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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unpacking shame management in politics: strategies for evoking and steps to mitigate the feeling of shame

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines politicians' publicly displayed emotional responses to the sex affair and resignation of a Member of the European Parliament, József Szájer, from Fidesz, Hungary's one ruling party. The results of the qualitative analysis indicate that politicians displayed various combinations of self-conscious moral emotions: shame, guilt, pride, and hubris. Inspired by the MOSS-SASD model and the shame compass concept, the research demonstrates that the representatives of the parliamentary opposition discredit Fidesz with shame, guilt, accusations of hubris, and vicarious shame. The ruling parties, in turn, attempted to salvage their reputation via strategies of shame acknowledgment, empathy appeal, shame detachment, and exhibiting pride/hubris. With this illustrative case study, we provide a deeper understanding of political shame management through communication.

Introduction

As individuals who are often threatened and affected by personal attacks, politicians are certainly aware of the complexity of dealing with shame. The emotion of shame regularly ensues after a moral transgression both for individual politicians and for their political communities. To manage the politicians' own feelings and voters' emotions, it is important to evoke but also mitigate the effects of individual and collective humiliation. Inspired by Ahmed et al. (Ahmed et al. 2001), we contend that politicians intentionally employ public displays of shame as an emotional response, shaming as a regulatory practice, and avoiding shame as a defense mechanism. At present, there is little understanding of what political shame management looks like in terms of communication strategies.

To complicate matters, shame is usually connected to or mixed with other negative emotions, such as anger, rage, resentment and ressentiment (e.g. Benjamin 2020; Connolly 2014; Scheff 1990; 2003; Tangney, Wagner, and Gramzow 1992). Sometimes shame and pride are linked: social psychology outlines how social groups transform shame into pride by replacing stigma with acceptance (Britt and Heise 2000). Other

times, however, shame leads to hubris because of overcompensation if it is managed poorly (e.g. Braithwaite and Braithwaite 2001, 3). Although careful examination of moral-emotional expressions within mediated content is crucial for empirical analysis, it is notoriously difficult to distinguish between guilt and shame in real-life interactions because the two emotions have a somewhat similar manifestation and language kit (Nathanson 1994, 10). Shame management thus involves public displays of emotions such as shame, guilt, pride and hubris, and carefully calculated strategic communicative actions in order to incite, nurture, or reduce the feeling of shame.

With this paper, we contribute to multidisciplinary academic efforts (e.g. Britt and Heise 2000; Hu 2022; Locke 2016; Munt 2007; Nussbaum 2013) to understand the interactive nature of collective shame, shaming, and how people defend themselves against them. The study unpacks a specific sort of moral communication in political debates: shame management which includes a complex set of affect-oriented verbal, textual and gestural devices. We propose a novel conceptual framework to study shame, its instrumentalization and handling in political communication. Additionally, we present a case study of how politicians used various self-conscious moral emotions to respond to the fall of a Member of European Parliament (MEP), József Szájer, representing Fidesz, Hungary's ruling conservative, right-wing party. The politician resigned after being caught attending what media described as a 'gay sex party' in Brussels in late November 2020.

The study reveals that self-conscious moral emotions play a key role in the shame management communication strategies of political forces in Hungary. The nuanced investigation also shed some light on the importance of emotional blending: the way how the communicators verbally turn one emotion to another and strategically oscillate between guilt/guilting and shame/shaming.

The analysis is driven by the following research question:

> In what ways did politicians evoke or mitigate shame in communicating the Szájer- affair and resignation of MEP Szájer?

The findings of the qualitative content analysis (Schreier 2012) indicate that the self-conscious moral emotions of the shame-pride axis were used to interpret the affair of József Szájer in two remarkably different ways. The representatives of the parliamentary opposition disparaged Fidesz, Szájer's party, via a mix of shaming, guilting and making accusations of hubris. They also tried to manage possible vicarious shame among supporters of the political left by limiting the group of perpetrators to the out-group, meaning to the political right in general and its elite in particular. The ruling party's shame management, in turn, developed in phases: first, the leaders of the political right acknowledged shame by removing and hiding the wrongdoer while verbally attempting to mitigate the humiliation by communicating guilt. They then tried to generalize and thereby disperse these feelings by reminding the general population that nobody is innocent. Finally, Fidesz politicians strove to channel potentially negative emotions into pride, sometimes hubris, to reinforce the party's political stance based on moral superiority. Using this illustrative example, this article offers a deeper understanding of moral emotion management in politics through communication and public action.

Hungary is an excellent case study of moral emotions in politics because there has been increasing concern about the moral status of the political elite since 2006 when an infamous speech of Ferenc Gyurcsány, a socialist and Prime Minister at the time,

was leaked. In the speech, Prime Minister Gyurcsány confessed that his government had deliberately misled citizens before the general election of 2006 to gain more votes. After the leak, the speech was labelled 'shameful' and 'morally outrageous' by mass protesters and public intellectuals, who demanded that Gyurcsány step down (Korkut 2007, 681). On coming to power in 2010, Fidesz adopted nationalistic, conservative and plebeian policies, which were constantly criticized for their hypocrisy and their sincerity was often questioned by the opposition forces (see Ilonszki and Gy 2019). The decay of the moral alignment between groups of elites and citizens is often discussed in connection with Hungary (Blanton et al. 2020). The Hungarian case is also interesting because that downfall of MEP Szájer, who is a founder of Fidesz party, Member of the European Parliament, former Vice-President of the EP Group of the European Parliament, and close ally to PM Viktor Orbán, received significant media attention from all across Europe. The shame management communication strategies were also partly covered by the international and non-Hungarian press. Lastly, Hungary is studied as one of the most politically polarized country in Europe which solidifies rigid political group identities and devaluation of the political opposition (see Arbatli and Rosenberg 2021).

Self-conscious moral emotions in politics

Making moral judgements seems to have been an essential part of political communication (see Entman 1993). Moral intuitions strongly influence mass communication processes in terms of content selection, production, and evaluation in intense political times and crisis situations (see Hopp and Weber 2021; Wang and Liu 2021). It is also argued that political messages turn the focus from conflicting interests towards moral principles and the implications of particular political actions instead (Brady et al. 2019; 2020; Hier 2008). Moral rhetoric and the display of moral emotions are the focus of political communication scholars covering various levels of interactions (Prosser et al., 2020; Simonsen and Bonikowski 2022). To dig deeper into the role of shame, guilt, and pride (incl. its hubristic form as well) in politics, we first need to understand the socio-psychological roots of moral emotions. This chapter guides the reader through the development of moral emotions and their relevance in socio-political context.

As the affective aspects of moralization suggest, there is a heterogeneous bundle of emotions such as anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, shame, empathy, sympathy, and pride that usually co-occur with moral and ethical argumentations in public debates. Morality and emotions intersect and regulate individual and collective behaviour (Crockett 2017; Haidt 2003; Haidt et al. 1997). It has also been demonstrated that moral-emotional content spreads very quickly on online media and social networking platforms (Brady, Crockett, and Van Bavel 2020).

Moral emotions are affects that respond to moral transgressions and motivate social behaviour (Kroll and Egan 2004; Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek 2007); according to Haidt (2003), the more pro-social action tendencies an emotion elicits, the more moral it is. The group of moral emotions are labelled as self-conscious emotions (because they are connected to self-reflection and self-evaluation, see Tangney, Stuewig, and Mashek 2007), and this includes the sub-group at the centre of this research, self-evaluating emotions. As Lewis (2008) claims, when one evaluates the success or failure of fulfilling the social standards, rules, and goals (SRGs) of their community, self-conscious moral

emotions arise: when people believe that they meet the SRGs, they feel pride or hubris, while failure stimulates shame or guilt. The concept of self-conscious moral emotions is particularly useful for analyzing political debates on what is acceptable and what is not.

According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), belonging to a group implies sharing the knowledge, evaluations, and affective style perceived to be common within the group. Thus, one might have emotions on behalf of other members; this is why sport fans are proud of the victory of the national football team or you feel ashamed when a family member or a close colleague in the office does not meet the local norms or SRGs. Similar situations are frequent in politics, particularly under the conditions of strong personalization (Bennett 2012), or when a political community is represented by a personal prototype (Hogg 2001) such as a party leader, president, or prime minister. Members may feel shame when a leading figure does something shameful because of the convergence in affective response (Von Scheve and Ismer 2013). Self-conscious emotions are even more contagious in so-called leader democracies, in which most citizens identify with a couple of leading politicians rather than with political institutions (Körösényi, Illés, and Gyulai 2020).

In politics, it is very common that rivals accuse each other of violating SRGs because of unjust and sinful behaviours (Carraro, Castelli, and Macchiella 2011; Direk 2020; Tingley and Tomz 2022). These accusations are often supplemented by emotional expressions. The moral and physical humiliation of the opponent, such as shaming, is generally thought to perform asymmetric power relations where the humiliating party implicitly or explicitly want to take control of the situation (Frevert 2020). In politics, shaming is important not because of the feelings of the humiliated person, but because of the voters' reaction. The humiliating party wants voters to see the humiliated politicians as a disgrace. Moral emotions appear to work together to motivate action, devalue opponents and their supporters, and chase them out of politics (Matsumoto, Frank, and Hwang 2015).

In this study, we focus on four morally relevant self-conscious emotions: shame, guilt, pride, and hubris. Previous research mostly concentrated on the political relevance of group-based shame and guilt (Pettigrove and Parsons 2012; Salmela and von Scheve 2018). Social movements, queer and LGBTQIA + studies have documented the styles of coping with shame and guilt, their varieties in emotional experiences, and the collective process of replacing negative feelings with pride (Britt and Heise 2000; Popa 2017). Although there is sporadic evidence of shame-pride interactions in election campaigning (Kazlauskaitė and Salmela 2022), very few investigations have focused on self-conscious moral emotions in the context of political debates.

In emotionally loaded communicative situations, such as political debates, representatives of political camps aim to increase citizens' positive feelings toward the candidates and the party while encouraging emotional detachment from opposing party candidates. Moral emotions play a special role in accomplishing this dual goal. Shaming and guilting work well in character assassinations as a rhetorical tool to attack the core of the opponent's image (Reeves and Ingraham 2019). Although both are used to display moral superiority, shaming is stronger since it implies a desire to remove candidates of the opposing parties or even the political camp as a whole or else to fundamentally transform their characters. Expressing and fuelling pride is a useful tool to urge actions like continuous support for the party, participation in mass rallies, activism, and so forth

(see Vilas, Alzate, and Sabucedo 2016). In that sense, some contemporary political debates are more similar to moral purifications in politics than to series of information exchanges between politicians and citizens.

To learn more about the use of moral emotions in politics, we identify and measure shame management communication in light of politicians' emotional responses to the fall of MEP József Szájer, a prominent member of Hungary's ruling party, Fidesz, who stepped down after being caught attending what media describe as a 'gay sex party' in Brussels in late November 2020. After the first press release, national and international news media outlets provided more details about the event, labelling it as an 'orgy' in which 'illegal drugs were present.' Some press outlets said that Szájer even wanted to secretly escape from the police raid by sliding down a drainpipe outside of the house wearing little clothes. The reports recalled that the ruling Fidesz party had enacted legislation negatively affecting LGBTQIA + people and that Szájer was personally involved in amending the Constitution of Hungary to define marriage as an exclusively heterosexual institution (Bayer 2020; Makszimov 2020; Thorpe 2020).

Conceptualizing shame, guilt, pride, hubris, and emotion management

To understand the primary reactions to the fall of MEP Szájer, we must define what we mean by the emotions of shame, guilt, pride, and hubris and how they are managed. As with every emotion, these four emotions consist not only of subjective feelings and physical changes but also of additional components including cognitive appraisals, specific action tendencies, and responses. Furthermore, each emotion has analytically distinguishable factors, namely a target, object, and focus (Helm 2001).

Although sometimes connected to satisfactory feelings (e.g. desire or seduction), *shame* is an emotion one feels about oneself prompted by feeling inferior to the SRGs of one's social environment (Lewis 2008; Miceli and Castelfranchi 2018). The subject feels that, for example, being incapable of avoiding their breach, they have irreparably violated generally accepted moral norms; hence, the only possible course of action is a radical transformation of their identity or their removal from the communication situation or, in extreme cases, from life in general (Haidt 2003). In politics, actors feeling or performing shame are likely to leave politics and public life.

While shame is an emotion that one has about oneself, *shaming* is an affective process intended to make someone else feel shame for being morally wrong (Combs et al. 2010). Shaming elevates the accuser into a morally superior position from which they are entitled to judge others and prescribe how they should act (Elshout, Nelissen, and van Beest 2017). There are many different ways of shaming: sarcasm, ridiculing, name-calling, and expressing disgust are the most prototypical ways. Politics offers many cases of public shaming in which the communicators want to convince undecided or politically less engaged citizens that the representatives of the opposing camp are shameful and therefore morally unacceptable to vote for.

Generally speaking, *guilt* also refers to one's discomfort towards oneself (Fehr and Stamps 1979). It is centred, however, not on the entirety of oneself but on a specific morally questionable act or personality trait (Cohen, Panter, and Turan 2012). Whereas shame comes from the inability to avoid transgression – placing the whole identity at stake – guilt is a response to lagging behind specific social expectations (Gilbert 2003;

Tangney 1996). In response, the subject usually confesses and tries to make amends for what they have done. In politics, this can manifest as a politician admitting responsibility for an unpleasant event and making efforts to prevent it from happening in the future. The display of guilt contains elements of self-blame for a specific reason.

Guilting, in turn, involves making someone feel guilty or the intent to change behaviour or take a specific action. Because guilt can be such a powerful motive of human behaviour, people can instrumentalize it to change how others think, feel, and behave. Guilt and guilting are often considered to influence collective identities. For example, shared guilt is claimed to have considerable explanatory power for the German post-world war II national identity (Dresler-Hawke and Liu 2006) and for white Americans' recent support for policies perceived to benefit African Americans (Chudy, Piston, and Shipper 2019).

Somewhat similar to guilt, *pride* is an emotion with a specific object: one feels pride when they have done something good, such as won a game or made efforts for a worthy cause. In other words, they have carried out something remarkable according to SRGs. These are specific acts that make the subject feel triumphant. This joy over the specific achievement which motivates the politicians and the citizens to act ethically. The display of pride generates satisfaction as well (Ho, Tong, and Jia 2016). Scholars have made theoretical and empirical distinctions between good and bad pride, with the latter labelled as hubris (Sullivan 2014).

Hubris is generalized pride, that is, pride extended to the self as a whole. One is considered to feel and express hubris if one communicates a general moral excellence without any self-reflection – let alone self-criticism. Thus, if pride is characterized by the display of feelings of accomplishment and confidence, hubris is the expression of arrogance and conceit.

Research shows that individuals who express pride, as compared to hubris, are appreciated as acting more pro-socially (Wubben, De Cremer, and van Dijk 2012), and pride has been positively related to the overall engagement level of the members' social groups (Michie 2009). Thus, pride serves as a self-regulatory mechanism that helps govern social behaviour (Bodolica and Spraggon 2011). Since engagement is a key issue in election campaigns, it is plausible that candidates use morality via expressions of pride to motivate their followers to pursue desired ends, lessen their willingness to evaluate alternatives, and inspire greater confidence in the mission (Lerner et al. 2015). Hubris, as a general feeling of superiority, is also useful for characterizing the in-group as more capable than the opponents and to pre-empt any moral criticism from outside. The opponent, however, might be accused of feeling unjustified pride in particular or hubris in general, being labelled as stuck-up, arrogant, conceited, snob, overconfident, having lost contact with reality, or lacking humility.

Having thus modified Braithwaite and Braithwaite's concept of shame management (2001), we define shame management as the branch of communicative activities and strategic discursive maneuvers which are introduced by various political actors in Hungary to fuel or moderate collective shame through the expressions of further self-conscious emotions. Inspired by the Management of Shame State - Shame Acknowledgement and Shame Displacement (MOSS-SASD) model (Ahmed et al. 2001) and the concept of the shame compass (Nathanson 1994), we propose a measurement framework to assess how shame is collectively managed in Hungarian politics. Both approaches, MOSS-SASD and compass concept, derive from psychotherapeutic works, and it is

therefore necessary to make slight revisions to adapt them for understanding shame management communication in politics.

The MOSS-SASD model was designed to detect scenarios of shame management. Via the concept of shame acknowledgment, Ahmed et al. address scenarios that lead to accepting shame, preferring to hide one's shame, taking responsibility, confronting others' rejection, and making amends. In contrast, shame displacement consists of distancing strategies like externalizing blame, having unresolved shame, and feeling and/or expressing other emotions such as anger or hubris. All these reactions represent attempts to deflect shame by displacing the humiliation felt into other emotions (Ahmed et al. 2001, 240–241).

Similarly, Nathanson argues that the various responses to shame fall loosely into two major categories: acceptance and defense. Acceptance and defense represent entirely different ways of responses and emotion management strategies, but their purpose is to transform the original feeling of shame into another feeling. Nathanson's shame compass consists of four poles, with two belonging to the strategy of acceptance and two to defense. The first pole, 'withdraw,' directs all of the physiological manifestations of shame towards the experience and a strategy of escape from the situation. Withdrawal is usually very quick and total. In public life, prominent figures may resign, step down or terminate their careers after a shameful event or public humiliation. In other cases, shame is considered so dangerous that the individuals or the collective tend to prevent shameful occurrence at all costs. If prevention is not possible, the 'avoidance' pole features a strategy for reducing, minimizing, shaking off, or modifying the feeling of shame. Nathanson (1994, 323–324) suggests that both the withdrawal and avoidance strategies aim to move away from the feeling of shame. The second pair of poles in the compass are 'attack self' and 'attack other.' The former refers to a strategy when the subject or the group accepts shame but want to control it and incorporate it into self-portrayal; a common strategy for this is shyness, whereby one humbles oneself in order to pre-empt further shaming by others, that is, accepting a part of shame to escape the whole of it. Attack other, in turn, is guided by a way of thinking that aims to alleviate the feeling of inferiority by turning the person or group against others and blaming, hurting, and injuring outside targets.

The MOSS-SASD model and the four poles of the shame compass are the most typical ways to manage self-conscious moral emotions. Each strategy has complementary effects: withdrawal is likely to be accompanied by shame, sadness, distress and fear, attack self by self-disgust, avoidance by joy, and attack other by anger and pride. Moreover, there is a set of publicly articulated auxiliary emotionalizing techniques as well: attack other might go along with guilting and shaming, and avoidance can be linked to evoking feelings of pride and hubris.

In psychoanalytic literature, morality-related emotional responses are often assessed normatively (Miceli and Castelfranchi 2018; Tracy and Robins 2007). In the MOSS-SASD model, shame acknowledgment is discussed under the umbrella of productive-adaptive scenarios (Ahmed et al. 2001, 212). The compass concept also distinguishes between good and bad techniques, but for Nathanson (1994, 324), intensity matters most: for example, mild withdrawal and avoidance are considered normal, while a greater degree of remoteness or self-glorification is regarded as damaging. Our analysis avoids the normative aspect in that we do not differentiate between healthy or harmful, positive

or negative, or neutral or ambivalent processes of shame management. We could do this only if we had information about the reception by and the effects exerted on the audience, or the citizens. This investigation does not aim to outline the arousal level of the emotions either for the same reason. We register the presence of the emotional expressions without considering their intensity.

Data and measurement

To answer the research question, we choose qualitative content analysis as methodological background which is a suitable and reliable technique to cover the 'what, why and how' types of scientific inquiries, and learn more about 'the common patterns in the data are searched for' (Heikkilä and Ekman 2003, 138). The data came from prominent politicians' responses to the Szájer affair. The sample covers the leaders of the parties represented in the Parliament of Hungary and the heads of the parties with more than 1% support according to 2020 opinion polls. All in all, we uncovered the communication activities of 10 parties (Fidesz, Christian Democrats, Socialist Parties, Párbeszéd, Jobbik, Democratic Coalition, LMP – Politics Can Be Different, Momentum, MKKP – Hungarian Two Tail's Dog Party, Mi Hazánk – Our Homeland) between December 1 and December 14, 2020, which was the most intensive period of public discussion of the Szájer affair.

We used two subsets of samples. The first consisted of the party leaders' Facebook pages.[1] Through manual data collection, we gathered all posts (including textual and visual elements) that contained any references to the Szájer affair; 22 such posts were found. The second subset consisted of the articles published by the 10 most popular online news portals. The outlets were selected to represent pro-government sources (origo.hu, ripost.hu, metropol.hu, hirado.hu, szon.hu) as well as media that is critical of the government (index.hu, 24.hu, telex.hu, hvg.hu and 444.hu). After excluding the opinion pieces and collecting all news items which named at least one of the sampled politicians as the source of the communication, the media sample included 296 items. The news media published repetitive information on the affair. We considered this repetition as useful information on the news media's amplification role (see Ridout and Smith 2008) in political shame management and we, therefore, decided not to remove repetitions from the sample, though we did analytically separate the repetitions from the original statements. Altogether, the sample size is 318 utterances.

After collecting the corpora, we registered the presence of the manifested self-conscious moral emotions (shame, guilt, pride, and hubris) in the sample. Then, the target, object, and focus of the publicly articulated self-conscious moral emotions were qualitatively analyzed. These three components are helpful to understand the evaluative characters of the emotional responses (Helm 2001; Von Scheve and Salmela 2014, 49–50).

In short, we coded why the manifested emotion is felt or should be felt (object), who causes the feeling (target), and who feels or should feel (focus) in both the opposition parties' and pro-government forces' mediated communications.

The emotion's *target* informs us whose behaviour is claimed to cause shame, guilt, pride, or hubris. When the communicators direct shame toward themselves, it is shame acknowledgement. If shame is directed onto someone else, it is shaming. Similarly, the concept of the 'target' is helpful as a distinction between the acceptance of guilt and induction of guilt in others, which we call guilting. The *object* component of emotion

specifies what exactly is discussed as a cause of the affect. It provides information regarding why one should feel the given emotions. Lastly, the *focus* component of an emotion refers to who the communicator believes should feel the emotion. The target and the focus might overlap sometimes, because in a case of individual shame, one feels shame because of one's deed or character (target) and they are the focus of the emotion. In political shame management communication, however, maintaining the analytical separation between target and focus is useful to assess the nuances of the rhetorical tools and register the shift between individual and collective emotions. If the communicator concentrates on individual emotional responses, the focus of the manifested emotion is limited to one single person or a couple of people, but without specific group identification. Whereas the political community may or should feel shame (focus) because of what a prominent member or more than one has done (target), it implies emotional collectivity in the rhetoric. It is plausible to assume that in a country where there is fierce elite hostility, the offensive shame management may define collective target(s) and focus to extend and deepen the humiliation. In defensive shame management, we expect that the communicators replace the community target with an individual one so that the focus of shame will probably change from the community as a whole to the individual perpetrator, who is expected to vanish.

The coding was conducted by the authors. Due to the complex nature of self-conscious moral emotive expressions and the difficulties in identifying the target, object, and focus of the emotions, all the materials were carefully observed by both coders and discussed in detail. In case of different assessments, the classification was revised by joint coding activities until agreement was reached. The dataset includes the coding agreed by both coders.

Results

After scrutinizing the sampled utterances, we identified 119 statements by Hungarian politicians that made reference to József Szájer's actions and self-conscious moral emotions, representing 37% of the total number of utterances regarding the affair from December 1–14, 2020. We interpret this frequency to mean that emotion-based shame management was one of the dominant features of the political discussion. As expected, there are significant differences between the activities of the pro-government and the opposition parties. Firstly, numbers differ remarkably: the pro-government parties communicated less (18 items as original utterances, 53 items with repetitions), while the representatives of the opposition camp were far more active in the discussion (49 items as original utterances, 66 items with repetitions). Secondly, the chosen tactics and the manifested emotions of the opposing political camps were almost perfect inversions of each other: shame reduction and shame dispersion.

Shame management of the pro-government parties

Since shame is an aversive and extremely disturbing feeling of worthlessness that signals a threat to the collective political self, the aim of the pro-government parties was to diminish it. To accomplish this, four main strategies were activated: acknowledging the

shame, shame dispersion with empathetic perspective-shifting, shame detachment, and reinforcing the political camp.

Shame acknowledgement

Szájer acknowledged shame in a complex way. As was revealed in media coverage and his own press release, he did not have identity documents on him at the party, which suggests that he did not want to identify with himself as a person who would attend such an event. Another point of shame acknowledgement is his attempt to escape when the police raided the venue; he wanted to disappear, which is again one of the behavioural sign of shame. If he had not been ashamed, he would have had his papers and produced them to the police. A third point is that he announced his resignation from the European Parliament two days after the incident. In another two days, he left Fidesz, his party, and – except for the publication of two press releases – vanished from the public sphere; he thus performed and expressed shame in various ways. A small but not irrelevant point is that he never met with the media personally and instead used only press releases. He was never willing to show his face – another indicator of deep shame.

In the press releases, he showed guilt instead of shame. He admitted that he had attended the party in Brussels and apologized for 'violating the regulation on assemblage' as well as 'ask[ing] for the pardon' of his family, his colleagues, and his constituents (Ritó 2020). By naming specific misdeeds, he verbally reduced what happened into less serious transgressions.

Szájer therefore verbally reflected guilt but perform shame. This tension between verbal communication and the action of stepping down with complete disappearance from public life serves to protect the personal ego and the collective political self from harmful consequences.

The first reaction came from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, the President of Fidesz.

> What our fellow Member of Parliament has done does not fit into the values of our political community. We will never forget nor disavow his thirty years of work, but his deed is unacceptable and indefensible. After what happened, he has made the only right decision possible when he apologized and resigned from the mandate in the European Parliament and left Fidesz. We have taken notice of his decision. (Ritó 2020 quoting PM Orbán)

With this statement, which was republished several times in pro-government media and by politicians of the political right (33 utterances), Orbán acknowledged the shameful nature of Szájer's deed without specifying exactly what was shameful. Shame acknowledgement was implemented by defining Szájer's resignation from both the European Parliament and Fidesz – that is, his withdrawal, which is one of the specific expression of shame – as 'the only right decision possible.' He acknowledged the shamefulness of Szájer's deed also by describing it as 'indefensible,' foreclosing any return to public life, for example, apologies or pardoning. The announcement also uses a verbal indicator of exclusion to underline that, from now on, Szájer belongs to the past and only to the past. Finally, the last sentence suggests that PM Orbán regarded the affair as closed, again, qualifying it as a non-issue, something that does not exist anymore.

By not mentioning what exactly happened that night in Brussels, PM Orbán created a double solution to the political unease. On the one hand, he applied the rhetoric of

silence suggesting that the deed was so shameful that it must not be named. In an oppo-site situation, he would have specified what was against the values of the political com-munity. On the other hand, his omission covered the entire possible spectrum of interpretation: each citizen both on the right and the left could project and organize the details they gathered into their own narrative. Obfuscating the object of the potential emotions could be used to make the depth of crisis depend on the audience.

There was certainly central coordination in the party's shame acknowledgement. Many of the statements (7 original utterances, 33 incl. repetition) from pro-government repre-sentatives repeated the target and the focus of shame and vaguely mentioned value vio-lation as the emotion object.

Shame dispersion with empathetic perspective-shifting

Prinz (2011) argues that empathy is the process through which people experience the emotion that they believe another person has. The call for empathy is a rhetorical device which aims to convince the audience that they should feel sympathy (Czap et al. 2015). In our case, empathy seems to be an important component of shame man-agement in the pro-government parties' communications. Two prominent politicians dis-cussed the sinful nature of all humans and called for empathy with the wrongdoer (2 utterances, 12 withrepetition). They made references to the Bible and paraphrased Jesus' remark in John 8:7, 'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at him.' Through this emotional manifestation, the communicators wanted the audience to change perspective and become involved in the collective and general feeling of shame. The urge to empathize with the ashamed person modifies the emotion target and the focus: not only József Szájer but everybody is directed by and should share the shame. The emotion object, or why people must feel shame, remained deliberately unspecified to elevate the feeling of collective shame.

Empathetic perspective-shifting (see also Dougherty 2019) was done by manipulating the target, focus, and object of the emotion. In this particular shame management case, the communicators influenced the way citizens may evaluate the situation to decrease the general feeling of shame amongst Fidesz members. Through the shift toward a more empathetic perspective, the speakers reminded the recipients of their individual fal-libility. This maneuver serves two goals: on the one hand, it might create an emotional bond amongst supporters of the political camp; on the other hand, it might confuse non-Fidesz voters by calling for critical self-assessments and empathy. Also, it resonates very well with the religious rhetoric of Fidesz and the parties' frequent references to Chris-tianity (see Ádám and Bozóki 2011).

Shame detachment

Studies on individual emotion management claim that detachment is amongst the most probable reactions to shame (Giner-Sorolla, Piazza, and Espinosa 2011; Irwin et al. 2019; Tangney 1991; Tangney, Wagner, and Gramzow 1989). Understanding shame detachment is especially important in politics because of its contribution to overcoming the collective emotional experience of mediatized humiliation. In this context, detachment responses indicate the communicators' desire to disconnect the feeling of shame from the collective political self.

In his press release, Szájer explicitly engaged in shame detachment by declaring '*the failure is personal, so only I have a responsibility, please do not extend it to my country or to my political community*' (Ritó 2020). Later, PM Orbán and other representatives of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats confirmed the separation between the parties and Szájer, citing the act of resignation and that the wrongdoer was no longer a member of the ruling party. Since the relative majority of communications contained elements of detachment, we identify detachment as the most visible shame management tool applied by the pro-government political camp (13 original utterances, 45 items incl. repetition).

Reinforcement of the self

Pride and hubris are used to reinforce the political self by convincing the political community of moral superiority (McLatchie and Piazza 2017). Pride, including hubristic pride, can be considered the emotion related to feeling good as a result of living up to the standards a community holds for its identity (Lawler 2018; Tracy and Robins 2004). For the purpose of this study, we reverse this argument: political communicators want to reinforce the core identity of a political camp by praising themselves or their specific actions; thus, they evoke pleasant feelings to get rid of negative collective self-assessments (Salice and Montes Sanchez 2016). In this case study, the pro-government shame management modified the emotion target as well as changed the object.

In the reinforcement strategy, the transgression was not the object of the emotion. Rather, the way the community handled the affair and the value of the political party become the emotion object. The following two quotations illustrate how the speakers gave credit to the collective political self because of a specific action (managing the Szájer affair) and praised the general character of the Fidesz-led political camp: '*When it came to the public attention, the decision was made immediately. (…) It was the only right decision. (…) This justifies what we represent*' (Előd 2020 quoting Minister Varga); and '*On the political right deeds have consequences, but on the left they have none at all. The opposition parties can only offer reprimand, while they tolerate cocaine consumption, anti-Semitism … amongst themselves*' (Hvg.hu 2020 quoting State Secretary Dömötör).

The previous quotation aims to elicit pride, whereas the latter aims to give rise to hubris. In addition, the emotion focus is clearly identified. In six utterances (13 incl. repetitions), the political camp of the party is discussed as a whole to trigger positive emotional response of the collectivity.

Shame management of the oppositional parties

The opposition parties made statements which fit three separate strategies: a compound of shaming and guilting, vicarious shame acknowledgment, and hubris accusations.

Shaming and guilting

Social psychological research claims that shaming and guilting are crucial tools that hold society together by marking norm violations and reinforcing behavioural standards (Scheff 2000; Scheff and Retzinger 1991). If this is the case, shaming and guilting in politics can be considered a form of moral-discursive control over political rulers. As such, the representatives of opposition parties have every right to think that shaming and guilting

are useful strategies for changing political affects and behaviour. In addition, the representatives might create a sense of moral superiority over adversaries who are more successful in politics. To influence the collective self-esteem, shaming and guilting were manifested in the communication repertoire when opposition parties responded to Szájer's behaviour (26 original statements, 37 with repetition). We found expressions of shame, shamefulness, failure, demanding that the leaders step down, moral bankruptcy, and moral insanity, which clearly suggested shaming. At the same time, phrases such as political harm done, wrongdoing, violating the lockdown regulations, and legal transgressions indicated the use of guilting. Variations of the shaming and guilting language often appeared within the same statement, as the example below illustrates.

> It is now revealed in a disgraceful way that Fidesz members do not consider the Christian-conservative morals to be obligatory for themselves. The Szájer affair points out that it is high time Fidesz clarified whether they are honest or false if one of their representatives are fleeing down the drainpipe to escape punishment because that person violated the lockdown rules. The Christian family model which Fidesz so often propagates is a force even for its members. Its own people must live in lies. Their reign must be ended! (Pál 2020 quoting the press release of party LMP).

> The scandal of József Szájer is proof of the complete moral bankruptcy of Fidesz! It seems that it is more important for them to take part in an illegal orgy than doing something which would prevent Hungary from the negative consequences of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. (Pál 2020 quoting the press release of party Momentum)

The co-occurrences of shaming and guilting confirm that the language use is far from consistent and that shame and guilt-related expressions are often employed in an interchangeable manner. Beyond the verbal amalgamation of shame and guilt, shame dispersion seems to be a common strategy of the opposition parties. The communicators also broadened public discussion of the Szájer affair by redefining the object, target, and focus of the emotion. They discussed the individual wrongdoing of the politician by mentioning the sexual aspects of the event, the violation of lockdown rules, and the illegal drug possession (Farkas 2020), but the emotion object was discussed in a more abstract sense, in the context of the contradiction between the ideology of the Fidesz-dominated, Orbán-Viktor-led government and the deeds of a leading member of the party.

The shame and guilt originated from the two levels of contradiction. At the individual level, the personality of Szájer was mentioned by highlighting the fact that he played an important role in defending the Hungarian government in the European Parliament and actively participated in drafting the current constitutional law declaring the country's Christian roots, but he also lived a life in which he recurrently violated the norms he had been representing for decades. At the community level, a similar contradiction was underlined by noting that the government was openly hostile towards the LGBTQIA + community and actively propagated conservative lifestyles and family values, but at the same time, the party tolerated someone who could not meet their own requirements and posed a threat for possible secret service's trap. This hypocrisy was claimed to be the reason why shame and guilt had to be felt, as per the following quotations.

'*The policies of Fidesz are sanctimonious and hypocritical. They preach about the protection of families when making changes in the Basic Law and debarring tens of thousands from having families. How hypocritical it is that they talk about family!*' (Kanász-Nagy 2020).

'*Never let Fidesz talk about family and traditional values! Don't you all dare lie in our face so shamelessly!*' (Schmuck 2020). '*These people are preaching about family, Christianity, and conservative values! (…) You will all be done in the fire of hell! Before that, we will make sure you go to jail.*' (Szabó 2020a).

While pro-government forces aimed to disconnect the ashamed politician from the political camp, the opposition parties' strategy was the reverse and discussed Szájer's misbehaviour at the group level. It was not the individual politician but the whole Fidesz party that carried shame and guilt, so all members of Fidesz were guilted and shamed. In other words, the collective political entity was the target and focus of the emotions.

A few utterances contain references to other individuals who hold responsibility and should feel guilty. Some representatives of the opposition parties discussed the responsibility of Viktor Orbán as the president and the leader of Fidesz (Szabó 2020b) and Szájer's wife for covering up her husband's double life (Szily 2020).

Vicarious shame acknowledgement

Although the perpetrator belonged to the political right, the political left also carried out shame management, though it is not obvious whether it was conscious or unconscious. After all, for a great number of supporters of the left, beyond being a right-wing politician, Szájer is also a fellow Hungarian citizen and a representative of the country in the European Parliament. Thus, his actions may have had a negative effect on the citizens outside his party and the political right. As such, the political elite of the left may have felt obliged to respond to what happened – not just to the probable shame of the Hungarian right and of Szájer himself but to the shame and other possible unpleasant emotions that might have arisen among supporters of the political left.

The co-president of the Socialist Party, Bertalan Tóth, acknowledged shame by saying, '*No one likes to be ashamed. However, for the last few days or weeks, all Hungarians have had enough to be ashamed of*' (Párbeszéd 2020). Besides the Szájer affair, Tóth enumerated further misdeeds by Fidesz members that meant that '*the European public opinion speaks about us, the newspapers write about us, and we have to feel shame*' (Párbeszéd 2020). Hence, Szájer's shameful deed incited shame for the whole country. At the same moment, however, Tóth localized the target of shame outside the political left and also outside the Hungarian people in general, reducing it to the members of the governing party. But if the target of the emotion is a small group, its focus cannot differ, and so citizens in general and the political left in particular are exempt from responsibility and shame.

Another object of emotion Tóth mentioned is the negative attention foreign media paid to Hungary. Intense attention can easily turn to shame if the interest is raised not by some great achievement but by something repugnant.

Although shame is mentioned repeatedly, the feeling of collective guilt was also exhibited (1 original statement, 14 with repetition). The politician oscillated between vicarious shame and guilt acknowledgment depending on whether the Hungarian people (incl. the left-leaning politicians) or only the governing elite was the target and focus of the emotion. What Szájer and other Fidesz members did urged the political left to restore the country's honour, which suggests that it is possible to make amends through the disappearance of the political right. Thus, while the elite of political right should step back to end the feeling of vicarious shame, politicians on the left may feel only guilt, which will lead to the improvement of their moral character.

Accusation of hubris

Beyond intensive shaming and guilting, we identified the accusation of hubris as a minor shame management strategy. Leading figures of the parliamentary opposition described Szájer's actions as a consequence of the arrogant behaviour of Fidesz and the Orbán-led government. The fall of Szájer was discussed as a punishment for the violation of decorum and propriety in governing Hungary. Criticism of the hubristic politics of Fidesz contrasted the party's hostility towards the LGBTQIA + community with Szájer's behaviour. Reactions included words and themes like arrogance, impertinence, the assumption that Fidesz members are above the law, the presumption that they have the right to do whatever they want, and the ignorance towards LGBTQIA + people's feelings. For example: '*You are neither Christians, nor patriots. You are primitive, lying morons who think that you are allowed to do whatever you want to. You have desecrated the holiest, the homeland*' (Gyurcsány 2020).

> A dictatorship, whether it is hard or soft, is always defeated by its own priggishness, the lack of self-control and the myth of invincibility. It is when the people in power are blindly chasing money and pleasures and weltering in their own wallow to such an extent that it becomes unthinkable for them that they would even be unmasked. (…) In Brussels, he [Szájer] spent millions of public money to live the very life of which he deprived many people in Hungary. He deprived people of the most basic thing: to love freely. Since the beginning, Szájer has been part of the scurvy political machine which has ruined many people's lives in order to vilely produce enemies. (Szabó 2020b)

When reacting to the Szájer affair, representatives of the opposition parties directed voters' attention to the fact that long-time ruling party Fidesz was abusing its power and authority to gratify its own ambitions, which is a sign of hubristic pride. Accusations of hubris were manifested in two utterances (16 incl. repetition) in which the emotion object was the hectoring politics of the Fidesz, and the target and the focus was the whole right wing political camp led by PM Orbán.

Discussion

Like many other social science disciplines, political communication and media studies also experienced the 'affective turn,' and scholars began to reflect on how emotions can be triggered (Wagner 2014) and their importance in political mobilization (Barbeito Iglesias and Iglesias Alonso 2021), group-based identity (Chouliaraki 2021), and voting behaviour (Weber 2013). Despite growing interest in feelings in politics, the presence and features of moral emotions in public debates still seem to be terra incognita. While studies have demonstrated the application of shame in the mediated environment for political purposes (Pettigrove and Parsons 2012; Salmela and von Scheve 2018), the emotional and communicative complexity of public degradation and counteractions have remained largely undiscovered. To fill this gap, this study investigated the characteristics of mediated shame management strategies in politics. We examined the ways politicians in Hungary tried to evoke and reduce the feeling of humiliation when reacting to the fall of József Szájer.

As the literature on public shaming implies (Direk 2020; Rowbottom 2013), communicators purposefully use self-conscious emotions either to attack a collective political self or to protect their own from the potentially harmful consequences of group-based

humiliation. To study shame-related strategic maneuvers in politics, this research sought new avenues for investigating moral emotions. After a slight revision of psychotherapeutic models of shame processes (Ahmed et al. 2001; Nathanson 1994), we proposed an innovative analytical toolkit to study public shaming and the way it was handled. While the majority of the research concentrates on either public shaming or reputation reparation (Nardella, Brammer, and Surdu 2020; Rowbottom 2013), this paper provided a holistic and dynamic framework for studying shame management strategies. Based on the publicly displayed verbal forms of self-conscious moral emotions, we measured publicly manifested emotions (what is felt or should be felt), emotional objects (why it is felt or should be felt), targets (who causes the feeling), and focuses (who feels or should feel) in both the opposition parties' and pro-government forces' mediated communications. With this integrative approach, we traced the rhetorical manifestations of shaming and the ways in which politicians aimed to overcome the negative effect of public disgrace.

The qualitative content analysis (Schreier 2012) of social media and online news media data revealed two major findings. The first concerns the interplay between emotions and political strategies. Our analysis reveals that pro-government parties aimed to diminish the aversive and extremely disturbing feeling of worthlessness, which poses a threat to the collective political self. To do this, four main strategies were applied: acknowledging shame; shame dispersion by empathetic perspective-shifting; shame detachment; and reinforcing the political self through pride, including its hubristic form. The opposition parties, in turn, communicated using three separate strategies: a compound of shaming and guilting, vicarious shame acknowledgment, and hubris accusations (see Table 1).

The empirics revealed the various forms of moral emotional responses to the step down of MEP Szájer. The optimistic account of the case is that shame acknowledgment and shaming in politics contributes to the sanitization of politics by discussing the norm violation and removing the transgressor from politics. Alternatively, publicly manifested shame and shaming might have unfavourable consequences in the long run: triggering disruptive emotions such as ressentiment and schadenfreude, encouraging hiding or revenge-seeking behaviour, rising the affective polarization between political camps, and decreasing chances of elite cooperation. Only time will tell which scenario plays out in Hungary.

The second outcome of the illustrative case study is that shame in politics is often intertwined with other self-conscious moral emotions. Emotional blending and mixing, or simultaneous feelings of different emotions, are well-explored fields (Watson and Stanton 2017). However, our work discovered the verbal complexity of the emotional transformations in political rhetoric. In the political debate over the fall of Szájer, politicians very often used expressions and phrases of shame and guilt as mutually occurring with each other. A similar observation was made by Monika Verbalyte in analyzing the apologia strategies in German politics (Verbalyte, 2020).

We argue that the difficulties in separating shame and guilt are not just a linguistic problem that can be solved by improving the methodological toolkit; rather, the boundaries between the two emotions need to be better addressed in media and communication studies. To fully understand the political implications of publicly manifested guilt and shame, as well as guilting and shaming, there should be more academic reflection on the characteristics of self-evaluative emotions in collective and interactive circumstances. Unsurprisingly, shame and guilt often go hand in hand (Eisenberg 2000; Miceli

Table 1. Comprehensive summary of the strategies in the emotional responses to the fall of Szájer.

		Shame management strategies			
		Displayed/denied self-conscious moral emotion	Object	Target	Focus
Government parties	*Shame acknowledgment*	shame (blended with verbally manifested guilt)	unspecified	Szájer	Szájer
	Shame detachment	shame	unspecified	Szájer	Szájer
	Empathetic-perspective shifting	guilt	general nature of humans	everybody	everybody
	Reinforcement	pride	the way the affair was handled	Fidesz	Fidesz
		hubris	the moral character of the political camp	Fidesz	Fidesz
		Displayed/ appealing to self-conscious moral emotion	**Object**	**Target**	**Focus**
Oppositional parties	*Guilting and shaming*	guilt (blended with verbally manifested appeals to shame)	violating the lockdown rules	Szájer	Szájer
			tolerating someone who could be blackmailed	Viktor Orbán; wife of Szájer	Viktor Orbán; wife of Szájer
			hypocrisy	Fidesz; wife of Szájer	Fidesz
	Vicarious shame acknowledgment	shame	unspecified	Fidesz	Hungarian people
	The accusation of being hubristic	hubris	Fidesz self-portrayal	Fidesz	Fidesz

and Castelfranchi 2018). The distinction between guilt and shame has always been challenging to identify because they have so much in common. Both involve the negative feeling elicited by someone's perceived moral failures and transgressions. In addition, they contain criticism and acknowledge group-based responsibility. However, it is suggested that separation based on the types of transgression should still be maintained. In line with the literature, this paper does not challenge the need for conceptual separation and clear analytical distinctions between guilt and shame, we rather invite media and political communication scholars to join the discussion on making sense of the functionality of emotional blending and oscillations in public debates. Although we are generally positive about the academic advancements of reshaping the boundaries between guilt and shame, we remain somewhat unconvinced by the current proposals.

Combs et al. (2010), for example, propagate that the public versus the private experience of a fall matters: if the faults are witnessed by a larger audience, the emotion is most likely to be shame (and shaming), while in the private sphere the negative (self-) evaluation leads to guilt (and guilting). Relying on studies of the foggy lines between the private and public spheres in the contemporary media ecosystem (Ruotsalainen and Heinonen 2015), we are very much skeptical about grounding the difference between shame and guilt on the distinction between public and private. In politics, politicians and voters frequently have direct and personal contact via social media platforms. This tendency is amplified by the overlapping private and professional roles that politicians undertake.

Today, politicians – especially presidents, prime ministers, and party leaders – are more than just policymakers and legislators; they are community leaders and prototypes of political camps and have a significant impact on political and non-political aspects of voters' lives (Hogg 2001).

Miceli and Castelfranchi (2018) make an alternative suggestion: take shame out of the classification of moral emotions and define it as a self-evaluation of failure to meet the standards of one's ideal self. Consequently, shaming must be considered a discursive strategy focusing on the accusation of inadequacy to meet the standards of one's ideal self, an argument recurrently stressed during debate of the fall of Szájer. According to Miceli and Castelfranchi, contrary to shame, guilt is a negative self-evaluation against one's moral standards. In this approach, guilting might therefore be understood as the type of communication in which someone criticizes elements of others' moral standards. The Hungarian case provides evidence for critiquing the moral standards of the political opponents but does not support the idea of taking shame out from the concept of moral emotions.

The problem with Miceli and Castelfranchi's approach is that in politics it is not the emotions per se but rather the character of the content they co-occur with that makes something morally relevant. If social injustice is connected to anger, then it is morally relevant emotion. If there is a constant guilting of political adversaries, it leads to general devaluation of the opponents' moral status. Joy in politics is often expressed over moral superiorities (see also Avramova and Inbar 2013; Landy and Goodwin 2015; McAuliffe 2019). In other words, politicians usually tag a behaviour or a situation as unjust or as a value violation and support their argument with emotionally loaded language, including shame-related phrases, such as calls to leave office or to disappear from public life, and qualifying what happened as a shameful action or moral insanity. The opposite also occurs, where politicians' publicly displayed emotions can be based on moral reasoning or moral framing.

Put differently, one can never be certain about the exclusion of shame from moralized political disputes. To avoid ex-ante calculations of moral attribution in measuring emotionalized political communication, we recommend not excluding shame and shaming from morality and instead reconsidering the relationship between the two emotions. One possible way out of this dilemma may be to recognize and pay more attention to emotion blends (Berrios 2019; Berrios, Totterdell, and Kellett 2015; Lindquist and Barrett 2008) in political rhetoric as well. The Hungarian case implies that such blending has a special function both in shaming and reducing the effects of shame. To make the accusation more grievous, the communicator tends to shift the focus from a specific – and hence reparable – wrongdoing, such as guilt, towards a general condemnation of the opponents' identity to evoke shame. Conversely, politicians want to convince citizens that a transgression incites guilt and is hence solvable by the wrongdoer, rather than shame, which would entail the complete withdrawal and communicative surrender of the perpetrator. As reported by De Hooge and colleagues (2018) individual shame and shaming lead to both withdrawal and social approach. The Hungarian case shows how this duality works in a concrete political situation: MEP Szájer resigned and disappeared from the public life (withdrawal), but Fidesz party (as a collective entity) continued to be engaged in positive social interactions with their audience (social approach).

Ever since the classic work by Helen Lewis (1971; see also Scheff 1988), shame and guilt have been detected through not only verbal formulas but also markers of hiding

behaviour. We did not scrutinize specific nonverbal expressions, such as change in body posture or other physiological signals of shame or guilt, because we studied public communication of not necessarily authentic moral emotions. Nonetheless, a remarkable kit of shame markers could be found in the political communications of leaders of the political right. The most characteristic of these is the evanescence of the perpetrator, which is a definite follow-up to shame. We also underlined what may be called communication by silence. No political leader on the right defined the trigger of Szájer's resignation, or the object of shame – as if it were so shameful that its sheer naming would also shame the communicator.

We are nonetheless aware of the limitations of our analysis. A first limitation pertains to selection bias: if we had selected another issue, perhaps the analysis would have produced slightly different findings. We cannot claim that we identified all possible ways of managing public shame. Rather, our research provides a comparative snapshot that sheds light on the communicative repertoire of collective deployment of moral emotions. The second limitation concerns the chosen country: we focused on Hungary, which was coping with severe elite conflicts for a long time. Such polarization indicates greater proneness to moralized and emotionalized political communication, which might not be the case in other countries. Thirdly, our method is not helpful for assessing whether the communicated feelings are genuine or not. What we were able to present is the register of the publicly displayed emotions, regardless of intentionality. Same holds true for the silence component of shame management: our study cannot claim that the withdrawal and lack of communication is solely motivated by shame. Data and previous studies suggest however that one of the shame management scenario is 'leaving the scène' in a way it happened in the case of József Szájer. In addition, due to conceptual limitations – we focused on self-conscious moral emotions – this paper cannot detect all the morally relevant affective components of shame management communication strategies. Our intention was to demonstrate the complexity of emotional languages in responding to the sex affair and resignation of a Member of the Parliament with the involvement of multiple emotions, however for the sake of coherence and brevity, we did not collect data on other potentially relevant and publicly manifested emotions such as anger and contempt. Finally, our study does not examine the success of shaming and its counter-strategies. Further quantitative analyses are needed to evaluate, for example, in what ways different communicative efforts affected public opinion. Although political communication and media scholars is not completely ignoring moral emotional rhetoric (see Verbalyte 2018), we need more empirical studies to analyze the role of positive morally relevant emotions, such as sympathy, empathy, gratitude, and elevation in political discourses, especially in times of multiple crises.

Note

1. Facebook is the most popular social networking platform for posting and seeking political information. See Bene 2017; 2021.

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