

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE SERBIAN DAILY PRESS: FROM FACTS TO SENSATIONALISM**

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**Abstract.** *Five years ago, Serbia adopted the National Strategy for the empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality, as well as the Action Plan for its implementation (2010-2015) in order to reduce domestic violence. If we look at this major social problem from the media content point of view, the conclusion is that an unprofessional journalistic text may increase the damage that the victim of violence has already experienced. This paper analyzes the reporting on domestic violence in the Serbian daily press. The aim is to determine the daily newspapers' relation to this problem; whether there are differences in the approach to this issue, depending on the nature of the press (tabloid and the so-called "serious" press). The research is based on the content analysis of three newspapers: Politika, Blic and Kurir. The research timeframe is limited to seven days in two periods, randomly selected: from December 3 to 9, 2012, as well as from June 27 to July 3, 2013. The results will show the frequency and amount of space allocated to the issue in the analyzed newspapers, and a content analysis will determine the way this issue was reported on.*

**Key words:** *printing, domestic violence, crime, sensationalism, prevention.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Even if we understand the history of civilization as the history of changes, processes and ideas, where the degree of social development may be perceived as the most important, throughout the entire history of civilization the constant growth of violence can clearly be identified. Changes in social organization, disappearance and creation of new eras are marked by wars, social, class and cultural conflicts. Where do the roots of violence lie, of man's need to disturb the peace, endanger the life of another human being? Is there a segmented field of social reality without violence? In ancient Rome, the

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final outcomes of the popular gladiator fights were violent deaths. In the middle Ages, tournaments organized to entertain the nobility and celebrate victories in wars often had tragic consequences for knights; burning witches in public was presented by the Inquisition as God-pleasing work. The killing of elderly and disabled, known as 'Lapot'<sup>1</sup>, or, for example, severe punishing of women for adultery in some countries and cultures that still exists today, are only the occasional violent incidents that take place during the development of the world society. It is difficult to scale different kinds of violence by cruelty, but it is safe to say that domestic violence is the one that the public must be constantly warned about, that needs to be treated like a scourge and eradicated by taking constant preventive actions.

If we look at relationships in the family, we can notice the presence of violence in all cultures and countries throughout history, even in the present. However, in modern times, in which the rights and freedoms of all citizens, regardless of religion, gender or race are proclaimed, the spiral of silence over this phenomenon is absurd. "Murders, sex, fear, severe diseases, accidents, natural disasters and similar topics dominate the media, colonizing a fluid environment composed of a number of dangers. Content blocks the mind, inflames emotions, and orients the subconscious, so that by focusing on deviant behavior, extreme events and violence, a disguised ideological pattern that is becoming a global environment is created" (Jevtović, Vulić and Pavlović 2011, 73–74). The Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia defines an offender of this type of violence as "Whoever by use of violence, threat of attack against life or body, insolent or ruthless behavior endangers the tranquility, physical integrity or mental condition of a member of his family..." (Article 194, paragraph 1).<sup>2</sup> Family Law determines family violence more precisely, so the definition is far broader and clearer (Article 197, paragraph 1 and 2). Paragraph 1 of the Family Law<sup>3</sup> states: "Domestic violence, in terms of this Act, is the behavior when a family member threatens the physical integrity, mental health or peace of another family member." Paragraph 2 further defines this term, and recognizes six forms of violence: "Violence within the family, within the meaning of Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be limited to: 1. causing or attempting to cause bodily injury; 2. inducing fear by threat of death or inflicting bodily injury to a family member or a person close to him; 3. forced sexual intercourse; 4. persuasion to sexual intercourse or sexual intercourse with a person under 14 years of age or a disabled person; 5. restricting freedom of movement or communication with third parties; 6. insults, as well as any other impudent, reckless and malicious conduct."

As a phenomenon, domestic violence<sup>4</sup> can be defined as the behavior of a family member that endangers the mental health or physical integrity of other member or

<sup>1</sup> Lapot – ritual killing of old people; more in: Jovanović 1999.

<sup>2</sup> The Criminal Code, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no.85/2005, 88/2005 – corr., 72/2009, 111/2009 and 121/2012, 12.01. 2013. <http://www.mpravde.gpv.rs/lt/articles/zakonodavna-aktivnost/pozitivno-zakonodavstvo/krivicna-materija/>, english translation: <http://www.zakon.co.rs/tekstovi-zakona-na-engleskom-jeziku.html>

<sup>3</sup> Family Law, The Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no. 18/2005 and 72/2011

<sup>4</sup> Domestic violence occurs in many forms: physical, sexual, psychological and economic. In addition to active, we can also identify passive abuse as a distinct form of violence which is, in fact, difficult to recognize, but usually leads directly to physical violence. Passive abuse is usually subtle and includes victimization, ambiguity, neglect, spiritual and intellectual abuse.

Domestic violence, identified as physical, psychological, sexual and economic, can have different intensity - may be occasional and chronic. If we consider the gravity or severity of psychological and physical abuse, the main parameters for assessment are the degree of injury and the need for treatment, or whether the perpetrator caused temporary or permanent injuries to the victim and whether those injuries are mild, moderate or severe. The highest level of violence is murder.

members of the family. Most often it refers to spousal violence or abuse, but also to violence between partners, or, for example, people who live together. Until the 1970s, the public was mostly silent on this issue, so it was only with the beginning of the women's movement that people seriously began to talk about domestic violence. Understanding the problem and the awareness of the necessity for the prevention of violence in the twenty-first century differs from country to country. For example, in the USA and the UK, only a third of these offenses are reported to the police. In the Balkans, according to the Victimology Society of Serbia, one in four women is experiencing some form of domestic violence.<sup>5</sup> However, it is almost as if nobody talks about it. Why? The answer can be found in the analysis of Serbian society, especially in the past, as a conservative and patriarchal system in which domestic violence is an avoided topic, locked behind the door of the family home. The modern approach to this problem is based on the view that it is not only a personal problem and individual pathology, but a social problem and social pathology that has deep roots in the patriarchal structure of society (Konstantinović Vilić and Petrušić 2005, 135–141). Despite the high prevalence of domestic violence in Serbia, this topic is opened only when a tragic outcome occurs. Group of authors Babović, Ginić and Vuković published the study "Mapping of domestic violence against women in Central Serbia" in 2010. According to a survey that included 2500 adult women, in that year alone, 37.5 percent of women were exposed to family violence, and as many as 54.2 percent were exposed to some form of this type of violence during their lifetime (Babović, Ginić, and Vuković 2010). The fact that somewhere between 5 and 10 percent of the elderly are subjected to violence, (most commonly psychological – 50 percent, while physical violence occurs in 19 percent of cases), shows that this problem is widespread in Serbia.<sup>6</sup> Even children are not spared from domestic violence. Every third girl in the world and every seventh boy are subjected to sexual abuse. In Serbia, 10 percent of children are permanently exposed to severe physical or sexual abuse, while every child at least once during their upbringing has experienced some form of violence.<sup>7</sup>

What is the role of the media, do they have a preventive effect, do they warn and educate in order to draw attention to and reduce these forms of violence? Israel Drapkin argues that "citizens have the right to be informed by the media about the state of crime in society, but that does not mean that the media have the right to treat them in sensational and scandalous way" (Drapkin, in Ignjatovic 2007, 171). In what way do the media report: factual or analytical, ethical or not, sensationally or professionally, do they just record event with tragic consequences or write preventively in order to reduce the occurrence of such events? Stjepan Malović believes that editors in the process of selecting the news are led by the criteria that "bad news is more in demand, whether it is viewed, read or listened to and is more interesting to a wide audience" (Malović 2007, 111).

However, we must not overlook the fact that the role of the media is crucial in breaking down the stereotypes, that domestic violence is not an isolated case where the victim should be ashamed, but torture that society should not allow. In May 2014, Serbia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on combating domestic violence, which took effect in early August. This document talks about the assistance that should be provided for victims of violence as well as all the negative consequences of domestic violence. Serbia is obliged to implement the Convention in its entirety and to modify national

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<sup>5</sup> One in four woman in the Balkans is a victim of domestic violence (Blic online, June 19, 2009)

<sup>6</sup> [www.nasiljeuprodici.rs](http://www.nasiljeuprodici.rs)

<sup>7</sup> [www.nasiljeuprodici.rs](http://www.nasiljeuprodici.rs)

legislation if necessary. The Embassy of the United States report on the situation of human rights in Serbia in 2008 and 2013<sup>8</sup> noted that "high levels of domestic violence still exist." The Autonomous Women's Center as well as NGOs and the professional community warn the public about this issue. The agency Ninamedia did a study for the project "Combating sexual and gender-based violence" in 2010, analyzing the presence of violence against women, children and the elderly in the media. For this purpose, texts that deal with this issue: 16 in daily newspapers and 198 in periodicals, as well as 76 in local print media, were analyzed; the monitoring of 11 national broadcasters and the same number of local radio and television stations was also conducted. The research results showed 1198 texts which dealt with violence against women, children and the elderly in 2010, and pointed out that "the reporting of domestic violence is more visible in the print than in the electronic media; the largest part of the reporting was found in the daily national newspapers and less in local, and the least in periodicals. The lack of articles on domestic violence suggests that there is an analytical approach to this topic (articles on this topic are published mostly in journals dealing with Crime News)" (Aleksić and Đorgović 2011, 51). The research clearly shows that the most numerous stories were about women who had suffered violence (824), followed by children in 363 and elderly in 98 stories. "Photos of the perpetrators were found in 209 articles or 17.7 percent, and there were nearly as many photos of the victims (211). Although the Journalism Code of Ethics and other legal regulations require protection of identity, the media published photos of the perpetrators and persons who had suffered the violence" (Aleksić and Đorgović 2011, 59). On the other hand, this study found twice the number of articles on violence in the "Crime News" and these texts are most prominent in the tabloid newspapers. A similar study was conducted by Jelena Višnjić, and the results were presented in the paper "Killing me softly: print media coverage of women victims of violence" (Višnjić 2012, 141–156).<sup>9</sup> In the study, "A qualitative analysis of media reporting on violence against women in Serbia" Zorica Mršević, PhD, systematically and scientifically exhibited a qualitative discourse analysis of thematic articles on this topic. A critical review of the articles published in the print media was carried out in a period of two years, from 2010 to 2012. The special quality of the study is a number of positive and negative examples of media practice when reporting on violence against women. The author has done a qualitative analysis in order to investigate the mechanisms of media image creation regarding the social problem of violence against women. The publication also offers the public access to Zorica Mršević's review and critiques of the available studies that have dealt with this issue since 2009. Unlike other authors, Mršević believes that the publication of articles on violence against women – domestic violence – in the Crime News columns is not bad. She interprets that this position in the paper (proven in the research to be the most common), is chosen simply due to journalism practice to fairly and factually report, and emphasizes that the problem is "why there are no more analytical texts". "Media coverage of violence against women and, in general, the social context in which it occurs, and the status of women, is a good and useful source of information. Bringing systematic and continuous information on the most serious acts of violence resulting in death, the media have a very important social role of "whistleblowers" on which they certainly should be applauded. Undoubtedly, there is a good side of this

<sup>8</sup> More in: <http://serbian.serbia.usembassy.gov/izvestaji/izvestaj-o-stanju-ljudskih-prava-u-srbiji-2013.html> and <http://serbian.serbia.usembassy.gov/sr/ljudskim-pravima-2008-srbija.html>

<sup>9</sup> See in: [http://www.womenngo.org.rs/images/zagovaranje/Jelena\\_Visnjic-Killing\\_me\\_softly-medijsko\\_izvestavanje\\_o\\_zenama\\_zrtvama\\_nasilja.pdf](http://www.womenngo.org.rs/images/zagovaranje/Jelena_Visnjic-Killing_me_softly-medijsko_izvestavanje_o_zenama_zrtvama_nasilja.pdf), Accessed 29.6.2014.

media approach, because it gives us the main pointer showing the frequency of violence on the entire territory of the Republic of Serbia. Most of these reports, however, remained connected to "individual cases", without a deeper examination of the problem and social responsibility, which would direct the social reaction to finding a systematic solution" (Mršević 2013, 63). Furthermore, the Association of Journalists of Serbia and UNICEF published a study in 2012, "Media and violence against children" (Analysis of print and electronic media reporting July 15 – November 10, 2012). The main results of this study do not differ from the preceding ones that focused on the topic of violence against women and domestic violence. In fact, "the majority of articles on violence against and among children are published in the press in accordance with the Journalism Code of Ethics, but those who do not follow the rules of ethics and the rights of the child are usually published as main texts. Photos contribute to discovering the identity of child victims of violence. In addition to showing the face of the victim and/or the face of the perpetrator, photographs often show houses, institutions, a recognizable environment, so even if the media do not reveal the full identity, they contribute to recognition of the victim. When it comes to reporting on violence against and among children, television does not follow the press in the manner and number of releases. Usually it do not take the risk of covering specific cases where children had been victims of violence and deals with the issue of violence in general. But, it was noted that when it does decide to cover a story about domestic violence, often, the same as the press, it fails to protect the identity of the victim and usually reveals it indirectly."<sup>10</sup>

In order to comprehend how the print media report on domestic violence, we have analyzed the content of the three most influential daily newspapers: *Politika*, *Blic* and *Kurir*. We needed to assess the situation, note deficiencies in order to make the right conclusions in the form of recommendations for the preventive and educational role of the media regarding this phenomenon.

## 2. THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to determine in what way daily newspapers in Serbia report on domestic violence, in what way and how often this topic is presented. In addition, we also aimed to determine whether there is a difference in the approach when writing about this topic, between tabloid and serious newspapers, as well as whether sensationalism and the violation of the code of ethics of reporting can be found in these articles. The research is based on content analysis of three Serbian newspapers: *Politika*, *Blic* and *Kurir*. The research timeframe is limited to seven days in two periods randomly selected: from December 3 to 9, 2012, as well as from June 27 to July 3, 2013. Given the fact that these newspapers are published daily, the total number of the analyzed corpus is 42 copies. The reason for choosing these newspapers can be found in their diversity (serious, half-tabloid and tabloid). *Politika* is classified as a serious daily newspaper, *Blic* is considered a "golden mean" or half-tabloid, while *Kurir* is classified as tabloid press and is perceived as a newspaper in which the reader seeks sensational headlines and vivid images rather than information. In terms of the research method, quantitative and content analysis were used.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See: [www.uns.org.rs/sw4i/download/files/box/\\_id\\_542/mediji\\_i\\_nasilje\\_nad\\_decom.pdf](http://www.uns.org.rs/sw4i/download/files/box/_id_542/mediji_i_nasilje_nad_decom.pdf), Accessed 7.6. 2014.

<sup>11</sup> See in: (Branković, 2007)

Research hypotheses:

1. Tabloid daily newspaper more often tend to write about cases of domestic violence than newspapers whose content is not directed towards sensationalism.
2. In tabloid press, the subject of domestic violence takes up more space compared to the serious press.
3. Domestic violence is generally written about only after the tragic outcome. Factual genres (news or reports) are mainly used, while the analytical genres on this issue are marginalized.
4. The fact that the laws of the Republic of Serbia and the Journalism Code of Ethics obliges journalists to respect and protect the rights and dignity of children and crime victims, it can be proved the media often reveals the identity of a domestic violence victim.

The results will show the frequency and amount of space allotted to the issue in the analyzed newspapers, and a content analysis will show the way of reporting on this issue.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the first research week, from December 3 to December 9, 2012, *Politika*, *Blic* and *Kurir* published a total of 20 articles regarding domestic violence. *Blic* published 9 articles on this topic, *Kurir* 8, while *Politika* published only 3.

During the second week of research, from June 27 to July 3, 2013, the analyzed newspapers published 13 texts that had topic of domestic violence: *Kurir* 7, *Blic* and *Politika* 3 each.

**Table 1** Quantity of domestic violence texts in both research weeks

	<i>Blic</i>	<i>Kurir</i>	<i>Politika</i>	Total
The first week	9	8	3	20
The second week	3	7	3	13

Sensationalist headlines dominate all the observed newspaper articles – *Blic*: "A woman thrown down the window and slaughtered in front of her children", December 3, 2012 page 14; "We are more aggressive because of poverty", December 6, 2012 page 8; "He killed the mother, and then held a memorial service" December 8, 2012 page 15; "He killed the mother and then took a drink," June 27, 2013; *Kurir*: "She suffocated the baby and covered it with leaves", December 3, 2012 page 13; "The monster sent kisses in court," December 4, 2012, pages 12 – 13; "He slept with his daughter, the court set him free," December 7, 2012 pages 14 – 15; "The son beat his mother, and butchered her with a knife," June 27, 2013; *Politika*: "He killed his wife in front of their children," December 4, 2012 page 4... During the first week in which we analyzed the content of newspapers, domestic violence with tragic consequences that occurred with extreme cruelty and pathology, so all the media covered this event. *Blic* dealt with this tragic accident in four editions. On the first day, December 3, 2012, page 14, the article "A woman thrown down the window and slaughtered in front of her children" in the form of a report brought basic information, but on the next day December 4, 2012, a new article entitled "He killed his wife because she wanted a divorce" on page 15, provided the readers with additional information and assumptions on why the crime was committed. This article

published photographs of the victim and the perpetrator. A photo of the thug sending kisses is on the front page with the headline: "The kiss of the villain". On the next day, *Blic* published a report from the funeral of the victim: "Even 30 criminal charges did not stop her husband, the killer", and on the fourth day the article "We are more aggressive because of poverty" was published, in which interviews with the victim's father, a psychologist and a social worker were printed. *Kurir* reported on the same event for three days in the form of reports and articles, while *Politika* published only one report.

The fact is that "dark" topics, such as, for example, domestic violence, are more often represented in the tabloids because of editorial policy that directs reporting to the columns of "Crime News", which readers of these newspapers are interested in. The personalization of the news with this topic is also present, which also directs the attention and curiosity of the readers. "What makes the essence, the essence of quality press - reporting on the public sphere - does not have to get space in the tabloids. This is also true for the most relevant topics of national or international significance. In the tabloids, on the contrary, most of the selected content is associated with the private sphere, with one's personal experience, with interesting, individual examples (HI). Human Interest means that the popular dimension of the personal overpowers the significance of the general – political, economic, and social. Human interest (personalized news) dominates the public interest, the socially relevant is neglected by the trivial, private" (Todorović 2006, 22–23).

The presented results confirm the initial hypothesis that in tabloid newspapers, such as *Kurir* and *Blic*, domestic violence is more present, as opposed to *Politika*, which belongs in the category of high-quality press.

In order to determine the representation of domestic violence issues in selected newspapers, we chose the size of the text as a unit of measurement, or the reserved space on the newspaper pages.

**Table 2** The size of the text in the period from December 2 to 9, 2012

	<i>Blic</i>	<i>Kurir</i>	<i>Politika</i>	Total
Whole page	2	3	/	5
Two thirds	2	1	/	3
Half a page	2	/	/	2
One fourth	/	3	1	4
Less than one fourth	3	1	2	6

**Table 3** The size of the text in the period from June 27 to July 3, 2013

	<i>Blic</i>	<i>Kurir</i>	<i>Politika</i>	Total
Whole page	/	2	/	2
Two thirds	/	/	/	/
Half a page	1	/	/	1
One fourth	/	1	/	1
Less than one fourth	2	4	3	9

Based on the results, it is easy to conclude that *Politika* devoted less space to the issues of domestic violence, and the texts did not exceed one-fourth of the page, compared to *Kurir* and *Blic* where the texts on these topics, with sensational headlines, even took up the entire newspaper page.

For the second unit of measurement, we chose text illustrations or published photos.

**Table 4** Text illustrations in the period from December 2 to 9, 2012

	<i>Blic</i>	<i>Kurir</i>	<i>Politika</i>	Total
More than one photo	4	5	/	9
One photo	2	2	1	5
No photos	3	1	2	6

**Table 5** Text illustrations in the period from June 27 to July 3, 2013

	<i>Blic</i>	<i>Kurir</i>	<i>Politika</i>	Total
More than one photo	/	2	/	2
One photo	1	/	/	1
No photos	2	4	3	9

Based on the data, we can conclude that *Blic* and *Kurir* tend to illustrate texts in the issues of domestic violence with more than one photo. It should be noted that these newspapers often publish photographs of the crime scene, bullies, victims and family members of the victims. Unlike *Kurir* and *Blic*, *Politika* has as editorial concept that is governed by the rule that when these topics are a part of the newspaper content, they are not illustrated, no photographs are published, and writers of these texts keep a neutral view. Our analysis also confirmed that *Blic* and *Kurir* illustrate articles on domestic violence with photographs of victims and bullies, as well as with the crime scene photos. The data in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 support the hypothesis that the "tabloid" newspapers provide more space for content on topic of domestic violence than does the "serious" press. In addition, we partially confirmed the hypothesis that the identities of domestic violence victims are often revealed, contrary to the Journalism Code of Ethics.

For a better insight into the problems of daily press coverage on domestic violence, we chose one more unit of measurement – the use of journalistic genres. We identified the following categories: factual (news and report), analytical (article), and the third category, where we sorted all other journalistic genres and forms.

**Table 6** Journalistic genres in the period from December 2 to 9, 2012

	<i>Blic</i>	<i>Kurir</i>	<i>Politika</i>	Total
News	3	1	1	5
Report	4	7	2	13
Article	2	/	/	2
Other genres	/	/	/	/

**Table 7** Journalistic genres in the period from June 27 to July 3, 2013

	<i>Blic</i>	<i>Kurir</i>	<i>Politika</i>	Total
News	2	4	3	9
Report	1	3	/	4
Article	/	/	/	/
Other genres	/	/	/	/



The presented results clearly indicate that the factual genres (news and reports) are the most common and that the editorial staff of all three newspapers favor them when reporting on this issue. In the first week, 90 percent of all articles on domestic violence were identified as news (5) and reports (13). In the second week, these genres were the only ones that were observed (9 news articles and 4 reports). Other journalistic genres were not noted in any of the analyzed periods. Two articles were observed in *Blic* in the first week; one of them did not deal just with domestic violence, but this issue was mentioned as one of the violence forms. These data support the view that the domestic violence is mainly represented with factual genres. Analytical articles on this topic are very rare or completely marginalized.

If we look at the position of the newspaper, where the articles on domestic violence are placed, it is quite clear that more than two-thirds of the articles are published on the "Crime News" pages, while the rest is published in sections that follow developments in the world and the society column. Also, one article was found on the front page in the first week: "The kiss from the villain," which was illustrated with a perpetrator's photograph (*Blic*, December 4, 2012).

A number of articles on domestic violence in the "Crime News" section led us to draw some conclusions on the approach to this subject. The press writes about this problem only when the violence had led to tragic consequences - severe personal injuries, death... It is guided by the need to inform readers and does not ignore sensationalism. At the same time, the fact is that the press does not write on this issue in order to indicate the need to prevent violence. Thus, it seems that the print media have been influenced by the trend of "tabloidization" and forgot about some functions of journalism, such as, for example, the educational, cognitive, integrative, social and educational, guiding and ethical. Incorporating causality into our research, or the answer to the question: "When do the print media write about domestic violence?" will contribute to fuller analysis. The content analysis of the articles published in the selected newspaper corpus showed unambiguously that the reason for reporting in more than 90 percent of the texts was violence in the family with a tragic outcome. Writing about violence is writing about the incident. For the public condemnation of such pathological behavior, the press generally does not have the space, as there is no space for analytical articles that contain educational, guiding and ethical message in order to prevent the suppression and eradication of all forms of domestic violence.

The research also shows that in 95 percent of the cases, journalists revealed the identity of domestic violence victims, releasing the full name and often a publishing a photograph. This is in direct conflict with the Journalism Code of Ethics in Serbia: "The journalist is obliged to respect the presumption of innocence rule and is not allowed to find anyone guilty before the court's verdict. Journalists are forbidden to use inappropriate, harassing, pornographic and other content that can have a detrimental impact on children. The journalist is obliged to respect and protect the rights and dignity of children, crime victims, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups."<sup>12</sup> Why do the journalists violate the Code? Our research demonstrated that they often do not comply with codes and standards. Daniel Kornić recognizes the cause in the book "Information Ethics", but at the same time he gives the recommendation of what a journalist should do when reporting on such events. "The necessity for the journalists to give the human touch to events, in any way does not justify the hunting of suffering and uncontrolled and excessive exploitation of those pains. It is necessary to respect the victims and the people who experience shock, on the spot, as well as in the manner of events presentation in the media" (Kornić 1999, 59).

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<sup>12</sup> Journalism Code of Ethics in Serbia, <http://nuns.rs/codex/ethical-code.html>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Contemporary society is marked by the incredible speed at which new media is created, and the development and improvement of traditional media; they all produce, create and place information in one media sky, searching for the consumers of media messages. In the abundance of media content, man today is simply overwhelmed with all the information. "From the day of your birth more information has been produced than in the entire recorded history before your birth, and half of the total number of scientists in history live today, and produce information" (Potter 2011, 24). In contrast to the time when the news was worth more than gold, the digital age has led us into a vortex of an information blizzard in which analytic journalism is losing the battle with sensationalist reporting and tabloidization. "More or less aggressive, here and there stylishly subtle, yet populist in doctrine, a form imposes that the information is only possible if is scandalized and vulgarized" (Rutović 2011, 279). The last decade is characterized by a degradation of print newspaper quality observed through the parameters of objectivity, accuracy, timeliness, and clearly expressed ethical crisis. Professional standards of reporting adopted long ago, codes of ethics and generally humane and moral concerns for the victims and tragedies are losing the battle because of the competitive media war in order to attract the attention of readers at all costs. Principles of the media industry – the basic standards of the journalism profession - are recomposed in time of sensationalist media. Publishing photos and locations of tragedies with the discriminatory narrative discourse, the identification of victims and impersonation of compassion for the sake of following new news trends, often causes victims to be subjected to secondary victimization through the media. Only one of the headlines in our research is enough to confirm this view, "A woman thrown down the window and slaughtered in front of her children", and raises the question of the psychological dimensions of the average consumer who reaches for the newspapers just because of this title. Curiosity or reaching for information about various forms of violence against individuals or groups? From the media perspective – a justified title, because of the rule "Shock sells newspapers."

The conditions in which the print media operate in Serbia today can be described as unfavorable to the promotion of old real values. A decline in living standards, unemployment, frustration because of the difficulty of survival, general depression and obvious process of differentiation to a small number of the super-rich, the disappearance of the middle class and the increasing number of poor people, contributed to a low level of everybody else, as well as media culture. These conditions have created a fertile ground for the development of the tabloids and the penetration of tabloidization in quality, serious media. The premise of our research, that mostly tabloid dailies more often report on domestic violence than the newspapers of a different nature was proven. However, the presence of sensational headlines was also observed in *Politika*, which justifies the abovementioned stand that tabloidization is penetrating serious, high-quality printing. Domestic violence as a topic in the daily press is present only when the violence occurs along with plenty of sensational narrative and it can be recognized as a trend in reporting. A particular problem, which is clearly observed in our content analysis, is direct or indirect identification of the victim, which is not only an ethical but also a legal problem. Positive legal and ethical practice assumes the need to protect the victims and family members for the entire time until the trial is complete and in some cases afterwards. There is a great necessity for reporting and general conceptualization of displaying the themes of domestic violence to be changed. The journalists have to report on such violence, characterizing it as an anomaly that deserves social condemnation.

Undoubtedly, domestic violence is a very sensitive subject and when writing about it, it is necessary to make an effort in order to help the victims and motivate victims to report violators. At the same time, constant warnings that domestic violence is not a private and individual matter but a problem for all of us, the problem of society in general, is a must. Journalists, editors and media owners themselves must take greater responsibility and act professionally and ethically based on long adopted codes of good journalistic practice. On the other hand, society also needs to develop mechanisms for the protection of such content in a way that these problems are studied, discussed and understood in order to protect victims and take preventive actions in order to eradicate this problem. Media sensationalism is largely created or is connected to consumerism and profit at any cost. However, what does not and cannot have a price is each individual, each life. *Blic* published a report entitled "In Serbia 11 women were killed in domestic violence since the beginning of the year" on August 1, 2014<sup>13</sup>. This is the reason why it is necessary to remind the media that they are socially responsible and bring them back on the track of professional and ethical journalism, even the tabloids, at least when reporting on these and similar topics.

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## **NASILJE U PORODICI U SRPSKOJ DNEVNOJ ŠTAMPI: OD FAKTOGRAFIJE DO SENZACIONALIZMA**

*Pre pet godina Srbija je usvojila Nacionalnu strategiju za poboljšanje položaja žena i unapređenje rodne ravnopravnosti, kao i Akcioni plan za njeno sprovođenje (2010 – 2015). Ukoliko ovaj veliki društveni problem posmatramo iz medijski prezentovanih sadržaja, nameće se konstatacija da neprofesionalan novinarski tekst može uvećati štetu koju je žrtva nasilja već doživela. U ovom radu analizirano je izveštavanje o nasilju u porodici u srpskoj dnevnoj štampi. Cilj rada je usmeren na utvrđivanje odnosa dnevne štampe prema ovom problemu. Takođe, cilj je i utvrditi da li postoji razlika u pristupu ovoj temi u zavisnosti od karaktera štampe (tabloidna i takozvana „ozbiljna“). Istraživanje se zasniva na analizi sadržaja tri dnevna lista: Politika, Blic i Kurir. Vremenski je istraživanje ograničeno na sedam dana u dva perioda, odabranih na osnovu metode slučajnog uzorka i to od 3. do 9.decembra 2012. godine, kao i od 27.juna do 3.jula 2013.godine. Rezultati će pokazati učestalost i veličinu prostora u analiziranim novinama, a analizom sadržaja utvrdiće se i na koji način se izveštava o ovom problemu.*

*Ključne reči: štampa, nasilje u porodici, krivično delo, senzacionalizam, prevencija.*