

Effects of Political Leaders' Speech on Violence Against Women

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Abstract

Political leaders are high-profile individuals who influence large groups of sympathizers. This paper studies the unintended effects of a political leader's speech on violence. Specifically, it examines the effects of the derogatory treatment of women by former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa during his TV and radio program, *Enlace Ciudadano*. We have access to administrative data from Ecuador's 911 Integrated Security Service to estimate the impact of *Enlace Ciudadano* when hosted by President Correa on reported violence against women. We found a 2.6 to 5 percent increase in such crimes on Saturdays when Correa hosted the show. These estimates are robust to different specifications and two falsification tests. We provide additional evidence suggesting that the President's derogatory speech may have increased cultural acceptance of violence against women and shifted social norms regarding violence against women. The program increases the salience of new norms that validate violence against women, ultimately resulting in increased violence. These results underscore the challenges policymakers face in countering the lasting impact of such rhetoric on societal attitudes and the potential harm to vulnerable groups.

JEL codes: D91, J16, K42, Z13

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“We are going to walk down to the Capitol... If you don’t fight like hell, you are not going to have a country anymore...” Donald Trump, 45th President of the United States, January 6, 2021

1 Introduction

In today’s world, people’s behavior in different environments is increasingly explained by their cultural identity, beliefs, and stereotypes (Bordalo et al., 2016; Bonomi et al., 2021). Individuals tend to align their beliefs with the stereotypes of the group they identify with (Bonomi et al., 2021), which creates an opportunity for political leaders to cater to these stereotypes (Enke, 2020; Grosjean et al., 2023). Political leaders are high-profile individuals who influence large groups of sympathizers who can listen, see, and read what these leaders say and do through different media. These individuals can be perceived as role models by their followers, with their apparent success inspiring their followers’ behavior (Merton, 1968; Morgenroth et al., 2015). While high-profile individuals can increase pro-social behavior in various fields (for example, Alatas et al., 2019 and Xiong, 2021), they can also incentivize anti-social behaviors. Sometimes, encouragement for anti-social behavior can be more explicit, like Donald Trump encouraging his followers to storm the Capitol, the state-promoted use of radio to promote the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014), and the use of radio by the Nazi government to promote antisemitism (Adena et al., 2015). However, this encouragement can be implicit. If political leaders’ actions and speeches are charged with biases and prejudice against vulnerable groups, they can increase discrimination and violence against these groups, albeit unintendedly.

This study examines the unintended consequences of a political leader’s attitudes and rhetoric on violence, particularly in the case of former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa and his derogatory treatment of women. Between 2007 and 2017, President Correa hosted a national radio and TV show called *Enlace Ciudadano* on Saturdays. In this program, President Correa frequently engaged in sexist behavior, belittling and objectifying women in his

speech (Ayala, 2014; Arias and Guerrero, 2017; Cerbino et al., 2017; Granda, 2017; Campo, 2018). Theoretically, in a setting where individuals align their beliefs with the stereotypes of the group they identify with (Bonomi et al., 2021), if the president legitimizes discriminatory gender roles and verbal violence, individuals can perceive that the cost of violence against women is lower than expected, thus increasing the probability of committing violent acts (Heise et al., 2002; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014). Hence, men, as the main perpetrators of violence against women, when meeting a model figure who validates violence against women, may adopt these attitudes. Media exposure can further compound this effect by normalizing and validating aggressive behavior towards women (Malamuth and Briere, 1986). Men who are exposed to this type of media may view violence against women as culturally acceptable and justifiable, leading to an increased likelihood of aggressive behavior towards women (Ferguson, 2012).

We have access to administrative data from Ecuador’s ECU 911 Integrated Security Service, covering every emergency reported between 2014 and 2017. With this data, we estimate the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* when hosted by President Correa on reported violence against women, leveraging on variation coming from the fact that President Correa did not always host the program. Sometimes, when the president was ill or on a trip, Vice President Glas would host the program, or the program would be canceled for the week. The identifying assumption is that after controlling for the expected differences between years, months, days of the week, provinces, and time of the day, whether President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano* in a given week is essentially random. We use a Poisson model to account for the discrete nature of reported crimes against women and the fact that there are several days without such crimes.

We find that conditional on different fixed effects specifications, on average, reported crimes against women increased between 2.6 and 5 percent on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*. These estimates are robust to two types of misreporting issues that could be present in the data. Also, we performed two falsification checks to rule

out any confounding factors. We find no effect on Saturdays when Vice President Glas hosted the program and no effect on crimes against property. Together, these findings suggest that President Correa’s speech during *Enlace Ciudadano* may have contributed to the increase in reported crimes against women and that other unobserved factors are unlikely to be at play.

In terms of mechanisms, we find evidence supporting that the estimated effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* when hosted by President Correa is consistent with the predictions of theory on the effects of state-run media on violence (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014; Adena et al., 2015). Our findings reveal that this effect is driven by provinces with higher levels of long-term violence against women, indicating that President Correa’s derogatory remarks may have increased cultural acceptance of violence, as proposed by Yanagizawa-Drott’s model 2014. We also find evidence of a null effect during and after the transmission of the program, consistent with findings in the literature on the effects of violent media on violence (Dahl and DellaVigna, 2009; Card and Dahl, 2011; Cunningham et al., 2016; Lindo et al., 2020; Gibbons and Rossi, 2021). This suggests that potential perpetrators may be watching the program without engaging in behavior that increases violence against women, such as drinking alcohol. In fact, we find a decrease in reported alcohol-related emergencies on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*. This suggests that the estimated effect on violence against women is due to the anticipation of the program’s broadcast, and the proximity of the program increases the salience of new norms that validate violence against women, ultimately resulting in increased violence (Bordalo et al., 2013, 2016) . Overall, our findings suggest that social norms regarding violence against women may have changed after seven years of President Correa verbally attacking women.

This paper contributes to understanding how political leaders’ speech and actions affect identity, social norms, and behavior, including the inadvertent promotion of anti-social conduct. Recent research has explored the effects of Donald Trump’s campaign, election, and social media discourse on the rise of prejudices, xenophobia, hate crimes, and discrimination against Blacks and Asians (Edwards and Rushin, 2018; Bursztyn et al., 2020; Newman et al.,

2021; Cao et al., 2023; Grosjean et al., 2023). By documenting how the sexist attitude displayed by a national leader over media can unintendedly increase violence against women, we show that the consequences of a political leader behaving in a derogatory fashion generalize across the world. Our results highlight how the adoption of stereotypes by political leaders and how they can broadcast them through media can affect vulnerable groups, even when there is no explicit call for violence. In contrast to previous research, the effect is estimated after seven years of derogatory speech, and we find evidence consistent with a shift in social norms toward normalizing discrimination against women. This poses a significant challenge to policymakers seeking to combat the consequences of politicians’ increasing use of discriminatory, derogatory, and racist rhetoric. If this rhetoric continues to shape social norms, it will be challenging to establish institutions that can counter political leaders’ speech by providing context and fact-checking.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses President Correa’s discourse during *Enlace Ciudadano*’s broadcasts. Section 3 describes the data. Section 4 presents the empirical strategy. Section 5 presents the results and robustness checks. Section 6 presents evidence supporting that the mechanism behind the estimated effects is consistent with an increased cultural acceptance of violence against women. Section 7 concludes.

2 Background on *Enlace Ciudadano*

Enlace Ciudadano was a radio and television program created in 2007 by Rafael Correa, then President of Ecuador. Its purpose was to be a direct communication channel between the president and the general population. By 2016, almost 500 different media, both private and public, had broadcast the program nationally and internationally (Campo, 2018). From January 20, 2007, to May 20, 2017, 523 programs were broadcast (498 live, while 25 were pre-recorded), of which Correa hosted 456. The rest were transmitted by the Vice President. The programs were broadcast on Saturdays, starting at ten in the morning, from different provinces.

Initially, the main objective of these broadcasts was to provide weekly updates on the progress made in government projects. The president presented an update on the government actions taken during the week in less than an hour and then answered questions from the media. However, these broadcasts became a strategic promotion space that sought to reinforce President Correa's political culture (Granda, 2017). Ayala (2014) analyzes the political discourse of the program and shows that it was not only used for the initial objective of rendering accounts, but it was also an opportunity for Correa to attack his political opponents. Less than a year after the program's launch, the duration of each transmission increased to between three and four hours (Ayala, 2014).

Regarding the speech and content used by former President Correa in these programs, Ayala (2014) explains that their structure allowed the speech to start with a soft tone, which led to a controversial conclusion. Campo (2018) frames the discursive strategy of the former president as a media spectacle in which every action was designed to generate empathy through the personification of a hero who defeats enemies and ends social ills. The enemy is discredited and questioned using expressions similar and close to a citizen's daily life to generate representativeness. The enemy is not unique, but it takes several forms depending on the topics covered in the discourse.

On multiple occasions, President Correa framed women as opponents. Granda (2017) documents repeated occasions when Correa disqualified women, including public officers, journalists, human rights activists, political opponents, and social figures, branding these women as irrational beings. The author indicates that sexism and racism supported the presidential speech in the *Enlace Ciudadano* programs. She points out that Rafael Correa usually refers to women holding public office by their physical appearance, implying that was the main reason these women were elected. Along the same line, the Ecuadorian Media Observatory (OME) conducted a study analyzing 152 *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcasts between 2013 and 2016, finding that Correa verbally attacked women in 1 out of 2 programs (Arias and Guerrero, 2017). The authors of this study point out that the former president disqualified

women and their statements, denigrated them, and exposed them as sexual objects. Arias and Guerrero (2017) note that the former president used at least five types of insults against women. They classify the insults as injurious insult, disqualifying insult, threat, irony, and morbid compliments.¹ Disqualifying insult represents 80 percent of the defamatory statements the former president displayed in *Enlace Ciudadano*.

Ayala (2014) argues that President Correa’s discourse greatly impacted attitudes in most of the country. In this sense, Cerbino et al. (2017) highlight that this discourse affected the polarization of society and political participation, as individuals unconsciously identify with the cultural underprints in the speech of former President Correa. However, the former president’s speech may have affected outcomes beyond political attitudes and participation. Ferguson’s 2012 results suggest that this repetitive defamatory discourse against women can increase cultural acceptance of violence against women, leading to greater aggressiveness. Many individuals potentially look at their country’s president as a role model and can adopt the same attitudes after feeling validated by him. It is plausible that by repetitively displaying this type of violence against women on radio and TV, President Correa unintentionally validated other types of violence against women. We study these unintended effects in the rest of the paper.

3 Data

We use data on every emergency reported to the ECU 911 Integrated Security Service between 2014 and 2017. ECU 911 was created in December 2011 to provide a similar service to 911 calls in the United States. It is a technological platform for receiving emergency calls and dispatching the appropriate response. It integrates the services provided by firefighters, the armed forces, the police, and the public health network. However, it was not until 2014 that all emergency calls and reports were fully centralized in ECU 911. Before 2014,

¹Neurotic, corrupt, liar, deranged, mediocre, dishonest, bad-faith, and anti-country are some of the statements used by President Correa to denigrate women’s reputations.

police, firefighters, and other emergency response teams maintained their contact lines and emergency records. For this reason, emergency records before 2014 are incomplete, and we focus on the period between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2017.

We observe each emergency's type, subtype, province of occurrence, date, and time. We do not observe the individual characteristics of the individuals present at each emergency. The emergency's type and subtype are not coded but described in words. To identify which emergencies constitute cases of violence against women, we follow the definitions of Ecuador's Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) and the United Nations. INEC (2019) defines psychological violence against women as any behavior aimed at causing emotional damage and degrading the personal dignity of women. Physical violence is any act or harm that causes physical suffering, pain, or death. Finally, sexual violence is the violation of the right to integrity and voluntary decision about the sexual life of women under the use of force or intimidation. Similarly, UN (1993) defines violence against women as an act of violence based on gender that has or may result in physical, sexual, or mental harm to women, as well as threats and deprivation of rights or freedom. Given these definitions, we take the following emergency reports as cases of violence against women: femicide, rape, violence against children and adolescents, violence against women or members of the physical family nucleus, psychological violence against women or members of the family nucleus, violence against women or sexual family members, and domestic violence.² Hereafter, we refer to these emergency reports as reported crimes against women. We count all cases of reported crimes against women by their hour of occurrence, date, and province. Thus, there is a total of 1,284,000 observations.³

Additionally, we constructed a dataset of every *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcast between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2017. For each Saturday in the period, we identify if

²We use other types of emergencies that should not constitute cases of violence against women to perform falsification tests.

³As there might be crimes against women that are not identified as such in the data, in a robustness check, we also include all violent crimes. These crimes include amputations, injuries with bladed weapons or firearms, assault, and murder.

Enlace Ciudadano was broadcast and who was the program’s anchor. There were 169 *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcasts, of which President Correa hosted 138 programs and the remaining 31 Vicepresident Glas. There were eight Saturdays on which the program was not broadcast. This variation in whether there was an *Enlace Ciudadano* and who hosted the program is the base for the empirical strategy described in the next section.

4 Empirical Strategy

To estimate the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcasts on the number of reported crimes against women to ECU 911, we compare Saturdays where Correa hosted the programs to Saturdays where he did not anchor the program, controlling for day-of-the-week variation in the number of crimes reported and other time and locations fixed effects. This strategy is similar to the one used by (Lindo et al., 2018). We use a Poisson model due to the discrete nature of the dependent variable and the fact that there are several days without reported emergencies for crimes against women. We estimate the following equation:

$$E[Reports_{p,t,h}|program_t, \theta_p, \delta_t, X_t] = exp(\beta program_t + \theta_p + \delta_t + X'_{p,t}\tau) \quad (1)$$

where $Reports_{p,t,h}$ is the number of reported crimes against women in the province p at time t and hour h ; $program_t$ is the treatment, it takes the value of 1 when the *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcasted at date t was hosted by President Correa; θ_p are province fixed effects; δ_t are day-of-the-week and year fixed effects; X_t is a national holiday indicator; and β is the parameter of interest. We cluster the standard errors by province, capturing the correlation that may exist within the same province in reported crimes against women.

The identification assumption is that proportional changes in emergencies observed on days without an *Enlace Ciudadano* directed by President Correa are a good counterfactual for the changes expected on days when he directed the program in the absence of the said program. This assumption is conditional on the expected differences between years, months,

days, provinces, and hours. The day-of-the-week fixed effects allow us to differentiate Saturdays from the rest of the week and set the baseline of a Saturday without a program directed by Correa. We use month and year fixed effects to control for trends and seasonality that may affect the number of reported crimes against women. For instance, in the past ten years, the country has become more violent, a factor that contributes to a positive trend in emergencies reported. The hour fixed effects aim to capture differences in reported emergencies across the day that may coincide with the time *Enlace Ciudadano* was broadcasted.

Province fixed effects control for time-invariant characteristics of each province, such as local cultural characteristics that could directly affect the volume of reported crimes against women. These fixed effects also control for heterogeneity due to each program's transmission place since *Enlace Ciudadano* was transmitted from different provinces. The holiday indicator makes it possible to separate the treatment effect from any effect created by a holiday because holidays are generally associated with increased crimes and violence against women.

The included fixed effects capture the bias due to differences between provinces, years, months, days, and hours. We extend the proposed model for robustness, allowing for more flexible fixed effects specifications. We include month-year and province-month-year fixed effects. These specifications allow us to capture even more specific systematic changes that may bias the results. In the most flexible model, identification comes from comparing emergencies reported on Saturdays with *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcasted by President Correa to emergencies reported on other days of the week within a province, year, and month, controlling for the expected changes across days of the week.

This identification strategy faces two potential challenges. First, the presence of unobserved shocks that coincide with Saturdays when President Correa broadcasted *Enlace Ciudadano* would confound the true effect, either by overestimating or understating the effect depending on the nature of the shock. For instance, if the time at which *Enlace Ciudadano* was broadcast is correlated with events that increase violence against women, then

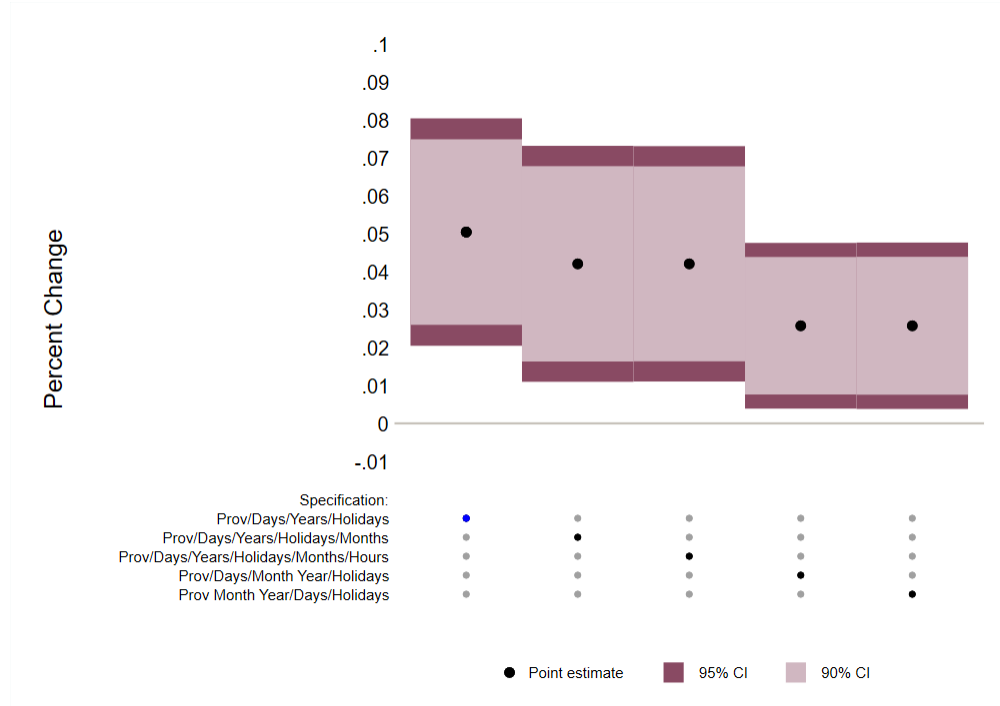
the estimates would overstate the actual effect. We address this potential issue by estimating the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano*'s broadcasts that President Correa did not anchor. We take advantage of the fact that Vice President Glas directed some programs because the president was on a trip abroad and estimate their effect. We should not find an effect if no other shock is related to the broadcast time. We also perform a falsification test by estimating the effect on reported property crimes. President Correa did not call for any violence directly, but his attitudes and speech may have encouraged violence against women. Also, it is implausible that crimes against women are misreported as property crimes. Thus, there should be no effect on property crimes.

The second main challenge is related to the fact that we only have information on reported crimes against women. We cannot observe the true number of crimes or distinguish which reports constituted a crime. This problem is common in studies that analyze illicit behavior, implying that the estimates must be interpreted as the effect of reported crimes against women. We have to consider two points regarding the direction of potential biases from this issue. First, the Poisson specification measures proportional changes in reported crimes against women, not changes in levels. Thus, unless *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, affects the likelihood of reporting a crime, we would recover the proportional change in actual crimes against women. Unfortunately, the data available do not allow us to test directly for changes in the probability of reporting a crime against women. Second, crimes against women, such as rape, tend to be underreported because victims have concerns about a lack of proof and are uncertain about the perpetrator's intentions (Kilpatrick et al., 2007). Underreporting would bias our estimates downwards, suggesting that the results are a lower bound of the actual effect.

5 Results

Figure 1 and Appendix Table A.1 present the main results. Column 1 presents the estimates of Equation 1 using only province, holiday, and day-of-the-week fixed effects. In

Figure 1: Effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* on Reported Crimes Against Women



Notes: This figure shows the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* hosted by President Correa on reported crimes against women using different sets of fixed effects described in the legend (1). The standard errors are clustered by province.

this specification, on average, reported crimes against women increased by five percent on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*. This effect is significant at the one percent level. Column 2 includes month fixed effects. The point estimate decreases slightly to 4.2 percent, still significant at the one percent level. Column 3 introduces hour fixed effects. The point estimate does not change. Column 4 replaces year and month fixed effects with year-by-month fixed effects. The point estimate decreases to 2.6 percent, significant at the five percent level. Finally, the estimate in Column 5 uses province-by-year-by-month fixed effects. The point estimate remains at 2.6 percent, and its significance does not change. We cannot reject that the estimates in the last four specifications are the same. Together, these results suggest that broadcasting *Enlace Ciudadano* with President Correa as its host increased reported crimes against women.

Table 1: Robustness Checks

	Reported Crimes Against Women	Violent Crimes and Crimes Against Women	Reported Crimes Against Women since 2015	Hosted by President Correa vs. Hosted by Vice President Glas	Crimes Against Property
President Correa hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	0.026 (0.011)	0.030 (0.009)	0.025 (0.010)	0.023 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.016)
Vice President Glas hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>				-0.007 (0.023)	
N	876,600	876,600	657,600	876,600	876,600

Notes: The standard errors are clustered by province. This table presents several checks on the robustness the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* hosted by President Correa on reported crimes against women. All estimates control for province, day-of-the-week, holiday, hour, and month-by-year fixed effects.

5.1 Robustness Checks

We performed a series of checks to assess the robustness of the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, on reported crimes against women. Table 1 presents these tests. All estimates control for province, day-of-the-week, holiday, hour, and month-by-year fixed effects. For comparison, Column 1 presents the effect reported in Figure 1.

First, we validate if misreported crimes against women in the data are biasing the results. As we mentioned in Section 3, the reported emergency type and subtype are not coded but described in words. Suppose not all cases of reported crimes against women are identified as such in the data. In that case, we would lose precision when estimating the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcasted by President Correa on these crimes, and the results could be biased in any direction if there is systematic misreporting. To test against this concern, we add all reported violent crimes to the dependent variable. Column 2 shows that reported crimes against women and violent crimes increased by three percent on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*, significant at the one percent level. This effect is slightly larger than the effect estimated only with reported crimes against women, suggesting that this potential issue is a minor concern.

Second, while 2014 was the first year when all emergency calls and reports were fully centralized in ECU 911, there is a significant difference in the number of emergencies reported

that year compared to 2015–2017. There were 1,242 reported crimes against women in 2014, 105,636 in 2015, 111,839 in 2016, and 100,099 in 2017. This difference suggests that there are reporting issues in 2014 that could bias the results. To test if this difference in reporting is a concern, we estimate the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* excluding 2014. Column 3 shows that reported crimes against women and violent crimes increased by 2.5 percent on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*, significant at the five percent level. This estimate is slightly smaller than the 2.6 percent effect reported in Column 1, and we cannot reject that they are the same.

Third, if the day or time at which *Enlace Ciudadano* was broadcast is correlated with events that increase violence against women or violence in general, then the estimates reported in Figure 1 would be biased upwards. To provide evidence against this concern, we exploit the fact that Vice President Glas hosted some programs when the president was out of the country. These broadcasts followed the original format of the program, with the Vice President presenting an update on the governmental actions taken during the week and then answering questions from the media. Thus, if we find an effect during these broadcasts, it would suggest that some other shock is confounding the estimates. Column 4 presents these results. We find that reported crimes against women and violent crimes increased by 2.3 percent on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano* and decreased by 0.7 percent when Vice President Glas hosted the program. The latter estimate is insignificant at conventional levels and 3.3 times smaller than the program’s effect when President Correa hosts it. This suggests that the effect on reported crimes against women is driven by President Correa’s speech during the program and is not because another unobserved shock is present.

Finally, we perform a falsification check to assuage further that there is no unobserved shock biasing the estimated effect of *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, on reported crimes against women. President Correa did not call for any violence directly, but his attitudes and speech may have unintendedly encouraged violence against women.

Thus, finding effects on crimes that should not be affected would threaten the validity of the results, as this would suggest that other shocks are present. We look for effects on crimes against property, as it is unlikely that crimes against women are misreported as property crimes. Column 5 shows that, on average, reported property crimes decreased by 0.7 percent on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*. This effect is statistically insignificant, suggesting a null effect on this type of crime. This further suggests that no unobserved shock is biasing the results.

6 Mechanisms Behind the Estimated Effect

6.1 Theoretical Hypotheses

Theoretically, the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* hosted by President Correa potentially combines two causal pathways. First, since Ecuador's president hosted the program, the mechanisms can also include features documented by the literature on the effects of state-run media (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014; Adena et al., 2015). Second, since the program was broadcast through radio and television, the mechanisms behind the effect can share features documented by the literature on the effect of violent media content on violence (Dahl and DellaVigna, 2009; Card and Dahl, 2011; Lindo et al., 2020). Additionally, it is important to consider that we are estimating the effects of a program that has already broadcasted for seven years. This opens the door to additional channels, like anticipation, not present in related studies focusing on the consequences of the speech and actions of political figures with less time in the political arena.

The increase in reported crimes against women documented in the previous section is consistent with the model of the effect of state-run media on violence developed by Yanagizawa-Drott (2014). President Correa's repetitive defamatory discourse against women can increase cultural acceptance of violence against women by suggesting to individuals that the cost of committing acts of violence against women is low, increasing violence against women. In-

dividuals displaying aggressive machismo and a predisposition against women should react more to the president’s defamatory discourse.

However, if listening to or watching *Enlace Ciudadano* is causing the estimated increase in reported crimes against women, there should be a mechanical incapacitation effect during the program (Dahl and DellaVigna, 2009). Given that the program was broadcast at 10 a.m., this suggests that individuals stayed at home during the program, limiting access to other activities, including alcohol consumption. Alcohol consumption is linked to violence against women (Lindo et al., 2018). Thus, we could find decreased reported crimes against women in the hours after *Enlace Ciudadano*. Also, if alcohol consumption is the mediator behind the effect, other reported emergencies related to alcohol consumption should also decrease during and after *Enlace Ciudadano*.

If incapacitation effects are present during and after *Enlace Ciudadano*, the overall increase in reported crimes against women would suggest that violence against women increases before the broadcast. Behavioral theory on salience suggests that the proximity of the broadcast increases the salience of new norms social norms that validate violence against women (Bordalo et al., 2013), which could lead to increased violence before the program’s broadcast. This would be consistent with a change in social norms after seven years of President Correa verbally attacking women, as implied by the model of Bursztyn et al. (2020).

6.2 Empirical Evidence Regarding the Hypotheses

In this section, we present several results supporting the hypotheses regarding the potential mechanism of the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* on reported crimes against women. First, we check if geographic areas that display aggressive machismo and a predisposition against women react more to the president’s defamatory discourse. As mentioned in Section 3, one limitation is that the data does not include individual-level information about the victim or the aggressor. Therefore, we cannot determine whether more aggressive perpetrators are the ones reacting to the president’s speech. To overcome this limitation, we investigate whether

Table 2: Effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* on Reported Crimes Against Women for Violent Provinces and Alcohol-Related Emergencies

	Reported Crimes Against Women	Reported Emergencies Related to Alcohol Consumption
President Correa hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	-0.083 (0.060)	-0.011 (0.014)
President Correa hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i> x Violent Province	0.181 (0.089)	
N		876,600

Notes: The standard errors are clustered by province. This table presents the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, on reported crimes against women, differentiating the effect by how violent the province is against women. It also presents the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, on emergencies related to alcohol consumption. Violent province is a dummy variable that takes one if the province is among the twelve most violent against women, according to INEC (2019). All estimates control for province, day-of-the-week, holiday, hour, and month-by-year fixed effects.

the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, is more pronounced in provinces with higher levels of violence against women. We generate a dummy variable that equals one if the province is one of the twelve most violent against women, as reported by INEC (2019).⁴ This measure takes into account violence against women throughout their lifetimes and is thus likely to reflect the long-term attitudes of individuals residing in those provinces. Column 1 in Table 2 shows that in provinces with higher levels of violence against women, *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, increased reported crimes against women by 18.1 percent, which is statistically significant at the five percent level. In contrast, the estimate is negative and insignificant at conventional levels in the rest of the country. This outcome supports the hypothesis that President Correa’s defamatory rhetoric against women increased cultural acceptance of violence, as regions with a greater bias against women are more responsive to the president’s speech.

Second, since *Enlace Ciudadano* is a radio and TV program, if watching it is causing the estimated effects, there should be no effect or a reduction in reported crimes against women

⁴The provinces are Azuay, Cañar, El Oro, Esmeraldas, Imbabura, Morona Santiago, Napo, Pastaza, Pichincha, Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas, Tungurahua, and Zamora Chinchipe.

Table 3: Effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* on Reported Crimes Against Women by Time of the Day

	Before <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	During <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	After <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>
President Correa hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	0.075 (0.031)	0.004 (0.022)	0.006 (0.021)
N		876,600	

Notes: The standard errors are clustered by province. This table presents the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, on reported crimes against women before, during, and after the program. We consider the period between 0:00 and 9:59 as before the program, between 10:00 and 14:59 as during the program, and between 15:00 and 23:59 as after the program. All estimates control for province, day-of-the-week, holiday, hour, and month-by-year fixed effects.

during the time it is on air. We estimate the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* before, during, and after the program was broadcast. We consider the period between 0:00 and 9:59 as before the program, between 10:00 and 14:59 as during the program, and between 15:00 and 23:59 as after the program. Table 3 presents these results. When President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*, reported crimes against women increased by 0.4 percent during the program and by 0.6 percent after the program. These effects are economically small and statistically insignificant, suggesting a null result. The point estimates are consistent with incapacitation and also suggest that it is anticipation to President Correa’s speech that drives the increased reported crimes against women we document in the main results.

Furthermore, considering the program’s broadcast time of 10 a.m., it is likely that individuals chose to remain at home during its airing, resulting in limited access to alcohol consumption. Research indicates that alcohol consumption is linked to violence against women (Lindo et al., 2018). To gauge the impact of *Enlace Ciudadano* on alcohol consumption, we developed a measurement of all reported emergencies that may be linked to alcohol consumption. This measure excludes crimes against women and includes all vehicular accidents and emergencies that explicitly mention alcohol in their description. It is important to note that this measure is imprecise and may result in measurement error that reduce the estimate’s precision. Column 2 in Table 2 presents this result. *Enlace Ciudadano*, hosted by President Correa, decreased emergencies related to alcohol consumption by 1.1 percent. However, the effect is imprecise due to measurement error in the dependent variable.

Finally, given that incapacitation effects are present during and after *Enlace Ciudadano*, the overall increase in reported crimes against women is driven by increased violence against women before the program. Column 1 in Table 3 shows that when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*, reported crimes against women increased by 7.5 percent before the program. This effect is significant at the five percent level. This result suggests that social norms regarding violence against women changed after seven years of President Correa verbally attacking women. The proximity of the broadcast increases the salience of the new norms, resulting in increased violence against women. However, it is essential to note that we could not check how different perpetrators reacted. A generalized effect across perpetrators with different demographics would provide additional support to the hypothesis that increased salience of new norms leads to anticipation effects.

7 Conclusion

This study examines the impact of *Enlace Ciudadano* broadcasts hosted by President Correa on reported crimes against women. Our findings reveal a significant increase in reported crimes against women on Saturdays, ranging from 2.6 to 5 percent. Additionally, our analysis suggests that President Correa’s repetitive defamatory language towards women may have validated and contributed to this increase in violence. This study serves as a stark reminder of how political figures can unintentionally influence their country’s population in negative ways. While President Rafael Correa did not explicitly call for violence against women, his attitudes and speech had unintended consequences that cannot be ignored.

Although our identifying assumption is supported by several robustness tests, limitations in the available data prevent us from examining how the results may differ across various perpetrators of crimes against women. As many offenders are familiar with their victims, it is crucial to determine whether the estimated impacts differ for those who have a personal connection to their victims. Analyzing this heterogeneity would provide valuable insights into how the president’s rhetoric has influenced societal norms and inform the development

of effective policies to address these shifts. This is an area of importance for future research.

The findings of this study underscore a new dimension that public policy should consider to improve the conditions of vulnerable populations. Specifically, the research highlights the unintended consequences that can arise when political leaders, such as Presidents Correa and Trump, serve as role models for large groups of people. As demonstrated in our study, even seemingly innocuous speech or actions can have far-reaching effects on vulnerable populations. One implication of these results is that political leaders should take a more deliberate approach to communication, carefully considering the potential impact of their words and actions. By doing so, they can help mitigate the adverse effects of unintended influences. However, given the current polarized political environment worldwide, not all political leaders have the incentive to be more careful about the consequences of their speech and actions. Hence, third parties, like media outlets, should step in and provide factual cross-checking and context to the speech of political leaders. Future research should explore whether providing such factual cross-checking and context is effective in mitigating any unintentional adverse effects.

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A Online Appendix Tables and Figures

Table A.1: Effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* on Reported Crimes Against Women

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
President Correa hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	0.050 (0.014)	0.042 (0.015)	0.042 (0.015)	0.026 (0.011)	0.026 (0.011)
Fixed Effects:					
Province	x	x	x	x	
Day-of-the-week	x	x	x	x	x
Holidays	x	x	x	x	x
Year	x	x	x		
Month		x	x		
Hour			x	x	x
Month×Year				x	
Province×Month×Year					x
N			876,600		

Notes: The standard errors are clustered by province. This table presents the effect of *Enlace Ciudadano* hosted by President Correa on reported crimes against women using different sets of fixed effects described in the table (1).