

Internet Media Coverage of Domestic Violence Cases in Armenia

Aram Afrikyan

American University of Armenia

Research Methods Section B

Maria Titizyan

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About 30 women died at the hands of their violent and abused husbands or family members and a great number of women have suffered from domestic violence in the period of 2010-2015.

Abusing or beating a woman an act of cowardice. It is so awful that it happens in our country that adopted the day of beauty for women. How long will it last?

Introduction

Domestic violence is one of the main social issues of any society. Even though we live in the age of open and tolerant communities and strict laws, the problem of domestic violence does not step back. Unfortunately, our country, Armenia is still placed in the list of countries with an evident high rate of domestic violence cases. According to the head of the third department (department of special cases of underage citizens) of the Police of the Republic of Armenia, colonel Nelli Duryan, in the first quarter of 2016 there were 373 officially registered domestic violence cases, also adding that for the same period in 2015, there were 342 cases. The roots of this problem have history of many ages as there have been several historical works that included information about fathers beating sons and husbands beating wives. Although, in my research I am taking the sample of modern Armenia. It is vitally important to control and regulate the violence, especially the domestic one. The laws and regulations of the Republic of Armenia provide clear descriptions of what is violence and how it should be punished. The negative part of this is that in the majority of cases the victims of domestic violence do not request assistance from the government bodies or NGOs that are dealing with this sphere.

It is more important how media delivers the messages regarding domestic violence to the people.

In countries like Armenia media plays an important role as the major part of the population does

not use alternative sources to get news and accept media messages as they are. In this research I will refer to the media coverage of domestic violence of Armenian media, trying to clear out percentage and frequency of articles about domestic violence. By this I will try to see whether the media helps the improvement of the social relations in the scopes of domestic violence. The goal is to find out if media provides articles with adequate manner that can raise awareness about domestic violence.

Annotated Bibliography

Bullock, C. F., & Cubert, J. (2002, April). Coverage of Domestic Violence Fatalities by Newspapers in Washington State [Scholarly project].

This research by Cathy Bullock and Jason Cubert provides the readers with an insight of how newspapers in Washington DC cover domestic violence cases with fatal outcomes. The study was conducted in 1988 and analyzed all newspapers in Washington. After the analysis was complete the researchers came to a conclusion that the newspapers in Washington provide a crooked view on what is really happening. The newspaper concentrated on sole cases of domestic violence, instead of talking about about domestic violence as a general social problem. However, there were articles that stood out, because they portrayed it as a social issue.

The source will be used as a means to draw a comparison between a developing democratic country and one of the most developed democratic countries in the world. It will also serve as a

tool for understanding how to analyze articles and draw conclusions from articles regarding domestic violence.

U. P. (2011, August 20). *Survey on Domestic Violence Towards Women in Armenia (Rep.)*. Retrieved November 30, 2016, from UN Armenia website.

In this report, which is based on a survey conducted by UN Division of Population in Armenia, there is detailed information about the frequency of the cases of violence towards women. The survey was organized for the adult female population of Armenia, and was conducted not only in Yerevan, but also regions. The report indicates data about the cases when husbands, boyfriends or sexual partners violated the rights of the women. The information is provided in graphs and tables. The survey was made according to mental and ethnic specifications of Armenians, so that the majority of females would answer the questions without being shy and with correct details.

This report is important for my research in various ways. Firstly, it will serve as a good sample for my own surveys. At the same time it provides clear data about the cases of domestic violence in Armenia. The most important thing is that the data and information is collected from the victims. By this report, I will also have enough basis to start analyzing the cases, to see how many times those cases occurred and by whom. I will also look for media articles or reports about this survey, which will also help me to conduct a better research. I will also use the UN report for comparisons.

Berns, N. (2004). *Framing the victim: Domestic violence, media, and social problems.*

Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

This study generally concentrates on the concept of “victim” and how it is defined and portrayed by the public. It exercises the specific cases which have occurred in US and analyses the media coverage of them. This research does not question the cause of the public opinion, but rather the public opinion itself. The study also shows the changes over the tendencies of public attitude towards the domestic violence over time as once the domestic violence was not considered as something wrong. Also, the study examines how different people view the domestic violence based on their gender, belief and other demographics.

The study would help me to have some idea over the concept of “victim” in the cases of domestic violence. This study would also provide a base for my own research on the matter as I would apply the method of the research used in study. The study also would provide a great diversification of the study of media and on what it pays most attention. Even though, the study is concentrated on the US society and media, it would provide a fundament for the future research. Also this study would be a great example to compare old media coverage and tendencies back then with today’s internet media coverage.

Newspapers' Framing of Elder Abuse: It's Not a Family Affair (2007)

This article portrays media coverage of senior abuse from 2003 to 2005. Eight daily papers' elder abuse scope was analyzed by its content that was followed by media exemplification and

encircling. Elder abuse in a criminal equity setting, most of the time was encapsulated and encircled by the coverage of the newspapers. Contrary to a societal-level issue, stories include regularly highlighted episodic frames (57.1%) while a larger part (65,2%) of the coverage was surrounded violence towards older people as a person. Most senior abuse happens in domestic settings, yet the daily papers' coverage frequently centered around elder abuse in long haul mind settings.

This article will give more accurate and clear statistics on the subject. It will help me to give examples and compare the data from article with the situation in Armenia.

Bullock, C. F., & Cubert, J. (2002, April). Framing Domestic Violence Fatalities: Coverage by Utah Newspapers [Scholarly project].

This review investigates the confining of one year of abusive behavior at home casualty scope by daily papers in Utah, which are implanted inside powerful patriarchal culture. Deductive and inductive framing examinations were utilized to recognize the essential substance related edges and figure out if coverage included perspectives that tested patriarchy. Most scope depicted aggressive behavior at home fatalities in ways that assist patriarchal institutions. In any case, a little gathering of articles recognized aggressive behavior at home's underlying foundations in patriarchy and men's subordination of women, affirming that standard daily papers can and some of the time to distribute sees that test the prevailing ones. This coverage may indicate approaches to reframe scope of abusive behavior at home fatalities.

This research will help me to compare the Utah State and the Washington State media reports and study their truthfulness.

“Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence Against Women in Armenia 2008-2009”

Executive Summary © 2010 United Nations Population Fund

This report is based on the Armenia Nationwide Survey on Violence against Women in 2008 , conducted by UNFPA. The subject of the survey is mainly the violence against women. The study discoveries give significant data on predominance and occurrence of real types of violence against women, including impacts of gender-based violence on women’s physical, mental and regenerative wellbeing, on women’s adapting systems and components, on the relationship between women’s financial status, budgetary self-governance and gender-based violece.

This report will help me to show the main statistics of violence against women in Republic of Armenia. The research will also help me to compare my data with the one that was 4 years ago, to see if there are any positive or negative changes.

ARMENIA HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS 2012-2015

The reports contain information and observations of various of acts of domestic violence reported by respected NGOs. The report shows the government's approach and policies towards the domestic violence and weather they tackle the issue. The reports contain numbers and some

description of the cases of domestic violence and the way the media portrays those. The report contains information provided by the local observers NGOs and media outlets.

The reports will help me to have secondary data for analysis. First and foremost I would get a clear grasp over the issue of domestic violence in Armenia as most of the cases are emphasized in those reports. Secondly I will use the data to check it with the media reports and how the media coverage was on the specific cases. Thirdly, any reports in general provide a great material to compare and emphasize the tendencies over the issues discussed. I would filter the information by the years and the characteristics of the domestic violence cases.

Methodology

My research is mostly based on the deep analysis of media field, and comparison with the works and studies I have picked as sources. Firstly, to successfully complete the review of my sources, I will apply content analysis method. This will help me to identify each source and understand how it is going to help me in further explorations. As I have various sources, with different backgrounds, I have to extract correct data from each one of them. One of the main problems is to find the parallels between these studies to find ways how those can be applied by me form comparing with the information I gather in Armenia. The second approach is going to be the ethnomethodological one. This is also important as I am exploring the field of a very fragile social group, the victims of violence. I am studying the representatives of the same ethnic and national background, with almost the same religion and social status. This is important as these people will “require” a unique approach. Most of them are children and females, and might have

unstable psychological basis for participation in such study. My next step will be the interviews. I am going to conduct interviews with representatives of various NGO's that study the cases of domestic violence. The representatives of NGO's will provide exact cases that were somehow commented by media and tell how the problems were solved. At the same time I will get acquainted with the ways that NGOs try to raise awareness about this problem. The reason or that is to get information on how the problem can be told to the public and raise awareness, so that I can compare it with the techniques that media uses. The other one is observation. I will observe main Armenian online media platforms (News.am, Lragir.am, Tert.am, Panarmenian.net,) and TV channels (Armenia TV, 1st Chanel, ATV, Shant) to see and register the frequency of news about domestic violence and the way those are delivered to the audience. At the same time, I will compare those with the ones that were published, aired in the period of 2013-2015. This will help me to understand how media treats the field of domestic violence and if there are any methods to raise the awareness about it.

Timeline.

The process of my study will cover the period of December 2016 to April 2017. The first general step is the collection of data and information. I will start doing this in December 2015, and will finalize all the information that I will be using for my research process. The next part will be the general study of the material and analyzing it. I will dedicate the main portion of time to it, which will take the period of mid January to mid March, 2017. This long-lasting process will help me to analyze the sources and simultaneously start my thesis. The remaining time, which

means mid March to May 5-10, I will do my interviews and the rest of work. The anticipated date of finishing is May 15, 2017.

Research Questions

Question 1: How does the Armenian media cover the cases of domestic violence.

This question is the core one for my study. The main goal is to find out how exactly media approaches to this problem

Question 2: Does the coverage of media contain any effort to raise awareness about the problem?

The second question is also important as it will clarify if the media outlets just post news for informing or they try to concentrate some attention for the effective solution of the problem.

Literature Review

The problem of domestic violence in Armenia

Even though after getting independence Armenia adopted the principles of human rights and humanitarian equality, the domestic violence stays as one of the core problems of the modern society. Various international organizations are interested about this problem, and especially in this region where the mentality cannot be easily changed. United Nations Armenian office conducted a research project in 2011. This was a survey that explored the victims of domestic violence, especially women. The survey's audience was comprised of females aged 18 and older,

that were victims of domestic violence and were physically abused, insulted, humiliated or threatened by their sexual partners or husbands. As one of the authors, Vladimir Osipov claims, the survey was really hard to conduct as the women in most of the cases did not want to participate. The survey was organized not only in Yerevan but also in the regions and rural areas of Armenia. In all of the regions the majority of females eventually agreed to participate, as their identities were guaranteed to be kept anonymous. In Yerevan 78% , in other urban areas 73.3% and in rural regions 73.9% of the females joined the project as participants. Each victim of such a problem needs unique and individual approach, as such surveys are very hard to organize, especially in Armenia (UN Armenia, 2011). The researches concentrated not only on physical abuse but also on psychological pressure. The study showed that in many cases the partners would not allow the females to go out with friends, visit family members and relatives or would either stalk them, trying to know their location constantly or ignore them all the time. The ad thing is that for many girls and women, all of this becomes usual during time (UN Armenia 2011). The part of psychological pressure also includes cases of insults and suspicions. The next part of the survey touches more sensitive topics. It is about the physical abuses. The categorization is based on three main types of violence. The first one is slapping or throwing something at the person, the second group is pulling the hair, hitting with fist or kicking. The final one includes the most brutal types of violence, even torturing (burning or threatening to use weapon). This survey is a significant evidence of the crime taking place everyday among us. The UN Armenia survey proves that domestic violence is widespread, especially in the rural regions. This case is a good example of how to study the special groups with the possibility of having psychological problems.

The performance of the human rights reports shows the various changes in the tendencies not only in case of some the domestic abuses but also on the terms of its coverage and attempts of prevention by the government. The local authorities over time started to trust and to allow the local observers to monitor the cases of the family member abuse or domestic violence cases, but in most of the years and cases, the state was inactive towards the domestic violence. In general Armenian government and the local governments almost in all cases were not obstacles for the NGO's, media outlets and observers for the cases of domestic violence.

Regarding the action from the side of people, the domestic violence cases were not reported to the authorities which shows a cultural impact on the society. The domestic observers monitored many cases of domestic violence that were not reported. According to the reports, many victims of domestic violence were avoiding the labeling and alienation as a reason for their silence and nonreporting of the cases. Most of the violence were unreported some numbers suggest that on average per year there are 400 cases of domestic violence in Armenia that went unreported. Here we should understand the obstacle in front of media outlets as most of the victims are avoiding the outreach and that the press reporting on domestic violence in Armenia is becoming a delicate issue. The importance of framing the cases in a correct way is and will be the challenge for the internet media and other media outlets.

Domestic violence abroad

To understand the media coverage of domestic violence in Armenia, one should have a basis for a comparison, e.g. an example of domestic violence media coverage abroad. Such knowledge can be provided from a study done in 1988 by Bullock, C. F., & Cubert, J. Published in 2002 it provides the readers with an insight on how the media portrayed the domestic violence in

Washington DC. According to results of the study, it was made clear that the majority of media concentrates on sole examples of domestic violence rather than the fact that domestic violence is a societal issue itself. Thus, the society that is affected by the media does not see domestic violence as a public issue, it sees different cases of “unlucky” people. Therefore, if the society does not see a problem it cannot solve the problem. The study will be a handy tool to use for understanding techniques used in analysing domestic violence in the newspapers. It will also serve as a benchmark for comparison of media coverage of domestic violence in Armenia and abroad. The United States of America are notorious for their tolerance towards people, and intolerance towards unacceptable, inhumane and violent behavior of people towards other human beings. Thus, it is interesting to compare the media coverage of domestic violence in the USA and in a conservative country like Armenia, where mothers are loved and respected, and wives are abused.

Similarly, a book by Nancy Berns called “Framing the Victim” (2004) draws upon not only how media influences people but also how it affects people’s perception of societal issues. It also gives a definition of a “victim.” This will come handy in trying to differentiate the victims of domestic violence from those who are not.

Nancy Berns separates people in two categories: people with experience and participants. She states that people who are affected by the media and read about violence in newspaper, gain experience and therefore are considered people with experience. The victims, on the contrary, are considered participants because they felt the abuse from the first hand. “ People with experience can critique media. However, being a participant in the problem (e.g., as a victim) leads to a more complicated and confused understanding of the problem. Those without experience tend to accept the simplified “official reality.” (Berns)

In another US state- Utah compared to the other state the domestic violence cases are comparatively bigger issue than in other states. In the past ten years according to the public sources 30% of homicides nationwide in the United States are the consequence of domestic violence. In Utah that number is explicitly higher than national average at 42%.

<http://www.good4utah.com/news/local-news/high-rate-of-domestic-violence-worsens-in-utah>

The culture in Utah is very specific and quite patriarchal. As the media usually represents the culture of the ongoing events, according to the scholarly project “Framing Domestic Violence Fatalities: Coverage by Utah Newspapers” many of the Utah’s newspapers and media agency frame the cases in accordance with the patriarchal culture within the houses of the victims. The oppression and non-popularity of the news agencies, which frame the domestic violence out of the scope of Utah’s patriarchal culture, is evident. This source gives a perfect analysis of the situation and shows how media frames the cases taking into account the trends and stereotypes set by the culture.

Sometimes the framing of the cases were too sensitive and some may argue that it is necessary for the domestic violence to be framed as a criminal justice case. In the European Union for instance the specific committee on co-operation between judicial authorities and police was created to tackle the issue of domestic violence in the EU households. It was built based on two main objectives; first is tackling racism, second is for law enforcement. [1] The committee on justice and home affairs from the first glance was not designed to tackle directly, but some of the EU member countries have home affairs committee as a part of their National Assembly Committee. For instance in United Kingdom, the house of commons appoint a specific committee to investigate the specific cases of domestic violence, force a judicial cases and came up with the report each year on the more specific cases of domestic violence which were mostly

discussed. For instance in 2008 the committee came up with the report on the “forced marriage” cases. One of the positive parts in the strategy of this committee is that they co-operate with non-governmental organizations and consider their reports as a necessary evidence for the specific cases. Of course in order to have a productive co-operation not only the committee should be well prepared and organized, but it also requires the strong knowledge and productive work done from the non-governmental organizations for both private and public sector to be involved in the combat towards the domestic violence.

In my work, I try to examine the official data and my own findings after interviewing a group of women. I came to conclusion that the reasons for domestic violence in Armenia are different depending on many factors. We should take into accounts the historical and national factors of the Armenian community. Some cases of domestic violence happen because of patriarchal upbringing in Armenian families where mothers and sisters serve boys then their husbands. It is common for men think that a woman should be in the kitchen, obey her husband and his parents and have no right or voice in the household decisions. The other reason is social contradictions and social economical hardships that lead to violent and immoral behavior in the family. It is worth mentioning that the reasons for domestic violence are quite the same in many countries but the protection is different. In Armenia there is no reliable statistics on domestic violence. The Police maintain statistics, but it refers only to criminal cases, whereas domestic violence is not considered crimes. In most cases there are no witnesses because of the national peculiarity victims seldom

address the police. There is another problem that the police or court cannot gather the evidence about the occurrence. There are many recommendations and strategies how to change the situation and protect women from brutal and aggressive attacks of men. The most effective way to decrease all forms of violence against women is to stop it from happening in the first place. Nobody can forget that the interests of the victims of domestic violence are protected under the Criminal, Criminal Procedures, Civil, Administrative Violations and Family Codes of the Republic of Armenia. It is very important to convey the statistical data and the results of the analysis to the government, governmental agencies and non-governmental bodies and international organizations in order to take measures against the domestic violence. The following step is to draw the media's and general public's attention to this problem. Especially mass media plays a great role in raising the people's awareness to help with the solution to the heated issue. Television is watched by many people, especially in rural regions. The special programs can shape people's perceptions and attitudes to this problem. What we observe is that many local programs or serials show patriarchal norms of the family and family tragedies with dead circumstances. Films or articles attribute the killing of women or abusing them on the ground of crimes of passion or jealousy. In most Armenian films we see heroes who use drugs or alcohol, have a lover or treat women rudely. All these provoke and deepen the problems. Television and mass media should have a great influence on the society and provide legal, statistical or contextual information on cases of domestic violence. Media campaigns and demonstrations, manifestations and public condemnation can warn and prevent from more domestic violence. Any work of mass media not only attracts public interest to this problem but also help to take action to organize the shelters where women who leave their homes can get refuge. In Armenia the church the media, the government and the society should condemn domestic violence. The majority of Armenian people are religious, so the role of church

is big. The church can give shelters survivors and defend them. But it is not enough. The Parliament should pass the law that imposes heavy penalties and punishment.

NATIONWIDE SURVEY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ARMENIA
2008- 2009 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY National Statistical Service of RA YEREVAN 2010
UNFPA “Combating Gender- Based Violence in the South Caucasus”.

This information helped me a lot to distinguish different kinds of domestic violence against women. This survey takes into consideration such aspects as social and economical status, physical and mental health. The main aim of the work is to collect survey data and show the results of the survey findings. This report includes a descriptive and detailed analysis of the case data in the terms of the current gender situation. We can find accurate and true information about the major forms of husbands or intimate or family member violence against women. The survey gives the esteem about the scope and the scale of such incidence in Armenia. In this fundamental work there are a lot of figures, tables and charts of striking that can cause agencies and organizations to formulate national policy and strategies to join the efforts to protect women from domestic violence. The work identifies effectiveness of managing strategies and services that women can use when they are subjected. The research triggers further public discussions and investigations of this problem. There are many essential prevailing questions are asked in this work. Examining cases of domestic violence in different regions in Armenia including rural and urban settlements the report tries to answer these questions.

Countering Violence in the Family in Armenia, Amnesty International 2008; Nationwide Survey on Domestic Violence against Women in Armenia,

This article is part of Amnesty International’s series of publications the organization’s global

‘Stop Violence against Women’ campaign. Amnesty International is worried that the crimes and violations of women’s rights are spread in Armenia. This report examines different forms of gender-based violence, including the violence against women made by husbands, other intimate partners or other family members. Amnesty International insists that Armenian authorities should do more to fulfill the rights of women and change the criminal justice law in order to defend women. The members of this organization carried out their research in three regions of Armenia and provided the valuable information on the current situation. In this report, Amnesty International joins governmental and non-governmental organizations to make domestic violence a crime. The report gives suggestions that the authorities provide hotlines, shelters and support services. This report brings the real-life stories of survivors of domestic and sexual violence in Armenia. This report concludes that violence against women is a criminal offence and a human rights violation, not a private issue on which we should keep silence.

Any society should be knowledgeable about the fact of abusing and aggressive treatment against women. So journalists are the first in contact with the population and they are in power to inform society about domestic violence. There is short of literature or information on this subject. Moreover there is little evidence because of Armenian mentality. Some journalists rush for burning news and do not see the essence of the tragedy. Others try to show the reason for happening and find the ways to attract more attention to this problem. The work of such organizations as the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women provides mass media with information and asks to publish the evidence or research on the subject of domestic violence.

Having looked through some newspaper articles concerning domestic violence in Armenia I can mention that the attention of mass media such as periodicals, the internet or TV programs

to this problem is enormous. In general journalists write articles to bring awareness to domestic violence cases and they describe these cases in order to raise anger and then condemnation among people. For example, Source Panorama. Am from 28.12.2016 brings some advocates' opinion about adoption of the law against domestic violence in Armenia and its important role in preventing women from abusing. They claim that this law will provide certain mechanisms to protect and save women. Lida Minasyan, Executive Director of "Society without Violence" NGO states that only this law will not work and it is necessary to raise awareness, financially help to organize shelters and do everything to take action. The other articles bring deadly cases of aggressive attacks of husbands on their wives and describe the scene of crime in detail in order to draw readers' attention to this issue. The most awful thing as the journalist states is that the deaths from domestic violence are considered as suicide or accident. This article is as a cry for help. One of the victims says "When people go participate in some protest, the police arrest them and imprison them for three months. They set penalties and what not, but a terrorist like that, who terrorized my whole family, got away with nothing." News.am reports introduce the cases of domestic violence and women' murder in Armenia and analyze the circumstances of ignoring these cases. It is stated that the law should be made clearly taking into consideration all the aspects of the case. Journalists should speak up when they know about happening domestic violence, take their own journalist investigation and knock at any possible doors to help and save victims. If victims in domestic violence know for sure that they and their children will be protected and abusers will be punished, the cases of domestic violence will be eliminated. Mass media should cover such aspects as the role of TV and its programs or films where there is a lot of violence and insult on women. With the help of different kinds – publications, marches, posters and public lectures at schools, universities and working places –

the society should raise this problem and must not keep silence that if there is no problem, there is no tragedy.

1. **EurasiaNet's Weekly Digest** July 13, 2016
2. Source Panorama.am 18:11 28/12/2016
3. Domestic violence on rise in Armenia

Tufenkian Foundation Women's Support Center

<http://hetq.am/eng/opinion/7895/domestic-violence-in-armenia-what-we-need-to-know.html>