

Political Responsiveness to Conflict Victims: Evidence from a Countrywide Audit Experiment in Colombia

Research background and purpose

1. Government response to victims of the conflict

The study focuses on how politicians respond to victims' requests for help after the conflict is over.

2. Response rate analysis of local governments

The response rate of the government was calculated by comparing the responses to the request emails sent by conflict victims and non-conflict victims.

3. A Study on the Difference of Government Response

The study found that local officials had different response rates, friendliness and effectiveness for requests from different identities (conflict victims/non-conflict victims).

And local officials are more likely to respond to requests for help from victims than from ordinary citizens and return friendlier and more helpful responses.

Detailed explanation of the original study

Main issues:

1. Do conflict victims have equal access to institutions and social services?

Are politicians less likely to be responsive to internally displaced individuals?

2. Does the identity of the victim's perpetrator influence whether politicians facilitate access to social services?

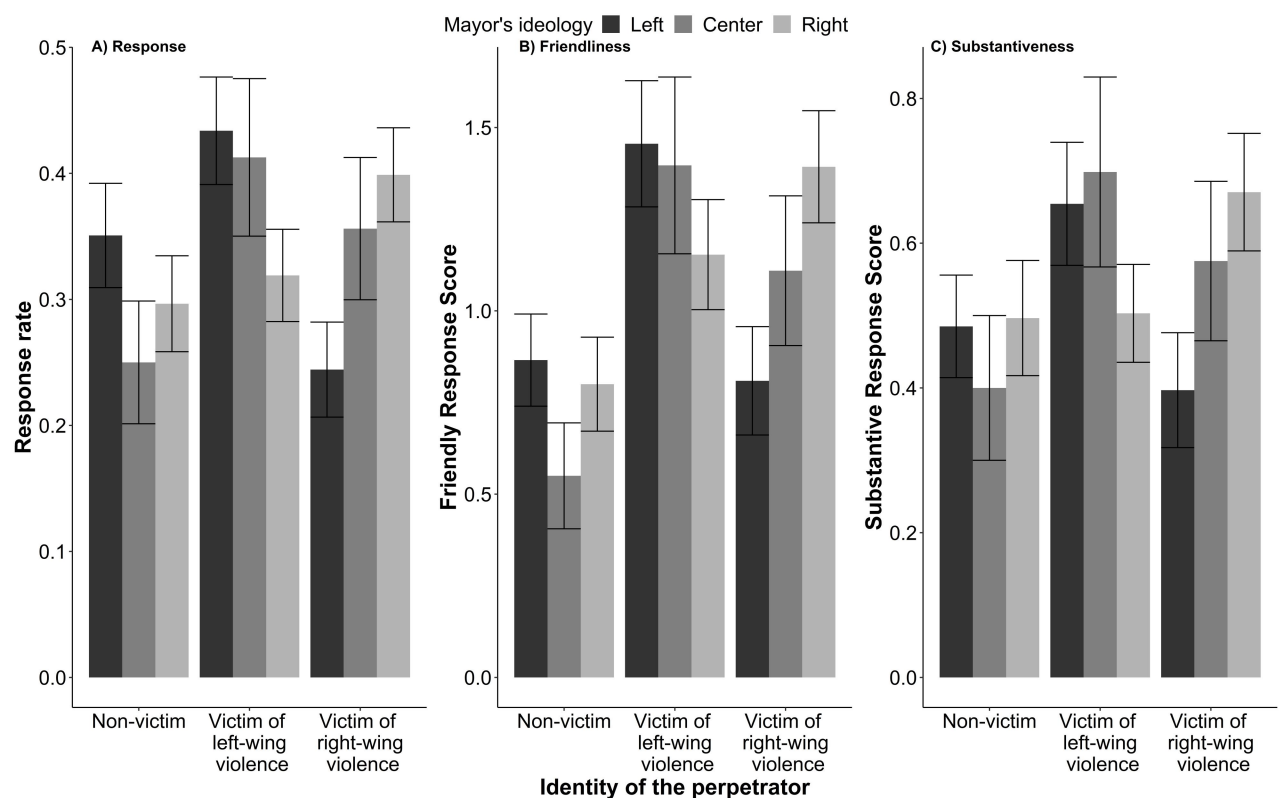
3. Do the ideological leanings of the party in power affect responsiveness toward victims?

The experiment contacted every local authority in the 32 departamentos in Colombia, in total, 1,098 Alcaldías. Act as a conflict victim/non-conflict victim, send an email seeking employment/housing assistance to the local government, and make statistics on the government's response rate, friendliness and effectiveness of the reply.

Measuring Responsiveness:

The friendliness of a response was measured as the sum of four independent indicators: name use (0-1), warm greetings (0-1), offer to follow-up (0-1), and a qualitative indicator of friendliness (0-3). Measured helpful responses based on a qualitative assessment of whether the response included useful and meaningful information on a 0-4 scale

Replication



Left-wing governments respond more and more kindly to victims of left-wing violence. Right-wing governments respond more to victims of right-wing violence, and their responses are kinder and more helpful.

The Interaction Effects of Mayor' s Ideology and the Identity of the Perpetrator									
<i>Dependent variable:</i>									
	response			friendliness			substantive		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
victim_of_left	0.190***	0.173***	0.147**	0.647***	0.567**	0.513**	0.257**	0.212*	0.170
	(0.058)	(0.056)	(0.059)	(0.233)	(0.227)	(0.239)	(0.119)	(0.116)	(0.120)
center	0.112	0.094	0.102	0.300	0.220	0.249	0.178	0.136	0.115
	(0.070)	(0.068)	(0.070)	(0.278)	(0.275)	(0.284)	(0.142)	(0.140)	(0.142)
right	0.155***	0.142***	0.156***	0.584***	0.517**	0.578**	0.274**	0.250**	0.263**
	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.056)	(0.220)	(0.218)	(0.229)	(0.112)	(0.111)	(0.115)
victim_of_left:center	-0.133	-0.079	-0.081	-0.359	-0.189	-0.243	-0.134	-0.015	-0.023
	(0.101)	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.402)	(0.391)	(0.401)	(0.205)	(0.199)	(0.201)
victim_of_left:right	-0.269***	-0.270***	-0.248***	-0.886***	-0.850***	-0.822***	-0.425***	-0.406***	-0.358**
	(0.078)	(0.075)	(0.077)	(0.312)	(0.304)	(0.316)	(0.159)	(0.155)	(0.158)
Constant	0.244***	0.125	0.871	0.809***	0.232	2.349	0.397***	0.208	2.410*
	(0.042)	(0.455)	(0.625)	(0.166)	(1.837)	(2.548)	(0.085)	(0.934)	(1.277)
Observations	739	739	698	739	739	698	739	739	698

My Contribution

In the original study, the government's more friendly and effective responses to help seekers from other factions did not mean that they actually expressed more goodwill, but simply because they responded to more texts. According to the original study's evaluation criteria for the friendliness and helpfulness of reply content, replies with more words tend to show more kindness and helpfulness.

First, test the correlation coefficient between $\log(\text{words_response}+1)$ and friendliness /substantive. There is a significant positive correlation between the two groups.

After introducing the word number $\log(\text{words_response}+1)$ as a control variable, the

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1 #Table K.5. Length of Responses
2
3 #column 1
4 summary(h1_nocontrols_length <- lm(log(words_responses+1) ~
5   victim_conflict, data = audit))
6
7 #column 2
8 summary(h1_allmanip_fe_length <- lm(log(words_responses+1) ~
9   victim_conflict + gender_female + vote_registration +
10   employment_request + as.factor(depto), data = audit))
11
12 #column 3
13 summary(h1_allmanip_fe_controls_length <- lm(log(
14   words_responses+1) ~ victim_conflict + gender_female +
15   vote_registration + employment_request + as.factor(depto) +
16   tpobc_DESC + tpobc_ELN + tpobc_FARC + tpobc_AUC +
17   lotes_coca + gini + nbi + I(pobl_tot/1000000) + ing_propios +
18   iga_total + ate_ciudadano +
19   desemp_fisc + inv_gruposvunera +
20   center + right + pvotes, data = audit))
21
22 #column 4
23 summary(h2_nocontrols_length <- lm(log(words_responses+1) ~
24   idp_status, data = audit[audit$idp_status == 1 |
25   audit$victim_conflict == 0,]))
26
27 #column 5
28 summary(h2_allmanip_fe_length <- lm(log(words_responses+1) ~
29   idp_status + gender_female + vote_registration +
30   employment_request + as.factor(depto), data = audit[
31   audit$idp_status == 1 | audit$victim_conflict == 0,]))
32
33 #column 6
34 summary(h2_allmanip_fe_controls_length <- lm(log(
35   words_responses+1) ~ idp_status + gender_female +
36   vote_registration + employment_request + as.factor(depto) +
37   tpobc_DESC + tpobc_ELN + tpobc_FARC + tpobc_AUC +
38   lotes_coca + gini + nbi + I(pobl_tot/1000000) + ing_propios +
39   iga_total + ate_ciudadano +
40   desemp_fisc + inv_gruposvunera +
41   center + right + pvotes, data = audit[audit$idp_status == 1 |
42   audit$victim_conflict == 0,]))
43
44

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regression results are as follows. It can be found that $\log(\text{words_responses} + 1)$ in the regression is still significantly related to friendliness and substantive, but victim_of_left and $\text{victim_of_left:right}$ are no longer significantly related to friendliness and substantive. In other words, under the condition of controlling the number of words, the effect found in the original study no longer exists.

The Interaction Effects of Mayor' s Ideology and the Identity of the Perpetrator

<i>Dependent variable:</i>						
	substantive			friendliness		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
victim_of_left	-0.053	-0.065	-0.058	0.026	0.012	0.047
	(0.058)	(0.059)	(0.062)	(0.108)	(0.109)	(0.116)
center	-0.019	-0.031	-0.066	-0.094	-0.115	-0.119
	(0.069)	(0.071)	(0.074)	(0.128)	(0.132)	(0.137)
$\log(\text{words_responses} + 1)$	0.387***	0.387***	0.387***	0.774***	0.778***	0.791***
	(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.015)	(0.016)	(0.017)
right	-0.011	-0.008	-0.019	0.015	-0.002	0.002

	(0.055)	(0.057)	(0.060)	(0.102)	(0.105)	(0.111)
victim_of_left:center	0.031	0.049	0.054	-0.029	-0.059	-0.086
	(0.100)	(0.101)	(0.104)	(0.185)	(0.187)	(0.194)
victim_of_left:right	0.009	0.023	0.027	-0.019	0.011	-0.037
	(0.078)	(0.079)	(0.083)	(0.144)	(0.147)	(0.154)
Constant	-0.005	-0.005	0.424	0.005	-0.195	-1.705
	(0.042)	(0.476)	(0.663)	(0.078)	(0.879)	(1.235)

The original study states: left-leaning elected officials were more likely to respond to victims of left-wing armed groups in contrast to victims of the state or paramilitary groups. At the same time, right-leaning elected officials were more likely to respond to state or paramilitary victims, as opposed to victims of left-wing violence.

However, upon further examination, this conclusion does not appear to be tenable. In my opinion, the government only provided more word-length replies to those seeking help from other factions, but did not provide more friendliness and help. Since the original article's evaluation criteria for the friendliness and usefulness of the reply content were inappropriate, the original study mistakenly considered the higher friendliness and effectiveness scores resulting from an increase in the number of words to be objective differences caused by the government's attitude.

Extension

This repeated study cannot effectively deny the correctness of the original research hypothesis. In order to further analyze whether the ideological tendency of the ruling party affects responsiveness to victims, more advanced and scientific methods can

be used to evaluate the friendliness and helpfulness scores in text messages. In particular, it is necessary to control the correlation between scores and text length. Current AI technology may be able to provide better help in this regard.