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VOICES WITHOUT FILTERS:
Disintermediated Discourse of the Spanish and Brazilian Far-Right

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ABSTRACT

This research compares the discursive strategies of the far-right in Brazil and Spain, focusing on Jair Bolsonaro and Santiago Abascal. The objective is to analyze how disintermediated political discourse on social media contributes to polarization and disinformation. A sample of videos published on Instagram between 2022 and 2023 was examined. The study adopts a qualitative and exploratory methodology, applying critical discourse analysis across seven categories: informative, ideological, paternalistic, negationist, authoritarian, aggressive, and media discredit. The findings demonstrate that both leaders construct a political influencer persona through polarizing and direct language that discredits opponents and the media. The analysis shows that disintermediated discourse constitutes a key strategy of digital populism within the far-right.

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1. Introduction

Between 2018 and 2025, *Bolsonarismo* gained prominence in Brazilian politics through violent discourse and Jair Bolsonaro's intensive use of social media (Bayarri & Fernández-Villanueva, 2025; Canavilhas & Colussi, 2022). In 2018, the Social Liberal Party secured the presidency of the Republic and 52 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In 2020, municipal candidates linked to *Bolsonarismo* triumphed in strategic cities. Although Bolsonaro was defeated in 2022 by Lula da Silva (PT), his movement retained significant influence in Congress and in state governments such as São Paulo (Nogueira Cunha, 2020; Peres-Neto, 2022).

In a parallel development, Vox grew rapidly in Spain between 2019 and 2025, transitioning from a marginal force to becoming the third-largest party in the country (Bayarri & Fernández-Villanueva, 2025). In 2019, it obtained 53 seats in Congress, in addition to regional and municipal representation. Its leader, Santiago Abascal, consolidated direct communication with his followers (Rodríguez et al., 2024). In 2023, coalition agreements with the Partido Popular (PP) allowed them to enter regional governments such as Castilla y León and the Valencian Community.

This comparative study raises two questions: How was it possible for Spain and Brazil to display discourses that shared such similar traits? How did these violent discourses become so deeply embedded among their supporters?

By the end of 2020, the scale of the economic recession was comparable only to the Great Depression of the 1930s (Burdett & Mancosu, 2024). In recent years, this crisis of the neoliberal order manifested through various international political projects commonly described as belonging to the "far-right", which, according to studies by Mudde (2019) and Eatwell & Goodwin (2021), shared two core elements: nativism (as a combination of nationalism and xenophobia) and authoritarianism. The Brazilian and Spanish case studies are highly representative within the Ibero-American context.

This paper focuses on a central aspect of the phenomenon: disintermediated discourse, through which these authoritarian figures normalized their local and transnational ideas, emitting distinct forms of violence and propagating disinformation without the mediation of traditional mass media or political parties themselves. The primary objective of this study is to compare the discursive strategies of the representatives of the Brazilian far-right, former President Bolsonaro, and the president of Vox, Abascal, based on the analysis of videos published on their official Instagram accounts. The justification for conducting this study rests on the fact that disintermediated political discourse frequently employs elements and strategies that contribute to the generation of disinformation content and political polarization.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Disintermediated Discourse of the Far-Right

Disintermediation has become a central phenomenon in contemporary far-right political discourse, redefining the interaction between leaders and their audiences. Bossetta (2023) highlights that this strategy not only challenges the informational monopoly of established institutions but also reinforces an immediate emotional bond that enhances the perception of authenticity and proximity between leaders and their followers.

The intensive use of digital platforms has been key to this transformation. These tools allow far-right leaders to generate and disseminate unfiltered messages, appealing to primary emotions such as fear or outrage (Engesser et al., 2017). These strategies reinforce crisis narratives that create a sense of urgency and emotionally mobilize the grassroots, relying on the construction of common enemies such as immigrants, feminism, or progressivism (Wodak, 2022). The virality of messages is another key aspect. A fundamental element of disintermediation is the personalization of leadership. Leaders like Trump, Bolsonaro, or Abascal have utilized platforms such as Instagram or X (formerly Twitter) to present themselves as authentic and approachable figures, challenging traditional media, which they accuse of bias or manipulation (Moffitt, 2022). This approach reinforces the narrative that these leaders are the sole legitimate representatives of "the people," standing against a corrupt and disconnected elite (Sunstein, 2017).

Disintermediated discourse has profound implications for political radicalization. Without the mediation of traditional actors, hate speech, conspiracy theories, and fake news propagate with fewer

restrictions, reinforcing ideological bubbles where users only consume information that confirms their biases. This fosters a polarization that weakens democratic debate and strengthens authoritarian narratives (Bartlett, 2014). Digital platforms are not merely communication channels, but political actors that actively shape public discourse (Taggart, 2024).

Trump's 2016 presidential campaign marked a turning point in the use of disintermediated communication, establishing a model replicated by far-right leaders in other contexts. Bolsonaro and Abascal have adapted these strategies to their national realities, utilizing polarizing narratives and intense emotions to mobilize support and delegitimize their adversaries. The success of these leaders lies in their ability to establish a direct and emotional connection with their base, bypassing traditional mediation mechanisms (Peres-Neto, 2022). The impact of this dynamic is global. Recent data show that the polarization derived from these discursive strategies is fragmenting youth along ideological lines: young men lean toward more conservative political thought, whereas young women shift toward more progressive positions (Mirowski, 2023). Disintermediation not only transforms political dynamics but also social and cultural divisions (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

2.2. Polarization and Populism on Digital Platforms

Following the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal—in which the company irregularly accessed the data of over 87 million users to promote the Pro-Trump and Pro-Brexit campaigns—concerns emerged regarding how the business models of big tech platforms might be favoring political radicalization and polarization (Deibert, 2019). Research across diverse contexts suggests a structural affinity between social media and new forms of populist discourse (Maly, 2020; Mazzarella, 2019). Digital populism reflects how digital platforms facilitate the creation of a direct and emotional relationship between populist leaders and their followers (Cesarino, 2019). This phenomenon has been evidenced by the rise of political figures such as Abascal in Spain, Bukele in El Salvador, or Bolsonaro in Brazil, where social media have acted as catalysts for polarizing narratives and mobilization strategies (Cesarino, 2020a).

Digital populism and polarization on digital platforms not only represent a challenge to contemporary democracies but also raise fundamental questions about the role of technology in shaping political dynamics. According to Maly (2020), these platforms enable an "elective affinity" between populist leaders and their bases, while simultaneously amplifying simplistic and polarizing messages, and even reconfiguring the modes of production and reception of political content (Mirowski, 2023). Polarization is intensified through discursive strategies that reduce the complexity of social issues to rigid dichotomies (Fernández-Villanueva & Bayarri, 2021). This simplification is observed in narratives that exalt the leader as a central figure, relegating speech content to the background (Moffitt, 2022). This simplification is reinforced by the creation of antagonists who are dehumanized within the discourse—a communicative technique that draws direct influences from 20th-century historical fascism (Burdett & Mancosu, 2024).

Populist leaders frequently exploit these mechanisms to generate what Mouffe (2022) terms an "affective identification," in which emotions replace rationality in the construction of political bonds. In this sense, social media has become a privileged vehicle for affective polarization, a dynamic where emotional identification with the leader is consolidated through shared narratives and nationalist symbology (Freidin et al., 2022). The direct interaction between leaders and followers generates a sense of closeness and belonging (Mazzarella, 2019).

These digital environments operate as echo chambers that intensify radicalization by excluding dissenting voices (Miller & Wang, 2021). According to Procházka & Blommaert (2019), the relative anonymity of these platforms removes sociological markers such as age or gender, facilitating the homogenization of users around a common cause. Additionally, the media ecology described by these authors highlights how traditional and digital media interact to capture the attention of fragmented and polarized audiences. This interaction generates a constant feedback loop that amplifies dominant narratives and reconfigures discursive orders (Fenoll et al., 2024). As a result, social media not only reinforces polarization but also acts as apparatuses of power that shape the socio-political present (Zafra, 2022).

Platform governance also plays a crucial role in these processes. Algorithmic design, coupled with moderation policies, directly influences the visibility and persistence of extremist content (Bossetta, 2023). In less regulated platforms, such as Gab or Parler, a greater proliferation of radical discourse is

observed, which reinforces the cohesion of extremist groups and facilitates the planning of collective actions (Mahl et al., 2023).

The concept of liminality developed by Turner (1969) is particularly useful for understanding how transitional spaces are created on social networks, facilitating the emergence of new political identities. In these spaces, traditional social structures are suspended, allowing the formation of communities based on shared affects and narratives (Cesarino, 2020b). The cases of Brazil and Spain illustrate how these dynamics have transformed the political field. The 2013 protests in Brazil and the 2017 Catalan conflict are representative examples of the onset of liminal periods in which social media became the primary space for mobilization and political resignification (Cesarino, 2020b).

2.3. Political Influencers: The Production of "Truths" in Third Spaces

The transformation of political communication in the digital era has given rise to the emergence of political influencers, figures who play a central role in shaping public opinion and redefining political dynamics. These actors exert significant influence by controlling the conversation on social media , which is equivalent to contesting hegemony over the domain of public opinion. This phenomenon is closely linked to the widespread adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which have altered the relationships between political actors and citizens, displacing traditional processes of mediation (Gutiérrez Rubí, 2023).

Political influencers adopt approachable and personal discursive strategies, sharing details of their daily lives to convey an accessible and human image that fosters emotional identification among their followers. This approach grants them authority by positioning them as legitimate opinion leaders across various platforms (Maly, 2020). The ability of these actors to build "third spaces"—digital environments where political discourses have a direct impact on user behavior—reinforces their central role in the contemporary political ecosystem (Suuronen et al., 2022). In this context, the previously analyzed process of disintermediation plays a crucial role. The elimination of traditional intermediaries allows these influencers to connect directly with their audiences, facilitating the construction of simplistic and emotional narratives that contribute to polarization (Norris, 2024). According to Peres-Neto (2022), this dynamic is sustained by political marketing strategies that prioritize image and reputation over ideological content, generating clear and coherent identities that are emotionally appealing.

Political influencers act as agents in the production of "truths," displacing the traditional role of the media as well as political and academic institutions. Beraba (2022) highlights how these figures consolidate their authority through the dissemination of commentary and testimonies that enhance disinformation and polarization. In the field of far-right studies, this phenomenon could be termed the "pop far-right"—a category that captures the combination of accessible cultural symbols with radical ideological narratives (Goldstein, 2019). The relationship between influencers and their followers is strengthened by the ability of social media to create a direct and seemingly authentic connection. According to Cesarino (2020a), this relationship fosters a perception of proximity that blurs the boundaries between the personal and the political. These leaders do not merely communicate ideas; they also build virtual communities around their personas (Forti, 2024).

3. Materials and Methods

This research is based on an approach to the discourses constructed by both politicians, drawing from: 1) the live streams broadcast by Bolsonaro through his official Instagram account and 2) Abascal's *reels* published on his official Instagram account. The audiovisual sample consists of ten of Bolsonaro's *Lives* broadcast between February and May 2022—months that comprise the pre-electoral period of the Brazilian presidential elections—(see Table 1) and 24 of Abascal's *reels* published between July 7 and 21, 2023, during the official campaign period of the Spanish General Elections, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 1. Bolsonaro's *Lives* Sample

Video	Publication date	Duration	Link
1	02/04/2022	56'51"	https://bit.ly/3OqUtzS
2	02/10/2022	39'30"	https://bit.ly/3MiWdcF
3	02/24/2022	34'21"	https://bit.ly/3JYvNvg
4	03/03/2022	56'12"	https://bit.ly/3w7sq0X
5	03/17/2022	48'57"	https://bit.ly/3QNK1Tv
6	03/24/2022	54'42"	https://bit.ly/3R4Souf
7	03/31/2022	37'57"	https://bit.ly/3A26lls
8	04/07/2022	44'28"	https://bit.ly/3pGi6tn
9	04/28/2022	39'05"	https://bit.ly/3AlYcK5
10	05/05/2022	71'08"	https://bit.ly/3zSfeOA

Source: Own elaboration, 2026.

Table 2. Abascal's *Reels* Sample

Video	Publication date	Link
11	07/07/2023	https://acortar.link/jJoMJx
12	07/07/2023	https://acortar.link/AcTjhE
13	07/07/2023	https://acortar.link/SDScmg
14	07/08/2023	https://acortar.link/wa7o4P
15	07/08/2023	https://acortar.link/3rcFBR
16	07/09/2023	https://acortar.link/D18SGe
17	07/09/2023	https://acortar.link/lqMM49
18	07/09/2023	https://acortar.link/3iT7f7
19	07/09/2023	https://acortar.link/AUfdDK
20	07/10/2023	https://acortar.link/MydWAO
21	07/10/2023	https://acortar.link/tRTdy8
22	07/11/2023	https://acortar.link/UEM0GH
23	07/11/2023	https://acortar.link/zeeZth
24	07/12/2023	https://acortar.link/GMMQaW
25	07/12/2023	https://acortar.link/ck78sW
26	07/14/2023	https://acortar.link/M6fzBM
27	07/15/2023	https://acortar.link/33MtyA
28	07/15/2023	https://acortar.link/lRh5YX
29	07/16/2023	https://acortar.link/2E3xN1
30	07/16/2023	https://acortar.link/NMiaAt
31	07/18/2023	https://acortar.link/XYn0cp
32	07/20/2023	https://acortar.link/ym3IwG
33	07/21/2023	https://acortar.link/sUrlWI
34	07/21/2023	https://acortar.link/OmzXqQ

Source: Own elaboration, 2026.

On the one hand, Bolsonaro's live streams have a total duration of 8 hours, 3 minutes, and 11 seconds, and were analyzed from his Instagram profile (@jairmessiasbolsonaro), an account followed by more than 25.9 million users, a figure close to 12% of the Brazilian population. On the other hand, Abascal's *reels* were examined from his official Instagram account (@santi_abascal), which has 1 million followers, approximately 2% of the Spanish population. Given that Instagram no longer provides information regarding the duration of videos, it was not possible to collect this data for Abascal's video sample.

Grounded in a critical discourse analysis of both leaders, this study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What discursive strategies do Bolsonaro and Abascal employ in the videos published on their official Instagram accounts?

RQ2: What aspects of the disintermediated communication carried out by Bolsonaro and Abascal could be considered similar despite the differing socio-political contexts of Brazil and Spain?

The methodology employed is qualitative and exploratory in nature. A qualitative approach in research of this kind provides descriptive value and facilitates inferences, offering potentially significant findings (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).The research questions are addressed through a thematic-narrative analysis, integrating both implicit and explicit content via critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2017) as a fundamental strategy for identifying polarities, subjectivities, or sentiments. To delve deeper into RQ2,

a process of identifying and coding the predominant themes is conducted, aiming to compare the similarities and differences in the discourses of both politicians. Identifying thematic patterns within the object of study, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is a key method for qualitative research, thereby providing descriptive richness.

The definition of the analytical categories was derived from previous studies analyzing Bolsonaro's disintermediated discourse, whose categorization has been tested and applied on multiple occasions (Gomes-Franco et al., 2022; Colussi et al., 2023; Bayarri et al., 2024). Thus, the comparative discourse analysis of these leaders is based on the following categories: 1) Informative; 2) Ideological; 3) Paternalistic; 4) Negationist; 5) Authoritarian; 6) Aggressive; and 7) Media discredit.

In alignment with the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Code of Conduct, this study did not require approval from an Ethics Committee, as it relies exclusively on the analysis of publicly available social media content, without direct intervention involving human subjects or the collection of sensitive data. Nevertheless, the fundamental ethical principles of confidentiality, privacy, and non-maleficence have been strictly respected, ensuring the protection of non-public users and avoiding any form of undue exposure or stigmatization of the actors involved.

4. Results

The results of the comparative study of far-right discourse in Brazil and Spain are presented below, based on the analysis of the audiovisual content published by Bolsonaro and Abascal on their official Instagram accounts.

4.1. Between Violence and Aggressiveness

Violent or aggressive discourse has been defined as manifestations of hatred, whether implicit or explicit, directed toward specific individuals, groups, or certain cultural practices and standards. These are predominantly related to societal advancements in terms of representation, visibility, rights, and equality.

The first notable aspect is that both political figures execute a hostile discursive strategy toward the press, seeking ways to discredit the work of the media in general and journalists in particular. Table 3 compiles a sample of the anti-media discourse articulated in Brazil and Spain by the analyzed politicians. A strategy primarily composed of the following discursive elements is observed: 1) Accusing the media of publishing false information and deliberately spreading disinformation. The semantic field in this case encompasses verbs such as *to lie*, *to deceive*, or *to conceal*; 2) Accusing the media of manipulating information to benefit specific political parties, utilizing words like *to confuse* and *to guide*. This technique also includes accusing the press of filtering information based on their own interests, as Bolsonaro claims, or diverting attention away from Vox politicians to discredit them, as Abascal indicates; 3) Belittling the work of the media and journalists, questioning their professionalism and worth through the use of expressions or terms such as *rotten gang*, *little questions*, *nonsense*, etc.

Table 3. Anti-media discourse: Examples of fragments from the media discredit category

Fragment	Author	Video
“I regret that the Brazilian press, *O Globo* in particular, has lied.”	Bolsonaro	4
"Your source of consultation is TV Globo, isn't it? This is the image that comes from *TV Globo*, from the *Folha de S.Paulo* newspaper. They are liars!"	Bolsonaro	4
"A misleading news story right here!"	Bolsonaro	5
"So let's take this considerable rotten gang of media outlets."	Bolsonaro	10
"They generally publish what interests them, what matters to the mainstream media. What does not interest them, they do not publish."	Bolsonaro	10
"We are tired of answering little questions about nonsense in the media."	Abascal	14
"You do your jobs, but later, in the newsrooms, there is someone who is very well-tasked, very well-trained to conceal reality."	Abascal	17
"We see the Partido Popular very keen on ensuring that their newspaper mastheads, I am referring specifically to *ABC*, *El Mundo*, and *La Razón*, conceal reality."	Abascal	17
"The Prime Minister of Italy intervenes, who is changing the course of Europe, the one they have demonized [...], that leader who today holds the highest approval rating that any European leader has from their own people, and here the Partido Popular's mastheads dare to hide it."	Abascal	18
"[...] with great peace of mind regarding the polls and the headlines with which they hammer Spaniards, trying to confuse them and guide their vote."	Abascal	19
"How dare they keep asking us this?"	Abascal	25

Source: Own elaboration, 2026.

In this vein, Bolsonaro accuses the media of publishing false information about him and his government, lashing out at major, established media conglomerates in Brazil, such as *Globo* or *Folha de S.Paulo*. This same strategy is mirrored in Abascal's discourse, which repeatedly stresses the role of newspaper mastheads allegedly controlled by the PP—specifically referencing *ABC*, *El Mundo*, and *La Razón*—in concealing reality, thereby serving the purpose of manipulating the electorate's voting decisions. Furthermore, a declared contempt for journalistic work is evident, employing a vehement tone when questioning how the media dares to continue asking them certain questions—in this case, regarding male violence, a concept that Vox seeks to deconstruct.

It is worth noting a common strategy shared by both leaders aimed at reinforcing their own values by undermining other politicians who do not share their ideals. This consists of a compendium of attacks against other political parties, primarily from the left. These attacks are frequently directed at specific individuals, such as Bolsonaro's contempt for Orlando Silva—the Minister of Sports during the governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff and current federal deputy for São Paulo—whom he accuses of embezzlement (see Table 4).

Table 4. Ejemplos de fragmentos del discurso antiizquierdista de Bolsonaro y Abascal

Fragment	Author	Video
"Everything the left puts its hands on, it breaks; it fails."	Bolsonaro	5
"Orlando Silva, the king of *tapioca*, who used a corporate card to eat *tapioca* at the expense of the people."	Bolsonaro	8
"The Ministry of Defense was created back then. Look at the figures who occupied the Ministry of Defense! People who didn't know the difference between a helmet and a chamber pot."	Bolsonaro	9
"[...] we saw a completely unhinged Pedro Sánchez, a Pedro Sánchez lying compulsively, denying the evidence."	Abascal	13
"[...] a left wing that has become the primary threat to the interests of workers, in alliance with the most powerful, because it puts our sovereignty at risk in every aspect."	Abascal	19
"The Socialist Party has killed opposition leaders, has stolen gold from the Bank of Spain [...] to shower its own people, for clientelism, and to alter election results."	Abascal	21
"[PSOE] has not left a single article of the criminal code unviolated."	Abascal	21

Source: Own elaboration, 2026.

With the aim of invalidating the measures taken by previous leftist governments in Brazil, Bolsonaro accuses the individuals who formed them of a lack of preparation, ignorance, and incompetence. The former leader does not solely focus on specific individuals; he also launches generalized attacks against the Workers' Party (PT) and its ideology.

For his part, Abascal utilizes a strategy similar to Bolsonaro's in two scenarios: 1) when attacking the opposition (politicians and parties) and 2) when deceptively criticizing government actions carried out by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the left in general, including trade unions, which he labels a "leftist sect" (Video 15).

In an attempt to highlight opposing poles, Abascal also dismisses the performance of the leader of the conservative PP, Alberto Núñez Feijóo, as head of the opposition, considering him clueless and unfocused: "In the face of a left wing that is so damaging to the interests of workers, we see a Mr. Feijóo who is a bit more clueless every day. [...] We are surprised that Mr. Feijóo, being so centrist, is so little centered" (Video 19). Abascal likewise accuses the PP leader of leaning toward the left, questioning the right-wing values that characterize Feijóo's party: "[...] we see Mr. Feijóo permanently extending his hand to the Socialist Party" (Video 11). In sum, Table 4 brings together several examples of discursive techniques employed by far-right leaders to discredit a left wing they consider incompetent, unhinged, lying, corrupt, and even criminal—ultimately, a threat to national sovereignty.

Another recurring feature issue within the context of the discursive exercise of violence and aggressiveness is the presence of sexist and misogynistic elements in the statements of the analyzed leaders. An aggressive-paternalistic attitude toward women is observed. Bolsonaro almost always veiled his male chauvinist comments under ironies, such as the one directed at Emilly Coelho, then National Youth Secretary, during one of the live streams she attended as a guest. Intending to shorten her participation in the broadcast, he stated: "For you women, there is never a time limit to speak. It is a pleasure to listen to you. When a woman speaks, it is like eye drops for our ears. Are there eye drops for ears? I wouldn't know" (Video 5).

Similarly, his discourse reinforced the patriarchal model by explicitly omitting and delegitimizing gender-based violence: "The most important thing is prevention. We want women not to be attacked. So, a message for the tough guy: 'Watch out, because things are going to get ugly for you'" (Video 4). When referring to women, it is striking how Abascal's discourse in the studied *reels* is contradictory. While adopting a paternalistic tone and defending the protection of women, the president of Vox employs aggressiveness when criticizing the existence of the Ministry of Equality. His aggressive facet takes center stage when referring to the 'Only Yes Means Yes' law (*ley del solo sí es sí*): "That means that the leader of the pack, Pedro Sánchez, and his accomplice, Yolanda Díaz, and the other two psychopaths whom they have wanted to cast aside at this moment, have put dangerous vision-violators [rapists] out on the streets" (Video 11).

4.2. Denialism

Both Bolsonaro and Abascal frequently employ communication strategies based on unverified assertions emerging from legitimized statements detached from critical and scientific thought. In this case, different analytical units have been classified as denialist, subcategorized according to the type of reality that far-right politicians most frequently seek to deny: scientific denialism, climate change denialism, gender denialism, and gender-based violence denialism—the latter two being differentiated between determining gender solely based on an individual's biological sex and the non-existence of a specific type of violence against women (see Table 5).

Table 5. Ejemplos de fragmentos de discursos clasificados como negacionistas

Fragment	Author	Type	Video
"The official data I have say that suicide has also increased due to the pandemic."	Bolsonaro	Scientific denialism	4
"Whoever says the Amazon is burning is lying. The Amazon does not burn; a rainforest does not catch fire."	Bolsonaro	Climate change denialism	4
"I don't want to say something silly here: the crowd that likes the environment."	Bolsonaro	Climate change denialism	5
"The implementation of Agenda 2030 that targets our agriculture, our livestock; the implementation of hydrological policies that empty the countryside."	Abascal	Climate change denialism	15
"[...] the gender policies that harm workers and that fewer and fewer people understand."	Abascal	Gender denialism	19
"Yes to the defense of nature, and no to climate fundamentalism!"	Abascal	Climate change denialism	24
"We are clear on what a woman is; we know our daughters, our mothers, our wives, and to us, a woman is a person equal in dignity and rights to a man, but she is a female-sexed person."	Abascal	Gender denialism	23
"Yes to parental authority, and no to gender ideology in the classrooms!"	Abascal	Gender denialism	24
"They have asked me the same question as always: when a man kills a woman, what is it? Male violence? I call it murder."	Abascal	Gender-based violence denialism	25

Source: Own elaboration, 2026.

In general, Bolsonaro's denialist attitude was highly prominent during the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil. The former president was one of the political leaders opposed to vaccines and lockdowns as resources to halt the virus's spread, prioritizing the maintenance of the economy to the detriment of public health. Bolsonaro openly and repeatedly criticized what he termed the "stay-at-home policy, we'll look at the economy later" (Video 5) and questioned the effectiveness of lockdowns as a containment measure for the coronavirus, making generic references to studies—without specifying their origin or authorship—concluding that "staying at home did not help lower the number of deaths" (Video 4). Bolsonaro tended to seek alternative causes for the rising death toll during the pandemic in an attempt to downplay the consequences of the virus, constructing a discourse heavily marked by scientific denialism.

In environmental terms, the former Brazilian leader used an ironic tone when referring to individuals and groups defending nature conservation as "the environmentalist crowd", placing special emphasis on the word *environmentalist* to erode their credibility and dismiss the need for implementing environmental protection and conservation policies. Irony and sarcasm were used to disguise a denialist discourse, even regarding the evident destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

Abascal's manifestation of climate denialism develops primarily around themes related to Agenda 2030, which, according to the president of Vox, is a strategy designed by Sánchez and the Brussels bureaucrats to ruin Spain (Video 15). This denialist stance is perceptible in several of the analyzed *reels*, where the politician asserts that Agenda 2030 targets agriculture. Abascal adopts a posture similar to Bolsonaro's by denying climate change evidence, vehemently defending the preservation of a way of life he considers inherent to Spaniards: "Let nobody tell us how we have to live" (Video 22).

Another discursive technique characterizing Abascal's disintermediated discourse is the use of arguments that could be classified as gender denialism or gender-based violence denialism, with the distinct nuance noted above. When confronted with issues related to women's rights and laws, Abascal claims not to recognize femicide. For him, the death of a woman at the hands of her partner or ex-partner is not a matter of gender-based violence or male violence, but a common homicide, a term that should be used without ideological connotations. Regarding gender ideology and queer theory—both heavily criticized by the international far-right—Abascal rejects any advancement in the identity recognition of the LGTBIQ+ community, demanding a traditional and dualistic interpretation of genders which, for him, are determined by sex, understanding a woman solely as a female-sexed person.

Ultimately, the analyzed sample reveals discursive elements characteristic of different types of denialism. Although these fragments fall under denialism, it is useful to distinguish the different arguments used to confuse and divert public attention. This communication strategy connects with

other disintermediated discourses flourishing on social media at the hands of various influencers who cast doubt on scientific studies, institutions, or the media as reliable sources of information.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of the discourses articulated by far-right representatives in Brazil and Spain during election campaigns reveals a marked tendency toward the verbal execution of violence and aggressiveness. This hostility is directed against all social, cultural, or economic agents that contradict the identity values of this political ideology in both countries.

Within the discursive fragments comprising the sample, a latent and manifest aggressiveness is observed in Abascal's discursive strategy. Conversely, Bolsonaro frequently employs irony or sarcasm to soften the criticisms he repeatedly launches at the media, leftist politicians, and everything with which he does not share an ideological stance. Singling out, discrediting, accusing, eroding, and dismissing the opponent—understood as the enemy—constitutes one of the most widely utilized tactics by these politicians, shaping a common strategy in far-right political communication in Brazil and Spain. Both Bolsonaro and Abascal have utilized their personal networks to interact with their bases, consolidating the perception of a direct bond between the leader and "their people" (Evangelista & Bruno, 2019). These interactions create a "virtual community" that reinforces political identities, blurring individual differences in favor of a homogeneous collective identity (Turner, 1969).

It is worth noting that denialist statements launched from a disintermediated channel, such as the personal social media accounts of political leaders, can generate disinformation by casting doubt on institutions and social sectors of well-established recognition and credibility. This process involves bypassing traditional intermediaries, such as political parties and the media, thereby facilitating a direct connection with the grassroots level (Engesser et al., 2017). Furthermore, it allows far-right leaders to disseminate unfiltered messages, appealing to emotions such as fear. It also facilitates the proximity between the political leader-influencer and their supporters (Norris, 2024).It is crucial to highlight the impact that this type of disintermediated, extremist, and polarizing discourse can have on previously established policies (Fenoll et al., 2024), ultimately questioning the democratic advancements achieved in Brazil and Spain.

These communication strategies frequently target major social milestones, such as gender equality policies or the recognition of the rights of ethnic minorities and the LGTBIQ+ community. Although the analyzed sample does not include examples of anti-progressive discourse by Bolsonaro regarding gender equality policies, it is well known that the former leader launched various offensives against debates surrounding this issue in Brazil. Research on this matter points toward a positive correlation between an ideological stance framed within gender denialism and an increase in hatred and violence toward the LGTBIQ+ community (Nogueira Cunha, 2020).

The preliminary results of this research indicate that the construction of a public figure who ultimately becomes a political influencer takes place through a compendium of communicative and discursive strategies that spread easily across online platforms. The self-legitimation of these far-right influencers appears to be intimately linked to the use of a simplistic, direct, and trenchant language. This language asserts the speaker's credibility through high-impact statements capable of provoking an emotional and impulsive reaction from the audience. Consequently, it is necessary to continue investigating the discursive strategies that connect new forms of digital populism, disintermediation, and disinformation—elements that pose a risk to democratic processes.

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