The Emotion Narrative of Journalists and Commentators Facing Populism

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Abstract

Journalists and political commentators are essential players in disseminating emotion narratives as within their work, they reinforce, moderate, or pass over the emotion narratives of political parties. That includes positive emotions towards political ingroups and negative emotions toward outgroups. Journalists and commentators play a significant role in establishing a connection between the demand side (citizenry) and the supply side (party leaders and political parties) within the realm of political science. Political communication focuses on the work of journalists and commentators, however marginally and with reduced attention to their role in transmitting emotions from the supply and demand side of politics and reverse. This study[1] sought to comprehend the role journalists and political commentators played in the transmissions of emotion narratives of political parties, focusing on their contribution, potential, and consequences. Therefore, based on the results of a similarity analysis, a critical discussion of the discourses of journalists and commentators was performed, using the open-source software IRaMuTeQ. The analysis was conducted using secondary data from the transcriptions of fifteen thematic journalistic programs carried out by two major Portuguese private radio organizations, in which journalists commented on the performance of populist candidates during the debates for the Legislative Elections in Portugal in January 2022. The results revealed that journalists and commentators primarily focus their comments on the candidates' behavioral traits and political articulation strategies. The main groups of emotions identified exhibit low valence and high control, expressing disagreement, detachment, and dissatisfaction with the populist narratives of André Ventura and Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos. This finding highlights the journalists and

commentators' inclination to critique and express negative sentiments towards the populist candidates, reflecting their disapproval of their political approaches and rhetoric.

Keywords: journalists, populism, emotion narratives, political communication.

Introduction

Particularly in the last decade, since the consolidation of social networks such as Facebook, Telegram, Whatsapp and Twitter, the manners of debating and bearing political ideas have undergone significant changes. These communication channels allow for greater interaction with political actors, an increase in the flow of information, and the personalization of political narratives according to the intention of parties and candidates (Larsson, 2022). However, their emergence does not mean that traditional political communication, mediated by professional journalists, has ceased evolving or been relegated to a trivial space in the political scenario dynamics.

In the last electoral race for the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic, in January 2022, the audience levels for the debates aired by both public and private media outlets reached close to three and a half million viewers, with an average of slightly less than half a million, in a country with just over 10 million inhabitants (Faustino, 2022). These numbers give an overview of the relevance of the information transmitted by professional journalists and commentators to public opinion. Moreover, studies demonstrate that even though debates are not the only elements tailoring the voter's choice, they offer the opportunity to create, define or ratify an image of the candidates (Baboš & Világi, 2018; Harmatiy, 2020).

The intense crisis of representativeness and vast ideological polarization that currently involves the sociopolitical frameworks of different regions of the globe is another factor that justifies the relevance of studying the manners of political communication mediation (Becerra & Wagner, 2018). The inability of representatives and political parties to deal with conflicts,

establish negotiations and fulfill the demands of different sectors of society tends to weaken people's confidence in politics and governance in certain regions (Cells et al., 2021).

This paradigm, concurrently with other factors, may undermine the consistency of democratic institutions and organizations and lead to the return of authoritarian forms of government and political power, which can be facilitated and very strongly entangled by populism. Populism is a concept that is difficult to define and operationalized from different perspectives based on situational vicissitudes and the uses that assign to it (De la Torre & Mazzoleni, 2019). In general terms, populism comprehends an ideology or discursive frame firmly rooted in the notions of popular sovereignty and anti-elitism that convoke the masses to overthrow local political elites, blamed for stagnation and social failure (Pereira, 2020). Thus, populists advertise themselves as legitimate defenders of the people's interests, justifying their desire for power by promising the people's sovereign will reposition at the center of the political process (Varshney, 2021).

Recent studies have suggested the relationship between adherence to populism and some emotional patterns found in society, such as shame, indignation, joy, pleasure, fear, anger (Hameleers et al., 2017; Rico et al., 2017a; Salmela & Von Scheve, 2018; Yilmaz & Morieson, 2021), anxiety and nostalgia (Bonansinga, 2020). The emotion narratives comprehend the process in which the interconnection between diverse emotional arrangements and their meanings provide idealization, identification, and differentiation between the ingroup and the outgroup, enriching the sense of political and social affiliation (Gianolla, 2022). In this sense, Caiani and Padoan (2020) suggest that social contingencies interact with emotions to pave the way for the development of populism, while the affections transmitted by populist discourses can reinforce the feeling of social identity, legitimize demands, and even increase or decrease one's self-esteem.

When discussing the competencies and responsibilities of research in Work and Organizational Psychology, Human Resources, Bartram & Roe (2005) suggest that its focus should be on individuals, groups, and entities, as well as the physical and social work environment, its policies, and procedures. They adopt the understanding that knowledge from psychological science and its phenomena, e.g., emotions, are valuable assets for understanding social functioning and thus serve as instruments for improving understanding of the surrounding culture and intervening in social, cultural, and organizational practices.

This knowledge must be used with utmost ethical care, aiming to promote equality, equity, freedom, and inclusion. As work is a phenomenon that extends to all spheres of human experience, it provides the field of Work and Organizational Psychology with a vast scope for action and analysis.

These guidelines are endorsed and incorporated by the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's in Work, Organizational, and Personnel Psychology program (Universitat de València, 2023), funded by the European Commission, which encourages and advocates the use of psychological knowledge in analyzing and intervening in various types of problem situations. To achieve this, the program develops competencies among its students, such as needs analysis, goal setting, individual and situational assessment, and indirect intervention, among others. It is within this broader understanding of the work phenomenon and the relevance of psychological knowledge in constructing explanations about the intricacies of the work process that the present study focuses on the role of journalists and political commentators in transmitting emotion narratives originating from populist leaders (Gianolla, 2021).

By selecting this target audience, this thesis contributes to understanding the work landscape of journalists and commentators: how they organize themselves, which resources they utilize, and how they manage their own emotions and transmit emotions to their

audience. Furthermore, it allows for understanding the relationship between two distinct social actors: radio and television broadcasters and the populist candidates. With different objectives, approaches, and sociopolitical positions, these two entities engage in a dynamic essential to comprehending the organization of society.

Thus, for this purpose, the current thesis consists of a case study aiming to demonstrate how journalists and political commentators handle the transmission of the political discourse and the emotion narratives resorted by social actors in political life, considering their role in reinforcing, moderating, misrepresenting them, or letting them pass, and what emotions they convey to the people when contacting them. For this purpose, the current project consists of a case study of the Portuguese legislative elections of 2022, analyzing journalists' and commentators' discourses during and after the official debates.

Literature Review

Populism

Populism comprises a current and relevant phenomenon in the European political scenario, having garnered the attention and focus of the specialized literature over the last years. Caiani and Padoan (Caiani & Padoan, 2020) refer that there were 66 populist political parties active in 30 countries on the European continent in 2020, as well as the percentage of the electorate that trusts their votes in populist parties has increased from 7% to 25% in the last three decades. In addition, several populist leaders, occupying positions of relevance in their countries or not, have stood out on the internet worldwide and became very influential, such as Jair Bolsonaro, in Brazil, Modi, in India, and Le Pen, in France.

In an attempt to comprehend the populist phenomenon, specialized literature has sought to define and scrutinize it. Nevertheless, there is still no agreement on a definition of

populism that can comprise different methods and research approaches to this subject (De la Torre & Mazzoleni, 2019). Even among the specialized literature, there are issues in distinguishing the concept of populism and those of demagogy (Gianolla, 2017) or opportunism (Mudde, 2004).

Gianolla (2017) suggests that populisms are a social phenomenon that emerges in response to the existence of social demands not met by the political establishment. They act, therefore, to take advantage of the voice given to these social conflicts. Mudde (2004) defines populism as an ideology that divides society into two antagonistic poles: the people, pure and virtuous, and the elites, corrupt and inept, emphasizing that this ideology proposes the role of politics as expressing the will and supremacy of the people. Thus, populism would be the antithesis of elitism and pluralism.

Populism has at least two varieties, relying on its ideological alignment: a left-wing populism tends to defend social causes, economic equality, and place *the people* in the workers and lower classes, while the elite comprises bankers, managers, and speculators. Right-wing populism, on the other hand, usually represents the values of racial, ethnic, or religious majorities against minorities (Pereira, 2020; Varshney, 2021). However, due to the flexibility and adaptability of populism to historical, social, and economic contexts, this differentiation does not denote a general rule; therefore, right-wing populism can target business elites as the opponent, just as left-wing populism can turn against social minorities.

Mudde (2004) points out that populism tends to be more moralistic than pragmatic. If, on the one hand, the division between ingroup and outgroup is typical in politics, where each party discusses ideas and argues against the proposals of the others, populist polarization entails the radicalization of the differentiation between the people and their antagonists. This radicalization occurs mainly through the instrumentalization of narratives about the other

group, forging a positive evaluative identity for the ingroup and building a negative and anti-citizen image of the outgroup.

Latent examples of consequences of contemporary populist policies are described in the literature by Wirz and colleagues (Wirz et al., 2018), who suggest there are effects (albeit veiled in some regions) of the far-right populist discourse on the deal with issues related to immigrants in Europe. Also, Gaucher (Gaucher, 2020) points out the construction of the image of the good and the bad immigrant in Canada, signaling the instrumentalization of these concepts for political uses. In Brazil, Chagas, Modesto and Magalhães (Chagas et al., 2019) describe how Bolsonaro capitalized on Brazilians' dissatisfaction and resentment with the rising cost of living to insufflate violence against supporters of previous governments, generating violence and hostility, especially in regions where he had been defeated in the elections.

Caiani and Padoan (2020) acknowledge that although studies on populism are not recent, it was just lately that a sociocultural perspective of this phenomenon came up. This approach seeks to assess which features of the cultural environment (or folklore, in its broadest sense) have been expropriated by populist discourses to corroborate their interests, manipulating the perception and set of meanings of the people who access it. This perspective allows the establishment of dialogue in the broadest sense, including contributions from fields such as Social and Political Psychology and the study of emotions.

The Role of Emotions in the Emergence, Diffusion, and Consolidation of Populism

In order to provide a definition that allows the understanding of emotions as a process, (Scherer, 2005) postulates that emotions consist of the result of the synchronous interaction of five subsystems in response to an external or internal event: the cognitive subsystem, which assesses the elicitor; the neurophysiological subsystem, which comprises bodily symptoms and arousal; the motivational, which indicates tendencies for action; that of

engine expression; and the subjective feeling component, which characterizes the emotional experience.

This perspective assumes that emotions are evoked by the perception and appraisal of the *stimuli* events and work as a basis for different responses to the environment, producing a subjective feeling and preparing for action. Thus, e.g., when one's plans are frustrated (stimulus event), it is more likely that they experience negative valence emotions, such as worry, disappointment, or anger; in turn, these emotions demand motor, behavioral and cognitive responses from the brain regarding the modification of the unsatisfactory environment or adapting to it.

In order to create a visual representation of the organization of human emotions, Scherer (2005) developed a comprehensive tool known as the Geneva Emotion Wheel (GEW). The primary objective of this tool is to classify different groups of emotions. It provides a systematic framework for organizing emotions based on their valence (positive or negative) and control (high or low). As shown in Figure 1, The GEW consists of multiple concentric circles, with each circle representing a specific category or dimension of emotions. The outermost circle represents the primary emotions, while the inner circles represent secondary and tertiary emotions, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the emotional landscape.

Figure 1
The Geneva Emotion Wheel
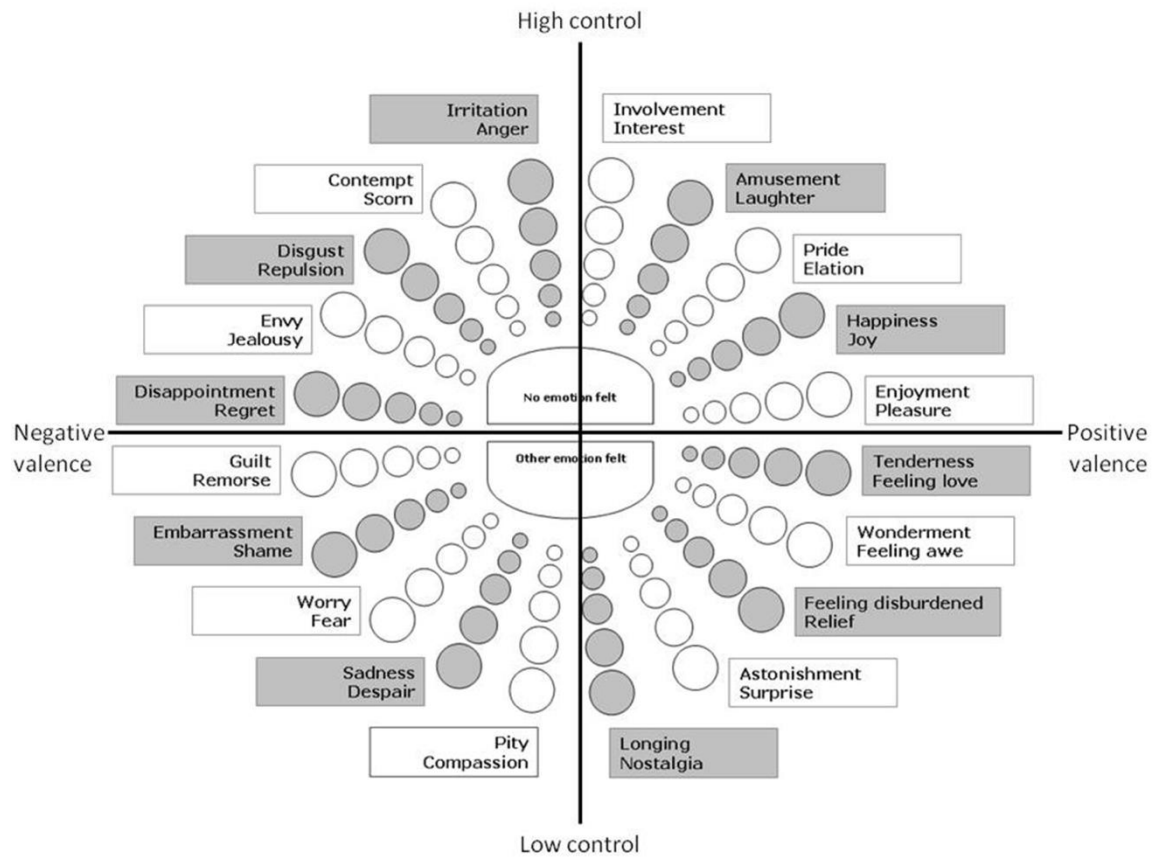
Source: elaborated by the author

The GEW offers a structured approach to studying emotions by providing a taxonomy that captures the complexity and diversity of human emotional experiences. It enables the categorization of emotions based on their underlying psychological dimensions, facilitating cross-cultural comparisons and analysis of emotional expressions in various contexts. The wheel's multidimensional nature allows for a more comprehensive assessment of emotional responses, taking into account both the positive or negative valence and the degree of control individuals have over their emotional states.

Bonansinga (2020) states that emotions affect the way we think by influencing three crucial areas: they affect the levels of attention we pay to the environment around us, since some emotions, like fear, demand higher levels of attention to the environment, and others, such as anger, reduce the level of attention to the environment and the information it

provides; affect our motivation to act over the environment, e.g., anger predisposes us to confrontation, while fear predisposes us to reconsider our attitudes and change course; and impact the judgments we make about the context in which we operate. These features of emotions give them a prominent role in analyzing the political behavior of the social masses.

Previous studies suggest that emotions transmitted in the communication process help foster goal attainment (Wong et al., 2013), engagement in social causes (Odou & Schill, 2020), and political attitudes, such as voting decisions (Jaráiz et al., 2020; Qorri, 2018; Rico et al., 2017). Bonansinga (2020) suggests analyzing the relationship between emotions and populism from three dimensions:

a) The first, named structural dimension, comprises the macrosocial context, considering that globalization and successive economic crises highlight the social feeling of insecurity and uncertainty;

b) The second dimension, subjective, comprises how individuals cope with this insecurity feeling in an attempt to provide meaning to their lives;

c) Finally, the third dimension, communicative, encompasses how populist ideas capitalize on these social demands in order to produce discourses that interact with people's subjectivity, producing and modifying emotions.

The scope of this research addresses the third dimension of analysis, representing an effort in the search for evidence that contributes to understanding the process of formation, diffusion, and consolidation of populist discourse.

Emotion Narratives

The growing interest in the study of populist phenomena in recent years has enlisted contributions from scientific domains other than Political Science or Sociology. Communications, Semiotics, and Psychology have also shown their relevance, especially

regarding the analysis of emotions and their transmission as a subjectivizing instrument, in the consolidation and maintenance of social and political groups (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2021).

In this scenario, emotion narratives comprise an emerging concept not yet clearly defined or operationalized by the literature. However, Gianolla (2021) argues that they can be understood as networks of emotions, whose valence can be positive (e.g., love) or negative (e.g., anger), which give meaning and identification to a social group, functioning as the differentiating link of that particular interpersonal environment. For example, green parties' supporters tend to feel positive emotions such as pride, satisfaction, or hope about the proposal of the short-haul flight ban, which intends to extinguish short commercial flights in Europe as a way of reducing the release of toxic gases in the atmosphere by aircrafts (Moody, 2021).

Emotion narratives comprehend that the interrelationship of a range of emotions allows social identification with a particular group, outlining differences between this social body (the ingroup) and others (the outgroup) as a product of the similarities between the emotions and attitudes of each's members. In this sense, the networks of meanings impregnated in the speech of a social or political leader can have repercussions on their interlocutors in order to encourage feelings of identification and support or rejection and repulsion. In any case, emotion narratives function as stimuli that evoke a range of emotional responses leading to actions, like manifesting, abstaining, or voting (Gianolla, 2022; Gianolla, s.d.).

The Hungarian case provides an example of the political instrumentalization of emotion narratives. According to Abril (2021), Hungary is one of the European countries with the highest rates of popular rejection of equal rights between heterosexual people and the LGBTQIA+ community legislative proposals. In the last parliamentary elections of April

2022, the then prime minister and candidate for re-election, Viktor Orbán, made a speech impregnated with negative emotion references, such as disgust and contempt, as a way of showing himself ideologically close to the electorate, capitalizing and inciting popular rejection by associating the proposals to the promotion of sexual content to children, particularly homosexual propaganda (Rédai, 2022). This use of identification with the electorate allows a glimpse of the essential political role of emotion narratives, precisely in the construction of the populist narrative.

On the other hand, the permanent dynamics between different narratives about a given social phenomenon can be filtered in different ways by the mediators of political communication. In a previous study, Araújo and Prior (2021) point out that in the 2018 Brazilian presidential elections, journalists and political commentators contributed to naturalizing disruptive, anti-democratic, and illegal behaviors by Jair Bolsonaro, who was eventually elected. Although the then-candidate promised throughout the campaign to shoot political enemies, persecute opponents and establish an anti-democratic military dictatorship, the media insisted on mentioning that the elections had proved the strength of Brazilian democracy, justifying his public behaviors as unsatisfaction over the country's situation and indiscriminately comparing his political tactics to the other candidates' ones.

Based on the presented scope of electoral debates and the scenario of expansion of populism and the crisis of representativeness, the present study focuses on the work of journalists and political commentators, considering their relevance and protagonism in the shaping of opinions and mediation of emotions, as demonstrated by previous studies held in Slovakia (Baboš & Világi, 2018), Brazil (Araújo & Prior, 2021), Chile (Porath et al., 2021) and Europe (Thornborrow et al., 2021). The methodological approach employed opted for analyzing the particular case of Portugal due to the recent advent and accelerated advance of populist parties in its political scenario (Pereira, 2020).

Aim of the Study

General Aim

Comprehend the influence journalists and political commentators have in transmitting emotion narratives from the two populist political parties in Portugal: CHEGA and CDS.

Specific Aims

a)   Identify patterns of emotion narratives related to the candidates' speeches in political debates;

b)   Classify the emotions expressed by journalists and commentators according to the Geneva Emotion Wheel;

Method

Data Source

The present study used secondary data, which comprises seven emissions from the program *E o Vencedor É*, held by the Portuguese communication group O Observador and transmitted on the radio, on podcast platforms (Google Podcasts, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts), and on the holding group's Youtube Channel; four emissions of the program *Não Alinhados*; and four emissions of *Bloco Central,* these last two ones held by TSF Radio and transmitted also on podcast platforms.

E o Vencedor É program's format is designed to gather political commentators, inviting them to evaluate candidates' performance in the previous day's debates. After the comments, the journalists are invited to grade candidates' performance (ranging from 0 to 20), revealing, in doing so, which candidate was the winner (the *vencedor*) of that session. Seven programs regarding ten debate sessions in which André Ventura, from CHEGA, and Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos, from CDS, participated, were chosen as the subject of

analysis. The debates were organized in a dyad configuration, where a candidate debates directly with one another, mediated by the designated journalist, with an average duration of 25 minutes.

The emissions of *E o Vencedor É*, in its turn, has also 25 minutes; however, since the Portuguese TV held, in some cases, more than one debate per day, in some of the analyzed radio programs, the commentators discussed more than one debate. The total sample of *E o Vencedor É* programs used in this study comprises 175 minutes of comments on seven emissions, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1
E o Vencedor É *emissions and its correspondent debates*

Date	Emission Title	Candidates enrolled in the debate	Duration
January 03, 2022	O não debate e um debate que poderia ter descambado	André Ventura (CHEGA) *x* Catarina Martins (BE)	26min50sec
January 04, 2022	Frente a Frente: Rio foi a reboque de Ventura	André Ventura (CHEGA) *x* Rui Rio (PSD)	22min57sec
January 05, 2022	PS e PCP já não são parceiros de sueca	Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos (CDS) *x* Inês Sousa Real (PAN)	21min41sec
January 06, 2022	Rui Rio parece um balão a esvaziar	André Ventura (CHEGA) *x* Rui Tavares (LIVRE)	28min11sec
		Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos (CDS) *x* João Cotrim de Figueiredo (IL)	
January 07, 2022	Ventura não passará. E António Costa?	André Ventura (CHEGA) *x* António Costa (PS)	26min13sec
January 10, 2022	Ainda vale a pena ler os lábios de Ventura?	André Ventura (CHEGA) *x* João Cotrim de Figueiredo (IL)	26min22sec
		Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos (CDS) *x* Rui Rio (PSD)	
		Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos (CDS) *x* António Costa (PS)	
January 13, 2022	Rodrigues dos Santos à luta na lama com Ventura	André Ventura (CHEGA) *x* Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos (CDS)	22min27sec

Source: elaborated by the author

The other two programs are organized in a similar format and structure, although they differ significantly in duration. *Não Alinhados* airs weekly and broadcasts political comments made by one or more guest journalists, always mediated by guiding questions from an anchor journalist, in an opinion-sharing format. With a short duration, averaging 15 minutes per emission, it has a narrated and informative tone, with a very informal background environment. Four episodes of *Não Alinhados* were used in this study, namely, those that during the election campaign period, focused on the candidates from CHEGA and CDS.

On the other hand, *Bloco Central* airs one hour of open debate between anchor journalists in each episode, who aim to comment not only on the content of political debates that occurred that week but also on the context and behind-the-scenes of political coordination between candidates, supporters, and parties. In the present study, four episodes of the *Bloco Central* were used, in which CHEGA and CDS candidates are discussed in terms of their performances in the debates, appeal to the electorate, and political strategy.

When combined, the samples from the *Bloco Central* and *Não Alinhados* comprise 247 minutes of commentary across eight episodes, as illustrated in Table 2:

Table 2

Bloco Central *and* Não Alinhados *emissions*

Date	Program	Emission Title	Duration
January 05, 2022	Não Alinhados	As primeiras pistas saídas dos debates e o direito a votar	12min39sec
January 07, 2022	Bloco Central	Debates de múltipla escolha	45min28sec
January 12, 2022	Não Alinhados	A fragilidade de António Ramalho e os protagonistas do debate	13min30sec
January 14, 2022	Bloco Central	Duelo a dois (mais dois)	46min47sec
January 19, 2022	Não Alinhados	A pobreza elevada à potência da pandemia	15min35sec
January 21, 2022	Bloco Central	Margens, pontes, miragens	44min23sec
January 26, 2022	Não Alinhados	Os temas ausentes da campanha	15min58sec

Date	Program	Emission Title	Duration
January 28, 2022	Bloco Central	Tudo incerto, menos Marcelo	52min34sec

Source: elaborated by the author

Therefore, the present study consists of 15 journalistic emissions divided among three political commentary programs aired in January 2022, during the last Portuguese political race. The emissions amount to 422 minutes of analyzed content according to the procedure descriptions provided in the following sections.

Procedures

In order to meet the research goal, a lexicographic quantitative-qualitative approach was used employing IRaMuTeQ software, whose primary function is to analyze the structure and organization of discourses, making it possible to recognize the relations between the lexical contexts that are more frequently stated . After the transcription and coding, all the data was adapted to make the text compatible with the software entries.

Initially, the textual corpus was thoroughly reviewed, and the expressed emotions were categorized based on the categories proposed by Scherer (2005) in his postulation of the Geneva Emotions Wheel. Consequently, the name of each class was included in the text immediately following the corresponding verbalization to be considered for the subsequent stage of analysis procedures: the Similarity Analysis (SA).

Then, the textual *corpus* obtained was submitted to a SA, which works leading to the identification of terms' co-ocurrences, providing information on the web of connectivity of each word in the context it is immerse. It also allows for the identification of structures that share meanings and senses attributed to the elementary variables of the textual *corpus*.

The utilization of SA has facilitated the development of a graphical representation that intricately depicts the discourse structure employed by journalists and commentators. This visualization highlights the interconnections between various components, such as networks
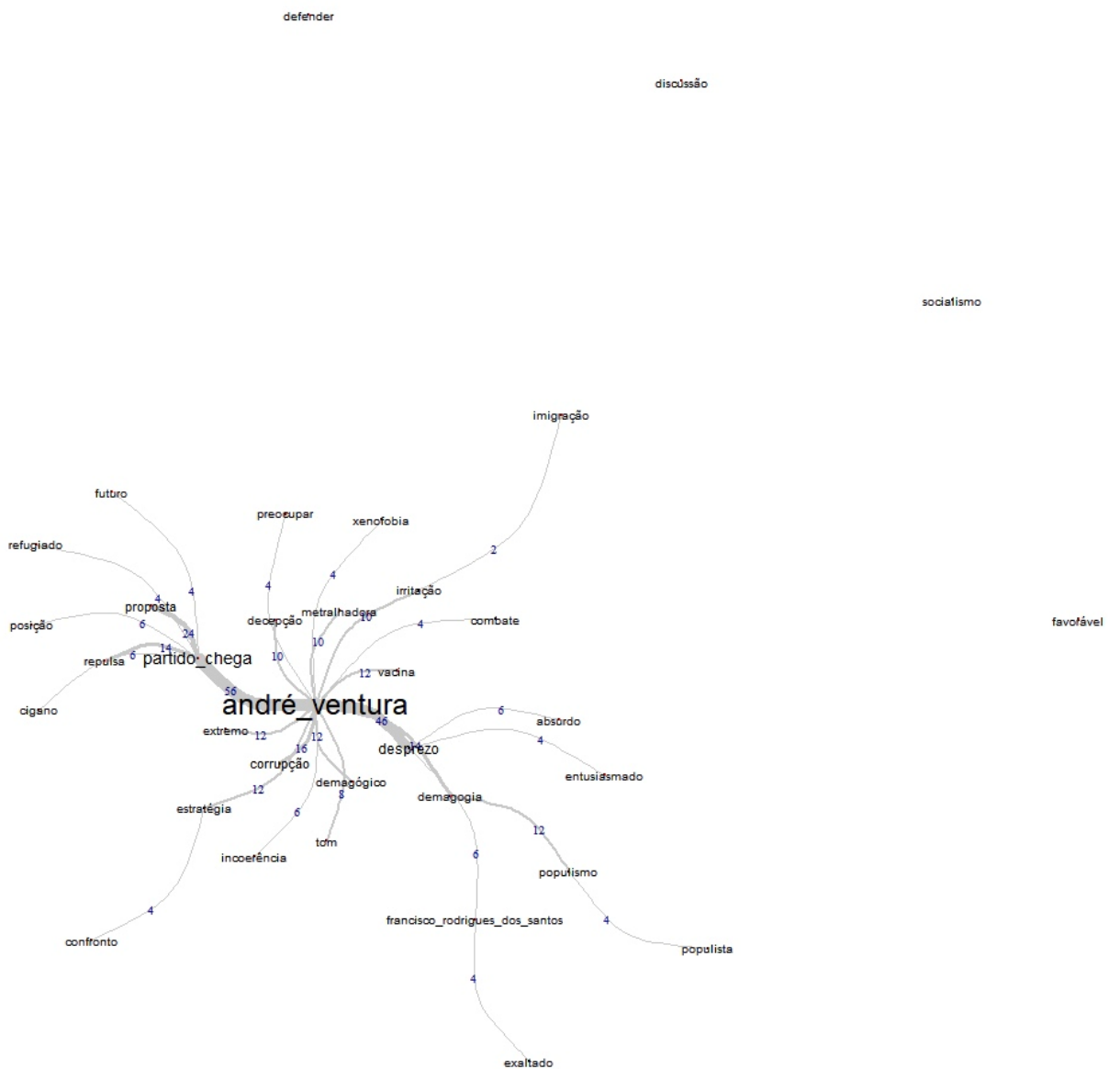
of meanings, and subsequently reveals the classes of emotions associated with each elicited content. By employing the framework of the GEW, it became possible to map the valence and predominant level of control manifested in the emotions conveyed by journalists when transmitting emotional narratives pertaining to competing populist parties in the electoral context of Portugal.

Results

The SA procedure revealed the main themes addressed by commentators when referring to the candidates' speeches, proposals, and behaviors. The most frequently used terms are highlighted in the similarity graph with words, and their branches with numbers that correspond to the amount of other relevant terms in the network of meaning.

The S.A. traces a network of correlations between elements of discourse, like a tree in which all branches are connected because they share the same connection with the trunk, the semantic center of the discourse. However, they encompass different specificities in constructing and transmitting the narratives used. These "branches" are represented in Figure 2 by the lines connected to the center of the figure, and they always feature one or more related nuclear terms that link to the semantic center.

Figure 2
Similarity Analysis' Tree

defender

discussão

socialismo

imigração

futuro

preocupar   xenofobia

refugiado   irritação

proposta   decepção   metralhadora   combate

posição   6   24   10

repulsa   6   partido_chega   10

56

cigano   12   vacina

extremo   12   absurdo

16   12   desprezo

corrupção   entusiasmado

estratégia   12   demagógico   demagogia

8

incoerência   tom   12

confronto   populismo

francisco_rodrigues_dos_santos

populista

exaltado

favorável

Source: elaborated by the author

The image clearly reveals the semantic center anchored in the image of CHEGA's candidate, André Ventura. Previous studies, particularly focused on the analysis of the 2021 presidential elections (Camilo, 2022; Dias, 2020), suggest that Ventura's political trajectory encompasses a transition in stance from a democratic and discursive approach to a more controversial and often angrier tone, delivering tough and inflammatory speeches against corruption and the exercise of full rights and equity by minorities. Since Ventura became the

main name in the Portuguese populist environment, it was expected that he would be the most mentioned term in the commentator's discourse.

The main themes raised by commentators when referring to Ventura are corruption, vaccines, and the health crisis, his proposals in the fiscal field, described as incoherent and extremist, and immigration. The fiscal proposals, depicted in the graph elaborated by the SA, consistently evoke numerous thematic connections and stimulate the discussion of other topics or behaviors, such as political negotiation, congressional support, and the need for a more moderate stance in order to establish a successful government with parliamentary backing.

Commentators allocate less attention to Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos when compared to Ventura, but yet they still link him to demagogy and the proliferation of occasionally impractical ideas perceived as politically motivated actions. At various moments, especially when discussing candidates' approaches to talking to the electorate, Rodrigues dos Santos is compared to Ventura, which creates a strong connection between mentions of the two candidates mediated by the reference to demagogy. Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos is also particularly criticized by journalists for emulating the modus operandi of the CHEGA leader, inserting controversial issues and impractical proposals into his speech. Some examples of excerpts from the program *E o Vencedor É* help to understand this association:

> "Perhaps it is the way for the CDS to save itself: turning Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos into a kind of a second André Ventura in his aggressiveness, his imposition, in the permanent interruption of the other debaters, or maybe it is the solution to avoid the bleeding of CDS votes for the André Ventura's party" — José Manuel Fernandes, on January 04, 2022

The SA also allows for the creation of categorization graphs of areas of influence, such as sets of semantic classes and networks of meaning, of the described emotions. When requested, these analyses reorganize the tree-branch graphs to display the inherent network of meanings associated with discourse elements that share strong connections.

In general, emotions primarily belonging to the irritation, contempt, repulsion, disgust, and disappointment groups were described. The networks of relationships and areas of influence can be observed in Figure 3, where each class denotes one or more groups of emotions.

Figure 3
Similarity Analysis' Tree Organized by Classes
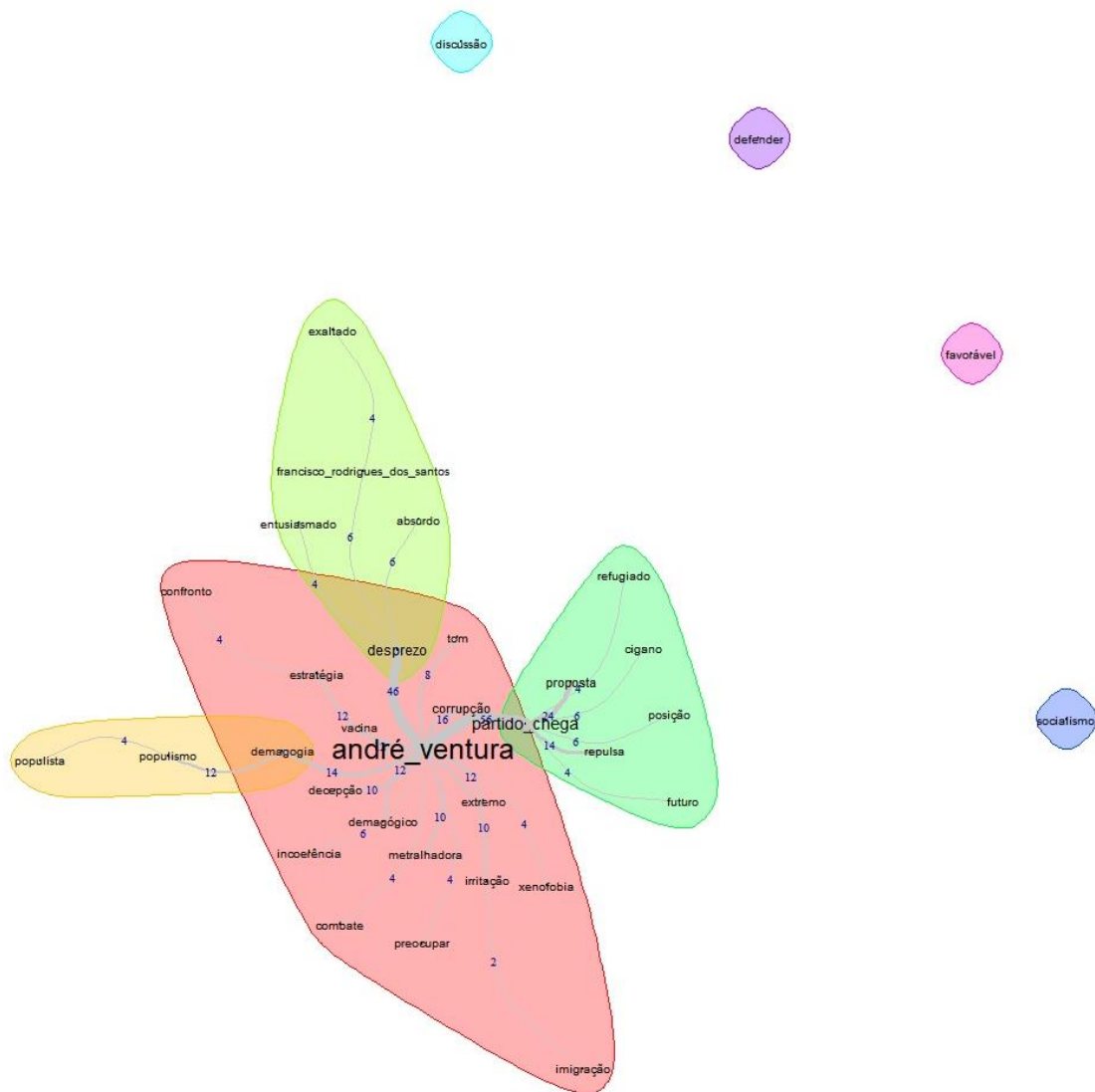
Source: elaborated by the author

The first axis, represented by yellow on the left side of the image, primarily describes André Ventura's populist and demagogic behaviors, especially when commentators analyze the pragmatic function of his proposals or behaviors toward the electorate, in a kind of intention reading. An example occurs when Ventura declares rejecting vaccines for himself but expresses concern that the main opposition candidate, António Costa, gets vaccinated, or when he addresses the voters and suggests that the country needs a cleansing, that the elite be removed from power. In general, this class evokes emotions from the irritation and anger group.

In relation to the second class, which appears in a light green color and is situated in the upper region of the graph, there are mentions of Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos and Ventura, and the content of this class is primarily focused on the topography of the candidates' behavior, commonly referred to as exaggerated, absurd, restless, explosive, and lacking decorum.

Within this class, journalists identify behavioral strategies employed by the candidates that exude confidence and proficiency. Although these behaviors can be understood, when viewed from the candidates' perspective, as linked to narratives of emotion based on the pride and anger emotions, instigating identification with the demands of the electorate, from the commentators' side, it actively represents an interpretation of the candidates' emotional state corresponding to pride and confidence as immaturity and emotional imbalance. The behavioral characteristics of self-confident behavior displayed by André Ventura and Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos, such as raising their voices, interrupting their adversaries, and using an accusatory tone, are reported as arrogance and disdain.

However, particularly when comparing the leaders of CHEGA and CDS with other candidates in the electoral competition, journalists describe them as less mild and temperate, undermining the image of confidence they are attempting to convey. This occurs because, by resorting to fiery speeches and displaying intolerant behavioral conduct, they effectively address the demands of a segment of society that does not find identification with their desires in the other, more moderate candidates.

Despite evaluating their effectiveness and relative success in establishing a connection with the most pressing demands of the population through emotional ties, journalists argue that Ventura and Rodrigues dos Santos may encounter difficulties in maintaining their bond with their more dissatisfied electorate, which demands, in the long term, a reconsideration of

their strategies. As Miguel Santos Carrapatoso (2022) argues, "It is a formula that I believe may exhaust itself in the future; it is impossible to maintain this discourse permanently and bring it to every debate and every campaign while expecting the electorate to continue growing."

The green axis, observed on the right side, refers to the positions, propositions, and proposals of the candidates for the legislature. This class encompasses mentions of the CHEGA party and the debate surrounding the payment of subsidies to communities in vulnerable social situations. Within this context, André Ventura puts forward proposed changes to the income inclusion program, a move that has been interpreted as ill-prepared, lacking adequate planning, and aimed at perpetuating the common narrative among the more impassioned electorate regarding the existence of a parasitic community that consumes resources and hinders the country's development.

This class of discourse delves into the analysis and evaluation of the candidates' articulated stances and proposals for legislative action. The specific mention of the CHEGA party and the discussion on subsidies for socially vulnerable communities triggers scrutiny of Ventura's suggested alterations to the income inclusion program. Commentators perceive these proposed changes as indicative of Ventura's lack of preparedness, revealing a hasty and poorly planned approach to policymaking.

Ventura's proposal to modify the income inclusion program is met with skepticism and critique. Journalists and political analysts argue that his actions exemplify a lack of understanding of the complexities and intricacies involved in addressing social vulnerabilities. The absence of a comprehensive and well-thought-out plan, coupled with the intention to fuel the prevailing narrative among his fervent supporters about the presence of a

parasitic community draining national resources and obstructing progress, raises concerns about Ventura's level of preparation and suitability for office.

Furthermore, this interpretation of Ventura's proposal reveals a calculated strategy to appeal to a specific segment of the electorate characterized by heightened emotions and polarization. By capitalizing on existing prejudices and stoking fears surrounding the perceived burden of certain communities, Ventura aims to solidify his support base among those receptive to his populist discourse. However, this approach is viewed as short-sighted and potentially detrimental to the long-term welfare and unity of the country, as it fosters division rather than offering comprehensive solutions for social integration and cohesion.

When discussing this category, journalists employ emotionally charged discourse centered around disgust and repulsion, aiming to distance themselves from the candidate's narrative and help clarify the facts for their audience. They utilize techniques such as questioning and comparison throughout their narratives. By addressing Ventura's proposals, they dismantle their feasibility by pointing out planning errors and a lack of understanding of the country's fiscal system, signaling the mismatch between the candidate's lack of preparation and the responsibilities associated with the position of prime minister.

Finally, the central class of the graph, illustrated in red, encompasses the semantic core of the entire discourse, which revolves around the mention of André Ventura. While it encompasses various secondary themes constituting the journalists' discourse, it tends to focus on the candidate's personal characteristics, such as the tone of his speeches and combative posture, as well as his strategy, preparation, and personal stance on adjacent topics such as inclusion and diversity.

The distribution of the discourse branches indicates that journalists perceive Ventura as a candidate whose sole strategy revolves around creating controversies and maintaining a

combative tone, thereby associating him with the image of a leader fighting against the adversities faced by the country. To illustrate this, they draw an analogy between his characteristic verbosity and a machine gun, claim that his latent xenophobia is a means to convey the idea of nationalism and defense of the homeland, and frequently refer to corruption as a way to solidify the image of the ideal purpose for his candidacy.

Within this class, two main groups of emotions are primarily associated. The first is disappointment and regret, especially expressed in the journalists' comments about the direction taken by Portuguese politics, given the low level of discussion on quality proposals and credible solutions to national demands. The second is disgust and repulsion, often mentioned in connection with the emotions of the first group, as a reaction to the contentious nature and personal attacks that prevail in Portuguese politics. Thus, journalists seek to approach the viewers and distance themselves from the candidates, employing an empathetic stylistic device to convey information from a closer perspective and provide a viable and reliable interpretation for those who watch them.

Discussion

The present research sought to analyze the influence professional journalists and political commentators exert on the transmission of emotion narratives disseminated by CHEGA and CDS, two Portuguese populist parties, at the time of the televised debates regarding the National Legislative Elections of 2022. A critical discussion of the discourses of journalists and commentators from a radio program of wide national circulation was performed, addressing 15 programs in which the performances of André Ventura, leader of CHEGA, and Francisco Rodrigues dos Santos, leader of CDS, were discussed and analyzed by political commentators.

A similarity analysis was conducted, revealing that the discourse of journalists and political commentators regarding the emotion narratives propagated by the two

aforementioned populist candidates is mainly characterized by emotions from the groups of irritation and anger, contempt and scorn, disgust and repulsion, and disappointment. According to the Geneva Emotion Wheel (Scherer, 2005; Scherer et al., 2013), all of these emotions are classified as having low valence and high control. The analysis relied on the structure of the text as provided by the interlocutors to assess the emotions expressed within it. This method is supported by the study of Sacharin, Schlegel and Scherer (2012), which suggests that the GEW can be used to examine the circumstances under which specific words are used to describe emotions elicited by a given event or situation.

In their analyses, journalists convey an unpleasant experience of the speeches by populist candidates, specifically highlighting the sections that evoke negative emotions and thus imparting a negative interpretation to the audience regarding the excesses of these candidates. The emotions evoked by the speeches fall entirely within the realm of negative valence and high control, as indicated by the quadrant division proposed by the GEW.

Negative valence emotions are expressed when the interlocutor perceives a situation as unpleasant or when they believe that negative and/or undesirable consequences have resulted or will result from that situation (Sacharin et al., 2012). In this case, the negative emotions (i.e., anger, irritation, disgust, repulsion, disappointment and etc.) reflect the commentators' negative experience toward the object of their discourse: the candidates' proposals, behaviors, and intentions. The evaluation of Ventura and Rodrigues dos Santos' performances is often negative, primarily due to their lack of decorum and respect for the democratic process.

Other aspects of both candidates' behavior also receive negative evaluations, particularly the strategies used to capture voters' attention. References to devotion to the Catholic Church and the military forces, scapegoating immigrants, and the intention to

remove corrupt individuals from positions of power are portrayed as theatrically rehearsed and detrimental to the discussion of effective proposals for the necessary change in the country.

Journalists also predominantly employ high-control emotions, which, according to Sacharin and cols. (2012), are evoked when the interlocutor believes they can modify or exert some influence over the situation referred to in their discourse. Unlike the qualitative assessment undertaken by journalists regarding the content of the candidates' speeches and their demeanor, these results can be interpreted as inherently rooted in the nature of the profession they practice (Glück, 2021).

The profession of journalism is naturally concerned with transmitting information, communicating interpretations, and initiating a particular way of perceiving given situations. Journalists assume the role of mediators in the assimilation of an ethical and political stance on the facts they report because, despite striving for impartiality in principle, journalists engage in a human activity that requires interpretation and judgment of the facts. Therefore, their discourse is naturally directive and didactic, fundamentally imbued with high-power emotions.

Thus, the panorama provided by the results suggests that journalists and commentators demonstrate clarity and objectivity in classifying the two candidates as demagogic and populist, sharing and exemplifying to the viewers the effects of populism on society. This characteristic marks the work of communication as a contribution to the exercise of democracy, monitoring and denouncing the narrowing of the concept of citizenship, a common practice in populist discourse that limits the definition of the "pure people" to a narrower social group (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018). However, several factors are involved in the content-mediating process performed by media professionals. The press's

bias, the guidance provided by the information management organization, the social context, the levels of press freedom, and the autonomy granted to journalists are examples of mediating variables in the information transmission process.

Another aspect to which the present research draws attention is the emotional work demanded by journalistic activity. Jeung and cols. (2018) argue that emotional labor is the one in which the body and its expressions are used to denote a particular emotional disposition, intending to influence the outcome of the work activity.

In this sense, for the journalist, showing indignation, disagreement, anger, joy, happiness, pride, and other emotions is fundamental for effectively transmitting the message they intend to communicate to the interlocutor. It is possible to notice that not only the articulation of the speech and the choice of harsh words (e.g., the journalist José Manuel Fernandes calls the CDS leader a troublemaker for not allowing his opponent in the debate to respond to his accusations), but also the tone and cadence of the voice, in addition to gestures and signals, that the journalist vehemently disapproves of that behavior.

The specialized literature indicates, however, that emotional work can be harmful to physical and mental health, having been linked in previous studies with depression, burnout syndrome (Jeung et al., 2018), job dissatisfaction (Wen et al., 2019), depersonalization (Mastracci & Adams, 2020) and other related patterns. In this sense, shedding light on emotional and organizational demands in the work of political journalists, as the present research intended, can support the scientific debate on the training and preparation of these social actors to avoid fatigue and emotional exhaustion.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research

Due to the need for methodological and temporal delimitation for the execution of the present work, only three radio programs from two stations were used as a sample. Future work should consider using a greater diversity of programs with different political orientations and publicized in more communication instruments (e.g., radio, television, podcasts, and others).

Another relevant methodological limitation is the restriction on analyzing the journalists' discourse due to the short deadline for its realization. On the other hand, the present research has been continued in a new stage, integrating the analysis of the reactions of the electorate on social networks (namely on Facebook, using the CrowdTangle software) both to the performance of CHEGA and CDS in the debates, as well as the interventions carried out by the journalists on their debate commentary programs. In this sense, it will be possible to assess the mediation's effectiveness by journalists and commentators.

The support from automated instruments explicitly developed for analyzing emotions in speeches in the digital environment, such as Feeltrace, which tracks emotional contents in someone's speech in real-time (Cowie et al., 2000), would also be reasonable. Quantitative and more detailed data from each moment of the debates and comments can provide an overview that allows for a broader understanding of the process of formation of the culture, identity, and history of a nation.

Conclusions

In this dynamic and crucial process for political behavior, journalists and political commentators, mediators of information, play a significant role. These social actors are responsible for clarifying, questioning, and proposing new reflections on the meanings provided by political parties, including opposing them with the use of factual data. The

information service consists, therefore, mainly in providing new sources so that the interlocutor can question the reality presented to him, acquiring autonomy (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2018).

In the course of their work, journalists and political commentators are consistently expected to maintain their deontological responsibility, which entails the transmission of accurate and unbiased information, with social responsibility and respect. The present study unveils how this professional category plays a social alert role, thus, firmly grounding in the organization of their work the duty to question political phenomena considered dangerous, unclear, or demagogic, signaling this to their interlocutors.

In this regard, the present thesis contributes to the understanding of the work of journalists and political commentators through the lens of cognitive psychology, particularly concerning emotional reactions, their management, and their relationship with other social actors. Comprehending the work of these social actors as not only mediating information but also emotion narratives is crucial for comprehending the intricacies of journalistic work, the depth of its relevance and social role, as well as for developing forms of intervention and adaptation within this type of work that meet their social responsibility and ensure the health and safety of journalists, especially in times of populist upsurge.

In the Portuguese case, the high audience rates for debates between candidates denote an active search for information by the electorate, highlighting the role of professional journalists as mediators between emotion narratives and opinion formation. This identification process culminates, in this case, with the vote. The protagonism of professional political journalism in this scenario characterizes evidence of its relevance and the social role it performs, regardless of the advent of the internet and the major social networks.

The focus on the journalist's activity, supported by its social relevance, raises questions more deeply rooted in the profession's performance, such as professional health and well-being and training conditions to deal with the workload in this setting. In this sense, mapping the journalist's professional activity and understanding the social, political, economic, and ideological issues that permeate their work is fundamental, as explored in this work.

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