MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

The portrayal of domestic violence in newspapers of Rio de Janeiro: a framing analysis

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science (MSc)

Wien, 2020 / Vienna 2020

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

In 2018 figures from the "Violence Monitor", a study made by the online portal G1 in partnership with the University of Sao Paulo and the Brazilian Forum of Public Security, showed that a total of 4.254 women were murdered in Brazil that year. Even though this number represents a reduction of 6.7% in comparison to 2017, the total number of murders classified as "femicides" grew by 12%, totalizing 1.173 cases. According to the data collected by the study, one woman is killed every two hours in the country (Velasco et al., 2019). The definition of the term "femicide" was first created in 1976 by the American feminist Diana H. Russel, who conceptualizes the word as the killing of women by men because they are female (Russel, 2011). Other definitions can be found in the literature, however, the central idea of all these designations is the homicide with intrinsic gender motives (Weil et al., 2018). Brazil occupies the fifth position among 83 countries concerning homicide rate for women, according to data from the World Health Organization (Christofaro, 2018).

This present study explores not only femicide, but the portrayal of domestic violence (DV) in general in the newspapers of Rio de Janeiro, including any acts as physical abuse up to the murder of females. Bearing in mind the relevance of such social problems within the Brazilian society, scrutinizing how the topic is dealt with in the media is essential since as Meyers (1994, 1997) argues, it is mainly the media who disseminate harmful myths and stereotypes about victims of violence against women. The primary focus of the present study is to observe news coverage about domestic violence and the chosen frames by Brazilian journalists, as frames might influence how the public sees the world, its problems and the resolutions to those problems (Bullock and Cubert, 2002).

Building on the existent and vast literature about how global media report on domestic violence, this research adds primarily to the limited amount of up to date and

specific studies within the scenario in Brazil, specifically drawing upon Entman's (1993) clear definition of frames. Moreover, this study contributes to the field as it takes a holistic approach to investigate the way the report is made through images and text, therefore looking into the main features of news articles. Unlike many studies, it also analyzes all types of violence against women by their intimate partners and not only, for example, rape or femicide, focusing on building an integrated and comprehensive examination of the issue of domestic violence.

News articles from 2019 and 2020 reporting on the issue were analyzed in a quantified qualitative content analysis, taken from the two main newspapers of Rio de Janeiro: "O Globo" and "Meia Hora". The pattern of coverage was examined in order to report on how Brazilian journalists are constructing the narrative about DV when it comes to the language used, the sources and images chosen, and if any types of direct or indirect victim blaming tactics were found – these specific tactics are discussed in the following section of this paper. Results from previous studies conducted in other countries have been somewhat similar among each other regarding these characteristics, even though journalistic practices may be highly determined by organizational orientation and journalistic cultures.

Domestic violence

The definition of domestic violence found in previous studies and adopted by the present research includes not only the actual act of physical violence, but also the threat or act of psychological and/or emotional abuse. By definition, the perpetrator is part of the victim's domestic environment, and they can be, for example, a current or previous intimate partner, a member of the family, a friend or an acquaintance. The term is based on the relationship between perpetrator and victim, and whether they both live together or not is not necessarily taken into account (Flury et al., 2010).

In Brazil, it was only in 1980 that a discussion about the problem of DV happening in the country began. Feminist demonstrations at the time were protesting against the murderer of women by their partners and the subsequent exoneration of the assassins by the Brazilian courts. Back then, discharges were based on the argument of "self-defense of honor" - a strategy used by the Defensor as a way to justify the crime, placing the guilt on the behavior of the victim. In 1985, the first women's police precinct was created, a department specialized in violence against females. Another key moment was the conception of the law 11.340 in 2006, known as "Lei Maria da Penha" (Maria da Penha's Law), which has the aim of reducing domestic violence in the country by criminalizing it (Santos, 2010). However, the number of femicide in the country has been growing exponentially over the years as the latest report from the study *"Mapa da Violência"* (Violence Map) about homicide of women indicates, which shows that female killings increased by 21% during the period of 2003 until 2013 (Waiselfisz, 2015).

The coverage of domestic violence in the media is the object of analysis of numerous authors (e.g., Cullen et al., 2019; Gillespie et al., 2013; Sutherland et al., 2019; Carll, 2003), and the patterns of reporting identified are somewhat similar within the studies. Sutherland et al. (2016), for example, reviewed 48 primary studies on the topic and found five key themes of how the media misrepresent the realities of women's experience of violence committed against them, which are: the lack of social context, sensationalism, misrepresentations, victim blaming, and the choice to select authorities (e.g., the police) as their main source of information, consequently omitting the victim's own voices. Researchers argue that a way to improve this incomplete and misleading coverage of DV would be to include information, sources and words that place the incident within the wider social context, in order to more truthfully represent the victim's experience (Bullock & Cubert, 2002). To achieve that and modify the pattern which reporting is being currently made worldwide, Sutherland et al.

(2016) listed 11 practical guidelines produced by organizations from several countries with the aim to encourage a responsible, sensitive and ethical news coverage on domestic violence. All of them are in English and available publicly for journalists across the world access information regarding how to consciously report on DV. The list includes guidelines from organizations in Australia, United Kingdom, United States, Canada, New Zealand, and from the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

Frame analysis

One of the main analytical approaches on studies regarding the representation of domestic violence in the media is frame analysis (Sutherland, 2016). The term dates back to 1974, when Goffman (1974) defined "frame" as how the explanation of a certain condition is constructed in agreement with the values of a group. Framing has been used quite often to look into journalistic practices in general, since as Entman (1993) argues, the act of framing highlights some pieces of reality while obfuscating others, which might result in different reactions from the audience. The manner in which this is done is by selecting "(…) some aspects of a perceived reality and [making] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). This type of analysis usually explores not only messages, but also pictures, stereotypes, metaphors, and actors (Matthes, 2009).

Gitlin (1980) defines frames as a process of "selection, emphasis, and exclusion" (Gitlin, 1980, p.7), which enables journalists to work on large quantities of information rapidly and bundle the material for effective relay to the audience. However, frames can be identified not only among journalists but also in newsrooms, the receivers of the messages

being transmitted, and also amid political, cultural, and economical groups or associations (Scheufele, 2006).

Empirical research shows that journalists employ framing practices that can be divided into two categories that create a continuum: frame sending and frame setting. Frame setting suggests that the professionals frame their work in line with their own individual interpretations. Frame sending, on the other hand, indicates the practice of transmitting the frames as represented by different public actors (Brüggemann, 2014).

According to Brüggemann (2014), the most expected practice among journalists is a mixture of frame sending and frame setting. No absolute frame sending is likely to happen, since the journalistic production procedure will select and shorten statements of interviewees and consequently decide which aspects of "reality" should be transmitted to the public, making them more prominent for the audience. As scholars argue, that is one of the reasons why even the most "neutral" and "objective" journalism also contribute to the composition of reality. Frame setting, the other extreme of the continuum, is also unlikely to happen entirely since journalism does not comprise the individuals' decision-making only, but it is a collective process of sense-making in the newsroom, and between the journalists and their sources as well (Brüggemann, 2014).

As the discussion about the importance and effects of framing goes on among scholars, some of them investigated the duration such effects may have on the audience. Through an online survey experiment, Lecheler & de Vreese (2011) tested the magnitude of influence of a frame immediately after exposure and also at three different time intervals - after one day, one week and two weeks – moderated by political knowledge. Results found that the framing influence persisted past the initial exposure, and no immediate moderating effect of political knowledge was found. Nonetheless, the participants with moderate levels

of political knowledge presented more steady framing effects than the participants with low or high levels.

Sources and victim blaming tactics

A journalist's choice of sources when covering stories about domestic violence is also one of the key factors when analyzing how the media reports about the issue. As Meyers (1997) argues, journalists often perceive the police as a neutral source and tend not to get information from those holding contrasting views. However, the police may not be neutral, and their purposes may be different from the needs of the media, the public, or the victims and their families. Results from a quantitative content analysis made by Bullock & Cubert (2002) within the context of the United States, shows that the newspapers in Washington State often used a police frame and trusted mostly on official sources of information. The authors claim that this practice can dehumanize the crime when it sheds light on things as what, when, and how the misconduct happened, instead of hearing information from people who were close to the victim and criminal. Another quantitative content analysis study that examined the type of sources chosen for DV articles found that defense attorneys often claimed that the victim was abusive to the offender even when there were records of misconduct by the man against the victim documented by the police, or that in the past she had caused him a great amount of stress from several behaviors (Taylor, 2009).

Consequently, a recurrent aspect of domestic violence reporting is the tendency of the media to portray the victims as somewhat responsible for the crime committed against them. Taylor (2009) analyzed 292 articles from one North American newspaper, from 1995 to 2000, and found victim blaming actions in all the articles examined, with either a direct or indirect type of blame-approach written by the journalist. The present study intends to analyze the articles based on the same definition of direct and indirect victim blaming

techniques, which are summarized in Figure 1. One interesting finding from the study

conducted by Taylor (2009) is the fact that within the sample of articles analyzed, female-

perpetrated episodes had very little victim blame when compared to the stories in which

women were the victims.

Direct victim blame tactics
   Negative language used to describe the victim.
   Highlighting the victim's choice not to report past incidences as contributing to her murder.
   Highlighting the victim's decision not to prosecute previous incidences as contributing to her murder.
   Highlighting her actions with other men, such as actual and suspected infidelity while married, being
     seen with another man, being found with another man when killed, and being the mistress of the killer.
Indirect victim blame tactics
   Positive, sympathetic language used to describe the perpetrator.
   Highlighting the perpetrator's mental, physical, and emotional problems.
   Discussing the couple's financial despair.
   Highlighting the victim's mental or physical problems.
   Describing domestic violence in terms which assign equal blame to both the victim and perpetrator.

Figure 1. Direct and Indirect victim blaming tactics. Reprinted from "Slain and Slandered. A Content Analysis of the Portrayal of Femicide in Crime News" by R. Taylor, 2009, *Homicide Studies, Volume 13*, page 34.

According to Taylor (2009), the direct tactic comprises using negative language to

describe the victim, which can be found in both adjectives and in certain comportments

accredited to the victim, as well as blaming the victim for not reporting to the police previous

incidents and/or choosing not to cooperate with the prosecution in past offenses, and pointing

to the fact that the woman had an affair or there was a suspicion of a relation with other men.

The indirect tactics found in the analysis include a more sympathetic type of language to

describe the perpetrator and his behaviors, mentioning the mental, physical, and emotional

state of the criminal and victim, revealing the couple's financial problems and reporting on

the issue in a way to assign equal blame to both parties involved (Taylor 2009).

In a similar study conducted by Richards et al. (2011) in the context of femicide in the

state of North Carolina in the United States, an additional and relevant characteristic was

found and highlighted, which adds to the range of direct types of victim blaming – a reference to the victim's choice to not leave an abusive relation. A significant number of news articles analyzed for the study advocated that if the victim would have taken any actions against the perpetrator, the crime could have never happened. This type of judgment was extracted from sources such as police officers, friends, or family.

The choice of words also plays an important role in news coverage about domestic violence and its frames. Sutherland et al. (2016) found that there is a tendency to use sensational and exceptional language, being one of the key themes of how the media misrepresent the realities of victims of domestic violence, as mentioned before in this same section. The language chosen can be used with the intention to, for example, "… titillate, shock, fascinate, amuse or entertain, as well as to obfuscate or undermine the true nature of the crime" (Sutherland et al., 2016, p. 7). Some vocabulary selections may have the effect of masking the violence intrinsic to such crimes, as for example, referring to a rape crime as a "sex attack". Furthermore, in the book written by Benedict (1992), she compares how different the language to describe women is from the language to portray men. In her analysis of reports of violence against women, she exposed how sexual and despising words are often used to describe females, but never males. She also points out how women are frequently defined in the media based on their relationship to their male partners, instead of as unique individuals.

Another pattern of coverage identified by previous research is the lack of social context when domestic violence is discussed (Sutherland et al., 2016; Taylor, 2009; Cullen, 2019, Richards et al., 2011). According to Sutherland et al. (2016), journalists have the tendency to report violent cases as isolated or episodic events, ignoring the whole social context in which domestic violence is inserted (Sutherland et al., 2016). According to Cullen (2019), such factual focus might result in overlooking the role domestic violence had in the

incident, and she points out a certain unwillingness among journalists to classify a crime as domestic violence, except if the police frames the misconduct as such originally.

Images

Last but not least, another key element of investigation among scholars is how the media chooses to portray violence through images. This element is not recurrent in most of the specific studies about the portrayal of domestic violence in the media, however, the present research analyzes it as well taking into consideration that graphic images about violence may have an effect in the audience's response. Results from the study conducted by Höijer (2004) indicate that pictures of suffering may make the audience morally compassionate and mobilize compassion as well, being especially more appealing to the female audience. However, according to the author, a different reaction the audience may have is not being emotionally moved by such pictures, an attitude perceived to be more common among the male audience – which, according to the author, can be partly explained by societal ideals of manliness. Additionally, compassion fatigue can also be considered as another reason for this indifference.

The term "compassion fatigue" is found to be present not only in the media context, but also in health-related topics. For example, a study found how nurses may suffer from compassion fatigue after dealing on a daily basis with other peoples' suffering (Neville, 2013). From a communication perspective, the expression can be defined as the inability to feel empathy for others that are in delicate situations due to the overexposure of violent images by the media (Moeller, 2002). This effect on the audience is considered relevant since as Hanusch (2010) argues, images are sometimes thought to be capable of prompting people into action.

However, there is certainly criticism related to the idea of compassion fatigue caused by the media when reporting violent and graphic images. Hanusch (2010) reviews these ideas and arguments in the book "Representing Death in the News", and while the author acknowledges that the media may cause a certain empathic distress in the audience, he also analyzes how in some cases shocking images can lead to an interest for the topic. As the scholar points out, "It is therefore quite likely that images, even graphic ones, can have at least some potential to stir public emotions, which in turn may or may not engender change in government policy" (Hanusch, 2010, p. 115).

In line with this argument, a study conducted by Grizzard et al. (2017) about violent coverage in the context of terrorism and the display of a mass execution guided by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), proposed to challenge the common wisdom that graphic images in the news may cause the audience to have antisocial attitudes. The authors argue that, according to their results, violent pictures result in superior moral sympathy and a greater eagerness to discontinue terrorist groups, when compared to more subtle graphic images of violence in the news.

Research questions

In conclusion, this review of the literature recognizes several journalistic practices when reporting about domestic violence, characteristics which were not fully investigated in the context of the media in a Latin American country but mostly in a Western setting. Therefore, aspiring to strengthen the body of knowledge concerning how journalists report on domestic violence in the region of Rio de Janeiro, this present study intends to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1. What frames can be extracted from the content analysis regarding how

domestic violence is portrayed in the selected newspapers?

RQ 2. To what degree did the articles display victim blaming tactics?

RQ 3. What type of sources were mainly chosen by the journalists?

RQ 4. What type of images were used in the articles analyzed?

Method

To examine the research questions, a quantified qualitative content analysis was

conducted, which looked into frame elements of news articles about domestic violence from

the two most read newspapers in Rio de Janeiro: "O Globo" and "Meia Hora". As

Krippendorff (1989) argues, content analysis is possibly one of the most important research

methods within social sciences, since it aims to extract the meanings the receiver of a specific

message obtains from it. Content analysis also provides flexibility to the designated research

design (Harwood & Garry, 2003), and it is more than a method to simply describe the data

collected (Cavanagh, 1997), since it contains context, elusive meanings and intentions

(Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

A mixed qualitative inductive and deductive content analysis was applied to 203 news

articles about domestic violence dated within a range of 18 months, from January 2019 until

June 2020. Such time span was chosen with the intention to gather an overview of the most

current features of coverage made by the selected newspapers. A qualitative analysis was

preferred as Reese (2007) argues, this approach does not classify discourses into precise

containers, but apprehends the connotations that can be found in the text. According to Wood

(2004), not all forms of communication can be looked into quantitatively since it lacks the

interpretation of how people make sense of what is being conveyed.

The articles were retrieved from the websites of the newspapers directly by using the following keywords in the search function (in Portuguese): "femicide" (feminicídio), "domestic violence" (violência doméstica), "boyfriend kills" (namorado mata), "husband kills" (marido mata), "ex-husband kills" (ex-marido mata), "woman dead" (mulher morta), "burned alive" (queimada viva), "woman tortured" (mulher torturada), "woman raped" (mulher estuprada), "wife beaten" (mulher espancada), "family violence" (família violência), and "man arrested" (homem preso).

Operationalization

The present study adopts definitions of key terms defined by other authors and used by Taylor (2009), which are the following:

Femicide. The definition offered by Dawson and Gartner (1998) will be used: "The killing of women by a male intimate partner" (p. 383).

Perpetrator. Refers to those persons who have committed the crime. In this analysis, it will refer to the male who has killed his female intimate partner.

Intimate partner. The definition for intimate partner offered by Dawson and Gartner (1998) will be used as well: "current or formal legal spouses, common-law partners, and boyfriends" (p. 383). (Taylor, 2009, p. 29)

Frame elements

The codebook for the analysis was partially built with the guidance of Entman's (1993) definition of framing, previously discussed in the literature review section of the present study. As mentioned, the definition presents four important aspects that can be selected and thus made more salient in a communication setting: "promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation

for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). As Matthes and Kohring (2008) explain, these elements can be seen as variables, and each one of them may have numerous categories in a content analysis:

> A problem definition can consist of an issue and relevant actors that discuss the problem. A causal interpretation is an attribution of failure or success regarding a specific outcome. An evaluation can be positive, negative, or neutral and can refer to different objects. Finally, a treatment recommendation can include a call for or against a certain action. (p. 264)

The variables linked to each of the aforementioned frame elements originated in parts from Matthes and Kohring's study (2008) but were also extracted from the findings from Taylor (2009) concerning the different types of victim blaming, associated to the "causal attribution" frame element. The remaining variables and categories were derived from a qualitative inductive process of analyzing 10% (n = 20) of the entire sample of articles collected. Table 1 lists the four frame elements as described by Entman (1993) together with the equivalent variables generated for this study.

The element "problem definition" identified the central topics and actors addressed or that discuss the problem, which is how Matthes and Kohring (2008) also proceeded with the analysis. Nevertheless, the elements "treatment recommendation" and "moral evaluation" were operationalized differently given that the present study's subject (domestic violence) differs tremendously from the one conducted by the previously mentioned authors (biotechnology). In their study, the first element was associated to negative and positive judgments of the topic biotechnology itself. In the present study, it is clear that no article would display a positive inference about domestic violence, therefore this element was literally interpreted given the authors definition. Consequently "a call for an action" was operationalized as if the journalists brought to the public any type of solution to the problem

presented in the article or not (e.g., what the reader should do in case she's a victim of domestic violence or knows someone who is). Some of the actions described in the articles of the sample were official places for reporting and/or seek shelter or which phone number to call in case of an abusive relationship. Another variable connected to the same frame element is the "call against an action", referring to the presence or not of any sign of the journalist's own disapproval of the topic discussed.

The frame element "moral evaluation" did not exactly follow Matthes and Kohring (2008) operationalization as well. In the current study, the variables added to this element refer to the evaluation of the problem of domestic violence as a whole, and not the identified actors as the aforementioned authors did. The variables concerning the presence of statistics of DV followed by a discussion (which demonstrates whether the journalist brings the topic within a broader social context), the culmination of past events (investigating if the author of the article discusses previous types of abuse before the act reported) and the occurrence of arguments related to false accusations of domestic violence were included.

Table 1. Frame elements and variables identified according to Entman's (1993) definition

Frame element	Variables
Problem definition	Topic: Sexual violence
	Topic: Battering
	Topic: Femicide
	Topic: Psychological violence
	Actor: Wife/ex-wife/girlfriend/intimate partner (victim)
	Actor: Husband/ex-husband/boyfriend/intimate partner (perpetrator)
	Actor: Police
	Actor: Family/friends of the victim
	Actor: Family/friends of the perpetrator
	Actor: Media
	Actor: Victim
	Actor: Perpetrator
	Sub-actor: Same as *"Actor"* variable
Moral evaluation	Societal effects: Statistics of domestic violence
	Societal effects: Culmination of past events
	Risks: False accusations
Causal attribution	Responsibility attribution: Victim – Direct Victim Blaming
	Negative language to describe the victim
	Victim did not report past incidents
	Victim did not prosecute past incidents
	Victim's actions with other men
	Victim did not leave an abusive setting
	Responsibility attribution: Victim – Indirect Victim Blaming
	Positive language to describe the perpetrator
	Perpetrator's mental/emotional problems
	Feature the couple's financial problems
	Feature the victim's mental/emotional problems
	Assign equal blame to victim and perpetrator
	Responsibility attribution: Perpetrator
Treatment recommendation	Solution: Call for an action
	Solution: Call against an action

Pretest and analysis

The pretest of the developed codebook (see *Appendix A*) was done with a subsample of 10% of the total number of selected articles (n = 20), which were randomly selected with the "RANDBETWEEN" function from the software Microsoft Excel and were then coded by two coders – the researcher herself and a colleague not associated to the study and who is also a native Portuguese speaker, therefore having full comprehension of the material being coded. Training was conducted in which the codebook was entirely explained and discussed, and one random article was coded together as a model. After the subsample was completely coded by the two coders, the Krippendorff's alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) was calculated in order to evaluate the inter-coder reliability and a strong level of agreement was identified with an alpha (α) value of α = .8366. According to Krippendorff (2018), inter-coder agreement is seen as reliable when the α value is $\geq$ .80.

After checking the reliability agreement, the entire sample of articles was coded by the researcher according to the coding scheme. Every article was read in order to identify attributes of domestic violence frames previously set by the literature, as well as the sources of information, language used, and the context. As the codebook of the present study is divided into several variables that can only constitute a frame once systematically grouped together, the frames themselves were not identified at the moment of the coding (e.g., the victim blaming frame is formed by 11 distinct variables related to several traits of blaming reporting, therefore the frame could only be identified once the final results were computed).

Results

Research question 1 asked what frames can be identified within the sample of articles, and the ones recognized are the following: the "police", the "neutral" and the "isolated event" frames. The first frame that emerged from the data relates to the sources selected to discuss

the event, and the police or other types of law enforcement institutions were the preferred ones in more than half (52%) of the articles sampled. A mixture of police and also people close to the victim and/or perpetrator as sources was present in only 8% of the news stories, and 10% of the cases talked only to the friends or family of the involved parties, without quotes or information from the police. A DV specialist (such as a researcher or a professional of the field) was heard in about slightly more than 2% of the sample. In all cases the expert was the second source of information, the police being the first and most prominent within the article. The perpetrator was interviewed in 3 out of the 203 sampled articles, and the victim herself in 25.

The second frame found in the data collected is the neutral (the "matter-of-fact" frame). In only about 2% of the articles, a solution to the problem was proposed by the journalist – as, for instance, what to do, where to go or who to call in case the reader is or knows someone who is a victim of domestic violence. Additionally, merely 2% of the articles showed some type of judgement from the journalist, keeping the tone of the story strictly informative. Therefore, a neutral and straightforward description of the event was the prevailing type of reporting among the sample of articles.

The last and third frame established was the isolated event sort. Only about 10% of the articles discussed the history of abuse the victim went through, the majority of the journalists treated the occurrence as rather unforeseen. As it is also the case with the police type of frame, this last one also lacks overall context. A full discussion on this and the other two frames is made in detail in the discussion section of the present study later on.

Research question 2 examines specifically the presence or absence of types of victim blaming. Among the sample of articles analyzed, the results of the computed scores of the variables related to the two different types of victim blaming were somewhat distinctive than what the discussed literature proposes to be the case in several other countries. Direct and

indirect victim blaming tactics were not found in about 72% of the 203 articles analyzed, and 20% of the sample had one blaming tactic present. Only 7% of the data had two or more of these features.

When comparing the two different types of blaming tactics, the direct sort was shown to be more present than the indirect. At least one type of direct blaming tactic was found in 23% of the sample analyzed, whereas only 5% of the articles had one kind of indirect tactic. No article analyzed displayed more than one indirect victim blaming tactic.

Research question 3 investigates the type of sources chosen to talk about the episode of domestic violence. In line with previous research and as already mentioned in the first research question, the police, or any type of law enforcement institution or authority were the sources which the journalists rely on the most to comment on the event. Overall, in both newspapers, almost 52% of the articles analyzed had this type of authority as their source of information. However, the newspaper "Meia Hora" showed a considerably higher preference for such source, having 59% of its articles with information credited to the police alone, and only 8% of the articles of the newspaper had a mixture of an authority source and also relatives or people close to the victim of domestic violence. Table 2 includes the main sources identified for each of the newspapers.

Table 2. Sources found in each of the newspapers

Source	O Globo (*n*)	Meia Hora (*n*)
Police	44	61
People close to the victim/perpetrator	18	3
Victim	14	11
No source identified	11	5
Police and people close to the victim/perpetrator	8	9
DV specialist and police	2	3
Other	3	11

The fourth and last research question addresses the type of images used in the articles. It was found that the journalists of both newspapers select more non-graphic pictures of the victim of the incident in comparison to graphic ones, as 29% of the articles displayed an image of the victim (e.g., a normal photo taken from the victim's social media), while almost 11% had a picture with some level of graphic violence. Miscellaneous pictures of, e.g., police stations, crime scenes, or hospitals, were also found to be common among the articles analyzed, particularly in the newspaper Meia Hora, where they were present in 29% of the articles. Additionally, only 3% of the articles showed the act of violence itself in form of a video (e.g., from a security camera). The specific number for each type of image used per newspaper can be found in table 3.

Table 3. Types of images found in each of the newspapers

Image	O Globo (*n*)	Meia Hora (*n*)
Non-graphic victim's picture	33	26
Miscellaneous	20	30
Graphic victim's picture	13	9
Couple's picture	12	9
Perpetrator (not famous)	11	7
Perpetrator (famous)	6	9
No picture	4	8

Discussion

Given the significance of such a sensitive topic as that of domestic violence it is necessary to understand how the media portrays this societal issue, especially in underdeveloped and violent countries as Brazil. The results of the present content analysis in light of previous studies is discussed in this section.

The three frames found (police, neutral and isolated event) are in line with previous research. Bullock and Cubert (2002) found, for example, that the police frame is the most common type of source chosen in all the newspapers in the Washington State to report on DV. According to the authors, it desensitizes the crime as it does not bring information from the individual's perspective, it only stresses the "what, where, when, and how" of the misconduct. This reliance in official statements is not at all unanticipated, as there is evidence that the police is used as the primary source by journalists for news about all types of crimes, domestic violence included (Chermak, 1995; Naylor, 2001; Pritchard & Hughes, 1997). However, the delicate nature of the topic requires a greater attention for placing the issue as a societal matter and enabling those who were close to the victim to also have a voice, and additionally, specially shedding light on what DV specialists have to say. As per the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) Guidelines for Reporting on Violence Against Women, a suitable way to report on DV is to hear not only official law enforcement institutions but also the experts on the issue. Within the articles sampled, however, only 2% of the stories chose this type of approach. In other studies, the percentage of articles presenting domestic violence experts was also low - 6% in the research from Richards et al. (2011); Bullock and Cubert, (2002) found 4%; and Taylor (2009) only 1% of the sample. This type of practice, which focuses only on official statements, may place the public in a more distant position than if the reporting is done otherwise, creating the impression that DV occurrences are an extraordinary type of event, far from their reality. Nevertheless, it is necessary to stress also that very often this optimal kind of reporting cannot be achieved from the journalist's side as friends and family members frequently request not to be disturbed by the media, and domestic violence specialists may be hard to reach while in a tight work deadline.

The neutral, "matter of fact" frame was found to be present in the current study by the lack of solutions or discussions presented, the mere "hard news" type of approach. The journalists of the sampled newspapers seem to aim to comprehensively inform the public on the latest events without exhibiting any type of judgement or proposing solutions. However, the problematic side of this approach is a detachment from any veins of constructive or service type of journalism. Only 2% of the 203 articles sampled brought some sort of information regarding shelter or victim's hotlines, which is somewhat in line with other studies. Seely and Riffe (2020), for example, found that in the newspapers from Appalachia, in the United States, only 10% of the stories about domestic violence had this type of mobilizing information – a higher percentage but also not satisfactory. As mentioned previously, DV is a sensitive and complex social problem that is existent in the life of millions of women, thus a coverage that goes beyond the basic demand to just inform and also brings relevant and practical advice could mean the empowerment of citizens. As previous research points out, incorporating elements of constructive journalism may add to the welfare of individuals and of society as a whole (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). Additionally, providing such information could actively lead to victims seeking shelters or even the general public making donations to these centers (Lemert et al., 1977). According to the reporting guideline from the Australian Press Council, the correct incorporation of this sort of instruction is made by using neutral terminology, such as "If you are affected by this story and want to seek assistance, contact…" (Advisory Guideline on Family and Domestic Violence Reporting, 2016). The sampled articles that proposed some type of solution to the issue often mentioned the "DEAM" (Delegacia da Mulher), the specialized police precinct for domestic violence in Rio de Janeiro, a place where the victim does not need to report the crime to a male police officer.

The third and last frame identified is the portrayal of the incident as an isolated event. Such frame was also found in previous studies (e.g., Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Gillespie et al., 2013; Hernández, 2018), and it underlines once again the overall lack of context and "hard news" type of coverage in the Brazilian media. A possible interpretation for the strong appearance of this frame within the sample of articles analyzed is that this type of portrayal is a product of the two other frames found, the police and neutral frame. It is only safe to assume that by mainly selecting official sources of information who do not bring any type of judgment or solution to the incident but only the straightforward facts, the event will be conveyed as isolated, and therefore without any type of information regarding a possible history of abuse.

A startling result from the content analysis is the fact that a strong tendency for victim blaming was not identified in the majority of the articles sampled, which is not in line with most of the similar studies made about DV in other settings. Taylor (2009), for example, found direct or indirect tactics of victim blaming in all of the 292 articles analyzed, while in the present study 72% of the stories did not display neither direct nor indirect victim blaming. However, it is necessary to point out that most of the literature on the subject is not up to date – none of the findings are from the same timespan as this analysis, 2019 and 2020. Among the articles of the sample that had some type victim blaming, the victim's actions with other men was the most prominent sort. Jealousy was a feeling attributed to the intimate partner for explaining why the crime happened. Nevertheless, the biggest share of news articles did not try to justify why the incident occurred based on the victim's previous actions.

Therefore, it is possible to assume that conceivably this type of blaming treatment does not happen as frequently as it used to some years or decades ago. Reasonably, it could be the case that society, and therefore journalists as well, have been getting more knowledgeable on political and social issues such as DV and no longer place the blame on

the victim as much as they used to. Further research is clearly needed in order to verify this and whether it applies to victim blaming in the matter of domestic violence. As an alternative interpretation, victim blaming might indeed be heavily present within the Brazilian media, but only not in the chosen analyzed newspapers, O Globo and Meia Hora. Nevertheless, the two selected dailies were chosen considering that besides having the biggest audience in the region, they have very distinct editorial lines and targeted audiences. Consequently, the present study does not investigate how victims are portrayed in only one type of medium, but in two very disparate publications.

When investigating the sources of information chosen, besides the clear preference for law enforcement institutions a significant percentage of non-identified sources was found, and in one of the newspapers (O Globo) this source was even more prominent than the police and friends and/or relatives together within the same article. Not mentioning from where the information was received or taken from (or not even mentioning that the source wishes not to be identified) is not recommended in most cases. The handbook of journalism from Reuters, for example, advises reporters to source every statement in all stories, except if the information is a well-known fact or it is in the public domain. This practice could be logically explained by the fact that most news companies do establish several constrains to the professionals' work, such as a tight deadline and not enough journalists in the newsroom. Further investigation is needed in order to establish whether stories about domestic violence without named sources are received differently by the audience.

Lastly, the present study looked into the type of images chosen by the journalists to illustrate the stories. Evidence from other studies found that the Brazilian media tend to use high levels of graphic images in their coverage in the context of natural disasters (Hanusch, 2012), which is not the case when domestic violence is under investigation. A great deal of stories preferred to include miscellaneous pictures, such as police stations, police cars,

hospitals, etc. This practice can be another indicator that the journalists are simply not given enough time or resources to actively produce or search for other image options, which may force them to rely on databases.

Conclusion and limitations

This study has examined how the newspapers O Globo and Meia Hora portray domestic violence over an 18-month time span, identifying, with a holistic perspective, the most relevant frames and characteristics of report in the sampled 203 news articles. Taking into account that most of the related studies investigate the way Western media deals with the topic, the present research contributes to the understanding of how the issue is discussed in a Latin American society.

The three frames found in this research support previous studies, indicating that in Brazil there is also a tendency to mainly rely on the police as a source, present the topic in a neutral manner, and depict it as an isolated event. However, the characteristic that stands out the most is that the articles from the two selected newspapers did not show as much victim blaming as in other countries analyzed. This is an important finding as it might demonstrate that the Brazilian society is evolving in its treatment to victims of domestic abuse.

The present study has some empirical limitations, the threats to reliability and validity being the major ones. As a frame qualitative content analysis is a rather subjective process, researchers point out how this approach brings challenges in regard to data collection, the analysis itself and the interpretation and presentation of results (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002; D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Nevertheless, the present study aimed to rigorously detail its rationality and justification of its methods and findings in order to enhance transparency. Thorne (1997) explains that noteworthy factors for a good qualitative research involves

logical, detailed, and auditable analytical procedures, and such aspects were heavily taken into account throughout the development of this research.

Another limitation of the present study is that it could have taken advantage of the ability a frame analysis offers on building connections and intensifying the discussion about domestic violence coverage. As Matthes (2009) argues, one strength of conducting a frame-oriented research is the capability of connecting different areas of studies such as the analysis of the news content itself, but also the production and the effects afterwards. One approach to bridge these areas may be with a discussion on how the analyzed frames advance or the possible consequences they might have in the future. An alternative approach is to combine the analysis with other methods or data sources, as for example surveys, interviews with journalists, or factual data. Matthes claims that by looking into "[…] the origins and effects of frames, scholars could move beyond a mere description of media content, thus ultimately advancing the understanding of frames." (Matthes, 2009). Therefore, future research with additional methods and data is needed in order to establish such connections and a better understanding of frames and its effects.

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Appendix

Appendix A – Codebook

CODEBOOK

1 – Introduction (purpose of the study)

2 – Codebook

2.1 – General instructions

2.2 - Descriptive variables

2.3 – Framing element variables

2.3.1 – Problem definition

2.3.1.1 – Topic

2.3.1.2 – Actor

2.3.1.3 – Sub actor

2.3.2 – Moral evaluation

2.3.3 – Causal attribution

2.3.4 – Treatment recommendation

2.4 – Images

2.5 - Sources

1. Introduction

The purpose of this codebook is the identification of media frames within articles about domestic violence from two newspapers of Rio de Janeiro, "O Globo" and "Meia Hora". A qualitative content analysis of the articles will be carried after the coding process is done. Theoretically, the present study relies on the framing theory as outlined by Entman (1993).

2. Codebook

2.1 – General instructions

- Read the articles carefully before taking any notes on the codes. After reading it entirely, go over it one more time and code as instructed.
- Only select one of the codes available per variable.

- There is the possibility to specify characteristics that are not listed within the options listed by coding "other". Fill it in only if possible, otherwise leave it empty.
- Code every category that had a light grey background.
- The yellow categories are to be answered only if the "other" in the previous category was chosen.

2.2. Descriptive variables

Formal aspects of the news articles.

2.2.1.	Article ID
Instructions:	Write the article's ID-number indicated in the beginning of the file name.
2.2.2.	Date
Instructions:	Write when the article was published. Use the format YYYY/MM/DD.
2.2.3.	Publication
Instructions:	Write the code corresponding to the publication: 1 = O Globo 2 = Meia Hora

2.3. Framing element variables

2.3.1. Problem definition

2.3.1.1.	Topic
Instructions:	The theme or main idea of the article. Code "other" if the main topic is not listed below. 1 = Sexual violence 2 = Physical assault 3 = Femicide 4 = Psychological violence 5 = Torture

	0 = Other, please specify in 2.3.1.1.1.
2.3.1.1.1.	Other main topic
Instructions:	Write down the identified article's main topic which is not listed among the variables above.

2.3.1.2.	Actor
Instructions:	An actor is the central person, group or institution presented in the article. Fill in the most appropriate code. 1 = Wife/ex-wife/girlfriend/family member (victim) 2 = Husband/ex-husband/boyfriend/family member (perpetrator) 3 = Police/Law enforcement institutions 4 = Family/friends of the victim 5 = Family/friends of the perpetrator 6 = Media 0 = Other, please specify in 2.3.1.2.1.
2.3.1.2.1.	Other actor
Instructions:	Write down the identified actor which is not listed among the variables above.

2.3.1.3.	Sub-actor
Instructions:	A sub-actor is the person, group or institution discussed in the article with less focus than the main actor. Fill in the most appropriate code. 1 = Wife/ex-wife/girlfriend/family member (victim) 2 = Husband/ex-husband/boyfriend/family member (perpetrator) 3 = Police/Law enforcement institutions 4 = Family/friends of the victim

	5 = Family/friends of the perpetrator
	6 = Media
	0 = Other, please specify in 2.3.1.2.1.
	999 = None
2.3.1.3.1.	Other sub-actor
Instructions:	Write down the identified sub-actor which is not listed among the variables above.

2.3.2. Moral evaluation

2.3.2.1.	Societal effects: statistics
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code regarding statistics of domestic violence: 1 = The article presents statistics of domestic violence 0 = The article does not present statistics of domestic violence

2.3.2.2.	Societal effects: Culmination of past events
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code regarding whether the journalist discusses previous abusive events or behaviors in the article: 1 = The article mentions previous abusive events or behaviors 0 = The article does not mention previous abusive events or behaviors

2.3.2.3.	Risks: False accusations
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code regarding false accusations in the article: 1 = The article presents arguments of a possible false accusation 0 = The article does not present arguments of a possible false accusation

2.3.3. Causal attribution

2.3.3.1.	Responsibility attribution: Negative adjectives/behaviors to describe the victim (DVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Negative adjectives/behaviors to describe the victim: 1 = Yes 0 = No
2.3.3.2.	Responsibility attribution: Reference to the victim's choice to not report past incidents (DVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Reference to the victim's choice to not **report** past incidents: 1 = Yes 0 = No
2.3.3.3.	Responsibility attribution: Reference to the victim's choice to not prosecute past incidents (DVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Reference to the victim's choice to not **prosecute** past incidents: 1 = Yes 0 = No
2.3.3.4.	Responsibility attribution: Reference to the victim's actions with other men (DVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Reference to the victim's actions with other men (e.g., suspected infidelity, being seen

	with another man, being found with another man when killed, being the mistress of the killer): 1 = Yes 0 = No
2.3.3.5	Responsibility attribution: Reference to the victim's choice to not leave the abusive relationship (DVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Reference to the victim's choice to not **leave** the abusive relationship (e.g., sources quoting how the victim did not take any actions to leave her abuser): 1 = Yes 0 = No

2.3.3.6.	Responsibility attribution: Positive language to describe the perpetrator (IVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Positive language to describe the perpetrator: 1 = Yes 0 = No
2.3.3.7.	Responsibility attribution: Perpetrator's mental and/or emotional problems (IVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Reference to the perpetrator's mental and/or emotional problems: 1 = Yes 0 = No

2.3.3.8.	Responsibility attribution: Couple's financial problems (IVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Feature the couple's financial problems: 1 = Yes 0 = No
2.3.3.9.	Responsibility attribution: Feature the victim's mental and/or emotional problems (IVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Feature the victim's mental and/or emotional problems: 1 = Yes 0 = No
2.3.3.10.	Responsibility attribution: Assign equal blame to victim and perpetrator (IVB)
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code in case any of the following cases were present or not in the article. Assign equal blame to victim and perpetrator: 1 = Yes 0 = No

2.3.3.11.	Responsibility attribution: Perpetrator
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code regarding assigning the blame exclusively to the perpetrator: 1 = The article clearly assigns the blame to the perpetrator as none of the victim blaming tactics mentioned previously are present in the article 2 = The article somewhat assigns the blame to the perpetrator

	3 = The article does not assign the blame to the perpetrator
	4 = I cannot say for sure

2.3.4. Treatment recommendation

2.3.4.1.	Solution: call for an action
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code regarding the presence of a call for an action: 1 = The journalist presents the problem and proposes to the reader an action to try to solve the problem 0 = The journalist presents the problem and does **not** propose to the reader an action to try to solve the problem

2.3.4.2.	Solution: call against an action
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code regarding the presence of a call against an action: 1 = The journalist presents the problem and condemns it. 0 = The journalist presents the problem and there is no information available that indicates that he/she condemns it.

2.4. Images

2.4.1	Type of image
Instructions:	Fill in the appropriate code regarding the images presented in the article. Please disregard any type of banner advertisement: 10 = Non-graphic victim's picture 20 = Graphic victim's picture 30 = Perpetrator's picture

	31 = The perpetrator is famous
	32 = The perpetrator is not famous
	40 = Perpetrator's mugshot
	41 = The perpetrator is famous
	42 = The perpetrator is not famous
	50 = Picture of the couple
	60 = Other, please specify in 2.4.1.1.
	999 = No picture
2.4.1.1	Other picture
Instructions:	Write down the article's picture which is not listed among the variables above.
2.4.2	Video
Instructions:	Does the article have a video of the act of violence described in the article? (For example, from a security camera). 1 = Yes 0 = No

2.5. Sources

2.5.1.	Type of sources
Instructions:	Who were the sources interviewed for the article regarding the event? 1 = Police 2 = People close to the victim and/or criminal 3 = Both police and people close to the victim and/or criminal 4 = Victim 5 = Perpetrator 6 = Other, please specify in 2.5.1.1. 7 = Both victim and perpetrator 8 = Victim, perpetrator, and police

	9 = Victim, perpetrator, police, and people close to the victim and/or criminal 10 = Victim, perpetrator, and people close to the victim and/or criminal 11 = Victim and people close to the victim and/or criminal 12 = Perpetrator and people close to the victim and/or criminal 13 = Victim and police 14 = Domestic violence specialist 999 = None
2.5.1.1.	Other type of source
Instructions:	Write down the identified source which is not listed among the variables above.

Abstract

Scholars from all over the world have been paying close attention to the pattern of coverage made by journalists to sensitive topics, domestic violence being one of them. Yet, there is still a gap of knowledge when it comes to how the Brazilian media deals with the issue – what sources, frames and images journalists tend to choose when reporting about such crimes. Therefore, implementing a qualitative frame content analysis, this study analyzes the two most read newspapers of the city of Rio de Janeiro and investigates the pattern of coverage found in the frames emerged from the analysis. The results are somewhat in line with previous studies about the topic but made in other settings. The identified frames are the police, the neutral, and the isolated event frame. The frames are consistent with former research, however, unlike other studies, no high tendency to direct or indirectly blame the victim was identified.

Keywords: domestic violence; journalism; frame; media coverage

Abstrakt

Forscher aus aller Welt haben das sich abbildende Muster journalistischer Berichterstattung bei sensiblen Themen, unter anderem häuslicher Gewalt, genau beobachtet. Dennoch fehlen aktuell zahlreiche Erkenntnisse darüber, wie die brasilianischen Medien an den Sachverhalt herangehen - welche Quellen, Frames und Bilder von Journalisten bevorzugt verwendet werden. Unter Einbeziehung einer qualitativen Frame-Content-Analyse, analysiert diese Arbeit die zwei meistgelesenen Zeitungen der Stadt Rio de Janeiro und untersucht das Muster der Berichterstattung in jenen Frames, welche sich in der Analyse kenntlich gemacht haben. Vergleichbare Studien mit anderen Rahmenbedingungen, kommen zu einem ähnlichen Ergebnis wie diese Arbeit. Die drei identifizierten Frames sind das polizeiliche, neutrale und isolierte Frame. Die Frames decken sich mit früherer Forschung, weisen jedoch im Gegensatz zu anderen Studien, keine extreme Tendenz einer direkten oder indirekten Schuldzuweisung an das Opfer auf.

Schlüsselwörter: Häusliche Gewalt, Journalismus, Frame, Mediale Berichterstattung