

**VIOLENCIA POLÍTICA CONTRA LAS MUJERES EN DURANGO, MÉXICO.
EXPRESIONES DE MISOGINIA FEMENINA A PARTIR DE UN ANÁLISIS
CUALITATIVO**

**A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN
POLITICS EXPRESSED AS FEMALE MISOGYNY IN DURANGO, MEXICO**

Paloma Cecilia Barraza Cárdenas¹

Luis Barraza Cárdenas²

Resumen: A pesar de la instauración de la participación política como un elemento crucial en el proceso de emancipación social de las mujeres, el terreno político mexicano se ha establecido como un espacio hostil, inseguro y agresivo para ellas. En México, las mujeres afrontan constantemente múltiples agresiones, obstáculos y dificultades al realizar actividades de naturaleza pública o electoral, las cuales pueden configurar violencia política contra las mujeres. Dichos actos son perpetrados tanto por los hombres como grupo social dominante, como por partidos políticos, organizaciones gubernamentales, medios de comunicación e incluso por las mismas mujeres. Este último fenómeno puede identificarse como misoginia femenina y, se refiere a la violencia ejercida por mujeres hacia otras mujeres. Sin embargo, las investigaciones sobre esta modalidad de violencia tienden a centrarse en conductas efectuadas por varones o instituciones patriarcales y, pocos estudios han intentado explorar la mencionada arista y sus manifestaciones en el ámbito político. En tal tesitura, la presente investigación examina la violencia política contra las mujeres expresada en la forma de misoginia femenina, con un enfoque cualitativo basado en entrevistas semiestructuradas a profundidad realizadas a mujeres políticas en el entorno específico de Durango, México. Los resultados de dicho acercamiento ilustran lo siguiente: la violencia política contra las mujeres en razón de género, independientemente de la persona perpetradora, es perjudicial para el ejercicio efectivo de los derechos políticos y electorales de las mujeres, por tanto, la violencia ejercida por otras mujeres constituye una parte importante del

¹ Ph.D in Law, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Durango Juárez State University. E-mail: paloma.barraza@ujed.mx

² MSc Sustainable Urbanism, The Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. Urban Planner, Arcadis | IBI Group. E-mail: lugibarraza@gmail.com

problema. No obstante, se argumenta la necesidad de su análisis con perspectiva de género, así como de una manera global, sistémica y no aislada.

Palabras clave: Violencia contra las mujeres; política; misoginia femenina

Abstract: Despite politics' configuration as a crucial element in the process of female self-determination, this area has consistently been insecure, hostile, and aggressive for women in Mexico. Female politicians often face multiple obstacles and difficulties when carrying out activities of public or electoral nature. Violence in this context is known as violence against women in politics. Furthermore, the violence is not solely perpetrated by men as the dominant group, but also by political parties, government institutions, media, and in some instances, women themselves. This last issue can be identified as female misogyny, which describes when women execute acts of violence towards other women. However, research on the subject tends to focus on violence against women perpetrated by men or patriarchal organizations, and therefore few studies have attempted to explore this phenomenon in the political arena. In this context, this analytical essay examines violence against women in politics expressed as female misogyny in the specific context in Durango, Mexico, through a qualitative approach based on a series of long interviews with female politicians. The preliminary research results illustrate that violence regardless of perpetrator, is detrimental to women's participation in politics and therefore female misogyny constitutes an important part of the challenges faced by women in politics. It can also be argued that this issue requires analysis from a gendered perspective and acknowledgment that it does not exist in isolation but occurs within global and systemic dynamics.

Keywords: Violence against women, politics, female misogyny

I. Introduction

In recent years, normative changes in gender equality have been promoted in global public life, accounting for the historical and current representation and political participation gaps between men and women worldwide. These efforts have reached Mexico's legal environment, gradually increasing the number of women in areas of power and representation; predominantly through the incorporation of affirmative actions and the constitutionalisation of the gender parity principle. Thus, studying the political sphere has become an increasingly relevant aspect of gender equality. Politics constitute a vital structure for women's social emancipation, mainly because it enables the exercise of public power and decision-making, establishes conduits to collect and promote citizen demands, favours the amplification of voices, and provides a convenient platform to fight for pending rights and liberties. In addition to being a fundamental right that compels top normative protection, political participation represents an ideal medium to integrate the discussion of transcendental women's issues into the political agenda; avoiding their bypassing and deferment, considering these issues are regularly avoided or rejected by men. Because of this there appears to be a correlation between the development of women's public participation in Mexico and the insurgence of violence against women.

Violence in this particular context is known as violence against women in politics. This phenomenon can be associated with patriarchal ideologies and patterns intended to limit female leadership and women's contributions to public life, tinted with the intrinsic motivation of preserving traditional gender norms. Although politics plays a crucial role in emancipating women to achieve their goals, it has consistently been a hostile and aggressive environment for them. Women in politics often encounter multiple obstacles and challenges when engaging in public or electoral activities, which can compromise their ability to fully participate and succeed in this field. Daily, the evident structural barriers that hinder the full exercise of women's political rights remain present and manifest themselves in multiple ways, from the explicitly loud to the insidiously silent. This scenery has led to an enormous distance between female citizens and the general public platform of democracies, revealing the fragility of the human rights system and Mexican democracy itself. This gendered political environment fosters behaviours, practices, and patterns that affect women not only individually, but also collectively, and one could argue the development of the country as a whole. In addition, violences are not only carried out by men in positions of power, but also by political parties, government institutions, media, and, in some cases, even women themselves.

Even though politics is an important realm for female self-determination, women in politics face significant obstacles, including violence, that can undermine their ability to fully participate in this domain. While violence against women in politics is often associated with men or patriarchal organizations, it is important to recognize that women can also perpetrate violence against other women in the form of female misogyny. This phenomenon includes various forms of violence, such as symbolic, psychological, physical, and economic violence, and can have serious implications for women's political participation. Unfortunately, research in this area has mainly focused on violence against women perpetrated by men or patriarchal organizations, neglecting the issue of female misogyny in politics. Therefore, this analytical essay seeks to address this gap by exploring the issue of violence against women in politics expressed as female misogyny in Durango, Mexico. Using a qualitative approach that involves eight in-depth interviews with female politicians, this study aims to shed light on this important issue and contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced by women in politics. From this perspective, unequal or discriminatory gender-based conducts perpetrated by women, that hinder, impair, or nullify the full exercise of women's political rights or interfere in their professional political development or inhibit their political work or participation as citizens were analysed through theoretical and empirical perspectives to address both its treatment from the academic-legal field, as well as its materialization in its environment. The first section of this paper outlines a dogmatic review of the main conceptualization elements of the problem. Subsequently, an approach to the phenomenon is presented from empirical data through qualitative approximation, since the types and modalities of gender-based violence against women reflect a historical, systematic, structural, and cultural problem, capable of touching extremely sensitive fibers, beyond literature and statistics. The aforementioned, part of the research endeavours carried out to discover and make visible hidden aspects of the problem and present them through the lens of women who experience them firsthand.

II. Violence against women in politics in Mexico

First, it is essential to establish both the context and the meaning of the analysed phenomenon and the scope of the study. Violence against women in all its forms and expressions reflects a serious social disease, whose symptoms appear globally. However, it manifests with different degrees, nuances, and characteristics related contextually to

aspects linked to the historical, cultural, political, and legal systems of each country or region. As an example, Lamas emphasizes the following: when European and North American women speak, for instance, of «sexual violence» they refer to harassment and rape, but not to femicides, since in their particular contexts these crimes are exceptional, in contrast to Latin American countries where these terrifying tragedies occur with alarming frequency³.

Similarly, violence against women in the political domain has become particularly visible and investigated in Latin America. This specific region has been identified to have substantial gender disparities in all social spheres. Made particularly profound it's gender gaps in the political participation field, evidenced by emblematic cases that reveal the risk associated with it. According to Piscopo, in the Latin American political arena specifically, violence against women is established on several mutually-dependent sociopolitical issues, such as the normalization of violence, the tainted justice systems, and structures that endorse impunity for perpetrators, mostly in cases of violence against women, and the constant strive of political parties to obstruct women's access to power⁴. Despite these adverse conditions, women's political activity has emerged in the region, which has led to the inception and development of various forms of violence that intimidate, silence, and isolate women, disturbing the effective exercise of their political rights. These conducts are known as violence against women in politics.

Although ample descriptions addressing violence against women in politics exist, Krook determined that most definitions of the phenomenon emphasize the following elements: (1) aggressive acts in the political sphere, directed mainly or to a large extent at women; (2) because they are women, that is, the acts are gender-based; and (3) they are carried out to discourage women's political participation, maintain conventional gender roles and diminish democratic institutions⁵. The distinction of these elements is fundamental because it allows the differentiation between two related but different concepts: political violence and violence against women in politics. While the broader concept aims to consummate merely political goals and as stated by Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo,

³ Lamas, Marta, *Dolor y política. Sentir, pensar y hablar desde el feminismo*, Estado de México, Océano, 2020, p. 15.

⁴ Piscopo, Jennifer M., "Los riesgos de sobrelegislar. Reflexiones acerca de las respuestas institucionales a la violencia contra las mujeres que hacen política en América Latina", en Freidenberg, Flavia y Valle Pérez Gabriela del (eds.), *Cuando hacer política te cuesta la vida. Estrategias contra la violencia política hacia las mujeres en América Latina*, Ciudad de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 2017, p. 76, <https://archivos.juridicas.unam.mx/www/bjv/libros/10/4735/6.pdf>

⁵ Krook, Mona Lena, "Violence against women in politics", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 28, num. 1, January, 2017, pp.74-88. p. 78, <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/violence-against-women-in-politics/>

obstructs the regular process of political life⁶, the latter, according to authors like Restrepo, is not associated with political ideologies or party affiliations of the victims, but to their gender⁷. It further denotes that aggressions, motivations, channels, and/or ramifications are related to the female condition of victims of violence, highlighting the need to categorize under the gender-based violence umbrella.

Freidenberg and Osornio outline the phenomenon as follows: situations of invisibility, discredit, or guilt generation such as: using the masculine pronoun in official documents, making pejorative comments about someone's abilities due to their gender, not paying attention to women's ideas or speeches, interruptions, misogynistic or gender-biased jokes, gossip or comments, lying about holding important meetings, denying women resources, sexual harassment, forcing women into submissive behaviours, not providing them with access to relevant information, physically assaulting them, attempting against the lives of their collaborators and/or family members, among others conducts⁸.

Therefore, it can be stated that the definitions are multiple and extensive since they refer to the spectrum of violence that can materialize in the political environment. This includes victims and spaces where the behaviours occur, the aggressor, persons, or entities that exert them, as well as the possible individual and collective implications of these manifestations. More specifically, the definition implies any act or practice, which background, means, or consequence that includes sexist or discriminatory components towards women for being women to affect one or several women, in the free and full exercise of their political rights or disrupt the plethora of activities related to access, performance or permanence in public office.

From a regulatory angle, as a result of the pivotal amendment to the Federal Constitution in 2020⁹, according to the Mexican legal system, the phenomenon presents the following

⁶ Bardall, Gabrielle et al., "How is political violence gendered? Disentangling motives, forms, and impacts", *Political Studies*, vol. 68, num. 4, 2020, p. 917, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0032321719881812>

⁷ Restrepo Sanín, Juliana, "Criminalizing violence against women in politics: innovation, diffusion, and transformation", *Politics and Gender*, vol.18, num.1, published by Cambridge University Press, for The Women and Politics Research Section of the American Political Science Association, 2020, pp. 1-32. p. 10, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/abs/criminalizing-violence-against-women-in-politics-innovation-diffusion-and-transformation/D940136A274FB47381EB286E88D2793B>

⁸ Freidenberg, Flavia y Osornio Guerrero, María Cristina, "Las consecuencias imprevistas de la participación: la violencia política hacia las mujeres en México", en Freidenberg, Flavia (ed.), *La representación política de las mujeres en México*, México, INE, UNAM, 2017, p. 278, <http://ru.juridicas.unam.mx/xmlui/handle/123456789/39172>

⁹ Diario Oficial de la Federación, Decreto por el que se reforman y adicionan diversas disposiciones de la Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia, de la Ley General de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales, de la Ley General del Sistema de Medios de Impugnación en Materia Electoral, de la Ley General de Partidos Políticos, de la Ley General en Materia de Delitos Electorales, de la Ley Orgánica de la Fiscalía General de la República, de la Ley Orgánica de Poder Judicial de la Federación y de la Ley General de Responsabilidades Administrativas, 13 de abril de 2020, https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5591565&fecha=13/04/2020#gsc.tab=0

components: (a) any action or omission, including tolerance; (b) that is gender-based, for being directed at a woman because she is a woman, for having a differentiated impact on women or disproportionately affecting women as a social group; (c) exercised within the public or private field; (d) with the purpose or result of limiting, impairing or annulling the effective exercise of women's political rights or the free and safe practice of a public function or decision-making position; (e) capable of revealing any form of violence and, (f) perpetrated by any person, entity or organization.

The reform represents a significant advancement to tackle the problem in Mexico since the phenomenon through its conceptualization. However, establishing a large descriptive catalogue of behaviours and determining the mechanisms and competent authorities to sanction and deal with possible cases, including the protection of victims, is insufficient to solidify a message of equality and non-tolerance towards violence against women in Mexico that is capable of transmuting from figurative to formal. Therefore, approaches to the problem from a qualitative perspective that are focused on the descriptive and observable aspects of the phenomenon are paramount to frame specific experiences within a panorama of greater interest and to generate new knowledge or different study approaches that allow the construction of more adequate strategies to holistically tackle the issue.

III. Methodology: A qualitative approach to understanding violence beyond numerical data

As stated before, the research's relevance manifests through the examination and analysis of scenarios of violence against women in politics in Durango in its different forms and expressions. It further describes its specificities, to flesh out the types, causes, and effects of this form of violence. The research methodology outlined in this paper was built expressly for this particular study, yet theoretically withholds the capacity for replication in other regions or federal entities.

The methodological frameworks employed include the literature review, case study and oral history, supported by the semi-structured long-interview technique. Using the perspective of particular situations to approach the phenomenon, a link between experience and narrative communicated by the informants as study subjects with

individual experiences nurtured the information. Moreover, the information is perceived with a certain sense of ownership through the assimilation of a shared history with a historical, structural, cultural, and systematically discriminated and violated reference group.

According to Stake, a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, understanding its activity within important circumstances¹⁰. Case studies allow a broad approach to the phenomena from qualitative perspectives to obtain a deeper and perhaps more nuanced understanding of them. Despite the tendency of gender-based violence against women to have a series of common features, we can assume that, as with any other phenomena, each case of violence is different or, in terms of Stake complex. Therefore, the usage of this methodology seems appropriate and key to a broader understanding of the phenomenon. Moreover, the technique seems extremely beneficial to understanding specific cases of violence due to its ability to contextualize the realities and ranges of a multidimensional social phenomenon such as gender-based violence against women.

Furthermore, oral history seeks the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data on events or specific cases, based on the individual experiences of people close to or related to the topic of inquiry. Hence, we can assume that applying both methodologies will help frame interviewees' experiences within the panorama of greater interest and generate new knowledge or different study approaches. Barela, Miguez, and García conceive the oral history method not only as a construction of the historical source but also as a possibility of recovering, from individual or group memory, a network of social ties in their everyday anonymity, recognised as historical attitude¹¹. This idea of everyday anonymity appears to be paramount to finding truth in the collective commonalities of experiences of violence within the scope of the research. Pondering over the element of everyday anonymity brings attention to another relevant aspect to consider, the relative visibility of the phenomenon. Thus far, the process of shining a light on the experiences of violence against women in politics has been slow and full of obstacles in Mexico, due to complexities due in large part to the historical and current social subordination of women

¹⁰ Stake, R.E, *Investigación con estudio de casos*, 2ª. ed., Madrid, Ediciones Morata, 1999, p. 11.

¹¹ Barela et. al., *Algunos apuntes sobre la historia oral*, 4ª. ed., Buenos Aires, Instituto Histórico de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Secretaría de Cultura, 2004, p. 7, https://www.comisionporlamemoria.org/archivos/archivo/archivo-oral/bibliografia/Barela_Miguez_conde.pdf

in patriarchal cultures¹². These limitations have inadvertently created a scarcity of information and a lack of in-depth case studies that analyse violence against women in the political field and represent a gargantuan challenge to overcome in future years to move forward towards substantial equality within the Mexican political environment.

Additionally, it is important to note the limitations that ethical issues related to the interview process pose for the research. The collection of information about participants and their experiences of gender-based violence in public office and the political environment of Durango carries procedural challenges. Particular attention and delicacy should be inscribed around sensitive topics of sexual harassment and any instance of gender-based violence throughout the interviewing process. Moreover, it is worth specifying the following: the research data set out in the last chapter intends to privilege the safety and integrity of the women interviewed, therefore, the anonymity of the informants is taken care of through the omission of names, in an effort to avoid a process of re-victimization. Within this context, the following mechanisms were implemented in the design of the methodological tools and data collection process to mitigate projected tensions and unexpected challenges: (1) Provide transparency regarding the nature of the research and its applications and implications. (2) Guarantee the informed consent of all participants involved in the research process before collecting data and information. (3) Respect confidentiality by not disclosing identities or potential means of identification regarding the individual responses of any of the participants, except when explicit consent is requested and provided accordingly. (4) Conduct interviews in an impartial way regarding the social, cultural, and political background of the participants and their experience of violence, sexual orientation and practices, mental health, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, and/or social condition. (5) Ensure sensitive information is adequately stored while conducting surveys, according to Durango Juárez State University guidelines and protocols. (6) Ensure adequate disposal of all information that could identify the participants after completing the research.

As a result of the acknowledgement of the particularities of the regional context, a research instrument specifically designed was applied to a motivated sample of women. This sample encompasses different age groups and ascriptions to political militancy, within a study perimeter sectioned into entities and observation dimensions. For

¹² Barraza Cárdenas, Paloma Cecilia, "Violence against women in politics in Mexico", en Flores Fernández, Zitlally (Coord.), *Temas Actuales Sobre Investigación Jurídica en Iberoamérica*, Durango, Universidad Juárez del Estado de Durango, Ediciones La Biblioteca, S.A. de C.V., 2021, pp. 351-367, <https://cigg-usal.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/temasactuales.pdf>

McCracken, qualitative analysis requires working with substantial amounts of information. The absence of such pieces of information can ascribe difficulty to the perception of subtleties and cognitive singularities of the interviewed person and can obstruct clarity behind the cultural logic in which these ideas arise¹³. Additionally, the object of the analysis is to determine categories, relationships, and overlaps that inform the interviewed person's vision of the world, in general, and of the particular topic¹⁴. As a result, McCracken proposes to follow five stages¹⁵, which constitute a framework of reference for data treatment obtained from the interviews, exemplified by the next graphics.

Graphic 1. Identifying analytical categories and relations

Legislation	Category	Literature review	Relation
Violence against women in politics can reveal itself in any form of violence ¹⁶ .	Forms of violence	Outlines psychological and emotional consequences for the victims, produced by any form of gender-based violence against women ¹⁷ .	Violence-consequences

Source: Own elaboration

¹³ McCracken, Grant, *The long interview*, United States of America, Sage Publications, Qualitative Research Method Series, 1988, p. 25.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

¹⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁶ Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia: LGAMVLV, art. 20 Bis, <https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGAMVLV.pdf>

¹⁷ Kuperberg, Rebecca, "Intersectional violence against women in politics", *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 14, num. 4, Cambridge University Press, 2018, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/intersectional-violence-against-women-in-politics/857778003CD6AB6448FC30DBC1F34416>

Graphic 2. Cultural categories

Literature review	Category	Questionary	Relation
<p>La no revictimización de las mujeres en México¹⁸.</p> <p>Rutas críticas en materia de atención a mujeres en situación de violencia en México¹⁹.</p> <p>Violencia de género en México: revictimización hacia las mujeres por falta de acceso a la justicia²⁰.</p>	Revictimization	<p>The constituent elements of revictimization were taken into account in the design of the questionnaire.</p> <p>Likewise, the team was trained on attention and accompaniment of victims of gender-based violence.</p>	<p>The Mexican cultural environment, influenced by a strong patriarchal tradition, produces multiple forms of structural discrimination. One of them is revictimization, therefore, it is necessary to take this category into account in the questionnaire application.</p>

Source: Own elaboration

¹⁸ Carranco, Dalia B, "La no revictimización de las mujeres en México", *Revista Digital Universitaria*, vol. 21, núm.. 4, Julio-agosto, 2020, https://www.revista.unam.mx/wp-content/uploads/a3_v21n4.pdf

¹⁹ UNODC, *Rutas críticas en materia de atención a mujeres en situación de violencia en México*, México: Oficina de Enlace y Parteneriado en México de la Oficina de las Naciones Unidas contra la Droga y el Delito, 2019, https://www.unodc.org/documents/mexicoandcentralamerica/2020/Mexico/Rutas_Criticas_en_materia_de_atencion_a_mujeres_en_situacion_de_violencia_en_Mexico_VF.pdf

²⁰Burgueño Duarte, Luz Berthila, "Violencia de género en México: revictimización hacia las mujeres por falta de acceso a la justicia", *Alegatos*, núm. 97, septiembre-diciembre, 2017, <http://alegatos.azc.uam.mx/index.php/ra/article/viewFile/408/396>

First, he treats each statement in the transcript in its own terms, that is, ignores its relationship to other aspects of the text. In this sense, the treatment of each useful utterance creates an observation. Second, he extracts remarks and develops them individually and expands further according to the evidence derived from the transcripts. Lastly, he analyses them against previous literature and cultural review. Third, he examines the interconnections of the second-level observations through their correlation to literature and cultural aspects. Fourth, he applies collective scrutiny to the remarks to determine patterns of consistency and contradictions. The fifth stage uses these patterns and themes to execute a final analysis²¹.

Based on McCracken's methodology, we first conducted several transcript reviews to highlight the statements with valuable elements for the investigation. Once the team identified the fragments of information relevant to the case study, we proceeded to make punctual observations and build upon them individually concerning the evidence. Once this information was fleshed out, the information was analysed regarding gender perspective theoretical contributions, followed by identifying the appropriate interconnections. Finally, the process of analysing the information recollected concluded by critically detecting coincidence patterns and contradictions among the testimonials. Correspondingly, a list of possible analytical categories was raised and refined through a second iterative review of coincidence patterns and contradictions for further development. Subsequently, through a new review of coincidence patterns, a matrix was designed to define the finalist categories, the statements to be analysed, their dimensions, and various indicators. Finally, a conclusive analytical process was carried out illustrated by the following graphic.

Graphic 3. Empirical Matrix

Category	Interview	Question	Data	Dimensions	Indicators
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²¹ *Idem.*

Women as perpetrators	E1	7.1	"...I think it is very sad when you say: it came from another woman, more than from a man."	Political and Factional	Social media political party
	E8	2	"... unfortunately I have had more female obstacles on the political road than male obstacles..."	Factional and Political	Political party The State Congress

Source: Own elaboration

Thus, based on the data provided by the testimonies and their link with the gender theoretical foundation of the research, three main analytical categories, and nine subcategories were selected. One of these categories is denominated female misogyny and refers to violence against women carried out by other women in the political context, and will be the sole focus of the research analysis in the following sections.

IV. Findings and discussion: female misogyny as violence against women in politics

According to Srivastava, Chaudhury and Sahu, the word misogyny derives from the ancient Greek word *mī̄sogunīā*, the meaning of which reveals hatred towards women²².

²² Srivastava et. al., "Misogyny, feminism, and sexual harassment", *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, vol. 26, num. 2, July-December, 2017, p. 111, <https://www.industrialpsychiatry.org/article.asp?issn=0972-6748;year=2017;volume=26;issue=2;spage=111;epage=113;aulast=Srivastava>

The Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy defines the word misogyny as aversion to women²³, without referring specifically to who is the object of that emotion of rejection or tediousness. Whereas the Cambridge Dictionary offers two meanings of the term: the first, aligned with the previous one, refers to misogyny as feelings of hatred towards women; and the second indicates the belief in male superiority to women²⁴. This last definition expresses a meaningful link between hatred towards women and credence in assumed masculine dominance. However, the definition does not explicitly indicate the sex of the person who experiences hate, but it does establish a conceptual relationship between misogyny as a social phenomenon and the ideological pillar of sexism as a correlated factor.

Similarly, other literature presents a terminological divergence. Some outline misogyny as denoted solely based on its semantic core: the feeling of hatred and, to whom the expression is directed: women. Other more specific interpretations assemble the implicit link in the Cambridge Dictionary definition, by pointing to men as responsible for containing and executing the multiple and diverse forms of animosity towards women. For example, Barker and Jurasz conceive the concept as "the manifestation of hostility towards women because they are women"²⁵. Rottweiler and Gill conceptualize it in terms of hatred, devaluation, hostility, or prejudice toward women without considering subtle sexism and gender bias in favour of men²⁶. For Bosch, Ferrer, and Gili the concept attributes to the attitudinal hatred, aversion, and contempt of men towards women²⁷. Similarly, according to Varela, the term refers to hatred, rejection, aversion, and contempt of men toward women and, in general, toward everything related to the feminine²⁸.

Although doctrinal definitions are not conclusive about who engages in hateful behaviours towards women, one line of thought mainly identifies men as perpetrators, while other studies explore the concept more deeply and reject the idea that misogyny is carried out exclusively by men and consider the possibility of it being carried out by women as well. For example, for Kaul, even though a conventional and basic conception

²³ Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, Edición del Tricentenario, 2021, <https://dle.rae.es/misoginia>

²⁴ Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/es/diccionario/ingles/misogyny>

²⁵ Barker, Kim & Jurasz, Olga, "Online Misogyny: A Challenge for Digital Feminism?", *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 72, num. 2, spring-summer, Dynamics of global feminism, Columbia University, 2019, p. 97, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26760834>

²⁶ Rottweiler Bettina & Gill, Paul, "Measuring individuals' misogynistic attitudes: development and validation of the misogyny scale", *PsyArXiv Preprints*, 2021, p. 5, <https://psyarxiv.com/6f829>

²⁷ Bosch, Esperanza et. al., *Historia de la misoginia*, Barcelona, Anthropos Editorial, 1999, p. 9.

²⁸ Varela, Nuria, "La nueva misoginia", *Revista Europea de Derechos Fundamentales*, vol. 19, 1er semestre, 2012, p. 36, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=4055493>

of misogyny is related to men's loathing and dislike of women, misogyny can also be assumed by women²⁹. Furthermore, Ussher conceptualizes all misogynistic beliefs and practices as a potential in all men, yet acknowledges that women can also embrace these beliefs through self-deprecation or self-objectification³⁰. In the words of Miranda and Agudelo, women can hate each other and incur sexist outbursts, with an aggressiveness comparable to that of sexist men³¹. These definitions show a broader spectrum of the term by conceiving the possibility of manifestations beyond men towards women, but also as a tool for self-aggression and assaults between women.

During the analytical process of the empirical phase of this study, coincidences with three aspects of the concept of misogyny were found: a) as acts of hostility carried out by men against women; b) as an instrument of self-induced psychological damage by women themselves; and c) as a way to attack other women. The last one, as previously mentioned, was established as its own analytical category due to the identification of comments falling under the same umbrella in all of the interview transcripts. Female Misogyny is considered by Miranda and Agudelo as the predisposition of women to delegitimize and hate each other as a form of social and predominant valorization of the masculine³². Moreover, one of the interviewed women used the term female gendered misogyny³³ as such during the application of the research instrument. Therefore, the concept's incorporation as an analytical category for the research was considered essential moving forward.

According to Lagarde, what we call female misogyny, or what she refers to as misogyny among women, manifests itself in very different ways than broader definitions that denounce males as the sole perpetrators, and potentially result in different outcomes. For instance, women may obtain value from the devaluation of other women, that is, by nullifying, disqualifying, ignoring, attacking, discriminating, exploiting, and harming other women³⁴. In the matrix extracted from the data banks of the interviews, various

²⁹ Kaul, Nitasha, "The misogyny of authoritarians in contemporary democracies", *International Studies Review*, vol. 23, num. 4, 2021, pp. 1619-1645. p. 1622, <https://academic.oup.com/isr/article/23/4/1619/6303451>

³⁰ Ussher, Jane M., "Misogyny", en Naples, Nancy A. (ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, Wiley Blackwell, 2016, p. 1, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315786004_Misogyny

³¹ Miranda Bustamante, María de los Ángeles y Agudelo Vizcaíno, María Fernanda, "Mujer contra mujer: misoginia femenina en comentarios de noticias en Facebook", *Revista de Comunicación*, vol. 20, núm. 2, 2020, p. 244, <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=589469276014>

³² *Idem*.

³³ The interviews were conducted in Spanish, she used the term "misoginia de género femenino".

³⁴ Lagarde, Marcela, "La construcción de humanas", en *Estudios básicos de derechos humanos*, San José, IIDH, 1996, IV. p. 34.

statements concerning this type of aggression flared up the analysis. To expand further, some of the more succinct testimonies are listed below:

"[...] I have a situation specifically within the City Council, to which it was always said that I had arrived for having slept with three political party figures... and the most unfortunate thing is that they were comments from men, but also comments from women [...] I think it is very sad when you say: it came from another woman, more than from a man."

"I remember in the last campaign, all the candidates for the district were women and I stated: «I hope we respect each other, I hope there is a civility pact» [...] but no, one of my colleagues [...] who was in another political party, also fighting for the district that I won said: «we don't want princesses», «we don't want [...] queens, princesses», something like that... that is, it's not that I'm not prepared or it's not that I don't comply with some issues, it's that I'm a Princess, I'm a queen... I thought, well, I mean, how sad, I still felt a lot of violence during this campaign."

"[...] at that moment³⁵, for example, I thought: Where are the women of my party? Who could support me for this position? It was my right. Well, no, there was no reaction from any woman".

"Oh, they gave her the candidacy as a substitute Congresswoman, surely because she's the party leader's girlfriend [...] the saddest thing is that it comes from women [...] sometimes the issue is women against women, and that's when it hurts the most."

"[...] we also face female gendered misogyny [...] when we arrive to power, the attitude is exacerbated [...] «why you?», and «you have to lose because I have to win» [...] we struggle so much, instead of elevating other women, we have to bring them down to empower ourselves [...] and we lose ourselves, we lose those narratives of sisterhood and empathy [...] unfortunately I have had more female obstacles on the political road than male obstacles [...] and holding office I have come across more problems and bumps with women than with men."

From the previous transcripts, three subcategories were extracted: a) women as aggressors; b) gendered attack forms; and c) sisterhood: between illusion and utopia. The

³⁵ The interviewee refers to the moment after the refusal to designate her as party leader, when it was her prerogative according to the party statutes.

following section defines these categories and explains them further, highlighting some relevant notes extracted from the results of the qualitative analysis.

a) Women as aggressors

First, it is cardinal to highlight that none of the definitions of violence against women in politics explored in the second section of this essay points to men as the only potential perpetrators of this form of violence. Furthermore, Mexican legislation indicates that any person, group, entity, or organization can commit this type of violence.³⁶ As Gentry and Sjoberg state, women, just like men, can perpetrate violence and engage in political violence acts for different reasons —strategy, ideology, and personal or social grievances—. Women, like men, may find violent behaviour as the best course for their political agendas³⁷. Nevertheless, they also find it important to acknowledge that: “violent women are violent people, who, like all people, violent or not, live in a gendered world”³⁸.

The concept of the gendered world is particularly useful to anchor the idea that violence does not exist, happen, or manifest in isolation and that gendered dynamics are circumscribed in human daily lives and are materialised in politics as much as any other part of civilian life³⁹. Hence, for political violence, the gendered world functions as an accomplice and instrument of the oppressive patriarchal system and affects women disproportionately in all social spheres, including politics. Women can exercise violence against other women, but they do so within a system that promotes and facilitates it. The aforementioned implies a bias —whether conscious or unconscious— that informs the understanding of men's and women's social positions in the context of their political rights. Therefore, women may become a vehicle, perhaps even involuntarily, to damage other women. Through this conceptual understanding and gendered world lens, it is paramount to highlight the relevance of consistently distinguishing women as channels of aggression, rather than aggressors. However, some testimonies reflect a less nuanced understanding of the issue. For instance:

³⁶Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida Libre de Violencia: LGAMVLV, art. 20 Bis, <https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/LGAMVLV.pdf>

³⁷ Gentry, Caron E. & Sjoberg, Laura, *Beyond mothers, monsters, whores. Thinking about women's violence in global politics*, London, Zed Books, 2015, p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

³⁹ Kern, Leslie, *Feminist city: claiming space in the man-made world*, Verso Books, 2021.

[...] I think it is very sad when you say: it came from another woman, more than from a man." [...]

[...] sometimes the issue is women against women, and that's when it hurts the most."

[...] unfortunately, I have had more female obstacles on the political road than male obstacles [...]

These statements reflect a tendency to identify women as offenders without considering the constant risk and vulnerability factors that, women as a collective, face in this gendered world. The foregoing does not imply absolving or diluting women's responsibility when engaging in misogynistic attitudes or acts. Moreover, this conceptual approach does not champion to deny the configuration of this phenomenon as an important part of the issue of violence against women in politics, but it does rally the need to approach, study and analyse it from a gendered perspective within the scope of global, systemic, and unisolated dynamics, that is, taking into account the socio-economic-cultural context. This would explain how concrete situations of violence occur differently across spatial and temporal scales.

b) Gendered attack forms

Bardall, Bjarnegård and, Piscopo argue that political violence can be gendered in multiple ways. In doing so, they identify gendered motives, forms, and impacts faced by women in the political field. According to their research, gender forms highlight that gender roles and stereotypes define "how men and women perpetrate and experience political violence, regardless of whether gender appears in the motive". That is, men and women confront violence in a differentiated way, which establishes the aggression manifestation⁴⁰.

[...] it was always said that I had arrived for having slept with three political party figures [...]

[...] «we don't want princesses» [...]

[...] "Oh, they gave her the candidacy as a substitute Congresswoman, surely because she's the party leader's girlfriend [...]

⁴⁰ Bardall, Gabrielle *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 917 y 918.

As can be noted in the previous statements, regardless of the aggressor, the motive, or the impact of the aggression, when women suffer attacks in a political context, gender stereotypes are often used as a channel to inflict damage. Based on the above, we can make the following observations:

First: narratives related to sexuality and corporeality are used as an instrument of attack to reaffirm stereotypes and the objectification of women, impacting their personal development at different levels. For example, according to Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr, sexual objectification affects women disproportionately in matters related to mental health and well-being⁴¹. Moreover, this gendered issue has negative externalities beyond the individual sphere by hindering women's emancipation as a social group. For Bartky, psychological oppression produced by sexual objectification – which leads to the identification of those who suffer it solely with their body and separates them from the essential attributes of their humanity, can produce impacts outside the mind. For instance, people may be ostracised from the cultural apparatus under their oppressive situation through inferiority messages sent to those who should occupy an inferior place in society, thus being banned from the community participation process that consolidates the values that are supposed to conform part of their identities⁴².

Second: in addition to perpetuating stereotypes, the narratives employ the fact that women exercise a sexual life as a punitive tool. In the words of Lagarde, there is misogyny in relationships between women when they disqualify and judge themselves with the measuring stick of sexuality⁴³. For Litam and Speciale, the presence of sexual currency is juxtaposed with another degrading social message of women with open sexuality, for which they are marginalised through slut shaming, revealed through a double standard that stigmatizes women's sexuality, but flatters men with the same type of manifestations⁴⁴. According to Ringrose and Harvey, while there is an intense sexual regulation on women's bodies that tends to associate their sexuality or bodily displays with shame and lack of

⁴¹ Szymanski et. al., "Sexual Objectification of Women: Advances to Theory and Research", *The Counseling Psychologist*, vol. 39, num.1, 2011, p. 8, <https://www.apa.org/education-career/ce/sexual-objectification.pdf>

⁴² Bartky, Sandra Lee, *Femininity and domination. Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*, New York, Routledge, 1990, p. 30.

⁴³ Lagarde, Marcela, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Litam, Stacey Diane A. & Speciale, Megan, "Deconstructing Sexual Shame: Implications for Clinical Counselors and Counselor Educators", *Journal of Counseling Sexology & Sexual Wellness: Research, Practice, and Education*, vol. 3, num. 1, 2021, p. 16, <https://digitalcommons.unf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=jcssw>

self-respect, men can be rewarded and gain social value in the same scenario⁴⁵. In other words, society punishes women for behaviours -alleged or real- that challenge the confining stereotype of repressing, hiding or being ashamed of their sexual freedom. This same mechanism translates into a form of discrimination for women since it works oppositely for men, whose behaviours with the same or similar connotations are socially accepted, condoned, or glorified.

Both observations denote estrangement from the necessary considerations to analyse situations of violence in our gendered world. A world where women are stigmatised based on their sexuality before assessing their capacities, where sexual violence is so frequent that it is normalised, where there is a high probability of sexual coercion due to power asymmetries, and where in addition to attacking with these comments, the possibility of revictimising a previous situation of violence is often ubiquitous.

c) Sisterhood: between illusion and utopia

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word sisterhood as "a strong feeling of friendship and support among women who are involved in actions to improve women's rights"⁴⁶. For Lagarde, this term implies a feminist alliance between women to change life and the world with a just and libertarian sense⁴⁷. Although this is a feminist concept, we identified through this study that a lack of perceived sisterhood in politics exists and that a utopian notion based on an illusion of sisterhood persists in the interviewees' collective consciousness. This statement does not intend to perpetuate the non-existence of sorority, but only reflects the empirical experiences of women as found within the interviews. Such arguments may respond to a reduced scope that is representative particularly -if not exclusively- of the Mexican political context on a large scale. Statements such as the following emanate from the declarations of the interviewed women:

[...] I think it is very sad when you say: it came from another woman, more than from a man.

⁴⁵ Ringrose, Jessica & Harvey, Laura, "Boobs, back-off, six packs and bits: Mediated body parts, gendered reward, and sexual shame in teens' sexting images", *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, Routledge, vol. 29, num. 2, 2015, p. 214, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10304312.2015.1022952?journalCode=ccon20>

⁴⁶ Cambridge Dictionary, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sisterhood>

⁴⁷ Lagarde y de los Ríos, Marcela, "Pacto entre mujeres sororidad", *Aportes*, núm. 25, p. 126, <https://biblioteca.efid.uy/document/188>

[...] all the candidates for the district were women and I stated: «I hope we respect each other, I hope there is a civility pact» [...] but no [...] I mean, how sad [...]

[...] Where are the women of my party? Who could support me for this position? It was my right. Well, no, there was no reaction from any woman.

[...] the saddest thing is that it comes from women [...] sometimes the issue is women against women, and that's when it hurts the most.

[...] we struggle so much, instead of elevating other women, we have to bring them down to empower ourselves [...] and we lose ourselves, we lose those narratives of sisterhood and empathy [...] unfortunately I have had more female obstacles on the political road than male obstacles [...] and holding office I have come across more problems and bumps with women than with men.

From the previous fragments, we extract the existence of certain expectations and their corresponding setbacks about the behavioural exchange of women in the political environment or their relation to it. The women interviewed tended to emphasize situations that classify other women as perpetrators of aggression and reveal feelings of distress or annoyance in the face of these antagonistic scenarios. This sisterhood illusion fabricates differentiated utopian expectations of violence and non-violence based on a gender-biased understanding. This criticism is reflected from two angles: the first feeds on sexist stereotypes and supports the normalization of violence perpetrated by men, and the second is nourished by feminist expectations and is reflected in an extrapolation of the violence committed by women.

Violence exerted by women causes surprise and is markedly verbalised in the interviews. A correlational explanation of the emphasis on these situations can be explained through the first angle outlined above: stereotypes influence expectations generated around people. On the one hand, the aggression coming from their woman peers breaks the hegemonic archetype of good, maternal, understanding, kind, quiet, respectful, submissive women, and is configured and understood as a disruptive event. As Gentry and Sjoberg argue, women's violence is often examined in terms of sex and gender-related expectations, feeding the idea that women should not be violent. Based on this principle, violent women are considered not only as "bad" but also as "bad women", that

is, exercising violence causes them to perform their "role as women" poorly.⁴⁸ On the other hand, violence from men is harmonised with the archetype of aggressive, abusive, impulsive, predatory men, etc., and is configured as a habitual event. According to Lagarde, the position of social superiority of men in the patriarchal culture empowers them to harm women in a legitimate, normal, and acceptable way⁴⁹.

The production of feminist expectations as a second angle causes the romanticization of the dynamics between women in the political context. Expectations of sorority foster the utopian idea of sisterhood: cordiality is expected between women under a tacit agreement of empathy and thus creating a perception of safety among women in the political environment. Subsequently, when this implicit understanding is infringed, it causes differentiated reactions to the breach of this fictitious pact. According to Valcárcel, relationships between women are complex and are crossed by difficulties derived from different powers, hierarchies, supremacism, competition, and rivalry. This, from encounters and conflicts of the false belief in natural feminine solidarity⁵⁰.

Despite identifying these theoretical, imaginary, and practical inconsistencies through the analysis of the information collected, the intention diverts from ruling out or discrediting sisterhood as a helpful tool to combat stereotypes and gender-based violence in the political sphere. On the contrary, it is fundamental to establish new concepts within the denotation of the term to clarify its manifestations since they can be problematic and feed back into the patriarchal misogynist system within the gendered world so it can better serve equality goals. Through this critical approach to the issue, we identified the following challenge in the study perimeter of this research: In this mirage effect of sisterhood, the intrinsic expectation that there exists -or should exist- absolute and *de facto* sisterhood among women in the political sphere, may cause a disproportionate vilification process of women who act as vehicles of aggression. This phenomenon has the ultimate potential to sustain and reproduce limiting gender archetypes of women's roles and participation in political life under equal circumstances with men.

As can be inferred from the previous reflections, the sisterhood illusion produces behavioural expectations in this context. Moreover, these expectations have the

⁴⁸ Gentry, Caron E. & Sjoberg, Laura, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Lagarde, Marcela, *Género y feminismo. Desarrollo humano y democracia*, 2^a. ed., España, Instituto de la Mujer, 1997, pp. 74 y 75. <https://desarmandolacultura.files.wordpress.com/2018/04/lagarde-marcela-genero-y-feminismo.pdf>

⁵⁰ Valcárcel, Amelia, cited by, Lagarde y de los Ríos, Marcela, "Pacto entre mujeres sororidad", *op. cit.*, p. 125.

potential to reproduce gender stereotypes. Subsequently, the reproduction of gender stereotypes may cause the distancing between the ideological construct of sisterhood and its quotidian reality, which implies its constant configuration in a utopian form.

V. Limitations and Conclusions

Within the specific framework of our case study, the informants identified various attacks carried out by other women, which constitute violence against women in politics when they contain gender elements. However, this identification does not consider the instance within the scope of broader components of insecurity and vulnerability of women in patriarchal societies. This situation does not imply attenuating or exempting the responsibility of women in the perpetuation of misogynistic acts, nor does it conceal the significance of their participation as a substantial part of the exertion of this type of violence. Nevertheless, it does constrain its analysis from a gender perspective and in a systemic and not isolated way, that is, to consider social, economic, and cultural factors specific to the context of each country and even each region to improve its understanding.

Gender forms tend to emphasize the social roles of men and women, determining the instruments of attack and impacting the way of divergently experiencing the different types of violence in the political environment. In this situation, regardless of the aggressor, the reason, or the impact of the attacks, when women are victims of political violence, leveraging gender stereotypes constitutes one of the most common ways to inflict the intended damage.

Lastly, it is necessary to understand the constraints regarding the context, the scope, and the reach of the study because, like any research work, this contribution has certain biases and limitations. Initially, it is worth noting that studying this particular topic was addressed without ignoring the existence and importance of the broadest theoretical conception of the gender construct as a spectrum, whose dimensions encompass the bodies, identities, and expressions of people beyond the male-female reduction but was tackled primarily from a binary perspective. The above is explained partly by the deficit of theoretical framework and context-specific research that encompasses a more nuanced acknowledgement of gender within the political environment at both a regional and

national scale in Mexico. Further research could focus on more transversal experiences of women at the intersections of multiple gender identities and sexual expressions. However, a quantum leap in political participation from a variety of women is necessary for fathoming those experiences from a qualitative analysis, such as the one conducted.

Likewise, the research is anchored theoretically and empirically outside the domains of the intersectional world and does not specifically disentangle the experiences of women who find themselves layered between different systems of oppression. Thus, it is paramount to underline the need for and importance of expansive research, whose incorporation and analysis of various categories such as race, ethnicity, social class, age, sexual orientation, religion, and disabilities, among others, allow a greater understanding of women as a heterogeneous group subject to experiencing systemic, intersecting, and complementary violence.

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