

**FEMICIDE IN ROMANIA. SOCIAL REALITIES AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS
CASE STUDY: A FEMICIDE FROM AUGUST 2021 PRESENTED BY THE
MAINSTREAM MEDIA****DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26758/13.1.14>**

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Objectives. Femicide and violence against women (VAW) represent two phenomena with a major impact concerning the public health, women rights and the freedom of speech. This article aims to capture the manner in which a Romanian femicide case is framed in news reporting, the depictions of the victim and the abuser and the context, sources, language used in media news reporting on femicide.

Material and methods. The analysis emphasizes media patterns (frames, portrayals, linguistic structures), which represent an important instrument in shaping public opinion and awareness. For this study, there were selected 20 articles which present a Romanian femicide case - August 2021. In order to get specific results, there were used two qualitative methods - critical discourse analysis and frame analysis.

Results. Media news were analyzed from several points of view: the general context, the representation of the victim and of the perpetrator, the narrative of the event, the management of voices which appear during the description of the event and the language used by the journalist. The key findings show that femicide articles published in Romanian print media actualize the negative sensationalistic news tendency, detrimental to civic mobilization and public agenda change.

Conclusions. The denunciation of violence committed by men against women has been and continues to be one of the major issues of the contemporary society, which needs an appropriate mediatization and framing; violence against women and femicide were accentuated by the pandemic context as well as by the race, class, age of the abused women.

Keywords: violence against women, femicide, media discourse, COVID-19 crisis.

Introduction

Violence against women represents a social problem that - during the last decades - drew the attention of the researchers from many fields: sociology, communication, linguistics, psychology, etc. This variety of perspectives shows that violence against women represents an important subject which needs to be present in the public debates because "it is inextricably tied to issues of power and control" (Weil, 2020, p.112).

The denunciation of violence committed by men against women has been and continues to be one of the major issues of the contemporary society, polarized on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, class. Raised by the feminist movement of the 1970s and based on a questioning of the opposition between public space and private space, between public questions with which society must be concerned and private questions kept in silence, feminist reflections have highlighted the "banality" of the different forms of violence committed by men against women - harassment in the street or at work, domestic violence, sexual violence, but also verbal and psychological violence.

Elizabeth Stanko's book first published in 1985, "Intimate intrusions Women's experience of male violence" presents the victimization of women, focusing on the four main areas of incest, rape, physical violence, and sexual harassment. Based on participant observation and interviews with police forces, victims and others involved, the research examines women's experiences of male violence and the reactions of those to whom women complain, including police officers, judges and union officials. The book highlights the errors or indifference of the criminal justice system and administrative personnel institutions carrying *the male point of view*.

Three decades later, things haven't much changed, women are reluctant to fill a complaint against their violent partner, media representations are individualized events and not thematic approaches -deep analysis of social dramatic issues, the blame the victim frame continues to work. Jewkes and Linneman (2018) argue that "No one who lives in today's media-saturated society is immune to the winner-loser/self-other/insider-outsider culture - little wonder, then, that to many U.S. citizens, the police and criminal justice system are viewed as, at best, ineffective and, at worst, threatening".

Femicide – theoretical aspects

The first paradigmatic change appears with the designation of the phenomenon by introducing the name created to fill the gap in sociological and feminist research violence against women, domestic violence, intimate partner violence against women (late in the 70's members of the "women's movement" convinced the public to recognize the condition of "wife abuse" as a social problem).

The word "femicide" appeared for the first time in 1976, in Diana Russell's discourse in front of the International Tribunal for Crimes against Women (Lujan Pinelo, 2018, p.42). This word raised awareness among professionals from various fields that "the violent death of women was a crime per se, not to be confused with the gender-neutral term homicide" (Corradi & Stockl, 2014, p. 976). For hundreds of years, "the abuse of women, particularly by the male partners, was condoned socially as an acceptable way for husbands to discipline their wives" (Gillespie, Richards, & Givens, 2013, p.222). Feminist research emphasized the "internalized oppression" (Kanbur et al., 2021, p.444) of patriarchal ideology and the paradoxical relationship attacker/victim "women are most likely to be killed in a context of a continuing, physically abusive

relationship, whereas men are most likely to be killed by strangers or acquaintances" (Sela-Shayovitz, 2018, p.13).

Many researchers have also tried to find out why the aggressor ends up killing his partner: some pointed out that during their childhood they were abused, others pointed out that low levels of education would be one of the causes, and others indicated that mental problems and drugs abuse would be linked to the existence of such behavior (Dobash et al., 2004; Campbell, 2003; Belfrage & Rying, 2004; Aldrige & Browne, 2003 as cited in Balica, 2018, p.16). Although the number of women killed because of their gender is very high all over the world, other catastrophic events such as hurricanes, epidemics, pandemics, tsunamis, increase more the statistics and show the importance of rules and laws that should be implemented in this regard. Violence against women remains a *shadow pandemic* as it was designed by the UN secretary Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Femicide and domestic violence during COVID-19 pandemics

There are many similarities that could be seen when comparing coronavirus with femicide. Weil stated that "femicide, like the coronavirus, occurs in every society indiscriminately and spreads at an incalculable rate". Moreover, both phenomena are lethal and should be eradicated. There are also differences: while coronavirus is a disease that appeared suddenly, the femicide is a predictable matter, that coexists with the world's population since forever (Weil, 2021, p. 110).

During pandemics, the number of victims who suffered because of their intimate partner's violent behavior increased all over the world (Campbell, 2020; Kofman & Garfin, 2020; Peterman et al., 2020).

"Economic strains, confined quarantine conditions, increased time and tensions at home, closed schools, and limited access to an overwhelmed health system increased vulnerability and risks for different types of abuse" (Kanbur et al., 2021, p. 444). During the state of emergency, when the state authorities imposed numerous restrictive measures in order to reduce the number of coronavirus cases, the aggressors managed to control their victims much more easily. They "restricted their ability to ask for help and used various misinformation tactics, limiting their access to the media" (Campbell, 2020, p. 29). At the same time, during the pandemic, it was observed an increase in alcohol consumption (Usher, Bhullar, Durkin, Gyamfi, & Jackson, 2020, p.550). This finding was associated with the stress caused by the virus, with the insecure situation at work, with the routine at home, in the family.

In the whole world, during COVID-19 pandemics, it was perceived an increase in what concerns the cases of domestic violence and femicide. "It was estimated that domestic violence has increased with 30% in France and 18% in Spain" (Sharifi, Larki, & Roudsari, 2020, p.2377). Also, "in Brazil, the state hotline Ligue 180 reported an increase of 18% in calls in one week in March alone" (Weil, 2021, p.111). In Mexico, "the highest number of domestic violence cases was registered in March and comparing the first six months of 2020 with those of 2019, it can be observed a 25% increase during the pandemic" (Vasquez Correa, 2020, p.135). Countries such as Argentina, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom insisted that since the beginning of the pandemic there was a higher rate of femicides. In Romania, during the pandemic, the press drew attention to the very large number of cases of femicide and cases of domestic violence. Approximately 4860 protection orders were issued, 72 Romanian women died as a result of abuse suffered by their partners, and approximately 10,000 women suffered trauma due to physical violence throughout 2020 (Cojan, 2021).

Femicide in media

Nowadays, media has a significant role in our society, because it decides what kind of news are worthy of publicity or not. "A media organization prefers to cover crime events since this type of coverage is convenient, newsworthy and contributes to sales, while the public requires these reports in order to gain a view about this problem" (Sela-Shayovitz, 2018, p.16). Generally speaking, the violent issues are preferred by the audience due to the fact that they evoke fear and curiosity in the same time.

When presenting a killing of a woman, mass media tends to use specific tools, vocabulary, methods, in order to draw attention to that article. There was observed that sometimes the femicides in media are described as "crimes of passion", sustaining that "both members of the couple are equally considered victims of the situation, and responsible for its dramatic consequences" (Gius & Lali, 2014, p. 57), which is not always true. Over time, researchers have shown that articles published by the media, which approach issues related to domestic or domestic violence have often focused on "severe forms of violence, fatal incidents, acts of violence committed by women, or accidental situations of violence" (Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008; Marhia, 2008; Mason & Monckton-Smith, 2008; Morgan, Politoff, 2012; Sims, 2008 as cited in Sutherland, McCormack, Easteal, Holland, & Pirkis, 2016, pp.6-7). Moreover, they also showed that the language used by the authors of the articles is used to shock, fascinate or entertain, as well as to undermine the true nature of the crime, to compromise the real impact of the crime.

Regarding the violence and femicides, journalists focus in particular on some issues in order to draw the public's attention: "blaming the victim, perpetuating the myths of domestic violence, (...) transforming the facts to fit the values and style building a news story" (Easteal, Holland, Dunne Breen, Vaughan, & Sutherland, 2018, p. 2). The absence of a presentation of the social context highlights the fact that incidents are treated discreetly, from an individual perspective, without taking into account social responsibility. In some articles it has been noted that victims are presented as accomplices to their own killing, and other episodes of domestic violence in their past are silenced (Saroca, 2013, as cited in Easteal et al., 2018, p. 2).

When speaking about blaming the victim, it was envisaged a dichotomy between direct and indirect victim blaming. The indirect victim blaming strategies used in the articles published in the media refer to the development of excuses for the perpetrator, portraying them as victims themselves by presenting the case in such a manner as to bring sympathy to the killer (Taylor, 2009, p.25; Richards, Gillespie, & Smith, 2011, p.182). In addition, the aggressor is described as a person who loved the victim so much that he could not live without her after a divorce, a separation, etc. The direct victim blaming strategies include a negative characterization of the victim – suspicion of infidelity, her general behavior, her love affairs, etc. (Taylor, 2009, p.25; Richards et al., 2011, p. 182).

If previous research (Morgan & Politoff, 2012) found out that media coverage presented VAW incidents as isolated, event based rather than as a pervasive social issue with gendered political drivers, some recently published empirical study (Sutherland et al., 2016) also confirm a new trend. In that study of print, broadcast and online news published in 2015, the proportion of newspaper articles that were events based only was 38.7 per cent, with the reminder either partially or wholly thematic (Sutherland et al., 2016, p.15).

Simons and Morgan (2017) define the journalism devoted to social change as "useful journalism" (other researchers label it alternative journalism). This kind of journalism "focuses on a particular cause or issue with the objective of achieving societal change and where the media

platform transparently declares its objective" (Simons & Morgan, 2017). Such a media campaign usually includes informing the public, investigation, analysis and perhaps most relevantly here, social empathy — the method of using individual stories to create collective yearnings for social change (Schudson, 2008).

Material and methods

At the social level, naming a problem may lead to the formulation of a solution (Mehrotra, 1999, as cited in Simons & Morgan, 2017). "That is why the ways in which the news media choose to frame domestic violence influences the public's perception of the phenomenon as well as solutions, and public responsibility".

Despite socio-cultural and statistical differences men's violence against women is normalized, tolerated and justified, and there is a lack of truly proactive and state initiatives to protect women's right to life (Garcia-Moreno & Stockl, 2013; Ingala Smith, 2018).

Femicide, like any other form of men's violence, reflects macro-level socio-political and economic institutions and formal and informal beliefs and stereotypes, which are disseminated normalized or challenged in the *deep mediatization society* (Hepp, 2020).

The current analysis emphasizes media patterns (frames, portrayals, linguistic structures), which represents an important instrument in shaping public opinion and awareness.

The media was identified as all but ignoring the misogynistic motivations of men who killed women, therefore overlooking the sexual politics of femicide and contributing to the maintenance of patriarchy and simultaneously that of men's violence against women (Ingala Smith, 2018, p.162). For Radford and Russell (1992) naming and defining femicide was crucial in order to promote awareness and generate resistance.

For this analysis, there were selected 20 articles which present a femicide that took place at the middle of August 2021. When the corpus was established, it was observed that many online journals or publications treated this issue, which was considered an important event, that received, apparently, a high level of attention from the journalists across the country. Taking into consideration that this analysis represents an exploratory study, there were included the first 20 articles, which appeared on Google, using a specific phrase: "teacher killed by her husband 2021", considering that after the first results, the research will be expanded. Moreover, it must be emphasized the distinction between the quality press vs. tabloid press. Out of these 20 articles, 4 were published on websites representing the tabloid press, such as Click, Cancan, Spynews, Wowbiz and the other 16 were published online, on websites representing the quality press.

In order to analyse this specific case, first of all, the critical discourse analysis will be used. This method offers the possibility to "explore unclear causal and deterministic relationships between discursive practices, events and texts, but also between cultural structures, relationships and processes to investigate how these practices, events or texts appear and are modeled. ideological view through power relations" (Fairclough & Holes, 1995, p.32 as cited in Mardhyarini & Ariyanti, 2015, p. 66). On the other hand, through discourse analysis, it will be possible to identify the strategies and enunciation marks used by journalists in transmitting information to the general public. At the same time, using this method, it can be emphasized that discourse is "an instrument of control and social action, which works to support a particular institution, organization or ideology" (Fernandez Martinez & Trujillo Gonzalez, 2012, p.206).

In media and communication studies, framing is included as a strategic action involving the conscious choice of words and indicators supposed to produce certain effects, namely the

highlighting of certain aspects of a theme (De Vreese, 2005; Entman, 1993). Frame analysis, the second method that will be used, distinguishes between generic frameworks (human interest, economic consequences, conflict, responsibility, morality detectable in all categories of news) and specific ones (Roventă-Frumușani & Ștefănel, 2017). It will be significant to emphasize the interplay between generic frames and specific ones in the area of VAW.

In addition, Bullock and Cubert (2002) identified four media frames that were mainly used in presenting VAW news. These frames were (1) a police frame or "just the facts" (2) a frame indicating that the current event involved people that are different from "us" (3) a frame that blamed the victim and/or excused the perpetrator, and (4) a frame that implied shock at the identification of the perpetrator because of his normalcy.

Focusing specifically on femicide, Taylor (2009) examined 6 years (1995-2000) of newspaper coverage in the Orlando Sentinel resulting in an analysis of 292 articles representing 168 cases. Taylor observed whether or not cases of femicide were presented as domestic violence. She found that violence was mentioned ambiguously in 42 articles (usually through a vague description of the event as "some type of domestic incident") and in an equal-blame or neutral manner in 57 articles.

The entire analysis will follow a well-established path, determined by the five frames elaborated by Gillespie et al. (2013). As such, the main areas of interest will be the following: (1) focus on the behavior of the victim, including the indirect or direct victim blaming; (2) on observing if normalizing the event as commonplace could be discussed; (3) about suggesting the incident was an isolated event; (4) about indicating the victim and/or perpetrator are somehow different from the norm; and (5) about asserting that domestic violence perpetrators are "disordered" and should be easily identifiable (Gillespie et al., 2013, p. 227).

Previous research indicates two distinct presentations of intimate partner homicide in the news: a majority of articles portrays intimate partner homicide as general homicide and a minority of articles portrays intimate partner homicide as domestic violence.

One of the most underutilized sources regarding domestic violence is those with an educated opinion and informed background in the problem, such as victim advocates or academic researchers (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Byerly, 1994; Meyers, 1997; Taylor, 2009).

The linguistic choices and discourse strategies are also relevant. For example, it was often the case that headlines failed to include linguistic indicators that distinguished an intimate partner homicide from a homicide between strangers (Bullock & Cubert, 2002).

Because media are able to legitimize some views and to marginalize others, the news media are an important part of this framing process. Surette (2007) suggests that the media function as a filter in this capacity.

Moreover, it will be observed if there can be envisaged some marks of sensationalism, since journalists focus, in particular, on several aspects to attract the public's attention, such as: "blaming the victim, perpetuating the myths of domestic violence, the absence of the social context in which the violent episode takes place, sensationalism through the language used, transforming the facts and the style used to build a news story" (Easteal et al., 2018, p.2). Other researchers showed that the language used by the authors of the articles is used to shock, fascinate or entertain, as well as to undermine the true nature of the crime, to compromise the real impact of the crime (Carlyle, Slater, & Chakroff, 2008; Marhia, 2008; Mason & Monckton-Smith, 2008; Morgan & Politoff, 2012; Sims, 2008 as cited in Sutherland et al., 2016, pp. 6-7).

It was observed, that in press articles, the sources which are mostly mentioned or quoted are the police, the politicians, the perpetrator or the judge (Sutherland, Easteal, Holland, &

Vaughan, 2019, p. 5). As a matter of fact, it could be perceived as a disproportion, because the voices of the victim or of a domestic violence advocate are not paraphrased or included to such an extent in the media articles (Sutherland et al, 2019, p. 6).

Each article was read for content specifically relating to the three components of domestic violence frames, sources of information, language (e.g., word choice in titles, characteristics of the victim and perpetrator), and context (e.g., couple's history, perpetrator's history of violence).

Research questions

1. How are Romanian femicide cases framed in news reporting?
2. How are the victim and the abuser presented in femicide cases?
3. What is the context, the sources, the language used when presenting a femicide?

Results

The femicide which will be analyzed in this section presents a couple who had two girls and was getting a divorce, because they were no longer getting along. They lived in Bucharest, the woman worked as a kindergarten teacher and the man was previously jurist and, in some articles, it stated that actually he worked as taxi driver and in others that he was unemployed. In order to follow the aspects mentioned in the methodological part, the actors, the events, the language used, the experts and the presence or absence of sensationalism will be taken into consideration.

The type of article

When speaking of the type of article, the reference is mainly made to the category in which each article is included when entering on the website. It was observed that only one article was included in the "social" section; the other ones were uploaded on the "actuality", "events", "news", "national", "internal news" or "trending" sections. The "national" category appeared on the websites that published mainly events that happened in a specific county. The most frequent category was "actuality" and explanation for this could be the fact that the publication wants to draw attention on something that happened recently and that needs to be known by the whole audience.

The representation of victim and perpetrator. Linguistic strategies, labels

It was observed that both, the victim and the aggressor, were described in different ways by using different kind of nouns (Table 1). It can be seen that the journalists insist mainly on the profession of both persons, on their spousal relation, on the existence of the children and finally on the fatal incident, which led to a relation "victim" vs. "perpetrator". At the same time, it could be mentioned the fact that the name of the victim appeared more frequently than the name of the aggressor and also that there can be envisaged three kinds of articles: those where it can be found both names, those where we cannot find any name and those where it is present the victim's name. Moreover, the journalists published also photographs with the victim and with the aggressor in order to offer a complete image of the couple, without taking into consideration the negative consequences of posting publicly this kind of content for the children or for the rest of the family.

Table 1*The representation of victim and perpetrator*

Victim	Perpetrator
"mother"	"husband"
"woman"	"ex-husband"
"victim"	"suspect"
"Kindergarten teacher"	"criminal"
"ex-wife"	"perpetrator"
"Liliana"	"killer"
"Liliana Faur"	"man"
"devil"	"father"
	"Valentin Nicușor Faur"
	"taxi driver"
	"executioner"
	"devil"

All articles attach big importance to the professions practiced by the couple. While the victim was a kindergarten teacher, the aggressor graduated from the Law School, practiced for a short period of time in this field as jurist and then he became taxi driver. Related to his decline, in some articles, it can be underlined some indirect victim-blaming strategies that try to justify the inappropriate behavior of the perpetrator: "because he was jealous", "he was very jealous", "few years ago, he killed their two-year-old boy in a car accident and after this, he was locked up in a hospital for therapy, since then he had never recovered", etc. The journalists try to find the reasons which pushed the man to kill his ex-wife, even though the couple was very known for the frequent misunderstandings they had.

On the other side, the victim is regarded as a woman who worked a lot for her children, who suffered a lot because of her ex-husband, but in some articles we can find the fact that "she wanted to start a new life with another man". In a specific article, it can be underlined the fact that the victim must respect some rules imposed by the perpetrator: she should wear only dark clothes which should fully cover her legs and arms. In each article it is mentioned the fact that the woman

had many protection orders on the name of the aggressor and also the fact that the eldest daughter had one order because her father beat her once.

The perpetrator describes in one article the victim, saying that she was "a devil with an angel's face, she did not accept under any circumstances the reconciliation, she was capable of unspeakable evil". At the same time, he stated that the victim beat him - he showed some scratches in order to prove the truth - and that he was affected because she demanded so many protection orders. Although the victim is dead, the perpetrator does not regret what he had done and even worse, he tries to accuse her. On the other side, any article does not present the statements of the victim from the moments she was alive.

In sum, it can be envisaged that the journalists emphasize certain aspects in describing the victim and the aggressor, such as: the gender, the profession, their spousal relationship, regarding the perpetrator mostly as an individual, as a separate instance, whereas the victim is part of a group (relatives, neighbors, authorities), who defend her and understand her terrible pain and sorrow.

The representation of the event

The relation between time and space is very important when presenting any kind of news. In this situation, the two axes are significant, because they can offer more details concerning the event: the crime took place in the second district of Bucharest in broad daylight. Even though the couple was getting divorce, the aggressor entered sometimes in the house where lived his wife and daughters in order to take a shower or change his clothes, aspect that can be perceived as an indirect victim-blaming strategy. The day when the crime occurred, he entered the house, talked with the victim, a new scandal began and he killed her. In some articles, the journalists mention that she was stabbed four times and the fatal coup was in her heart. This event is not described as an isolated one; many times, the relatives and the neighbors mentioned that the couple had always disagreements and that the perpetrator was known for having a violent behavior.

The voice of experts – primary source definers of violence - is being heard in five articles. The most frequently are quoted the statements of the police and of the courts, which mentioned that the investigations in this case had begun and also that the aggressor had over 10 criminal cases on his name for aspects related to domestic violence. Mentioning the high number of criminal cases and of protection orders, appears as normalized or predictable: the perpetrator was violent, he has already proved this to the police, victim, relatives, neighbors, etc. and the fatal incident was just the result of this big list of accusations. On the other side, a criminologist and a psychologist presented their opinions in this matter. The criminologist mentioned in the article published by *Observer News* underlined the frustration of the man, due to the fact that his wife proved her power by beginning the divorce procedures. In return, the psychologist whose opinion appears in the article published by *DC News* mentioned the illness of the whole system: even though the victim wants to get divorced, in the court, during the hearings, the couple is encouraged not to end the relationship, but to reconcile. In addition, the psychologist insists on the culpability of the police officers who should have taken action more rapidly in order to protect the victim.

Apart from the experts' voices, there are present the voices of relatives and neighbors, who are afraid of the perpetrator. The statement of the victim's brother reveals the violent behavior of the aggressor towards the victim. The neighbors and relatives insist on the jealousy towards the victim and towards other relatives of hers. The opinions of the neighbors and relatives are presented in eight articles. It should be mentioned the fact that the articles, which do not present

the views of the authorities or neighbors, have retrieved information from the other news, without mentioning explicitly the sources (institutions, psychologists or relatives).

In all the news that were analyzed, the description of the murder, does not refer to the tragedy as a "gender-violence case", a "femicide", "a masculine violence against the women".

Sensationalism

In order to draw attention of the public regarding the news, the journalists indicated certain myths of domestic violence (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013). The criminal was a father who lost his main job, being unemployed for a certain period of time and then becoming a taxi driver. He suffered from a mental breakdown following the accident in which he killed his two-year-old son. At the same time, he was a jealous person who did not agree that his ex-wife could begin a new life with another man. Those aspects reveal one of the myths of domestic violence, which is concentrated on the idea that usually domestic violence perpetrators have some mental problems or do not have the possibility to support their family.

On the other side, the sensationalism throughout the titles and the catchphrases used in order to make the reader more curious are also obvious. In some articles there are some expressions which indicate the opinion of the journalists, who evaluate the gravity of the incident, such as: "heinous crime", "the main suspect is the husband of the victim", "horrible crime", "shattering murder", "killed brutally", "died in terrible pain", "stabbed in heart", "he was the devil", "murdered in cold blood". This language is used in order to fascinate and stimulate the curiosity of the public towards the cruelty of the event. In many titles, it is mentioned the place where the crime happened – Bucharest –, feeling the necessity to underline the fact even if in the capital of the country this kind of incidents can happen.

Throughout the whole analysis, there were found some indirect victim-blaming strategies in order to excuse the behavior of the perpetrator, but there was not felt any kind of shock when identifying the aggressor, because the authorities, the victim, the relatives and the neighbors knew his violent attitude. It can be observed also that there were not presented just the facts, there were included the experts` opinions and the statements of victim`s relatives. In one article, it can be detected the aggressor allegations concerning his attitude towards the victim. Moreover, the perpetrator and the victim were described as normal people, who did not have a good marital relationship like many other persons, but who ended up this relationship in a tragic way.

Discussions

Dorfman, Woodruff, Chavez and Wallack (1997, pp. 1311–1316) analyzed whether violence stories included a public health perspective and found that episodic coverage of violence was more than five times more frequent than thematic coverage with its links to broader social factors. The same focus of episodic frames (isolated event like in the syntagms of the police officers) continues, and the deep picture (thematic coverage) of the shadow pandemic is underrepresented.

The purpose of the study was to capture the manner in which the lethal acts of violence against women - femicides - are presented to the public. Following Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991) an emphasis was also placed on the fact that news organizations still have a tendency to focus on what is wrong in the society, which explains the heavy emphasis on deviance and law violations. Such events draw public attention, shape public's opinion, and awareness concerning

societal phenomena, but actualize the negative sensationalistic news tendency detrimental to civic and governmental agenda change. Previous research has noted that it is the repetitiveness with which the frames are presented to the public that slowly shapes the way an issue is seen. The more frequently an issue is framed in a particular way, the more likely it is for people to adopt media's frame for it.

In the analyzed articles, both the victims and the aggressors are portrayed in the same way: gender, age, education, professional status, family status. The dissimilarity appears in the persons involved in the dramatic event description: the perpetrator acts alone, the victim and her relatives suffer as a group (heavily injured, threatened, battered). Furthermore, it was not identified any difference between the articles published in the quality press websites and tabloid press webpages: the facts are presented in a chronological order and the description of the characters is complex. Surprisingly, even in sensationalistic online press, expert voices are also present, not only the non-institutional voices, such as relatives and neighbors.

Conclusions

The articles were analyzed from various perspectives, such as: the general context of the tragic event, the representation of the victim and perpetrator, the representation of the event, the management of voices which appear in the description of the event and the language used by the journalist. It is worth mentioning that the hypothesis elaborated by Bullock and Cubert in 2002 is validated in this study: the opinion of victim advocates or of academic researchers is not present in any article. Following the analysis, it can be underlined the fact that the "main definers of the situation" (Ericson et al., 1991; Fishman 1981; Surette 1998), which are the institutions of the justice system – police, judges or prosecutors (Marinescu & Marinache, 2018) are present in the articles, as experts or sources of information, but also, the voices of the non-institutional, less powerful side are present (relatives and neighbors).

Moreover, regarding the frames proposed by Bullock and Cubert (2002), it can be stated that there are present some indirect victim blaming strategies and some phrases that try to justify the inappropriate behavior of the perpetrator: "because he was jealous", "he was very jealous". It was not present any kind of shock when identifying the culprit and also the perpetrator and the victim are described as normal people, like "us".

Concerning the frames elaborated by Gillespie (2013), it can be observed that in most of the articles the journalists were focused on the behavior of the victim and on blaming indirectly her conduct. At the same time, the emphasis is on the disordered attitude of the perpetrator, who can be easily identifiable. This incident is not perceived as an isolated event in this couple – many times it was mentioned that the aggressor was violent against his wife and daughter.

Furthermore, at the beginning it was mentioned that this femicide case happened during a difficult period for all the mankind – COVID-19 pandemics. Contrary to the statements presented by Campbell (2020), Kofman (2020) or Peterman et al. (2020), COVID-19 effects have not been evoked in any article in order to explain the aggressor's behavior. There were presented a lot of other reasons, but not the hardships experienced during this health crisis. In line with previous international researches, our analysis discovered only the episodic and not the thematic framing: episodic framing presents violence against women as a series of random events, blaming individual actors, ignoring societal responsibility for this tragic broad social phenomenon.

Taking into consideration all these aspects, the study can be extended by adding new cases of tragic paradigmatic incidents presented in dozens of contextualizations (in print online

media) in order to change the coverage of violence – from an episodic sensationalistic framing to a thematic, social issue, based on different journalistic sources, discourses and practices.

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Appendix 1 - Articles that were the object of this research:

1. Bolocan, A., "O educatoare din București a fost ucisă de soțul ei. Criminalul, PRINS după 4 zile" [An educator from Bucharest was killed by her husband. Criminal, CAUGHT after 4 days], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.stirilekanald.ro/foto-o-educatoare-din-bucuresti-a-fost-ucisa-de-sotul-ei-criminalul-prins-dupa-4-zile-20164706>
2. Chivu, A., "Educatorea ucisă de soț cu 6 ordine de restricție în mână. „Erau în divorț, era de o gelozie rară" [The educator killed by her husband with 6 restraining orders in hand. They were divorcing, it was a rare jealousy], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.9am.ro/stiri/Social/349956/educatoarea-ucisa-de-sot-cu-6-ordine-de-restrictie-in-mana-erau-in-divort-era-de-o-gelozie-rara.html>
3. Ciucă, R., "Ce a îndurat timp de 12 ani femeia ucisă de propriul soț. Fratele victimei: "Era diavolul în persoană" [What the woman killed by her own husband endured for 12 years. The victim's brother: He was the devil in person], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.antena3.ro/emisiuni/news-hour-with-cnn/ce-a-indurat-timp-de-12-ani-femeia-ucisa-de-propriul-sot-611242.html>
4. Dobre, C., "O femeie din București a fost ucisă de fostul soț, din gelozie. Bărbatul a fost găsit după 4 zile" [A woman from Bucharest was killed by her ex-husband out of jealousy. The man was found after 4 days], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/o-femeie-din-bucuresti-a-fost-atacata-si-ucisa-de-fostul-sot-barbatul-este-cautat-in-toata-tara.html>
5. Dumitrescu, A., "Liliana, o educatoare din București, a fost ucisă de soțul taximetrist, cu mai multe lovituri de cuțit. Bărbatul, surprins de camerele de supraveghere, este de negăsit de patru zile" [Liliana, an educator from Bucharest, was killed by her taxi driver husband, with several stab wounds. The man, caught on surveillance cameras, has been missing for four days], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.gandul.ro/actualitate/liliana-o-educatoare-din-bucuresti-a-fost-ucisa-de-sotul-taximetrist-cu-mai-multe-lovituri-de-cutit-barbatul-surprins-de-camerele-de-supraveghere-este-de-negasit-de-patru-zile-19675490>
6. Hendrik, A., "Educatorea ucisă de fostul soț a murit în chinuri groaznice. Taximetristul a tăiat-o cu o lamă zimțată. Ce au descoperit legiștii pe trupul ei" [The teacher killed by her ex-husband died in terrible agony. The taxi driver cut it with a serrated blade. What the coroners found on her body], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://evz.ro/noi-detalii-despre-crima-facuta-de-taximetrist-si-a-macelarit-sotia-cu-o-lama-zimtata-ce-au-descoperit-pe-trupul-victimei.html>
7. Iacob, B., "Crima odioasă care a îngrozit Bucureștiul: o educatoare a fost ucisă, iar de 3 zile criminalul se plimbă liber. Principalul suspect e chiar soțul femeii" [The heinous crime that horrified Bucharest: an educator was killed, and the criminal has been walking free for

- 3 days. The main suspect is the woman's husband], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://observatornews.ro/eveniment/crima-odioasa-care-a-ingrozit-bucurestiul-o-educatoare-a-fost-ucisa-iar-de-3-zile-criminalul-se-plimba-liber-principalul-suspect-e-chiar-sotul-femeii-433086.html>
8. N.A., "Ea este Liliana, educatoarea ucisă în București. Principalul suspect este chiar fostul ei soț care e de negăsit. Cele două fete își înmormântează, astăzi, mama" [She is Liliana, the teacher killed in Bucharest. The main suspect is even her ex-husband who is nowhere to be found. The two girls are burying their mother today], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.wowbiz.ro/ea-este-liliana-educatoarea-ucisa-in-bucuresti-principalul-suspect-este-chiar-fostul-ei-sot-care-e-de-negasit-cele-doua-fete-isi-inmormanteaza-astazi-mama-20164697>
 9. N.A., "Educatore din București, ucisă de soțul ei, cu care era în divorț / Bărbatul, găsit de polițiști după 4 zile" [Educator from Bucharest, killed by her husband, with whom she was divorcing / The man, found by the police after 4 days], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-24981621-educatoare-din-bucuresti-ucisa-sotul-care-era-divort-barbatul-gasit-politisti-dupa-4-zile.htm>
 10. N.A., "Femeie, ucisă cu 10 ordine de protecție în mână, făptaș de negăsit de 4 zile. Radu Leca: Sistem BOLNAV! Clar NU mai e în viață" [Woman, murdered with 10 protection orders in hand, perpetrator not found for 4 days. Radu Leca: SICK system! He is clearly NOT alive anymore], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.dcnews.ro/femeie-ucisa-cu-10-ordine-de-protectie-in-mana-faptas-de-negasit-de-4-zile-radu-leca-sistem-bolnav-clar-nu-mai-e-in-viata-833434.html>
 11. N.A., "Liliana, o educatoare de doar 48 de ani, ucisă de soțul cu care era în divorț. 10 plângeri și cinci ordine de restricție ceruse pe numele bărbatului" [Liliana, a 48-year-old educator, killed by her divorced husband. 10 complaints and five restraining orders requested on the man's behalf], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.dobrogea.tv/stire/Actualitate/24257/liliana-o-educatoare-de-doar-48-de-ani-ucisa-de-sotul-cu-care-era-in-divort-10-plangeri-si-cinci-ordine-de-restrictie-ceruse-pe-numele-barbatului-.html>
 12. N.A., "NAȚIONAL. O educatoare a fost ucisă de soțul ei, cu care era în proces de divorț: bărbatul, găsit de polițiști după patru zile" [NATIONAL. An educator was killed by her husband, with whom she was in the process of divorcing: the man, found by the police after four days], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.dobrogea.tv/stire/Actualitate/24236/national-o-educatoare-a-fost-ucisa-de-sotul-ei-cu-care-era-in-proces-de-divort-barbatul-gasit-de-politisti-dupa-patru-zile.ht>
 13. N.A., "O femeie din București a fost atacată și ucisă de fostul soț. Bărbatul este căutat în toată țara" [A woman from Bucharest was attacked and killed by her ex-husband. The man is wanted throughout the country], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://olt-alert.ro/2021/08/16/o-femeie-din-bucuresti-a-fost-atacata-si-ucisa-de-fostul-sot-barbatul-este-cautat-in-toata-tara/>
 14. N.A., "Soțul care a ucis-o pe educatoare era „diavolul în persoană”. A trimis un bilet după crimă" [The husband who killed the teacher was "the devil himself". He sent a note after the murder], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro/stiri/sotul-care-a-ucis-o-pe-educatoare-era-a-diavolul-in-persoanaa-a-trimis-un-bilet-dupa-crima--297308.html>
 15. Năstase, A., Marin, A., "Crimă oribilă în Capitală! O educatoare a fost ucisă de soțul ei. Primele declarații ale bărbatului: Drac cu chip de înger" [Horrible crime in the capital! An

- educator was killed by her husband. The man's first statements: Devil with the face of an angel], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.fanatik.ro/crima-oribila-in-capitala-o-educatoare-a-fost-ucisa-de-sotul-ei-19725468>
16. Popescu, E., "[crimă în capitală! O educatoare a fost găsită fără suflare într-un apartament](https://www.cancan.ro/crima-in-capitala-o-educatoare-a-fost-gasita-fara-suflare-intr-un-apartament-20473111)" [murder in the capital! An educator was found dead in an apartment], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.cancan.ro/crima-in-capitala-o-educatoare-a-fost-gasita-fara-suflare-intr-un-apartament-20473111>
 17. Prodan, G., "Cine este educatoarea ucisă de soț în București. Femeia a fost găsită înjunghiată în inimă / FOTO" [Who is the educator killed by her husband in Bucharest. The woman was found stabbed in the heart / PHOTO], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://spynews.ro/actualitate/stiri-interne/cine-este-educatoarea-ucisa-de-sot-in-bucuresti-femeia-a-fost-gasita-injunghiatata-in-inima-foto-259602.html>
 18. Roșu, I., "Crimă cutremurătoare în București. Educatoare și mamă, ucisă cu bestialitate în propria locuință. Criminalul este de negăsit" [Shocking crime in Bucharest. Educator and mother, brutally murdered in her own home. The criminal is nowhere to be found], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://playtech.ro/stiri/crima-cutremuratoare-in-bucuresti-educatoare-si-mama-ucisa-cu-bestialitate-in-propriul-apartament-criminalul-este-de-negasit-374760>
 19. Ștefan, C., "O educatoare din București, ucisă în propria casă. Principalul suspect este chiar soțul femeii, căutat de polițiști" [An educator from Bucharest, murdered in her own home. The main suspect is the woman's husband, wanted by the police], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://click.ro/actualitate/national/o-educatoare-din-bucuresti-ucisa-in-propria-casa-4514.html>
 20. Zărnescu, M., "[O educatoare din București, ucisă cu sânge rece în propria casă. Femeia și soțul ei erau în plin proces de divorț \(VIDEO\)](https://www.b1tv.ro/eveniment/o-educatoare-din-bucuresti-ucisa-cu-sange-rece-in-propria-casa-femeia-si-sotul-ei-erai-in-plin-proces-de-divort-video-1049632.html)" [An educator from Bucharest, murdered in cold blood in her own home. The woman and her husband were in full divorce proceedings (VIDEO)], retrieved 20.11.2021, from <https://www.b1tv.ro/eveniment/o-educatoare-din-bucuresti-ucisa-cu-sange-rece-in-propria-casa-femeia-si-sotul-ei-erai-in-plin-proces-de-divort-video-1049632.html>