

Media Portrayal of Kamala Harris in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Serbia, Poland, and Norway in Relation to the Gender Inequality Index

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Introduction

“Kamala Harris’s rise from local to national politics marks her as one of the most successful women in U.S. politics” (Osei Fordjour, 2022). Being an influential political figure, Harris has widely attracted huge European media attention-both her political career and identity being intact from every other end. Her election to the Vice Presidency is not only a milestone in American politics but also represents a significant achievement for women in leadership roles globally. With her unprecedented rise to power, Harris presents a particularly suitable case study for exploring how gender and race inform the media representation of a female politician in contexts that have historically been dominated by men. This makes her media portrayal very important, since such portrayals reflect and reinforce the common societal norms and biases. Media coverage amplifies stereotypes and biased standards in shaping the public view of women leaders in relation to what political leaders should be.

This research project, therefore, aims at the analysis of representations of Kamala Harris in news media outlets across three European countries: Serbia, Poland, and Norway. It is based on discussing different ways in which her identity, achievements, and role in U.S. politics have been portrayed. We will try to see to what extent gender and other aspects of her identity, such as her race and political affiliations, are accentuated in these portrayals through this comparative analysis. While the media may not literally tell anyone what to think about Harris, it really sets the agenda and dictates the narratives through which the public thinks. As the theory of agenda-setting goes, even as the media may not tell us what to think, they most definitely tell us what to think about and direct attention to certain aspects of a figure's identity over others.

The present paper also seeks to explore whether the representation of Harris reflects the position of the countries concerned in respect to the GII-an important indicator for measuring disparities between men and women. Thus, a comparison of the rankings in the GII for Serbia, Poland, and Norway will help to contextualize the contribution that a nation's relative level of gender inequality can make to the ways in which media representations of women politicians are constructed. The current research serves to fill an important gap in our understanding of media coverage, gender representation, and their embeddedness within national contexts, whose biases are translated onto the representation of female political figures. Examples of cases in point might be Kamala Harris.

We hope, through this analysis, to contribute to a broader conversation about the role of the media in shaping public perceptions of women in political leadership and the impact of gender inequality on political representation.

Methodology

To see how Kamala Harris was reported and portrayed in two different news media outlets in various countries, we chose to collect our data in the period October 29th to November 13th 2024, i.e. one week before and one week after the US election. Our project was done in the following four steps: An article selection, sentiment analysis, gender sensitivity analysis, and a comparison and visualization.

1. Article Selection

With random sampling we selected 16 articles within each of the three countries, namely Serbia, Poland, and Norway. The whole sample consisted of 48 articles, where the articles from each country consisted of 8 articles from state-owned news outlet selections, and 8 independent news outlets. Nevertheless, we faced some data limitations and were able to find only 4 articles from Serbian independent news outlets that reported about Kamala Harris in a given timeframe.

2. Sentiment Analysis:

Kamala Harris's sentiment was determined in each article using a Google sheet. The sentiment classification was as follows: negative (-1), neutral (0), positive (1). We coded the articles as negative, neutral, or positive based on their tone, content, and framing, as well as the words used. Articles were considered positive if they highlighted Kamala Harris's achievements or portrayed her in a favorable light, neutral if they maintained an objective tone without clear bias, and negative if they focused on her perceived weaknesses, challenges, or used language that could undermine her credibility. This classification was guided by both textual analysis and the overall sentiment conveyed in the articles. The graph was made to show results of sentiment analysis.

3. Gender Sensitivity Analysis:

Articles were further analyzed using the Gender Media Monitoring guide and filling in the above-mentioned sheet. Some of the questions from the sheet were: Does the article contain a picture of Kamala Harris?; Is Kamala Harris mentioned in the headline, in the first 20% or the rest of the text?; Does the article highlight any issues of inequality?; Does it challenge gender stereotypes? We also answered several key questions from the GMM framework that can be found on AGEMI Platform, as a means of determining whether these articles were good examples of gender-sensitive political reporting about Kamala Harris.

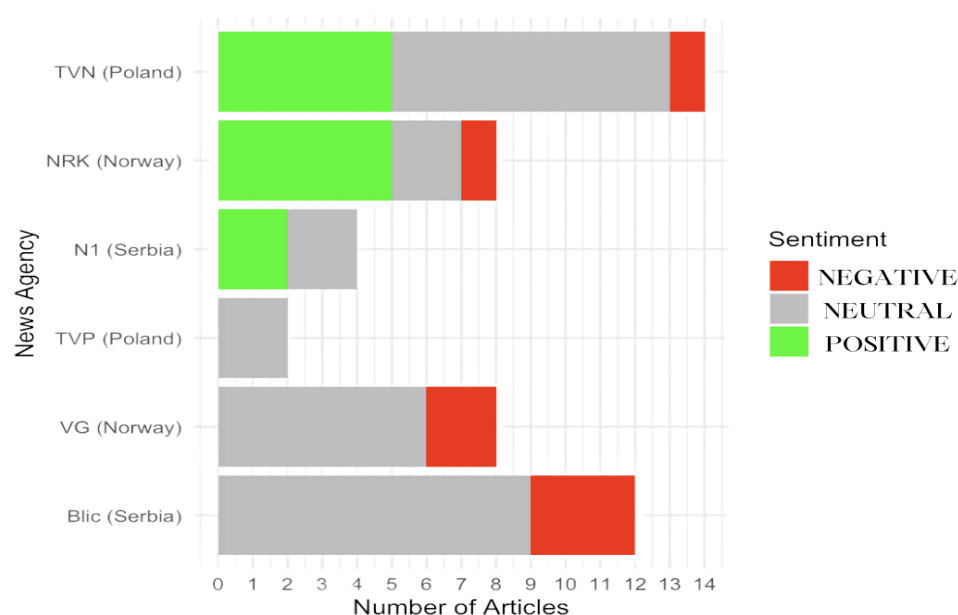
Link to our Google sheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vUJdJbEXb4Mf-NXMk1VnBSNQyO79OrMZzO7NO-ZKDfo/edit?gid=1588879227#gid=1588879227>

4. Comparison and Visualization:

The paper therefore presents a comparison and visualization of the sentiment and gender sensitivity results from the three representative countries, a comparison between these findings, and the official GII rankings that these countries have.

Comparison and examples



Media coverage of Kamala Harris across Serbia, Poland, and Norway was varied in its tone and focus: Serbian media ranged from positive to critical, as well as featuring only occasionally gendered framing. Polish media offered mostly neutral analysis, showing an objective understanding of both achievements and strategic missteps. The Norwegian media highlighted leadership qualities and substantive issues; they were very balanced and rather gender-sensitive. This reflects diverse journalistic practices, with Poland leaning neutral and Norway demonstrating progressive media standards compared to the mixed approaches seen in Serbia.

Serbia

Media outlets that were analyzed in Serbia were *Blic*, which is perceived as a state-owned media outlet and *NI* which is an independent one. We analyzed 16 articles in total from which 4 were from *NI* due to data limitation in a given timespan, and therefore 12 articles from *Blic*. The nuanced yet critical coverage of Kamala Harris in the media landscape of Serbia again reflects the wider landscape of gender inequality within the country, with its mid-range standing in the GII. Most Serbian media focused on the political campaign and public persona of Kamala Harris, while neutral or critical tones were dominant. While the neutral articles underlined her professional and political competencies, some stressed certain weaknesses or setbacks in the course of her candidature; others introduced even gendered arguments, as an example of how media framing is made around the candidate based on details from her private life undermining her professional standings. It epitomizes society's struggle to let women take over its reins. Overall, the findings from the news media outlets in Serbia reflect social attitudes whereby some progress toward gender equality is being made, yet in the framing of female leaders such as Kamala Harris, traditional perception and bias persist.

Examples from Serbia

1. <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/kamala-haris-zivotna-prica-zivot-joj-obelezila-4-muskarca-evo-sta-je-njen/jzpsge6>

Negative context:

This article on Kamala Harris immediately frames her life in personal relationships and key men, possibly as an example of gendered framing. The actual article is not overtly sexist in the word choices; what the focus on making the personal story important does is take attention from her professional life achievements. Overall, the tone seems pretty neutral throughout; still, that choice of perspective makes it problematically angled in certain ways.

2. <https://n1info.rs/svet/kamala-haris-cestitala-trampu-na-pobedi/>

Positive context:

The article reported on Kamala Harris congratulating Donald Trump on winning the presidential election in 2024 to formally seal the race. It puts the limelight on her statement over and over again-the importance of the peaceful transfer of power. The tone is positive; this article depicts Kamala as a professional, responsible politician respectful of her opponent's victory. There is no pronounced gender bias or racial overtone in this article. It doesn't give out so much of her personal life; instead, it talks of the political aspects.

3. <https://n1info.rs/svet/kamala-haris-i-donald-tramp-odrzali-poslednje-mitinge-pred-danasnje-izbore-u-sad/>

Neutral context:

Kamala Harris' Final Rally Before 2024 US Election The tone is not biased in this text, though from the very first words, when Trump speaks of Kamala Harris as some "radical leftist" while she is mostly positive and energetic when she speaks to the audience. Harris is portrayed as a leading figure in this campaign, wherein her political dynamism and ability to attract younger voters are being focused on and not really her personal life. There is no blunt bias in terms of gender or racial issues herein, but perhaps some political polarization with Trump's choice of words.

Poland

The number of articles we coded from Poland did not differ from others. We analyzed 16 articles from which 8 were from TVP and 8 were from TVN. In fact, Polish coverage of Kamala Harris was hardly loaded with over-praise-just straightforward stories. Most press reports spoke only to her position of great responsibility or participation in these elections and effective challenges. It is possible to learn from the media an unbiased account of how she conducted herself-from mentions of successes right through to its potential mishaps, leading toward campaigning. This neutrality reflected the journalistic commitment to a balanced and fact-based account, which gave the audience a full understanding of her political standing without resorting to personal or gender-based narratives. Generally, Polish outlets portrayed Harris in a manner that leaned toward neutrality, showing an effort to avoid sensationalism or bias.

Examples from Poland

1. ["Porzucenie", "egoizm", "zmęczenie". Media o grzechach demokratów - TVN24](#)

Negative context:

This was the only Polish article that we coded in a negative context because it's more critical toward the Democratic Party, particularly Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, while presenting Donald Trump in a more favorable light. The article mentions strategic missteps, and general voter dissatisfaction with Democrats, and paints their loss as a result of incompetence and lack of leadership.

"Skala klęski jest tak ogromna, ponieważ demokraci porzucili ludzi klasy pracującej. Dlatego klasa pracująca porzuciła demokratów - powiedział lewicowy niezależny senator Bernie Sanders."

Translation:

"The scale of the defeat is so enormous because the Democrats abandoned the working class. That is why the working class abandoned the Democrats," said left-wing independent Senator Bernie Sanders.

2. <https://www.tvp.pl/83251288/wybory-prezydenckie-usa-2024-historia-kamali-harris>

Positive context:

This article is positive because it presents Kamala Harris in the most positive and respectful light. Moreover, the article mentions her achievements and values. The article gives readers a multidimensional description of her life and political career, showing respect for the right to serve and the rights of underprivileged people. The tone of this article is supportive, while pointing out a lot that separates her from Donald Trump.

3. [Wybory prezydenckie USA 2024. Najnowszy sondaż pokazał to jasno](#)

Neutral context:

We assessed this article as neutral because it keeps an objective tone and gives readers a balanced analysis of the electoral dynamics. The article completely focuses on polling data, state-level dynamics, and historical voting trends without expressing bias toward either candidate.

Norway

When it comes to Norway, eight articles were extracted from a state-owned news outlet NRK, and eight were taken from VG, an independent Norwegian newspaper. Kamala Harris in Norwegian coverage gave reason for a weighted and professional attitude, corresponding to the standards of journalist neutrality and fairness. Most press reports spoke of her role as Vice President and mentioned her great contribution to the election campaign, underlining leadership qualities and participation without excessive praise or harsh criticism. The media gave clear accounts of all her political acts, both successful and challenging, on which one can develop an opinion with facts, rather than sensation. More significantly, the reporting did not include either gendered storylines or attacks against her private character but had put more emphasis on policy and public activity. This is again a consequence of Norway's commitment to gender-sensitive reporting and underlined a focus on Harris's competence and political standing in a fair and unbiased way.

Examples from Norway

1. <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/i/kwd4k9/valget-i-usa-raadyrt-i-usa-vil-lommeboka-avgjore-for-kamala-harris>

Negative context:

Norwegian newspaper VG writes an article that demonstrates the food in the United States is expensive, and this can affect the presidential election in a way that Kamala Harris might experience. The article displays frustration from U.S. citizens tired of their increased cost of living, blaming it on the administration, Harris included. For example, one speaks about her struggles to buy groceries while uttering that all these economic struggles make her vote for Donald Trump over Kamala Harris. The article therefore places Harris in a setting where she associates with economic tribulations and condemnation by the people.

2. <https://www.nrk.no/urix/harris-holdt-tale-pa-samme-sted-som-trump-talte-for-kongresstormingen-1.17103641>

Positive context:

The NRK article, however, reports on the speech recently given by Vice President Kamala Harris in White House Ellipse, the very place that former President Donald Trump held a rally before the January 6, 2021 storming of the Capitol. By using this symbolic site, Harris wished to make clear an opposition between what has been and what will be, opposing Trump's past with her future. She spoke of unity, democracy, and moving forward, positioning her tenure as one of healing and progress. This caricature represents Harris's commitment to democratic principles and the strategic way she really has towards solving the nation's problems.

3. <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/i/KnOyj6/valget-i-usa-alt-du-trenger-aa-vite>

Neutral context:

The following article from VG, *Alt du trenger å vite om valget i USA 2024*, shows the upcoming presidential election in the United States of America by showing facts about the candidates - one of them is Kamala Harris - without any opinion or bias. Kamala Harris was the democratic candidate for presidential elections along with her running mate Tim Walz and key matters in the elections include issues relating to swing states and how the election

works. This straightforward presentation offers readers essential information, portraying Harris in a neutral context.

Findings and analysis

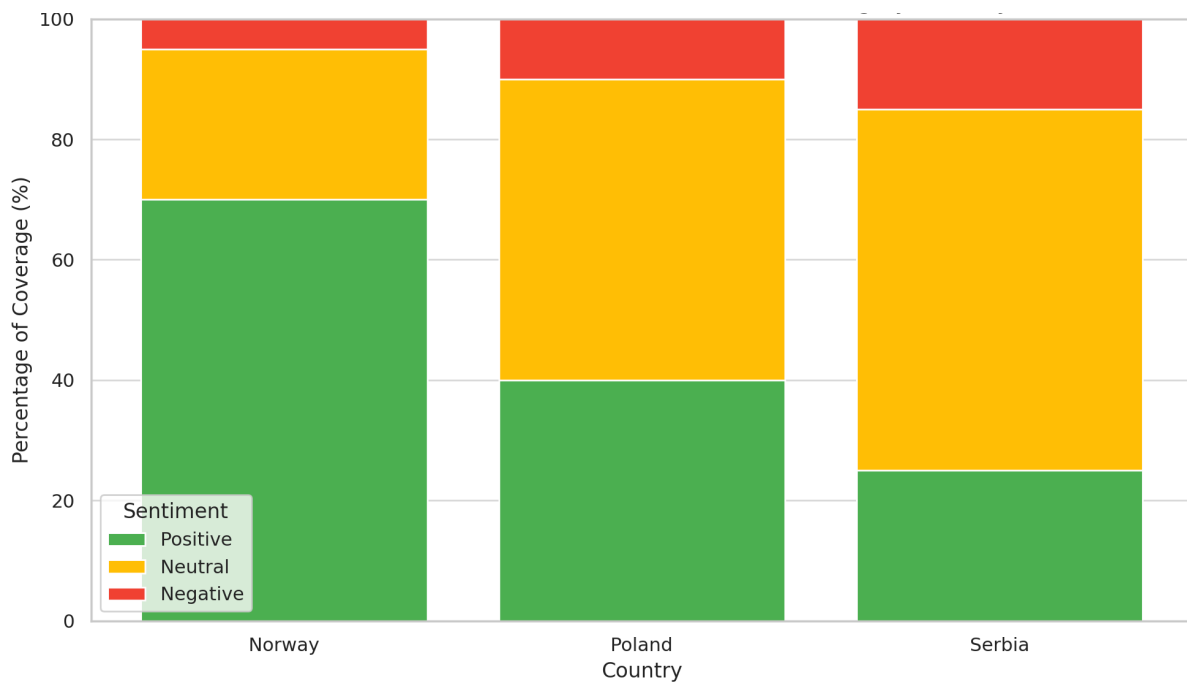
Tone, framing, and focus have been quite diverse in relation to the media coverage of Kamala Harris in Serbia, Poland, and Norway. In Serbia, Harris was framed as both a problematic and a successful candidate, with different outlets either praising her because of her achievement or pointing at challenges and setbacks within her campaign. What is interesting to note is that gendered framing appeared only sporadically, which may be an indicator of the wider political discourse rather than a constant framing of her gender.

Polish media reporting was mostly neutral, representing a balanced view of both strengths and weaknesses of Harris. The articles deeply analyzed her political strategies but kept their commentaries objective. This enabled a reflective look at her role in the electoral context without leaning toward any particular ideological perspective.

On the other hand, Norwegian media reporting focused on Harris's leadership qualities and abilities to address critical political issues. Norwegian reporting was highly sensitive to gender and emphasized Harris' professional competence and political integrity without reverting to stereotypical gender-framing. In this perspective, Norwegian media demonstrated progressive journalistic standards related to deeper understanding of both gender and politics.

On these grounds, the differences in media coverage of Kamala Harris in the three countries underpin a range of journalistic practices: from predominantly neutral in Poland, via mixed approaches in Serbia, to more sensitivity to gender issues with higher political framing in Norway. It means that the media landscapes of the selected countries are embedded in other cultural and political environments that give shape to the representation of women in politics, like Kamala Harris.

Correlation with GII rankings



“GII is a composite metric of gender inequality using three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and labour market. A low GII value indicates low inequality between women and men and vice-versa.” (United Nations Development Programme). The official rankings for the year of 2023 is as follows: Norway is ranked as 16th, which is the highest place. Serbia is on the 47th place which means she is at the lowest position amongst these three countries. Poland is in the middle taking the 32nd place, and therefore representing the bridge between the two opposites.

Countries that had lower GII scores showed greater consistency in gender-sensitive reporting, focusing on Harris's political competencies without using stereotypes. The higher the GII ranking it more frequently included gendered language and storylines, indicative of more general societal barriers to achieving full equality between men and women. Poland is a middle ground in the media representation of Kamala Harris, and this corresponds with its moderate ranking in GII. Polish media presented mostly neutral views of Kamala Harris, but it was less polarized than in Serbia and not as consistent in gender sensitivity as in Norway. These trends indicate that cultural and societal norms influence media practices, which in turn are captured by the rankings of GII.

Challenges and limits

Some of the most salient challenges in our paper pertain to subjectivity in coding and analysis, since tone, sentiment, and bias might be perceived differently by different researchers. Although consistency was attempted to be achieved through predefined criteria and guidelines for coding, personal perspective may still have an impact on the way articles were categorized, therefore affecting the reliability of the findings. Furthermore, the small sample size does have a serious limitation in that it reduces representation and diversity within the dataset, which may affect robustness in the conclusion.

The paper also focuses on a relatively small time frame for the media to cover Kamala Harris, only in the period before and after the elections. This temporality of scope enables us to deeply explore one important moment, yet may not take into account the long-term trend or shift of media narratives. The limitations of the data collection and analysis point out that our findings, while indicative of patterns and tendencies, need to be read with a degree of caution and placed within the context of the constraints. Future research may therefore overcome some of these challenges by increasing the sample size, extending the time frame, and adding more strategies to reduce subjectivity in data interpretation so as to present a more comprehensive understanding of media portrayals of female political leaders.

Conclusion

The portraits of Kamala Harris that appeared in the European media show very valuable insights into attitudes within societies and the state of gender equality across different countries. Norwegian media distinguished itself with professionalism, adherence to best practices of gender-sensitive reporting, highlighting leadership qualities, policies, and political competencies without stereotypes or personal attacks against Harris. This shows the high ranking of Norway according to the GII and generally strong commitment to progressive values and equality. In stark contrast, the Polish media seemed very neutral in regard to stances on facts, which varied from acclaim for Harris' achievements to critique of political strategies taken. That is indicative of a commitment to balance in reporting, although sometimes with broader societal bias.

The discourses in the media were more polarized in Serbia, with some coverage that was critical, or reflected gender biases, by focusing on personal aspects or framing Harris's actions in a way that diminished her professional accomplishments. Such differences in reporting also reflect the respective positions of the countries in the Gender Inequality Index and indicate how social values and the extent of gender equality in a given country influence media narratives. Such disparities signal the need for increased efforts towards gender-sensitive reporting practices. Fair representation would help dismantle stereotypes and ensure equal treatment for women leaders. Media can either make or break the case for diversity in leadership through encouraging more equitable reporting and helping to remove some of the barriers that have traditionally prevented women from succeeding in politics. These findings reveal the larger consequences of media stories for society and point out the imperative to frame journalistic work within the ideals of justice and equality.

References and web resources

In this research, as a starting point we took the online platform [AGEMI](#) and the work of Cristina Fernández-Rovira and Santiago Giraldo-Luque on the treatment that women politicians have received in the media in Spain, United Kingdom, and France (Fernández-Rovira & Giraldo-Luque, 2021). The sentiment analysis used in the text analysis guides the study to the context of the mentions about Kamala Harris. We found the article *Framing Madam Vice President: Global Newspaper Coverage of Kamala Harris in Her First Year* relevant; this one elaborates even more on framing and gives one understanding of how, more generally, such media representations might be used as a basis upon which shaping public views regarding women in leadership roles would come out (Osei Fordjour & McIntosh White, 2024).