

Sexual Violence: The media construction on the victim's role

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Background

Criminality and media have every passing day a closer relationship. It is impossible to avoid media not to have to scrutinize of what happened, and particularly if crimes are against people. In sexual violence the situation is not different. It is even worse, by the importance that this theme have in actual society. Media shape opinions and what is reflected in the news can be responsible for attitudes and believes. In Portugal, there a few studies conducted about the relationship between media and sexual violence, but it is clear that the role of the victim is not valued.

Aims

In this presentation, the aim is to analyse the construction of the role of sexual violence victims within the most read Portuguese Newspaper.

Methods

A content analysis will be carried in the daily newspaper with the regard of all the news involving sexual violence during an entire year (2015). This analysis will include a title examination (who is the person that is present? The offender or the victim?) and a content analysis of the text (in there are victim blaming during the news? How are victims described? What do we know about sexual violence victims through the news?)

Results

This is an ongoing study which final results are not known yet. Though, the preliminary results are quite striking. The fact is that in the majority of the titles on sexual violence news are about the offender neglecting the role of the victim. When the victim is woman, which are in the most cases, the news do not take in consideration that the person that was wrong was the offender, and sometimes have a blaming discourse about the victim (including discourses on theirs clothes, description of the place where assault take place, between others forgiven discourses).

Discussion

As we started saying, media changes society. People who are not correctly informed that read the news everyday on the most well-known Portuguese paper journal, might sometimes think that the victim was actually somehow guilty of its own crime (or because she was dressed “inappropriately” or because she was passing by a dark alley...). It would be very important to mention in the news that the victim can never be blamed for a sexual assault and that offender is the one who was wrong.

Conclusions

With the conclusions of this study it is remarkable the need of professional training for journalists with the regard of sexual violence. Further studies with this basis investigation are needed so that knowledge is expanded to all professionals and raise awareness to this social

problem and to the need of having respect for the victim.