

LmunA 2025

Research report

Forum: Commission on the Status of Woman

Issue: Debating the media's ethical responsibility
in the justification of femicide

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LmunA 2025

Introduction

Femicide, defined as the gender-based killing of women, remains deeply misunderstood and, troublingly, is not always acknowledged as a gendered crime within public discourse. Media coverage, more often than not, frames these horrific acts as isolated tragedies or unfortunate incidents, sometimes even implying, whether subtly or overtly, that the victim bears some responsibility. This tendency to individualize and decontextualize femicide fundamentally distorts public understanding, making it seem like a series of unrelated events rather than the consequence of inherent, systemic misogyny.

This narrative approach in the media reinforces harmful patterns: it fuels victim-blaming and allows patriarchal ideologies to remain unchallenged. When news outlets present femicide as a personal tragedy instead of a manifestation of gendered oppression, it undermines the urgency to recognize femicide as a societal problem. This, in turn, limits the public's capacity to see the issue as one that demands a collective response, and restricts the possibilities for both justice and societal behavioral change.

The present research report provides the reader with a general overview of the issue, a list of major parties involved and key timeline events. At the end the reader will find a paragraph describing previous attempts to solve this issue, this section is meant to inspire the reader to come up with solutions of their own.

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Definitions of key terms

Femicide

The intentional killing of a woman or girl because of her gender.

Victim Blaming

Framing victims as responsible for the violence they experience.

Perpetrator Justification

Depicting the perpetrator's actions as understandable or influenced by external factors, thus excusing the act.

Othering

Portraying victims as fundamentally different, often through race, class, or sexuality and dehumanizing them in the process.

Sensationalism

Media coverage emphasizing shocking or superficial details over context. Criticized for dehumanizing victims, as seen in the case of Ingrid Escamillaw: where gruesome images were widely circulated.

Ethical Reporting

Practices that humanize victims, contextualize femicide within socio-structural realities, and avoid reinforcing harmful narratives.

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General overview

The media exerts a profound influence over how society perceives **femicide**. Across various platforms (be it mainstream news, social media, literature, or the arts) certain alarming patterns persist. Coverage frequently leans toward narratives that **blame victims**, rationalize the actions of perpetrators, or portray femicide as an issue that happens to "others." For instance, in Latin America, there was a staggering 447% increase in media coverage of femicide between 2014 and 2017. Despite this surge in attention, the prevailing tone of these reports often cast women in a negative light and, disturbingly, provided excuses or justifications for those responsible for the violence. Furthermore these reports also often favored **sensationalism** over truthfulness, focusing on catching the reader's attention instead of providing them with the entire context.

This phenomenon is not unique to Latin America. In countries such as Kenya, both traditional media and social platforms have been complicit in reinforcing patriarchal attitudes. They often attribute femicide to the supposed choices, lifestyles, or behaviors of the victims themselves, rather than addressing the broader societal and structural factors at play. These narratives become even more complex and damaging when intersectional vulnerabilities, such as socioeconomic status, sexuality, or disability, are involved, further marginalizing certain groups and compounding the harm done to them.

Recent academic and activist literature strongly advocates for a shift in how femicide is represented. The consensus is that media outlets should move beyond their traditional roles as passive chroniclers of events and towards **ethical reporting**. They are called upon to act as agents of prevention, reframing femicide not as an unavoidable or isolated tragedy, but as a pressing public health and human rights crisis. This shift in framing has the potential to challenge rooted stereotypes and disrupt cycles of victim-blaming. In essence, the media holds significant power: not only to inform, but also to transform societal attitudes and contribute actively to the prevention of femicide.

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Major parties involved

News Media Organizations

Set the tone and framing of femicide cases.

Journalists & Editors

Can either perpetuate harmful tropes or lead change through ethical storytelling.

Media Regulators & Press Councils

Influence reporting norms and accountability.

Civil Society & Feminist Movements

Advocate for responsible representation and public awareness.

Victim Advocacy Groups

Push for victim-sensitive, dignified media practices.

Academics & Media Researchers

Create frameworks and provide training for ethical femicide reporting.

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Timeline of Key Events

2014–2017 Media coverage of femicide in Latin America surged by 447%, yet remained dominated by problematic framing.

2020 The graphic media coverage in the case of Ingrid Escamilla in Mexico sparks widespread condemnation and demands for reform.

2023 Research-based advocacy grows for media's role in prevention, rather than sensational reporting.

Recent Years Kenyan and Latin American studies deepen understanding of how intersectionality and media bias enable impunity.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

1. Publishing guidelines for gender-sensitive reporting emphasizing context and humanization.
2. Media-watch organizations and experts advocating against exploitation of victims' images, as in the aftermath of Ingrid Escamilla's case.

Why These Fell Short:

1. Lack of widespread adoption and enforcement in media practices.
2. Ethical frameworks overshadowed by pressure for traffic, sensational headlines, or "newsworthy" visuals.
3. Intersectional biases remain deeply embedded; media prioritizes "worthy" victims, often based on race or social status.

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Possible solutions

1. Adopt gender-sensitive reporting standards: Emphasize structural gendered context and avoid victim blaming.
2. Prioritize humanizing narratives: Highlight survivors' identities beyond their victimhood and avoid graphic sensationalism.
3. Train journalists on intersectionality: Sensitize coverage to the experiences of marginalized women.
4. Promote prevention-focused coverage: Present femicide as societal failure, not random tragedy.
5. Regulatory frameworks: Hold media accountable for violations of dignity and ethical standards.
6. Amplify survivor-led journalism: Center voices of those with lived experience to shape messages and norms.

Further reading

Align Platform. *“Femicide and Media: Do Reporting Practices Normalize Gender-Based Violence?”*

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reports on femicide representation.

Research from Latin America and Kenya on media framing and intersectionality.

Journalism ethics manuals advocating for social-justice oriented reporting.

LmunA 2025

Bibliography

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2. Ramírez, [First Name]. "Media Coverage of Femicide in Latin America: Blaming the Victim." *UOC IN3 Blog*.
3. Sitati, Ian Wesa. "Intersecting Narratives: Victim Blaming, Patriarchy, and the Escalation of Femicide in Kenya." *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, vol. 9, no. 11, Nov. 2024, doi:10.5281/zenodo.14292507. [IJISRT](#)
4. UN Human Rights Office. "Femicide and the Media." OHCHR, 2020.