

ANALYZING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE THROUGHOUT MEDIA DISCOURSE. THE CASE OF THE ITALIAN PRESS

Annotation. This work aims to provide a tool to analyze social representations of gender-based violence, an issue that is receiving increasing media attention in recent years. Focusing on the Italian case, the research questions we try to answer are: 1) How is gender-based violence represented in the Italian press? 2) How does Italian press represent the women victims of gender-based violence and the men authors of such violence? Particularly, we try to understand how press contributes to the social discourse on gender-based violence and what role it plays in the perpetuation of a social structure based on unequal power relations between genders.

The starting hypothesis is that the press can contribute to create and reinforce stereotypes and prejudices about the role of women in society, thus favoring the persistence of those relations of material and symbolic domination, that still too often lead to gender-based violence.

Our work is based on the data collected within the research project *STEP – Stereotypes and prejudice. Toward a cultural change in gender representation in judicial, law enforcement and media narrative*. It relies on the analysis of a corpus containing more than 16,000 articles published in Italian newspapers in the period between the 1st of January 2017 and the 31st December 2019, dealing with the issue of gender-based violence and with the crimes connected to it: domestic violence, rape, femicide, stalking, women trafficking.

Keywords: gender-based violence, media, stereotypes and prejudices, role of women in society.

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Introduction. Due to their pervasiveness, media – in particular news media – play a fundamental role in spreading cultural models and represent the main source for people to know and interpret reality. Indeed, through the selection and the omission of news, they influence public opinion and shape the social representation of phenomena. This also applies for the phenomenon gender-based violence [1-4], which is based on culturally transmitted social mechanisms [5-7] that are reflected in the language through which social institutions and actors represent it, thus reproducing the conditions underlying it [8-10].

In the last two decades, thanks to the several global campaigns (eg. #*MeToo* and *Ni una Menos*) that drawn great attention on gender issues, gender-based violence has gained more visibility in the public sphere and throughout the media [11]. Anyhow, social representations of gender-based violence vehiculated by media do not always help to correctly understand and interpret the phenomenon. They often beneath the dignity of the victims and feed prejudices towards them through toxic and stereotypical narratives, thus reproducing a patriarchal ideology that weakens women and prevent them to breaking free from masculine domination [12-19; 9-10].

In the light of the above, this work is based on the assumption that news media, in particular the press, have the power to influence the social relevance of phenomena by increasing or reducing their visibility [19-21]. At the same time, through distorted narratives, they can contribute to creating and reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices about women's role in society, thus favoring the persistence of those relations of material and symbolic domination [22] that still too often lead to male violence against women.

Starting from these premises, in this work we analyze how national, macro-regional and local Italian press narrates violence against women and which kinds of messages the newspapers spread. In particular, our attention is focused on the stereotypes and prejudices that characterize the journalistic narrative of gender-based violence and contribute to its normalization.

Specifically, the research questions we try to answer are: 1) *How is gender-based violence represented in the Italian press?* 2) *How does Italian press represent the women victims of gender-based violence and the men authors of such violence?*

Precisely, we will try to understand how the press contributes to the social discourse on gender-based violence and what role newspapers play in the perpetuation of a social structure based on unequal power relations between genders, in which women are in a disadvantaged position. The work is based on the data collected within the research project *STEP – Stereotypes and prejudice. Toward a cultural change in gender representation in judicial, law enforcement and media narrative* led by Tuscia University and coordinated by Prof. Flaminia Saccà¹, that has analyzed sexist attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices related to violence-against women and characterizing the current socio-cultural environment.

Methodological and contextual aspects. The study of the representation of gender-based violence can undoubtedly be included among the empirical research practices in numerous sub-disciplinary areas of sociology: sociology of communication, sociology of security, sociology of the family, sociology of deviance, sociology of political phenomena, and so on. Indeed, in the representation of gender-based violence the cultural context in which the abuse takes place has a crucial role.

The objective of the study on which this article is based is first and foremost descriptive, but we also seek to provide some explanatory hypotheses and an operational tool to scholars and practitioners, in the context of the cognitive and formative action-research of which the work is part. In order to achieve such aim, we present the results (quantitative, typological and dealing with best and worst practices) which, it is hoped, will contribute to a progressive improvement of communication on this very important and highly sensitive subject. The sources used in this study are among the most used in the national-level research carried out in Italy, together with the institutional quantitative sources (i.e., Istat, ministries, and so on). The research strategy is mainly synchronic (but may constitute the start of a monitoring process), comparative (especially in space and by types of publications considered) and extensive (with regard to the number of cases considered).

According to what emerged from an analysis, conducted by Capecchi, on the state of the art of research on gender-based violence and femicide in Italy, «the analyses and interpretations proposed seem to depend very much on the interpretative paradigms and definitions adopted by the researchers, rather than on the theoretical structure of the research» [23]. «This tendency seems indeed to be found, but it does

¹ STEP project has been carried on by Tuscia University in partnership with the NGO “Differenza Donna” and has been supported by the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (www.progettostep.it).

not appear as an absolutely unavoidable circumstance. In any case, the recurrence reported can certainly be understood in the light both of the ethical connotation of the object of study and of the need to delineate clear and unequivocal concepts and paradigmatic references, due to the elements of definitional uncertainty present in the scientific debate and among experts» [23].

According to Capecchi [23], «in Italy it is possible to distinguish two fundamental interpretative paradigms concerning gender-based violence: on the one hand, the feminist and sociological perspective focused on socio-cultural explanations of the phenomenon, and on the other hand, the psycho-individualistic paradigm». The theoretical framework of the research on which this article is based also includes both generalist and socio-political sociological aspects. However, it also, and above all, refers to socio-cultural and socio-communication aspects.

In this last respect, it should first be noted that the world of media communication has changed profoundly in recent decades. It is changing constantly, alternating between revolutionary and incremental moments, and increasingly rapidly. Even in this new context, mainstream media information is absolutely relevant. This is even more so with the growth of phenomena like the cognitive self-segregation, with the development of the so-called echo chambers, and because of the pedagogical characterization of the Italian journalistic system. In this regard, it should be remembered that the narrative model is an essential part of representation and the latter always assumes a social dimension. «To connect is to explain: to withdraw from the universe of the purely random, of the unjustified and the brutally arbitrary. A world that is told, or that can be told, is much more livable than a world that is only directly experienced» [24]. The use of the narrative model is not only limited to fiction or videogames. It extends to journalistic information and it is almost natural that it occurs in the presence of stories (such as cases of gender-based violence, especially the most striking ones) and, even more so, in a judicial reality that requires the reconstruction of facts. Moreover, we should consider the presence of a plurality of further representations drawn for purposes which, as in the case of popularization and politics and others, go beyond the journalistic and legal dimensions. The purpose of narration often transcends the mere transmission and sharing of information and cultural contents and involves the process of socialization (and the convey of complex more culturally advanced contents). This applies also for journalistic communication. On the contrary, the case of the Italian press is emblematic in this sense, precisely because of its traditional tendency to combine literary modes of expression and a vocation towards socialization, all within the context of an impure publishing system, strongly correlated with the political and economic systems, and rarely ascribable to a dimension of independence (with only a few exceptions, among the digitally native media). It is no coincidence that Mancini speaks of a fragile system, implying not only its limited economic weight, but also, and above all, the weak professional and functional identity of its individual and organizational protagonists. In other words: «its ability to influence, independently of other systems, the processes of social change» [25, p. 12]. The concept of impure publishing stress on the subordination of journalistic and media culture to that of the (more powerful) ideological or interest groups (party press, business press, etc.).

In such a context, what emerges is what, in the Anglo-Saxon meaning, is called advocacy journalism or point-of-view journalism, which is absolutely compatible with the vocation for the interpretation, comment and reconstruction of facts, also typical of the Italian journalism. As Asor Rosa observed, the relationship between informa-

tion and politics, and the relationship between journalism and literature «have generally moved in the opposite direction to the two great models of European and particularly Anglo-Saxon journalism: journalism-information and journalism-popular» [26, p. 1242], essentially lacking any educational ambitions or intellectual growth.

In the Italian case, opinions and comments (that are the results of an advocacy-type professional orientation) are often expression of an elevated degree of partisanship. In addition, newspaper article or the page of a newspaper dedicated to a single theme ends up proposing a mixture of genres, as it happens in the TV infotainment. Boccia Artieri [27, p. 49] cites Davis's considerations on the close relationship between journalism and novel, which manifests itself in a real news/novels discourse, and on the characterization of the latter in terms of factual fiction [28]. Given this communicative situation, the study of an issue of deviance and criminality with relevant cultural and normative implications (both at legal and social level) – as it happens for gender-based violence, becomes particularly relevant.

The research. Our research relies on the results of the analysis of a corpus of 16.715 newspaper's articles created by collecting articles on gender-based violence, published by fifteen Italian newspapers² in the period between the 1st of January 2017 and the 31st December 2019. In order to answer to our research questions, we made a computer-based content analysis of our corpus throughout two software: 1) Weblive, that allowed measuring the absolute frequency of lemmas and, therefore, finding the main occurrences within the corpus; 2) SketchEngine, that made possible to investigate throughout statistical measures aimed to synthesize the syntactic, semantic and collocational behavior of selected nouns. Particularly, data analysis has been conducted through the function WordSketch, that allowed to view graphical representations of the linguistic constructions through which press tends to narrate gender-based violence and describe its protagonists.

From the analysis of our corpus five main items of interests emerged: *a)* an unbalanced representation of victims and perpetrators; *b)* a “de-responsibilization” of the violence's perpetrator; *c)* a denying of woman's subjectivity; *d)* a normalization of violence; *e)* an episodic narrative of violence.

a) An unbalanced representation of victims and perpetrators. The first result of our analysis relates to the centrality of women in the journalistic narrative of gender-based violence and the parallel marginality of the men who perpetrated such violence. Indeed, by observing the first hundred occurrences within the corpus, we noticed that the words *woman* and *women*, that correspond to the victims of male violence, are much more frequent than *man*, *men* or *husband*, namely the main perpetrators of gender-based crimes, who occur very marginally. The word cloud³ shown in the figure 1 clearly reflects a journalistic narrative of the violence in which there are no culprits. The attention is indeed focused on the victim (i.e., *woman*, *women*, *wife*, *she*, *victim*, *victims*), on the crime perpetrated (i.e., *violence*, *stalking*, *femicide*, *abuses*), on the context in which violence is perpetrated (i.e., *house*, *home*, *family*) and on the coercive response by the institutions (i.e., *carabineers*, *police*, *judge*, *investigations*, *report*, *arrested*, etc.).

² The newspapers analyzed in our research are: “Il Corriere della Sera”; “Il Fatto Quotidiano”; “Il Giornale”; “Il Manifesto”; “La Repubblica”; “Libero Quotidiano”; “Il Giorno”; “L'Unione Sarda”; “Il Mattino”; “Il Messaggero”; “Il Corriere Adriatico”; “Il Gazzettino”; “Il Tirreno”; “La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno”; and “La Sentinella del Canavese”.

³ A “word cloud” is a visual representation of the words used in a particular piece of text or corpus with the size of each word indicating its frequency.

Furthermore, male responsibility is mitigated also when the violence is considered as a consequence of the deviant nature of the perpetrator. In the newspaper articles dealing with gender-based violence, men are usually described by adjectives that refer to their personality (*violent, weak, gentle, etc.*), to their origins (*Italian, Greek, Moroccan, etc.*), their personal qualities (*brilliant, mature, etc.*) or their social and marital status (*young, adult, married, etc.*). Particularly, by observing the terms most frequently associated with the word *man* by each of the newspapers analyzed, a first kind of de-responsibilization of the perpetrator emerges. It consists in the depiction of the latter as a *violent, dangerous* or *aggressive* man, or as *drug addicted, a crazy person* or a *misfit*.

e.g.: «The 21-years-old guy, indeed, is drug addicted. Such condition is at the origin of his violent behaviors and of the episodes of beatings reported by the expectant mother to the Company of Carabinieri of Pordenone, that followed this delicate case from the beginning, trying to protect the young woman and to avoid any possible risk for her pregnancy»⁷.

Likewise, the lack of awareness represents an alibi for those men whose violence is narrated by the press throughout the frames of the jealousy and raptus. In these cases, the perpetrator is depicted as a *simple, gentle* or *mature* man, whose brutality has been triggered by a fact or by a provocation that made him lose control: the desire for self-determination of the partner, the suspicion of being cheated on, the distress or the incapacity of accepting a breakup. Consequently, male violence against women becomes “crime of passion” [19], that Monckton-Smith describes as «outbursts of extreme violence, directed at a loved one, and in response to provocations which threaten the perceived stability of a loving or romantic relationship, and can be considered a demonstration of depth of love for the victim» [32, p. 86].

Nevertheless, talking about love or passion between the victim and the perpetrator let people consider violence as a natural consequence of such sentiments. Thus, the will for possession, domination and annihilation underlying crimes against women are interpreted as manifestations of intimacy and love [19; 32; 34-35].

e.g.: «Love is a fire, a flame that sometimes brings to uncontrolled actions. It's the fire that has been felt by the tired and tortured heart of the old man from Cecchina, a peripheral area of Rome, who – despite being 84 years old – after his partner left him, poured a can of gasoline on the glass door of the woman's house, luckily while she was outside»⁸.

In the articles that explain gender-based violence through the frame of the jealousy, among the adjectives more often associated to the word *man*, besides *violent*, there are: *crazy, perfect, capable, gentle, wonderful*. These expressions shape the idea of a perpetrator who is also victim of his inability to control the jealousy. At the same time, the word *jealousy* is associated to adjectives that convey the idea of an impulse so uncontrollable that justifies perpetrator's brutality (i.e., *obsessive, insane, extreme, pathological, blind, uncontrollable, etc.*). Consequently, the responsibility of the man who committed violence is mitigated by his “impossibility” to control his impetus.

e.g.: «Blinded by jealousy and anger, on Saturday morning her husband stormed in the bathroom while she was taking a shower, grabbed her and dragged her out of the shower-box and smashed her face on the sink»⁹.

⁷ Redazione “Il Gazzettino”, Maltrattava la compagna incinta, arrestato, 11.10.2018.

⁸ G. Tedoldi, Folle d'amore e stalker a 84 anni, in “Libero Quotidiano”, 11.02.2018.

⁹ M. Aldighieri, M. Lucchin, Il dramma nel padovano, in “Il Gazzettino”, 19.02.2019.

Also, perpetrator's guilt is diminished in those newspapers' articles – although less frequent¹⁰ – that represent violence against women as consequence of a raptus. The latter is depicted as a temporary loss of judgement, an instinctive and uncontrollable violent impulse associated to madness, jealousy or love. Although the concept of raptus is not recognized by psychiatry [36], it is still not rarely used to justify the loss of control that brings men to commit violence against women. It so happens that the perpetrator ends up appearing, in the eyes of society, as a victim of an instinctive and uncontrollable impulse originated from a sentiment that became pathological [32; 4]. Indeed, in the articles that narrate violence throughout the frame of the raptus, the word man is associated to adjectives like *simple, fair, broken, brilliant, disoriented or frustrated*. Male brutality is so perceived as an irrational behavior instead of a manifestation of a social structure based on unequal power relations, in which men occupy a position of symbolic and material domination [22; 37-39].

Nonetheless, representing male violence against women as an action which is independent from the author's will, thus vehiculating the idea that both of the protagonists are victims, inexorably involves an emphatic reaction of the readers towards the perpetrator and, at the same time, a suspicion towards the victim.

c) The denying of woman's subjectivity. Whilst in the journalistic narrative of male violence against women the aspects related to the perpetrator's personality represent the main descriptive element, when press talks about the victim attention is mainly focused on her social status (i.e., *young, foreigner, residing, Italian, etc.*), and on her family status (i.e., *married, single, pregnant, divorced, etc.*). In addition, a further element emerging (which does not characterize the description of men) is that, in some cases, press describes the victim as beautiful, whereas there is no mentioning of male beauty in the narration of gender-based violence. It is also infrequent that press describes the man as son, father or father-to-be.

Talking about the woman who is victim of violence by referring to her youth, beauty and motherhood means not to recognize her a full subjectivity and autonomy, thus fostering prejudices and stereotypes that perpetuate the old dominant gender order and normalize male violence. In other words, women are not protagonist either when they are abused, stalked or killed because the dominant perspective is still the male one.

d) The normalization of violence. The many initiatives and awareness campaigns on gender-based violence through the television, newspapers and Internet testify the great visibility that this phenomenon gained in the contemporary media landscape [40-42]. Notwithstanding, the greater attention on the issue, which is present in each sector of the cultural and information industry [43], is not an indicator of an increased awareness on the subject and does not always represents a mean for contrasting the phenomenon of violence against women. On the contrary, from the analysis of more than 16.000 newspapers' articles on gender-based violence it emerges a significant asymmetry between reality and its representation provided by the press.

For what concerns the main forms of gender-based violence narrated by the press, it is noted that although violence against women does not consist only in physical assaults, but it includes also psychological abuses, threats, blackmails, and persecutions, press mostly covers forms of violence that produce physical consequences or that can be materially demonstrated (e.g., sms, phone calls, e-mails or material damages in the case of stalking).

The episodes of gender-based violence most frequently covered by the press deal with cases of stalking (53,4%) and femicides (44,5%), whereas only 14% of the news-

¹⁰ While the frame of jealousy occurs in the 6,6% of the articles, the frame of raptus is present only in the 1,4%, showing how such expression is progressively disappearing from the linguistic repertory.

papers' articles deals with domestic violence. Finally, 10% of the articles of our corpus narrates rapes.

According to the data provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior covering the same period of our articles' corpus, the crime against women most frequently perpetrated in Italy is domestic violence. Specifically, the reports of domestic violence in 2017, 2018 and 2019 correspond exactly to the 47%, the 48% and the 51% of the totality of crimes against women perpetrated in that years. Anyway, the worsening of the phenomenon does not seem having effects on the press coverage, and the press' attention continues to be focused on stalking and femicide.

However, if on the one hand stalking, since it is the form of violence against women mostly perpetrated in Italy¹¹, it is understandably the most covered by the press, on the other hand episodes of femicide correspond to the 0.7% of all the gender crimes committed in the years analyzed. Nevertheless, almost half of the articles of our corpus cover episodes of femicide. This unbalance between the frequency at which these crimes are perpetrated and their coverage in the Italian press is confirmed by the literature on the subject. Indeed, many authors [40; 44-46; 19] highlighted how newspaper articles are not reflective of the present reality; rather they are the result of a human choice of the news.

In the case of male violence against women, this choice is mainly based on the brutality of the crime perpetrated or the presence of extravagant details in the story. Newspapers, indeed, tend to focus on those events that break the everyday social life, thus becoming worthy of collective attention. In other words, if domestic violence does not provoke extreme consequences or if it is not characterized by aspects that make it newsworthy [47-48], it is overlooked by media which underestimate its disruptiveness for the victim's daily life and for the whole society.

As a result, intimate partner violence is not perceived as a social problem and unavoidably ends to be normalized and thus, more easily tolerated by the collectivity.

Frequently, in the newspapers' narrative, violence against women is depicted as a typical dynamic of a conflictual couple's relationship. It is the bias of the "lovers' quarrel", which consists in considering intimate partner violence as part of a normal family routine. In the articles in which the "lovers' quarrel" bias occurs, the *relationship* is described by adjectives such as *tormented*, *turbulent*, *stormy*, *troubled*, whilst the word *quarrel* is accompanied by adjectives like *violent*, *furious*, *familiar*, *continuous*, *frequent*.

Both of the words – *relationship* and *quarrel* – are thus associated to adjectives that contribute to transform a unilateral aggressivity in a conflictual relationship with the effect of representing the victims as co-responsible of the violence they suffered. In this way, it becomes always more difficult for a woman to recognize the signs of an abuse within what is generally represented as a turbulent relationship.

es. «Fierce family quarrel, drunk man beaten to a pulp his wife in front of his 5-years-old daughter. It was one of the many nights in hell for a 27-years-old woman who has been victim of physical and psychological violence from her 31-years-old husband»¹².

Even in this case, depicting violence as a quarrel or as an extreme consequence of a turbulent relationship means blaming both of the protagonists of the story and normalizing the abusive behaviors of which women are victims. In this way, press contributes to de-responsibilize or justify the real culprit and reproduces that cultural bias, present in the 12,4% of our newspapers' corpus, according to which violence against

¹¹ According to the data provided by the Italian Ministry of Interior, the cases of stalking reported in 2017, 2018 and 2019 represent the 33%, 32% and 31% of the total gender crimes perpetrated during each of year.

¹² S. Ronconi, *Ubricaco picchia la moglie davanti alla figlia di 5 anni. Arrestato marito violento. Ha trovato il coraggio di denunciare dopo due anni di soprusi*, in "Il Giorno", 3.12.2019.

wives, fiancés and partner is an ordinary aspect of a sentimental relationship instead of being regarded as a male misconduct [49-52].

As a result, while the fact that violence perpetrated in a family context is an aggravating element from the judicial point of view, the lack of journalistic coverage of the phenomenon witnesses how in the common thought domestic abuses are considered a “natural” element of the intimate partnerships [53].

e) *An episodic narrative of violence*. Another important aspect investigated by our research deals with the depth of the journalistic narrative of gender-based violence. From our analysis two main social representations of violence emerged: a prevailing one – common to all the analyzed newspapers – that privileges an episodic narration of the violence against women, which is described as a private affair that affects directly only the victim and the perpetrator; an unusual representation, that addresses gender-based violence as a sociocultural problem that should be read in the light of gender relations and inequalities [9-10].

A private affair. By observing the words occurrences for each single crime in our corpus, it emerges that the two main thematic areas are related to the judicial field (as it is demonstrated by the frequency of keywords like *carabinieri, police, judge, court, trial, report/s, prison etc.*) and the family (as it is shown by the frequency of key words like *home, family, wife, husband, partner, son, mother or couple*¹³). According to this kind of journalistic narrative, male brutality is deprived – both subjectively and objectively – of its social meaning and it is not explained in terms of asymmetry of power.

At the same time, when gender-based violence – both verbal and physical – is perpetrated in a closed context such as the domestic environment, the family nucleus or the couple’s relationship, it is depicted as a private affair. In this type of narration, there is no place for the antiviolence shelters, although their important role of assistance and support to the victims of male violence. In addition, in most of the newspapers there is no space for the political and cultural dimension of gender-based violence. Indeed, among the main occurrences of our corpus, there are not expressions referring to the feminist movements, to the power relations among sexes, to the culture, and inequalities. Therefore, journalistic narrative of gender-based violence does not consider the gender order and the power relations among sexes. Consequently, violence is not framed in a sociocultural, political and legislative dimension. On the contrary, press tends to privilege a narration that represents the cases of violence as episodic, thus leaving the symbolic order at the root of violence unchanged [54-55] disregarding the structural and global character underlying the phenomenon.

A sociocultural problem. The second type of journalistic representation of gender-based violence depicts this phenomenon as a cultural issue, as the manifestation of an historical *continuum* of violence and oppression that affects women and men all over the world. Newspapers that privilege this kind of social representation of gender-based violence provide for data about the spread of the phenomenon, highlight the sociocultural factors underlying violence, and inform about the measures of protection and support for the victims [31; 23]. This type of representation, that we define “thematic”, is very unusual compared to the trend emerged from our research. Only one of the newspapers analyzed – “Il Manifesto” – privileges a thematic representation of gender-based violence. Indeed, within its articles about gender-based violence, “Il Manifesto” stresses on the sociocultural factors underlying the violence, and on the role played by feminist movements and campaigns at both national and

¹³The 55% of the articles mention a couple. Specifically, the 25% of the articles deals with violence perpetrated within a wife-husband relationship and the 15% deals with unmarried partners.

transnational level, thus highlighting the strict correlation between violence against women and gender order. Among the main occurrences in the articles of “Il Manifesto” we can find lemmas like *feminism, feminist, power, racism, culture, freedom, movement, fight, global, international* and *migrants* [9-10].

Since violence does not involve only its authors and the victims, but it concerns the whole society, we believe that the second type of representation – although significantly less common – can contribute more effectively to the fight against gender-based violence.

Conclusions. The diverse types of analysis that have been conducted on our corpus have given us a quite complete overview of the current social representation of gender-based violence in the Italian journalistic discourse, showing how Italian press – although unintentionally – contributes to reproducing a social context in which male violence against women proliferates. Indeed, even though in the last decades we witnessed a greater attention, sensibility and awareness towards the phenomenon of sexist discriminations and gender-based violence [41; 23; 55-57], the social representation of such phenomena emerged from our research still appears distorted and characterized by stereotypes and prejudices towards women.

Indeed, the first element that emerged by the analysis of more than 16.000 newspapers’ articles is the concealment of the relation between male and violence throughout the use of expressions that let men disappear from discourses. Indeed, the narrative of violence is almost completely focused on the women, on the crimes perpetrated, and on the investigations and judicial proceedings. As a result, male responsibility is concealed, as if to deny – through a process of hegemonic self-preservation – that abuses, violence and femicide are typically male crimes [12].

When newspapers’ attention focuses on the male protagonists of the violence, the latter is represented throughout the traditional understandings of romantic love, or by defining the crime as the outcome of a couple’s quarrel either of irrational behaviors, thus operating a de-responsibilization of the perpetrator. The authors of the violence are represented as men who act moved by feelings of jealousy and tormented passion and who suddenly lost their control.

As a result, newspapers convey a social representation of gender-based violence that confines it to the private dynamics of a couple, or in a dimension of individual action which is not related to the socialization processes to gender roles, power relations and processes of gender construction [19]. It happens also that violence is narrated by press as the tragic outcome of a couple’s quarrel, thus vehiculating the idea that both of the protagonists – the victim and the perpetrator – are at the same time victims and responsible for what is happened. Consequently, violence is almost never framed in a social, cultural and political dimension.

As it emerged from our analysis, newspapers rarely address the structural factors that underlying violence, and refrain to properly discuss the issues of symbolic domination and gender hierarchies. As a result, newspapers, that represent a fundamental variable in the social construction of reality process [58] and have the power to contribute to this process both in a conservative and in innovative way, tend to comply with a social structure still profoundly permeated by patriarchy.

Nevertheless, because of its centrality and pervasiveness, journalism is called to play an innovative role, starting from a more gender-sensitive representation of violence-against-women in the news media. This is a fundamental role both when newspapers address themselves to an informed public opinion (through editorials and commentary articles), and when the public is less informed and more easily influenced (through news articles and titles).

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АНАЛИЗ РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИИ ПРОБЛЕМЫ ГЕНДЕРНОГО НАСИЛИЯ В РАМКАХ МЕДИА-ДИСКУРСА. НА ПРИМЕРЕ ИТАЛЬЯНСКОЙ ПРЕССЫ

Аннотация. Цель статьи состоит в предоставлении инструментария для анализа социальных представлений о гендерном насилии, – проблеме, привлекающей в последние годы всё большее внимание средств массовой информации. Сосредоточившись в ходе исследования на примере итальянской прессы, авторы освещают ряд вопросов, в числе которых: 1) представление о гендерном насилии в итальянских СМИ; 2) образ в итальянской прессе женщин, ставших жертвами гендерного насилия, и мужчин, виновных в этом насилии. В частности, авторы стремятся определить, какой вклад средства массовой информации вносят в общественный дискурс о гендерном насилии; какую роль пресса играет в сохранении социальной структуры, основанной на гендерном неравенстве.

Согласно исходной гипотезе, есть вероятность того, что сюжеты в прессе способствуют укреплению стереотипов и предубеждений относительно роли женщины в обществе. Что, в свою очередь, содействует сохранению принципов материального и символического доминирования, зачастую и приводящих к гендерному насилию.

Работа основана на данных, собранных в рамках исследовательского проекта STEP: *Stereotypes and prejudice. Toward a cultural change in gender representation in judicial, law enforcement and media narrativ* [Стереотипы и предубеждения. На пути к культурным изменениям гендерных представлений в рамках судебной системы, правоохранительных органов и СМИ]. Проект основан на анализе базы данных, содержащей более 16000 статей, опубликованных в итальянских газетах в период с 1 января 2017 года по 31 декабря 2019 года, касающихся проблемы гендерного насилия и связанных с ним преступлений: бытовое насилие, изнасилование, фемцид, преследование, торговля женщинами.

Ключевые слова: гендерное насилие, СМИ, стереотипы и предубеждения, роль женщины в обществе.

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