

STEPSISTER PROJECT – STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES IN PRESS REPRESENTATION OF GENDER VIOLENCE

FINAL REPORT

DELIVERABLE 8 (REPORT CONTAINING TOOLS, GUIDELINES AND A
COMPENDIUM OF BEST AND WORST PRACTICES)

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Introduction – The STEPSISTER project – STereotypes and PrejudiceS In preSs repreSenTation of gEndeR-violence

In recent decades, gender-based violence has gained increasing visibility in the public sphere and the media landscape, becoming the subject of an increasingly broad and structured debate involving institutions, social movements, international organizations, and public opinion. However, this growing media attention does not always correspond to a social framing of the phenomenon capable of raising greater awareness regarding the structural and cultural dynamics that fuel gender-based violence, understood as an expression of ingrained inequalities in power relations between genders. On the contrary, despite the significant progress made thanks to the promptings of civil society, academia, and associations and organizations operating in journalism (see the Venice Manifesto), the media still continue to represent gender-based violence predominantly through highly stereotyped schemes, contributing to its normalization and implementing processes of secondary and tertiary victimization of the people who have suffered such violence.

The STEPSISTER project – Stereotypes and prejudices in press representation of gender-violence, funded under the PRIN PNRR 2022 (Mission 4 "Education and Research", Component 2, Investment 1.1) was therefore born with the aim of contributing to the prevention and countering of gender-based violence through the identification and deconstruction of those social representations of the phenomenon that contribute to the reproduction of forms of secondary and tertiary victimization, affecting not only the public perception of the phenomenon but also the symbolic and cultural conditions within which institutional and socio-political responses to gender-based violence are situated.

In this regard, a fundamental reference is represented by the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), adopted in 2011, which interprets gender-based violence as a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between the sexes and, therefore, as an expression of a system of deeply rooted inequalities.

The project is part of the framework of those studies that view the media as central actors in the social construction of phenomena, capable of orienting collective perception and influencing the public and political agenda. The research focused particularly on the coverage of gender-based violence in the daily press and on the ways in which perpetrators, victims, as well as the socio-political and institutional actors involved in the narrated acts of violence and, more generally, those engaged in the prevention and countering of the phenomenon, are represented.

From an operational point of view, the research units collaborated on the creation and operationalization of a shared database consisting of a vast corpus of journalistic articles related to cases of gender-based violence, and on the subsequent analysis according to the methods that will be described in the following pages. The work of analysing the daily press was accompanied by a series of interviews with socio-political actors belonging to anti-violence centres and shelters, social



workers, activists, as well as policymakers engaged in countering violence against women and institutional actors operating in the judicial field. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how these actors interpret the various forms of gender-based violence, their role, and their work. The project was structured into four integrated research and third mission activities, aimed at: i) the systematic monitoring and comparative analysis of journalistic representations and socio-political interpretations of gender-based violence; ii) the provision of cultural tools useful for deconstructing the sexist stereotypes and prejudices in which gender-based violence is rooted:

- a) the analysis of the journalistic representation of domestic violence and violence in intimate relationships, as well as the socio-political interpretation of the phenomenon and its journalistic representation (Sapienza Unit);
- b) the analysis of the journalistic representation of male violence against women perpetrated in public spaces and/or by strangers, as well as the socio-political interpretation of the phenomenon and its journalistic representation (Unitelma Unit, formerly Tuscia);
- c) the analysis of the journalistic representation of violence against LGBTQIA+ people and associations and the socio-political responses to these forms of violence (Messina Unit);
- d) the analysis of the methods of representation of institutions, institutional professionals (prosecuting and judging judiciary, law enforcement agencies) and lawyers in press articles dedicated to gender-based violence, as well as the methods of self-representation and legitimization of institutional practices (Molise Unit).

The research made it possible to highlight the persistence in media and institutional narratives of deeply rooted stereotypes, prejudices, and rhetorics that legitimize and normalize gender-based violence, highlighting their role in conditioning the experience of victims of gender-based violence and hindering their access to justice.

From the perspective of social impact, project activities consisted of dissemination activities of the research results, which were shared with social, institutional, and professional actors involved in the processes of representation, prevention, and countering of gender-based violence. In particular, each research unit developed guidelines intended for professionals in the various sectors involved, aimed at deconstructing sexist stereotypes and prejudices and promoting narratives respectful of gender equality, human rights, and the dignity of people who have experienced gender-based violence, consistently with the principle of non-discrimination enshrined in Art. 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The project activities carried out are therefore part of the priorities outlined by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), which identifies gender equality as a cross-cutting strategic axis to be developed through missions in continuity with the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2026 and with Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the Global Agenda 2030, which aims to



achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by removing all forms of violence against women and girls, both in the private and public spheres, and in line with the objectives of cluster 2 (sub-cluster 6) of the Horizon Europe Program, with particular attention to the themes of inclusive growth and social sustainability.

This report, which constitutes deliverable no. 8 of the STEPSISTER project, is divided into four sections, edited respectively by the four units involved in the project, which briefly illustrate the work carried out by each of them. Each section consists of two paragraphs dedicated respectively to research and to recommendations for information professionals, institutional actors, and all those subjectivities called upon to report on gender-based violence. The recommendations/guidelines are accompanied by examples of best and worst practices in the representation of gender-based violence and the actors involved in it, identified during the research and useful for understanding the mechanisms through which media narratives can reinforce or, conversely, challenge sexist stereotypes and prejudices.



1. Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence (Sapienza Unit)

1.1 Research unit report

The Sapienza Unit focused its research activity on the social and journalistic representation of domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV), through the analysis of articles published by the Italian press in the two-year period 2024-2025, with the aim of evaluating the ways in which the national press treated the phenomenon, with particular attention to stereotyped interpretative frames.

In 2024, the crime most frequently reported by Italian newspapers was femicide, followed by domestic violence. The latter is particularly significant, considering that the entire analyzed corpus actually falls into the category of domestic violence, as the crimes were committed by individuals belonging to the victim's family unit. However, one-third of the articles do not make this explicit or recognize it as such. This datum is significant because naming and codifying phenomena is essential to make them visible in the public sphere and promote their social recognition. Sexual violence, on the other hand, appears in a more limited number of articles, suggesting that when it occurs within the domestic sphere, it tends to be normalized and less frequently covered by the media. Consequently, its journalistic representation mainly concerns cases where the perpetrator is a stranger or an individual with whom the woman does not have an emotional or intimate relationship.

With reference to the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, violence is mainly perpetrated by the ex-partner/spouse, while the most frequently reported "motive" is jealousy/possessiveness which, together with revenge/reaction to alleged offenses, represents over 80% of the corpus. This framing is problematic because it tends to normalize violence in intimate relationships, often represented as a "domestic dispute", and to activate mechanisms of secondary victimization. The attribution of jealousy as a motivation and/or the configuration of violence as a reaction to an offense imply, in fact, a form of co-responsibility of the woman, with a partial shift of blame from the perpetrator to the victim.

However, it is worth noting that references to a "raptus" (sudden fit of madness/fury) occur in only 4.3% of cases, suggesting a progressive downsizing of the use of this stereotyped frame, which traditionally served to represent violence as an uncontrollable and unpredictable explosion of anger, the perpetrator as temporarily insane, and the crime, consequently, as inevitable.

In 2025 as well, the analysed articles mainly deal with cases of femicide, which constitute about two-thirds of the corpus, while domestic violence is explicitly mentioned in 42% of the articles. The centrality of femicide is also attributable to the occurrence, during 2025, of cases that received extensive media coverage, including the reopening of the case relating to the femicide of Chiara Poggi (killed in 2007), the femicide of Ilaria Sula, the double femicide of Villa Pamphilj, and



the conviction of Salvatore Montefusco for the double femicide of his wife and her daughter. The latter case sparked a wide public debate, as the perpetrator's motivations were defined by the judge as "humanly understandable." This formulation highlights the persistence of stereotypes and prejudices, particularly connected to secondary victimization and the mechanisms of *Himpathy*, which continue to permeate not only social representations but also the administration of justice.

Regarding the relationship between victim and perpetrator, the results indicate that the Italian press predominantly covered acts of violence perpetrated by men with whom the woman has or had an intimate relationship. Unlike in 2024, in 2025 articles mainly report cases where the perpetrator is identified as the current partner or husband of the victim (54% of the corpus).

In 2025, it was also possible to focus on the sources given visibility within the articles. The attribution of the right to speak is never neutral, as it helps define the boundaries of public discourse by legitimizing some voices and marginalizing others. The analysis of the actors to whom newspapers give a voice and of the privileged perspectives thus allows for a deeper understanding of the social representation of gender-based violence, particularly in relation to the persistence of stereotypes, including the tendency to uncritically adopt the perspective of the perpetrator and to marginalize that of the victim.

On a quantitative level, 80% of the articles report—directly or indirectly—the voices of experts and professionals, judicial authorities, law enforcement, witnesses, institutional authorities, and other actors. In 45% of the articles, a voice is given to the perpetrator and/or his representatives, and in another 45% to the victim and/or her representatives.

A deeper analysis of the articles that include the victim's voice highlights that the most frequently cited sources are family members (e.g., *«"Love can end. But can one die like this?"*, asks [...] *"What sin did my daughter commit? She was as beautiful as the sun. Now I will go home and find her little room empty"*») and the victim in the first person (e.g., *«"I was on the stairs," Martina recounted, "he came up behind me, asked me if I had started dating someone. He struck me with a first knife blow"*»), while lawyers appear in a more limited percentage. In articles that include the perpetrator's voice, it is mainly the man himself who is quoted (*«"She lunged at me with a knife taken from the kitchen," explains the suspect, "She cut my tongue and I shot her"*»), along with statements from lawyers (*«"We are considering requesting a psychiatric evaluation... He truly repents, he did not realize what he did. He was a lonely man who suffered from not seeing his son..."*»).

The qualitative analysis shows that journalistic representations of IPV remain strongly characterized by stereotypes and prejudices that produce interpretative distortions, hindering an accurate understanding of the phenomenon and obscuring its structural, cultural, and power dimensions. In particular, the recurrent use of exculpatory narratives attributable to the construct of *Himpathy* emerges, which deflect empathy away from the victim and direct it, at least in part, toward the perpetrator, who benefits from this both socially, through the attenuation of the stigmatization of the crime, and judicially, through the mitigation of the sentence.



Such narratives occur when the press adopts the self-absolving perspective of the perpetrator, offering him mitigating circumstances. An example is represented by the headline:

«Filippo Turetta cries in the courtroom. "I wanted to extend the time together with Giulia". Eyes downcast, he never looks at Gino Cecchetti»

These narratives are often accompanied by the reproduction of mechanisms of secondary victimization and *victim blaming*, which shift part of the responsibility from the man who committed the violence to the woman who suffered it. In journalistic discourse, the victim's behavior and attitudes are subjected to close scrutiny and represented, directly or indirectly, as factors that contributed to the crime.

Victim blaming manifests itself, for example, when violence is described as a man's reaction to a woman's behavior, redefining the distribution of responsibility and attenuating male responsibility. The following case is emblematic:

«She leaves him, he attacks the ex's parents with a billhook. The 25-year-old reportedly did not accept the end of the relationship with the girl».

The press also contributes to a process of normalization of violence, particularly when it occurs in intimate relationships, framing it as a "domestic dispute"—a category that presupposes a symmetry of power and does not constitute a crime—as a consequence of jealousy, often with an implicit reference to an alleged female provocation, or, although to a lesser extent than in the past, as the result of a "raptus" (or functional equivalents) despite lacking any scientific foundation.

In the following example, the crime is defined as a "passion crime" and traced back to an argument, establishing a link between violence and love; the perpetrator's words are reported and substantially accepted without problematization:

«"I was tired, after three months of arguments. I couldn't take it anymore," he said in tears, confessing to having strangled his wife at the climax of an argument. A crime of impulse, it would seem».

The results also highlight how the characteristics of the victim can influence the ways in which violence is represented. The two thematic focuses—one on violence against women with disabilities or pathologies and the other on violence perpetrated by a father or stepfather—clearly show that cases of violence against sick women or women with disabilities tend to be represented as more "socially acceptable". In these cases, recourse to the frame of the "raptus" is significantly more frequent than in the overall corpus. Even the most extreme forms of violence are sometimes described as acts of compassion ("altruistic femicide"), reinforcing strategies of *himpathy* toward



the man and producing a re-victimization of the woman, blamed for her illness or advanced age. In the following example, the perpetrator's words are reported twice within a short distance, with a partial shift of responsibility onto the wife who "no longer wanted to take her medicine" and was "devoured by depression".

«Kills his wife and turns himself in: "Depression was devouring her"».

«Cristina Marini, 72 years old, was shot and killed by her husband Gian Paolo Bregante, 74. The femicide took place yesterday in Sestri Levante. Bregante, a former merchant ship captain, turned himself in to the Carabinieri: "I killed her to stop the depression that was devouring her. She didn't want to take her medicine anymore"».

Conversely, articles relating to violence perpetrated by a father or stepfather—often involving sexual abuse of minors—are represented as socially more unacceptable. In these cases, the representation appears more accurate: there are no justificatory narratives or discursive strategies of *himpathy*, the events are framed with clarity, and the roles of perpetrator and victim are not confused.

«"Master-father and violent husband" the prosecutor asks for 2 years for the defendant»

A wife beaten, humiliated, insulted, forced to have sexual relations with that husband by whom she felt treated like a piece of property. And a daughter who was prevented from doing anything: "Going out with a friend, going on a field trip with my classmates, being able to eat ice cream with them" she recounted during her deposition in the courtroom before the judge. "My father never allowed me any of this, and if I insisted it meant slaps, kicks, punches..." ».

The results of the research confirm what was reported by the interviewed professionals, who offer a situated and competent look at the way the Italian press tells the story of violence in intimate relationships and in the most private contexts. From the six semi-structured interviews, in fact, a shared vision emerges regarding the central role of culture in the reproduction of violence and, in particular, the absence of affective and emotional education and the difficulty in recognizing consent as a founding element of relationships. In journalistic representation, this translates into a tendency to justify the man through categories such as jealousy or emotional suffering (*raptus* or functional equivalents), searching for a triggering event that blames the woman and/or de-responsibilizes the man. Consequently, violence often ends up being normalized, spectacularized, or told through stereotypes that hide its structural roots, in the press, in society, and all the way to courtrooms.

1.2 Recommendations for a correct representation of gender-based violence | Compendium of best and worst practices



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- 1) **Avoid defining violence as a domestic dispute – which presupposes a symmetry between the two people involved and a co-responsibility – or a family tragedy – which recalls something unpredictable and inevitable, not acted out by anyone, something that just happens, whereas violence is a voluntary act and a crime.**

Worst Practice (WP): «*We are facing a family tragedy with many emotional facets and now many, among friends and family, are beating their chests because they looked the other way or underestimated the signs of a storm. Salvatore Ocone, a 58-year-old farmer, killed his 49-year-old wife Elisa and his 15-year-old son Cosimo, hitting them with a large stone picked up in the garden [...]*» (02/10/2025)

Worst Practice (WP): «*An argument, harsh words, then the attack in the remote hovel [...] where husband and wife lived in disastrous hygienic-sanitary conditions [...] Perhaps tempers during the argument had flared due to a few too many drinks*» (03/01/2024)

Best Practice (BP): «*On the night of Thursday, January 2, police arrested a man accused of domestic abuse and violation of a restraining order. The arrest resulted from a new episode of violence reported by the victim, who contacted the police headquarters patrols to report the assault [...] This episode is part of a context of growing attention toward crimes of domestic abuse, with law enforcement always ready to intervene promptly to protect victims and prevent further abuse [...]*» (09/01/2025)

- 2) **Do not use the “raptus” (or its functional equivalents) to motivate violence, as it conveys the idea that violence is a sudden loss of control, de-responsibilizing the offender and obscuring the structural dimension of violence.**

Worst Practice (WP): «*The guard lowered for a fraction of a second, anger taking possession of thoughts and blinding any remaining trace of rationality. Finally, the atrocious bloodshed. "I just wanted a hug. But she denied it to me and as soon as she turned around, giving me her back, I grabbed a stone from the ground and hit her on the head. Then I did it two more times". Alessio Tucci breaks down under the weight of the questions from the investigating judge of the Court of North Naples Stefania Amodio and lets himself go to a confession [...]* As soon as the young girl turns her back to him, that's when the murderous raptus kicks in» (31/05/2025)

Best Practice (BP): «*[...] «Manuela Petrangeli is not the victim of a raptus, but of a patriarchal culture that normalizes control and dominance over women, considering*



them an object. Victim of the most brutal, archaic, and ancestral model of male-female relationship, which Molinaro interpreted in the worst way». For this reason, in addition to the specific allegations of the facts about which there are no doubts, before the Court of Assizes the account of the investigations coordinated by assistant prosecutor Giuseppe Cascini highlighted the entire context of violence and oppression that began long before the murder» (02/10/2025)

- 3) **Do not link the motive of violence to jealousy, which romanticizes violence and risks creating empathy toward the offender and/or triggering mechanisms that blame the woman.**

Worst Practice (WP): *«The story of the femicide of Ilaria Sula remains simple in its tragedy. The motive for the stabbings that killed her is the same as in many other similar cases: jealousy, exacerbated to such an extent that it became murderous, of her ex, 23-year-old Mark Samson» (05/04/2025)*

Best Practice (BP): *«[...] "I killed Giulia because she didn't want to get back with me, I was suffering from this thing. I wanted to get back together and she didn't want to, it made me angry that she didn't want to," Turetta's words. It is in patriarchy that the femicide of Giulia Cecchettin sinks its roots. After an evening together and the last "no", Turetta carries out the plan noted down in the list, a list of items to buy and ideas, which is the first partial confession. "I hypothesized kidnapping her in the car, moving away together toward an isolated location to spend more time together; then attacking her, taking her life and then mine" he says when interrogated. Lies, the plan was always one. On November 11, 2023, in the parking lot of Vigonovo, a few steps from the Cecchettin home, Turetta knows what he wants. When one of the knives breaks, he doesn't stop: he forces his ex into the car, blocks her with tape, and when she tries to escape, he finishes her with another blade, in the industrial area of Fossò» (26/10/2024)*

- 4) **Avoid romanticizing violence, implicitly or explicitly indicating "too much love" as the motive for violence.**

Worst Practice (WP): *«Vittorio Pescaglini yesterday in the courtroom took the floor to repeat his version: "I still ask forgiveness from everyone and from God, I was wrong... but I loved her"» (19/06/2025)*

Best Practice (BP): *«An execution. Gianluca Molinaro took aim and fired a sawed-off shotgun at his ex-girlfriend. He shot her from the car while she was leaving work to return to her son. He hit her in the chest, then fled. [...] Control, possession, machismo. This is*



what condemned Manuela Petrangeli, 51 years old, a physiotherapist at the Villa Sandra clinic in Rome, a working-class area of the capital, to death» (05/07/2024).

- 5) **Avoid describing violence as a man's reaction to a woman's behavior or action. The risk is to trigger *victim-blaming* mechanisms, i.e., shifting part of the responsibility for the crime from the man who committed it to the woman who suffered it.**

Worst Practice (WP): *«He still wanted her. She, on the other hand, "was talking to another guy". He would not resign himself and threatened suicide if she left him» (23/06/2024)*

Worst Practice (WP): *«She leaves him, he attacks the ex's parents with a billhook. The 25-year-old reportedly did not accept the end of the relationship with the girl» (11/06/2024)*

Best Practice (BP): *«He wanted to erase with flames the wife who had left him, but she managed to save herself by locking herself in the car before he could use the lighter to set fire to the gasoline, he had thrown in her face at the climax of yet another delusion of possession. When he was arrested, the man asked for forgiveness, as those like him often do right before starting again to humiliate their partners, up to killing them. Both originally from Romania, residing in Seregno, a town in Brianza north of Milan, the birth of a baby girl in 2008 had failed to mitigate the violent and possessive character of the 46-year-old» (11/11/2025)*

- 6) **Be careful not to give too much space to the perpetrator's experience – uncritically reporting his words in quotes or those of people close to him who frame him as a "good boy" / "decent man" – which give rise to exculpatory discursive strategies of *Himpathy* (i.e., they subtract empathy from the victim to redirect it toward the abusive man).**

Worst Practice (WP): *«An apparently peaceful life, theirs, all home and work. He was "always available to everyone and ready to lend a hand." She was "very kind" and very reserved. Neighbors explained that they had not heard any arguments or anything strange. "Daniele," says a neighbor, "was a great person. I would have trusted him with my children" [...] "No one," says an acquaintance, "could have ever imagined such a thing. They were a really beautiful couple" [...]» (06/01/2025)*



Worst Practice (WP): «*Filippo Turetta cries in the courtroom. "I wanted to extend the time together with Giulia". Eyes downcast, he never looks at Gino Cecchettin*» (25/10/2024)

Best Practice (BP): «*[...] Then he recounts: "It had gotten late and she asked me if she could sleep at my place. I gave her comfortable pajamas". They talk, lie down on the bed, "we remember the beautiful things experienced together, the experiences, the trips, the nicknames. 'Love', 'darling', 'life', then the ones in Albanian – 'shpirt', 'zemra ime' – and those in Filipino: 'bebe ko', 'mahal', 'asawa'". The affective details aim to attenuate the crime, but at most it reveals itself to be an attempt to sketch a context. The substance does not change: Samson committed a femicide. The rest is news [...]*» (30/04/2025)

- 7) **Define the man correctly (violent man, femicider), avoiding dehumanization (ogre, monster) or resorting to formulations that emphasize his social status/role (the entrepreneur, the policeman, the lawyer, etc.).**

Worst Practice (WP): «*[...] Financier Christian Sodano shot and killed the mother and sister of the girl he had been dating for about six months. The relationship between 27-year-old Christian Sodano, a marshal of the Fiamme Gialle on duty at the naval section of Ostia, and 22-year-old Desyrée Amato was no longer going well [...] Desy had reiterated this and the financier was leaving the girl's house*» (18/02/2024)

Worst Practice (WP): «*Slaps, kicks and violence against his ex-partner at home a hell, the ogre ends up in prison*» (09/02/2025)

Best Practice (BP): «*The victim, Emilia Nobili, a retired professor, born in 1949, was stabbed to death by her violent 65-year-old husband of Moroccan origin, who had previously already been arrested and removed from the home for repeatedly beating his wife*» (03/08/2025)

- 8) **Do not focus attention on macabre details of the event, which trigger processes of spectacularization of violence and pornography of grief.**

Worst Practice (WP): «*[...] The 22-year-old out-of-town student entered the apartment of her ex-boyfriend on her own feet on the evening of last March 25, in the Africano district of Rome, and came out dead a few hours later, packed in a suitcase in a fetal position, with her legs protruding from the zipper*» (04/04/2025).



Best Practice (BP): «[...] The young woman had been struck with three knife wounds to the neck and the body, hidden in a suitcase, was then abandoned in a ravine» (08/07/2025).

- 9) **Avoid stripping the victim of subjectivity, defining her, for example, only based on her demographic-physical characteristics (especially in cases of violence against sick and/or elderly women).**

Worst Practice (WP): «The femicide of Piera Ulivelli, 83 years old, who had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease for some time, was allegedly triggered by the despair of her husband, Mauro Caparrini, 84 years old, a former public employee, retired for more than 25 years. The man, exhausted by the consequences of such an invalidating pathology that turned the lives of the two elderly people upside down, killed his wife by suffocating her with a grocery bag [...]. A life spent together, which became increasingly difficult, day after day, just when the weight of the years began to make itself felt. For the husband, according to initial police investigations, seeing his wife become disabled was increasingly difficult to accept» (10/06/2025).

Best Practice (BP): «Nine years of imprisonment for the crimes of sexual assault and domestic abuse against his stepdaughter, suffering from a mental disability. This is the heavy sentence that the Court of Venice, President Francesca Zancan, handed down to a seventy-year-old residing in the Venetian mainland in relation to a series of episodes that occurred between 2019 and 2020, after the death of the young woman's mother, with whom the defendant cohabited» (14/12/2025)

- 10) **Pay attention to the use of syntactic constructs that do not highlight the perpetrator's responsibilities.**

Worst Practice (WP): «For investigators, Daniele shot his wife and then killed himself, presumably for reasons related to their relationship. A relationship that, several acquaintances say, had begun to degrade recently, a hypothesis supported by investigators, who speak of "marital disagreements" [...] the relationship would have cracked. So much so as to arm the man's hand» (06/01/2025).

Worst Practice (WP): «The triggering motive for the murderous fury? She no longer wanted to sign the legal separation [...] A text message from his wife was enough to make his anger explode and to arm his hand with a hunting knife» (19/06/2025).



Best Practice (BP): «"He beat her with his bare hands, with kicks, the broom, and once even with a small wooden log. He kept her under control with beatings, by now he had developed a taste for it." The hell at home was recounted yesterday by a 45-year-old who, in November 2020, had gone to the Carabinieri together with her sister to report her violent father. The man, a 66-year-old from Loreto, ended up on trial on charges of having abused his sick wife, who suffered from a mental disorder developed over time. Precisely the woman's pathology, and therefore her impaired defense, represents an aggravating circumstance» (04/12/2025).



2. Gender-Based Violence in Public Contexts and by Strangers (Unitelma Unit)

2.1 Research unit report

Within the scope of the research, the work of the Unitelma unit (formerly Tuscia) focused on non-intimate partner violence (NIPV), understood as the set of forms of actual or threatened violence, perpetrated by strangers or by people with whom the victims have a superficial relationship (strangers, colleagues, employers, clients, educational or professional figures with whom one interacts in daily contexts: public spaces, study or work environments, recreational contexts). This form of violence, while sharing the gender matrix with Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), is distinguished by its different relational configuration and the contexts in which it manifests itself.

As in the case of IPV, it is a structural, widespread, and certainly non-emergency phenomenon. In fact, according to the EU Gender-Based Violence Survey, 20.2% of women in EU countries state that they have suffered at least one episode of physical or sexual violence by an individual who does not belong to their intimate sphere starting from 15 years of age. Among these, 12.9% experienced a form of sexual violence by a non-partner and 3.8% suffered rape. In this scenario, Italy ranks above the European average, with a value equal to 24.8%. Among those responsible for NIPV, 8.4% are strangers, while 10.6% are people known but not family members or partners.

The choice to analyse the social representation of NIPV separately from the representation of violence in intimate relationships allows for reflection on how gender-based violence is interpreted when it is not intertwined with the asymmetries of power and control typical of the private sphere. The public dimension of the contexts in which it is acted out, in fact, favours a reading of this form of violence centred on security, public order, and territorial control. In this way, NIPV risks being framed predominantly within securitarian or culturalist frames, which shift attention from the structural asymmetry of power between genders toward an emergency and risk management narrative.

Starting from these premises, the research unit collaborated on the creation, operationalization, and constant updating of a shared corpus of journalistic articles concerning gender-based violence, focusing then on the analysis of news articles concerning NIPV published by 28 newspapers in 2024 and 26 newspapers in 2025, for a total of 3567 texts.

Descriptive analyses were conducted on these texts aimed at exploring the distribution of cases in the period considered, with particular attention to differences by year, by newspaper, and by type of violence represented. Simultaneously, we proceeded with the systematic extraction of qualitative-quantitative data from the articles, with particular reference to the type of violence reported, the association between the type of violence and the perpetrator's profile, the discursive modalities with which victims and perpetrators are described in journalistic texts, including lexical



recurrences, narrative characterizations, and possible elements of stereotyping and secondary victimization.

The choice to focus on crime reporting (news) is due to the non-neutrality of this journalistic genre. In fact, although it is often perceived as a mere recording of facts, it actually involves complex processes of selection, organization, and prioritization of information, as well as lexical choices and narrative structures oriented by specific worldviews. Essentially, reporters contribute to the social production of the meaning of the events they narrate, shaping representations that settle into the public imagination and influence the collective perception of social phenomena.

The analysed news articles are 1827 for 2024 and 1740 for 2025. The forms of violence that received the most attention are, in both years, sexual violence (present in 70% of articles in 2024 and 59% in 2025), personal injuries (35% in 2024 and 25% in 2025), and femicides (22% in 2024 and 21% in 2025), perpetrated predominantly by general acquaintances, strangers, or men with whom the victims had superficial relationships.

Since sexual violence is the NIPV crime most covered by the press, a first focus of the research was dedicated to the representation of its most extreme and complex form, namely group rape, which constitutes a paradigmatic expression of power asymmetries, shaped both by gender relations and group dynamics. The work was conducted on a sub-corpus of 125 articles published in 2024 and selected using the keywords "stupr* di gruppo" (group rape) and "branco" (pack/gang). Through an analysis conducted with the lexicometric program SketchEngine, it was possible to detect how, even in these cases, the press tends to focus attention on the victims of the crimes (the most frequent lemmas in the text refer to the victims and their very young age), on details relating to the dynamics of violence, and on the numerous elements belonging to the investigative-judicial sphere. This latter aspect is of particular interest as it determines two main effects. On one hand, it creates a distance between readers and the narrated facts: the language centred on investigations, arrests, and trials reinforces the idea that the matter is managed exclusively by professionals, reducing identification and empathy toward the victims. On the other hand, it normalizes violence and interprets it like common crime, rather than as an expression of a structural and social problem.

The qualitative analysis conducted through detection sheets highlights further elements of interest: in 76% of the articles, the victims are represented as "unequivocally victims" and, therefore, in no way co-responsible for the violence suffered; instead, the percentage of articles that attribute exclusive responsibility for the violence to the perpetrators drops to 66%, denoting greater difficulty in focusing on male responsibility in violence against women. This difficulty is evidenced by the presence in narratives of different forms of "misdirection", i.e., rhetorical strategies that distract attention from the true causes and true perpetrators of violence. These consist in the de-humanization of perpetrators (e.g., the use of the term "branco" [pack/gang]), in giving space to their perspectives (especially to the idea that the victim might have been consenting), and, in particular, in attributing the causes of violence to contexts of social marginality and criminal subculture. In this last case, the effect is to assimilate group sexual violence to other



forms of common criminality, framing it more as a matter of public order than as a structural asymmetry of power between genders.

The tendency to recount violence by emphasizing security, public order, and territorial control characterizes not only group sexual violence, but NIPV in general. Over the entire analysis period—2024 and 2025—the research investigated the main discursive frames that allow understanding how NIPV is socially constructed in media discourse and public debates. Starting from the hypotheses that i) the journalistic narrative of NIPV registers narrative schemes and prejudicial distortions attributable to a political reading of the narrated facts and that ii) the reporting of NIPV facilitates the activation of instrumental political narratives that use specific framing (securitarian and ethnic) to reinforce specific positions, we proceeded to analyse headlines, article texts, and adjectives referred to perpetrators in each text. The AI-assisted analysis identified discursive signals traceable to a securitarian paradigm, often intertwined with mechanisms of ethnicization and narratives akin to femonationalism. A significant datum, however, is the decrease in the presence of the securitarian paradigm in 2025 (26%) compared to 2024 (48%). This drop can be interpreted in light of the different nature of the news cases that occupied the media agenda in 2025 and which, although formally falling within the category of NIPV, often involve perpetrators who are not strangers to the victim: acquaintances, friends, colleagues, neighbours. In these situations, the journalistic narrative tends less to mobilize registers of public danger or external threat. The securitarian frame is therefore less activated, because violence is perceived and, consequently, narrated as an event in which other interpretative keys prevail.

Furthermore, analysing collectively the articles that activate the securitarian frame over the two years, an articulated structure emerges: about two-thirds exclusively use the security frame; a consistent share combines security and ethnicization, giving shape to hybrid narratives in which the theme of public order intertwines with cultural and ethnic categories; a more limited portion—although constant over time—simultaneously mobilizes security, ethnicization, and femonationalism.

To contextualize these results, a comparison was made with data relating to the journalistic representation of IPV. In the latter, the securitarian frame is significantly lower, confirming that when the perpetrator is a stranger, journalistic coverage tends to emphasize social alarm, external threat, and the public order dimension. When, instead, violence takes place in a relational context, media discourse is oriented much less toward security. The six privileged observers interviewed during the research confirm this reading, highlighting how NIPV is often socially represented as an exceptional fact attributed to subjects perceived as "others": marginalized men, foreigners, individuals with psychiatric or social problems. This process of exceptionalization and racialization shifts violence outside the majority social body, removing it from a structural gender reading.

Observing, then, the political-editorial orientation of the analysed newspapers, it was possible to detect how for both years the securitarian frame is activated predominantly by right-wing and centre-right newspapers (about 38% in 2024 and 40% in 2025). Furthermore, the more the frame



becomes radicalized—from security alone to its combination with ethnicization and femonationalism—the more the relative weight of right-wing newspapers grows, especially populist ones, while that of the liberal-democratic area decreases and that of the left disappears.

In conclusion, although a reduction in the incidence of the securitarian paradigm is recorded in 2025, the stability of discursive hybridizations remains. The overlap between security, ethnicization, and femonationalism produces an emergency and identity narrative that obscures the structural nature of gender-based violence. This narrative affects the public agenda, prioritizing policies oriented toward public order rather than prevention, education, or support for victims. The media narrative therefore continues to play a crucial role in building the collective imagination of gender-based violence, influencing social perceptions and institutional choices. The analysis of the press, integrated with interviews with experts on the subject, suggests that a more conscious and structurally oriented journalistic representation could contribute significantly to the recognition, prevention, and countering of such forms of violence.

2.2 Recommendations for a correct representation of gender-based violence | Compendium of best and worst practices

1. Pay attention to the use of impersonal or passive syntactic constructs that narrate violence by putting the perpetrator in the background

WP: «What was supposed to be a quiet evening with friends at a nightclub turned instead into a nightmare for an American student, raped in a parking lot not far from the venue. The young woman, in Italy to participate in an Erasmus study program, had decided to spend a few hours of recreation in the well-known Alcatraz nightclub in via Valtellina. Here she met another student, a 20-year-old Italian of Egyptian origin, spending time with him to have a few drinks. Leaving the club around 2:20 AM, the young man reportedly led the girl to the parking lot of a nearby supermarket, where shortly afterward the violence would take place» (25/02/2024).

BP: «A 31-year-old man, an operator within an educational community in the province of Lecce, is under investigation for aggravated sexual violence against a 16-year-old girl, a guest of the same community, whom he allegedly abused for months. The story came to light thanks to the complaint that the girl's father filed after the teenager told her family what was happening in that community. According to the examination of the statements and documentation on which investigators are working, the operator reportedly administered, on multiple occasions, a higher dose of psychotropic drugs to the sixteen-year-old, then sexually abused her» (27/04/2025).



2. Pay attention to the use of expressions that dehumanize the perpetrator (e.g., ogre, beast, pack/gang)

WP: «*There are seven suspects in prison: five adults and two minors. Witnessing the abuse was the young boyfriend who was pinned down by some members of the pack [branco]*» (05/09/2024).

BP: «*The three men from Palagiano arrested for the group rape of a 23-year-old, which occurred on the night between August 30 and 31 in the countryside of Massafra, remain in prison*» (20/09/2024).

3. Pay attention to the use of rhetorics that can shift responsibility for the violence from the perpetrator to the victim

WP: «*There would be the shadow of "baby call girls" behind the case involving a 16-year-old from the province of Rimini, drugged, raped, and then abandoned on the street by two men she had met on a dating site. It was she herself, after waking up confused on the street, who raised the alarm to law enforcement. Rescued and transported to the hospital, medical staff confirmed the violence. The young woman told the Carabinieri investigating, coordinated by prosecutor Davide Ercolani, that she remembered nothing of what happened, but only having taken drugs in the company of two men met the night before on social media*» (20/08/2024).

BP: «*A 22-year-old woman was raped in a Milanese venue during a New Year's Eve party. The young woman was at the Magnolia club, just outside Milan, to spend the evening with some friends. Here she met the attacker, with whom she decided to step aside in the restroom area. Following the woman's refusal to have intercourse, he reportedly blocked her by force and raped her, then fled the venue*» (03/01/2025).

4. Pay attention to the use of rhetorics that can reproduce stereotypes about victims, eliciting greater empathy toward victims perceived as ideal and minimizing the suffering of victims who do not conform to social expectations

WP1: «*The young woman, a model student who has already passed the tests for enrollment in Medicine...*» (22/05/2024).

WP2: «*She had said she was raped by a client who, not "satisfied" with the intercourse already paid for, demanded a second one for free. Faced with the woman's refusal, the man allegedly abused her. Or at least this is the prosecution's version based on the victim's account, a 55-year-old Romanian sex worker*» (27/02/2025).



BP: «A girl was raped at dawn on Friday by a man on one of the sunbeds on the beach near the hotel where she was staying with her group: the attacker, a 26-year-old local man, was arrested. The violence was immediately reported by the victim, a girl from Campagna Lupia, in the province of Venice: "I was with some friends during the night — the young woman explained to the officers — For a moment I left the group, went up to the hotel with a friend, and then came back down alone to the beach, sitting on a sunbed a few meters from the hotel. Shortly after, a person approached me and raped me"» (07/09/2025).

5. **Pay attention to the use of rhetorics that can shift responsibility for the violence from the perpetrator to external factors (e.g., social context, alcohol or drug dependence) or factors independent of his will (e.g., pathologies, raptus)**

WP: «The attacker – recognized thanks to the description provided by the victim and the footage from surveillance cameras and immediately accused of robbery and sexual violence – admitted the violence and specified that he acted under the influence of drugs» (27/08/2025).

BP: «A 30-year-old woman was raped in the centre of Vignola, in the province of Modena, around 10:30 PM on Wednesday. The young woman, after greeting some friends, while returning home, was attacked from behind and thrown to the ground by a stranger, who then abused her. The attacker fled shortly after, when the woman began to scream, attracting the attention of some people still present in a nearby venue. The 30-year-old, who suffered injuries, was taken to the hospital and then subjected to the protocol provided for in cases of sexual violence. Carabinieri from the Emilian city intervened and are trying to identify the man through the area's cameras» (28/06/2025).

6. **Pay attention to the use of rhetorics that – by representing the perpetrator as a deviant subject – assimilate violence to common crime, obscuring the gender dimension of the crime**

WP: «This is how the Carabinieri reached Omar Edgar Nedelko, 24 years old, a Romanian with a long string of criminal precedents to which charges of double femicide and desecration of a corpse are now added» (7/01/2024).

BP: «A man attempted to abuse a woman after dragging her by force behind a hedge. It happened yesterday morning around 9:00 AM on the outskirts of Poggio Imperiale, in a densely populated area. In fact, the woman's screams attracted residents who intervened, blocking the man until the arrival of the Carabinieri, who arrested him in flagrante» (24/02/2025).



7. Pay attention to the use of rhetorics that – by dwelling on the good reputation or socio-economic status of the perpetrator – put his responsibility in the background.

WP: «The psychotherapist, defended by lawyer ****, answered the investigating judge's questions during the interrogation, providing his reconstruction of facts and declaring his innocence. The defence, however, did not file an appeal for review. According to the prosecution, "numerous, serious pieces of evidence of guilt have been gathered" against ****, which provided "a very significant evidential framework" on the charges. The investigation originated from a report by the school attended by the minor, where one of the teachers was the first to notice the victim's distress, consequently activating the "code red" procedures. In addition to listening to the minor, investigators heard other people informed about the facts and also acquired "relevant conversations". **** is a prominent figure in ***, boasting a thirty-year political career and experience in the healthcare sector. He was twice a city councillor, first between 1980 and 1983, and then from 1984 to 1992. He spent two other interludes as municipal assessor of public works ('83-'84) and of social solidarity ('92-'94). He received his most significant appointment in 2006, when the then governor ***** chose him to lead the department for the family. He lasted in office just two years due to his early resignation because of a 5-year first-degree conviction for simple abetment and disclosure of official secrets. He moved to the side of the future governor *****, running in the 2008 Regional Elections. He gathered 8,498 preferences, winning a seat at ****, where he became vice-president of the productive activities commission and a member of the social and health services commission. Recently, he was among the candidates for the role of provincial coordinator of ***, *but in the February congress, ***** decided to take over the post himself*» (16/04/2024).

8. Avoid describing violence as a reaction (e.g., to a refusal)

WP: «*A ferocious stabbing just because the young woman had refused the repeated advances of her desk-mate*» (11/09/2025).

BP: «*University classmates at La Sapienza, but after a few months, he became her stalker. He demanded that she leave her boyfriend and become his girl. But she already had a partner and, beyond that—an aspect that must always be emphasized—that girl did not like her colleague. A freedom of choice that he attempted to deny her. Now that young man is under investigation for stalking following her complaint*» (20/09/2024).

9. Pay attention to the use of rhetorics that – by dwelling on the emotions or repentance of the perpetrator – can elicit empathy toward him



WP: «During the interrogation conducted before prosecutor Roberto Bonfanti, the suspect admitted his responsibilities through tears. "My client was unable to give an explanation for what happened," explained the 35-year-old's lawyer. "He appeared shattered, literally stating that he is unable to explain what came over him at that moment. In fact, he did not try to downplay the incident, he confirmed every circumstance contested by investigators and is ready to accept all the consequences of the case"» (22/11/2025).

BP: «Frightened and alone, despite being surrounded by dozens of people. That is how Stephanie felt on board a train, a Brazilian model who on social media recounted the violent assault she suffered in Brianza» (08/11/2025).

10. Pay attention not to prioritize the perpetrator's perspective within the narrative

WP: «The lawyer ***** defending him is outraged: "The Cassation's decision to send the trial against ***** back to appeal is madness. If the idea passes that before touching a woman with your fingers you must ask for written consent," he says, "human relations end. I told my son that if he wants to court a girl, he should first send her a certified email [PEC] and wait for the response." ***** , a trade unionist, was accused of sexual violence by ***** , whose labor dispute he was following» (15/03/2025).

BP: «The messages, by the hundreds, were sent between October and November 2023. Until she arrived in tears at the police post inside the university. "He writes me hundreds of messages a day, I can't take it anymore," was the girl's desperate account to the police, whom we will call Rosa. Investigators at the police post immediately started investigations. Hundreds of messages sent per day were found on the university student's cell phone, and even while she was at the police station reporting him, he obsessed her on WhatsApp. Talking to the university psychologist didn't help either. That boy didn't want to let go of his grip, making life impossible for his colleague. "I can't take it anymore," was the young woman's outburst. The messages went on for weeks. A persecution that created a continuous state of anxiety in the victim» (25/02/2024).

11. Avoid characterizing the perpetrator mainly through his ethnic origin, nationality, or cultural background

WP: «An asylum seeker of Tunisian origin, homeless, irregular on Italian territory due to an expulsion order suspended because he applied for asylum, with a hearing before the Territorial Commission for residence permits scheduled for next November. In the meantime, he was free to move around Italian territory. He was stopped yesterday on charges of beating and raping a 32-year-old Italian homeless woman in Mestre. And of holding her segregated



in an abandoned building that once housed Telecom offices, between via Carducci and piazzale Donatori di Sangue» (18/04/2025).

BP: *«A man attempted to abuse a woman after dragging her by force behind a hedge. It happened yesterday morning around 9:00 AM on the outskirts of Poggio Imperiale, in a densely populated area. In fact, the woman's screams attracted residents who intervened, blocking the man until the arrival of the Carabinieri, who arrested him in flagrante» (24/02/2025).*



3. Violence Against LGBTQI+ People (Messina Unit)

3.1 Research unit report

Within the scope of the research, the work of the Messina unit focused on the analysis of the journalistic representation of violence and discrimination against LGBTQI+ people and associations, and on the analysis of socio-political responses to these forms of violence. The objective was to identify the prejudices and stereotypes contained within them and the underlying culture, and to attempt a systematization of the best and worst practices recognized in the analysis of the journalistic representation of gender-based violence.

When we speak of violence against multiple communities under the LGBTQI+ umbrella, we refer to the marginalization, exclusion, and harm suffered by LGBTQI+ individuals (Lund, Burgess, Johnson, 2021). It is a broad form of violence that holds together a structural and a relational dimension. Indeed, on one hand, it operates on a systemic level: it is inscribed in social norms, public policies, and institutional apparatuses; on the other hand, it operates on an interpersonal level: it manifests itself in daily relationships, in individual interactions. Furthermore, violence against LGBTQI+ people and communities can reveal itself in explicit forms, up to murder, or implicit forms, which are subtle and normalized: microaggressions, invalidation, exclusion.

From a theoretical point of view, violence against LGBTQI+ people has been analysed as a socio-political phenomenon rooted in historical and structural power asymmetries between genders. Following the tradition of feminist and queer studies, these asymmetries are not limited to producing legal or material inequalities, but operate as apparatuses of social and political regulation, differentially shaping experiences of discrimination and exclusion.

The analysis was conducted within an interpretative framework provided by international legislation, in particular by the Istanbul Convention (2011), which reads gender-based violence as a violation of human rights. Although an explicit reference to LGBTQI+ people is absent in the Istanbul Convention, affecting the tool's capacity to offer a fully inclusive protection, its theoretical and political redefinition in an intersectional key has allowed reading violence against LGBTQI+ people and its eventual distorted representation as a violation of the rights of LGBTQI+ subjectivities and their democratic participation, determining what Prearo and Trastulli (2025) define as a citizenship deficit.

Violence against LGBTQI+ people in Italy is a phenomenon that, in recent years, has shown signs of growth and visibility in the data collected by independent associations and observatories. Yet, against this trend, its journalistic representation remains sporadic, fragmented, and often marginal.

This scarce media attention contributes to making the phenomenon invisible, removing it from public perception as a structural problem. Starting from this datum, the Messina unit



conducted a content analysis on a corpus of 356 journalistic articles published in 2021 in the following newspapers: *Avvenire*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Il Manifesto*. The year 2021 was chosen because it was the year of parliamentary discussion of the Zan Bill (DDL Zan). The selection of newspapers was made by prioritizing dailies considered authoritative and positioned in different political areas, but far from openly populist positions, so as to guarantee plurality and comparability. The articles, selected based on their relevance to LGBTQI+ themes, were subjected to systematic coding through an analysis grid aimed at detecting: prevailing narrative frames, cited actors, lexicon used, problematization of violence, and presence/absence of references to the structural dimensions of the phenomenon.

From the analysis of the corpus, it emerges that the examined articles address LGBTQI+ issues by focusing predominantly on two thematic cores: 1) the issue of violence/discrimination; 2) the debate surrounding the Zan Bill.

1) The issue of violence is represented mainly through episodes of physical and verbal aggression, including insults and discriminatory practices. Cases of murder or sexual violence do not appear in the corpus: an analytically significant absence, which may suggest an underrepresentation of the most extreme forms of violence or the operation of specific framing mechanisms in the media construction of the phenomenon. Physical aggression is described through concrete and circumscribed episodes – kicks and punches, stabbings, throwing of firecrackers, up to the threat or use of firearms – which emphasize the spectacular and immediately visible dimension of the violent act. Alongside this, verbal and symbolic violence finds space, manifesting itself through insults, mockery, derogatory epithets, homophobic banners in stadiums, intimidating notes, and practices of relational exclusion, such as hostile silence or refusal to speak. Overall, the media narrative tends to prioritize explicit and recognizable forms of aggression, rendering violence primarily as an overt episode rather than as a structural and daily process of marginalization.

The analysis shows that violence manifests itself in specific socio-political spaces: online environments, domestic and family contexts, neighbourhoods and proximity networks, as well as anonymous urban public spaces. In the latter, violence often punishes visibility and the transgression of heteronormative and cisnormative norms, transforming urban space into a place of symbolic social control and, sometimes, impunity.

Regarding the representation of the victim, violence suffered by gay men turns out to be the most frequently documented, with predominantly neutral narratives, although recurring stereotypes persist. The greatest stereotypes, however, are used in the representation of lesbian women victims of violence, whose physical characteristics and the "masculinization" of the body are highlighted. Transgender people are represented mainly in neutral terms. A relevant element is that in this representation, the media frequently recall associations and movements, politicizing the narrative and inserting the episodes into a collective framework of claim.

The perpetrators of violence are represented mainly in three categories: institutions, family, and anonymous actors, whether single or collective. Institutional violence, exercised by police,



health services, schools, municipal administrations, and sports environments, highlights how official structures can produce exclusion, control, or abuse, both through bureaucratic practices and through negligence or discrimination. In the family sphere, violence involves the mother, father, or both parents, underlining the role of intimate relationships as spaces of asymmetric power and direct threat. Anonymous actors include passers-by, bullies, baby gangs, generic groups or individuals such as "someone" or "the guy" and, in online contexts, the so-called "keyboard warriors", showing how violence can manifest itself in a diffuse, collective, or virtual form, often without an immediately recognizable individual responsibility.

2) The analysis of the debate around the approval of the Zan Bill was conducted within the framework of the relationship between gender and political ideologies and the determination and regulation of political conflicts.

Specifically, the formation of a broad and varied social group emerged that fuelled a campaign, exercising hegemony through ideological guidelines organized around a few thematic cores: the fight against "Gender Identity"; the focus on threats deriving from the recognition of LGBTQI+ Rights; the affirmation of freedom of speech as an expression of the dominance of majorities and non-recognition of the rights of minorities.

The Zan Bill emerged as a crucial field for observing not so much the chronicle of a legislative failure, but a fundamental stage in the process of normalization of the radical right in public debate.

Alongside the analysis of the journalistic representation of violence against LGBTQI+ people, the research set the further objective of studying socio-political responses to this form of violence. To this end, the gaze turned to the actions of Anti-discrimination Centres (CAD) in Italy. The best practices of the latter were analyzed, with particular attention both to the intervention methods adopted and to the interpretative frameworks through which operators read and define violence.

In-depth interviews were conducted with operators with coordinating roles, each belonging to 13 CADs and 3 Family Homes distributed throughout the national territory: Bologna, Campobasso, Ferrara, Foggia, Latina, Milan, Modena, Naples, Padua, Palermo, Potenza, Reggio Calabria, Rome, Sassari, Turin, and Udine. The interviews yielded interesting information on service management and collaborations with local institutions.

The main results show that CADs tend to make up for the shortcomings of the local service network, a critical issue accentuated by the inadequate training of public personnel regarding the needs of LGBTQI+ people. Structured collaborations with local institutions have a positive impact on the quality and effectiveness of interventions, contributing to the construction of more inclusive and cohesive contexts. However, significant fragilities remain: the instability of funding and the limited public visibility of activities compromise the continuity and sustainability of services, particularly for smaller centres or those located in economically disadvantaged areas.

On the communication front, in general, there is good dialogue between CADs and the local press (which also highlights a certain sensitivity toward the theme of discrimination and violence). Most of the interviewed operators underline how the world of journalism is beginning to interest



itself in LGBTQI+ issues with a decidedly more appropriate approach than in the past. Trying to move from the local to the national level, however, the reaction of the interviewees changes radically: almost unanimously, a national underrepresentation of the violence acted out against LGBTQI+ people is noted. While an improvement is recognized on the level of using more inclusive language, a narrative remains significant in which violence becomes the occasion for a representation steeped in stereotypes and prejudices.

3.2 Recommendations for a correct representation of gender-based violence | Compendium of best and worst practices

1. Replace the use of terms that lack scientific adherence

Critical issue: Use of the term "Gender Ideology" to discredit gender studies.

WP: «*Gender enters children's TV: "Thus the reality of man and woman is falsified"*» – 15/01/2021.

BP: «*Education on affectivity and respect for diversity lands in children's programs: a step toward understanding gender identities and breaking down stereotypes*».

2. Recognize Violence as a Citizenship Deficit

Critical issue: Representation of violence as an isolated "episode" or "brawl", or doubts about the homophobic matrix despite evidence.

WP: «*A minute of silence in the City Council: this is how Orlando Merenda was remembered yesterday in Turin, his city. He was just 18 years old and on June 20, he threw himself under a train between the Turin-Lingotto station and Moncalieri. "On the horizon – said the President of the City Council, Francesco Sicari – there is the specter of bullying, including of a homophobic nature". The 'specter' [of homophobic bullying], not a certainty, despite many already wanting to make poor Orlando an emblem of the horrors of homophobia*».

 – 29/06/2021.

BP: «*A minute of silence in the City Council: this is how Orlando Merenda was remembered yesterday in Turin, his city. He was just 18 years old and on June 20, he threw himself under a train between the Turin-Lingotto station and Moncalieri. "On the horizon – said the President of the City Council, Francesco Sicari – there is the specter of bullying, including of a homophobic nature. The tragic death of Orlando reignites the debate on*



the systemic impact of homotransphobia and the need for effective school protocols to counter bullying based on sexual orientation”».

3. Make Violence in Public Spaces Visible

Critical issue: Underrepresentation or minimization of assaults occurring in public places.

WP: *«“Once on the ground they continued to beat me. There were three or four guys, some girls stood by watching. We were in a very crowded street, it happened in the middle of many people, but nobody intervened”».*

BP: *«“Once on the ground they continued to beat me. There were three or four guys, some girls stood by watching. We were in a very crowded street, it happened in the middle of many people, but nobody intervened”. The homophobic assault that occurred in a crowded street highlights a worrying lack of civic culture and the need to rebuild safe and solidary urban spaces for every citizen».*

4. Guard Against Institutional Violence

Critical issue: Reproduction of stigmatizing language and procedures by public bodies.

WP: *«In a Covid vaccination form from Asl5 of La Spezia, homosexuals were still indicated as a “risk category” along with drug addicts and sex workers» - 12/02/2021.*

BP: *«Institutional prejudices at the ASL: the use of obsolete pathologizing categories demonstrates the need for an update of language and healthcare practices for the respect of LGBTQI+ people».*

5. Defuse the Instrumental Use of Rights

Critical issue: Use of femonationalism or homonationalism to attack other minorities.

WP: *«The fact that Malika's family is of Islamic religion – a father of Moroccan origin and a converted Italian mother –, a detail that changes the features for understanding the affair in light of the consideration that Muslim culture reserves for homosexuality» – 23/04/2021.*



BP: *«Malika's case highlights the difficulties encountered by many LGBTQI+ youth within conservative family contexts, regardless of religious belief, calling for the collective responsibility of the State in protecting children».*

6. Deconstruct the Hegemonic Narrative

Critical issue: Reduction of the debate to a "clash between leaders," obscuring the core issues.

WP: *«Salvini: arrogance defeated. The leader of Iv from Arabia: blame Pd and 5 Stars» – 24/10/2021.*

BP: *«Stop to the Zan Bill: the rejection in the Senate leaves Italy without a specific law against homotransphobia. Concern among civil rights associations».*

7. Protect Educational Pluralism

WP: *«The No to violence against them, resolute and convinced, is also accompanied by an equally resolute and convinced No to the many gay prides that people want to celebrate in schools on May 17, with children and adolescents of all ages, in the name of an alleged discrimination, which does not exist when the quality of interpersonal relationships is played out on many other tracks and not only on the exclusively sexual one»- 13/07/2021*

BP: *«On the occasion of the International Day Against Homotransphobia (May 17), many Italian schools initiated awareness paths addressed to children and adolescents. Although the political debate remains divided on intervention methods, data from the last year confirm the urgency of such initiatives: discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity continues to affect a significant part of the school population. These educational projects are not ideological manifestations, but pedagogical tools aimed at ensuring a safe and respectful study environment, where the quality of interpersonal relationships is based on the recognition of the dignity of each student».*

Based on the results of the research conducted, it is suggested to:

- give greater voice to transgender people, in order to counter symbolic annihilation and favor a democratic and plural representation;



- valorize best practices present on the territory, ensuring greater media coverage to Anti-Discrimination Centres.



4. The Institutions and Justice Professionals (Molise Unit)

4.1 Research unit report

In its preliminary phases, the research activity was directed toward the reconnaissance of the most appropriate and authoritative scientific literature available about the journalistic representation of the institutional voice, aimed at illustrating interventions, methods, and forms of countering gender-based violence.

In concert with the other research units involved in the project, we then contributed to developing the organizational boundaries and directive guidelines, aimed at the creation of a database for collecting national press articles traceable to the sphere of the public representation of the institutional voice of operators and professionals of the police system and criminal justice.

In order to allow the execution of a broad and analytical critical examination regarding the most relevant occurrences extractable from the powerful database made available in the meantime ("Cronaca Mimosa", containing all the articles published in 2024 by the national print press regarding cases of gender-based violence), a research fellow was specifically recruited (in the person of Dr. Manuela Garofalo), tasked with scrutinizing the collected journalistic heritage and systematizing the reconstructive outcomes that could be enucleated.

This qualitative-quantitative scrutiny activity had to preventively contemplate the identification of a persuasive methodological approach, defined by the fellow and agreed with the supervising tutor. The public representation of the institutional voice was correctly analyzed according to the combination of two complementary interpretative perspectives: the institutional production of communication and its re-elaborative projection in the national press.

The same fellow was also tasked with planning, organizing, conducting, and then analyzing the outcomes of certain specific institutional interlocutions, carried out through the personal interview technique.

In this perspective of investigation, the following were respectively interviewed on the topics of interest of the research:

- the Public Prosecutor at the Court of Campobasso, as well as the District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor;
- the Police Commissioner [*Questore*] of Campobasso;
- the Head of the Flying Squad [*Squadra Mobile*] of the Police Headquarters of Campobasso;
- the coordinator of the Anti-violence Center at Be Free Molise - Campobasso;
- the Head of the Liberaluna Anti-violence Center of Campobasso.



The chosen methodological option allowed for a profitable and virtuous combination of the two organizational levels of the analysis conducted.

On one hand, in fact, the qualitative interviews made it possible to collect and understand the perceptions, communication practices, and strategies put in place by institutions and associations, in the framework of the intentional production of institutional discourse; on the other hand, the qualitative-quantitative analysis of the "Cronaca Mimosa" dataset provided the opportunity to observe and decipher, in solid and systematic terms, the dynamics and trajectories of re-elaboration and transformation of these discourses in the journalistic narrative, identifying recurrences, patterns, and prevailing representations.

The research conducted made it possible to achieve highly significant and interesting scientific reconstructive results, which were presented, illustrated, and discussed in a series of initiatives, debates, and academic seminars, addressed to specialized audiences of scholars, professionals, and students, as well as to more general listeners:

- **Seminar day Prin Pnrr 2022 - Panel IV The legal narrative of violence against women**, Thursday, November 27, 2025 (Aula Oriana, CoRiS Department, Sapienza University of Rome);
- **Seminar day Prin Pnrr 2022 addressed to students**, Monday, February 16, 2026 (Aula D, Second Multifunctional Building, University of Molise - Campobasso campus);
- **Seminar day Prin Pnrr 2022 addressed to the public audience**, Friday, February 20, 2026 (Aula Fermi, Central University Library, University of Molise - Campobasso campus);
- **Concluding round table Prin Pnrr 2022**, Wednesday, February 25, 2026 (Unitelma Sapienza Conference Room - Rome campus).

Among the most remarkable reconstructive results, the enucleation of a qualified series of recommendations and best practices undoubtedly deserves to be highlighted, which can serve as a guiding orientation for the benefit of the interested institutional professionals and the communication operators involved.

4.2 Recommendations for a correct representation of gender-based violence | Compendium of best and worst practices

- 1) Elimination – from institutional representations and press reports – of the nominative identifiers of victims of gender-based violence crimes, except upon explicit and motivated request of adult victims;
- 2) Elimination – from institutional representations and press reports – of biographical information that may contribute to the direct or indirect identifiability of victims of gender-based violence, except upon explicit and motivated request of adult victims;



- 3) Elimination – from institutional representations and press reports – of data, sensitive information, and suggestions that may constitute a tool for secondary victimization;
- 4) Elimination – from institutional representations and press reports – of information, news, details, narratives, and suggestions that may cause distress, suffering, or indirect victimization effects to minors, indirect victims of gender-based violence or witnesses of assisted violence;
- 5) Elimination – from institutional representations and press reports – of information, news, details, narratives, and suggestions that may fuel the elaboration, dissemination, and persistence of sexist, ethnocentric, xenophobic, and racist stereotypes and prejudices against victims of gender-based violence.
- 6) Recommendation to the legislator to introduce the provision of a specific right to be forgotten, which can allow victims of gender-based violence and their successors/heirs to request and obtain the removal of offensive content from press reports of gender-based violence, through their de-indexing from the main online search engines;
- 7) Recommendation to the legislator to introduce the provision of judicial powers of a praetorian type, functional to favour the removal from digital communication circuits of offensive content from press reports of gender-based violence, reproduced, obtained, or extracted upon the initiative of private individuals;
- 8) Provision, at the management companies of the main online search engines, of organizational measures aimed at implementing the promptness and effectiveness of the exercise of the right to be forgotten by direct or indirect victims of gender-based violence.

Worst practices

- Suggestive and biased connotations, in institutional representations and press reports, of the biographical paths and existential choices of victims of gender-based violence, with the aim of generating justificatory evaluations of the conduct of the perpetrators of the crime;
- Excessively detailed, scandalous, and voyeuristic descriptions, in institutional representations and press reports, of the factual events of gender-based violence, susceptible to fuelling painful processes of secondary victimization;
- Suggestive and reductionist connotations, in institutional representations and press reports, of aggressive violent conducts, behavioural habits, existential conditions, and the degree of dangerousness of those responsible for gender-based violence.



Best practices

- Institutional representations and press reports compliant with the principles of protection underpinning the introduction - in the new Code of Ethics for female and male journalists which entered into force as of June 1, 2025 - of the provisions of Articles 10 and 13:

Article 10

Right to be forgotten

The journalist:

1. respects the right to personal identity and avoids referring to details relating to the past, except when they are essential for the completeness of the information;
2. updates news, also evaluating the requests of the interested party, and facilitates online de-indexing processes, where the conditions are met.

Article 13

Respect for gender differences in cases of femicide, violence, harassment, discrimination, and news events involving aspects related to sexual orientation and identity, evaluated the public interest, the journalist:

1. avoids gender stereotypes, expressions, images, and behaviours harmful to the dignity of the person;
2. does not make the victims of acts of violence identifiable, even indirectly, except upon explicit and motivated request of the victims themselves, provided they are adults;
3. complies with a respectful, correct, and conscious language;
4. adheres to the essentiality of information and continence [restraint], avoiding spectacularization;
5. does not use expressions, terms, and images that downplay the severity of the fact or blame the victim;
6. ensures a report that is respectful also of family members and other people involved in the facts.



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