

Media Representations of Male Perpetrators of Violence against Women and Children: A Decolonial Feminist Analysis

Ms Baleseng F. Maeneche under the supervision of **Professor Tamara Shefer**

Rates of violence in South Africa continue to rise, significantly impacting society. In the context of gender-based violence (GBV), the media is often seen as reinforcing problematic structures of inequality, rendering the crisis more ambiguous and preventing thorough social discourse. Problematic representations can act as barriers to transformative dialogue and hinder effective action against violence.

This study addresses the underexplored representation of male perpetrators in media, asking how they are portrayed in newspaper articles about GBV against women and children (GBVAWC), and what insights a decolonial African feminist lens can provide. By integrating decolonial feminist theory into media analysis, this research undertakes a thematic and critical discourse analysis of reports on two South African cases: the Joe Slovo informal settlement father (2018) and the Dros rape case (2018). The findings reveal that colonial systems of gender, race, and class underpin news representations of male-perpetrated GBVAWC. The analysis highlights the pervasive racist, classist, and gendered lens that dominates media narratives, often erasing the structural violence enacted through systems of oppression. Consequently, poor, Black men are depicted as ‘beasts of the nation’, obscuring deeper societal issues that exist within the pervasiveness of GBVAWC.

By providing a nuanced understanding of the root causes of this violence, this study advocates for a holistic and collaborative approach to addressing this violence, calling for effective and sustained change. The innovative application of a decolonial feminist perspective not only critiques existing representations but also opens pathways for transformative discourse that challenges entrenched inequalities.

Key words: Coloniality; gender-based violence (GBV); gender-based violence against women and children (GBVAWC); news and media; representations; men and masculinities; decolonial feminism