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LINGUISTIC COMBAT IN THE HUNGARIAN
PARLIAMENT: EXPLORING POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND
PERCEPTION OF INCIVILITY IN A GENDER
IMBALANCED ARENA

Thesis Booklet

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1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Political incivility has become an increasingly important area of political communication research, particularly because of its implications for democratic discourse, political engagement, and citizens' evaluations of political actors. Previous research has shown that uncivil political communication can influence how audiences respond to political debate and may reduce citizens' willingness to engage with political messages (Mutz & Reeves, 2005; Feinberg & Frimer, 2023). At the same time, incivility cannot be understood solely through particular linguistic forms, as its interpretation depends on communicative context, social norms, speaker characteristics, and audience expectations (Bentivegna & Rega, 2022; Feldman, 2023).

Gender represents an important dimension of this relationship. Political institutions remain gendered environments in which expectations concerning appropriate political behaviour may differ between male and female politicians (Erikson & Josefsson, 2022). Role Congruity Theory further suggests that individuals may be evaluated negatively when their behaviour conflicts with gendered social expectations (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Consequently, identical or comparable forms of confrontational political communication may not necessarily be interpreted in the same way when produced by male and female speakers. Existing research nevertheless indicates that these relationships are context-dependent and may vary according to political, institutional, and cultural settings.

The geographical distribution of existing research provides an additional reason for examining the Hungarian case. Political incivility research has predominantly focused on the United States and Western Europe, while post-socialist Central European political environments remain underrepresented. Hungary provides a particularly relevant case because political communication takes place within a highly gender-imbalanced parliamentary setting and a distinctive political and institutional context. The dissertation therefore, extends the geographical and contextual scope of political incivility research rather than assuming that patterns identified in other political systems are directly transferable to Hungary.

Against this background, the dissertation examines political incivility from two complementary perspectives: how it manifests in Hungarian parliamentary discourse and how it is perceived by Hungarian audiences. The first empirical component

analyses parliamentary discourse to identify patterns of incivility across political parties, genders, individual speakers, policy areas, and two consecutive parliamentary cycles. The second uses a survey experiment based on authentic parliamentary statements to examine audience evaluations under different communicative and speaker conditions. Together, the two components link the production and distribution of political incivility to its recipient's evaluation.

The overall objective of the research is to develop a gender-sensitive and context-dependent account of political incivility in Hungary that integrates discourse production and audience perception. More specifically, the dissertation seeks to clarify the relationship between political incivility and impoliteness, provide original empirical evidence from Hungarian parliamentary communication, examine the role of gender and individual characteristics in the production and perception of incivility, and develop a replicable multi-method framework combining corpus-based discourse analysis, AI-assisted annotation, qualitative contextual interpretation, and a corpus-derived survey experiment. The empirical findings are interpreted primarily within the Hungarian political and cultural context, while the broader contribution of the research lies in the framework's theoretical and comparative potential rather than in claims of universal empirical generalisability.

On this basis, the dissertation adopts a context-sensitive working definition of political incivility centred on perceived norm violation:

For the purposes of this dissertation, political incivility is defined as context-dependent political communication perceived as violating norms of respect and broader social, political, and democratic norms. Its identification depends on the interaction between the communicative act, its institutional and cultural context, and the expectations of speakers and audiences. Intentionality may shape political incivility, but is not treated as a necessary definitional condition.

The emphasis on perceived norm violation is consistent with hearer-oriented pragmatic approaches, according to which communicative meaning cannot be reduced to presumed speaker intention but is shaped through recipient interpretation in context (Hansen & Terkourafi, 2023; Terkourafi & Hansen, 2026).

This definition also reflects the dissertation's broader analytical framework: political incivility is evaluated in relation to context-dependent political and democratic norms, while the distinction between etic classification and emic audience evaluation acknowledges that researcher-defined classifications and recipient perceptions need not correspond perfectly. The corpus study therefore, identifies and classifies manifestations of political incivility in Hungarian parliamentary discourse, while the survey experiment examines how selected communicative acts are interpreted and evaluated by recipients.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND WORKING DEFINITION

The theoretical framework of the dissertation conceptualises political incivility as a socially interpreted and context-dependent communicative phenomenon rather than as an inherent property of particular linguistic forms. It integrates insights from pragmatics and impoliteness research, theories of civility, sociolinguistics, and gender theory to explain how incivility manifests in parliamentary discourse and how audiences interpret it.

A central conceptual distinction is made between impoliteness and political incivility. The two concepts are treated as overlapping but analytically distinct rather than interchangeable. Impoliteness primarily concerns the interpersonal and pragmatic dimensions of communication, including face-threatening behaviour, relational expectations, and interactional norm violations (Culpeper, 1996, 2005, 2011; Bousfield, 2008; Terkourafi, 2008). Political incivility operates at a broader social, political, and normative level, encompassing communicative behaviour evaluated against expectations concerning legitimate political conduct and democratic interaction. This distinction allows interpersonal linguistic behaviour to be analysed without reducing political incivility to impoliteness alone.

An important element of this distinction concerns speaker intention and recipient interpretation. Although impolite or uncivil communication may be intentional, such intent is not a necessary condition for identifying political incivility. Recent hearer-oriented pragmatic approaches distinguish Speaker's Meaning from Hearer's Meaning and emphasise that recipients do not have direct access to speakers' communicative intentions but construct interpretations from linguistic, contextual, and social information (Hansen & Terkourafi, 2023; Terkourafi & Hansen, 2026). Accordingly, the dissertation treats intentionality as a possible explanatory dimension rather than an empirical criterion and places greater emphasis on perceived norm violation and recipient evaluation. This provides an important theoretical connection between the discourse analysis and the subsequent survey experiment.

The relationship between impoliteness and political incivility is further organised through a micro–macro–meta framework. At the micro level, impoliteness concerns interpersonal interaction, including face threats, insults, personal attacks, and violations of interactional expectations. At the macro level, political incivility concerns broader

political, social, and democratic norms, including expectations surrounding legitimate political conduct, mutual respect, and institutional behaviour. At the proposed meta level, political communication may be recontextualised and evaluated within the wider public sphere through media and public commentary, where statements can be amplified, contested, reframed, or normalised. The meta level provides a conceptual extension of the framework but is not directly tested in the dissertation's empirical studies.

A complementary distinction is made between etic and emic perspectives (Pike, 1967). The corpus analysis primarily adopts an etic perspective by applying researcher-defined categories, supported by AI-assisted annotation, to parliamentary discourse. The survey introduces an emic perspective by examining how participants themselves perceive and evaluate political statements. An utterance analytically classified as uncivil does not necessarily have to be perceived as equally uncivil by all recipients. The etic–emic distinction, therefore, provides a theoretical and methodological bridge between the two empirical studies by connecting the analytical identification of political incivility with its audience interpretation.

Gender theory provides the final component of the framework. Role Congruity Theory suggests that individuals may be evaluated negatively when their behaviour conflicts with gendered social expectations (Eagly & Karau, 2002), while Gender Performativity Theory conceptualises gender as reproduced and negotiated through repeated social practices (Butler, 1990). Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity further draws attention to the different legitimacy that assertiveness, dominance, and conventionally masculine forms of behaviour may acquire within institutional environments. These perspectives provide a theoretical basis for examining whether comparable forms of political incivility are produced or evaluated differently according to speaker gender and audience characteristics.

On this basis, the dissertation adopts a context-sensitive working definition of political incivility centred on perceived norm violation. Norms are themselves socially constructed and subject to historical and cultural change; consequently, the same communicative behaviour may be interpreted differently across political environments and audiences (Shmargad et al., 2022; Vargiu et al., 2026).

Together, these theoretical components establish the analytical logic of the dissertation: the corpus study identifies and classifies manifestations of political incivility in Hungarian parliamentary discourse, while the survey experiment examines how recipients interpret selected manifestations. Political incivility is thus approached simultaneously as a discourse-level phenomenon and as a socially situated object of audience evaluation.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Building on the theoretical framework outlined above, the dissertation examines political incivility at two complementary levels: its manifestation in parliamentary discourse and its perception by audiences. The research is guided by the following research questions and hypotheses:

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between issue salience and the frequency and forms of political incivility in parliamentary discourse?

RQ2: How do gender and individual characteristics shape perceptions of political incivility?

Hypotheses

H1: Female politicians exhibit lower levels of incivility than male politicians.

H2: Patterns of incivility vary by political party and gender.

H3: Identical uncivil statements are evaluated more negatively when attributed to female politicians than when attributed to male politicians.

H4: Age, gender, and education level predict respondents' tolerance for political incivility.

These questions and hypotheses are addressed through two interconnected empirical studies. The corpus analysis examines the frequency, tone, and manifestations of political incivility in Hungarian parliamentary discourse and their variation across policy areas, gender, political parties, and individual speakers, primarily addressing RQ1, H1, and H2. The survey experiment complements this analysis by examining how corpus-derived parliamentary statements are evaluated under different speaker-gender conditions and how these evaluations vary with respondent characteristics, thereby addressing RQ2, H3, and H4. Together, the two studies connect the analytical identification of political incivility with its audience evaluation.

4 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The dissertation employs a multi-method research design that combines corpus-based discourse analysis with a survey experiment. The two empirical components are sequentially connected: the parliamentary corpus provides the empirical basis for identifying and classifying manifestations of political incivility, while selected authentic passages from the corpus are subsequently used as stimuli in the survey experiment. The overall methodological process can therefore be summarised as:

Corpus → Coding → Stimulus Selection → Experimental Manipulation →
Audience Evaluation.

This design connects the production and analytical classification of political incivility with its perception by recipients and reflects the dissertation's distinction between etic and emic perspectives.

Study 1: Corpus-Based Analysis of Parliamentary Discourse

The first empirical study examines political incivility in the Hungarian National Assembly using parliamentary speeches from the 2014–2018 and 2018–2022 parliamentary cycles. The analysis focuses on the *Hour of Immediate Questions*, a parliamentary format characterised by direct interaction between government and opposition politicians and therefore particularly suitable for examining confrontational political communication.

The selection of these two periods also supports institutional comparability. The 2014 parliamentary election marked an institutional boundary because it was the first election conducted under the new electoral framework established by Act CCIII of 2011, resulting in the first 199-member National Assembly. The 2014–2018 and 2018–2022 periods consequently constitute two consecutive and complete parliamentary cycles operating under the same basic institutional structure. The preceding 2010–2014 cycle represents, in this respect, a transitional period between the earlier and reformed parliamentary systems. Its inclusion would also have introduced a longitudinal dimension, requiring additional hypotheses concerning temporal change, which falls outside the dissertation's primary scope.

The original corpus contained 11,021 parliamentary speeches. After excluding speeches that did not meet the analytical criteria, 8,849 speeches remained for analysis. The

corpus was analysed through a two-level coding framework. At Level 1, speeches were classified according to their overall communicative tone as civil, negative civil, or uncivil. At Level 2, relevant instances were further classified according to recurring manifestations of political incivility, adapting the categorisation developed by Hill et al. (2015): name-calling, aspersion, exaggeration/hyperbole, mockery/sarcasm, character assassination, contrast, excerpts, and lying accusation, the latter being added during the research process in response to recurring patterns in the Hungarian corpus. The analysis, therefore, captures both broader differences in communicative tone and more specific linguistic manifestations of incivility.

Given the size of the corpus, the study employs an AI-augmented discourse-analytical approach in which computational classification supports the systematic processing of large-scale textual data. AI-assisted annotation is used as an analytical tool rather than as an autonomous decision-maker: its role is to improve scalability, efficiency, and consistency under controlled model and prompting conditions, while interpretation remains subject to human validation and contextual assessment. This combination is particularly important for political incivility because meaning may depend on pragmatic, cultural, and institutional contexts that automated classification cannot reliably capture in isolation.

The resulting classifications are analysed quantitatively to identify patterns across parliamentary cycles, policy areas, political parties, gender, and individual speakers, while qualitative examination of authentic parliamentary examples provides contextual interpretation of the principal manifestations of incivility. This combination allows the study to identify large-scale patterns without separating them from the linguistic and political contexts in which they occur.

Study 2: Survey Experiment

The second empirical study examines the recipient side of political incivility through a quantitative survey experiment using authentic statements drawn from the parliamentary corpus. Rather than constructing artificial political messages, the experiment uses actual parliamentary passages previously classified in Study 1, thereby establishing a direct methodological connection between discourse production and audience evaluation.

The experimental stimuli retain a traceable relationship with the corpus coding framework. Study 1 of the survey includes two civil, two negative civil, and two uncivil statements, representing the three Level-1 tone categories used in the corpus analysis. Study 2 draws on selected Level-2 manifestations of incivility, thereby enabling participants to evaluate more specific forms of uncivil communication. Speaker gender and communicative conditions are systematically controlled or manipulated, while respondents evaluate the statements on measures including perceived incivility, sympathy, support, and competence. The design, therefore, also follows the methodological logic of experimental pragmatics by examining recipient interpretations of communicative acts under controlled conditions (Noveck & Reboul, 2008; Gibbs & Colston, 2020; Bambini & Domaneschi, 2024).

Data were collected through an online questionnaire created in Qualtrics. The primary recruitment channel was Prolific, supplemented by three in-person seminar classes at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, mailing lists from Corvinus University, the *Fulbright ösztöndíjasok 2020-* and *Káposztásmegyer I* Facebook groups, and printed questionnaires administered at two residential care homes for older adults. A total of 1,055 responses were initially recorded. Responses failing the attention check, incomplete submissions, questionnaires completed in less than two minutes, and uniform response patterns were excluded during data cleaning, resulting in a final analytical sample of $N = 780$. Of these, 500 respondents were recruited through Prolific, 63 through BME seminars, 48 through the two residential care homes, and the remaining 169 through the supplementary online recruitment channels.

The survey thus complements the researcher-defined classification of the corpus by examining how recipients evaluate the same or comparable communicative acts. Methodologically, this provides the empirical connection between the dissertation's etic classification and emic audience evaluation and operationalises its working definition of political incivility as a context-dependent perceived norm violation.

5 MAIN FINDINGS

The empirical findings show that political incivility in Hungary is neither uniformly distributed across parliamentary actors nor uniformly perceived by audiences. Across both studies, the results indicate substantial contextual variation by policy area, party position, gender, individual speakers, communicative tone, and respondent characteristics. Taken together, the findings support the dissertation's conceptualisation of political incivility as a context-dependent and socially interpreted phenomenon rather than a purely linguistic property.

Findings of the Parliamentary Corpus Analysis

The corpus analysis revealed substantial variation in the density and manifestations of political incivility across parties, genders, individual MPs, and policy areas. Party- and gender-level averages did not fully explain the observed variation, as individual speakers frequently deviated from the broader patterns of their political groups. Several opposition female MPs displayed comparatively high levels of incivility, while representatives of Fidesz and KDNP generally exhibited lower levels within the Hour of Immediate Questions.

With regard to RQ1, the findings indicate that political incivility varies across policy domains. Statistically significant differences were identified across the 21 policy areas for both negativity, $F(20, 923) = 2.12, p = .0029$, and incivility, $F(20, 923) = 1.63, p = .039$. These results suggest that the subject matter of parliamentary communication is associated with differences in both communicative tone and the occurrence of uncivil language.

H1, which predicted that female politicians would exhibit lower levels of incivility than male politicians, received limited support. Lower levels of incivility were observed among women in some party contexts, particularly among governing-party MPs. However, this pattern was not consistent across the corpus. Several female MPs from opposition parties displayed levels of incivility comparable to or higher than those of male colleagues within the same political groups. The findings, therefore, do not support a generalised claim that female politicians are consistently less uncivil than male politicians.

H2, predicting variation in incivility by political party and gender, was supported descriptively. Clear differences emerged across party and gender groups. Several opposition parties, including Demokratikus Koalíció (DK), Párbeszéd, MSZP, and Jobbik, during the period in which they operated in opposition, exhibited comparatively higher incivility densities, whereas Fidesz and particularly KDNP generally showed lower levels within the analysed parliamentary segment. At the same time, substantial individual-level variation demonstrates that neither gender nor party affiliation alone is sufficient to explain patterns of incivility.

Overall, the corpus findings indicate that gender-related patterns of political incivility are embedded within party, institutional, and individual contexts. The analysis, therefore, does not establish a uniform gender effect or the motivations underlying politicians' rhetorical choices.

Findings of the Survey Experiment

The survey experiment showed that audience evaluations of political incivility are influenced not only by the linguistic content of a statement but also by the characteristics of speakers and respondents. This provides empirical support for the recipient-oriented component of the dissertation's framework, although the observed gender effects were more conditional than initially hypothesised.

With regard to RQ2, the findings show that gender and individual characteristics shape perceptions of political incivility in different and interacting ways. Speaker gender was significantly associated with perceived incivility, with male speakers receiving higher perceived-incivility ratings overall. Respondent gender did not produce a consistent main effect; however, its interaction with speaker gender and communicative tone revealed important conditional differences. In particular, male respondents evaluated uncivil male speakers more positively on competence, with a weaker positive pattern for sympathy. Age also emerged as a significant predictor of several evaluations, whereas the effects of the other demographic characteristics were less consistent. RQ2, therefore, indicates that perceptions of political incivility cannot be explained by gender or individual characteristics independently, but emerge through their interaction with communicative tone and audience characteristics

H3 predicted that identical uncivil statements would be evaluated more negatively when attributed to female rather than male politicians. The findings provided partial support, but not in the predicted overall direction. Male speakers received significantly higher perceived-incivility ratings overall, and the interaction between tone and speaker gender was not statistically significant. However, a three-way interaction between communicative tone, speaker gender, and respondent gender showed that male respondents evaluated uncivil male speakers more favourably in terms of competence, with a weaker positive pattern for sympathy. The results, therefore, do not demonstrate a uniform penalty against female speakers but indicate that gendered evaluations can emerge conditionally through the interaction of speaker gender, respondent gender, and communicative tone.

These findings are particularly notable because uncivil speech was generally associated with negative evaluations, yet some male respondents evaluated uncivil male speakers more positively on competence and, to a lesser extent, sympathy. This suggests that the social evaluation of incivility depends on more than whether a statement is linguistically uncivil: the identity of the speaker and the audience can influence how the same communicative behaviour is evaluated.

H4, concerning demographic predictors of tolerance for political incivility, also received partial support. Age emerged as a significant predictor of several evaluations, whereas respondent gender did not produce a consistent significant main effect across outcomes. The oldest respondents, aged 65 and above, reported lower levels of political interest and discussion while assigning comparatively higher ratings of incivility. The demographic effects were therefore uneven rather than uniform across the characteristics included in the hypothesis.

Taken together, the survey findings indicate that perceptions of political incivility are shaped by interactions between communicative tone, speaker characteristics, and audience characteristics rather than by linguistic form alone.

Combined Interpretation of the Findings

The two empirical studies provide complementary perspectives on political incivility. The corpus analysis demonstrates that its production and distribution vary across political, institutional, gender, and individual contexts, while the survey experiment

shows that its evaluation likewise varies across speakers and audiences. The findings, therefore, support the distinction between etic analytical classification and emic audience evaluation: communicative acts can be classified within a systematic analytical framework, but their perceived incivility is not necessarily identical among recipients.

The combined evidence does not establish speaker motivation or a universal gender effect. Instead, it indicates that political incivility emerges from the interaction of communicative form, institutional position, political context, gendered expectations, and recipient interpretation. This interpretation is consistent with research emphasising the contextual nature of gendered political communication and audience evaluation (Hargrave & Blumenau, 2022; Erikson & Josefsson, 2022; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Butler, 1990).

6 NEW SCIENTIFIC FINDINGS AND THESIS STATEMENTS

The dissertation contributes new theoretical, empirical, and methodological knowledge to the study of political incivility. Its principal scientific findings are formulated in the following six thesis statements.

Thesis 1. Political incivility and impoliteness are overlapping but analytically distinct norm-related phenomena.

The dissertation distinguishes political incivility from impoliteness without treating the two concepts as mutually exclusive or separating them on the basis of intentionality. Impoliteness primarily captures interpersonal and pragmatic norm violations, whereas political incivility additionally involves broader political, social, institutional, and democratic norms. Political incivility is therefore conceptualised as a context-dependent phenomenon whose identification cannot be reduced to linguistic form or presumed speaker intention. Recipient interpretation is an essential component of the analysis, consistent with the dissertation's working definition of political incivility as a perceived violation of norms. This distinction integrates pragmatic and political-communication perspectives while providing a conceptual basis for analysing political incivility across interpersonal and broader normative levels.

Thesis 2. The production and perception of political incivility can be analytically connected through complementary etic and emic perspectives.

The dissertation establishes a connection between researcher-defined classification and recipient evaluation by integrating etic and emic perspectives into a single analytical framework. The corpus analysis provides an etic classification of parliamentary communication, while the survey experiment introduces an emic perspective by examining how recipients themselves evaluate authentic political statements. These perspectives are complementary rather than interchangeable, as analytically classified communicative acts need not be perceived in the same way by different audiences. The integration of discourse production and audience perception, therefore, demonstrates that political incivility emerges through the interaction of communicative form, speakers, recipients, and culturally and institutionally situated norms rather than from linguistic content alone.

Thesis 3. Political incivility in Hungarian parliamentary discourse varies substantially across policy domains, political parties, genders, and individual speakers.

The corpus analysis provides original empirical evidence that political incivility is heterogeneously distributed within Hungarian parliamentary discourse. Differences were identified across policy areas, while variation was also observed across political parties, genders, and individual MPs. Several opposition parties displayed comparatively higher incivility densities within the analysed *Hour of Immediate Questions*, whereas Fidesz and KDNP generally exhibited lower levels. At the same time, substantial individual-level variation indicates that neither party affiliation nor gender alone adequately accounts for the observed patterns. The findings extend empirical knowledge of political incivility to a highly gender-imbalanced Central European parliamentary context that has received comparatively limited attention in the international literature.

Thesis 4. Gender differences in the production of parliamentary incivility are context-dependent rather than uniform.

The corpus findings do not support a general claim that female politicians consistently exhibit lower levels of incivility than male politicians. Although lower levels of female incivility were observed in some party contexts, several opposition female MPs displayed levels comparable to or higher than those of their male colleagues. Gender-related patterns of political incivility, therefore, need to be interpreted in relation to political party, institutional position, and individual speaker characteristics. The Hungarian evidence consequently qualifies expectations derived largely from Western political contexts and indicates that gendered patterns of political communication cannot be assumed to transfer uniformly across institutional and cultural environments. These findings identify patterns of association but do not establish the motivations underlying individual speakers' communicative choices.

Thesis 5. Audience evaluations of political incivility are shaped by conditional interactions between communicative tone, speaker characteristics, and respondent characteristics.

The survey experiment demonstrates that political incivility is not evaluated solely on the basis of linguistic content. Contrary to the predicted uniform penalty against female politicians, male speakers received significantly higher perceived-incivility ratings

overall. Interaction effects further indicated that some male respondents evaluated uncivil male speakers more favourably in terms of competence and, more weakly, on sympathy. These findings do not establish a general gender-based double standard against female politicians; instead, they demonstrate that evaluations of political incivility vary as a function of interactions among communicative tone, speaker gender, and audience characteristics. The results thereby provide empirical support for treating recipient evaluation as an integral dimension of political incivility rather than assuming uniform perceptions of the same communicative behaviour.

Thesis 6. A replicable multi-method framework can connect large-scale AI-assisted discourse analysis with contextual interpretation and experimental audience research.

The dissertation develops a multi-method framework that combines AI-assisted corpus annotation, quantitative pattern analysis, qualitative contextual interpretation, and a survey experiment using authentic parliamentary stimuli. AI-assisted annotation enables scalable analysis of large volumes of Hungarian parliamentary discourse, while human validation and contextual interpretation address ambiguity, model dependence, and culturally specific meanings. The framework further adapts the Hill et al. (2015) classification system to the Hungarian parliamentary context and adds lying accusation as an empirically recurring manifestation. The AT/TACTICNESS measure provides a standardised means of comparing the density of negative and uncivil communication relative to speech length without inferring speaker motivation.

The survey component extends this framework by connecting corpus-derived stimuli with controlled manipulations of speaker gender and recipient evaluation. The principal methodological contribution, therefore, lies in replicability rather than universal empirical generalisability: although the empirical distributions identified in Hungary may differ elsewhere, the analytical framework can be applied across countries, parliamentary periods, political institutions, and communicative settings to examine whether comparable relationships emerge under different institutional and cultural conditions.

7 APPLICABILITY, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Applicability

The findings have potential applications in political communication, media analysis, parliamentary practice, and civic education. By demonstrating that evaluations of political incivility can vary according to communicative tone, speaker characteristics, and audience characteristics, the research may contribute to a more context-sensitive understanding of political communication. Political actors may benefit from recognising that comparable communicative behaviour can be interpreted differently across audiences, while journalists and political analysts may use the findings to contextualise rather than simply label instances of uncivil political discourse.

The findings may also be relevant to parliamentary institutions and policymakers when considering responses to disruptive political speech and reviewing standards of parliamentary conduct. Civil society organisations and media literacy initiatives may similarly draw on the distinction between analytical classification and audience perception when addressing political communication and perceived norm violations.

Beyond these substantive applications, the dissertation has methodological applicability. Its combination of AI-assisted corpus annotation, human validation, contextual interpretation, and corpus-derived experimental stimuli can be transferred to other parliamentary periods, countries, political institutions, and communicative environments. The principal broader applicability of the research, therefore, lies in the replicability of its analytical framework rather than the direct generalisation of the Hungarian empirical findings.

Limitations and Generalisability

The findings should be interpreted within the boundaries of the research design. The parliamentary corpus covers two consecutive Hungarian parliamentary cycles, 2014–2018 and 2018–2022, selected partly because they provide institutionally comparable periods following the introduction of the reformed electoral framework. Consequently, the findings describe patterns within this specific historical and institutional setting and should not be interpreted as representing Hungarian parliamentary communication across all periods.

The survey similarly has limitations concerning sampling and experimental design. Although recruitment through multiple channels increased demographic diversity, the final sample was not designed to constitute a nationally representative probability sample. The use of written parliamentary stimuli also isolates specific dimensions of political communication while excluding nonverbal and paralinguistic features that may influence perceptions in naturally occurring political interactions. Audience evaluations of incivility are inherently subjective and may be affected by respondents' prior political knowledge, expectations, and attitudes.

AI-assisted annotation introduces additional methodological limitations. Although computational assistance enables scalable and comparatively consistent classification under controlled conditions, outputs remain sensitive to model choice, prompting, ambiguity, and contextual interpretation. Human validation, therefore, remains an essential component of the framework, and the resulting classifications should not be treated as entirely objective or independent of analytical decisions.

These limitations distinguish empirical generalisability from methodological replicability. The empirical findings are context-bound and should be generalised cautiously. The stronger international contribution lies in the replicability of the research design: the corpus coding procedure, AI-assisted annotation, linguistic classification, and corpus-derived survey experiment can be applied in different institutional and cultural contexts. Such replication would enable theoretical rather than purely statistical generalisation by examining whether the mechanisms and relationships identified in Hungary recur elsewhere.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should extend the framework both temporally and geographically. Applying the same analytical procedure to earlier and later Hungarian parliamentary cycles would allow longitudinal investigation of whether patterns of political incivility change alongside broader political and institutional developments. The 2010–2014 parliamentary cycle would provide a particularly informative comparison because it represents a transitional period preceding the first parliament elected entirely under the reformed institutional framework used during the two cycles examined in this dissertation.

Future studies could also examine changes in the roles of government and opposition. Comparing the communicative behaviour of political actors before and after changes in institutional position would help determine whether patterns associated with particular parties or speakers persist when their parliamentary roles change. Such research would provide a stronger basis for distinguishing patterns associated with gender or individual speakers from those associated with institutional position.

Cross-national replication would further establish whether the relationships identified in Hungary recur in political systems characterised by different gender compositions, institutional arrangements, and communicative norms. In particular, applying the framework to other Central and Eastern European democracies could help address the ongoing geographical imbalance in research on political incivility and provide a basis for systematic comparative analysis.

The proposed meta-level of the dissertation's theoretical framework also requires direct empirical investigation. Future research could examine how parliamentary statements are selected, reframed, amplified, or normalised through news media, social media, political commentary, and wider public discourse. Connecting the micro-level production of communicative acts and macro-level political norms with their subsequent public recontextualisation would enable the full micro–macro–meta framework to be empirically tested.

Finally, future studies could expand the experimental component by incorporating audiovisual stimuli, additional speaker characteristics, more diverse and representative samples, and cross-cultural experimental designs. Such extensions could further clarify how recipient interpretation interacts with communicative form, speaker identity, institutional context, and culturally situated norms.

PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

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