**Supplemental Materials for “When Journalists Run for Office: The Effects of Journalist-Candidates on Citizens’ Populist Attitudes and Voting Intentions”**

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# Appendix 1 – Comparison between Sample and Population Characteristics

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sample** | | **Voting-age population** |
| **Variable** | **N** | **%** | **%** |
| *Gender* |  |  |  |
| Male | 642 | 41.3 | 48.1 |
| Female | 911 | 58.7 | 51.9 |
| Total | 1533 | 100 | 100 |
|  |  |  |  |
| *Geographic area* |  |  |  |
| North-West | 358 | 23.1 | 26.7 |
| North-East | 331 | 21.3 | 19.3 |
| Center | 309 | 19.9 | 20.0 |
| South | 382 | 24.6 | 22.9 |
| Islands | 173 | 11.1 | 11.0 |
| Total | 1533 | 100 | 100 |
|  |  |  |  |
| *Age group* |  |  |  |
| 18-20 | 13 | 0.8 | 3.5 |
| 21-24 | 39 | 2.5 | 4.7 |
| 25-34 | 318 | 20.5 | 13.0 |
| 35-44 | 350 | 22.5 | 16.0 |
| 45-54 | 383 | 24.7 | 19.3 |
| 55-64 | 293 | 18.9 | 16.3 |
| 65-74 | 139 | 9.0 | 13.3 |
| 75 + | 18 | 1.2 | 13.9 |
| Total | 1553 | 100 | 100 |
|  |  |  |  |
| *Education* |  |  |  |
| Primary | 203 | 13 | 38.7 |
| Secondary | 753 | 48.5 | 45.2 |
| Tertiary | 597 | 38.5 | 16.1 |
| Total |  | 100 | 100 |

Note: the sources for voting-age population data are the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) 2019 (for gender, geographic area, and age group) and the European Values Study 2018 (for education).

# Appendix 2 – Question Wording for Treatments

*Treatment Group 1 (PD)*

“We will now talk about the candidates for Parliament. Have you heard that among the candidates for the Democratic Party there are journalists like Tommaso Cerno, co-editor of *la Repubblica*, and Francesca Barra, who previously worked for *Mediaset* and *La7*?”

*Treatment Group 2 (FI)*

“We will now talk about the candidates for Parliament. Have you heard that among the candidates for Forza Italia there are journalists like Giorgio Mulè, editor of *Panorama*, and Andrea Cangini, editor of *Il Resto del Carlino – Quotidiano Nazionale*?”

*Treatment Group 3 (M5S)*

“We will now talk about the candidates for Parliament. Have you heard that among the candidates for the Five Star Movement there are journalists like Emilio Carelli, former editor of *Sky Tg 24*, and Gianluigi Paragone, who was previously vice-chair of *Rai1* and *Rai2* and presenter of ‘The Cage’ on *La7*?”

*Treatment Group 4 (All parties)*

“We will now talk about the candidates for Parliament. Have you heard that among the main party candidates there are journalists such as Tommaso Cerno, co-editor of *la* *Repubblica*, Giorgio Mulè, editor of *Panorama*, and Gianluigi Paragone, former presenter of ‘The Cage’ on *La7*?”

*Control Group*

“We will now talk about the candidates for Parliament. Do you know who the main parties’ candidates for the House and Senate are in the constituency where you reside?”

*Response modes for all groups*

* “Yes”
* “No”
* “I don’t know”

# Appendix 3 – Responses to the Treatment Questions

301 respondents (19.4% of the total) were assigned to the question mentioning journalists running for PD, with 53.8% answering “No”, 25.9% “Yes”, and 20.3% “I don’t know”. 320 respondents (20.6%) were assigned to the question mentioning journalists running for FI, and of those respondents 60.9% answered “No”, 22.8% “Yes”, and 16.2% “I don’t know”. 319 (20.5%) were assigned to the question mentioning journalists running for M5S, and 42.3% answered “Yes”, 42.3% “No”, and 15.4% “I don’t know”. 307 respondents (19.8%) were assigned to the question mentioning journalists running for all three parties, with 52.6% answering “No”, 24.5% “Yes”, and 22.9% “I don’t know”. Finally, 306 respondents (19.7%) were assigned to the control group and asked a generic question about knowledge of the candidates in their districts. Among them, 52.6% answered “No”, 24.5% answered “Yes”, and 22.9% answered “I don’t know”. Apart from the question about M5S candidates, percentages of “Yes” answers are remarkably similar across the different groups.

The way in which respondents answered this question is not directly relevant to the analysis, as the purpose of the question was to *inform* participants who did not know and to *prime* participants who already knew about high-profile journalists running as major party candidates. However, the substantially higher percentage of “Yes” answers to the question about M5S candidates suggests that knowledge about the journalists running as candidates for this party was higher compared with journalists running for the other parties.

This difference is plausible for various reasons: the M5S devoted substantial efforts to publicizing its top candidates; recruiting journalist-candidates was a considerable break from the party’s traditional message and thus attracted more attention; and the two top journalists fielded by the M5S, both prominent TV personalities, were better known to the public than those fielded by PD and FI. Moreover, the sample included voters with stronger sympathies for the M5S than for the other parties, and party sympathizers were more likely to be aware (or to respond to a question to show they were aware) of the candidates of their favored party. The average propensity to vote for the M5S on a 0-10 scale, measured before the experiment, was 4.68 among those who claimed to be aware of their key journalist-candidates and 3.42 among those who claimed to be unaware or declined to answer. Among respondents who, before seeing the treatment, claimed their probability to vote for the M5S was 6 or higher (32.3% of the sample), 54.3% were aware of the journalists-candidates mentioned in the question, while among those whose PTV for the M5S was below 6, only 36.4% claimed to be aware of the party’s journalists-candidates.

To the extent that imparting new knowledge on respondents may elicit a stronger effect than priming knowledge they already possess, the M5S treatment may have been less powerful than those involving the other parties. However, as shown in the manuscript, the results suggest that the treatments mentioning journalists running for the M5S had similar effects as those mentioning journalists running for other parties.

# Appendix 4 – Randomization Checks

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Journalist-candidates mentioned (%)** | | | | |  |
| **Variable** | **None** | **PD** | **FI** | **M5S** | **All parties** | ***p*** |
| *Gender* |  |  |  |  |  | 0.5371 |
| Female | 19.8 | 19.4 | 21.6 | 20.7 | 18.4 |  |
| Male | 19.6 | 19.3 | 19.2 | 20.2 | 21.7 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Age group* |  |  |  |  |  | 0.3816 |
| 18-34 | 18.9 | 20.8 | 19.7 | 22.7 | 17.8 |  |
| 34-54 | 20.9 | 20.5 | 19.5 | 19.6 | 19.5 |  |
| 55 + | 18.4 | 16.4 | 23.1 | 20.2 | 21.8 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Education* |  |  |  |  |  | 0.3720 |
| Primary | 21.7 | 11.3 | 23.6 | 23.6 | 19.8 |  |
| Secondary | 18.7 | 20.5 | 21.4 | 19.2 | 20.2 |  |
| Tertiary | 20.8 | 19.3 | 18.9 | 21.9 | 19.1 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Employment* |  |  |  |  |  | 0.1271 |
| Not employed | 19.3 | 17.1 | 24.3 | 20.5 | 18.9 |  |
| Employed | 19.9 | 20.5 | 18.9 | 20.6 | 20.2 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *How does your family income allow you to live?* | | | | | | 0.1924 |
| Cannot make the end of the month | 21.7 | 16.3 | 26.1 | 16.8 | 19.0 |  |
| With difficulty | 17.4 | 21.2 | 20.4 | 21.6 | 19.3 |  |
| With ease | 20.6 | 17.9 | 18.7 | 21.1 | 21.7 |  |
| With comfort | 18.6 | 18.6 | 30.2 | 22.3 | 9.9 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Interest in politics* |  |  |  |  |  | 0.2364 |
| Not at all | 21.4 | 23.8 | 19.8 | 11.9 | 23.0 |  |
| A little | 20.1 | 19.1 | 21.3 | 21.3 | 18.2 |  |
| Some | 17.7 | 19.3 | 19.3 | 22.2 | 21.6 |  |
| A great deal | 23.4 | 16.3 | 23.4 | 19.6 | 17.4 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Interest in the campaign* | |  |  |  |  | 0.9206 |
| Not at all | 18.1 | 22.8 | 22.2 | 15.8 | 21.1 |  |
| A little | 18.5 | 20.2 | 20.2 | 21.0 | 20.2 |  |
| Some | 20.0 | 18.0 | 19.8 | 22.1 | 20.1 |  |
| A great deal | 20.4 | 18.3 | 21.7 | 20.8 | 18.8 |  |

Note: *p* values reported in the last column are based on of Chi-square tests for the bivariate relationship between each variable and the assigned treatment.

# Appendix 5 – Additional Analyses with an Index of Populism Constructed Based on the “Goertz” Method as Described by Wuttke et al. (2020)

Wuttke et al. (2020) demonstrate that combining individual measures of populist attitudes into a simple additive compensatory index, such as the one used in the analyses reported in the manuscript, may fail capture populism as a concept constituting more than the sum of individual attitudes and as distinct from other constructs such as, for instance, trust in institutions and political efficacy. Hence, Wuttke and colleagues propose alternative non-compensatory approaches, whereby populism is understood as being constituted in its essence by all the specific attitudes measured by researchers. One of these approaches is the “Goertz” method (Wuttke et al., 2020: 362), which takes the lowest values of each indicator as the overall populism score for each respondent.

When this index is computed, only respondents that have high values on all measures score high on the index, which ranges from 0-4 (mean = 2.30, median = 2, s.d. = 1.08). As shown by the central values of their distributions, the two indices differ quite starkly in how selective they are. While 79.7% of respondents score above the midpoint of the “Bollen” scale used in the manuscript, only 42.4% of respondents do so for the “Goertz” index.

Below I replicate all the analyses presented in the manuscript where the combined index of populism is the dependent variable using the Goertz index as dependent variable.

Figure A1 replicates the analyses shown in Figure 1 in the manuscript.

**Figure A1 – Relationship between Exposure to Treatment and Levels of Populist Attitudes, with Goertz Index of Populism**



Note: the figure shows means with standard errors.

Looking at the left panel of Figure A1, average values of the Goertz index of populism among treated participants are consistently higher than in the control group (treated groups average = 2.34, s.d. = 1.07; control group average = 2.16, s.d. = 1.15). ANOVA confirms that the relationship between exposure to any treatment and populism is statistically significant (F = 6.73, *p* = 0.009, η2 = 0.004). Moreover, this relationship remains significant with a repeated measures ANOVA that includes pre-treatment measures of populism (F = 17.4, *p* = < 0.001, partial η2 = 0.011).

The right panel of Figure A1 highlights that levels of populism were generally higher among participants in the treated groups than among those in the control group, and the difference is particularly large when comparing participants exposed to information on journalist-candidates running for all parties with the control group. ANOVA highlights that the bivariate relationship between treated groups and populism is significant (F = 2.42, p = 0.047, η2 = 0.006). The Tukey test reveals that the only significant difference in pairwise comparisons is between participants exposed to information about journalists running for all the main parties and the control group (difference = 0.25 [95% C.I. = 0.01, 0.49], p = 0.035). In the repeated measures ANOVA including pre-treatment levels of populism, the relationship between treated groups and post-treatment populism becomes stronger (F = 6.26, p < 0.001, partial η2 = 0.016) and the Tukey test reveals three significant pairwise differences between participants in the control group and those exposed to information about journalists running for (a) all parties (difference = 0.25 [95% C.I. = 0.10, 0.40, p = < 0.001), (b) FI (difference = 0.21 [95% C.I. = 0.06, 0.35, p = 0.001), and (c) M5S (difference = 0.15 [95% C.I. = 0.01, 0.30, p = 0.036).

**Reference**

Wuttke, A., Schimpf, C., & Schoen, H. (2020). When the Whole Is Greater than the Sum of Its Parts: On the Conceptualization and Measurement of Populist Attitudes and Other Multidimensional Constructs. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(2), 356–374.

# Appendix 6 – Additional Analyses Not Reported in the Manuscript

An earlier version of this manuscript included two hypotheses that were taken out of this version due to space considerations.

*H3a: Exposure to information about journalists running as candidates for major national parties will decrease levels of trust in journalists.*

*H3b: Exposure to information about journalists running as candidates for major national parties will decrease levels of trust in politicians.*

To test these hypotheses, I used post-treatment measures of trust in journalists and politicians. Importantly, pre-treatment measures of these constructs were not available, which sets these analyses apart from those presented in the manuscript, which are all based on both pre- and post-treatment measures.

To measure trust in journalists and politicians, I asked: “Could you tell me, on a scale from 0 to 10, what level of trust you personally have in the following professions?”. Respondents were asked to provide a number from 0-10 for “Journalists” and “Politicians”, rotated in random order. The mean for journalists was 3.6, the median 4; 5.8% declined to answer. The mean for politicians was 2.2, the median 2; 5.1% declined to answer.

**Figure A2 – Relationship between Exposure to Information on Journalist-Candidates and Trust in Journalists**



Note: the figure shows means with standard errors.

As Figure A2 shows, levels of trust in journalists were very similar across all groups. Those who saw any information about journalist-candidates reported average levels of trust in journalists equal to 3.58 on a 0-10 scale (s.d. = 2.34), while participants who saw no such information averaged 3.67 (s.d. = 2.513). ANOVA confirms that the relationship is not statistically significant (F = 0.35, *p* = 0.55, η2 = 0.000). Similarly, differences in trust in journalists are minor when we compare participants exposed to each of the treatments and the control group. Trust was slightly lower among those exposed to information about journalist-candidates for FI (average = 3.37, s.d. = 2.30) and for all parties (average = 3.55, s.d. = 2.32) but again the relationship is not significant, as confirmed by ANOVA (F = 1.11, *p* = 0.35, η2 = 0.003). Hence, we cannot reject the null hypothesis corresponding to H3a.

Similarly, there is no evidence that the treatments affected trust in politicians (Figure A3). Those who saw information on journalist-candidates reported average levels of trust of 2.20 (s.d. = 2.20) while those who did not see any information averaged 2.18 (s.d. = 2.17). ANOVA confirmed this relationship was not significant (F = 0.02, *p* = 0.89, η2 = 0.000). Participants exposed to information on journalist-candidates running for all major parties reported slightly lower average levels of trust in politicians (2.11, s.d. = 2.14), but, again, the relationship is not significant (ANOVA F = 0.26, *p* = 0.9, η2 = 0.001). Hence, the null hypothesis corresponding to H3b cannot be rejected.

**Figure A3 – Relationship between Exposure to Information on Journalist-Candidates and Trust in Politicians**

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Note: the figure shows means with standard errors.

The results of these additional analyses suggest that journalist-candidates may have less severe implications for the professional credibility of both politicians and journalists than they have for broader populist attitudes. However, the fact that I could not control for the pre-treatment values of trust in journalists and politicians, unlike in the analyses reported in the manuscript, suggests greater caution is needed in interpreting these null findings.

# Appendix 7 – Analysis of the Relationship Between the Dependent Variables and the Area of Residence and Population Size among Participants in the Control Group

The question asked to the control group focused on “the main parties’ candidates for the House and Senate” in the constituency where respondents resided. Because parliamentary candidates in local constituencies varied depending on where participants lived, it is conceivable that thinking about local candidates may have elicited different reactions among control group participants residing in different areas. To explore whether this is the case, I assess the correlation between the dependent variables and the geographic area and urban density of participants’ residency.

The variable measuring region of residence divides participants into five areas, based on a standard classification typically employed in Italian electoral studies: North East, North West, Center, South, and Islands. The variable measuring population size differentiates between four categories: less than 10,000 residents; between 10,000 and 30,000; between 30,000 and 100,000; more than 100,000. These data were collected unobtrusively by the company that conducted the survey.

Below I provide the results of ANOVAs between these two variables and the dependent variables discussed in the manuscript among the control group (*N*=306).

*Dependent variable: Additive index of populism*

* Independent variable: Area of residence, F = 0.879, *p* = 0.477
* Independent variable: Population size, F = 0.846, *p* = 0.47

*Dependent variable: “Politicians in Parliament must follow the will of the people”*

* Independent variable: Area of residence, F = 0.234, *p* = 0.919
* Independent variable: Population size, F = 2.158, *p* = 0.093

*Dependent variable: “I would rather be represented by an ordinary person than by a career politician”*

* Independent variable: Area of residence, F = 1.543, *p* = 0.19
* Independent variable: Population size, F = 0.519, *p* = 0.669

*Dependent variable: “Journalists are too close to powerful groups to inform ordinary people”*

* Independent variable: Area of residence, F = 0.641, *p* = 0.634
* Independent variable: Population size, F = 0.691, *p* = 0.558

*Dependent variable: Probability to vote for PD*

* Independent variable: Area of residence, F = 1.566, *p* = 0.184
* Independent variable: Population size, F = 0.469, *p* = 0.704

*Dependent variable: Probability to vote for FI*

* Independent variable: Area of residence, F = 0.463, *p* = 0.763
* Independent variable: Population size, F = 3.654, *p* = 0.013

*Dependent variable: Probability to vote for M5S*

* Independent variable: Area of residence, F = 4.722, *p* = 0.001
* Independent variable: Population size, F = 1.042, *p* = 0.374

All the analyses but two show no significant relationship between the geographic area or population size of respondents’ residence and their responses to the questions measuring populist attitudes and probability to vote for the parties that fielded journalist-candidates.

The only significant associations are between a) population size and the probability to vote for Forza Italia and b) area of residence and the probability to vote for the Five Star Movement. With respect to the former, a Tukey test reveals that the only significant difference is that between participants residing in areas with more than 100,000 inhabitants and those residing in areas with between 10,000-30,000 inhabitants (Δ = 1.49, *p* = 0.02). All the other differences are not significant at conventional levels. With respect to the latter, a Tukey test reveals significant differences between participants residing in the North East and the Islands (Δ = 2.67, *p* = 0.001) and between those residing in the North East and the Center (Δ = 2.04, *p* = 0.025). All the other differences are not significant at conventional levels.

These additional analyses suggest that the fact that the question showed to the control group focused on the local candidates in their constituencies elicited very similar responses regardless of where participants lived, and therefore that the control group provides a valid and reliable baseline for these measures—particularly for populism, but also for probability to vote for PD and, to a large degree, for FI and M5S as well.

# Appendix 8 – Replication Data and Code

Replication data and code in R are available at <https://osf.io/86f3s/?view_only=72ba9caad6b542bdb5024031a7b38c09>