate approved the law.
19 July 2017	The Senate approved the law
20 July 2017	The Chamber of Deputies rejected the changes on some of the provisions
01 August 2017	A mixed parliamentary commission was formed
02 August 2017	The bill was officially passed
23 September 2017	The law is published in the Official Journal of the Republic of Chile.
05 October 2017	First abortion under the rape provision of the law.

2. *Description of female politicians and their support to the abortion bill*

Name	Username	Description		
Michelle Bachelet	@mbachelet	Former President of Chile		
		Provisions		
		Health Risk	Rape	Inv. Foetus
Loreto Carvajal	@loretodiputada	YES	YES	YES
Cristina Girardi	@diputadagirardi	YES	YES	YES
Marcela Hernando	@MarcelaHernando	YES	YES	YES
Clemira Pacheco	@infocpacheco @ClemiraPacheco1	YES	YES	YES
Karla Rubilar	@KarlaEnAccion	YES	YES	YES
Jenny Alvarez	@jennyalvarezv	YES	YES	YES
Karol Cariola	@KarolCariola	YES	YES	YES
Daniella Cicardini	@Dani_Cicardini	YES	YES	YES
Yasna Provoste	@ProvosteYasna	YES	YES	NO
Marcela Sabat	@MarceSabat	YES	NO	NO
Camila Vallejo	@camila_vallejo	YES	YES	YES
Maya Fernández	@Mayafernandeza	YES	YES	YES
Alejandra Sepúlveda	No Twitter	YES	YES	YES

3. *Collocations female politicians*

Topic/discursive strategy	FQ	MI score	Collocate (Spanish – English)
Psychological traits	2	11,69	Payasa 'clown'
	1	11,69	Borracha 'drunk'
	1	9,69	Ridicula 'ridiculous'
	1	9,69	Atea 'atheist'
	1	9,37	Wna 'cunt / dumb'
	2	9,23	Ridícula 'ridiculous'
	1	8,88	Ebria 'inebriated'
	2	6,91	Ctm 'son of a bitch'
Physical Traits	1	9,37	Gorda 'fat'
	3	8,47	Vieja 'old'
Ideology (Politics and religion)	1	11,69	Endemoniada 'Possessed'
	1	11,69	Demoníaca 'demonic'
	1	9,11	Comunacho 'commie'
	1	9,11	Anticristo 'antichrist'
	1	5,81	Comunista 'communist'
Morality and Values	2	9,52	Indefensa 'defenceless'
	1	9,37	Abortadas 'aborted'
	3	8,63	Inconsecuencia 'inconsistency'
	1	7,37	Inmoral 'immoral'
	1	5,76	Marihuana 'marijuana'
Crime	4	8,05	Asesina 'murderer'
	1	7,99	Corrupta 'corrupt'
	6	7,22	Crimen 'crime'

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