

GENDER DIMENSIONS OF VERBAL AGGRESSION IN MODERN MEDIA AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE: CULT OF VIOLENCE OR PLAYING WITH AGGRESSIVE CONTENT?

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Abstract

The article examines gender stereotypes and speech aggression in political discourse, reflecting generalized judgments about the qualities and properties inherent in men and women, and the differences between them in the modern information society. This study is devoted to gender differences in the manifestation of aggression in political television debates, thereby revealing gender differences in aggressive behavior, stereotypes and features of linguistic manifestations, as well as communicative strategies present in the speeches and television debates of female and male politicians.

This article analyzes the problems of gender stereotypes in the modern information society, the academic significance of which is associated with the need to study the factors of political culture and discourse. In this sense, the analysis of the nature of political power, its resources and methods of its legitimacy have not been sufficiently studied in terms of the role of political, social and cultural discourse in maintaining gender stereotypes and the gender agenda of the modern information society. In social terms, the relevance of the problem is associated with the need to study those resources of political power that do not involve open violence, but, nevertheless, act as an effective means of social control and a tool actively used, in particular, in political struggle.

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The implementation of a political analysis of the role of gender stereotypes in the modern information society involved studying their properties, content and functions, identifying the conditions and reasons that allow them to act as a factor in political relations and social inequality.

Keywords: *gender stereotypes, aggression, political discourse, public opinion, television debates, communication strategies.*

Introduction

The issues of verbal aggression in modern media and political discourse are of great importance for modern society. The article examines the gender dimensions of verbal aggression in modern media and political discourse. The relationship between the manifestations of aggressiveness of the personality of male and female politicians is revealed. The formation of gender stereotypes is an important element of political culture, which performs a hereditary and protective function. At the same time, the formation of stereotypes of masculinity and femininity also generates a certain conservatism in the activities of politicians and voters, including in the process of their debates and political thinking. This is a feature of public opinion, which highlights two important reasons that influence the formation of gender stereotypes.

The speech of female politicians is quite emotional, striving to establish themselves in the political world and wanting to be taken seriously, female politicians demonstrate their knowledge, striving to equalize their status in political life with the positions of male politicians. The speech behavior of male politicians is characterized by monotony, as they use many verbs and imperative constructions. It is obvious that gender relations influence political culture, language and customs, as well as political decision-making by state institutions and CSOs, forming social and cultural stereotypes.

Despite the obvious differences in the manifestation of verbal aggressive behavior in male and female politicians, there are several common features that unite both genders in modern media and political discourse:

- in the political process, men's verbal aggression often manifests itself in the form of physical clashes, while women tend to a more verbal form of aggression.
- Both genders can experience verbal reactive aggression, which occurs in response to a threat or provocation, which is accompanied by instrumental aggression aimed at achieving certain political goals.
- Gender stereotypes and societal expectations about what male and female politicians should be can influence the expression of verbal aggressiveness. This can lead to the suppression of aggression in female politicians or, conversely, to the encouragement of aggressive behavior in male politicians.
- As mentioned above, men tend to switch from verbal to physical aggression, while women more often maintain and express verbal and relational aggression (damaging relationships and social connections).

- In male politicians, verbal aggression may be associated with the desire to dominate, establish their status and compete, while in female politicians, verbal aggression may arise from the protection of their reputation or close relationships.
- In female politicians, verbal aggression is often manifested in emotionally charged situations associated with negative emotions, while in male politicians, verbal aggression may be more cooled and calculated.

Political research on the gender aspects of aggression provides a more complete understanding of the diversity of this phenomenon. Similarities and differences in the expression of aggression in men and women indicate a complex interaction of biological, social and cultural factors. Understanding these dimensions helps to create a more comprehensive picture of gender verbal aggression and facilitates the development of more effective approaches to managing and reducing verbal aggression in contemporary society.

As factors that influence the manifestation of gender verbal aggression: biological factors, social upbringing, cultural norms, etc. Hormonal differences between the sexes can influence aggressive behavior in the media and political discourse. Upbringing and education in the family, school and society form stereotypes and expectations regarding verbal aggression, which may differ for men and women. In this context, different cultures may present different norms for the expression of verbal aggression depending on gender.

At the present stage of development of society, gender issues occupy one of the leading positions in terms of relevance. Despite obvious progress, gender discrimination still covers many areas of society. Females are subject to a special set of behavioral norms and expectations, significantly different from the requirements for the males. For this purpose, special terms and words are used to describe men and women differently. All this is reflected in special forms of manifestation of public consciousness – stereotypes. The study of the phenomenon of gender stereotypes in the modern political debates is relevant and significant. Gender stereotypes play a major role in influencing various spheres of life, including the political sphere. Gender equality and overcoming gender inequalities require a deep understanding of the phenomenon of gender stereotypes and its role in shaping public opinion in the context of political discourse. The study is based on the assumption that television media play a significant role in the formation and maintenance of gender stereotypes in political discourse. The purpose of the study is to analyze gender stereotypes and their reflection in political discourse. The results of the study will expand knowledge about gender stereotypes in the political discourse of television media and their influence on public opinion. The practical significance of the work lies in the fact that its results can be used to develop recommendations for adjusting and eliminating the negative impact of gender stereotypes on political discourse.

Gender is an integral part of the social and cultural interaction of people and affects various aspects of the political life of each, groups and society. In this context, the manifestation of social, cultural and linguistic features of gender stereotypes in political discourse is of particular interest, since gender ideas about masculinity and femininity have a certain impact on both human behavior and language. Political

language offers a ready-made set of stereotypes for designating politicians of different sexes, characterizing a certain gender, forming a specific vision of a person of how this political world is structured and what it should be. Using political language every day, we do not just speak, we learn, repeat and reinforce our political ideas about what politicians of different sexes and the civil society around us should be like. The use of linguistic means can also be presented through certain stereotypes, and this is becoming increasingly important in the process of political communication itself, since they have become standards of behavior for women and men politicians, thanks to which the type of moral relations between them, characteristic of a given political and civil culture, is formed (Knyazyan and Hakobyan 2018, 43). Analyzing stereotypes, it is necessary to take into account both negative and positive consequences of stereotyping (Knyazyan and Marabyan 2023). For example, a political text as a product of a certain civil culture accumulates values, the experience of generations, knowledge that is significant for a certain society, including information about femininity and masculinity, which attract people's attention and also cause constant disputes and disagreements.

Among researchers of political stereotypes and gender stereotypes in politics (Van der Pas and Aaldering 2020; McDermott 2020), which we can conditionally characterize as the 'deficit' approach, which assumes that in political life, male politicians have certain characteristics that female politicians lack. In this context, it turns out that men dominate women in all spheres, therefore some spheres, such as politics, are reserved for men only (Van der Pas and Aaldering 2020). Among the characteristic features given to women are modesty, compassion, politeness, cooperation. They lack oratory and public speaking skills. Next is the cultural difference theory, which represents gender differences between different cultures (Shitrit, Elad-Strenger and Hirsch-Hoefer 2017). Women's and men's roles are not only seen as given by nature, but more often they are imposed by society. Social power theory, which sees language as a means of creating social structure and power, is also stereotypical (Bennett, Connor, Bryant, and Metzger 2024). Men's role in communication has always been to provide power. The characteristic features of a man are the following: strength, less worried about his appearance and almost not afraid of old age, unemotional, objective, logical, rational, strives for power and leadership, independent, free, active (Akhtar, Jenichen and Intezar 2024). Characteristic features of a woman are: weakness, worries about her appearance and is afraid of old age, virtuous, emotional, gentle, frivolous, inconsistent, helpful.

In civil society, there are a large number of stereotypes that are formed on the asymmetry of the feminine and masculine. In any society, there is a division into men and women, on the basis of which certain roles of political behavior are prescribed to one or another gender group. In addition, in many cultures, there are emotionally charged ideals, images of traditional masculinity and femininity, according to which society judges the value of an individual as a representative of a particular sex. In this sense, gender stereotypes are a particular manifestation of social stereotypes and, accordingly, are also prototypical, collective, and have national and political cultural specificity. Gender stereotypes that arise over biological-sexual reality reflect a set of

biological characteristics, social roles, mental and behavioral characteristics inherent in representatives of a given sex within a certain culture.

Gender stereotypes are directly related to the political roles of men and women, since many gender differences are predetermined by the distinctive features of political roles that support or suppress certain options of political behavior in men and women. Differences in political behavior are a consequence of the fact that gender roles influence the experience, skills, and perceptions of men and women.

The distribution of genders among different political roles leads to certain social norms, according to which women and men behave in a certain way. The manifestation of gender-stereotypical behavior by men and women depends on the specifics of the situation and the behavior that is considered correct in this situation, i.e. political and social roles are usually regulated. Such regulation is stereotyped, and then functions in the collective consciousness according to the right/wrong scheme. The list of desirable/correct, i.e. positively assessed by society, in a sense ideal male qualities looks like this: assertiveness, ambition, competitive spirit, independence, self-sufficiency, leadership ability, firmness of convictions, integrity, willpower.

Gender Stereotypes of Male and Female Politicians

Social perceptions of male and female politicians concern their behavior in society. They differ in their psychological and social qualities: a man is usually associated with an active and socially creative human being, while a woman is perceived as a bearer of passive power. Women politicians have certain behavioral norms and expectations, which differ significantly from the requirements for male politicians. There is a misconception that women have no place in politics, and only men can be engaged in political activities. However, today women politicians have achieved obvious and significant success in political activity.

Stereotypes about men in politics match expectations of political leaders, while stereotypes about women contradict those expectations. There is a stereotype that female politicians are honest and likeable, and these seem to be very valuable traits for political leaders. However, in many cases such stereotypes lead voters to perceive politicians according to gender stereotypes, so they do not support female politicians who lack important masculine qualities. A number of stereotypes are imposed by society, according to which men are better suited to the role of politician, but there are fields such as education and health care, which are usually perceived as women's fields, and therefore in these fields people trust female politicians more. They are considered to be better able to solve social problems related to childcare, education, health, environment, poverty, violence etc. Male politicians are more focused on foreign policy, military affairs, trade and agriculture. There is even a widespread opinion that women do not have a place in politics, because the image of a female politician formed throughout the history of human society was influenced by the belief that the concept of 'politician' refers to a man. The stereotype of 'housewife' prevailed in the society, which was conditioned by the fulfillment of the duties. Men are characterized as aggressive, direct, assertive, strict, loud, while women are considered calm, gentle, talkative. In political communication, men are more often the direct initiators of aggression, while women are more sensitive and empathetic. Female

politicians often talk about women's issues, while men talk about men's issues. If male politicians focus on economic issues, crime, foreign policy, defense, women are more likely to discuss social issues.

Gender aggression in political television debates

In political debates, female and male candidates use many communication tactics to succeed (Knyazyan and Marabyan 2021). Studies of televised political debates have shown that men are more likely than women to break the order and pre-established topic constraints, and when these rules are broken by women, the TV presenters intervene much more quickly than do men. Women are more conscientious about following the rules of television debates than men. For women, the strategy of following the rules and acting as a good citizen during debates is more useful. During the debate, men get more opportunities to speak and address topics of interest to them. Gender stereotypes continue to shape the roles and positions that women and men occupy in society. Women are seen as the weaker sex and men dominate in many areas. Men and women have different political preferences, so voters judge politicians based on the candidate's gender. It should be noted, however, that currently the situation has somewhat changed. Since the second half of the 20th century, this stereotype has been receding, and women are actively involved in a variety of fields.

Television debates are considered as communicative phenomena, in which the male and female politicians' intentions, objectives, and opportunities to understand each other appear (Knyazyan and Marabyan 2023). During televised debates, each participant chooses or develops tactical and strategic components of their speech to maximize their strengths and achieve their goals in the debate. At the same time, expectations that the audience may have of each participant are taken into account. The speech that will be acceptable or considered successful for a woman politician may be considered unacceptable or unsuccessful for a man, and vice versa. In this process, not only the gender specificity of speech and language thinking plays a significant role, but also the factor of the audience's predisposition to it, which, we assume, affects the decision of voters.

The main stages of televised debates can be conventionally defined as passive and active. The passive stages of TV debates include the presentation of the participants by the host and the self-introduction of each of them. Active stages include the participants' answers to the audience's questions (at this stage, the participants practically do not communicate with each other, but communicate directly with the audience and the person who asks the question) and the debate itself, during which the discussion takes place between the participants. In this phase, all participants use verbal and non-verbal communication, talking or interrupting each other at the same time. In the context of studies of gender stereotypes, it is noted that women are as aggressive in verbal conflict as men. Women are characterized by: dispersion, clear or practical thinking, fusion of ideas and emotionality and instability of character, jealousy and cheerfulness, weak control of emotions and weak will, mild excitement, expressive movement in speech and communication, facial expressions, voice (talkativeness and tendency to repeat thoughts), exposure to the environment, incompetence in political activity. Thus, according to these characteristics, the role of a

woman is not to create, but to be a reliable support in society. Accordingly, men have the opposite characteristics: strong will, brief and exhaustive speech, analytical thinking, the ability to concentrate. In addition, men are characterized by originality of character and external personality, which is usually absent in women.

Conflict situations are mainly created between representatives of the same sex. It is noteworthy here that women seek to settle conflict situations by compromise and mutual agreement, unlike men, who in conflict situations can use pressure to achieve their goals. In a situation in which a woman becomes the object of verbal aggression, the opponent often uses insults, which mostly emphasize gender affiliation. When a woman becomes a participant in a conflict situation, the probability of using mutual insults increases. A man in a conflict situation may use slang, sometimes non-ethereal vocabulary, as well as words and expressions that do not correspond to the gender identity of the interlocutor, with the aim of insulting the latter.

The November 2016 U.S. presidential election (see Table 1) marked the end of a long electoral campaign that saw the political preferences of broad sections of citizens, elites, and the most influential lobby groups take shape. The unprecedentedly intense struggle for the post of head of state, which often went beyond basic ethical norms, provoked an extreme degree of polarization of society, splitting it into two ideologically irreconcilable camps.

Table 1. 2016 Presidential and Vice-Presidential General Election Results

<i>Presidential Candidate</i>	<i>Vice-Presidential Candidate</i>	<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Electoral College</i>		<i>Popular Vote</i>	
			<i>Vote</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>%</i>
Hillary Clinton	Tim Kaine	Democrat	227	42.2%	65,844,954	48.04%
Donald Trump	Mike Pence	Republican	304	56.5%	62,979,879	45.95%
Gary Johnson	William Weld	Libertarian	0	0	4,488,919	3.28%
Jill Stein	Ajamu Baraka	Green Party	0	0	1,457,044	1.06%
<i>Other candidates</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>	7	1.3%	1,179,566	0.86%

Source: OSCE/ODIHR 2017

Against the backdrop of unprecedentedly growing geopolitical tensions and turbulence, the confrontation between Russia and the West, with the United States still acting as the flagship, is exponentially intensifying. The election of D. Trump as U.S. President in 2016 (see Table 1), which came as a surprise to many, marked a correction in the military-political dimension of both the external and internal strategic approaches of the United States in 2016-2020. A characteristic feature of the U.S. political system is that it is during the presidential race that strategic agreements on mutual support are reached between candidates and influence groups seeking to ensure that their interests are met by the state over the next four years. Such agreements involve a market exchange of votes and material resources for potential political and managerial decisions that the candidate undertakes to make in the event of victory. Along with the largest American companies and corporations, CSOs and non-profit organizations representing the social interests of their members provide tangible moral and material support to candidates. Throughout the presidential election campaign,

American society was distinguished by a diversity of opinions on key aspects of political and social life. There were no patterns of social behavior in the country that obliged adherents of certain political views of the official candidates from the Republican and Democratic parties to take pre-determined positions on a wider range of social issues. This phenomenon largely supported the relative political and social stability of American society despite the different views between billionaire businessman Donald Trump and former Secretary of State and Senator Hillary Clinton.

Mosaic nature of television debates and aggressive verbal behavior

Public language, civil society and politics are in close interaction with each other and generate the complexity and multidimensionality of political discourse, which determines the interdisciplinary nature of its study at the junction of such sciences as psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, political linguistics, sociology, pragmatics, rhetoric, and speech influence theory. Such a comprehensive approach allows us to integrate scientific results and achievements and at the same time enrich our knowledge of this phenomenon. The dynamics of social development entail changes in the field of political communication and imposes ever new demands on language. Thanks to the rapid development of the media, information and communication transformations, including in the field of Internet technologies, a new field is being created for the formation of relations between the state and society, between politicians and citizens. In the context of such shifts, not only the linguistic analysis of public speech comes to the fore, but also the analysis of extralinguistic and paralinguistic means, for example, in speeches on television and radio, as well as the analysis of the transmission of political information through the prism of media discourse (Carmines, Schmidt and Fowler 2022). The current state of the linguistic paradigm is characterized by an anthropocentric approach, the essence of which lies in addressing the role of man in the process of generating and perceiving speech. The scientific community, taking into account the factor of the addressee, seeks to comprehend the nature of the phenomenon under consideration from a theoretical standpoint and, last but not least, from a practical one. For this reason, the creation and study of the most effective means of optimizing the verbal impact on the listener plays a special role, which is a significant contribution to the development of the culture of speech and business communication. The need to master the art of public speaking is great due to the ongoing processes of democratization, the growth of social and political activity. Public speech is a phenomenon that we often encounter in everyday practice, be it an academic speech, a speech on television or at parliamentary sessions. It is public speech that can have a great influence both on the level of development of a society of a separate state and on the international level. Therefore, this study is based on the idea of language as an instrument of social regulation of relations between communicants. The relevance of this work is determined by the trends that have emerged in political linguistics in connection with the study of pragmatics, with an interest in the study of psychological and social features of the generation and perception of speech in the course of communicative activity, with the mechanisms of speech influence, as well as the desire to clarify the nature of the connections between various cognitive processes and the conditions for the success and effectiveness of speech acts in certain situations

(Carmines, Schmidt and Fowler 2022). In addition, the study of public speeches of American statesmen lies in the need for a correct understanding of the political processes taking place within democratic countries.

To characterize the political structure of aggressive verbal behavior in the U.S., gender differentiation of electoral support, and answer the key question of contemporary U.S. electoral geography about the dynamics and degree of political polarization of American society, it is necessary to characterize the mosaic nature of television debates and, as a reflection of it, the country's electoral space.

Several parts from the television debates that contain aggressive verbal behavior are analyzed in the following examples.

TRUMP: She doesn't have the look. She doesn't have the stamina. I said she doesn't have the stamina, and I don't believe she does have the stamina. To be president of this country, you need tremendous stamina.

HOLT: The quote was, "I just don't think she has a presidential look."

TRUMP: Wait a minute, Lester. You asked me a question. Did you ask me a question? You have to be able to negotiate our trade deals. You have to be able to negotiate. That's right. With Japan, with Saudi Arabia. I mean, can you imagine, we're defending Saudi Arabia and with all of the money they have, we're defending them, and they're not paying, all you have to do is speak to them. Wait, you have so many different things, you have to be able to do, and I don't believe that Hillary has the stamina.

HOLT: Let's let her respond.

CLINTON: Well, as soon as he travels to 112 countries and negotiates a peace deal, a cease-fire, a release of dissidents, an opening of new opportunities in nations around the world or even spends 11 hours testifying in front of a congressional committee, he can talk to me about stamina.

TRUMP: The world. (CHEERS AND APPLAUSE) (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Trump's statement "*She doesn't have the look*" and the repetition of "*She doesn't have the stamina*" carry negative connotations and directly attack Clinton's capabilities to run the country. Furthermore, he used the intensifier "*tremendous*" to highlight the huge power that he holds. Clinton's response was delivered in a composed and assertive tone, which contrasts with Trump's more confrontational style. Clinton responds to Trump's aggression with irony using specific examples and accomplishments that add credibility to her response and reinforce her argument. However, Trump's interruptions of the moderator and repetition of phrases like "*Let me tell you*" and "*Wait a minute*" serve as linguistic markers expressing dominance and control.

CLINTON: Third, we don't know all his business dealings, but we have been told through investigative reporting that he owes about \$650 million to Wall Street and foreign banks. Or maybe he doesn't want the American people, all of you watching tonight, to know that he's paid nothing in federal taxes, because the only years that anybody's ever seen were a couple of years when he had to turn them over to state authorities when he was trying to get a casino license, and they showed he didn't pay any federal income tax.

TRUMP: That makes me smart (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Clinton's statements "we have been told...", "maybe he doesn't want the American people... to know" contain a sense of accusation and attack Trump's financial transparency and integrity. "That makes me smart" is an ironic response and downplays the seriousness of Clinton's accusations.

TRUMP: You look at the inner cities, I just left Detroit, I just left Philadelphia. You've seen me, I've been all over the place. You decided to stay home and that's OK.

I will tell you, I've been all over, and I've met some of the greatest people I'll ever meet within these communities. And they are very, very upset with what their politicians have told them. And what their politicians have done.

CLINTON: I think Donald just criticized me for preparing for this debate. And yes, I did. And you know what else I prepared for? I prepared to be president. And I think that's a good thing. (APPLAUSE) (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Trump contrasts his actions with Clinton's purported decision to "stay home," and makes an explicit value judgment on that decision by stating "and that's OK". Trump implies that she is neglecting or avoiding certain issues, thereby he attempts to undermine her credibility or commitment. Rather than accepting Trump's implied criticism, Clinton cleverly reframed his remarks to her advantage. since Trump did not stay home as she did - he did not prepare for the debate, thus his actions of having "been all over the place" was not an advantage. In this case it illustrates how Clinton skillfully used language to shift the focus onto her strengths and highlight potential weaknesses in Trump's candidacy.

CLINTON: First, we have to build an economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top. That means we need new jobs, good jobs, with rising incomes (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

While talking about economy, Clinton employs the pronoun "we" to align herself with the audience. Moreover, the phrase "economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top." presents Trump in a privileged way. In this way she fosters a sense of solidarity with her audience. In addition, it implies that her opponent's economic strategies primarily benefit wealthy people and Trump lacks empathy for others as he is from the "top". The modal verb "have to" underscores the obligation to fight against the economic elite.

CLINTON: The other day, I saw Donald saying that there were some Iranian sailors on a ship in the waters off Iran, and they were taunting American sailors who were on a nearby ship. He said, you know, if they taunted our sailors, I'd blow them out of the water and start another war. That's [Interruption]

TRUMP: That would not start a war.

CLINTON: That's bad judgment. That is not the right temperament to be commander in chief, to be taunted and the worst part [Interruption] (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Clinton cites Trump's assertion that he would *blow Iranian sailors out of the water and start another*. This statement is full of aggressive rhetoric which Trump neither tries to hide nor reject. In his response "That would not start a war" Trump uses conditional "would" to indicate starting a war may not be the inevitable outcome in this case. However, this does not indicate opposition to the idea of military action

against Iran. With the help of the adjective “*bad*” and adjective phrase “*not the right*” Clinton questions Trump’s judgment and suitability for the presidency, particularly in sensitive diplomatic matters. Besides, Clinton’s critical tone and declarative sentences show the audience that Trump is impulsive and not suitable for the post of the president.

CLINTON: ...He even said if there were nuclear war in East Asia, that's fine, you know.

TRUMP: Wrong.

CLINTON: Have a good time, folks.

TRUMP: That's lies.

CLINTON: And in fact, his cavalier attitude about nuclear weapons is so deeply troubling. That is the number one threat we face in the world, and it becomes particularly threatening if terrorists ever get their hands on any nuclear material. So, a man who can be provoked by a tweet should not have his fingers anywhere near the nuclear codes. As far as I think anyone with any sense about this should be concerned.

TRUMP: That line is getting a little bit old, I have to say.

CLINTON: It's a good one, though. It describes the problem well.

TRUMP: It's not an accurate one at all. It's not an accurate one. So, I just want to give a lot of things and just respond (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Clinton uses the phrase “that’s fine, you know” ironically to emphasize the absurdity of Trump’s rhetoric regarding the nuclear war. This time Trump contradicts directly with the word “*wrong*” and qualifies Clinton’s accusations as “*lies*”. In return Clinton employed the colloquial phrase “*Have a good time, folks*” showing the public that she is certain about her assertions and is not going to argue with Trump. She uses the metaphorical phrase “*cavalier attitude*” and the intensifier “*deeply*” in the expression “*deeply troubling*” to highlight her concerns regarding Trump’s recklessness. She claims that Trump is easily provoked and uses another metaphorical expression “*should not have his fingers anywhere near the nuclear codes*” to state that he should not have the authority and responsibility associated with the presidency, due to his temperament. “*That line is getting a little bit old*” is used metaphorically as well and conveys Trump’s dismissive attitude towards Clinton’s argument and its relevance. With the response, “*It's a good one, though. It describes the problem well*” Clinton acknowledges Trump’s assertion; however, she also affirms the validity of her argument. “*It's not an accurate one at all. It's not an accurate one*”: the repetition here emphasizes Trump’s disagreement with Clinton’s claims and contributes to the aggressive tone of this debate.

TRUMP: And I'll tell you what. I didn't think I'd say this, but I'm going to say it, and I hate to say it. But if I win, I am going to instruct my attorney general to get a special prosecutor to look into your situation, because there has never been so many lies, so much deception. There has never been anything like it. People have been — their lives have been destroyed for doing one-fifth of what you've done. And it's a disgrace. And honestly, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

RADDATZ: Secretary Clinton, I want to follow up on that.

CLINTON: ... because everything he just said is absolutely false, but I'm not surprised.

TRUMP: Oh, really?

CLINTON: In the first debate... (LAUGHTER)

Last time at the first debate, we had millions of people fact checking, so I expect we'll have millions more fact checking, because, you know, it is — it's just awfully good that someone with the temperament of Donald Trump is not in charge of the law in our country.

TRUMP: Because you'd be in jail (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

With the phrases "*I'll tell you what*" and "*I hate to say it*" Trump grabs the attention of the audience afterwards he introduces his intentions. The sentence "*I am going to instruct my attorney general to get a special prosecutor to look into your situation*" adds a sense of command and authority to his speech. The repetition of the phrase "*there has never been*" reinforces Trump's beliefs. Furthermore, he employs hyperbolic language, e.g. "*so much deception*" and "*so many lies*", to exaggerate reality. In her declarative sentence, "*Everything he just said is absolutely false,*" Clinton uses the adverb "*absolutely*" to emphasize that Trump's accusations are pointless. Trump's response "*Oh really*" was an irony, even the audience laughed. Meanwhile, the sentence "*It's just awfully good that someone with the temperament of Donald Trump is not in charge*" adds a mocking tone to Clinton's answer. With statements such as "*it's a disgrace*" and "*you ought to be ashamed of yourself*", Trump makes the audience morally judge and condemn his opponent.

TRUMP: ...I think the one that you should really be apologizing for and the thing that you should be apologizing for are the 33,000 emails that you deleted. ...

CLINTON: Look, it's just not true. And so please, go to...

TRUMP: Oh, you didn't delete them?

COOPER: Allow her to respond, please.

CLINTON: It was personal emails, not official.

TRUMP: Oh, 33,000? Yeah.

COOPER: Please allow her to respond. She didn't talk while you talked.

CLINTON: Yes, that's true, I didn't.

TRUMP: Because you have nothing to say.

CLINTON: I didn't in the first debate, and I'm going to try not to in this debate, because I'd like to get to the questions that the people have brought here tonight to talk to us about.

TRUMP: Get off this question.

CLINTON: OK, Donald. I know you're into big diversion tonight, anything to avoid talking about your campaign and the way it's exploding, and the way Republicans are leaving you. But let's at least focus... (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

In this part of the debate Trump is far more aggressive than Clinton. Even the moderator is not able to limit his interruptions. At the outset, he blames Clinton for deleting emails and uses imperative language "*you should be apologizing*". We can consider his questions "*Oh, you didn't delete them?*" and "*Oh, 33,000? Yeah*" sarcastic and rhetorical at the same time, since he does not expect an answer from his opponent. However, Clinton keeps stability. "*Look, it's just not true.*" is a straightforward denial of Trump's accusations. She also uses the gap-filling word "*Look*" to capture public attention. In her statement "*Yes, that's true, I didn't*" Clinton

shows the opponent that she is not going to discuss this topic. In response to this, Trump uses the following phrases “*Because you have nothing to say.*” and “*Get off this question.*” to directly attack Clinton’s credibility and ability to answer effectively. Eventually, Clinton attacks him back. She addresses Trump directly and challenges his behavior and motives during the debate.

RADDATZ: And why did it morph into that? No, did you — no, answer the question. Do you still believe... [Interruption]

TRUMP: Why don’t you interrupt her? You interrupt me all the time.

RADDATZ: I do.

TRUMP: Why don’t you interrupt her?

RADDATZ: Would you please explain whether or not the Muslim ban still stands?

TRUMP: It’s called extreme vetting (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

In this example Trump criticizes the moderator using the rhetorical question “*Why don’t you interrupt her?*” two times and accusatory language. He attempts to avoid the original question and portray himself as a victim of unfair treatment. After the moderator repeats the question, Trump avoids using the controversial term “Muslim ban” and instead he employs the euphemism “*extreme vetting*” to make his political visions less problematic.

COOPER: You said that half of Donald Trump’s supporters are, quote, “deplorables, racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic.” You later said you regretted saying half. You didn’t express regret for using the term “deplorables.” To Mr. Carter’s question, how can you unite a country if you’ve written off tens of millions of Americans?

CLINTON: Well...my argument is not with his supporters. It’s with him and with the hateful and divisive campaign that he has run, and the inciting of violence at his rallies, and the very brutal kinds of comments about not just women, but all Americans, all kinds of Americans.

*TRUMP: We have a divided nation, because people like her — and believe me, she has tremendous hate in her heart. And when she said *deplorables*, she meant it. And when she said *irredeemable*, they’re *irredeemable*, you didn’t mention that, but when she said they’re *irredeemable*, to me that might have been even worse (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).*

According to the moderator Clinton regretted describing Trump’s supporters with negative adjectives such as “*deplorables, racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic.*”. In response to this, Clinton uses parallel structure in the phrase “*It’s with him and with the hateful and divisive campaign that he has run,*” to underscore his criticism towards Trump and his campaign, not his supporters. Conversely, Trump uses hyperbole with “*tremendous hate,*” to exaggerate Clinton’s attitude. He also employs parallelism in the phrase “*And when she said *deplorables*, she meant it*”. After she repeats the same structure in “*when she said *irredeemable*, they’re *irredeemable*.*”

CLINTON: Well, here we go again. I’ve been in favor of getting rid of carried interest for years, starting when I was a senator from New York. But that’s not the point here.

TRUMP: Why didn’t you do it? Why didn’t you do it?

COOPER: Allow her to respond.

CLINTON: Because I was a senator with a Republican president.

TRUMP: Oh, really?

CLINTON: I will be the president and we will get it done. That's exactly right.

TRUMP: You could have done it, if you were an effective — if you were an effective senator, you could have done it. If you were an effective senator, you could have done it. But you were not an effective senator (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

“Here we go again” is an instance of an irony used in daily conversations. The repetition of “*Why didn’t you do it?*” is a direct accusation and emphasizes that Clinton failed to fulfill her responsibilities. Trump is from the Republican party. Thus, with the answer “*Because I was a senator with a Republican president.*” Clinton blames Trump and his party for not letting her do her job. Trump’s response to this “*Oh, really?*” was an irony as well. Trump is assured that Clinton is not competent enough and repeats the phrase “*You could have done it, if you were an effective*” to make his point more impressive.

TRUMP: It's just words, folks. It's just words. Those words, I've been hearing them for many years. I heard them when they were running for the Senate in New York, where Hillary was going to bring back jobs to upstate New York and she failed. She's done a terrible job for the African-Americans. She wants their vote, and she does nothing, and then she comes back four years later. We saw that firsthand when she was a United States senator. She campaigned where the primary part of her campaign [Interruption]

RADDATZ: Mr. Trump, Mr. Trump — I want to get to audience questions and online questions.

TRUMP: So, she's allowed to do that, but I'm not allowed to respond?

RADDATZ: You're going to have — you're going to get to respond right now.

TRUMP: Sounds fair (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Trump uses colloquial phrase “folks” to address the audience and repeats the phrase “*It's just words*” to dismiss Clinton’s points. The repetition of “*She's done a terrible job*” and “*she does nothing,*” highlights that Clinton breaks her promises after elections. He attacks the moderator with “*So, she's allowed to do that, but I'm not allowed to respond?*” as he feels imbalance and unfairness between him and Clinton. The phrase “*Sounds fair*” was sarcastic to emphasize the injustice during the debate.

CLINTON: He gets to decide what he wants to talk about. Instead of answering people's questions, talking about our agenda, laying out the plans that we have that we think can make a better life and a better country, that's his choice. When I hear something like that, I am reminded of what my friend, Michelle Obama, advised us all: When they go low, you go high.

TRUMP: Michelle Obama. I've gotten to see the commercials that they did on you. And I've gotten to see some of the most vicious commercials I've ever seen of Michelle Obama talking about you, Hillary.

So, you talk about a friend? Go back and take a look at those commercials, a race where you lost fair and square, unlike the Bernie Sanders race, where you won, but not fair and square, in my opinion (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Clinton criticizes her opponent for his behavior. “*He gets to decide what he wants to talk about.*” highlights that Trump focuses on personal attacks instead of answering

the questions directly. The phrase "*When they go low, you go high.*" is used metaphorically and symbolizes different moral or behavioral standards. Trump describes Michelle Obama's commercials as vicious. The use of the adjective "*vicious*" suggests that the campaigns deliberately harmed or degraded Clinton's reputation. Thus, the phrase "you talk about a friend?" and "*Go back and take a look*" are sarcastic. Besides, he refers to the race between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton and claims that her victory was not legitimate by describing it as "*not fair and square*".

CLINTON: And we should demand that Donald release all his tax returns so that people can see what are the entanglements and the financial relationships that he has with the Russians and other foreign powers.

TRUMP: Well, I think I should respond, because — so ridiculous. Look, now she's blaming — she got caught in a total lie. Her papers went out to all her friends at the banks, Goldman Sachs and everybody else, and she said things — WikiLeaks that just came out. And she lied. Now she's blaming the lie on the late, great Abraham Lincoln. That's one that I haven't... (LAUGHTER)

OK, Honest Abe, Honest Abe never lied. That's the good thing. That's the big difference between Abraham Lincoln and you. That's a big, big difference. We're talking about some differences (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Trump employs the adjective "*ridiculous*" to describe Clinton's demand for his tax returns release. After using the gap-filling word "*Look*" to grab public attention, Trump keeps blaming his opponent for a "*total lie*". "*Now she's blaming the lie on the late, great Abraham Lincoln.*" is an irony, since Lincoln is considered as a benchmark of honesty. "*Honest Abe*" is a well-known nickname for Abraham Lincoln highlighting his reputation. The statements "*That's the big difference between Abraham Lincoln and you.*" and "*That's a big, big difference*" make a contrast and emphasize Trump's beliefs.

CLINTON: ...We have 17, 17 intelligence agencies, civilian and military who have all concluded that these espionage attacks, these cyber-attacks, come from the highest levels of the Kremlin. And they are designed to influence our election. I find that deeply disturbing.

WALLACE: Secretary Clinton [Interruption]

CLINTON: And I think it is time

TRUMP: She has no idea whether it is Russia, China or anybody else.

CLINTON: I am not quoting myself.

TRUMP: You have no idea.

CLINTON: I am quoting 17, 17 -- do you doubt?

TRUMP: Our country has no idea.

CLINTON: Our military and civilian [Interruption]

TRUMP: Yeah, I doubt it, I doubt it (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

Clinton accuses Russia of cyber-attacks and Trump of defending them. The word "disturbing" in the sentence "*I find that deeply disturbing.*" is used to express her concern. On the contrary, Trump employs phrases like "*she has no idea whether it is Russia, China or anybody else.*", "*you have no idea*" and "*Our country has no idea.*" to challenge Clinton's credibility. Clinton cites 17, 17 intelligence agencies to prove her

trustworthiness. Then, Trump responds to her with the repetition “*Yeah, I doubt it, I doubt it.*” to reinforce his point.

CLINTON: He would rather believe Vladimir Putin than the military and civilian intelligence professionals who are sworn to protect us. I find that just absolutely [Interruption]

TRUMP: She doesn't like Putin because Putin has outsmarted her at every step of the way.

WALLACE: Mr. Trump [Interruption]

TRUMP: Excuse me. Putin has outsmarted her in Syria, he's outsmarted her every step of the way (POLITICO 2016; PBS NewsHour 2020).

In the above-mentioned example both sides firmly use declarative sentences to assert their point aggressively. Clinton uses “would rather” to highlight that Trump prefers Putin over their country. Trump used the interjection “excuse me” to interrupt the conversation and show dominance. Subsequently, he repeats his point “*Putin has outsmarted her at every step of the way*” to underline Clinton’s incompetence.

In exploring the gender features of aggressive verbal behavior, it becomes evident that communication styles are influenced by societal expectations, cultural norms, and individual characteristics. While traditional gender roles often dictate distinct modes of expression for men and women. Women may employ subtle forms of verbal aggression, such as sarcasm and irony, to assert themselves. Conversely, men may exhibit more forms of aggression, including direct attacks and interruptions, as a means of asserting dominance. Political discourse serves as a revealing case study, showing how gender dynamics play out in high-stakes communication environments.

Lately, the term ‘hate speech’ often includes expressions and forms of expression of opinion that are somewhat offensive or disliked by people. Examples of such speech include cursing, insulting, defamation, etc. Swearing is perceived as an aggressive act. Women who engage in such behavior may be perceived as violating cultural stereotypes and expectations of femininity. How do people perceive swearing, especially when it is uttered by politicians? Some studies have shown that swearers are perceived as untrustworthy, incompetent and unfriendly (Roberts and Utych 2022). Other researchers argue that swearing can have a positive effect because it significantly contributes to the persuasiveness of speech (Weidhase 2024). Swearing serves as a social signal. Those who adopt this strategy may hope that their target audience responds positively to profanity. Therefore, competing politicians may be perceived more positively. In addition, profanity has a rhetorical effect that implies the skill of delivering speech emotionally. Swearing is seen as a means of self-expression and can be effective in certain speech expressions (Hargrave and Blumenau 2022). Profanity at the beginning or end of a persuasive speech increases the persuasiveness of that speech (Hargrave 2023).

In social life, the use of profanity in the ordinary relations of people is rejected, and if it is milder, it is not encouraged, acceptable or desirable. Taking into account the fact that social prohibitions that have the power of tradition ensure people’s morals, the traditional way of life, they also play a significant role in staying close to the original state. Usually, women are more faithful to traditions than men, This circumstance is

clearly seen not only in the attitude of men and women towards profanity, but also especially in the differentiated attitude that society shows towards women when they use profanity or obscene language. In this case, unlike a man, a similar act of a woman is evaluated much more negatively and intolerable. Usually, women who use rude language are characterized as having a lower social position and can be perceived as violating cultural traditions. Men's speech is characterized by a propensity for vulgarity and profanity, and especially men use offensive vocabulary, referring, for example, to different parts of the body (Leonora, Gamuzza, Scieri and Caruso 2025). Other research has shown that while men's use of profanity in speech may sometimes still be tolerated, or seem to be tolerated, women's use of profanity is frowned upon and perceived as a breach of necessary decency (Reneses, Riberas-Gutiérrez and Bueno-Guerra 2025). However, women's vocabulary is also sometimes marked by vulgar style, and they can also use this vocabulary when communicating with representatives of the opposite sex (Greaves 2025). However, while women tend to use profanity and vulgar language when they are very angry, men swear both when they are angry and when they are calm. Political television debates are distinguished by a remarkable feature. men talk longer than women, although the stereotype that women always talk more than men is still common in modern society. The most characteristic of women's self-presentation strategies is the tactic of solidarity, which is accompanied by gestural movements and conversational communication, for example, a smile. Most men dominate communication, have a greater opportunity to express themselves using various language means. Their verbal communication is characterized by verbal and grammatical repetitions, verbs and word repetitions prevail in speech. The speech of female politicians is quite emotional, they often use complex grammatical and lexical structures. In terms of gender stereotypes, it is also noteworthy that men talk more factually than women and try to control the topic of conversation. Men are more likely to ignore or not respond to the comments of other interlocutors. For women, a conversation is an opportunity to make a connection, and for men, every interaction can lead to deciding a winner or a loser. Men do not ask for help because it weakens their status. They don't talk about their problems and they never ask for advice. However, women talk about their problems, ask for help and have conversations. Men want to establish themselves, while women want to establish and maintain harmonious relationships. People who have status or experience in a certain context talk more. In influential and elite professions, men have greater legitimacy, while women are seen as outsiders, so they try to prove that they too belong to that group.

Thus, the 2016 U.S. election campaign is in many ways a reflection of those political styles that were provocative in nature, those fundamental social divisions that have existed in the U.S. for a long time. Evidence of this is the fact that old concepts of electoral behavior are becoming relevant again, for example, social divisions along the lines of city and village, middle class and poor, center and periphery have been renewed and transformed.

The consequence of this is the electoral and political polarization between the Democratic and Republican parties, leading to social tension. Based on all of the above, we conclude that Donald Trump's victory is contradictory (as is his image), on the one hand, he enjoys the unconditional support of his electorate, on the other hand,

the fulfillment of his election promises and program may encounter serious rejection by other electoral groups.

Since 2016, there have been changes in the electoral space and public sentiment, some American citizens are in dire need of radical changes. The response to the current demand and changes was the emergence of unique political styles that were previously considered marginal, they have become mainstream. For example, Hillary Clinton's image began to be perceived by part of the democratic electorate not as offensive and populist, but as a sincere and honest position of a politician. Donald Trump's right-wing radical image is also perceived by his electorate as honest and sincere, but the downside is the acute rejection of his image by other electoral groups (Crosbie 2025). Attention was also paid to the features of modern communication channels between candidates and the electorate.

Criticism in public dialogue with official candidates for the U.S. President is a concept of argumentative nature, uniting the genres of accusation, reproach, reproach and other types of speech behavior containing a negative assessment of the current government. Criticism is one of the forms of communicative provocation, conditioned by the task of a mediator of the media, as a mediator of public opinion, to find out the necessary information. Criticism is explicated in the initiating remarks of the journalist mainly by means of vocabulary with negative evaluative semantics (Hopkins and Sigler 2025).

The reactive replica of the official candidates for the U.S. President has the features of textual organization. In the structure of the reactive replicas, schematicity and repetition of communicative tactics are traced, which served as the basis for the construction of their compositional schemes. The methods and means of responding to critical statements in the discourse of official candidates for the U.S. President vary depending on the components of the communicative situation and the addressee of criticism, the topics of criticism and the intensity of criticism. The general strategies for responding to criticism in American political discourse are information-interpretation and argumentative strategies. However, the methods for implementing these strategies differ: if the speech of official U.S. presidential candidates is characterized by polemical tactics, then in rhetoric, tactics of forming the emotional mood of the addressee prevail (Jardina and Ollerenshaw 2025).

Differences in the methods of responding to critical statements in the speech of presidents are due to the speech image of the politician and the role they choose based on the audience forecast. The determining factor in the choice here is the peculiarities of the mentality of voters, which form their linguistic picture of the world. Similarities in the use of linguistic means in the speech of both official U.S. presidential candidates are due to similar conditions of the communicative situation, but differences are found in the style of their statements. If Trump is characterized by the use of stylistically marked vocabulary (including colloquialisms, vernacular, jargon, etc.) as an expressive means of persuasion and rapprochement with the mass addressee, then the stylistic background of Clinton's responses is more neutral and is formed by means of phraseological units (proverbs, catchphrases), rhetorical figures (periphrasis, parallelism) and tropes.

The use of a structural and semantic approach to the analysis of the texts of the responses of official U.S. presidential candidates in response to criticism and the definition of semantic dominants in their speech allows us to discover the main lines of their speech behavior, clarify the methods of influencing the mass addressee, conduct a kind of cross-section of the state and development of modern society and trace the differences in the mentality of peoples.

Conclusion and discussion

The article studies the gender aspects of verbal aggression of the electoral structure and differentiation of electoral preferences based on the experience of television debates of official U.S. presidential candidates in 2016, characterizes the dynamics and factors of image formation of candidates, including in the context of modern processes of increasing political polarization. The implementation of the set research tasks allows us to draw the following conclusion:

- Political linguistics has been one of the most relevant and promising areas of political research in recent years. The central core of political linguistics is the study of political discourse, which is a set of all speech acts used in political discussions, as well as the rules of public policy, sanctified by tradition and tested by experience. The study of political discourse on various linguistic materials is a vast field for linguistic research. The focus of political scientists is on the cognitive foundations and linguistic features of political discourse, its genre differentiation, the study of political communication as a discursive and textual phenomenon, and the study of the idiosyncrasies of political figures. All these problems are studied from synchronic and diachronic perspectives, both comparatively and descriptively.
- In recent decades, researchers have increasingly focused on issues of gender variation in political discourse. Taking into account the gender factor implies an analysis of the use of gender stereotypes and gender metaphors in political discourse, a study of gender-marked lexical and grammatical parameters, the characteristics of communicative behavior and the nature of the argumentation of politicians, including taking into account existing ethnocultural differences.
- In political life, stereotypes are certain ideas of political party leaders and civil activists about groups, people and events that may contain a reasoned truth of their own, but at the same time may be incorrect and overly generalized. On the one hand, they simplify the political picture of the world and help to quickly assimilate incoming information, on the other hand, they can distort political reality and lead to erroneous generalizations.
- Gender stereotypes shape public expectations, behavior patterns, communication styles and the image of modern American politicians. Verbal aggression is implemented through certain communication strategies and tactics chosen by a politician based on the election program of each of them, studying the perception of the image of these politicians by the electorate. In recent years, especially in American political discourse, women have demonstrated sufficient self-confidence, determination and the ability to control and promote the topics under discussion. When a politician cannot present a weighty counterargument

to his opponents in a constructive dialogue, he often resorts to various forms of aggressive speech: populism, humor, accusations, criticism, lies, etc.

- As a result, it was found that the gender aspects of verbal aggression are features of the image as a form of communication of official candidates in the 2016 U.S. election campaign: 1) The formation of various populist images and political individuality becomes an important part of verbal communication; 2) The interaction of new political styles and the electorate leads to the polarization of electoral groups, resulting in a polarized perception of the candidates' images; 3) The images of the U.S. presidential candidates were perceived fragmentarily, partly because they were populist, partly because the images were broadcast through television and social networks, where their holistic perception is impossible.
- Gender stereotypes and verbal communication play a significant role in the political and electoral life of the U.S. and are reflected in the key institutions of the state, the political model and historical traditions of the country. Their significance is manifested, among other things, through the established practice of federalism, territorial representation, the electoral college as an instrument of territorial democracy, and the localization of political struggle. The very important, specific significance of the gender dimension of the territorial factor in the political life of the United States distinguishes this state from other world democracies.
- In general, communication channels have changed under the influence of populist political styles of candidates. Thus, television and debates in particular have completely transformed into a political show, where the main goal is not to convey one's position on a particular issue to the electorate, but to popularize one's political style, with the help of sharp statements, a provocative style to generate more content for discussion than one's opponent. Social networks and media have also become an important tool for forming a political image and style. Social networks have become an excellent platform for politicians to publish their populist positions on key issues. The use of these tools in the context of developing their populist political style by candidates has led to the polarization of the electoral space in the U.S., the genesis of the 'two Americas' - Republican and Democratic.
- The response of official U.S. presidential candidates to criticism in a public dialogue with a media representative is a multi-faceted object of research that requires an understanding of the principles of building and functioning of a public dialogue, the interrelationship between elements of a communicative situation, the communicative-pragmatic foundations of presidential discourse, the role of the media in the life of society, the professional tasks and ethical code of a journalist, the axiological nature of criticism, the corpus of evaluative linguistic means, etc.
- The image of the head of state in a modern democratic society determines the paradigm of his speech activity and brings dialogical genres to the rank of the most significant channels of interaction between the people and the authorities. Media representatives, on the one hand, are conductors of public opinion, on the

other hand, they contribute to the projection of the president's intentions onto a mass addressee. Demonstration of openness and transparency of the authorities' actions to society presupposes the introduction of the axiological operator good/bad, in other words, it makes it possible to express an approving or critical opinion about the actions of the authorities.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical standards

The authors affirm this research did not involve human subjects.

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