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Abbreviations

GBV – gender-based violence

VAW – violence against women

DV – domestic violence

UN – United Nations

CoE – Council of Europe

ECtHR – European Court of Human Rights

MIA – Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia

CC – Criminal Code of Georgia

OSCE – Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

AP – Action Plan

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The Istanbul Convention - The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

GCJE – Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics

GD – Georgian Dream

UNM – United National Movement

EBU – European Broadcasting Union

GPB – Georgian Public Broadcaster

ODIHR – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

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1. Introduction

1.1. Gender-based violence and media

Gender-based violence (GBV) and its worst form – femicide is an acute problem worldwide. It's a societal issue with many facets, requiring a robust, interdisciplinary approach to understand and tackle.

In the 1994 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the UNGA defines GBV as:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.¹

Many scholars expand GBV to include violence against individuals who are vulnerable due to gender positionality, such as sex workers, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer or people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities².

When analysing the Latin American movement against GBV, which is sometimes referred to as “feminicidio,” Judith Butler points out that it encompasses "all those who are feminized or regarded as feminine." This demonstrates that violence is committed not simply

¹ United Nations General Assembly A/RES/48/104, 23 February 1994.

² J. R. Wies and H.J. Haldane. *Anthropology at the Front Lines of Gender-Based Violence*, Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press, 2011, p.3-5

on the basis of gender, but also defines femininity as something men must decide on, have influence over, or even destroy at will³.

With the growing influence of social media and the way news are distributed, what is usually defined as ‘mass media’ has come to shape and guide the discourse around various issues around the globe. In the 20th century, the term mainly included press, cinema, television, and radio. Now it has grown immensely to include new types of media that get consumed daily with the ever-growing gadgets available for mass consumption⁴.

The media and news reporting are strongly intertwined with the ongoing trends, various discourses and processes ongoing locally and globally. News reporting is influenced by existing belief systems just as much as it influences debates on various topics. GBV is no exception to the trend.

Media freedom has been hailed as the ‘cornerstone’ of modern democracies time and time again⁵. Indeed, truthful and pluralistic news coverage and media are crucial to a functioning democracy. The freedom of information and expression are at the base of the idea. Media acts as a control mechanism for the State, often bringing numerous human rights violations to light.

Because the media bears the responsibility of providing and disseminating knowledge to society, it is seen as an important subject of study for feminist scholarship. There are numerous scholarly inquiries into the representation of women in the media and in the newsrooms. For decades, many women journalists have struggled to reach higher echelons

³ G. Yancy, ‘Judith Butler: When Killing Women Isn’t a Crime’, The New York Times, 10 July, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/10/opinion/judith-butler-gender.html> (accessed August 5)

⁴ M. Sturken, and L. Cartwright, 2018. Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture. 3rd ed. New York City, USA: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 224.

⁵ UN News ‘Free press ‘a cornerstone’ of democratic societies, UN says’, 3 May 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1091132> (accessed August 5)

of being editors and producers, thus depriving the public of their viewpoint in news coverage⁶.

When discussing GBV and femicide, the systemic nature of the issue shouldn't be overlooked. While GBV can be committed in the private sphere as well as in the public, the global power dynamics of patriarchy and male domination influence such acts. Additionally, other identities of survivors, such as race, class, sexuality, physical and mental ability, etc. come into play as well.

GBV can't be studied and understood without positioning it within the larger socio-economic structures that contribute to its pervasiveness. Many anti-imperialist, antiracist feminist scholars have challenged the feminist movement to think about the issue of violence against women in the broader context of the subjugation of people of colour and poor people.

Scholars such as bell hooks have challenged the dichotomy of public/private realms, pointing that the violence experienced by people of colour in the 'public realm' (i.e. discrimination, exploitation, police brutality, etc.) and violence at home are intricately linked⁷. Thus, when differentiating between the two realms as separate, the structural understanding of the issue tends to fade into the background.

Kimberle Crenshaw, the founder of the intersectional analysis, further suggests that violence against women at home should be understood through the lens of structural inequalities of race and class. When discussing minority women's shelters in Los Angeles, she notes that economic subjugation of women, combined with racist employment and

⁶ V. Angharad and S. Projansky, 'Feminism and/in Mass Media' in B. J. Dow and J.T Wood (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Communication*, Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2006.

⁷ R. J. Hall, 'Feminist Strategies to End Violence Against Women', in R. Baksh and W. Harcourt (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*, New York City, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 398.

housing policies, frequently leads women to situations where they can't escape the immediate violence they face at home at the hands of their male family members⁸.

Because journalists, like everyone else, are socialized as men and women, they bring their gendered perspective to their profession. Journalists and the media as a whole, often inadvertently, can reproduce harmful stereotypes and outdated understandings of women's issues, feeding into the structures that eventually lead to GBV.

Although not a new phenomenon, images and videos of violence tend to circulate even more than before thanks to the widespread use of social media. With little to no accountability or regulation for the media, creates an environment, where “the more graphic the material, the more it can be perceived as newsworthy”⁹.

The representation of GBV in media often follows this trend. Studies on GBV in media have found that the coverage of the issue is often on the surface level and with many faults. The coverage doesn't go in-depth on the issue, often portraying it as a familial tragedy instead of the persistent systemic problem that it is¹⁰.

Sensationalism, as well as voyeurism, are the most persistent issues when it comes to the coverage of gender-based violence in the media¹¹. In line with all the other news, the coverage of GBV focuses on single events, individualizes the issue and tries to seek balance between the two supposed sides of the story.

⁸ Hall (n7).

⁹ R. Alexandrowicz, '50 Years of Documentation: A Brief History of the Audiovisual Documentation of the Israeli Occupation', in S. Ristovska and M. Price (eds.), *Visual Imagery and Human Rights Practice*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 30.

¹⁰ B. Wolf, 2013. *Gender-based violence and its challenge for visual representation*. Comunicació: Revista de Recerca i d'Anàlisi., 30, pp.201-205.

¹¹ L. Cuklanz, 'Gendered violence and mass media representation'. in B. J. Dow and J.T Wood (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Communication*, Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, 2006.

Such coverage turns a blind eye to the systemic nature of violence and shies away from showcasing it as a societal problem. It often includes “elements of sensationalism, such as titillating or bizarre details”¹². Such an approach strips the media of being able to truthfully and fairly cover GBV.

The scholarship on the topic, along with numerous organizations working on the issue discuss several ways in which coverage of GBV could see improvement. Awareness-raising among editors and journalists is one of the most important steps. Educating media professionals on the trauma caused by GBV helps evoke empathy, urging them to commit to respecting survivors' privacy and avoiding humiliation¹³.

Media outlets contribute to shaping the culture, creating, changing, or recreating various assumptions on gender, sexuality, race, religion and other aspects of human identity¹⁴. The media reporting is also strongly intertwined with power dynamics that shape the discourse around the issue of GBV.

1.2. Gender-based violence in Georgia

Georgia faces many challenges concerning GBV. The issue is often shunned and not talked about in public unless the violence ends in femicide. In the years 2014-2018, the number of women killed by their partners, lovers or exes has ranged from 20 to 35 a year¹⁵. A 2018 UN Women national study has found that one in seven women have experienced domestic violence¹⁶.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Sturken and Cartwright (n. 4) pp. 3-5

¹⁵ Georgian Ombudsperson's Office, ‘ფემიციდის მონიტორინგის ანგარიში 2014-2018’ (‘Report on Femicide Monitoring 2014-2018’), 4 June 2020. <https://www.ombudsman.ge/geo/190306081201spetsialuri-angarishebi/femitsidis-monitoringis-angarishi-2014-2018> (accessed August 5, 2021)

¹⁶ GEOSTAT, UN Women and the EU for Georgia, “National Study on Violence against Women in Georgia 2017” 6 March, 2018.

In Georgia, gender-based violence is a serious human rights concern. There have been some encouraging legislative efforts in recent years, but the UN Women study demonstrates just how pervasive the problem is¹⁷. The country's dire socioeconomic situation makes combating the problem much more challenging.

According to the UN Women's data, domestic violence is the most common form of GBV in Georgia. "In Georgia, one in seven women aged 15-64 report they have been physically, sexually, or psychologically abused by an intimate partner in their lifetime and 1 in 29 in the last year,"¹⁸ reads the report.

In terms of other types of violence, the study discovered that sexual harassment is the most common. Despite the pervasiveness of all kinds of GBV, UN Women reports that, while the statistics are alarming, they do not represent the entire magnitude of the problem due to underreporting. This claim is reinforced by the fact that anonymous surveys conducted in 2017 revealed significantly higher reporting of violence than when asked directly¹⁹.

Despite the efforts of the Government and NGOs working on women's issues, the attitudes towards GBV are influenced by the patriarchal culture. Normalization of violence and isolating it as a "private matter" are some of the most pervasive ideas surrounding GBV.

The UN study found that 60% of women and 72% of men agree to different statements that normalize violence, such as: "A woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together"; "If a woman is raped, she has usually done something careless to put herself

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ *ibid.*

in that situation”; “Violence between husband and wife is private and others should not intervene”; “If a woman doesn’t physically fight back, you cannot call it rape”²⁰.

Additionally, due to stigma surrounding GBV, namely, rape, it is often not reported to the authorities. Even when the police are notified of a case of domestic violence or rape, the investigation is not always carried out properly²¹. This adds to the issue, creating a culture of impunity surrounding GBV.

The combination of socio-economic factors, the underreporting of GBV and lack of appropriate action from the police, and the sexist belief systems all contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence in Georgia.

1.3. Rationale

The present study is an attempt to analyse how the Georgian media covers GBV and what steps does the State take to ensure a high standard of coverage. As media hold power to shift attitudes in society, they also have a responsibility to have high ethical standards and dedicate efforts to dismantling harmful gender stereotypes and prejudices surrounding GBV.

However, the regulation of the media is a sensitive topic and requires well-thought-out steps to ensure that the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and expression aren’t violated.

Therefore, the self-regulation of media can be a powerful tool in taking active steps to ensure ethical coverage that also problematizes the issue and informs the audience.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ M. Tsurtsumia, *საქართველოში ქალთა არასამთავრობო ორგანიზაციების როლი სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების ჩამოყალიბების პროცესში* (the role the women’s NGOs in the process of development of the civic society), Doctoral dissertation, Caucasus International University, 2020, p. 78.

Gender researcher and Executive Director at Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) Eka Aghdgomelashvili points out in an interview that the media has a huge role in problematizing VAW²². When discussing the positive trend of the media talking more about such issues, she notes “activists, without the media, would still need a lot of time to address this issue as a public problem.”

Aghdgomelashvili further highlights that while it’s a positive development that the issue is no longer ignored in the media, there needs to be a broader context provided for the audience²³. Reporting on isolated incidents reinforces the idea that GBV is just an individual, familial tragedy and deprives the audience of the problematization of the issue as a complex, social concern.

We must not forget that this [domestic violence] is only one form of violence against women and not the only one. In addition, the focus of media attention is mainly on cases of physical violence or femicide. Recently, cases of sexual violence and harassment have also come into the media focus, although other forms of violence, such as psychological violence, bullying or other forms, are less commonly perceived as violence – Aghdgomelashvili notes²⁴.

The present study can be used as a point of departure for media organizations, self-regulatory bodies and governmental agencies in Georgia to see some of the most important aspects that might need improving in media reporting of GBV.

²² M. Gugulashvili, “მედიის როლი ქალთა მიმართ ძალადობის წინააღმდეგ ბრძოლაში - ინტერვიუ ეკა აღდგომელაშვილთან” (The Role of Media in Combating Violence Against Women – Interview with Eka Aghdgomelashvili), Media Checker, 26 March 2021, <https://www.mediachecker.ge/siakhleebi/article/87558-mediis-rol-i-qaltha-mimartha-dzaladobis-tsinaaghmdge-brdzolashi-interviu-eka-aghdgomelashvilthan> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

1.4. Research question

The thesis aims to answer the research question – how is gender-based violence portrayed in Georgian media, and what steps does the State take to ensure proper coverage?

The research question is twofold. Firstly, it aims to uncover the tendencies of GBV reporting in the Georgian media. Secondly, it sets out to ascertain what measures the State takes to meet its international and national human rights obligations by ensuring GBV is adequately covered in the media.

1.5. Methodology

The research is based on content analysis of articles related to GBV from two online publications. The articles that included keywords, such as “gender-based violence”, “domestic violence”, “violence against women”, “femicide”, etc. in the period from 1 November 2020 to 30 April 2021 were selected for analysis. The articles were limited to the cases that happened in Georgia and other news from around the world were disregarded. The methodology is based on previous research conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina²⁵.

The articles were coded in five analytical categories using Quirkos software in order to find commonalities across the content of the articles:

- Story and analysis
- Visualization
- Topics
- Actors

²⁵ E. M., Jukić, *Research on Media Reporting on Gender-Based Violence Against Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, UN Women, 2016, pp. 7-9.

- Visibility of the social issue

Additionally, three cases were selected for a deeper analysis of the TV channels. Three channels were selected, including the Public Broadcaster, one pro-government and one pro-opposition channels.

The case studies serve to analyse the coverage of GBV on TV channels to see how ethical and impartial it is and determine areas for improvement.

To address the second half of the research question, relevant international standards and good practices, as well as Georgia's Action Plan for 2018-2020 on the Measures to be Implemented for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims will be examined to determine what the State is already doing to ensure a high standard of coverage that does not reproduce the problem and what it can (and should) do to enhance its positive involvement.

1.6. Limitations

The research has several limitations. Firstly, the methodology is limited to analysing only online media and TV channels and doesn't consider print media, as well as social media. Furthermore, the selected outlets from each medium are limited to two and three, respectively. The period selected for the research is six months. Selecting more mediums, more outlets, or more time for research would not have been feasible for the present research.

While the methodology can indicate some common problems in reporting on GBV in Georgian media, it can't offer a comprehensive answer to the question due to the aforementioned limitations.

Future research can apply the same methodology to a broader selection of mediums and media outlets, both traditional (print, TV, radio) and newly emerging (online and social media) to add additional knowledge to this research and further advance the standard of GBV coverage in Georgian media.

2. Existing national and international safeguards to prevent GBV

There are numerous national and international mechanisms to prevent gender-based violence. However, the enforcement of the documents isn't always effective.

2.1. National mechanisms

The Constitution of Georgia, the supreme law, guarantees equality between men and women and denounces discrimination.

Article 11 of the Constitution guarantees equality of all persons:

All persons are equal before the law. Any discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, origin, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other views, social affiliation, property or titular status, place of residence, or on any other grounds shall be prohibited.

In 2018, Article 11 of the Constitution was amended to include special guarantees for gender equality. The addition to the Article takes a step further to guarantee equality for both genders²⁶. The new addition to the Constitution goes beyond the obligation to protect and

²⁶ UN Women, 'Georgia's new constitution guarantees substantive gender equality', 15 January 2018, <https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/01/georgias-new-constitution-guarantees-substantive-gender-equality> (accessed 5 August 2021)

adds the obligation for the State to fulfil the rights of women by implementing “special measures”. Article 11, section 3 reads:

The State shall provide equal rights and opportunities for men and women. The State shall take special measures to ensure the essential equality of men and women and to eliminate inequality.

The addition to the Constitution was an important step to hold the State accountable for the human rights violations that women face. It obliges the State to create targeted policies and laws to fight the structural inequalities that prevent women from enjoying their rights.

While NGOs had been working on the issue of GBV for years prior, 2006 was the year when the issue gained significant attention from the State. This is when nationwide efforts began to combat domestic violence and responsible State agencies began to keep records²⁷.

The law on “Prevention of Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance of Victims of Domestic Violence” was adopted in 2006. However, research shows that the idea of combatting GBV wasn’t fully matured at the State level and the law was only adopted to comply with the international standards. Thus, lack of readiness from the State influenced the policy implementation process²⁸.

²⁷ The World Bank, ‘Gender Based Violence in Georgia - Links Among Conflict, Economic Opportunities and Services’, 2017, p. 42

²⁸ N. Javakhishvili and G. Jibladze, ‘Analysis of Anti-Domestic Violence Policy Implementation in Georgia Using Contextual Interaction Theory (CIT)’, *Journal of social policy* 47, no. 2, 2018, pp. 317–334 (accessed 5 August 2021).

The decision to adopt the anti-domestic-violence law was not because of the commitment of the State to end GBV, but only to check it off of the list of laws needed to gain sympathy from the international community²⁹.

Javakhishvili and Jibladze point out that the anti-domestic-violence law lacked gender sensitivity and an overall gender equality approach to the GBV issue.

Despite its drawbacks, the 2006 law imposed restrictive measures against abusers, such as restraining orders issued by the police. Additionally, State-run shelters for victims of domestic violence was established. Currently, there are three shelters available.

Domestic violence (DV) was criminalized in 2012 by adding several provisions to the Criminal Code of Georgia. Article 1261 defined DV as “violence, regular insult, blackmail, humiliation by one family member of another family member, which has resulted in physical pain or anguish”. In addition, the article included an expansive list of family members entailed by the article. With the introduction of Article 111, other offences committed against a family member citing other provisions of the Code were listed.

2.2. International Mechanisms

Georgia is a signatory to most universal and regional human rights treaties. As a result, Georgia is obligated to follow current international human rights standards and to establish efficient national systems for human rights protection.

The State cooperates with various UN human rights agencies, as well as the Council of Europe (CoE), and the Organization for the Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE).

²⁹ *ibid.*

Georgia acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1994. CEDAW is arguably the most powerful international instrument for safeguarding women's rights. With 30 Articles, the treaty outlines discrimination against women and provides mechanisms for State parties to use to abolish it.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention) is the most relevant international human rights treaty relating to GBV and VAW/DV. It opened for signature in 2011.

The Istanbul Convention sets forth provisions for States that are meant to tackle VAW/DV on different levels. The Convention addresses GBV at every step of the way, from preventive measures to criminalization.

The document is the most potent and comprehensive human rights treaty concerning GBV to date. Georgia ratified the Convention in 2017 and undertook all the responsibilities it entails.

The Istanbul Convention also includes an article that is most relevant to the present research.

2.2.1. Article 17 of Istanbul Convention

Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention highlights the importance of participation of the private sector and the media in ending VAW/DV:

Parties shall encourage the private sector, the information and communication technology sector and the media, with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of policies and to

set guidelines and self-regulatory standards to prevent violence against women and to enhance respect for their dignity.

The Convention recognizes the power the media hold. It can play an important role in shaping attitudes and the State should tap into the potential for social change that media hold. However, unethical coverage and the way the media approaches GBV can also hinder the progress³⁰.

The article explicitly states that the involvement of media should be done with “with due respect for freedom of expression and their independence”. Media can get involved in numerous ways, including by firstly creating a non-discriminatory work environment for women journalists, strengthening their participation in the self-regulatory body, creating internal ethical standards related to the coverage of GBV, and much more³¹.

The CoE also points out that lack of context when reporting on GBV and preferring sensationalism “can reinforce gender stereotypes that perpetuate gender-based violence”³². In this regard, there are numerous nonbinding standards of the CoE and good practices from several European countries.

Article 17 presents an excellent tool and opportunity for the State to reach out to the private sector and media to get involved and make use of their potential in the prevention of VAW/DV.

³⁰ M. Morback, *Encouraging the participation of the private sector and the media in the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence: Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention - a collection of papers on the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, Council of Europe, 2016, pp. 9-11, 33-36.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

3. The media environment in Georgia

The media environment in Georgia is characterized as pluralistic and extremely polarized³³. For the purposes of this thesis, I will categorize the main TV channels into three groups – the public broadcaster, pro-government and pro-opposition.

The political divide between the channels became more evident during the 2020 Parliamentary Elections, as reported by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) monitoring mission. According to the report on media monitoring during the elections, ODIHR found that:

In the absence of genuine investigative programmes and analytical reporting, coverage of the campaign was at times limited to superficial reporting of daily campaign activities and of accusations made by the main political parties³⁴.

3.1. The Rustavi 2 ECtHR judgement shakes up the media landscape

The biggest shift in the media landscape came in 2019, when The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled on the case of the ownership of Rustavi 2, one of the most popular channels with pro-opposition links.

ECtHR ruled that there was no breach of fair trial and reverted the ownership of the company to a businessman Kibar Khalvashi, whose claim was that he was forced to give up his shares of the company at a low price in 2006³⁵.

³³ EU and UNDP, 'Georgian media stays pluralistic and polarized', 23 April 2021, <https://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2021/elections-media-monitoring.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

³⁴ OSCE/ODIHR 'Georgia Parliamentary Elections - 31 October 2020 - ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission - Final Report', 2021, pp. 21-24

³⁵ European Court of Human Rights, *Rustavi 2 Broadcasting Company Ltd and Others v. Georgia*, no. 16812/17, 18 July 2019.

Khalvashi is affiliated with the current ruling Georgian Dream (GD) party. Despite claiming that he would not interfere with the editorial policy of the channel, once he got back the control package of the company, he appointed a new director, who swiftly fired most editors, news anchors and hosts, claiming they had a conflict of interest to continue working at the company due to the previous remarks made against Khalvashi³⁶.

The purge of leading government-critical journalists resulted in most of the journalists quitting their positions at Rustavi 2.

The previous, pro-opposition director of Rustavi 2 Nika Gvaramia was charged with “abuse of power” for alleged bypassing of regulations of placing a commercial ad on the channel in 2015, resulting in loss of millions for the company³⁷.

As a result of Rustavi 2 falling into the hands of the pro-government businessman, the journalists that left the company went on to establish two new pro-opposition TV companies – Mtavari Arkhi (Main Channel) and Formula later in 2019.

Both new channels got staffed with previous Rustavi 2 employees, with Mtavari being spearheaded by Gvaramia.

3.2. Media polarization

³⁶ OSCE/ODIHR ‘Georgia Parliamentary Elections - 31 October 2020 - ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission - Final Report’, 2021, pp. 21-24

³⁷ OC Media, ‘Former Rustavi 2 director Nika Gvaramia indicted’, 9 August 2019, <https://oc-media.org/former-rustavi-2-director-nika-gvaramia-indicted/> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

Oftentimes, due to the ineffectiveness of the self-regulatory body, the media outlets are often used as a mere tool for political campaigns³⁸.

The divide between the government-aligned and pro-opposition media is best showcased through the airtime that they allow their respective parties during the 2020 election period.

According to ODIHR's monitoring, the GBP offered the viewers mostly neutral coverage. GD received 18, the UNM coalition – 13, EG – 8, and Lelo 4 per cent of the coverage. The government activities received 22% of the time. The other candidates received 22%³⁹.

The pro-opposition private broadcaster Mtavari Arkhi dedicated between 29-35% of negative coverage to the ruling party and the government. The other two pro-opposition broadcasters Pirveli and Formula dedicated 11 to 16 per cent negative coverage.

The ruling party-aligned Imedi dedicated 45% of “overwhelmingly positive or neutral coverage to GD and 24% to the government activities. UNM coalition and EG got 14 and 2 per cent negative coverage on Imedi. Other parties received an accumulative of 3% of the time.

ODIHR assessed Rustavi 2 coverage as largely neutral, but GD and government still received 27 per cent and 15 per cent coverage time respectively, “while the UNM-led coalition, EG and Lelo received some 14, 9 and 6 per cent of coverage”⁴⁰.

³⁸ OSCE/ODIHR ‘Georgia Parliamentary Elections - 31 October 2020 - ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission - Final Report’, 2021, pp. 21-24

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

However limited, the data shows that the polarization of the broadcast media landscape is immense. The gap between the coverage of pro-government and pro-opposition channels is directly mirrored in society's perception of the main political players.

This research, among other goals, seeks to examine how the GPB and private pro-government and pro-opposition broadcasters cover the issue of gender-based violence.

3.3. 5 July 2021 attack on the media

The Georgian media is characterized as pluralistic, yet extremely polarized by local NGOs and international media organizations⁴¹. While there have been isolated attacks on journalists in the past, in recent years, the freedom of media has been on the rise. Unfortunately, in the past year, the situation started to rapidly decline⁴². the most alarming attack on the media took place on 5 July 2021.

Tbilisi Pride, a local LGBTQIA+ organization held Pride week, which was to conclude with a 'March of Dignity' on the main street Rustaveli avenue on 5 July. Far-right violent groups announced that they would do anything to interfere with the planned events. Their counter-protests were announced weeks prior to the events taking place.

The events planned for the week were conducted relatively safely, including a movie screening, with police protecting the organizers and attendees inside a building from violent, far-right, religious groups.

⁴¹ RSF, Georgia country profile, 2021, <https://rsf.org/en/georgia> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁴² S. Beraia, 'Georgia: Media Freedom, Journalists' Safety In Decline', Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 1 May 2021, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/georgia-media-freedom-journalists-safety-decline> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

The concluding March of Dignity on Rustaveli was planned for 5 July. The violent counter-protesters gathered on the avenue, in front of the Parliament building from the early hours of the day.

Diplomatic Corps accredited in Georgia, as well as the representatives of the UN and EU in the country called on the Government⁴³ to protect the freedom of speech and expression of Tbilisi Pride and their supporters.

Despite the relevant authorities being informed on the planned March weeks prior, after the Government meeting on 5th, Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili declared that it was “unreasonable” to hold the Dignity March⁴⁴ and accused the organizers of being puppets of Mikheil Saakashvili, the third President of the country and the leader of the opposition party UNM.

The Georgian Orthodox Church also announced a “peaceful prayer” on the main avenue that same day. The religious and far-right protestors gathered on Rustaveli from early morning. The journalists covering the counter-protestors were met with sudden aggression from the groups.

In total, 53 journalists were assaulted. Many of them were brutally beaten, suffering concussions and broken limbs as a result. The police force on Rustaveli was insufficient to protect the media from aggressive mobs, and those there did not intervene sufficiently⁴⁵.

⁴³ Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, ‘Protect the right to freedom of assembly at 2021 Pride Week in Tbilisi’, 1 July 2021, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia/101070/protect-right-freedom-assembly-2021-pride-week-tbilisi_en (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁴⁴ Civil.ge, ‘PM Says Pride March ‘Unreasonable,’ Organized by ‘Radical Opposition’’, 5 July 2021, <https://civil.ge/archives/430522> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁴⁵ Civil.ge, ‘Far-Right Groups Massively Attack Journalists’, 5 July 2021, <https://civil.ge/archives/430551> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

The media representatives ended up being the targets of the violence on July 5th and Tbilisi Pride cancelled the March. Their office was also attacked and vandalized by the violent groups, but the members of Tbilisi Pride managed to relocate before the attack. None of the members of the organization were injured that day.

A few days later, pro-opposition TV Pirveli cameraman Aleksandre Lashkarava was found dead in his home⁴⁶. He sustained serious injuries on July 5th and had to undergo emergency surgery for his wounds.

At least 20 people beat Lashkarava when he tried to protect his colleague from a violent group when they were filming at the office of an NGO where far-right counter-protestors suspected Tbilisi Pride organizers were. “We were completely defenceless, there was only one police officer, and he couldn't help us,” Miranda Bagaturia, the TV Pirveli journalist said⁴⁷.

The international community condemned the failure of the government to protect the journalists.

After the coordinated attack on more than 50 journalists, the suspicious death of Aleksandre Lashkarava marks a disastrous turning point for the freedom to inform in Georgia. Instead of trying to discredit the late cameraman, we demand that the Interior Ministry launch an in-depth, impartial and transparent investigation of the circumstances of his death and of the attacks suffered by journalists whom the police failed to protect. Officials’ passivity in the face of this extreme attempt at intimidation of journalists by homophobic movements erodes the credibility of the government, which should not tolerate impunity, and which must accept its share of responsibility in the matter - Said

⁴⁶ RFE/RL, ‘Georgian TV Cameraman Injured Amid Anti-LGBT Violence Has Died’, 11 July 2021, <https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia-cameraman-dies-lgbt-violence/31352703.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

Jeanne Cavalier, head of Reporters Without Borders' (RSF) Eastern Europe and Central Asia office⁴⁸.

The EU Heads of Mission in Georgia addressed the Interior Minister Gomelauri, as well as the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs.

In the letter, the Heads of Mission noted that the 5 July violence “cast a shadow over EU-Georgia relations and Georgia’s image as a country upholding basic human rights”⁴⁹.

The letter criticized the lack of action from the authorities to prevent the violence in the first place and then to protect journalists and activists from violence. The Heads of Mission called for “all violent incidents and criminal acts need to be effectively and quickly investigated and duly prosecuted to the full extent of the law”⁵⁰.

This case illustrates that despite positive pluralization of the media landscape in recent years and a relatively safer environment for the journalists can be taken away any second. The ineffective and late reaction of the government set a terrible precedent for any type of violence in the country.

3.4. Regulation and self-regulation of the Georgian media

As the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media points out in the guidebook for media self-regulation, free media is an absolute prerequisite to a successful democratic

⁴⁸ RSF, 'Georgia: Suspicious death of a journalist attacked six days earlier by homophobic lynch mob', 12 July 2021, <https://rsf.org/en/news/georgia-suspicious-death-journalist-attacked-six-days-earlier-homophobic-lynch-mob> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁴⁹ Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, 'Letter addressed to the Government of Georgia by EU Heads of Mission on the Pride related events of 5 July and their follow-up', 15 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/3B1db9I> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

society⁵¹. In general, the State must not interfere with the work of the media with too many regulations, as it can be easily abused by elected governments and officials.

However, when it comes to cases of speech or images that might endanger “the rule of law, society’s peace, or the safety of individuals”, “exceptions from freedom of expression must be set in law”⁵². According to the guidebook, such cases can include “incitement to violence, calls for discrimination, or distribution of child pornography”⁵³

While GBV can’t fall into such categories, it’s still important to protect the identities of the victims and talk about the subject in the context of a social problem when reporting.

The best tool to ward off unnecessary involvement of the State in media is to have a strong self-regulatory body. With a bottom-up approach, self-regulation in media can be an excellent way to ensure ethical coverage, highlight social problems and help the journalists develop professionally.

Currently, journalistic work is governed by a sole independent self-regulatory body in the country, the Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics (GCJE). Anyone can address the Charter about any journalistic piece that might have violated the set ethical standards. However, the Charter can only establish if certain principles were violated or not. The Charter also holds training sessions to raise professionalism among journalists, but its work is purely formal and can’t penalize the journalists in any way.

Among others, the Charter forbids journalists discrimination of any kind:

⁵¹ The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Miklós Haraszti, “The Media Self-Regulation Guidebook - All questions and answers”, Vienna, 2008, pp. 13-15

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

Journalists must understand the dangers of encouraging discrimination on the part of the media; therefore, he/she must exert every effort to avoid discrimination of any person on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political and other opinion, national or social origin, or any other grounds. – stipulates Principle 7 of the Charter⁵⁴.

In addition, Principle 10 stipulates that “Journalists must pay respect to privacy, and not intrude into the private lives of people unless there is special public interest.”

The aforementioned Principles are particularly important in relation to GBV and how media covers the issue.

It is positive that the self-regulatory body exists in the country, however, strengthening it and promoting more participation from all forms of media is necessary. Many online publications fall into the grey area of not officially being media outlets yet reporting on the news. Therefore, online media remains unregulated.

The GCJE has dedicated guidelines for covering GBV, as well as suicide. The guidelines add on to the Principles stipulated in the Charter and encourage journalists to ethically cover such sensitive topics, while also highlighting the social problems.

The broadcast media has its own regulatory body Communications Commission. Adopted by the regulatory body, The Code of Conduct for Broadcasters obliges broadcasters to abide by certain standards and principles, such as accommodating the interest of different groups in the society, etc.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, <https://www.unicef.org/georgia/sites/unicef.org.georgia/files/2019-10/cartiaen.pdf> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁵⁵ Communications Commission, ‘Code of Conduct for Broadcasters’, 2009, http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/mdf/uploads//7200_7176_124355_Codex88504_1_ENG.pdf (last accessed 5 August 2021).

The Code lists suggestions to broadcasters as to how to cover some of the sensitive issues, including domestic violence. Additionally, the Code urges broadcasters to “not disclose the identity of victims of sexual abuse, unless victims give their consent and disclosure complies with the public interest”⁵⁶.

3.5. The most used media as the main source of information

Online media as a source of information is a fairly new development in the country. However, it’s a rapidly growing field as more and more people have access to smart devices that have internet access.

While the internet and social media (particularly Facebook) come second after television, it remains behind the TV as the main source of information for the majority of the population.

However, as recently as in the last three years, the number of people using the internet as their main source for the information has increased significantly. In 2018 research of public attitudes conducted by NDI and CRRC, 72% of surveyed people named television as their main source of information, with the internet coming second at 18%⁵⁷.

The same question asked in 2021 gave significantly different results. The percentage of people naming the internet as their main source of information increased from 18 to 35 per cent, while the users of television as their main source of information decreased from 72 to 57 (see Figure 1)⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ NDI/CRRC, “What are your main sources of information for receiving news about Georgian politics and current events? Please tell me, which is your first main source of information.” NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, March 2018. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/ge/nm2018ge/INFSOUF1/> (last accessed 5 August 2021)

⁵⁸ NDI/CRRC, “What are your main sources of information for receiving news about Georgian politics and current events? Please tell me, which is your first main source of information.” NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, July 2021. <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nj2021ge/INFSOUF1/> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

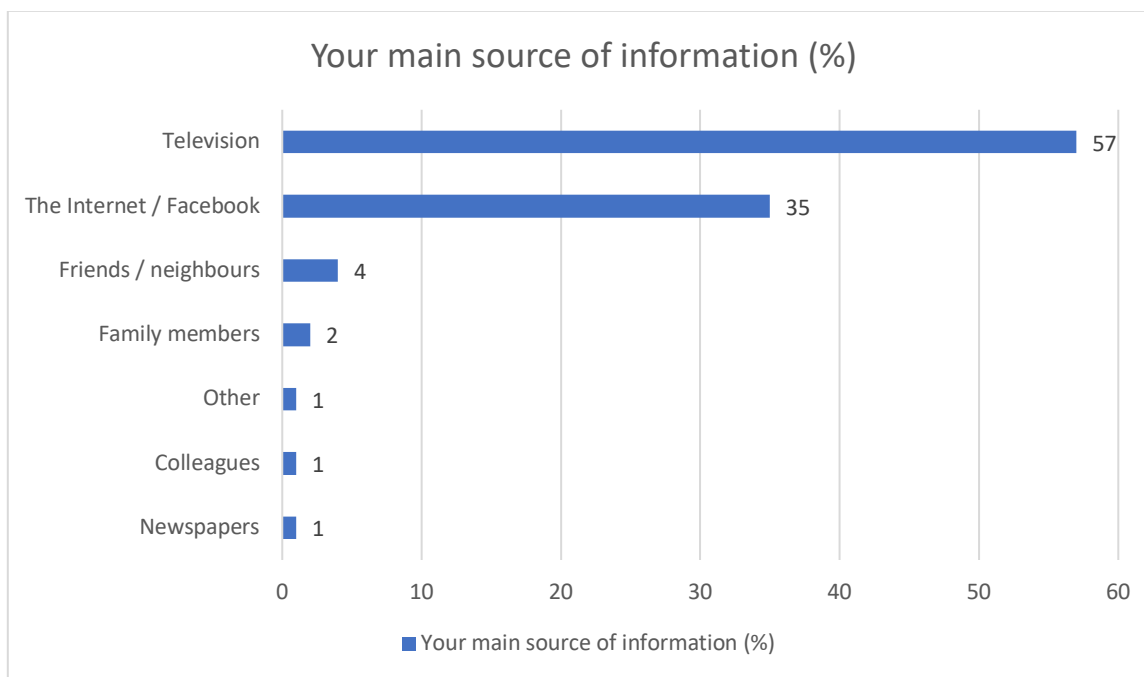


Figure 1 - Main source of information for Georgia's population, July 2021, source: NDI/CRRC

4. Analysis of the research results

As set by the methodology of this research, the results detail the findings of the analysis conducted on the content from two credible online media publishers – RFE/RL and Netgazeti/Batumelebi.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (Radio Tavisupleba in Georgian) is a United States government-funded media outlet, offering independent coverage of Georgia's news⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ RFE/RL, 'RFE/RL's Georgian Service: Radio Tavisupleba', <https://pressroom.rferl.org/rferl-georgian-service-radio-tavisupleba> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

Netgazeti is an online publication founded by the newspaper Batumelebi, an Adjarian publication mainly focused on regional issues. With Netgazeti, the newspaper expanded its readership by covering issues from all over the country⁶⁰.

It is noteworthy that both of these publications have proclaimed and demonstrated commitment to covering social issues, human rights violations, and the problems of vulnerable groups. While these two outlets do not represent the whole realm of ever-growing online publications, they are some of the most trustworthy with high journalistic value and a large readership.

These two were chosen because of their high regard in the public. There are other, smaller online publications that focus on generating clicks and focusing on ‘yellow’ issues that were not chosen in order to keep the focus on news coverage. However, it could be an interest of future research to see if other outlets that don’t primarily focus on covering news reflect GBV and other issues in their work.

The articles were chosen within the period of 1 November 2020 – 30 April 2021 that mentioned at least one of the keywords related to GBV. A total of 45 articles were selected for research. The articles were coded using Quirkos software according to the five analytical categories defined in the methodology chapter.

4.1. Story and analysis

Out of all the analysed articles, 31 had an author (see Figure 2). Others were not signed and were shorter articles as provided by the news agencies, NGOs, the police, or governmental agencies.

⁶⁰ Netgazeti ‘About’, <https://netgazeti.ge/about/>, (last accessed 5 August 2021).

Out of authored articles, the overwhelming majority – close to 84% were written by women. Only 5 articles (16%) were written by male journalists. This finding is interesting in several ways.

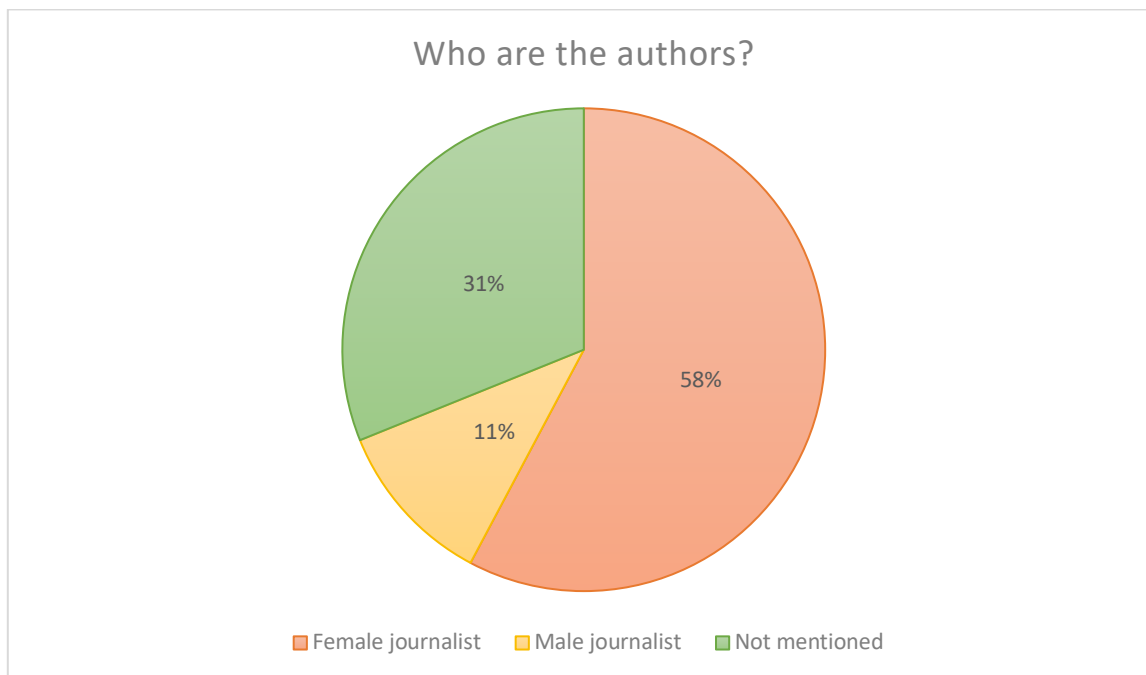


Figure 2 - authors of the analysed articles.

Despite the ever-growing number of women journalists in the media, the field is still dominated by men. There are no data available for Georgian media, however, a study conducted in 114 countries by the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in 2015, showed that female journalists represented only an average of 37% of the stories, while male reporters wrote 63%. This was a 9% increase in the 20 years since the first research (conducted in 1995). Despite the positive growth of female journalists, the field is still dominated by men⁶¹.

⁶¹ M. Geertsema-Sligh, 'Gender Issues in News Coverage', in T. P. Vos and F. Hanusch (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2018, p. 3.

Due to the lack of research conducted on gender disparity in Georgian media, I will take the GMMP research as a rule of thumb. Therefore, the finding that in Georgia, female reporters wrote more on the issues of GBV, despite them being underrepresented in the field, is even more worthy of attention.

This shows that GBV is considered as only a concern for women, with male reporters shying away from writing on the topic. It is also noteworthy that all five articles written by men that were related to GBV were reporting on specific cases, with no substantial analysis or discussion of GBV as a social issue.

Meanwhile, the articles that went more in-depth on the issue, showcasing the systemic nature of VAW, were all written by women.

The length of the analysed articles correlates with the number of signed versus unsigned pieces. Articles that didn't have an author were mostly short, only a few paragraph-long pieces that were taken directly from the source, such as the NGOs and the police.

Out of the analysed articles, 37% of them were shorter, only conveying information on a crime, for example, femicide, a perpetrator being arrested, etc.

The rest of the articles were either medium, or long, conveying more information about specific cases, or offering the analysis of the issue, legislature, or shortcomings in the State systems in place to protect women and girls from violence.

Such results show that online media tends to offer its readers not only short information about occurrences of GBV but an in-depth analysis of the issue as well.

4.2. Visualization

As per Principle 10 of GCJE, “journalists must pay respect to privacy, and not intrude into the private lives of people unless there is special public interest.” However, there’s no definition provided for what constitutes “public interest”, making it hard to enforce this Principle.

It is not considered ethical by local and international standards for journalists to include graphic visuals in the stories. It’s also pointed out in the guidelines on gender issues from the Charter that GBV should be covered without causing damage to the victim or their families.

Additionally, the guideline states that:

Often, even covering the face of the victim isn’t enough to make them unidentifiable. Even by telling their story, the victim can be identified by the abuser. Therefore, before telling the story of the victim, analyse if the safety of the victim will be protected after you tell their story. In the best interests of the respondent, you might have to not only cover the face and their name but change some details about the story as well⁶².

The Charter also encourages reporters to focus on systemic issues and what is being done by the State in this regard. The guidelines also point journalists to get familiar with the reports on the topic from the Public Defender and other relevant international and local organizations⁶³.

⁶² The Charter of Journalistic Ethics, ‘Coverage of Gender Issues – Guidelines’, 2017. <https://www.qartia.ge/ka/sakhelmdzghvanelo-tsesebi1/article/34573-genderuli-sakithkhebis-gashuqeba> (last accessed 5 August). Author’s translation.

⁶³ *ibid*.

All of the analysed articles had some sort of visuals attached to them. Since photos are part of the reporting and provide additional support to the coverage, they're also subject to ethical standards⁶⁴.

It's noteworthy that presumably because of the format of the online media platforms, even the shortest articles only reporting on a case had some sort of image to go along with the text.

Out of 45 articles, 28 had neutral images attached, such as art depicting little girls being yelled at, or stock images of clenched fists of men, etc. (see Figure 3).

While it is positive that the majority of the articles had neutral images without depicting the victims, it is concerning what message such stock images or art pieces send. Firstly, they're overwhelmingly focused on physical violence and don't reference any other forms of violence. Unfortunately, this is also in line with what gets reported on in the media. The stories are deemed "news-worthy" only when there's physical violence involved or femicide occurs.

This tendency fails to acknowledge other forms of GBV, leaving out forms other than physical violence, which is discussed further down.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

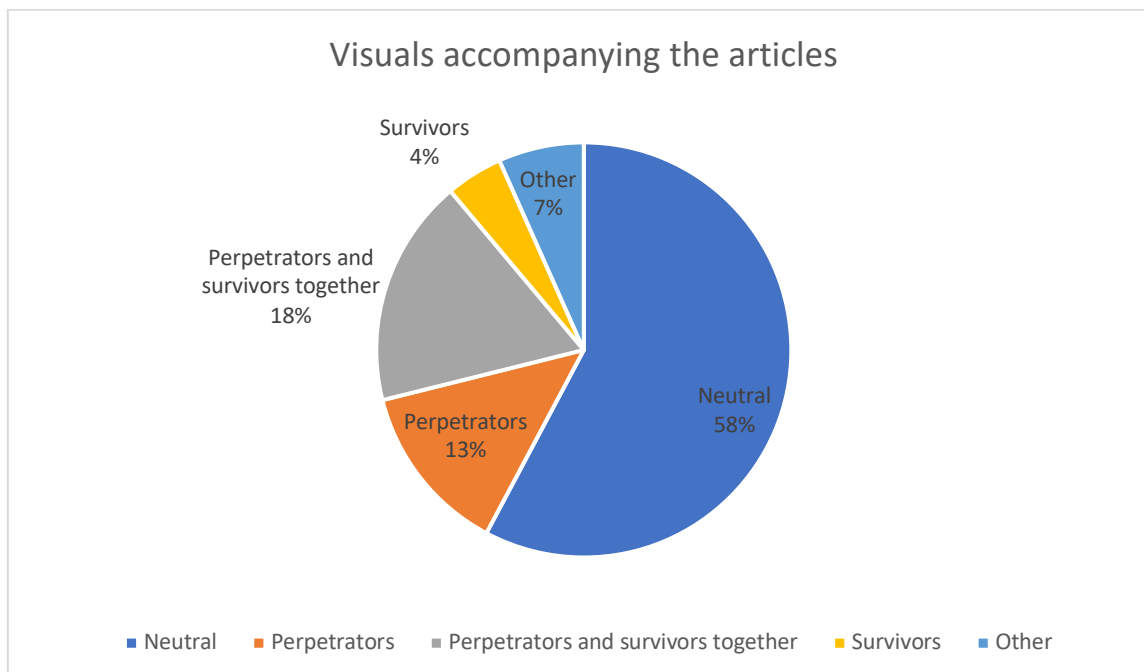


Figure 3 - the percentage of what is depicted on the accompanying visuals.

The rest of the articles were accompanied by pictures of perpetrators and victims. In more detail, perpetrators alone were featured in photos 6 times. Only one of the images was with the face of the perpetrator blurred (presumably provided by the police); it showed him being taken into custody.

It's interesting how the media reports on GBV when celebrities or politicians are involved. In the period selected for research, there were several cases of GBV that involved people known to the public. Some of the stories are discussed in more detail further down in the case studies chapter.

Two incidences of domestic violence in a celebrity family were reported throughout this period. Almost all of the articles that covered these two incidents included images of the famous couple posing together or their individual pictures stitched together.

This tendency leads to readers regarding the couple as a single familial unit, discouraging them from considering GBV as a systemic issue and instead viewing it as an individual tragedy of this specific (famous) couple.

Seeing images of their abusers next to themselves can sometimes be retraumatizing for the survivors. It is important noting that in both cases, the women involved chose to go public with their stories, alleviating the media of the responsibility of concealing their identities.

Only two of the articles featured images of the survivors of GBV. One was an interview with a survivor of child marriage and physical violence. The images taken during the interview showed the scars of the survivor to emphasize the nature of violence. In one of the pictures, the interviewee can be seen showing off her scars for the camera.

The other instance of showing the face of the victim was also related to a public figure. A businessman was arrested for alleged domestic violence and the news piece was about his wife telling the police and reporters that physical violence didn't occur. The image shows her leaving the police building. Despite asking

“I don't want him to get arrested. I called 112 [emergency services number], for them to come and write up the order [the restraining order], for us to be apart for some time,”⁶⁵ the article quotes the woman.

The article also emphasized that the woman had bruising on her eyelid that she sustained by “hitting a chair”.

⁶⁵ Author's translation and notes.

While it is undoubtedly encouraging that the majority of articles did not include photographs of survivors or, in the instance of femicide, crime scenes, the images picked for the articles could be better.

Such images depict women as victims, perpetuating gender stereotypes that women are weak and powerless, rather than challenging such ideas. Furthermore, because it solely displays physical violence, it fails to capture the complexities of GBV.

Instead of focusing solely on physical violence in stock pictures and art, the visuals could integrate statistical data on GBV to highlight the issue's systemic character, as recommended by many international guidelines on reporting on such issues.

4.3. Topics

The topics of the studied articles might provide us with a basic notion of what makes its way to the pages of online publications and, ultimately, to the general public. I analysed the articles looking for various forms of violence that are covered in order to determine which types of violence receive the greatest coverage.

The goal of this analytical category was to determine what it takes for GBV issues to make headlines. Because the media has responsibility and has the ability to influence public opinions, what it considers to be violence against women can have an impact on readers' perceptions of what they believe to be GBV as well.

Several articles mentioned more than one form of violence, which is also reflected in the numbers. Out of all analysed articles, close to 51% (23 articles) were about physical violence (see Figure 4). This finding is alarming, as it shows that online publications tend to only report on cases of physical violence and disregard other forms of GBV.

However, the finding cannot be attributed solely to media coverage. In general, forms of GBV other than physical violence receive insufficient attention from government officials, and public awareness of the other manifestations is also limited.

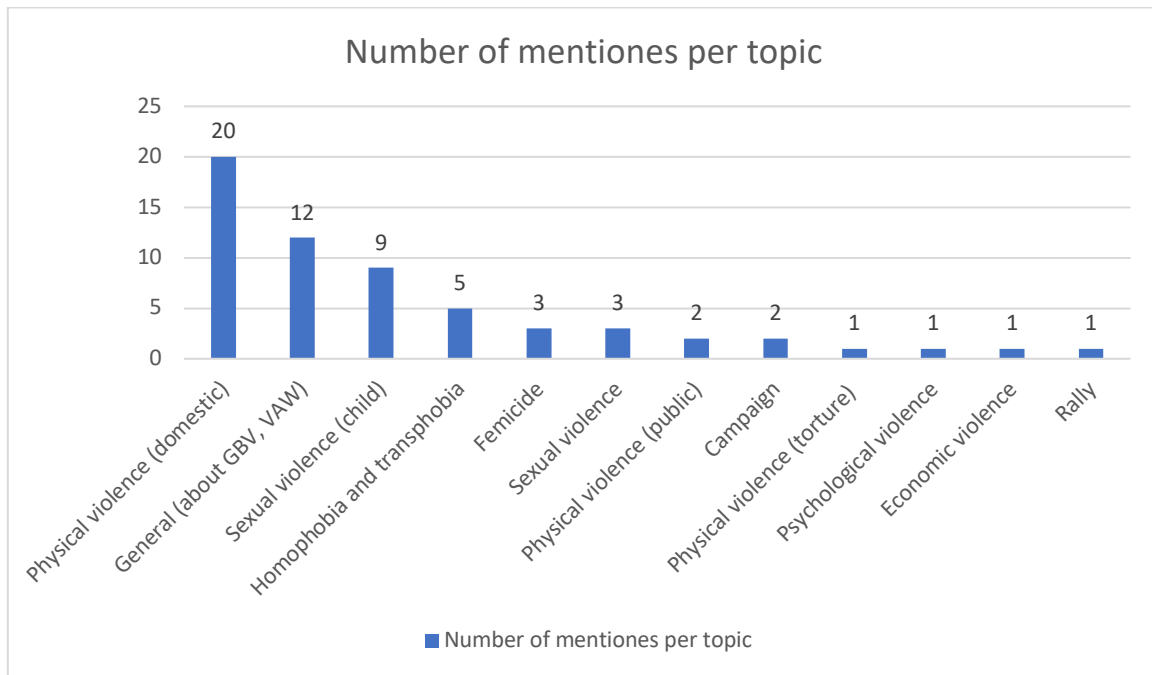


Figure 4 - Number of times a certain topic is mentioned in the analysed articles

Out of the 23 articles on physical violence, 20 were cases of domestic violence, only two mentioned violence in public. One of them was a report from an LGBTQ+ organization talking about violence against trans women in public, and the other was about a politician physically and sexually assaulting a woman (not his partner).

Only one case mentioned the torture of a woman at the hands of her husband. Coincidentally, this article also mentioned economic violence, since the husband controlled the finances of his wife, among other abusive behaviours.

The next category with the highest mentions in the studied articles is GBV and VAW as general topics. These articles ranged from brief news pieces about someone being detained for violence to in-depth analyses of GBV issues in Georgia, including statistics, legislation, and so on.

Sexual violence was a topic of a total of 11 articles, 9 out of which were about sexual violence against a child. Such a high number of articles about child sexual abuse was influenced by a case that received high coverage during the period chosen for research.

Femicide was mentioned in only three articles. Two of them were longer articles with analysis of GBV and one was a short news story, likely a press release from the police reporting on a case of femicide.

Five of the analysed articles mentioned violence against women belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. One article covered a story of a trans woman who was attacked and physically assaulted by two men solely based on her gender identity. The story featured an NGO activist talking about how the woman was assaulted but didn't give any information about the prevalence of the issue or other statistical data.

Another case that received attention in a number of articles was a case of a lesbian couple, who were attacked by their neighbour upon recognizing that they were a couple. The pair got home and parked their car where an underage child was also present. The neighbour got up to their car and started screaming homophobic slurs and phrases, such as “Get out of here, lesbians”, “Get out of this house [residential building], there is no place for you here”, etc.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Author's translation.

The article was based on the information provided by an LGBTQ+ organization and mentioned their demands for the case to be investigated and the perpetrator to be charged.

The other articles relating to the case included the perpetrator being released from jail on bail.

Other topics included several campaigns against GBV, and one article was focused on a rally that took place to protest GBV.

4.4. Actors

It is important to examine who the actors in the articles are. Who are the subjects journalists choose to focus on when discussing GBV? Examining the actors can give a better understanding of how the stories are construed.

The actors of text can include different subjects, not only the survivors and perpetrators of GBV but experts, the police, activists, politicians, etc.

Out of 45 analysed articles, 10 didn't have a defined actor, this was due to the general nature of the texts that didn't focus specifically on separate cases, or they were short news stories that also didn't have a narrow focus.

15 articles featured perpetrators of GBV as the main actors of the text. The majority of them, 8 men, were celebrities (see Figure 5). In the period selected for analysis, several women came forward accusing famous men of sexual assault or domestic violence. The men have found their way to the headlines due to their public personas.

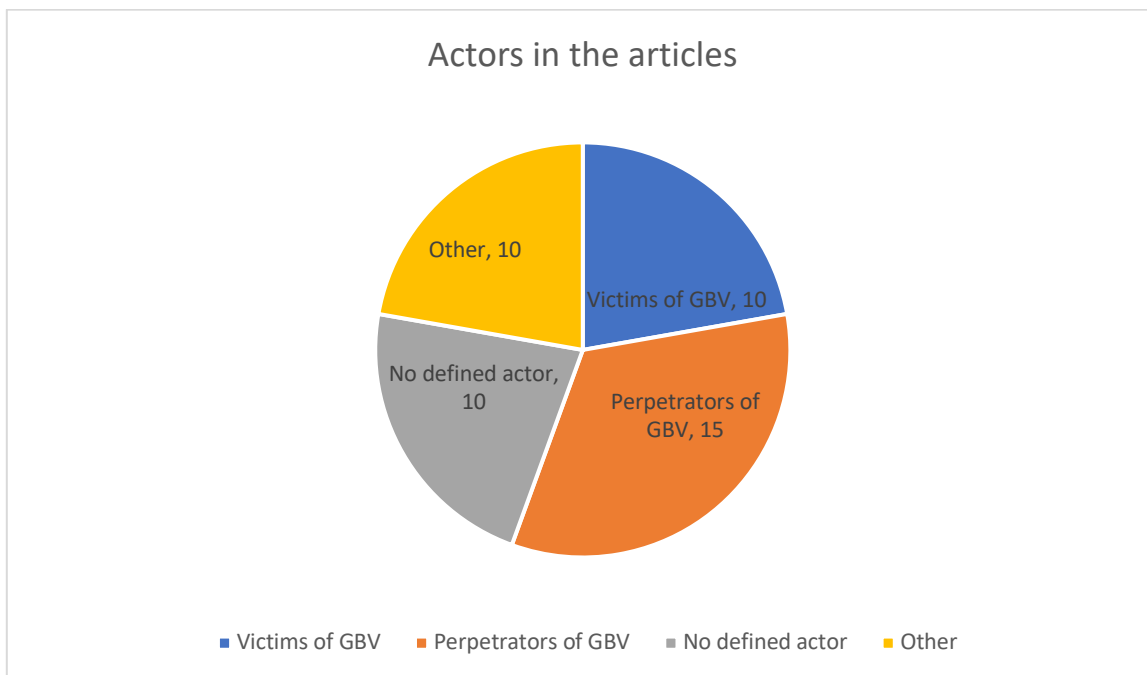


Figure 5 - Number of main actors of the analysed articles

However, the same can't be said about the other perpetrators. 7 of them weren't famous and still ended up being the main subjects of the published stories.

This finding shows that even at times when women are the victims and tell their stories, men still take the front lead in the stories. This is reflective of the general attitude of the male-dominated, patriarchal society.

With the high-profile GBV cases that featured famous men or women, the men were still regarded as innocent on social media and several articles highlighted that. Inquiring about the social media reaction to GBV is out of the scope of this research, however, it can be a subject of further research to establish the attitudes of the public through the reactions to GBV on social media.

Women were actors of the stories in only 10 articles. 4 articles featured women who came forward accusing their famous partners or other men of domestic violence or sexual violence. 5 stories were focused on a victim who died and was subject to domestic violence and sexual violence.

Only one story featured a survivor of domestic violence as the actor. It was an interview with a woman who survived child marriage and years of domestic violence.

One article featured attorneys defending women against perpetrators. It described the difficulties that women confront when defending other women in court against their partners or abusers.

The family of the victim was only featured in one article. It was about a woman whose child died of suicide as a result of sexual violence and domestic violence she faced.

Two articles were directed at the police or the government, discussing flaws in the legislature and the prevention of GBV. Two articles had politicians as main actors of the story; in both instances, they were commenting on specific cases of high-profile domestic violence.

Four actors didn't fit any of the defined categories, being people not related with either the perpetrator or the victim and offered their views on the issue. For clarity, other actors who weren't victims or abusers are also grouped in the "other" category in Figure 5.

To conclude, over 42% of the articles that had a defined actor, were perpetrators. While it's still positive that women who suffered GBV have some voice, it is still not enough. Five of the articles that featured the victim as the main actor was a girl who died of suicide as a result of repeated sexual and domestic violence.

4.5. Visibility of the social problem

The aim of the final analytical category is to establish if the two online media publications put emphasis on gender-based violence as a social problem or simply report on isolated cases of GBV.

Ideally, according to the international standards and guidelines set forth by the GCJE, even when reporting on a specific case, journalists should put the issue into the larger problem of GBV and talk about the systemic nature of the issue, to disclose what steps are being taken by the authorities against such acts and to alarm relevant stakeholders to pay more attention and raise awareness around GBV in the public.

Out of 45 analysed articles, the social problem was recognized in 27 articles. Only 18 articles didn't emphasize GBV as a widespread issue (see Figure 6).

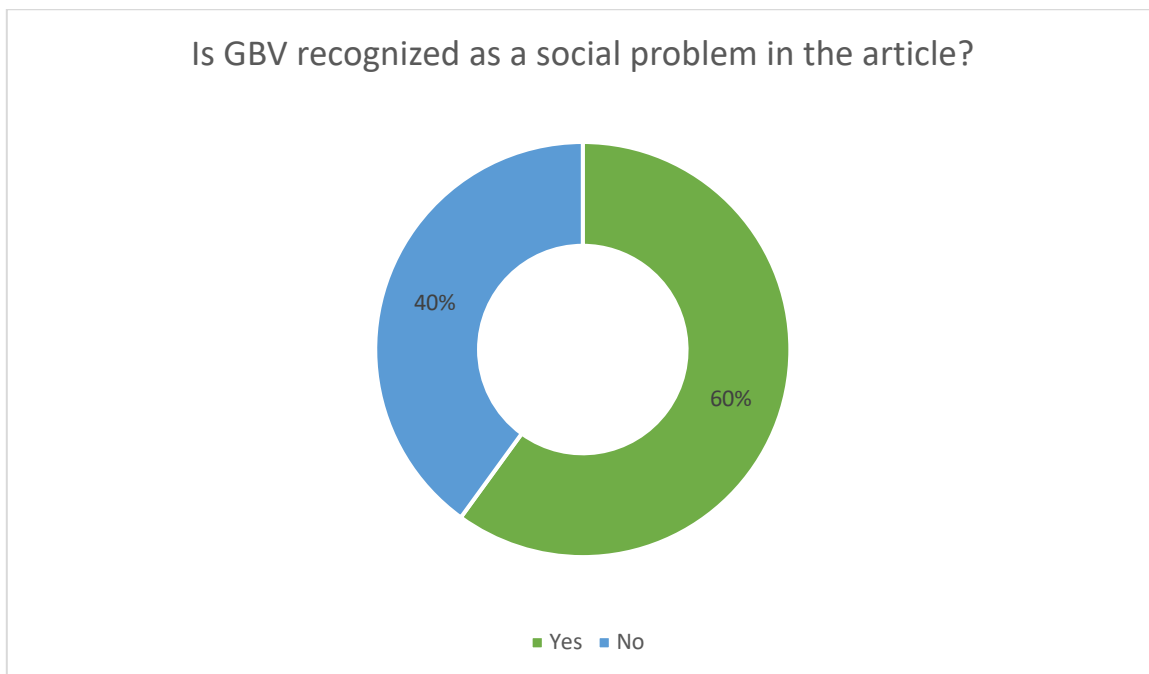


Figure 6 - whether or not GBV is recognized as a social problem in the analysed articles.

This finding is certainly positive since it shows that the journalists working on GBV issues recognize that it is a social problem in need of analysis and discussion. The articles that didn't explicitly mention GBV as a problem were mainly press releases obtained from the police or reports of crime. The articles that refrained from discussing the problem were mostly shorter articles with no author.

While it's important to show the social problem that GBV is, journalists should have the best interest of the victims when reporting on the incidents and refrain from sensationalizing the violence.

It's important to note that while the majority of the articles spoke about GBV as a social issue, the survivors of violence weren't given a direct voice. As noted in the research on GBV in media in Bosnia and Herzegovina, interviews and comments "are exactly the forms which can delve deeper into the topic of gender-based violence and emphasize it as a social problem." Out of all the analysed articles, only one of them was an interview with a survivor.

The interview with the survivor featured graphic details about the violence that her husband used against her and their four children. On the one hand, the interview format is positive so the woman who survived the violence can tell her story. However, the article included some aspects of sensationalizing the situation, such as the headline – "He stabbed me 55 times - the story of a mother of 4 children who got married at the age of 14".

5. Case Studies

Three cases in the observed period from 1 November to 30 April 2021 are chosen for further examination. For various reasons, those were the cases of GBV that received the most media attention and were the topic of reports for more than one day.

The separate cases were studied over several days to a week period following the incident (or publicization of the incident) in the daily evening TV news programs, that usually take place around 8-9 PM every weekday depending on the channel.

The analysis takes look at how the news was handled, who were the participants in the news pieces, if the reporting reflected GBV as a social problem, and whether the identities of the victims and perpetrators were disclosed, as well as other interesting factors that came up.

The three channels selected for analysis include the national public broadcaster of Georgia, Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB), as well as the pro-government TV Imedi and opposition-aligned channel Mtavari Arkhi (Main Channel).

This will establish the similarities and differences in reporting on GBV between the channels aligned with different political powers in the country.

Additionally, as a public broadcaster, examining GPB's coverage of these cases can reveal if the reporting is reflective of the State's declared national and international commitments concerning GBV.

5.1. 14-year-old girl commits suicide after allegedly being sexually assaulted on several occasions and physically abused by her family

A 14-year-old girl was found dead in her home in the Kobuleti municipality village of the Adjara region on 9 February 2021. The police arrested a 24-year-old man the following day under Article 140 of the CC – “sexual intercourse or any other act of sexual nature with a person who has not attained the age of 16 years” and Article 115 – “incitement to suicide”.

After the girl’s death and the perpetrator’s arrest, the Prosecutor’s Office issued a statement saying that the accused and the deceased had sexual contact on two separate occasions:

The investigations carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia showed that N.T. despite the fact that he knew N.Ts. was under sixteen, in June and December 2020, under a condition to marry her afterwards, established a sexual relationship, after which he stopped contact with her. Later he, degrading her dignity, told her that he wasn’t going to marry her. N.Ts. on February 09 2021 committed suicide.⁶⁷

The girl’s father was deceased, and her mother worked abroad, she lived with his paternal grandfather and uncles.

The legal guardian of the girl was her older, 20-year-old sister who had her own family and lived in another town. The sister was granted the status of the victim’s successor.

⁶⁷ Prosecutor’s Office of Georgia, ‘N.T. CHARGED BY THE PROSECUTOR’S OFFICE ON THE CASE OF LEADING TO SUICIDE AND ESTABLISHING A SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH UNDER SIXTEEN IN KOBULETI MUNICIPALITY’, 12 February 2021, <https://pog.gov.ge/en/news/prokuraturam-qobuleTis-municipalitetsi-momxdari-Teqvsmeti-wlis-asaks-miuRweveITan-seqsualuri-kavshi> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

There were numerous shortcomings in the case and several human rights organizations, as well as the Public Defender, pointed out from the beginning that the State was aware of the violence committed against the girl and the suicide could have been prevented.

The 14-year-old was questioned three times at a police station – on 10 December 2020, 14 December 2020, and 4 February 2021. Ana Tavkhelidze, Nini's sister's attorney, maintains that interrogating a victim of sexual violence, especially a minor, numerous times is unacceptable⁶⁸.

The questionings took place at a police station with only a social worker present, without a psychologist or lawyer present.

Nini received forensic medical examination in December and the results were available to the police on 11 January. According to the examination, the girl had three injuries on her body - one at the right anterior shoulder; second - in the area of the left shin, at the back; and third - in the foot.

During her most recent questioning, the girl explained the first two injuries and said she “accidentally hit a wall.”

Attorney said in an interview that the girl’s answer should have signalled the social worker and the police that her explanation of the injuries couldn’t have happened by an accident and that she was physically abused.

⁶⁸ N. Tarkhnishvili and E. Lortkipanidze, 14 წლის ნინის საქმის 7 ხარვეზი - რა წერია საქმის მასალებში (7 flaws in the case of 14-year-old Nini - what is written in the case materials), RFE/RL, 16 February 2021, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31104494.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

The third injury to her leg was explained by the girl as sustained by the 23-year-old accused. According to this evidence, the attorney points that instead of Article 140, which entails sexual intercourse with a minor, it should be reclassified under Article 137, rape⁶⁹.

In the following days after the suicide, the girl's mother told the media that the grandfather and other relatives physically assaulted her after finding out that she was sexually assaulted.

“They physically assaulted her after finding out my daughter was raped. On that day, before being taken to the police, my father-in-law's nieces beat my daughter mercilessly. The child told me everything. Only after that, she was taken to the police,” said Nini's mother to media⁷⁰.

Later, on February 15, the girl's grandfather was also arrested. He confessed and was found guilty of domestic violence against a minor and sentenced to one year in prison on August 6, 2021.

“I arrived [in Kobuleti] the day after her burial, I was told people were asking for me. I didn't even want to attend her burial. She didn't do the right thing, by committing such obscenity,” the uncle of the teenage girl told the media.

Such comments from the family point at the hostile environment that the girl lived in. Instead of being offered understanding and sympathy after being sexually assaulted, her family turned against her, ultimately driving her to suicide.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ RFE/RL, ‘გარდაცვლილი 14 წლის გოგოს დედა: იძულებული გახდა... რატომ გაგრძელდა ასე საქმეო’ (Mother of a dead 14-year-old girl: she was forced to ... why did the case continue like this), 12 February 2021, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31099540.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

Several diplomatic corps and UN Agencies in Georgia, in addition to women's and human rights NGOs, have commented on the case. The UN statement urged for an immediate investigation into the circumstances behind the teen's death, as well as improvements in legislative and social welfare protections:

This tragedy points to persistent stigma around rape, sexual violence and exploitation and gender inequality in Georgia, shortcomings on the part of the child protection system, along with gaps in psycho-social assessment, provision of support services and child-friendly justice for children in contact with the law.⁷¹

The media covered the news of the girl's death and the subsequent events extensively. I will examine the daily evening TV news programs for one week following the publicization of the girl's suicide.

5.1.1. GPB

In the period from 10 February to 17 February 2021, the daily evening news program on GPB was held according to the schedule. The programs ranged from 60 to 90 minutes, covering all the news deemed important that day.

In the examined period, the news of the girl's suicide and subsequent arrests didn't make it on any of GPB's main news programs on any of the days selected for analysis.

To see if GPB covered the case at all, I searched the official website with the keywords relating to the incident.

⁷¹ United Nations Georgia, 'United Nations statement on the death of Kobuleti teenage girl', 16 February 2021, <https://georgia.un.org/en/112000-united-nations-statement-death-kobuleti-teenage-girl> (last accessed 5 August 2021)

The search for the news relating to the case turned out several online articles on GPB's website. The majority of the articles were press releases from the police about the suicide, the arrest of the perpetrators (the alleged sexual assaulter and the grandfather) and the subsequent filing of the charges.

One article was reporting on President Salome Zourabichvili's statement on the case, noting that for her, "as a president and especially for as a woman, what has happened is very serious and violence of any kind is categorically unacceptable"⁷².

One news piece was dedicated to the case in a Sunday (14 February 2021) show that covers important topics that happened throughout the week. The show doesn't have the same format as the regular weekly news program, hence not being included in the initial analysis.

The piece was 4 minutes and 19 seconds long, featured a monologue from the host, as well as three comments from the director of the State Care Agency, the Interior Minister, and a representative of the Social Workers' Trade Union.

The show host started the segment by talking about how vulnerable children and youths are to violence and how families, schools, communities or the State can't protect them. He then continued talking about youth suicide and how it was a topic of his talk show two years ago, referring to a specific child suicide case.

He noted that they're waiting for the answers from State institutions and the only structure that answered their questions was the State Care Agency.

⁷² <https://1tv.ge/news/salome-zurabishvili-rogorc-prezidentisa-da-upirvelesad-qalistvis-chemtvis-kategoriulad-miughebelia-nebismieri-khasiatis-dzaladoba/>

The comments from the State Care Agency director mentioned that access to services is a major challenge, and they're working to improve on it. She noted that there were job openings for a social worker in Kobuleti municipality and they couldn't be filled due to the "lack of professionals in this field". She also noted that they're "studying and analysing" what could have had been done to avoid the fatal result.

Next, the news piece featured the Minister of Interior, who said that his institution did everything that it could as prescribed by the law. "We did everything we could, everything that the law allowed us to, we conducted investigations, questionings, interrogations, etc. We did everything we were supposed to," he said to the journalists.

Finally, the representative of the Social Workers' Trade Union highlighted that the Kobuleti municipality has a population of 75 thousand people and there's only one social worker employed. Their two colleagues were fired during reorganization and for over a year, a replacement couldn't be found.

The show host concluded by criticizing society for thinking it's not a problem that someone had sexual intercourse with a 14-year-old:

In short, we had many questions with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Prosecutor's Office, from which, unfortunately, we could not get answers. We live in a country where people think and say in TV interviews that a teenager atoned for her sins by committing suicide, therefore perceiving the victim as the perpetrator. And we live in a country where sexual intercourse with a 14-year-old is not considered a problem. In fact, it is the gravest crime in all cases and is punishable under the Criminal Code and has no bearing on the will of the child.

To conclude, the case didn't make it to the daily news program, had some coverage through GPB's online portal that was limited to police press releases and remarks from the President.

The one news story that was dedicated to the case was on a Sunday show and featured the host and several commenters problematizing the access to services and child suicide.

Even in his concluding statement, the host failed to mention the systemic nature of violence against women and girls and only criticized the society for thinking what happened had any justification.

Overall, with the limited coverage that the case received, GPB failed to showcase the social problems that led up to the 14-year-old committing suicide. While it is a positive step that the State Care Agency admitted that access to services was problematic and the Union representative had some airtime to talk about the lack of social workers, these were not enough.

On the positive side, the news story didn't identify the victim by name, or any of her family members and didn't show any footage directly related to the case, such as the girl's home, etc.

Allowing the Interior Minister's claim that his office did everything to air without at least contesting or opposing it by pointing out several flaws in the case that were obvious from the start is troubling.

The one 4-minute news story aired on GPB didn't successfully manage to cover the issue of GBV in Georgia with appropriate urgency and accountability for public officials.

5.1.2. Imedi

TV Imedi, the channel associated with the current GD government, also didn't report on the case in any of its daily evening news programs, the same time period of one week was observed from 10-17 February 2021.

Upon searching for the relevant keywords to the case on the TV Imedi website, similar to GPB, the channel had short written news articles that were based on press releases provided by the police. Most of the articles were short, with essential information about perpetrators getting arrested, etc.

Several written articles on Imedi's website featured comments from the Interior Minister, as well as the Minister of Health, under which the State Care Agency functions. The Interior Minister's comments were on suicide prevention and how only the MIA can't solve the problem without the help of society and every other ministry.

It's a heavy subject [suicide], it's great stress, especially in the youth, we have a lot of work to do. I think all of us should take responsibility for this, not only the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Suicide is a worldwide problem; it doesn't only happen in Georgia. But we have a lot of work to do in Georgia as well.⁷³

The Minister's statement doesn't mention what led to the suicide or how his Ministry could have helped prevent it. Imedi TV website featured the comment without providing brief information about the case, without going in-depth on the issue of GBV.

⁷³ Author's translation.

Another article featured a comment from the Health Minister, where she stated that “the fact gave us a signal that, the system needs strengthening and prevention of violence requires multisectoral involvement”.⁷⁴

Unlike GPB, TV Imedi’s short articles that were published on the website disclosed the name, last name and other personal details of the victim, as well as many of her family members.

5.1.3. Mtavari

Mtavari Arkhi (Main Channel), a broadcaster with an anti-government, pro-opposition attitude that was founded after the switch of Rustavi 2 ownership, first reported on the case on 11 February.

The case was featured as the first news story of the evening. The title was “tragedy of a 14-year-old in Kobuleti”. The whole story was 7 minutes and 41 seconds long and featured footage obtained from family members, NGO representatives, Ministry of Health worker, and more.

The long news story featured a comment from the journalist stating how the NGOs are pointing out numerous flaws in the case and how the State couldn’t protect the child.

Furthermore, the story features the grandfather (who was later arrested) of the deceased child stating that the police didn’t react accordingly when the sexual assault was reported to them in December 2020.

⁷⁴ Author’s translation

The story also featured interviews with the parents of the accused sexual perpetrator. They said their “child” (a 23-year-old man) was innocent and they implied that the girl didn’t kill herself but was killed (supposedly by her own family).

The school director where the deceased studied was also featured in the story. She said that the girl had a social worker, and the school was unaware of any violence that occurred. Another short interview featured an unidentified woman (presumably a neighbour) who said that “they” (presumably the neighbours) didn’t know anything about the sexual assault until the girl committed suicide.

The story also featured a comment from a human rights defender, director of an NGO working on women’s issues, where she discussed the State’s failure in investigating cases of VAW. The was concluded with a comment from a representative of the Ministry of Health, who said it’s tragic that every child can’t be strengthened and protected with appropriate services.

The case was also featured in the next day’s (12 February) broadcast, but not as the first news story, but as the fifth. The story was 5 minutes and 20 seconds long and mainly featured the mother of the child and activists demanding an effective investigation into the case.

The story now featured the deceased’s mother, who came back to the country to attend her daughter’s funeral. The story opened with comments from the mother. She said the girl was happy and was planning her future to travel and join her mother in another country.

She also told the journalist that she found out about the assault in December and that the family physically assaulted the girl so she wouldn’t talk about what happened to her. She accused the social worker of not doing her job properly.

The story also covered a protest that NGOs planned in front of the Prosecutor's Office, where they voiced their demands, among them to increase the number of social workers and psychologists and to create a specialized department at the Prosecutor's Office which will investigate cases of sexual assaults.

The story featured a Deputy Public Defender, who talked about the systemic problem that led to the tragic death of the girl:

The tragic incident is an echo of the systemic shortcomings we have in preventing child abuse in Georgia. Whether it be the critically low number of social workers and psychologists, the resources that they spend on reacting to such incidents or delayed and ineffective response from the law enforcement in some cases.⁷⁵

On the 15th, the story was fourth in the news program and went on for 5 minutes and 56 seconds.

This time, the report included the news about the arrest of the grandfather. The story featured the mother accusing her mother-in-law of physical violence towards the girl.

This time, the story featured unnecessary footage of the girl's coffin being carried to the gravesite, her brother crying over the casket and people holding an enlarged image of the girl, which had been blurred.

Activist and director of a women's rights NGO Sapari Baia Patariaia commented that she was sceptical that the investigation was conducted without faults.

⁷⁵ Author's translation

I'm sceptical after the Interior Minister's statement that he didn't see any flaws in the work of the police and the investigation was being conducted impeccably, whereas the perpetrator wasn't even interrogated for over two months.⁷⁶

The story also featured the girl's brother who claimed their mother was also physically abusive towards the children when they were younger.

The news story finished again with the footage of the girl's coffin being carried to the graveyard and people crying and grieving around it. Finally, an image of the girl (blurred) popped up on the screen.

The story wasn't featured on the 16th and 17th. The Mtavari news broadcast was dominated by the court proceedings against an opposition UNM leader Nika Melia.

Additionally, the story was covered during the Saturday (13 February) evening show that is similar to GPB's Saturday show as it covers the news throughout the past week. The story featured on the show was 10 minutes and 25 seconds long.

The news story started out with a monologue from the host, talking about how the "killing system that we have been requesting to dismantle for years" killed another innocent victim and criticizes the government for their ineffective reaction to the violence committed against the girl.

Unfortunately, compared to the other news stories that aired during the week, the one on Saturday lacked the same positive reporting that was featured at other times.

⁷⁶ Author's translation

In the story, there's again the footage from the burial, with shots of the girl's coffin, flowers, and friends crying. One of the people present at the graveyard is holding a picture of the girl, while it's blurred in most of the shots, in some of them the girl's face is visible without the blurring effect on it.

The footage is accompanied by dramatic music and a voiceover from a journalist that dramatizes and, at times, even glamorizes the girl's suicide:

From her grave, the garden is visible where the girl's life ended. She was all alone when making the most tragic and hopeless decision. She was probably afraid, she was probably hurting, though the pain caused by despair was probably far greater.⁷⁷

Such representation of the events is unethical. According to the guideline on suicide coverage from the Charter, "it is impermissible to romanticize suicide, or sensationalize the coverage," and that "suicide shouldn't be shown as a way to solve a problem."⁷⁸

The Journalist saying that the girl's pain caused by despair was greater than her fear suggests that there's no hope for anyone in a similar situation and could entice other young people to also commit suicide.

To conclude, Mtavari featured the story on three different days, dedicating news stories featuring different actors, including the family of the victim, public officials, activists, and more. The cumulative airtime that the case received over the span of three days was 18 minutes and 57 seconds (plus 10 minutes and 25 seconds on the Saturday show).

⁷⁷ Author's translation.

⁷⁸ <https://www.qartia.ge/sakhelmdzghvanelo-tsesebi1/article/29232-suicidis-gashuqebis-saxelmdzgvanelo-wesebi>

The social problem of violence against women and particularly sexual violence was highlighted in the news stories. It is a positive sign that the channel took time to address the shortcomings in the investigation process of this specific case and also highlighted challenges related to GBV in general.

However, there were elements of sensationalism, such as the headlines of the news stories, the anchors referring to the case as a “horrific tragedy” with “even worse continuation”, referring to the grandfather getting arrested.

Furthermore, the last news story featured disturbing footage showing the coffin of the girl being carried to the graveyard for burial. Similar problems were evident during the Saturday show story. Even though the corpse was blurred, as well as the photograph of the deceased girl, it was still unethical to air such sensitive footage, especially when it didn’t add anything to the story.

5.2. Ex-wife accuses a famous Georgian tennis player of domestic violence

This case started earlier in 2020 than the period selected for the research. However, due to the developments, it still made some headlines on online media platforms and TV channels.

Nikoloz Basilashvili, the most successful tennis player in Georgia’s history, was arrested on domestic violence charge on 22 May 2020. Basilashvili and his father allegedly physically assaulted his ex-wife Neli Dorokashvili the day prior in front of their 5-year-old son⁷⁹.

⁷⁹ RFE/RL, 'ყოფილი ცოლის ცემისთვის ბრალდებულ ნიკოლოზ ბასილაშვილს გირაო შეეფარდა' (Nikoloz Basilashvili, accused of physically assaulting his ex-wife, released on bail), 24 May 2020, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/30631348.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

Basilashvili was accused of domestic violence against a minor's family member in the presence of the minor, as prescribed by Article 1261 (b) of the CC⁸⁰.

The tennis player was released from pre-trial detention on 24 May 2020 on GEL 100,000 bail. Prosecutor's Office was requesting for Basilashvili to remain in detention. The restraining orders were issued against Basilashvili, as well as his father.

The violence, according to Neli Dorokashvili's lawyers, was ongoing and not an isolated incident. The violence occurred both during and after the couple's marriage. The violence was not only physical but also psychological and possibly economic in nature.

Basilashvili and his legal team called the allegations are "false and totally unsubstantiated."

When the news broke about Basilashvili's arrest and claims against him, the social media divided in half. Some supporting the tennis player and saying that the ex-wife wanted nothing but to extort money from him⁸¹.

Others defended Dorokashvili, saying that it's important for famous women to go public about domestic violence cases to encourage others to also come out with their stories.

The legal proceedings in the case are still ongoing, however, Basilashvili's recent victory has led to a reignited discussions on social media and received some coverage on TV channels⁸².

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² E. Kevanishvili, 'რა გვიხარია, როცა ბასილაშვილის გამარჯვება (არ) გვიხარია?' ('What are we happy about when we (are not) happy with Basilashvili's victory?'), 12 March 2021, RFE/RL, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31147130.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

5.2.1. GPB

GPB reported on Basilashvili's success during The Qatar Open (Doha tournament) on 11 March, when he defeated Roger Federer. The sports segment host called the win "historic", and that Georgia's most successful tennis player managed to win against "arguably the most successful tennis player of all time" (referring to Federer).

During over one minute of talking about the win and showing footage from the game, the host didn't once mention the ongoing domestic violence case against him.

Basilashvili's progress in the tournament was also mentioned in the 12 March sports segment of the evening news broadcast, where, again, the journalist failed to mention the pending case against the tennis player.

This time, the journalist mentioned that there was a celebration of Basilashvili's win against Federer on social media, but there was also a "small number, but still negative comments against the player". The journalist failed to mention why there were negative comments directed at the player. Then the news story went on to feature a comment from Basilashvili's lawyer:

Nikoloz Basilashvili is mentioned as an abuser, which clearly proves that people who call themselves human rights defenders unequivocally violate the presumption of innocence and the constitutional right, as no court has established that Nikoloz Basilashvili is an abuser or a perpetrator. Unfortunately, these non-governmental organizations are using all this to get grants, and I would like to appeal to the Public Defender to protect the most successful athlete in the country, Mr Nikoloz Basilashvili, whose presumption of innocence has been violated and has been a target of repeated hate speech.

The lawyer's comments aired without any context on what violence she was referring to. Her remarks went unchallenged and Dorokashvili's side of the story or her lawyers didn't get the chance to also comment on the case. Such one-sided reporting that doesn't provide sufficient context is problematic, as it deprives the audience of essential information to make an individual judgement of the situation.

On 13 March, the evening news broadcast started with the story of Basilashvili winning the tournament. The anchor mentioned that the player won against Federer and managed to get the top spot in the tournament and that he thanked his Georgian fans and his son after the win.

The news story showed footage from the game, as well as the player taking the trophy. The news story went on for over three minutes and again, didn't mention anything on the ongoing case against the player or the fact that he was arrested on the charge of committing domestic violence in front of his 5-year-old son and that he was released on bail of GEL 100 000.

5.2.2. Mtavari

The Mtavari channel didn't report on the win on either of the days. The news didn't end up on Saturday's news show either. This could be due to the fact that Mtavari's news show doesn't have a dedicated sports section.

However, on the channel's official website, the news of Basilashvili's win was posted on the 13th. However, the article was small, with basic information and a video from the game from a third party. It didn't mention the ongoing case against the man either.

5.2.3. Imedi

Imedi didn't air Basilashvili's win against Federer on 11 March in the evening news program but had a small segment dedicated to the news throughout the day.

On 12 March, Imedi dedicated a news story to Basilashvili's lawyer's remarks, titled "Irma Tchkadua [the lawyer] addresses the Public Defender".

The news story went on to also feature the lawyer and her address to the public defender. However, unlike GPB, the Imedi TV anchor mentioned the case that's currently against the tennis player. But, his remarks were overwhelmingly positive towards the accused and reiterated the lawyer's narrative that the NGOs are using this case to get more grants.

The anchor or the journalists present with the lawyer didn't even point out that it is not the Public Defender's mandate to "protect" the accused from NGOs:

Several non-governmental organizations have joined the campaign against Nikoloz Basilashvili. They even demand the removal of the Georgian tennis player from the Doha tournament. According to them, Basilashvili is an abuser and use the example of the case against him in court, where the tennis player is sued by his ex-wife.

The anchor went on to paraphrase the lawyer's words and finished his monologue by stating:

The most successful Georgian tennis player defeated Roger Federer at the Doha tournament yesterday and reached the semifinals. Basilashvili's victory was followed by a great response in the international press.

The side of Dorokashvili, or the NGOs accused of campaigning against Basilashvili didn't receive any airtime. The accused was shown in a positive light and his lawyer's statement went unchallenged.

On 13 March, the anchor of the evening news broadcast announced Basilashvili's win with a celebratory tone. In a short segment, nothing was mentioned about the pending case against the player.

Overall, when covering Basilashvili's run in Doha, the channels' reporting didn't differ much from each other. Leaving out that the tennis player is accused of domestic violence is a problem in and of itself. But giving airtime to his lawyer to defend him, without providing the same treatment to the other side, or the NGOs being accused of campaigning against the "most successful tennis player from Georgia" points at the preferential treatment that he enjoys in the media because of his high social status.

RFE/RL wrote a lengthy article following Basilashvili's win highlighting the challenges that Dorokashvili's lawyers face when defending the woman against his famous ex-husband:

Those for whom violence is an important topic remind the second part of the society that the victorious Basilashvili is accused of violence against his ex-wife and child, and this circumstance deserves to be mentioned when talking about his success. It is true that the court has not yet issued a verdict and the case is under consideration, but the facts of violence have been confirmed by restraining orders against both the tennis player and his parents.

The article points out the hate that these women receive on social media, as well as in public. According to one of the lawyers, Dorokashvili is even afraid to go outside alone, since when she gets recognized, she becomes a target of verbal abuse. Ana Arganashvili, one of the lawyers working on the case told RFE/RL:

Now we, as human rights activists and as women, have become victims of a very serious attack. They demand to expel us from the country, close our organization, make fun of our appearance and speech with sexist remarks. This is not an ordinary attack on an NGO that we have seen so far, this attack is carried out because we are women, and we are defending a woman.

5.3. Politician gets arrested for violence against a woman

Politician Gogi Tsulaia was arrested on 17 March 2021 with a charge of violence committed against a woman. Tsulaia was previously a member of the Parliament of Georgia, and until recently was a co-chair of an opposition party Free Georgia.

From the beginning of the arrest, politicians and media speculated that Tsulaia's arrest was politically motivated and that he was innocent. Later, Tsulaia's charges were changed to Article 138 of CC – “violent act of sexual nature”, which entails a sentence from 4 to 6 years⁸³.

Tsulaia asked his long-time acquaintance, with whom he had business relations for years, to accompany him to Tbilisi to a meeting with another politician. The victim agreed and she travelled with Tsulaia and his friend. The meeting was postponed to the next day and the three rented a flat together. Tsulaia's male friend left the victim and the perpetrator alone⁸⁴.

⁸³ RFE/RL, 'შს-ს თანახმად, გოგი წულაია ქალზე ძალადობის ბრალდებით დააკავეს' (According to the MIA, Gogi Tsulaia was arrested on charges of violence against a woman), 17 March 2021, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31155379.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁸⁴ RFE/RL, 'ქალი, რომელზე ძალადობის ბრალდებითაც წულაია დააკავეს, პოლიტიკოსის მხრიდან ძალადობაზე ჰყვება' (A woman tells about violence she experienced from the politician, due to which Gogi Tsulaia was arrested), 17 March 2021, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31155734.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

Later that night, Tsulaia drank alcohol and started being violent and attempted sexual contact with the victim. Despite her several rejections, Tsulaia proceeded to use violence against the woman, during which she sustained injuries on her hands, neck, and back.

The politician denied all accusations from the beginning and demanded to be released on bail. Tsulaia was sentenced to imprisonment as a measure of restraint but was later released on bail on 1 July 2021.

While in prison, Tsulaia asked opposition parties to support him and thought of himself as the personal prisoner of the GD founder and billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili.

On April 22, 22 opposition parties wrote and signed a letter stating that Tsulaia was a political prisoner. Virtually all major opposition parties signed the letter. Including the UNM, European Georgia, Strategy Aghmashenebeli and more. The letter noted:

With this statement, we are not going to automatically question the allegations made by the accuser, but the fact that Gogi Tsulaia was left in custody as a measure of restraint at the request of the prosecutor's office and with the approval of an obedient court points at a political motive because such preventive measure is never used on such cases⁸⁵.

Several women in the opposition political parties individually distanced themselves from the letter. The Tbilisi City Court issued a statement pointing out that the letter released by the opposition parties included disinformation because imprisonment as a measure of restraint was used on several cases in the past few years on people accused under the same Article of CC.

⁸⁵ RFE/RL, '22 პარტია გოგი წულაიას წინააღმდეგ პოლიტიკურ ანგარიშსწორებაზე საუბრობს' (22 parties are talking about political revenge against Gogi Tsulaia), 22 April 2021, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31216887.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021). Author's translation.

Several NGOs working on women's issues criticized the opposition parties for supporting the alleged perpetrator and issued a statement denouncing the letter:

Instead of demanding tough criminal policy against people accused of sexual violence, the parties are calling on the justice system to make concessions to the politician man and generally keep the non-serious and propitious attitude towards sexual abusers in the country. Such attitude harms all victims of sexual violence and incites the perpetrators⁸⁶

I will analyse the news stories that featured Tsulaia's case when he was arrested, as well as the coverage of the letter the opposition parties wrote regarding the politician's arrest.

5.3.1. Imedi

Imedi dedicated a three minute and 34-second news story to Tsulaia's arrest on 17 March. The story started with stating that the politician was arrested for alleged violence towards his acquaintance woman.

The journalist described the injuries that the woman sustained due to the alleged violence committed against her.

During the segment, there was a short interview with the victim, where she stated that she had friendly relations with the politician for years and aggreded to travel from Kutaisi to Tbilisi to accompany him to a meeting.

⁸⁶ RFE/RL '„ქალთა მოძრაობა" და ქალთა ორგანიზაციები გმობენ გოგი წულაიას შესახებ ოპოზიციის განცხადებას' (The Women's Movement and women's organizations condemn the opposition's statement about Gogi Tsulaia), 22 April 2021, <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/31217860.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021). Author's translation.

The alleged victim's face was blurred during the interview to protect her identity. "All perpetrators should be punished, so [other] don't end up in the same situation as me".

The news story continued with an interview with another man who accompanied the alleged perpetrator and victim to Tbilisi. According to him, the alcohol was certainly present in the flat, but he called the violence allegations "political speculation" and accused the victim of lying:

He was planning to create a new party. He was particularly active recently and when he started criticizing the government, they answered with a befitting answer. This woman, as I know from Gogi is his acquaintance and not a friend.

The story finally featured Tsulaia's attorney, who alleged that the victim could have injured herself on purpose and that the defendant was not guilty.

Another story was dedicated to the case the next day, where the Article brought against Tsulaia was changed. The news story was shorter, lasting for one minute and 30 seconds and featured the victim and Tsulaia's attorney. The victim's face and identity were again hidden.

It is certainly positive that Imedi dedicated time to the issue and in accordance with the ethical standards didn't disclose the identity of the woman and blurred her face. However, none of the stories mentioned any statistics on sexual violence or GBV or placed the specific case within the larger framework of a social problem.

Imedi also covered the letter written by the opposition parties on 22 April in support of Tsulaia. The story was 3 minutes and 43 seconds long.

The story started with the anchor stating that the opposition is:

Trying to create another political prisoner, this time, out of Gogi Tsulaia. The accusation is far from politics – sexual violence against a woman. The parties later could not explain the motive behind the letter in support of the detainee. Moreover, some of them took their solidarity back.

The news story featured the text of the letter, as well as comments from women from the opposition political parties that individually announced that they did not aggregate with the proclaimed support by their parties.

“More sensitivity, more empathy is needed. That is why I think that signing that [document] could not be justified, in my opinion,” said Teona Tchaladze from Strategy Aghmashenebeli opposition party.

The story also featured a male politician from European Georgia, stating that the statement was not about the contents of the case but the fact of the use of selective justice.

The story featured the statement from the Court, where the institution pointed at statistics, when, in recent years, out of 7 of the similar cases, 6 times imprisonment was used, and asked the opposition parties to refrain from spreading disinformation.

The story also featured comments from the ruling GD members of the parliament, stating that imprisonment was an adequate measure and that the opposition is using the case for their personal gain.

The story featured a small comment made over the telephone by the victim, her name and photo were used to identify her this time. It wasn't made clear if the woman agreed to be identified.

“I’m tired of everything. All I want right now is for society to find out the truth,” she said. The story concluded with the footage from the previous interviews with the victim, where her face was blurred again.

5.3.2. Mtavari

Mtavari covered Tsulaia’s arrest during the evening news broadcast with a 5 minutes and 7 seconds news story. The anchor started talking about the topic by stating that “the main evidence of the police against him is the testimony of a young woman who speaks about the violence perpetrated by Tsulaia”.

Along with Tsulaia's arrest, there was a version that it might be revenge against him. Civil activists and other members of the opposition recall the recent incident when, after the publication of Bera Ivanishvili's scandalous recording and Bera's statements, Tsulaia staged a televised performance which included swearing directed at the oligarch's son. – the anchor stated.

The story featured the footage of Tsulaia’s arrest. The story featured the alleged victim with a brief interview similar to the one aired by Imedi. Her face was blurred. The story featured Tsulaia’s lawyer who said the case could be staged provocation.

The story featured footage of Tsulaia a few weeks prior using offensive language and gestures against GD founder Ivanishvili’s son Bera and inviting him to punish him. Tsulaia was criticizing him for the leaked audio recordings of him asking the current prime minister Irakli Gharibashvili to “punish” school children who offended him online.

The story featured Tsulaia’s friends who said the case was staged because of his political activity. Opposition politicians also talked in brief comments given to Mtavari about

Tsulaia's performance where he offended Ivanishvili and showed suspicion that the arrest is in connection with that.

The story was heavily focused on the suspicions around Tsulaia's case, both from the journalists and the respondents from the opposition parties.

The next day, on 18 March, Mtavari reported on Tsulaia's accusation being requalified as sexual in nature with 4 minutes and 30 seconds news story. "In the case, due to which Tsulaia may find himself behind bars for a long time, the defendant's lawyer found several inconsistencies," said the anchor before the news story aired.

The story again featured Tsulaia's lawyer, as well as the alleged victim, whose face was blurred.

In the interview, the victim said that Tsulaia was under the influence of alcohol and marijuana. In the blurred video, the journalist can be heard asking why the tests show "radically different" results.

The victim answered that she doesn't know anything about this and hasn't watched any of the shows, supposedly referring to the news coverage of the case, because she was "questioned and examined" all day.

The journalist says to the victim that Gelbakhiani (Tsulaia's lawyer) says that she was the one under the influence. The victim answers that she wasn't, and they could see the results of the examinations.

"I hope examinations and the investigation will work properly and it's a little awkward when such rude [accusations] are coming my way," the victim concludes.

Mtavari didn't cover the letter the opposition parties wrote in defence of Tsulaia during the 22 April 2021 evening news broadcast.

The coverage of Tsulaia's case on Mtavari was heavily focused on suspicions that it was staged to reprimand him for offending the GD founder's son. While it's positive that the alleged victim was given the chance to talk about her experience, the repeated implications that the case might be fabricated put the woman's experience in the background, diminishing it to a mere tool for alleged political revenge against Tsulaia.

5.3.3. GPB

GPB reported on Tsulaia's arrest on 17 March with a short news story that didn't feature any footage related to the case. Instead, footage of Tsulaia was used from their archive.

The story was only 38 seconds long and featured the anchor's voiceover, reporting about the arrest based on the information provided by the MIA and noted that Tsulaia's lawyer denied all charges.

The alleged victim wasn't given any airtime during the reporting. GPB didn't report further on the case during the 18 March evening news broadcast.

During the 22 April 2021 broadcast, GPB reported on the letter of the opposition parties with a 49-second news story. The anchor read out some of the key passages from the letter while archival footage of Tsulaia's hearing was shown.

The anchor noted that one opposition party explained that they weren't signatories to the letter and that one politician from UNM personally distanced herself from the contents of the letter.

GPB provided very short coverage of the alleged violence, without giving any airtime to the alleged victim. When discussing the letter of opposition parties, GPB didn't interview any of the politicians to explain why some of them didn't agree with what the letter said.

Instead, the very short coverage focused on key details of the case and didn't represent the victim's side of the story at all, let alone the social problem of sexual violence and GBV in general.

According to the GPB website, the broadcaster "has been an active member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) since 2005". The Director-General of GPB, Tinatin Berdzenishvili currently serves as the chairwoman of the Gender Equality Group of the EBU⁸⁷.

She spearheaded the development of gender equality guidelines for media organizations, compiling some of the best practices from the member organizations.

The foreword of the guideline, written by Berdzenishvili proclaims:

As the public broadcaster, we should never forget history and the power we have to shape society. We feel strongly about our responsibility to carry society in the right direction, and in that sense, we are investing considerably in content, formats and campaigns that will foster public dialogue in the area of gender equality. It is my personal belief that, in the future, women and men will be equally respected, valued and, most importantly, equally represented⁸⁸.

⁸⁷ GPB, International Partnership EBU, <https://1tv.ge/en/organization/international-partnership-ebu/> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁸⁸ Report on gender equality All Things Being Equal, <https://1tv.ge/en/organization/guideline/> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

Additionally, when covering International Women's Day on 8 March 2021, GPB highlighted their efforts in ensuring gender equality, both within the organization and society at large⁸⁹.

It is particularly disheartening when such enthusiasm about gender equality isn't directly translated into frequent and fair coverage of GBV and other issues. Despite the strong feeling of the Director of the "responsibility to carry society in the right direction", the case studies have demonstrated that GPB has a long way to go to ensure that gender equality issues, including GBV, are properly represented in their work.

6. International good practise and Georgia's Action Plan

As mentioned, balancing the freedom of speech and expression and ensuring ethical coverage of GBV can be challenging for the state. Luckily, along with Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention, there are numerous good practises on the topic from around the world.

As UN Women points out:

Addressing violence against women in the media through domestic legislation and regulation must be approached very carefully, with thoughtful consideration of other rights and freedoms (e.g. freedom of speech and expression; access to information;

⁸⁹ Media Checker, 'აქცია და ყოჩივარდები - 8 მარტი მაუწყებლების ფოკუსით' (rally and cyclamen - 8 March in the focus of broadcasters), 9 March 2021, <https://www.mediachecker.ge/mediagaremo/article/87232-aqcia-da-yochivardebi-8-marti-mautsyebilebis-fokusith?image=> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

and the right to privacy) that are at the foundation of fostering democratic, inclusive and more equal societies⁹⁰.

UN Women discusses some positive examples of addressing GBV and discrimination in media and communications. Based on examples from six different countries, integrating the issue into the Action Plans relating to GBV is the best way to promote ethical coverage and strengthen self-regulatory bodies⁹¹.

Examples include Belgium highlighting the importance of self-regulation and training media representatives to address sexism in the AP on GBV.

Morocco has developed requirements on reporting on statistics, such as the number of women journalists and developed special charters and editorial policies for public television stations to prevent gender stereotyping in the media.

Other examples of action taken by states to encourage ethical coverage of GBV and women's issues include training for media professionals on human rights, GBV and gender stereotypes. As well as carrying out joint activities with self-regulatory bodies to raise awareness on these issues and promote ethical coverage.

Spain's equivalent of AP included numerous actions directed at media, including disseminating guidelines on GBV reporting, awards for advertisements. Additionally, Spain's AP included "strategies to establish strong partnership structures between government and media" and "a self-regulation pact that will guarantee that news items are

⁹⁰ UN Women Virtual Knowledge Center to end Violence against Women and Girls, 'Regulation on addressing violence against women', 28 July 2020, <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/2008-regulation-on-addressing-violence-against-women-.html> (last accessed 5 August 2021).

⁹¹ *ibid.*

treated objectively and that they transmit the values of equality and reject this type of violence”⁹².

The Action Plan for 2018-2020 on the Measures to be Implemented for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims was approved by the Government of Georgia on 11 April 2018. This was the sixth AP drafted by the Government on the issue⁹³.

The AP is a national framework document that combines the measures to prevent and combat VAW and DV. It was the first AP after Georgia ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2017. The AP sets targets for different governmental bodies and agencies, with specific indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

Despite referencing the Istanbul Convention several times, the document doesn’t mention the importance of the participation of the private sector and the media, as stipulated in Article 17 of the Convention.

Interestingly, the state report from Georgia to GREVIO, the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, dated December 2020, mentions several initiatives relevant to the Convention that the government has implemented with the private sector⁹⁴.

When discussing the media, the State Report only talks about the Communication Commission and the GCJE. There’s no information provided if there were any measures

⁹² *ibid.*

⁹³ The previous APs were in place for 2007-2008, 2009-2010, 2011-2012, 2013-2015 and 2016-2017.

⁹⁴ Report of the Government of Georgia on the implementation of The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), 2020, <https://rm.coe.int/georgia-state-report/1680a0a4e6> (last accessed 5 August, 2021).

implemented to enforce Article 17 of the Convention in relation to engaging the media to do its part in combating VAW/DV.

While it's important for governmental agencies to have a cohesive, integrated approach to ending VAW/DV/GBV, involving the private sector, and especially the media should not be side-lined, as they both hold powerful tools that can aid the State in achieving the goal of the Istanbul Convention.

7. Conclusions

The research has showcased some of the shortcomings that online publications and TV channels have when covering the issue of GBV.

Concerning online publications, the majority of the stories on GBV are written by women. The information included in the articles were mixed, with some including only facts about a certain case, for example, a perpetrator being arrested, etc. however, there were numerous articles that went in-depth, analysing the issue and showing the readers GBV as a social problem, not just a crime, or an incident.

The visuals attached to the articles were, in most cases, stock photos or art with elements of physical violence against women and girls. It is promising that the online publications didn't find the need to feature pictures of victims, but such imagery that references only physical violence can be misleading about the multifaceted nature of GBV. Additionally, when celebrities were involved in domestic violence, their pictures together accompanied the articles, further diverting attention from the social nature of the problem by focusing on one incident.

The majority of the articles were written about physical violence, which can not only be attributed to the media but the governmental agencies and society as well, since the awareness around other forms of violence tends to be lower. However, this has to be more reason for the media to highlight other forms of GBV to inform society.

60% of analysed articles highlighted GBV as a social issue. This was an encouraging finding and pointed at the two online publications taking the right stance against GBV by dedicating time and effort to showcasing it as a social problem.

The case studies have shown that the TV channels covering GBV don't pay attention to highlighting it as a social issue. Across the three different channels of various political affiliations, time dedicated to talking about the issues regarding GBV were extremely limited.

GPB didn't cover the first case of a 14-year-old girl analysed in the research in its evening daily news program and only received a 4-minute news story that featured the Interior Minister stating that the police did everything they could, without at least challenging his statement and pointing at some of the shortcomings in the case.

GPB also showed some substantial failure when reporting on Basilashvili's wins during the Doha tournament. The stories that aired didn't mention the accusations against the tennis player at all or showed only his side of the story, giving air time to his attorney and not talking about his ex-wife.

Such one-sided coverage of issues relating to GBV do nothing but perpetuate the stigma surrounding GBV and DV, discouraging survivors to step forward with their stories.

With the final case study of a politician accused of sexual violence, GPB again failed to show the survivor's side of the story and didn't highlight GBV as a social issue.

As a public broadcaster, GPB has an even greater responsibility to adequately cover social issues, including GBV. The failure to do so points to insufficient awareness within the broadcaster of the responsibility it bears. Despite continuous declarations of commitment to change public attitudes around gender norms, GPB has failed to do so in the case studies conducted for this study.

Imedi, closely associated with the current GD government, didn't dedicate any news stories to the 14-year-old girl's case in the daily evening news broadcasts. The media outlet only published several short articles related to the case on their website.

Concerning the tennis player's case, the evening news anchor covered one-sided remarks from Basilashvili's lawyer and announced to the audience that several NGOs "even demand the removal of the Georgian tennis player from the Doha tournament."

The anchor never specified which NGOs made the demands, creating animosity towards the civil society with such unsubstantiated claims. It was an opportunity taken by the editorial team of the channel to take a jab at civil society, which is frequently critical of the government.

Imedi dedicated far more airtime to opposition politician's arrest and his charges of sexual violence. The stories featured the victim and were more or less balanced in storytelling from both sides.

When reporting on the opposition parties' support of Tsulaia, Imedi anchor made ironic remarks that the opposition was "trying to create another political prisoner" and featured individual opposition politicians who didn't agree with the text published by the parties.

While there were some positive aspects to the coverage of Tsulaia's case, the political agenda behind the reporting was clearly visible.

Mtavari was the only channel out of the selected three to cover the 14-year-old's case with adequate urgency, giving airtime to a Deputy Public Defender, NGO representatives and others to showcase numerous shortcomings that led to the tragic death of the girl.

However, the abundance of airtime dedicated to the case also led to some disappointing flaws in the coverage. Unnecessary footage from the girl's burial, dramatic music, and voiceover from the journalist who sensationalized and even glamorized the girl's suicide.

However, showcasing the problems in the State care system and the work of police also gave Mtavari's reporting high value in disseminating information on GBV to the public and the areas where much-needed improvement is urgent.

By far, Mtavari's coverage of the case was closest to what the media need to be doing when covering GBV, save for the dramatized and sensationalized elements.

Mtavari didn't cover Basilashvili's wins in Doha during the evening news, therefore didn't mention anything on the sportsman's pending DV case.

When covering Tsulaia's case, Mtavari showed both sides of the story. However, the anchors were visibly suspicious of the alleged victim's story, because of the politician's active opposition to the government.

Such a stance was also apparent in questions asked by the Mtavari journalist to the alleged victim, questioning her claims that Tsulaia was under the influence when the incident

allegedly took place and even repeating the defendant's lawyer's claims that the woman was under influence of alcohol that day.

In conclusion, there were many shortcomings observed in the case studies. Particularly, GPB's lack of attention to the case of the 14-year-old from Kobuleti, failure of all channels to address the DV case against the tennis player and using GBV cases for political gain.

Finally, the obligation of the state assumed under the Istanbul Convention, including the responsibility to engage the media and private sector in GBV prevention, as well as the importance of using the GPB for the public good to raise awareness on such issues, is completely ignored in the AP for 2018-2020 and the State Report to GRIVIO has no mention of any initiatives implemented on the State's part to engage the media in combatting GBV.

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Abstract

The media has a significant role in shaping a society's attitudes, and it is critical that the responsibility is fully recognized when reporting on sensitive social issues like gender-based violence (GBV). The research aims to answer how the Georgian media covers the issue of GBV and what responsibility the State has in the matter. In a highly polarized media landscape, it is imperative for all media organizations, regardless of their political affiliations, to take a firm stance against GBV and other social issues. The research is based on content analysis of online publication articles and case studies of reporting on GBV from several TV channels, including the Public Broadcaster. The study presents international and national obligations of the state that can provide a positive framework for strengthening the ethical coverage of GBV that highlights the social issue, as well as some successful experiences on the subject from other countries. The research found numerous positive examples of ethical coverage in online publications and TV news stories. However, shortcomings in several areas have also been observed. Namely, one-sided reporting on cases involving celebrities, revealing unnecessary information about the victims or airing disturbing footage. The State's responsibility on the media reporting on the issue isn't limited only to the Public Broadcaster. This study paves the way for more research into the topic of GBV representation in Georgian media, as well as what positive role the state can play in encouraging ethical coverage of the issue in both public and private media.

Keywords: gender-based violence (GBV), Georgian media, reporting on GBV, Istanbul Convention, State responsibility

Abstrakt

Die Medien spielen eine wichtige Rolle bei der Formierung der Einstellungen einer Gesellschaft, und es ist von entscheidender Bedeutung, dass die Verantwortung bei der Berichterstattung über sensible soziale Themen wie geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt (GBV) voll anerkannt wird. Ziel dieser Untersuchung ist es, zu antworten, wie die georgischen Medien über das Thema GBV berichten und welche Verantwortung der Staat in dieser Angelegenheit hat. In einer stark polarisierten Medienlandschaft ist es für alle Medienorganisationen erforderlich, unabhängig von ihrer politischen Zugehörigkeit eine klare Haltung gegen GBV und andere soziale Themen einzunehmen. Die Untersuchung ist auf einer Inhaltsanalyse von Online-Publikationsartikeln und Fallstudien zur Berichterstattung über GBV in verschiedenen Fernsehsendern, einschließlich des öffentlichen Rundfunks basiert. Die Studie stellt internationale und nationale Verpflichtungen des Staates vor, die einen positiven Rahmen für die Stärkung der ethischen Berichterstattung über GBV bieten können und bringt einige erfolgreiche Erfahrungen zu diesem Thema aus anderen Ländern. Die Untersuchung ergab zahlreiche positive Beispiele für ethische Berichterstattung in Online-Publikationen und TV-Nachrichtenbeiträgen. Allerdings wurden auch Unzulänglichkeiten in verschiedenen Bereichen festgestellt. Dazu gehören die einseitige Berichterstattung über Fälle, in die Prominente verwickelt sind, die Preisgabe unnötiger Informationen über die Opfer oder die Ausstrahlung von beunruhigendem Bildmaterial. Die Verantwortung des Staates für die Medienberichterstattung über das Thema beschränkt sich nicht nur auf die öffentlichen Rundfunkanstalten. Diese Studie ebnet den Weg für weitere Untersuchungen zum Thema der Darstellung von Gewalt gegen Frauen in den georgischen Medien und sowohl zu Frage, welche positive Rolle der Staat bei der Förderung einer ethischen Berichterstattung über das Thema sowohl in den öffentlichen als auch in den privaten Medien spielen kann.

Keywords: geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt (GBV), georgische Medien, Berichterstattung über GBV, Istanbul-Konvention, staatliche Verantwortung

Annexe 1 – analysed daily evening news broadcasts

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-11-marti-2021-live/> - GPB, 11 March 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-12-marti-2021-live/> - GPB, 12 March 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-13-marti-2021-live/> - GPB, 13 March 2021

[https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/71909/qronika-2000-saatze--11-marti-2021-](https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/71909/qronika-2000-saatze--11-marti-2021-tseli#!?from=1615334400&page=5&to=1615680000)

[tseli#!?from=1615334400&page=5&to=1615680000](https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/71909/qronika-2000-saatze--11-marti-2021-tseli#!?from=1615334400&page=5&to=1615680000) – Imedi 11 March 2021

[https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/72012/nikoloz-basilashvili-dohas-mastersis-](https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/72012/nikoloz-basilashvili-dohas-mastersis-gamarjvebulia#!?from=1615593600&page=1&to=1615680000)

[gamarjvebulia#!?from=1615593600&page=1&to=1615680000](https://www.imedi.ge/ge/video/72012/nikoloz-basilashvili-dohas-mastersis-gamarjvebulia#!?from=1615593600&page=1&to=1615680000) – Imedi 13 March 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-10-tebervali-2021-live/> - GPB, 10 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-11-tebervali-2021-live/> - GPB, 11 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-12-tebervali-2021-live/> - GPB, 12 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-13-tebervali-2021-live/> - GPB, 13 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-15-tebervali-2021-live/> - GPB, 15 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-16-tebervali-2021-live/> - GPB, 16 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-17-tebervali-2021-live/> - GPB, 17 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/14-wlis-mozardis-tvitmkvleloba/> - GBP, news story 18 February 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-22-aprili-2021-live/> - GPB, 22 April 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-17-marti-2021-live/> - GPB, 17 March 2021

<https://1tv.ge/video/moambe-21-saatze-18-marti-2021-live/> - GPB, 18 March 2021

<https://youtu.be/7qTrPp0hQq8> – Imedi, 10 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/oxdEhMa0-P0> – Mtavari, 10 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/c00vOfyE8Pc> – Imedi, 11 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/ZNh0L0IJxDs> – Mtavari, 11 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/7nZMORiyVik> – Imedi, 12 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/TsMmHZr-Cpo> – Mtavari, 12 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/07Y5WqVlkH8> – Mtavari, 13 February 2021 (Saturday show)

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<https://youtu.be/IX-qEAsw0ak> – Mtavari, 15 February 2021

<https://bit.ly/3AXorEh> – Imedi, 16 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/UmCyB4OZCIE> – Mtavari, 16 February 2021

<https://bit.ly/2Uwa36k> – Imedi, 17 February 2021

<https://youtu.be/WimCyasadAw> – Mtavari, 17 February 2021

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<https://youtu.be/EyzmIxT3EZI> - Imedi 12 March 2021

<https://youtu.be/0X6umYn2zTk> - Mtavari, 13 March 2021

<https://youtu.be/7PLtMeoHSOk> – Imedi, 17 March 2021

<https://youtu.be/3YHO9f0y8P0> – Mtavari, 17 March 2021

<https://youtu.be/yHQiUDKvIYU> - Imedi, 18 March 2021

<https://youtu.be/P8N0o6V1ynk> – Mtavari, 18 March 2021

<https://youtu.be/nNwDFMgRzjs> – Imedi, 22 April 2021

<https://youtu.be/Ku7DCR6Zadg> – Mtavari, 22 April 2021

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