

## Gendered Online News Media: Analyzing News Reporting on Turkish News Websites\*

Çilem Tuğba KOÇ

Erciyes Üniversitesi

İletişim Fakültesi, Radyo Televizyon ve Sinema Bölümü

Kayseri

[takdag@erciyes.edu.tr](mailto:takdag@erciyes.edu.tr)

### Abstract

Dramatized ironic and stereotyped news coverage humiliates women who might be potential targets of such violence. This study aims to discover the representation of news on violence against women through mainstream online news media by analyzing 30 news websites in Turkey. A total of 150 news items from 1<sup>st</sup> March to the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2016, as produced by these news websites, were investigated for this research. It is revealed that the strategies used by traditional printed media, such as sensational language, victim blaming and trivializing violence also exist in online news reporting in Turkey. A significant finding of this study is the usage of certain clichés such as “once again a femicide” in order to legitimize VAW. (Violence Against Women). Another essential finding is on the consideration of the type of violence concerned. Through the analysis, this study finds that media reporters commonly apply sensational reporting and give details of the crime when reporting violence. However, the Turkish government has accepted VAW as a social issue and signed an act to prevent women from violence in 2006. Nevertheless, this study found that, on examination of online news reports, VAW is still seen as a series of singular cases rather than being a social problem for Turkey as a whole.

**Keywords:** news reporting; news websites; media representations; gendered online news media; violence against women (VAW).

### Cinsiyetçi Online Haber Medyası:

#### Türkiye’deki Haber Web Sitelerinin Haberleştirme Biçimlerinin Analizi\*

### Özet

Dramatik, ironik ve cinsiyetçi basmakalıp ifadelerle bezeli haber yazma pratikleri, kadınları bir kez daha şiddetin hedefi haline getirmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de yayınlanan 30 web sitesi üzerinden kadına yönelik şiddet haberlerinin ana akım online habercilikte nasıl temsil edildiğini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, 1 ile 2 Mart 2016 tarihleri arasında, 30 sitede yayınlanmış toplam 150 haber incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda, geleneksel habercilik pratikleriyle benzer bir biçimde “sansasyonel bir dil kullanma”, “kurbanı suçlama”, “şiddetin olağanlaştırılması gibi stratejilerin Türkiye’deki online haber yazımında da olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. “Yine bir kadın cinayeti” şeklinde sıklıkla başvurulan haberleştirme dilinin kadına yönelik şiddeti de olağan hale getirdiği belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca, kadına yönelik şiddet haberleri içinde sadece öldürme eylemi üzerine olmadığı, farklı şiddet biçimlerinin de olduğu görülmüştür. Yapılan bu çalışmayla, yeni medyada habercilik yapan medya profesyonellerinin,

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\*Bu çalışma orijinal bir çalışma olup daha önce herhangi bir yerde yayınlanmamıştır.

kadına yönelik şiddet haberlerini aktarırken sansasyonel bir dile ve şiddet eyleminin detaylarına yer verdikleri ortak bir bulgu olarak ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Türkiye’de hükümetin, kadına yönelik şiddeti bir toplumsal sorun olarak görerek, bu sorunu önlemek için 2006 yılında yasal düzenlemeler getirmesine rağmen, yapılan haber analizlerinden çıkan sonuç, kadına yönelik şiddetin halen bireysel olaylar olarak aktarılmasına dayanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Haber Yazımı, Haber Web Siteleri, Medya Temsili, Cinsiyetçi Online Haber Medyası, Kadına Yönelik Şiddet.

### Introduction

According to the 2011 United Nations (UN) Reports, two women are killed each day in Guatemala,-more than 1,800 women in Mexico are victims of femicide, a woman is killed every six hours in South Africa, and 50% of women in the European Union countries are victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. Over the last few years, violence against women have increased globally. Unodc (2018) conducted research on gender related killing of women and girls around the world. It has also been found that, in 2017, more than two thirds of all women and girls (69%) were killed in Africa and more than a third (38%) killed in Europe by their partners or family members. The UN held the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Strategic objectives and action plans were signed during the conference which encouraged the ending of gender discrimination and violence against women (VAW) in the media. During the conference it was emphasized that the media had to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women among its content and that it should refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, instead presenting them as creative human beings. Additionally, stress was placed on raising awareness concerning the media’s responsibility to eliminate patterns of representation that generate violence; informing and educating people about the causes and effects of violence against women; stimulating public debate on the topic and establishing professional guidelines and codes of conduct for responsible media content. National and international strategic and action plans were put forward by the UN.

An echo of this attempt presented itself with the establishment of Independent Communication Network (BIA) in Turkey. BIA project was realized in cooperation with IPS Communication Foundation, Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects and Turkish Medical Association, in 1997. 129 national media representatives, 141 local media organizations and a number of academics in the communications field were invited to Istanbul for a meeting in 2000. The first stage of the program was organized in two parts, and was completed with the participation of 270 journalists from among the 141 local media organizations from urban centers across nine regions, while the second was completed with the

involvement of 213 participants from 169 local media organizations from urban centers across three regions; accordingly, a total of 483 journalists attended (Alankuş, 2007).

The texts used in the seminar and workshop activities, as part of the training program carried out by communication academics and journalists who shared the BIA's conception of journalism, were subsequently published as books comprising the 2003 *Journalist's Guidebook* series: *The Media and Society*, *The Media, Ethics and the Law*, *Journalism and Reporting*, and *The Radio and Radio Broadcasting*. In order to end gender discrimination in the media, *Gender Based Journalism* book encourages journalists to be sensitive when reporting (Alankuş, 2007). It has been suggested that the choice of words and sentence structures in news items are organized a way as to convey or propagate sexism (Köker, 2007). For instance, the use of passive sentences in news coverage demonstrates women as being objects, affected by the reported action. Furthermore, the visual language of news contents is formed through the fantasies of the masculine world to hide the ideological character of patriarchal discourse. In existing news coverage, the perpetrator is described as the "dangerous stranger", a "person who has become a savage because of sexual instinct", and a "monster", while women are marginalized as being either "prostitutes" or "disobedient woman". In addition to this labeling, it has also been indicated that news narratives occasionally borrow pornographic language that lead to the aestheticization of violence, thereby tainting the news.

Several media scholars offer more women should have been employed in media sector in order to break down this patriarchal language. For instance, Ross (2001) claims that most of the women surveyed believe that more women in decision-making positions would have a positive impact on developing a more women-friendly news agenda in her study. In a similar vein, Asker (2004) analyzed 7 newspaper from mainstream media in Turkey and found that the number of men journalist was ranged from 25 to 45 while the number of women journalists was changing between 4 and 8. This means, compared to men, a small amount of women were in media sector in 2004. In addition to this, Asker (2004) emphasized that men journalists interested writing on the topics such as politics, economy, sport while women journalists focused on health, lifestyle and art issues. According to the MEDIZ Report (2008), patriarchal structure is dominant in Turkish media, with 52% of reporting on women being seen in magazines, just 18% of reporters choosing women for their news sources; just 16% of individuals working in the media sector being women; and just 12% of employed columnists being women in Turkey.

The second initiative originated with the Turkish government's "Order on Measures to be Taken to Prevent Acts of Violence against Women and Children and Tradition and Honor

Killings”. This became effective following its publication in the Official Gazette (number 26218) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2006, as signed by the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The Order (numbered 2006/17) underlines that the prevention of VAW is a state policy in Turkey for the first time and obliges all (public, private, national, regional and local) written and audio-visual media, information services, and news agencies and press professional organizations to play their part in preventing violence against women (Gülbahar, 2007). In addition to this initiative, in 2016 the Turkish Journalist’s Association published *Women and the Media: Guidebook of Equality on Gender in News* for media practitioners. Herein, in 61 articles of the guidebook, femicide is described as those cases in which women are victims of homicide, and are killed just because they are women.

As it is commonly known, the media can reinforce social and cultural values and attitudes by presenting, reconstructing and reporting reality. Accordingly, such news reports become the reality in the eyes of the community. Nevertheless, the media has the capacity to transform social values on gender discrimination, as well as to draw the public’s attention toward VAW. That there are so few studies on this issue corroborates such an approach. On examination of VAW researches, only a small percentage investigated media representation in online news media, whereas a majority explored VAW in printed media. Lloyd and Ramon (2017, p.139) have previously mentioned this when analyzing digital media’s representation of VAW by comparing a wider sampling, which may be useful for future research. Accordingly, this study aims to discover how the news on VAW represented in online journalism. The question arises as to whether the reporting habits of the mainstream media are maintained through news websites. According to the aim of the study, the following research questions are presented in this research: What kind of strategies do new websites in Turkey use when reporting the news of violence against women? Do the habits of printing press like (“victim blaming”, “sensationalization”, “trivializing violence”, “presenting excuses for perpetrator’s action” etc.) exist in online news media while reporting VAW incidents?

What kind of sources are used in order to narrate violence cases while reporting? Are different strategies used for online news reporting as compared with printed media? How frequently are these strategies used in reporting news on cases of violence against women? A total of 150 news items released from the Turkish news websites between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> March were analyzed in 2016 for this research.

### **Media Representations on Violence against Women**

Womenhood/ Manhood are reproduced and presented as a part of ideal self-identities inside a patriarchal system. Kandiyoti (2000: 8) indicates patriarchy, defined as a system of

social relations privileging male seniors over juniors and women (Kandiyoti 2000: 8). The status and power of men is not the same as that of woman inside a patriarchal society: women have to struggle more than men to gain self-value in the eyes of society. Such value generally depends on the obedience of women through traditional gender roles, and also the subjection of women to men in both the domestic private sphere and the working place. Accordingly, men are seen as decision makers, while women have to obey to men's rules. Akgül (2017: 60) remarks patriarchy resulted with gender-based violence, as women being physically and emotionally oppressed is directly related to gender-based violence as men being oppressed. Meyer (1997) argues that VAW is framed by news supporting, sustaining, and reproducing male supremacy. Coverage is rooted in cultural myths and stereotypes about women, men, and violence, as well as the links between sexist violence and social structures, whereby gendered patterns of domination and control are disguised. Such sexist violence perpetuates the culturally defined "virgin-whore" versus "good girl-bad girl" dichotomy so that women either appear to be wholly innocent or culpable of their victimization. News stories warn women to comply with acceptable behavior in order not to be raped, abused, or killed; accordingly, women are held by social control. Media portrayals focus on victims in some way being different, or marginalized, or else being "from the fringes" of society. Wykes (2001) also claims that patriarchal environment and gender inequalities foster VAW. The potential for news coverage to promote biased or stereotypical understandings of these crimes is particularly important due to the generation of sexual innuendo and romantic drama for audiences through which they can "titillate the public". Women are portrayed as the targets of violence by news reporting through the recalling of societal gender roles.

Existing VAW studies in international literature show that domestic violence is usually perpetrated by the affected individual's intimate partner. At first glance, it is seen that media scholars have undertaken descriptive works on how cases of violence is portrayed through media coverage, and that they use both qualitative and quantitative techniques to assess the narrative of news stories in order to frame the common themes among such cases. Sutherland et. al. (2015) found out that, between 2010 and 2015, 48 primary studies on the portrayal of violence in the media were published. According to the existing research, a majority of studies were conducted in the United States (US), with six studies originating in Australia. As a result of the project, Sutherland et al. (2015) indicated several main key themes could be identified among the studies they assessed on how the media portrays VAW. The first finding of the study states that the social contexts in which males perpetrated violence against women were not included in the media representations of VAW. Second, it was found that most of the studies

assessed indicate the stories had been sensationalized through language, and that this mostly applied in news reporting. Third, it is stated that the perpetuation of myths, misrepresentations, and victim blaming were commonly used when reporting cases on violence. Fourth, it is revealed that law enforcement, as expert “voices”, were commonly used as news sources according to the review of the related studies.

Fairbairn and Dowson (2013) investigated intimate partner homicide cases and reached similar results as those of other media scholars in the field. The authors reviewed three daily newspapers in Toronto for two separate time periods (1975-1979 and 1998-2002), exploring four themes among their various news items: prioritizing descriptions of violence, using excusing explanations for perpetrators’ actions, victim blaming, and consulting perpetrators as news sources. As a result of Fairbairn and Dowson’s (2013) study, it was discovered that coverage continues to employ victim-blaming news frames and to portray intimate partner homicides as individual cases; even though women are systematically exposed to violence, violence cases are shown as being private issues concerning marital matters within news narratives. Additionally, Fairbairn and Dowson’s (2013) also indicated that daily newspapers fell short of consulting the approaches of feminist organizations in their news reporting of VAW.

Another significant study on media representations of VAW literature is that of Richards, Gillespie, and Smith (2014), who probed media coverage of femicide cases in North Carolina, from 2002 to 2009, over 86 news items (Richards et. al., 2014). As a result of the study, it was found that 78% of the articles defined homicide–suicide as domestic violence. One of the most striking findings of the study was that, in 20 articles (14%), the reason given as to why such violence occurred was the perpetrators’ loss of control. The second substantial finding concerned femicide-suicide events. As for the researchers, through the analysis of the news items, it became apparent that these events occurred after the female partner had left the perpetrator. As a result of the study, according to five of the articles (3%), the perpetrator committed the crime in question due to jealousy (Richards et. al., 2014, p.37).

Similarly, Lloyd and Ramon (2014) explored media representations of domestic violence through news articles in United Kingdom. They examined the news outlets of *The Sun* and *The Guardian* newspapers from 2001-2002 and 2011-2013. Lloyd and Ramon (2014) detected that men who committed homicides involving their intimate partners were referred as “hubby”, “spurned lover”, “jilted lover” and “jealously crazed” in the tabloid news writing discourse. In the study, the researchers interpreted the use of the diminutive term “hubby” as having a trivializing effect on marital violence (Lloyd and Ramon, 2014, p.126).

In considering recent studies it can be seen that nothing has changed regarding the representation of women in cases of violence. Although researchers and countries differ, several common concerns on the reporting of cases of violence against women in the media nevertheless exist. For instance, Leal (2017) draws attention to the perception of cases of violence against women as being a private matter, instead of a public concern, based on an analysis of 607 news stories. Leal (2017) claims that news narratives are far from incorporating the comprehension of those causes, which might prevent women from abandoning the cycle of violence. As Leal (2017) maintains, the journalistic approach to reporting cases of VAW should be dependent on socially constructed causes. Within this context, reporters should consult women's organizations and other related institutions and government agencies, in addition to police records, when reproducing and presenting their news. Additionally, Lean concentrates on the portrayal of VAW cases as "crime scenes", which reflect the perspective offered by the police officers without considering the social roots (Lean, 2017, p.25).

In the light of the previous literature, Leung (2019) reveals that news reporters reproduce unequal power relations when using a sexist language in their representation of news concerning cases of violence involving intimate partners. Leung (2019) examined two popular local newspapers in Hong Kong, *Apple Daily* and *Ming Pao*, over 99 news outlets, detecting that both newspapers use five major discursive frameworks when reporting cases of violence involving intimate partners. According to the findings, gender asymmetry, stereotyping the abuser, labeling the abused, blaming the victim, and ignoring women's rights are all used as common strategies when reporting VAW cases. As a result of the study, it is emphasized that the news reports tend to identify the action of the perpetrator as impulsive, originating from the man's hot-tempered or reckless manner. To add this, it is stressed that violent actions of perpetrators are normalized with the attachment of some extenuating reasons like unemployment or economic pressure, or effects of some other personality trait.

### **Methodology of the Research**

This study used the quantitative content analysis in its research design. The reason for choosing this design is that it allows for the analysis of a wide range of materials while focusing on the selected aspects of meaning, namely those aspects that relate to the research questions. The current study is a descriptive study investigating the habits of online mainstream news media when reporting on the representation of VAW through news websites. First, therefore, common reporting habits among the new items are to be defined as common themes, and then these themes are codified into a coding list. Scherier (2014, p. 171) remarks that the assigning of segments of the material to the categories of the coding frame is to be carried out twice

(double coding) and that this is to be done for at least some parts of the material. Double coding is accepted as a quality control concerning category definitions. Therefore, conducting a pilot coding and subsequently evaluating the coding frame help to ensure reliability and validity in a content analysis research design (Scherier, 2014, p. 174). This study comprises two interconnected steps: a pilot study phase as the initial step and the main study phase as the second step.

The pilot study was undertaken in 2016 with the participation of volunteer students, studying at Journalism in Erciyes University in the same period. Before analyzing the news items, these students were trained on media representation of VAW through a “Media and Gender” course. After they had been introduced to the issue, it was demanded that they investigate news websites on the internet, and that they find news on the representation of women. In this first attempt, the students discovered that a total of 140 such news websites exist. Of the 140 news websites, 30 websites were sampled according to pre-determined criterions of the study. Information pertaining to these websites and criteria can be found in the sampling frame stage. For the pilot work, each student was requested to select one site and analyze five news items from that site on VAW, which were released in the sampling period. During the first stage of the study, a total of 55 articles were analyzed. In the pilot study stage, the students collected the news items on cases of violence against women from the selected news websites, recording them in the text format. Firstly, the students were advised to read each news story in their entirety and then to conduct a reading from headlines, subheads, and their main texts, examining each passage consecutively to determine common themes. Secondly, it was required that the students code main themes. At the end of the manual coding, the students submitted the news articles and analyzed items within two separate word documents. A total of 11 students participated in this work and 55 news articles were coded manually. The students found that “sensational reporting style”, “victim blaming”, “excuses for the perpetrator” and “intimacy with the victim” codes were commonly used in news reporting when representing VAW.

After the manual coding process, 55 news articles were loaded to QDA Miner 7 (Free Trial Version) by the researcher to recode and evaluate the co-occurrences among the codes through a computer analysis. For the computer analysis, first the students’ codes were added into the coding list and each news story was analyzed sentence by sentence in order to enter the codes into the program. During the coding process, new codes were encountered, and these were added into the coding list, and the news stories had been reviewed until coding process

was finished. These codes are defined and explained in the coding process stage of the current study.

For the main phase of this study, the sample size was increased from 55 to include 150 news articles on the representation of VAW. A total of 150 news articles from 30 websites were examined throughout the sampling period. For this phase, first, in order to determine the categories, the selected articles were revised and coded once again. After the coding process had finished, it was found that “using sensational expression”, “giving details of action”, “mocking with the violence case”, “victim blaming”, “trivializing violence”, “reasons for violence”, “news sources”, “type of the violence”, “intimacy with the victim” are the most commonly used strategies among the articles. In order to see the frequency of these strategies in the news narratives, these codes were entered as variables in SPSS 22.0. A numerical value was given to each sub-codes under the main codes. At the end of the analysis, the frequency of the codes in the news articles was presented as percentages to find out the overall proportions. At the end of this stage, the sub-codes were compared with one another according to the frequency with which they appear in the articles, and the findings were summarized accordingly.

### **Sampling Frame**

As mentioned by Patton (1990, p.169) decisions to use purposeful sampling are made because selecting some cases provide more in-depth information for describing the phenomenon as compared with others. Accordingly, a purposeful sampling method is used in this study to provide in-depth information for studying rich cases or data. In order to comprehend online reporting on violence against women, first, the news websites were found and listed according to pre-determined criteria. Of the 140 news online websites, 30 websites were sampled according to the criteria listed below. The selection was first made according to the number of followers of the news websites with a minimum of 1,000. Secondly, heterogeneous sampling was preferred when selecting websites to increase the power of the representation of news websites. Thus, the news websites were taken according to their potential national and local audience. Among the selected news websites, 23 have a national audience while seven had a local audience. The number of the followers of the selected websites ranged from 1,000 to 2,985,816. Furthermore, political views and publishing policies, which differ among the various websites (from left wing- the website of Cumhuriyet’s to the right-conservatives wing Yeniakit’s), were also taken into consideration.

**Table 1.** Selected News Websites.

<b>Item No</b>	<b>The Name of the News Websites</b>	<b>Number of Followers</b>	<b>Type of Publication</b>
1	<a href="http://www.turktime.com">www.turktime.com</a>	48,844	National
2	<a href="http://www.f5haber.com">www.f5haber.com</a>	112,669	National
3	<a href="http://www.cnnturk.com.tr">www.cnnturk.com.tr</a>	1,776,869	National
4	<a href="http://www.egehaber.com">www.egehaber.com</a>	614,799	Local
5	<a href="http://www.elmaelma.com">www.elmaelma.com</a>	867,697	Local
6	<a href="http://www.haber365.com">www.haber365.com</a>	1,491,220	National
7	<a href="http://www.habervitrini.com">www.habervitrini.com</a>	12,774	National
8	<a href="http://www.medyafaresi.com">www.medyafaresi.com</a>	3,734	National
9	<a href="http://www.ntv.com.tr">www.ntv.com.tr</a>	1,593,184	National
10	<a href="http://www.tgrthaber.com.tr">www.tgrthaber.com.tr</a>	1,020,399	National
11	<a href="http://www.abcgazetesi.com">www.abcgazetesi.com</a>	107,478	National
12	<a href="http://www.ajanshaber.com">www.ajanshaber.com</a>	231,550	National
13	<a href="http://www.akşamgazetesi.com">www.akşamgazetesi.com</a>	73,527	National
14	<a href="http://www.aydinlik.com">www.aydinlik.com</a>	125,561	National
15	<a href="http://www.denge.com">www.denge.com</a>	23,398	Local
16	<a href="http://www.bomba32.com">www.bomba32.com</a>	59,521	Local
17	<a href="http://www.cumhuriyet.com">www.cumhuriyet.com</a>	1,405,011	National
18	<a href="http://www.haber3.com">www.haber3.com</a>	264,664	National
19	<a href="http://www.haber24.com">www.haber24.com</a>	8,539	Local
20	<a href="http://www.haberler.com">www.haberler.com</a>	2,213,000	National
21	<a href="http://www.yeniakit.com">www.yeniakit.com</a>	775,465	National
22	<a href="http://www.hurriyet.com">www.hurriyet.com</a>	2,947,206	National
23	<a href="http://www.ahaber.com">www.ahaber.com</a>	1,320,194	National
24	<a href="http://www.kayserianadoluhaber.com">www.kayserianadoluhaber.com</a>	2,501	Local
25	<a href="http://www.kayseridenizpostası.com">www.kayseridenizpostası.com</a>	26,362	Local
26	<a href="http://www.milliyet.com">www.milliyet.com</a>	2,041,521	National
27	<a href="http://www.sabah.com">www.sabah.com</a>	2,985,816	National
28	<a href="http://www.sondakikatürk.com">www.sondakikatürk.com</a>	149,098	National
29	<a href="http://www.türkiyehaber.com">www.türkiyehaber.com</a>	1,787	National
30	<a href="http://www.yeniasır.com">www.yeniasır.com</a>	39,092	National

## Coding Process

The coding process was undertaken three times in accordance with the study design. First, the students manually coded the article's themes. The students took each of the news articles and investigated its discourse with a feminist approach, identifying the common themes among them. The students were instructed to take sentences as sampling units to focus on the reporting style, news sources, type of violence, and trivialization of the violence against women. From the 55 articles, the students determined four main codes through their analysis. One of the main codes was a "sensational" reporting style that the students commonly found among the news stories. The students found out that in order to attract the audience's attention, reporters commonly applied this type of reporting in the headlines along with exaggerated expressions (such as "bloody", "massacre", etc.) to label the cases of violence towards women. "Victim blaming" is the second main code the students indicated in regard to reporting on violence, which means that women were usually blamed for their victimization among the news stories. Women were blamed for not being "normal" women, and for deserving violence from their partners. Through these news stories, the notion of ideal womanhood is reconstructed accordingly. Third, the students identified the "excuses for perpetrator" as another main code. Reasons like "loosing temper", "honor", "social oppression" etc. were presented by the news stories as an excuse for violent action against women. It was found out that women mostly experienced violence at the hands of their husbands, boyfriends, and relatives, although the "intimacy with victim" appeared to be the fourth main code from the student's analysis. As it is mentioned in the literature review, most of the women face violence from intimate partner. With this code, we would like to investigate the truth of this assumption here, therefore we added this code as a separate code to evaluate.

The second coding process emerged from the analysis of the articles through the computer-assisted pilot work. For this coding process, each news article was segmented into headlines, subheads, and the main texts, and one unit was examined after another in regard to the determining of codes. Creswell (2009, p. 187) indicates that codes used in news analysis emerge from both data analysis and the adopted theoretical perspective. Both of the two ways were used during the coding process. The codes of "sensationalization", "victim blaming", "excuses for the perpetrator", and "intimacy with the victim" were found through both a theoretical perspective and through data analysis, while certain sub-codes were determined through the data-driven analysis of the selected articles.

At the end of the coding process, five main codes and 31 sub-codes were determined from the analysis of the articles. The five main codes include "encouraging violence", "making

violence acceptable”, “intimacy to victim”, “news sources”, and “type of violence”. “Using sensational expressions”, “giving details of actions”, and “mocking the violence case” were determined as the sub-codes of the first main code “encouraging violence”. “Excuses for the perpetrator”, “victim blaming”, and “trivialized violence” were determined as the sub-codes of the second code “making violence acceptable”. Another strategy that was applied throughout the majority of the reporting was giving details of the perpetrator’s action. Accordingly, women become the object of the violence once again through the mocking of the violence case in the articles. The reasons for violent action were shown to be jealousy, a concern with honor, divorce and social oppression. In contrast to this, women were usually blamed for their victimization in the news articles; the websites emphasized the so-called faults of the women victims to legitimate the violence against them. The women victims were blamed for drinking and/or using drugs or for being flirtatious at the time of the incident in the articles.

Through assessment of the news stories, it was discovered that women are mostly exposed to violence by individuals who are familiar to them. Therefore, “intimacy with the victim” was accepted as the third main code according to the analysis; accordingly, “husband/ex-husband”, “father”, “son”, “brother”, and “acquaintance” were determined as the sub-codes of the third main code. “News source” is the fourth main code according to the analysis; accordingly, “perpetrator”, “government agencies”, “neighbors”, “relatives”, “friends”, “victim” were determined as the sub-codes of the fourth main code. Police and officials are also most likely to be quoted or paraphrased in news coverage of femicide or used as a news source in media frames (Richards et al., 2014, p.27). Through the coding process, it can be seen that, in most femicide incidents, the perpetrator’s explanations from police records were used as a news source. Furthermore, different news sources such as government agencies, neighbors, relatives were the secondary sources. To add this, it was revealed that women were often killed not only by their partners, but that they were also raped, injured, abused, or killed by those individuals with whom they have a close relationship. Accordingly, “intimacy with the victim” becomes even more important when violence is perpetrated by people who are close to the victim.

The third coding process was realized through the analysis of the 150 news items in the main study. Through this coding process, it was revealed that “using sensational expressions”, “giving details of action”, “mocking with the violence case”, “victim blaming”, “trivializing violence”, “intimacy with the victim”, “news sources”, “the type of the violence” and “reasons for the act of violence” were the common codes among all the articles. Accordingly, these codes were taken as variables in the main phase. Accordingly, the sub-codes related with the main

variables were defined in this part of the study. The sub-codes of “intimacy with the victim” were defined as including “husband or ex-husband”, “boy-friend or ex-boyfriend”, “father”, “brother”, “son”, “relatives”, “acquaintance”, “stranger”. The sub-codes of “news sources” were determined as “perpetrator”, “government agencies”, “neighbors”, “relatives”, “friends” and “victim”. With the assessment of the articles, it became clear that perpetrator’s explanations, were commonly used as news sources, and that the reasons behind the action of violence were explained as an excuse. Therefore, “jealously”, “honor”, “the man’s honor”, “a broken up relationship with the lover”, “alcohol/drug addiction”, “psychological problems”, “financial reasons”, “the disobedience of the victim”, “being divorced from the husband” were determined as the sub-codes of the “reasons for the act of violence”. In most of the research on the representation of VAW, “femicide” is commonly defined as a major violence type. Comparatively, though, it can be seen that there are other types of violence than “femicide”, which have not been usually taken in to consideration as a phenomenon in the research on VAW. According to the analysis, it was discovered that “rape”, “abuse”, “violence”, “injured” were the main other ways of VAW.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Over all the reports, the code of sensational reporting comes first (42%, n=63), followed by giving details of the act of violence (32%, n=49). Trivializing violence is the third most frequently mentioned code at a rate of 30% across all the news stories. Of all the news reports, only a minority included the mocking with the violence case (15%, n=23) and victim blaming (14%, n=21) codes. Among the news sources, a majority of the reporters (38%, n=57) used perpetrators as the news source, while only a few used victims (12%, n=8). The Results showed that most v cases of violence that were reported by the articles were that of femicide (68%, n=102), while a minority were that of rape (4.7%, n=7). The most significant result belongs to the “intimacy with the victim”, and according to the analysis, women (62.7%, n=94) were mostly exposed to violence by their family members. It is assumed that reporting habits may differ depending on the type of violence. As a result, it was revealed that “sensational reporting” was seen most in femicide cases (41%, n=51), followed by “giving details of action” (38%, n=49). None of the reports referred to a helpline service for women readers who might have been exposed to such violence. Furthermore, none of the reports consulted professionals specialized in VAW as a news source.

### **Sensationalism in news reporting**

This study found that sensational reporting is the most commonly used strategy when reporting cases of violence against women in news websites. This code was emerged 45 times

in the pilot study and 63 times in the main study. In order to attract the audience's attention to the news, news reporters mostly romanticized violence as being part of a love story. In parallel with this framing of the violence, they preferred to call the perpetrator as a "mad hubby", "crazy lover", or a "jilted boyfriend" like in tabloid news writing. In addition to this, a pornographic language about violence was also seen to occur through the sensational reporting style of the selected articles, wherein such sensational expressions such as "mow down", "blood freezing", "bloody smell", "nude body searched" are often used in order to describe actions of violence, thereby perpetuating further violence. The sensationalization and dramatization of cases of violence in news articles presents women as victims.

### **Giving details of the action**

In the analysis, it was found that 27 news articles in the pilot study were related with the "giving details of action" code, while 49 articles in the main study were related with the "giving details of violence" code. Regarding the realization of the act of violence such phrases as "bowstring", "killed with stabbing", "mow down", "shot with pump rifle", "shattered skull", "chop a feel during the body search" etc. were found as commonly used reporting strategies. The news reporters also included certain idioms of the patriarchal discourse (such as "dragging away by holding her hair"). Consequently, the patriarchal ideology is strengthened through such news reporting, while the audience is reminded of traditional gender roles. Therefore, the media has become a vehicle of the patriarchal ideology, concerning the selection of culturally constructed words, idioms, and expressions.

### **Mocking with the violence case**

In the analysis, it was revealed that 16 articles in the pilot study and 23 articles in the main study were related to the "mocking with the violence case" code. News reporters consulted to ironic expressions such as "announced the murder over what's up", "coming for murdering", "murder of chopped hand", "served his wife coffee with acid in it", among other examples in the narration of the news stories. Women were presented as objects in the news stories by mocking the violence to which they have been exposed.

### **Victim blaming**

Most women faced violence at the hands of their family members, most of which was said to be undertaken in the name of familial honor in the news articles. Women were accused of going home with a man, being out at night alone, provoking their partners, talking to men and being disobedient towards their family members. The Domestic Violence Report in Turkey (2014) found out that women living in rural areas, as compared with those living in urban areas, are more apt to keep quiet in front of their husbands and to control their behaviors so as not to

be exposed to violence at their husbands' hands. VAW is supported through traditional gender roles in Turkey. Maternity and being a good wife are seen as the predominant roles of Turkish women. Women are raised and supported to be "good mothers and wives" in their respective families. Women who refuse to obey these roles are labeled as being marginal, odd, or as being selfish by society. An echo of this phenomenon was seen in the reporting style of the analyzed news articles through "victim blaming" code. In the pilot work, 13 news articles were found to be related to the "victim blaming" code, while 21 articles in the main study were related to this code.

### **Trivializing violence**

Of the 55 articles in the pilot study, "trivializing violence" was found to occur 16 times, while it was found to occur 46 times among the 150 articles in the main study. Cases of violence were commonly reported using certain expressions like "still femicide".

### **Intimacy with the victim**

In the assessment of the news stories, it was discovered that women are mostly exposed to violence by the people around them. As a result of the pilot work, it was revealed that, in 32 cases, women were exposed to violence at the hands of their family members. Among the code of the intimacy with the victim, women were mostly exposed to violence at the hands of their husbands or ex-husbands. In the assessment of those articles selected for the main analysis, it was seen that 47.3% (n=71) of women were killed or injured by their husbands or ex/husbands, while 14% (n=21) were killed or injured by their boyfriends or ex-boyfriends.

### **News sources**

In most of the cases across the articles, news reporters preferred using perpetrator's explanations from police records as the news source. Accordingly, audiences witnessed these cases from the perpetrator's perspective. Of those 55 articles included in the pilot study, perpetrators are used as a news source in 18 cases; comparatively, of those cases included in the main study, reporters consulted to perpetrator's explanations in 57 examples. Government agencies were the second most used news source among all the articles analyzed in both the pilot and the main studies. By the main study, it was discovered that in 41 cases (27.3%) news reporters consulted to governmental sources.

### **Type of violence**

Concerning the type of the violence, a significant majority of violence cases in both the pilot study (31.3%) and the main study (68.5%) were that of femicide. A small proportion of the news stories across all the articles (4.7%, n=7) concerned rape cases. Among all the news reports, eight cases were found to be related to abuse (5.3%) while seven cases were incidents

of injury (4,7%). Concerning the reporting style used to cover the type of the violence, it was revealed that media reporters mostly used sensational expressions, as was identified for 41 femicide cases. Besides a sensational reporting style, news writers reported 38 femicide incidents by giving details about the violence.

### **Reasons for the act of violence**

VAW has cultural roots and stems from the patriarchal structure, and this needs to be investigated. It is revealed that in most of the news narratives, violence demonstrated as a result of the perpetrator's uncontrolled behavior. Throughout the analysis of the media reports, it was revealed that most news reporters referred to perpetrator's explanations, and that, in a majority of the articles, perpetrators claimed that they had been out of control when engaging in the violence concerned. Perpetrators' explanations, such as having psychological or economic problems, being addicted to drugs or alcohol, or attacking out of jealousy, were all used as alleged excuses for violence throughout the news stories. Several findings were revealed by the analysis of the news reports: first, a majority of the news reports claimed that perpetrators had been violent because of jealousy (38.7%, n=58); second, most women were found to have been exposed to violence after divorcing their partners (12.7%, n=19); third, it was found that the three most commonly given reasons for VAW were of similar frequency. These three reasons include honor (9.3%, n=14), disobedience (7.3%, n=11), and the man's honor (6.7%, n=10).

### **Conclusion**

In this study, it was found out that "victim blaming", "sensational reporting", "trivializing violence", and "perpetrator's excuses" were the most commonly used strategies in news narratives of cases of violence against women. According to the findings of this research, in the sampled online news items, women were said to display 'unapproved' behavior such as provoking their partners, divorcing their husbands, leaving home, and leaving their partners for another person etc. Therefore, women were blamed for being the targets of acts of violence simply on the grounds that they deserved it. With these news stories, women are reminded of the existing gender roles through the emphasis on social roles derived from cultural norms.

In contrast, when trying to find the reasons for violence, news writers mostly consulted to perpetrators and their excuses when reporting violent incidents in their news stories. Among the assessment of the articles, violence was clarified by unemployment, alcohol addiction or psychological problems as a personal matters. This may stem from the fact that "violence against women" is still comprehended as a personal matter instead of being a broader social problem in Turkey.

It was found out that most reporters quoted or paraphrased governmental sources just because they defined these incidents as criminal cases. Therefore, the analysis showed that none of the news included the opinions of professionals, academicians, or individuals from non-governmental organizations working on VAW. Representations of cases of violence against women promote and encourage violence through news websites. In this respect, using a “sensational”, “humorous”, and “inspiring” reporting style in cases of violence has become in common among news websites.

However, the mocking of cases of violence code was not commonly used strategies in the articles, the existence of this code demonstrates that women are humiliated by the ironic expressions in news reporting. News professionals, consciously or unconsciously, presents women as sufferers of being helpless, doomed and gloomy in the articles. In their reporting, news editors are using a language with which women are victimized through the use of sensational expressions, misogynic idioms, and metaphors.

Although journalism technology is changing, with new possibilities being offered by internet journalism, reporting habits nevertheless remain the same as they were with traditional printed media. It was expected that online journalism would submit an alternative reporting style, one that treats all social groups more justly. Unfortunately, commercial concerns again got a head of ethic codes and values for online news media. Online news media professionals preferred sensational reporting style to attract attention their audience on VAW cases.

This study has offered a fine-grained analysis of how women victims of domestic violence and their perpetrators are discursively framed by 30 Turkish news websites online. In this study, 30 news websites were selected during one month because only one researcher conducted the work, which is the limitation of the study. In further studies, the selection might be widened and included from different media platforms in online. Our findings are consistent with predominant strategies reported by online mainstreams news media concerning victim blaming, sensational reporting, trivializing violence and perpetrator’s excuses. Furthermore, finding out the motives of journalists while using these strategies in their articles on VAW incidents would make an important research contribution.

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