

Framing Gender in Romanian 2019's Presidential Elections. A Comparison between Broadsheet and Tabloid Content Newspapers

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Abstract. As women are more and more represented in all domains, a political arena with a feminine presence becomes of great interest. By building off prior work on the same topic (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013), the present paper aims to analyze the way Viorica Dăncilă and Klaus Iohannis, as political candidates, are portrayed within 2019 Presidential elections' campaign. The inquiry is conducted by quantitatively and qualitatively comparing quality and tabloid content. The premise of the study is twofold. First, the article investigates if there is a gender bias in the news coverage of the two main candidates for the Presidential. Second, the aim is to identify if there are differences between quality and tabloid content. The data show that the woman candidate is mostly visible in tabloid media, that men's topics are predominant, and that the man candidate is presented as being more viable for the office.

Keywords: Gender in politics; Media framing; Presidential elections; Quality and Tabloid content.

Lyties rėminimas 2019 m. Rumunijos prezidento rinkimuose. Analitinių ir bulvarinių laikraščių turinio palyginimas

Santrauka. Moterys vis aktyviau dalyvauja įvairiose srityse, todėl jų įsitraukimas į politiką kelia didelį susidomėjimą. Remiantis ankstesniu straipsniu šia tema (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013), šiame straipsnyje siekiama išanalizuoti, kaip Viorica Dăncilă ir Klaus Iohannis 2019 m. prezidento rinkimų kampanijos metu yra vaizduojami kaip politiniai kandidatai. Tyrimas atliekamas kiekybiškai ir kokybiškai lyginant kokybišką ir bulvarinį turinį. Tyrime keliama dvejopa prielaida. Pirmą, straipsnyje tiriama, ar naujienų apžvalgoje du pagrindiniai kandidatai prezidento rinkimuose yra tendencingai vaizduojami lyties atžvilgiu. Antra, siekiama nustatyti, ar yra skirtumų tarp kokybiško ir bulvarinio turinio. Duomenys rodo, kad kandidatė labiausiai pastebima bulvarinėje spaudoje, kad vyriškosios temos dominuoja ir, kad kandidatas pristatomas kaip turintis daugiau šansų užimti postą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: lyties politikoje; rėminimas žiniasklaidoje; prezidento rinkimai; kokybiškas ir bulvarinis turinys.

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Introduction

Building off prior work that has examined variations in the media coverage of the most important Romanian men and women candidates for the European Parliament, in 2009 (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013), ten years later, the present study aims to re-evaluate the way politicians, men and women, are presented within media. The research conducts a comparative analysis on the way the main candidates for the 2019 Romanian Presidential election, Viorica Dăncilă (the woman candidate) and Klaus Iohannis (the man candidate), are framed within media coverage. By mixing quantitative and qualitative content analysis on 80 newspapers' articles (48 from broadsheet media and 32 from tabloid media), the study intends both to investigate if there is a gender bias in the news coverage of the two main candidates and to identify differences between broadsheet (or quality) and tabloid contents.

The 2019 Romanian Presidential election is notable particularly for two reasons. First, it is the first time after the fall of communism that a woman (Viorica Dăncilă, former Prime Minister from January 2018 to November 2019) has made it to the second round of elections for the highest office in the state. Second, the entire election campaign has been quite atypical, as the incumbent President Iohannis rejected a direct debate with his opponent throughout the campaign.

Being a post-communist country, Romania has deep-rooted mentalities that are reflected both in the role and status of women and men in society and in the media. Gender equality describes equal opportunities for both women and men and their presence equally in the public spheres, for example, in political parties or parliaments but also the implementation of gender equality policies, such as gender mainstreaming or gender quotas in institutions (Kantola & Verloo, 2018). Despite this, because of stereotypical visions and still predominantly patriarchal conceptions, gender inequalities are still evident (Ulickaitė, 2017). Research in the field of gender equality in Romania is continuously developing and becoming a very important topic. The existing studies compare Romania with Hungary (Norocel, 2018) and Bulgaria (Chiva, 2009; Chiva, 2018) by emphasizing their lowest rank on women's political representation in the national Parliament and by underlining their different views on gender equality (Raicheva-Stover & Ibroscheva, 2014). These studies highlight that, in Romania, politics is still a "men's field" (Mihalache & Drăgulin, 2016, p. 52), a "boyzone" (Ross, 2017, p. 31), and a gender-incongruent profession for women (Bligh et al., 2012).

The relevance of the study is threefold. First, the contribution lies especially in focusing on a post-communist country that has not been very much a subject of scholarly research. Starting from some of the most relevant existing studies dealing with Romanian women politicians (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013; Cmeciu & Pătruț, 2014; Fischer, 2016; Roventă-Frumușani & Irimescu, 2018; Rodat, 2019; Băluță, 2020), this work aims to broaden the spectrum by focusing on the gendered nature of the election coverage in four national newspapers, two with quality content and two with tabloid content. Second, considering that the literature comparing broadsheet and tabloid frameworks is scarce, the present

research proposes to fill in this gap. Finally, by drawing from Dan & Iorgoveanu's (2013) methodology, this research targets to validate and to extend it. Thus, besides using the horse-race frames and issue trivialization (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013), variables related to the visibility of the articles within the newspaper and to intrinsic characteristics (as genre, tone, gender of the topic) have been added.

The originality of the work derives from the interdisciplinarity of the scientific approach, as merging political, journalistic, linguistic, and communication-theoretical perspectives. For the political field, the relevance derives from the comparative and contrastive reflections on the two opponents from a variety of perspectives, such as the horse race, the viability for the presidential office or the analysis of the women and men issues. From a journalistic point of view, the study provides an overall picture of the diversity of the genres that deal with the political issue. From the linguistic perspective, this article examines the language used by journalists in their texts but also in statements of the political actors. Regarding communications theory, we use the framing approach.

Theoretical Framework

The Framing Theory

Agenda setting theory emphasizes the role of media in attaching saliency to certain issues through a better location within a newspaper or more broadly in the news (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Kim et al., 2012; McCombs & Mauro, 1977). Media succeeds in telling people what to think about (McCombs et al., 1997). As part of the agenda setting theory, framing implies the process of including and, reversely, excluding certain information on a given topic (Ryan, 2013). Framing gives the public the opportunity to see how the media also shapes the general public's interpretation of events, determining how the audience thinks about them. This interpretation of agenda-setting corresponds to constructivism, a view in which "social reality is assumed to be actively constructed and not discovered by people" (Stasiak-Jazukiewicz et al., 2020).

Frames, as patterns of interpretation used in processing information in an efficient manner and in influencing audiences, are considered to have a dual life by being present both at the level of political discourse (media frames) and in a person's mind (individual frames) (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2015). Without predicting how the readers are going to act, frames offer a context of meaning and understanding for a content that is still malleable (Lorino et al., 2017). While frames in communication imply the use of certain words and images, the frames of thought refer to the way a certain information or situation is understood. The framing effect is born through the influence of the former on the latter (Ryan, 2013).

Framing aims to explain how media can affect the readers (Burgers et al., 2016). The traditional view on framing theory states the need to select an aspect of the reality and give it saliency (Entman, 1993) by emphasizing a dichotomy between the framing device (linguistic packaging of a frame) and the reasoning device (conceptual content). The novel

view combines the language type, composed of metaphors, hyperboles and irony, with the conceptual content (Burgers et al., 2016).

The literature mentions two types of frames in communication. First, the emphasis frame refers to a central organizing idea of the content, to how the issue is thematically and how the content is being communicated. Second, the equivalency frame reflects on the method of communication by presenting different equivalent words or phrases (Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018; Cacciatore et al., 2016; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2014). The framing theory also aims to better understand how certain frames of an issue can guide the public opinion and exert an influence on preferences (Shulman & Sweitzer, 2018).

Political media coverage

Politics is considered a masculinized domain and thus giving birth to diverse media stereotypes (Meeks, 2012). As media has traditionally treated men and women differently, the nowadays gender frames used for political candidates seem to follow the same form (Ryan, 2013). While studying how women candidates are covered by newspapers during election campaigns, Gilardi and Wuest (2017) stress that the large amount of research on this issue concentrates either on the number of news items a certain candidate gets or on the content of the news, by emphasizing how the candidate is portrayed. Gender bias in the media can also be a barrier to women's representation in politics (Hooghe et al., 2015). According to Falk (2008), media bias theory highlights the fundamental role of the media in election campaigning by framing, shaping, ignoring or presenting candidates to potential voters. Thus, a different portrayal of women and men politicians could be disadvantageous to women politicians (Ross et al. 2013).

One of the most important patterns is that women candidates tend to receive less attention than men candidates (Kahn, 1994a; Rohrbach et al., 2020; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). Regarding the media coverage of women and men politicians, Hooghe et al., (2015) highlight two patterns. The first refers to the amount of media coverage they receive, and the second to the content of their political media coverage. By being considered biased due to an unequal amount of coverage for men and women, media find it more efficient to focus on viable candidates, namely men, who are standing in winnable seats and on top of their political parties' lists (Luhiste & Banducci, 2016). Thus, studies indicate that men are more likely to receive a higher amount, more prominent and more positive media coverage (Escobar-Lemmon et al., 2016). Women are underrepresented in positions of power and are not featured in the news as often as men (Trimble et al., 2021; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). In the case where women are represented in political news, the optics are often gendered (Vavrus, 2002). This is a form of framing effect (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2018), which has an implication for how the audience perceives gender in general (Rao & Taboada, 2021).

In the context in which women tend to be stereotypically associated with private life and men with public life (Chiva, 2009; O'Neill et al., 2016), findings underline that women politicians are covered prominently in tabloid newspapers (Dan & Iorgoveanu

2013). For instance, in their study about Germany's 2005 Bundestag Election Campaign, Semetko & Boomgaarden (2007) have noticed that the tabloid newspaper *Bild* has featured Merkel more often than Schröder. Relying on the existing literature, the first hypothesis is the following:

H1. *The man candidate is more present in quality media, while the woman candidate is more present in tabloid content.*

Hypothesizing that women are less viable candidates than men (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013), the literature also underlines that media tend to disadvantage women politicians by using a more negative tone (Patterson, 2016) and by presenting them as being out of place (Ward, 2016). These findings are contrasted by other studies showing that women candidates do not receive a more negative coverage as compared to their men opponents (Dimitrova, 2014), or that they were even more positively presented than men (Luhiste & Banducci, 2016). Given these two perspectives, we infer that:

H2. *A more negative tone is developed within the tabloid framework (and) in the case of the woman candidate.*

In terms of the content, the approached categories are the issues, the horse race, and the traits of the candidate, and trivialization (Gilardi & Wuest, 2017; Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013). While women issues are related to compassion for different society concerns, family matters, health, education, environment, and social welfare, men issues are related to economy, defense, affairs, military, and foreign policy (Heldman et al., 2005; Major & Coleman, 2008). Issue domains are deeply gendered in politics. (Meeks, 2012). Related to traits, voters expect good politicians and leaders to possess more traditionally men traits (strength, confidence, independence, and aggressiveness) than the women ones (warmth, emotionality, honesty, altruism, and friendliness), and men traits are considered more important as candidates run for higher office (Meeks, 2012). Women candidates are portrayed as being rather passive, by discussing their position on a certain situation, than focusing on action (Ryan, 2013).

Media texts easily associate women with domestic issues, emphasize their physical appearance (Kahn, 1994b; Lundell & Ekström, 2008), "their bodies and not their minds" (Ross 2017, p. 57), and continue to portray women by relying on stereotypes and predictable gender conventions (Raicheva-Stover & Ibroscheva, 2014; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). They are more likely to shape women's opinions on "compassion issues" (Bligh et al. 2012, p. 561), such as childcare and education rather than on prominent topics like economy, national security, and military affairs (Wasburn & Wasburn, 2011). Since the broadsheet journalism seems to be more analytical and hard news oriented, such as politics and economics (Skovsgaard, 2014; Palau-Sampio, 2016), the third hypothesis states that:

H3. *Broadsheet media emphasize more men topics, while tabloid content emphasizes compassion issues.*

While voters' opinion on candidates is induced by the way political actors are framed, metaphors, as rhetorical devices that simplify the way of understanding an input, are

believed to play an important role in shaping cognition and political attitudes (Cassese, 2018). Metaphors are believed to generate new insight for the communication debate and, based on the Theory of Moral Reasoning, they are critical and irreplaceable for the political discourse (Brugman et al., 2017). As metaphors are considered very convincing and arousing in impacting the audience, the same works for hyperboles and irony (Burgers et al., 2016). Horse race (strategy frames), by approaching the language of competition, of war and sport, is measured by the position of the candidate in public opinion polls, the resources for the campaign, and the viability to run for a certain office (Dan & Iorgovanu, 2013; Iyengar et al., 2004). Horse race aspects are focused on political campaign especially when women are involved (Ryan, 2013).

Media coverage is believed to be gendered in quality rather than in quantity (Fowler & Lawless, 2009). By ignoring gender neutrality when assessing candidates, voters are considered to evaluate both the ability of politicians to handle political matters and their personal character (Meeks, 2012). While, during elections, especially the presidential ones, media tend to abound in news on personal life of the candidates, family narratives are believed to serve for conveying group identity, for creating similarity bonds and for manipulating the level of the candidates' credibility (Burge et al., 2019). Tabloid media dedicate more space to the personal life of the candidates (Rohrbach et al., 2020). In contrast to men, media coverage tends to refer to women by emphasizing their marital status and appearance, thus lowering their level of credibility and viability for the office, and their professional performance, and emphasizing superficial characteristics (Ryan, 2013). Therefore, potential supporters might be discouraged from taking their candidacies seriously (Woodall et al., 2010). Frames describing women politicians include "political incompetence, political naïveté, insufficient political experience, lack of leadership skills, excessive emotionality, and, most importantly, being *not* men" (Ross, 2017, p.59). Regarding viability for the office respect, the next hypothesis is:

H4. *The man candidate is framed as being more viable for the presidential office in both quality and tabloid content.*

While stereotypes imply attributing different characteristics to men and women, paradoxically, stereotypes can dictate the functions people are expected to fulfill in society and in the professional domains (Meeks, 2012). Gender incongruity can lead to discrimination (Smith et al., 2007). Women politicians that run for a very important office can be an example. The literature suggests that, while traditionally, men and women have to choose between approaching men or women characteristics, nowadays, these aspects can be mixed and incorporated in a gender identity perception, making them more complex (Schneider, 2004).

Tabloid journalism lowers the standards of public discourse and may show a lack of interest in politics, by ignoring the real political issues in favor of superficial political scandals (Örnebring & Jönsson, 2004). Studies have shown that tabloid journalism tends to emphasize human-interest themes by increasing the amount of soft news, as scandals, sensation, and entertainment (Skovsgaard, 2014; Palau-Sampio, 2016). Likewise, the

used language plays a substantial role comparing tabloid and quality newspapers. While Sparks (2000, 17) underlines the necessity of defining the process of news media “going tabloid”, Skovsgaard (2014, 203) identifies that “tabloid-style” journalism emphasizes sensationalism, emotions, and private life. Our fifth hypothesis is that:

H5. *Tabloid content tends to use more allusions to the gender (identity) perception regardless of the candidate.*

Objectification theory sustains that reducing individuals to their physical features is a less beneficial approach to candidates (Funk & Coker, 2016). Although the attractiveness halo theory states that attractive people receive more favorable competence and credibility evaluations, it does not stand for women mainly due to an incongruity between social and leadership role expectations (Lizotte & Meggers-Wright, 2018).

Some studies consider that the bias in coverage against women is getting smaller by leveling the amount of coverage for the two genders, the amount of attention given to the viability of a candidate, the candidate's family focus, and the overall tone of the news (Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008). While men are considered to have instrumental traits for the role of a politician, such as being assertive, rational, and self-focused, women are considered sensitive, precautious, and emotional, thus, less qualified for a political position (Lizotte & Meggers-Wright, 2018). Women are less likely than men to express themselves as experts, but when they do appear in this role, they make more frequent references to topics such as health, nursing and less about politics (Ross et al., 2018). Due to traditional gender roles deeply incorporated within the collective mentality, the way media present women that run for a political office is unfavorable, quantitatively and qualitatively (Hooghe et al., 2015). Semetko & Boomgaarden (2007) have emphasized that gender role and gender framing occur frequently in tabloid stories. This leads us to the next hypotheses:

H6. *The gender role of the woman candidate is much more emphasized by tabloid framework.*

H6.1. *Tabloid content make more use of character traits than the quality one regarding the woman candidate.*

Methodology

By using newspapers' content analysis, the present paper aims to descriptively analyze the way Dăncilă and Iohannis, as candidates *per se* are portrayed within 2019 Presidential election campaign. The inquiry is conducted by comparing broadsheet (*Evenimentul zilei* and *Adevărul*) and tabloid media content (*Click Magazine* and *Libertatea*). Since 2016, *Libertatea* has been in a process of transfer to quality media, but in terms of language usage, images, and general approach, it was, at the time of the election coverage, closer to tabloid media. Based on BRAT (Romanian Joint Industry Committee for Print and Internet), the chosen newspapers are the ones with the largest national distribution. All four newspapers sampled have daily appearances, some with weekend issues. Having a higher level of complexity, the print version is chosen for the analysis. This complexity arises from the accuracy in which the characteristics of journalistic genres are respected.

Likewise, readers can identify the importance given to a text by its positioning in the newspaper.

Sample

The media coverage is developed through a five-week campaign period (October 14 to November 9, 2019, for the first election round, and November 18 to November 23, 2019 for the second election round). The unit of analysis is the individual article, composed of text. The analysis includes all the articles in which the two protagonists appear as political candidates (N=80, 48 from broadsheets and 32 from tabloids). It should be noted that only articles featuring the two candidates, Iohannis and Dăncilă, together, separately or with other political actors have been coded. The distribution of the articles based on the two election rounds is mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. The distribution of articles by media outlet

	Outlet	Electoral campaign periods		TOTAL n (%)
		Round 1 n (%)	Round 2 n (%)	
Broadsheet content	Adevărul	5 (6.3)	6 (7.5)	11 (13.8)
	Evenimentul zilei	24 (30)	13 (16.3)	37 (46.3)
Tabloid content	Libertatea	6 (7.5)	6 (7.5)	12 (15)
	Click	12 (15)	8 (10)	20 (30)

Out of these articles, 48.8% are published within the actuality-event domain and 41.3% are within the politics domain. The rest of the articles are opinion articles or electoral advertising.

Measurements

The analysis is developed in a dichotomous manner. First, formal variables of the articles (the visibility of the article and the intrinsic characteristics) are being assessed. Second, the frames and framing questions are developed. In this respect, the study replicates the methodology developed by Dan and Iorgoveanu (2013). Thus, two sets of narrative dichotomous variables are employed: the *horse-race frame* and the *issue trivialization*. The operationalization of these variables is presented within Table 2.

For the quantitative content analysis, and for the sake of a high intercoder reliability, most of the data (horse-race framing and issue trivialization) is coded in a binary manner (Vourvachis & Woodward, 2015; Matthes & Kohring, 2008), using yes/no categories for measuring the occurrence of the frame elements. The type of the newspaper is dichotomously coded (tabloid content=0, quality content=1). The potential drawback coming for a dichotomous analysis is resolved by the depth of the qualitative analysis.

For verifying the intercoder reliability, the second coder has analyzed a randomly selected subsample formed of 30% of the entire sample. The value of Cohen's Kappa is

.940. The authors of the paper have been the coders. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software 23.0 is used for the quantitative data analysis. Independent-samples *t*-test and Pearson correlations have been used to verify the hypotheses.

Table 2. The variables used within the analysis (adapted after Dan & Iorgoveanu 2013)

FORMAL ITEMS	Visibility	Title issues (<i>the presence of the one of the candidates within it, the length, the syntax, the lexis, and the address</i>)
	Intrinsic characteristics	Genre (<i>news, story, interview, comment</i>)
		Tone (<i>neutral, positive, negative</i>)
		Topic (<i>politics, economy, national security, healthcare, education, childcare</i>)
		Gender of the topic (<i>women issue, men issue, both</i>)
FRAMING ITEMS	Horse-race frames	Suitability of the candidate for office
		Campaign resources
		Results of the public opinion
		Use of metaphors from the worlds of sports and war
	Issue trivialization	Presence of political issues
		Traits of the candidate
		Candidate's gender and gender role
		Candidate's abilities specific to the gender
		Mention of the politics as a men's domain,
		Economic status of the candidate
Candidate's appearance		

The qualitative content perspective aims to gain more understanding and to complete the quantitative data with a more in-depth inquiry. It follows the same measurements as the quantitative approach and it highlights the most relevant examples. For each variable, the key concepts used as units of analysis have been categorized/coded and have been compared both between the two candidates and between the two types of newspapers analyzed. The qualitative analysis has been conducted by only one coder. However, the data are presented in a non-obstructive and objective manner.

Results

The visibility and intrinsic characteristics. As the title can create a high level of curiosity and interest into further explore the content of an article (Kurz, 2000), Figure 1 shows the presence of the two candidates in the titles based on the publication type.

Dăncilă is slightly more present within the analyzed media in general and within the tabloids in particular. The data reveal a weak to moderate correlation between her presence in the title and the newspaper type ($r=-.220, p=.05$). The articles in which Iohannis is the main protagonist in the title are almost evenly distributed within the two types of publications, no significant correlation existing. Thus, the first hypothesis (H1) is sustained: woman candidate is more present in tabloids in comparison with broadsheet media and with the man counter-candidate, who is equally presented in the two newspaper types.

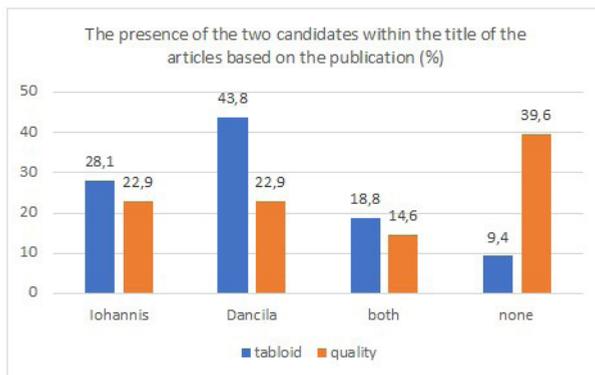


Figure 1. The presence of the two candidates within the title, based on the publication type

The intrinsic characteristics are operationalized in the genre and the tone of the article. Regarding the genre, more than half of the articles are reports, while the other half is composed of news, comments, and interviews. Taking each type of publication separately, the only significant difference is at the level of comment articles. While there are more than 20% of comment articles within broadsheet media, there are around half within tabloids (Figure 2). The larger number of comments in quality newspapers responds to the requirements and expectations of the reader not only to be informed about a political event but also to receive the analysis and opinion of an expert. A percentage of 84.4% of the tabloids' texts are information texts (reports and news), marking a clear discrepancy with opinion texts (commentaries and opinion interviews). Although we can observe in the broadsheets the same preference for reports and news (77.1%), the imbalance towards opinion texts is not so evident, as they appear in 20.8% of the cases. The number of news published in the two types of newspapers is almost identical (28.1% in the tabloid and 29.2% in the broadsheets). Regardless of the journalistic genre, the articles dealing with Iohannis and Dăncilă can be found in the two broadsheets in several resorts of the publication (event, political news, opinion section or even on the title page), compared to the tabloids, which deal with the electoral campaign only in the 'Political news' part.

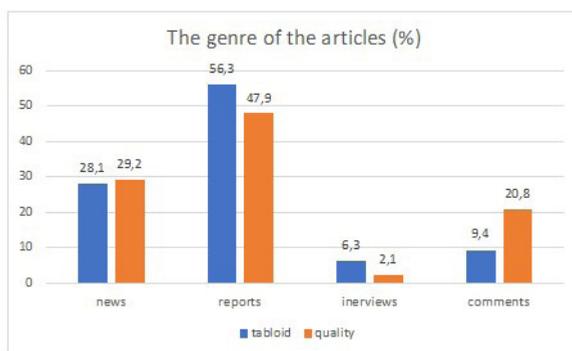


Figure 2. The genre of the articles based on the publication

Interestingly, the tone of the articles is, in its majority, neutral (75%). The positive (11.3%) and negative (13.8%) articles are almost equally distributed within the analyzed sample. The data indicate that while there is a slightly higher number of neutral articles in tabloids, there is a higher number of negative articles in quality media. The negative, pessimistic tone emerges from the use of war-related words, such as “conflict” and “destruction”. Some texts state that there is “war” between the two candidates, that “they will destroy the country”, that the election campaign will “blow up” the country. Although the initial presumption has been that a more negative tone is used in tabloids and in respect to the woman candidate, this hypothesis (H2) is not validated.

The gender of the topic is one core variable of the analysis. While men issues refer to foreign policy, economic management, and national security, women issues are linked to healthcare, education, and the welfare of children and families (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013; Heldman et al., 2005). The data show that women topics are much more reduced in comparison with men ones. Moreover, men issues are much more present in the quality media (Figures 3, 4).

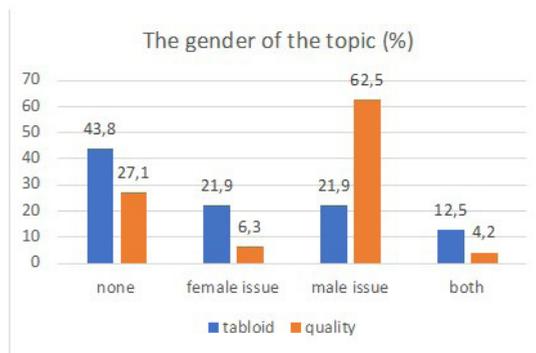


Figure 3. The gender topic based on the publication

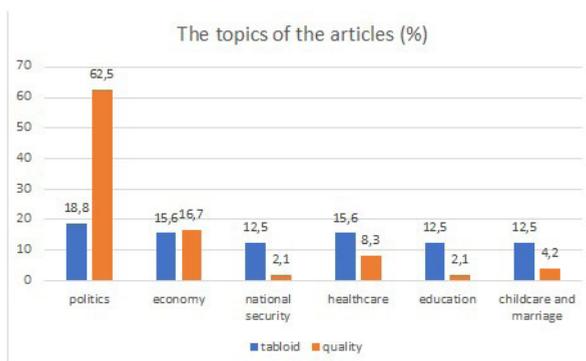


Figure 4. The topics of the articles based on the publication

The broadsheets are dominated by politics ($r=.431, p=.000$). On the contrary, tabloids are approaching all the topics to a similar degree. The difference between the two types of newspapers in respect to politics topic is significant ($t(78)=-4,216, p=.000$). There are also press texts, which cannot be assigned to any category, which deal with general information about the elections, sports or entertainment. The third hypothesis (H3) accurately states that quality media underline more on men topics, as politics.

Horse-race framing and issue trivialization. The **horse-race frame** is assessed through the viability of the candidate, the campaign resources, the results of the public opinion polls, and the use of metaphors from the worlds of sports and war. The descriptive for all these variables are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The horse-race frames descriptive

HORSE-RACE FRAMES		Dăncilă (woman candidate)		Iohannis (man candidate)	
		M(SD)	The presence of the issue %	M(SD)	The presence of the issue %
Suitability of the candidate for office	Broadsheet	.13(.334)	12.5	.31(.468)	31.3
	Tabloid	.09(.296)	9.4	.19(.397)	18.8
	Total	.11(.318)		.26(.443)	
Campaign resources	Broadsheet	.00(.000)	0	.00(.000)	0
	Tabloid	.00(.000)	0	.06(.246)	6.3
	Total	.00(.000)		.03(.157)	
Results of the public opinion	Broadsheet	.13(.334)	12.5	.19(.394)	18.8
	Tabloid	.09(.296)	9.4	.09(.296)	9.4
	Total	.11(.318)		.14(.359)	
Use of metaphors from the worlds of sports and war	Broadsheet	.15(.357)	14.6	.33(.476)	33.3
	Tabloid	.13(.336)	12.5	.19(.397)	18.8
	Total	.14(.347)		.28(.449)	

Note: The variables are measured in a dichotomous manner (0=the absence of the feature; 1=the presence of the feature). The presence of the issue is computed as crosstabs in percentages separately out of the total number of quality, respectively tabloid newspapers.

The data reveals no significant correlations between the newspaper type and the four dimensions of the horse-race frame for none of the two candidates.

As presented in Table 4, the suitability of the candidate for the office is not extensively mentioned. While the quality newspapers address this issue in 43.8% of the cases, tabloids present it in only 28.2% of the cases. Iohannis, in comparison with Dăncilă, is much more frequently presented as being viable for the Presidential position. Iohannis is called “the big favorite”, who wants to “build a new Romania”. Dăncilă is presented as “she is turning into a hard to kill candidate”, being “Iohannis’ only counter-candidate”. Based on the analyzed data, the fourth hypothesis (H4) is validated by clearly indicating that the man candidate is perceived as being more suitable for the office.

Campaign resources are mentioned only in two articles, both in tabloids, emphasizing this topic solely in respect to the candidate Iohannis. Reference is made to “firms hired to promote him” but equally to the fact that he “relies on his voters”.

Table 4. The positive viability assessment (distribution by media genre and candidate)

	Woman candidate	Man candidate
	Dăncilă n (%)	Iohannis n (%)
Broadsheet content	6 (12.5)	15 (31.3)
Tabloid content	3 (9.4)	6 (18.8)

Note: Values are percentages from the total number of articles per media type

The results of public opinion polls are presented in 15% cases when it comes to Iohannis and in 11.3% cases when it comes to Dăncilă. In the case of Iohannis, while the tabloid media is presenting public opinion polls in 9.4% situations, the broadsheets are presenting this information in 18.8%. In the case of Dăncilă, the results resemble the ones of the counter candidate, with a lower coverage in quality media (12.5%). We are told that Iohannis is “standing at a reassuringly high level of confidence”, or that he will win the elections with more than 50%. Several results of different public opinion polling institutions are enumerated in the case of Dăncilă.

As expected, language or metaphors from the world of sport and war are slightly more used in the articles in which Iohannis candidate is mentioned. Moreover, as Table 5 shows, quality media is using them to a higher degree.

Table 5. The use of language and metaphors from the world of sport or war (distribution by media and candidate)

	Woman candidate	Man candidate
	Dăncilă n (%)	Iohannis n (%)
Broadsheet content	7 (14.6)	16 (33.3)
Tabloid content	4 (12.5)	6 (18.8)

Note: Values are percentages from the total number of articles per media type

Iohannis is depicted in the texts as more warlike and combative than Dăncilă. His main enemy is the Social Democrat Party (SDP), to whom he declared “war” and with whom he is in constant “confrontation”. The president formulates “violent attacks” on the SDP, fights against the “abuses” of this party and wants its “destruction”. At the same time, he “refines” with “challenger” Dăncilă. However, he refuses “to duel with her” in front of the viewers.

At the same time Dăncilă is presented as being prepared for a “fight” with Iohannis. We learn that she “invited him to fight a woman”. “Her favorite target” is Iohannis, to whom she addresses “invectives”. For a more eloquent description of Dăncilă’s actions, journalists use terms from the field of confrontations in sports. Dăncilă “enters the ring” and “confronts” herself with her “opponent”.

This metaphorical language occurs precariously in the quality press. The tabloid press puts this confrontation on the secondary side and focuses mainly on the personality and traits of the two and less on the eminently political struggle. Thus, the fifth hypothesis (H5) that links the use of allusions to gender to tabloids is invalidated.

Issue trivialization is assessed through a set of nine variables. The descriptive perspective of these variables is presented in Table 6 in a comparative manner.

Table 6. The issue trivialization descriptive

ISSUE TRIVIALISATION		Dăncilă (woman candidate)		Iohannis (man candidate)	
		M(SD)	The presence of the issue %	M(SD)	The presence of the issue %
Presence of political issues	Broadsheet	.31(.468)	31.1	.40(.494)	39.6
	Tabloid	.03(.177)	3.1	.13(.336)	12.5
	Total	.20(.403)		.29(.455)	
Traits of the candidate	Broadsheet	.812(.394)	81.3	.75(.437)	75
	Tabloid	.812(.396)	81.3	.593(.498)	59.4
	Total	.812(.392)		.687(.466)	
Candidate's gender and gender role	Broadsheet	.31(.468)	31.1	.15(.357)	14.6
	Tabloid	.69(.471)	68.8	.44(.504)	43.8
	Total	.46(.502)		.26(.443)	
Candidate's abilities specific to the gender	Broadsheet	.13(.334)	12.5	.02(.144)	2.1
	Tabloid	.25(.440)	25	.03(.177)	3.1
	Total	.18(.382)		.03(.157)	
Mention of the politics as a men's domain	Broadsheet	.02(.144)	2.1	.00(.000)	0
	Tabloid	.00(.000)	0	.00(.000)	0
	Total	.01(.112)		.00(.000)	
Economic status of the candidate	Broadsheet	.00(.000)	0	.00(.000)	0
	Tabloid	.19(.397)	18.8	.09(.296)	9.4
	Total	.08(.265)		.04(.191)	
Candidate's appearance	Broadsheet	.08(.279)	8.3	.02(.144)	2.1
	Tabloid	.13(.336)	12.5	.06(.246)	6.3
	Total	.10(.302)		.04(.191)	

Note: The variables are measured in a dichotomous manner (0=the absence of the feature; 1=the presence of the feature). The presence of the issue is computed as crosstabs in percentages separately out of the total number of quality, respectively tabloid newspapers.

The only significant correlations are, on the one hand, between the newspaper type and the presence of political issue within the article, and, on the other hand, between the newspaper type and the mention of the gender role of the candidate. Political issues are discussed only in around 20% of the cases in each of the candidate's situation, the quality media being the most used for this topic (approximate 30%). The difference between tabloid and quality media is significant in respect to the presence of political issue both in Dăncilă's case ($t(78)=3.240, p=.002$) and in Iohannis's case ($t(78)=-2.708, p=.008$). The data reveals a positive weak to moderate correlation between the presence of both Dăncilă ($r=.344, p=.002$) and Iohannis ($r=.293, p=.008$) within political discussions and the newspaper type. In the case of tabloids, Iohannis and political issues are mentioned together in around 12.5% of the cases, while Dăncilă in 3.1% of the articles.

While in broadsheets Iohannis' character traits focus on his role as a political actor, in tabloids, the emphasis is on his abilities and financial status. These articles illustrate his hobbies and favorite sports. Table 7 shows the distribution of Iohannis's moral and physical traits from three perspectives: newspaper's, Dăncilă's, and other political actors' view.

Table 7. Iohannis' moral and physical traits

	Categories	Newspaper's view	Dăncilă's views	Other political actors' view
Broadsheet	Social features	1st order concepts		
	Political features	<i>Pragmatic, arrogant No ability for dialogue; Solemn;</i>	<i>Hateful; Cowardly; Arrogant;</i>	
		<i>A great anti-SPD fighter; Lack of political instinct;</i>	<i>Extremist; Anti-European;</i>	<i>A concentration camp chief for the re-education of SDP</i>
Tabloids	Hobbies	<i>Tennis amateur; Enjoys skiing and jogging;</i>		
	Appearance/Manners	<i>Is perfectly dressed; Does not dye his hair to hide grey strands;</i>		<i>Has manners; Is very polite;</i>
	Financial status	<i>Owens three houses and two apartments; Drives a BMW; Has a monthly salary of 25,000 RON;</i>		

The analysis shows that the characteristics of Dăncilă are described in both quality newspapers and tabloids. While broadsheets revolve around her role as a political actor, the tabloids emphasize her human side, her hobbies, and her financial status. Table 8 shows the distribution of the moral and physical traits of Dăncilă.

The gender role of the candidate is strongly emphasized in the case of Dăncilă (46% of the cases), in comparison with Iohannis (26.3%). As Table 9 presents, in the case of both candidate, tabloids are highlighting this aspect to a larger degree than broadsheets.

The difference between tabloids and broadsheets in respect to the mentioning of the gender role is significant both in the woman candidate's case ($t(78)=3.500, p=.001$) and in the man candidate's one ($t(78)=3.032, p=.003$). That there is a weak to moderate correlation between the type of newspaper and the emphasis of the candidate gender role, both in the case of Dăncilă ($r=-.368, p=.001$) and in the case of Iohannis ($r=-.325, p=.003$). It means that there is a tendency of the tabloids, in comparison with the quality media, to emphasize the gender characteristics of the candidates. Thus, the sixth hypothesis (H6) is validated. Qualitatively, appellations assigned to both candidates are presented in Table 10 and Table 11.

Table 8. Dăncilă's moral and physical traits

	Categories	Newspaper's view	Iohannis's views	Other political actors' view
		1 st order concepts		
Broadsheet	Political features	<i>She hangs like a millstone on the neck of SPD; Responsible for damaging Romania's image at European level; The most active candidate;</i>	<i>She is the worst in the politics of the recent years in Romania;</i>	<i>Stupid; Dead hand; Evildoer</i>
	Hobbies/ Competencies	<i>Plays table tennis; Does not know foreign languages very well;</i>		
Tabloids	Social features	<i>Tries to win the sympathy of the voters; She has received encouragements, but also criticism;</i>		
	Financial status	<i>Owens houses and apartments in Bucharest; Has lots of jewelry; Has a monthly salary of 24,000 RON;</i>		

Table 9. The emphasis on the gender/gender role of the candidates

	Woman candidate	Man candidate
	Dăncilă n (%)	Iohannis n (%)
Broadsheet content	15 (31.3)	7 (14.6)
Tabloid content	22 (68.8)	14 (43.8)

Note: Values are percentages from the total number of articles per media type

Table 10. Appellations assigned to Iohannis

	Categories	Newspaper's view	Dăncilă' view
		1 st order concepts	
Broadsheet	Political identity	<i>President of Romania (9 times); President in office (9 times); Master of the System;</i>	
	Mythological comparison	<i>Zeus;</i>	
Tabloids	Political identity	<i>Mayor of Sibiu; Poor candidate;</i>	<i>President-dictator extremist president;</i>
	Professional identity	<i>Professor of Physics;</i>	
	Celebrity comparison	<i>Elvis Presley with microphone; Too much attention is paid to him as if he were Luis XIV</i>	

Table 11. Appellations assigned to Dăncilă

	Categories	Newspaper's view	Iohannis' view
		1 st order concepts	
Broadsheet	Political identity	<i>Election candidate;</i> <i>Most suitable candidate;</i> <i>The social democratic party's Presidential candidate;</i> <i>Leader of the social democratic party;</i>	<i>The evil in Romanian politics</i>
		<i>Head of the social democrats;</i> <i>Dismissed P.M.;</i> <i>Former P.M.;</i>	
Tabloids	Political identity		

Only the tabloids mention the capabilities and skills in terms of gender of the man candidate. Iohannis assumes very seriously his role as a man and takes care of the house. Opposing, Dăncilă's gender related depictions are multiple (Table 12).

Table 12. Gender related depictions of Dăncilă

Categories	Broadsheet	Categories	Tabloids
	1 st order concepts		1 st order concepts
Politician	<i>The first female prime minister in Romanian history;</i> <i>The first woman to serve as prime minister;</i> <i>challenger;</i>	Diplomat	<i>The new Queen Mary;</i>
Warrior	<i>She follows the strategy of women being oppressed by men;</i> <i>She fights seven men plus one;</i> <i>Xenia;</i>	Family attached	<i>Protective mother;</i> <i>Caring daughter;</i> <i>She wants to raise her child in a quiet home;</i> <i>She devoted her life to her son;</i> <i>She has adopted a child</i>
Victim	<i>She is going to win by victimization;</i> <i>Iohannis's victim;</i>		

The resemblance to "Xenia" creates the image of a woman warrior, a tough woman who can get along with men. Tabloids claim that some fans regard her as "the new Queen Mary" referring to her kindness and diplomacy. In relation to its gender-related competences, the broadsheets refer to Dăncilă's tendency towards victimization. This seems to be a typically woman feature. Another gender-specific characteristic is that women are unpredictable. "Dăncilă had all the skills to take an unpredictable step. She was a woman."

From the point of view of the candidates' skills related to their gender, the newspapers are more generous with Dăncilă than with Iohannis. While only 2.5% of the publications are referring to Iohannis's capabilities, 17.5% of them are discussing Dăncilă's. The difference between broadsheets and tabloids is rather insignificant. Contrary to expectations, only one text (within the quality media), referring to Dăncilă candidate, suggests that politics is a man's domain.

The economic status of the candidates is rarely mentioned. While Iohannis's economic position is mentioned in only 3.8% of the cases, Dăncilă's one is stated in 7.5% of the cases. Interestingly, regardless of the candidate, all the references on the economic status are being claimed by tabloids and there are weak to moderate correlations for both the woman candidate ($r=-.349, p=.002$) and the man one ($r=-.242, p=.031$).

Most of the articles do not mention the candidates' appearance. Whereas Iohannis is referred to in 3.8% of the cases, Dăncilă's look is discussed in 10% of the articles. The distribution of these articles between quality and tabloid content is almost even.

Discussions and conclusion

Based on a comparative content analysis on the way the main candidates for the 2019 Romanian Presidential elections, Viorica Dăncilă and Klaus Iohannis are framed within media coverage in the five-week election campaign, the study attempted to identify whether gender plays a role in how media depicts candidates during elections.

There is a clear tendency towards gender equality in media coverage. However, even though our study comes out almost ten years after that of Dan & Iorgoveanu (2013), their conclusion, stating that it is still too soon to proclaim that there is equal treatment of the masculine and feminine genders in the Romanian media, remains valid. The psychological term *double bind* (Holtz-Bacha, 2009) best illustrates the difficult and sometimes hopeless situation in which women in politics find themselves. If they are aggressive and tough, they are considered too manly-like; if they display women traits, they are judged as unsuitable for the challenges of politics.

Considering the first hypothesis (H1), in the quality media, both man and woman candidates are equally represented. However, in tabloids, the woman candidate is more visible. This is in accordance with other studies such as Dan & Iorgovanu (2013) and Semetko & Boomgaarden (2007). The second hypothesis assumes that the negative tone is more developed within the tabloid media (H2). Contrary to expectations, the analysis shows that, regardless of the candidate, the tone is generally neutral and official, centered on giving information and on shaping opinions. Like Dimitrova (2014), we also state that there is no negative tone developed in the texts where the women candidate is depicted. The negative tone, which can be found in very few broadsheets' articles, is sustained by a certain vocabulary, by the way the relationship between the candidates is depicted but also by the rather grim predictions of the journalists.

Assuming that quality media emphasize more on men topics, the analysis shows that the third hypothesis is accurate (H3). Almost half of the articles focus on men topics such as politics, and these are by far more present in the quality newspapers. A possible explanation may be that broadsheets are more hard-news oriented, focusing on politics and economics (Skovsgaard, 2014; Palau-Sampio, 2016). In addition, women politicians themselves are emphasizing man issues in order to succeed in a men's-dominated field (Dan & Iorgovanu, 2013). Although women topics are much more reduced, the analysis has shown that in tabloids they are a slightly more present (e.g., healthcare).

The fourth hypothesis is also validated. Data reveal that the man candidate is much more frequently presented as being viable for the presidential role both in broadsheets and tabloids (H4). One explanation could be that, by emphasizing women's marital status and appearance, the level of credibility and the viability for the office is lowered (Ryan, 2013). Implicitly, this could rise the idea that women are being politically incompetent or even insufficiently politically experienced (Ross, 2017).

The fifth assumption (H5) that tabloids tend to use more metaphors regardless of the gender of the candidates is not valid. Although tabloids tend to present events sensationally with a focus on the emotions and private lives of those aimed at by the text (Skovsgaard, 2014), also making use of stereotypes describing the functions that women and men are expected to fulfill in society (Meeks, 2012; Gilardi & West, 2017), the analysis shows that allusions related to gender perception are more numerous in broadsheets. Metaphors from the field of sports and war are used mainly in the texts where Iohannis is mentioned.

The hypotheses stating that the gender role of the woman candidate is much more emphasized by tabloids is validated (H6, H6.1). Gender role is frequently mentioned in tabloids (Semetko & Boomgaarden, 2007). Thus, we learn about Dăncilă's role as a mother, wife or daughter-in-law. The assumption that the tabloids make more use of woman candidates' character traits, in comparison with broadsheets, cannot be verified. Both broadsheets and tabloids list the characteristics of the two political actors. The difference lies not in the number of traits but in their type. The quality newspapers present the traits in relationship with the political role of the two opponents, whereas the tabloids refer more to their human side.

Although gender equality has become a very important topic in society, it has not been given enough visibility in Romanian mass media or in scientific research (Mihalache & Drăgulin, 2016). This paper takes an in-depth view of the way gender bias is depicted in Romanian elections press coverage, thus underlining the role and status of women in politics in a patriarchal society where prejudices and stereotypes about women still persist. Although the analysis is carried out on a relatively small number of press articles (N=80), it certainly provides a relevant picture of gender bias not only in political media coverage, but it is also a barometer for the way women are (still) perceived, for the way they are assigned roles, responsibilities and expertise in society. Our results show that the woman candidate is mostly visible in tabloid media and that the gender role of the woman candidate is much more emphasized in this media type. The tabloid press tends to highlight issues of human interest, and the visibility that women politicians receive here thus reveals the connection to these topics assigned by tabloid media. The results also spotlight that the man candidate is more viable for the office. This finding is linked to the mentality that politics (and the offices that it covers) is still more suited to men. This framing could have implications for how the audience (i.e., the voters) will perceive the discussion of gender bias in media coverage and possibly influence how they will relate to candidates when making political decisions.

The paper also opens new perspectives for comparative and contrastive approaches to gender equality in other post-communist countries enlarging the sphere of analysis from the press to other media platforms that are used and trusted by consumers and voters.

The limits of the paper reside especially in the low number of articles analyzed. However, as mentioned in the methodological design, the analysis includes all the articles in which the two protagonists appear as political candidates. Moreover, the study did not consider the potential political affiliation of newspapers and, therefore, cannot identify the impact of this variable on how gender is depicted in the media coverage.

As future perspectives, a more wide-ranging analysis of the visual part should be pursued, including also the political cartoons. Being a form of a visual commentary (Quante, 2013), they accompany the written opinion text and reflect figuratively an important thought from the text. In the light of visual content analysis, future research can also examine the relationship between the journalistic text and the accompanying press photo, and reveal its function and role in the reporting process. In the field of political campaigns, an extension of the present study could be made by including the main European political dailies and the way they frame political candidates. Likewise, a further extension of the analysis could deal with other types of elections (e.g., the local elections).

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