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Framing Femicide in Italian Newspapers

Media Narratives and Young Adults' Interpretations

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ABSTRACT

In the past few decades, the Italian media landscape has persistently misrepresented gender-based violence (GBV), reflecting deeply rooted patriarchal socio-cultural patterns. This project aimed to explore how media outlets develop, frame, and construct strategic narratives around GBV in Italy, and how these media narratives are interpreted by young adults. Rather than establishing a general causal influence on Italian public opinion, this study highlights the specific ways young participants respond to and decode these media frames.

The project conducted a qualitative analysis, collecting data from seven articles in three main Italian newspapers — *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Corriere della Sera* — covering three cases of femicide that occurred between 2023 and 2025: Giulia Cecchettin, Sara Campanella, and Ilaria Sula. It also conducted two focus groups with participants aged 18–30 to understand first-hand perceptions and thoughts.

The analysis and findings of the research showed that focus group participants were more inclined to read news on social media than in newspapers, citing dissatisfaction with the narratives and language used in newspaper articles. Furthermore, the perceived politicisation of newspapers was another factor in their reading choices. Finally, participants reported feeling influenced by what is written in newspapers about femicide. However, they also used social media and expert commentary to gain additional perspectives.

The results suggest that, within the selected material, GBV and femicide narratives are still taboo subjects in Italian news, and that participants are turning to social media to get more points of view and to read and hear from people who are knowledgeable in the field. Ultimately, they suggest that raising awareness of GBV is essential to trigger significant change in newspapers, institutions, and individuals.

Introduction

The World Health Organization (2026) states that globally, nearly 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence. According to EIGE (2024a), in Italy, women accounted for 91% of police-recorded victims of sexual violence in 2022, while 48% of recorded victims of physical violence and 48% of recorded victims of psychological violence were women.

Although gender-based violence has always been part of our socio-cultural reality, it is only in recent decades that we have begun to talk about its recognition and understanding as a violation of human rights, but also as an oppressive and debilitating condition that affects not only women, but also people belonging to minority communities (UN Women, n.d.b). It is only with the advent of the exponential growth in the use of media and social media platforms that news and phenomena about gender-based violence and femicide have become frequent and widely communicated. Thanks to the instantaneous widespread dissemination of social media and the transition of newspapers to social media platforms, it has been possible to provide more targeted and detailed coverage of gender-based violence and the existence of patterns that are then found in premeditated acts, such as stalking, harassment and persecution, which in most cases precede femicide (Shahid and Rane, 2022). Despite the increased coverage of GBV and feminicide cases, which has also brought young people's attention back to newspapers, newspaper reporting can still lack substance and reliability in the eyes of some readers. This can be linked to the choice of vocabulary, the tone used, and the narrative structure that favours easy-to-read storytelling, with memorable headlines to attract the public's attention.

Additionally, the political orientation of a publishing house can influence readers' choices: Reho et al. (2025) classify *La Repubblica* and *La Stampa* as centre-left and *Corriere della Sera* as centre-right. The narrative and language choices adopted by newspapers can also shape how femicide cases are reported in Italy, as well as how the victim and perpetrator are portrayed. The perpetrator tends to be described in terms of his psychological and emotional state, in order to make the reader empathise with him, humanising him and justifying his actions (Belmonte and Negri, 2021), while the victim is portrayed as having emancipatory traits, those that would have elevated her above the perpetrator, and actions that would have triggered a *raptus* in her perpetrator (Capecchi, 2019).

Note on terminology. In international policy and scholarly frameworks, the terms *femicide* and *feminicide* are both recognised to describe the gender-motivated killing of women and girls, and they are used interchangeably in this study; the corresponding Italian legal term is *femminicidio* (UN Women, n.d.a).

The narrative decisions regarding femicides in Italian newspapers, and the way narratives are framed and manipulated, can shape readers' perspectives and understanding of GBV and

femicide in ways that could reflect patriarchal socio-cultural conditions, dissociating from the reality of a structural and systematic problem (DeKeseredy, 2022).

This project was created with the intention of examining how the most recognised Italian newspapers analyse and report on cases of gender-based violence and femicide, and how these narratives are interpreted by readers. According to Berger (2014), the choice and use of narrative and language is never neutral, but ideologically conveyed, not limiting itself to reporting only the facts but contributing to the creation and ideological shift of readers. The newspapers and cases of femicide under analysis and study are *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Corriere della Sera*, from which articles were extracted between November 2023 and August 2025 on Giulia Cecchettin, Sara Campanella, and Ilaria Sula, who had a substantial media impact due to the young age of the victims.

To further understand how this phenomenon occurs, the research explores not only media representation but also readers' perceptions.

The analysis of media production was carried out through media analysis, which examined the lexicon, tone, narrative structure, and the newspaper itself to understand how and whether newspapers offer readers reflections or awareness. The media analysis was then supplemented by focus groups with Italian participants, which provided a tool for gaining a deeper understanding of readers' emotional responses, interpretations, and their thoughts on the Italian journalistic landscape. This analytical combination provides an in-depth understanding of the cultural and political implications of media narratives, enabling us to examine the divergence (or convergence) between media discourse and social perception (Quarta, 2024).

The project first provides critical academic context on gender-based violence and its socio-cultural representation in Italian media and society, examining the cases of Giulia Cecchettin, Sara Campanella, and Ilaria Sula. It then details the qualitative research methodology – combining media discourse analysis with focus groups – before presenting empirical findings on how press narratives shape young readers' perceptions and ideologies.

In a society where the media is an integral part of our daily routine, bombarding us with news and facts every day, it is essential to be aware of what and how we read a particular article. Gender-based violence and femicide are still taboo subjects, on which there is still not enough awareness or education. Recognising the structural nature of gender-based violence, the Italian legal context has recently evolved. Italy introduced the specific offence of femicide through Law No. 181 of 2 December 2025, which officially entered into force on 17 December 2025 (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, 2025).

This research aims to contribute to the promotion of media research, advocating for urgent media responsibility in disseminating truthful and non-evasive facts and narratives, to build a society that is not afraid to expose itself.

Literature Review

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) has emerged as one of the most contested topics in socio-cultural and political discourse, raising persistent debates around its definition, causes, and institutional responses. Since its recognition at the international level — most notably through the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action — scholars have debated whether GBV should be understood as a structural, systemic issue rooted in patriarchal norms, or as a set of isolated incidents attributable to individual psychology (Kelly, 1988; DeKeseredy, 2022).

The structural interpretation holds that violence against women is not accidental but systematic, sustained by patriarchal institutions, cultural silence, and gendered power relations. Kelly's (1988) Continuum of Violence is central to this framework: GBV operates along a series of interconnected behaviours, from psychological manipulation and economic control to physical assault, all of which function as mechanisms of male domination. Gender, in this sense, is not merely a biological category but a social position shaped by intersecting axes of race, class, sexuality, and ability (Russo and Pirlott, 2006; Bows and Fileborn, 2022). The individualist interpretation, by contrast, attributes violence to personal factors such as psychological trauma, substance abuse, or emotional instability. Drawing on Sjøen and Mattsson's assertion that discourses surrounding terrorism can reify myopic, individualistic explanations of the phenomena that reproduce existing security "logic" (2023), framing GBV as a product of individual pathology depoliticises it, obscuring the structural, cultural, and institutional conditions that sustain it. The use of gender-neutral terminology such as "intimate partner violence" or "domestic abuse" further compounds this erasure by removing the gendered power asymmetry from institutional and media discourse (Davis, Mavisakalyan and Weber, 2024).

Media channels (television, print, and digital platforms) play a central role in shaping public understanding of GBV, not merely as neutral conveyors of information but as active participants in the cultural reproduction of gendered power relations (Scarcelli, Krijnen and Nixon, 2021). The language, imagery, and narrative structures deployed in media reporting significantly influence which forms of violence are deemed legitimate, which victims are considered credible, and which perpetrators are humanised or pathologised (Happer and Philo, 2013). Framing narratives is a critical mechanism in this process. As Rossoni and Campofreda (2023) demonstrate, media outlets tend to privilege stories that fit culturally recognisable patterns — the "ideal victim", the emotionally unstable perpetrator — narrowing the range of violence deemed reportable or newsworthy. On digital platforms, algorithmic filtering further amplifies this dynamic: content is curated based on engagement metrics that frequently reflect and reinforce existing biases, threatening the visibility of marginalised groups and the structural dimensions of GBV (Morgan and Hewitt, 2022).

A significant discursive strategy is linguistic avoidance — the selective use of language to sidestep direct attribution of gendered violence. In GBV reporting, this commonly manifests as the substitution of terms such as “male violence” with neutralising phrases like “domestic dispute”, or the dehumanisation of perpetrators through metaphors such as “monster” that paradoxically exclude them from ordinary social accountability (Belmonte and Negri, 2021). In both cases, men are rendered peripheral to the narrative. When perpetrators are named, media accounts frequently redirect attention to their mental state, socio-economic background, or emotional fragility, reframing violence as an aberration rather than a gendered pattern. A recurring media frame is the “crime of passion”. Monckton-Smith (2012) describes this narrative as portraying extreme violence against a partner as an uncontrollable emotional outburst, defined paradoxically as evidence of love. This framing minimises male accountability, obscures the premeditated and controlling nature of intimate partner violence, and normalises the possessive dynamics that typically precede lethal violence. As Meluzzi et al. (2021) demonstrate through analysis of Italian media, passive constructions and nominalisations frequently erase perpetrators from the syntactic structure of sentences, further diminishing their perceived responsibility in public discourse.

Italy offers a particularly instructive case study for examining the intersection of media framing, legal inadequacy, and entrenched patriarchal norms. Despite recent legal reform, including the creation of the specific offence of *femminicidio* under Article 577-bis of the Italian Penal Code in 2025 (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, 2025), GBV remains a systemic and widespread issue. According to EIGE (2024b), women represented 91% of victims of intimate partner homicide and 91% of police-recorded victims of sexual violence in 2022. Among women who turned to D.i.Re anti-violence centres in 2023, 82.2% had experienced psychological violence and 56.5% physical violence (D.i.Re, 2024). For instance, cases of illicit dissemination of sexually explicit images and videos fluctuated between 2020 and 2023, ultimately rising by 12% in 2023 following a previous decline, according to data compiled by Resistenza Femminista (2025).

The cases of Giulia Cecchettin (November 2023), Sara Campanella, and Ilaria Sula (April 2025) illustrate the tension between growing public awareness and persistent patterns of misrepresentation. All three victims were young women killed by a current or former intimate partner or stalker; all three cases generated substantial media coverage and public protest. Analysis of major Italian outlets — *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Corriere della Sera* — reveals a partial shift toward structural framing, yet long-standing patterns persist: perpetrators are described in terms of emotional instability or uncontrollable passion, while the sustained harassment and psychological violence that preceded each killing receive limited attention (Fusco, 2019; Saccà, 2024; Capecchi and Gius, 2023). Italian newspapers continue to obscure perpetrators through linguistic avoidance, shifting focus onto the victim’s behaviour, thereby reinforcing victim-blaming and the *delitto passionale* narrative (Saccà, 2024).

The Italian socio-cultural environment thus exemplifies the broader dynamic that this research addresses: the systematic displacement of GBV between individualised, privatised

explanations and structural accountability, reproduced through media framing, linguistic strategy, and cultural ideology. Critical discourse analysis of Italian media coverage of femicide offers a productive lens through which to interrogate these mechanisms and their consequences for public perception and institutional response.

Methodology

This project employs a qualitative research design, combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of newspaper media content with focus groups, to examine how Italian media frames gender-based violence and femicide and how these narratives are interpreted by young adults.

The media analysis draws on a purposive sample of seven articles published across three leading Italian newspapers — *La Repubblica* (Currò, 2023; Giannoli, 2025), *La Stampa* (Perina, 2023; La Stampa, 2023), and *Corriere della Sera* (Imarisio, 2023; Sacchettoni, 2025; Sirignano, 2025) — published between November 2023 and August 2025. Articles were identified via official newspaper archive searches using combinations of the victims' names ("Giulia Cecchetti", "Sara Campanella", "Ilaria Sula") and key search terms ("femminicidio", "omicidio", and "violenza di genere"). A purposive sampling strategy was applied to select seven representative articles based on their prominence, depth of narrative detail, and coverage of key reporting milestones across the three cases. The selected texts were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), focusing on the lexicon and framing devices used to describe victims and perpetrators. Main analytical themes were identified inductively during close reading, resulting in categories such as romanticisation and humanisation of the perpetrator, victim-blaming and secondary victimisation, and systemic structure and linguistic avoidance, which informed the four integrated themes presented in the findings.

To complement the media analysis and explore how individuals interpret and negotiate these narratives, two focus groups were conducted. Participants were recruited through university networking and chain-referral sampling, comprising ten young Italian adults aged 18–30 (five female, five male), selected to reflect a diversity of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Focus groups were conducted online via video call and lasted approximately 60–90 minutes each. They were held in Italian so that participants could express nuanced interpretations of the media texts comfortably; participant quotations are therefore presented here in English translation. Sessions were recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. The thematic analysis of the transcripts was structured around the core dimensions identified in the selected newspaper articles, specifically examining the choice of keywords, subject framing, and narrative dynamics surrounding feminicides. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, supported by informed consent documentation, and approved under the institutional MA dissertation ethics review process. It is important to note that this is an exploratory qualitative sample designed to gather first-hand insights into media decoding, rather than a statistically representative sample of all young Italians.

While this methodological combination offers depth of insight and contextual richness, it carries inherent limitations. Qualitative interpretation is shaped by the researcher's own position, and findings cannot be generalised beyond the sample. The relatively small focus

group size and the specific cultural and temporal scope of the media sample further constrain the breadth of conclusions that can be drawn.

Table 1. Newspapers included in the media analysis, with selection criteria.

NEWSPAPER	PERIOD COVERED	ARTICLES	SELECTION CRITERIA
<i>La Repubblica</i>	Nov 2023 – Aug 2025	2	– Print and digital articles covering the cases of Giulia Cecchettin, Sara Campanella, and Ilaria Sula. – Visibility and recognition in the Italian publishing landscape. – Historical influence among Italian readers. – Centre-left political orientation (Reho et al., 2025).
<i>La Stampa</i>	Nov 2023 – Aug 2025	2	– Print and digital articles covering the cases of Giulia Cecchettin, Sara Campanella, and Ilaria Sula. – Visibility and recognition in the Italian publishing landscape. – Historical influence among Italian readers. – Centre-left political orientation (Reho et al., 2025).
<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	Nov 2023 – Aug 2025	3	– Print and digital articles covering the cases of Giulia Cecchettin, Sara Campanella, and Ilaria Sula. – Visibility and recognition in the Italian publishing landscape. – Historical influence among Italian readers. – Centre-right political orientation (Reho et al., 2025).

Findings

The following section presents the findings drawn from the media analysis of selected articles across *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Corriere della Sera*, and from the thematic analysis of two focus groups conducted with Italian participants aged 18–30. Rather than presenting findings by method, this section organises them thematically to allow for a more integrated reading of how media representations of femicide are constructed and received. Four themes emerged from the data: perpetrator humanisation and psychological framing; insufficient attention to stalking, harassment, and premeditation; victim and perpetrator emotional imbalance; and young readers' declining trust in newspapers and their turn toward alternative sources.

Perpetrator Humanisation and Psychological Framing

Across the selected articles, a recurring tendency was observed to foreground the perpetrator's psychological and emotional state rather than the violent acts committed. In the selected *La Stampa* articles on the Cecchettin case, headlines focused on Filippo Turetta's study difficulties and psychological support, with one title describing him as attending therapy to discuss his "anxieties" (La Stampa, 2023). A *Corriere della Sera* article described him as "a shy and reserved boy, taciturn, passionate about motocross and trekking" (Imarisio, 2023), dedicating three paragraphs to his private life before his conviction. These framing choices suggest an attempt to humanise the perpetrator, emphasising emotional fragility over criminal responsibility, in line with Belmonte and Negri's (2021) analysis of linguistic avoidance in Italian press coverage.

Similar patterns were observed in the selected *Corriere della Sera* coverage of the Campanella case, where the suicide of the perpetrator was described as "an announced suicide", with references to his depression and lack of appetite. The article described his death as a "tragic end" (Sirignano, 2025), while giving limited attention to the year-long stalking and harassment Sara had endured. In the selected articles, the perpetrators' psychological decline was consistently framed in ways that, the findings suggest, risked repositioning them as subjects of empathy.

Focus group participants were acutely aware of these dynamics. Speaker III remarked: "I think they're afraid to say he was a psychopathic madman. Why do you have to tell me the story of the shy, skinny boy who played volleyball?" Speaker VIII observed that the journalistic choice to describe Turetta in ordinary terms "suggests that the problem is not systematic", while Speaker VI offered a contrasting reading, suggesting that portraying the perpetrator as outwardly normal could imply that "anyone could do something like that". These responses indicate that, among the focus group participants, the humanisation of perpetrators was interpreted in divergent ways, though a shared sense of critical unease was evident.

Insufficient Attention to Stalking, Harassment and Premeditation

In the selected articles, the findings suggest a tendency to omit or minimise the premeditated patterns of behaviour — including stalking, harassment, and persecution — that preceded the killings. In one *La Repubblica* headline, three forms of physical violence were listed (“killed, beaten or raped”) (Giannoli, 2025) without any reference to the psychological and coercive behaviours that had preceded them. This linguistic choice, as Lamb (1991) notes, reflects a broader media tendency to frame feminicide as an impulsive event rather than the culmination of a pattern of controlling behaviour, which risks reinforcing the perception of these cases as isolated incidents rather than expressions of a structural problem.

This pattern was also identified in the selected *Corriere della Sera* coverage, where the article on Argentino’s suicide gave limited attention to the stalking and harassment Sara Campanella had endured, focusing instead on his psychological deterioration in the period following his arrest. Among the focus group participants, this tendency to isolate the perpetrator from the broader context of gender-based violence (GBV) was a recurring point of discussion. Speaker VIII articulated this most directly: “There is always this pattern, as if the problem is always singular and not systematic in society. Because if you admitted that it’s a systematic problem of society, you’d have to blow up the whole society.” The findings suggest that this gap between the structural reality of GBV and its media representation is perceived by at least some readers as deliberate rather than incidental.

Victim and Perpetrator Emotional Imbalance

In the selected articles, the framing of victims and perpetrators frequently reflected an asymmetry in emotional and moral attribution. In the selected *La Stampa* coverage, a headline juxtaposed Giulia Cecchettin’s academic achievement with Turetta’s “obsession” and inability to “bear her success” (Perina, 2023), framing her ambition as a contextual factor in the events rather than an attribute independent of them. In the selected *Corriere della Sera* articles, Giulia was described as having “above-average intelligence” while also being portrayed as psychologically vulnerable due to her mother’s illness (Imarisio, 2023). These narrative choices, the findings suggest, reflect what Baiocco (2022) terms the “ideal victim” framework, in which victims are simultaneously elevated and rendered fragile, while perpetrators are partially absolved through references to emotional instability.

In the selected *La Repubblica* articles, this imbalance took a different form. One headline framed the case around commentary from the Italian national football coach (Currò, 2023), who used emotionally charged language to condemn perpetrators, while the body of the article made no direct reference to the specific circumstances of the Cecchettin case. The framing, which called on readers — particularly male readers — to “defend women and their freedom”, inadvertently reproduced a paternalistic narrative that positions women as passive objects of protection rather than autonomous subjects (Russo and Pirlott, 2006). In a further *La Repubblica* headline, the attribution of feminicide to the behaviours of “young boys” (Giannoli, 2025) suggested a generational rather than structural framing, which, as Meluzzi et

al. (2021) argue, diminishes awareness of the broader patriarchal conditions that enable GBV. Focus group participants reflected on this imbalance directly, with Speaker III noting that Giulia was “*blamed for being smart and confident*”, in contrast to Turetta, who was “*justified and humanised*”.

Young Readers’ Mistrust of Newspapers and Turn Toward Alternative Sources

A significant macro theme across both focus groups was a widespread scepticism toward Italian newspapers as reliable or neutral sources of information on GBV and femicide. Among the focus group participants, the majority reported not reading articles in full, preferring instead to consult summaries, social media posts, or podcasts produced by specialists perceived as more knowledgeable and politically independent. Speaker III stated a preference for “*neutral podcasts over newspapers*”, while Speaker V observed that newspapers had come to prioritise “*clickbait headlines*” over substantive content, “*devaluing journalism because it leaves no final reflection or awareness of any kind.*” Speaker VIII suggested that this dynamic was not incidental but structural, arguing that the production of easily consumable content served to create “*a citizen who is not interested in what we say, because that citizen exists only as a consumer.*”

The findings suggest that, among these participants at least, there is an emerging awareness of the political and commercial interests that shape newspaper coverage, with participants citing the ownership structures of the major Italian publishing groups as a factor in their distrust. Speaker IX drew an analogy between the credibility of sources and the incongruity of a sports interview being used to comment on a femicide case, suggesting that perceived authority and relevance of the source play a significant role in how readers form their opinions. While these findings cannot be generalised beyond the specific focus group sample, they indicate a shift in how a section of young Italian readers access and evaluate information on GBV — one that carries implications for the role of traditional media in shaping public discourse on the subject.

Final Discussion

The synthesis of findings from the media analysis and focus groups suggests that narrative structure, vocabulary, framing techniques, and publisher reputation are important factors in how participants interpret press coverage.

Syntactically, the selected coverage across *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Corriere della Sera* suggests that lexical choices in headlines can be used to evoke emotional responses rather than inform structural understanding. In the selected material, headlines featuring emotionally charged terminology appeared to appeal to reader curiosity and sensationalism. This was exemplified both in Currò (2023) – where commentary from national football coach Spalletti was used in an emotionally charged headline – and in Giannoli (2025), where the term *ragazzini* (“young boys”) introduced a generational framing. By framing femicide as a youth-centric or isolated emotional rupture, such reporting can obscure the systematic and structural reality of patriarchy.

The inclusion of focus group perspectives provided vital empirical insights into how young readers decode these media representations. The thematic analysis indicates a critical disconnect between traditional news construction and audience reception. Within these focus groups, participants recognised that mainstream coverage can isolate perpetrators, prioritise psychological justifications, and omit essential dynamics of premeditation and coercive control (Monckton-Smith, 2012). Several participants consequently described greater trust in alternative, expert-led digital spaces (Wu, 2017). Ultimately, participants’ responses suggest that perceptions of gender-based violence are shaped in part by whether press narratives frame violence as an isolated individual anomaly or as a systemic societal condition.

Recommendations for Journalists and Editors

The findings of this study point to a number of practical steps that journalists and editors covering femicide and gender-based violence in Italy could take to produce more responsible, accurate and structurally aware reporting.

Name the pattern, not just the act. In several of the selected articles, stalking, harassment and persecution were omitted or minimised despite being central to the cases analysed. Journalists should include the full chronology of coercive behaviour preceding a killing, making clear that femicide is rarely a spontaneous act but the endpoint of a documented pattern of violence.

Re-centre the victim. Coverage that dedicates significant space to the perpetrator's psychological state, hobbies or family background at the expense of the victim's life and experience risks humanising the perpetrator while rendering the victim secondary. Editors should actively audit the balance of attention given to each party before publication.

Avoid linguistic avoidance. Terms such as “crime of passion”, “*raptus*”, or “he could not bear her success” obscure perpetrator responsibility and reproduce patriarchal framings of GBV. Style guides should explicitly discourage language that attributes violent acts to emotional overflow or the victim's behaviour.

Contextualise within a structural framework. Framing each case as an isolated incident, driven by individual psychological dysfunction, prevents readers from understanding GBV as a systemic and cultural problem. Articles should include references to broader data on GBV prevalence and patterns, situating individual cases within a wider social context.

Be mindful of clickbait. Focus group participants identified sensationalised and emotionally charged headlines as one driver of their distrust in newspapers. Headlines should accurately reflect the content of the article and avoid using victims' names or distressing details purely to attract clicks.

Consult specialists. Participants expressed greater trust in podcasts and content produced by professionals with subject-matter expertise. Newsrooms covering GBV regularly should build relationships with gender-based violence researchers, legal experts and support organisations to ensure coverage is both accurate and contextually informed.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how gender-based violence and feminicide are framed within selected coverage from the mainstream Italian press, specifically *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, and *Corriere della Sera*, and how young Italian adults receive, decode, and critically evaluate these narratives. By combining Critical Discourse Analysis of seven selected articles with qualitative focus group research, the study identified a divergence within the selected material between the structural reality of gender-based violence and its fragmented, sensationalised representation in news coverage.

The central takeaway of this research is that the selected articles often depoliticise gender-based violence. Rather than interrogating the patriarchal structures that enable feminicide, the analysed narratives often default to linguistic avoidance, psychological humanisation of perpetrators, and moral evaluation of victims. This framing can obscure patterns of coercive control and premeditation, reducing systemic violence to isolated personal tragedies. In turn, this contributed to distrust among several focus group participants. Rather than accepting traditional news representations, participants exhibited active critical agency, rejecting sensationalist print media in favour of alternative, expert-driven digital channels that provide structural depth and contextual clarity.

These findings carry significant political, educational, and social implications. Gender-based violence cannot be addressed purely through legal reforms or sensationalised media reporting. While legislative advancements such as the penal recognition of feminicide represent progress, relying solely on criminal law risks masking the cultural roots of the phenomenon. This concern is further heightened by a 2025 change in data accessibility: the Ministry of the Interior's homicide monitoring, previously updated weekly, shifted to quarterly publication (Casula, 2025; Ministero dell'Interno, 2026), reducing the frequency of public updates and potentially limiting more timely monitoring and assessment. Combatting gender-based violence requires structural accountability across state institutions, media organisations, and educational frameworks, particularly through comprehensive affective and gender education in schools and universities.

To build upon this research, future academic inquiry should explore several critical avenues. Research on gender dynamics in newsrooms could investigate whether higher representation of female journalists and editors leads to structural changes in how gender-based violence is reported. Cross-platform narrative mapping could track the dissemination of feminicide narratives across visual and auditory media, including television broadcasting, dedicated true-crime podcasts, and social media platforms. Finally, longitudinal studies could examine how public discourse and media standards evolve following major legislative changes, grassroots feminist mobilisations, or targeted educational interventions in academic institutions.

Ultimately, addressing gender-based violence in Italy demands a fundamental transformation in how violence is communicated, understood, and structurally confronted. Deconstructing patriarchal narratives in the media is an important part of shifting public consciousness, helping coverage move away from voyeuristic consumption and toward institutional accountability and social change.

In Italy, gender-based violence is a profound problem that requires attention, both from individuals and from the highest institutions of the state. It is time for everyone to fully realise that isolating cases of femicide, without recognising the structural nature inherent in society, only feeds and reinforces the patriarchal system that we legitimise as part of our society.

Change is necessary to ensure that the deaths of Giulia, Sara and Ilaria were not in vain; to ensure that there is no longer any need to hide and be afraid. To be free.

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