

# Informative Treatment of Femicide in Chilean Digital Media in March 2016: An Approach to the Current Horizon from Gender Perspective

Tratamiento informativo del feminicidio en los medios de comunicación digitales chilenos en marzo de 2016: Una aproximación al horizonte actual desde la perspectiva de género

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## Resumen

La siguiente investigación busca determinar los principales errores los medios digitales chilenos a la hora de construir noticias sobre feminicidio, centrándose en el análisis de ocho asesinatos de mujeres ocurridos en marzo del 2016, mes en que se conmemora el Día de la Mujer. Para esto, se analizó el tratamiento informativo de cada medio con una perspectiva de género. Se buscó en manuales de género los errores más comunes en noticias sobre violencia contra la mujer, estos errores fueron transformados en categorías y luego, estas categorías fueron aplicadas a 35 noticias de cuatro importantes medios digitales chilenos: *BioBioChile.cl*, *LaTercera.com*, *SoyChile.cl* y *Lun.com*.

La investigación arrojó que los medios digitales continúan cometiendo los mismos errores que la prensa escrita, que su principal falencia es no contextualizar la información ni concientizar sobre el tema e incluso, se revela que hay una farandulización del asesinato misógino de mujeres.

## Palabras clave

Violencia contra la mujer, feminicidio, medios de comu-

## Abstract

This investigation will determinate the mistakes the Chilean digital media makes when they create news about femicide, focusing our attention on the 8 cases of femicide that happened in March 2016. The idea is to analyze the informative treatment of this subject, looking for common mistakes in digital media speech, with guidance from one of the main manuals on gender approach and journalism used in Spain and Latin America.

## Keywords:

Violence against women, femicide, digital mass media, gender perspective, journalism.

## 1. Introduction

Chile's rank fell from #66 to #73 in gender equality, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2015 of the World Economic Forum. Among various factors that caused this decrease, there is the low female labor force participation rate: only 46.4% of women of working age are economically active. And the majority of those who are not (37%), say that is due to being dedicated to taking care of the home (Brega, Durán and Sáez, 2015). On top of this is the gender gap, given that on average, women make 17.2% less income than men. This gap repeats in the population with the highest education level (13 years or more of education), given that the men of this group make 25.6% more than the women (CEPAL, 2016). This means that not even an investment in education or training brings women closer, in a linear fashion, to the income level of men.

These differences are repeated with the roles inside the home: a study performed by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, carried out in Greater Santiago, revealed that 77.8% of women spend 3.9 hours daily doing housework on workdays. In the case of men, only 40.7% spend 2.9 hours doing housework and another 9.2% admitted doing it for only 1.6 hours from Monday to Friday (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, 2009).

Another study by Images Chile carried out in 2011 and published in the newspaper *La Tercera*, interviewed 1,600 men and women between ages 18 and 59, revealed that 54% of men believe that women's main role is to take care of the home. Incredibly, 50% of women think the same.

These are some of the expressions of gender inequality in Chile, its most dramatic form comes by way of violence against women: in 2014, 40 women were murdered by their partners or spouses and in 2015, this number increased to 45. This year, the situation lacks improvement: as of May 15, 2016, 18 had already been murdered and 8 of these cases occurred in March alone, the month in which Women's Day is celebrated.

Violence against women is considered a serious human rights offense that seriously affects our country<sup>1</sup>. Despite communication media reporting the cases of violence as something isolated and even, like something "unbelievable", one out of every three Chilean women has suffered violence on behalf of a relative, partner, or ex-partner. And out of this number, 74% received it on

behalf of their partner or ex-partner. Moreover, some 64% do not report it, often due to fear of the assailant (Adimark, 2013).

Contrary to an attack, robbery or kidnapping, these women are violated in different spheres of their life just for being women. Their assailants do not seek to hurt them, but rather subject them to their rules and show them what will happen if they do not follow their orders within the relationship. For this reason there is a widespread call to report situations of violence and a majority of this effort falls on communication media, which "have been indicated as an institution with a key responsibility in the eradication of violence against women and (...) in the upholding of their human rights. As a source of education for society, alongside the family and the school, the media has a fundamental responsibility in the search for solutions" (Vega, 2014: 13).

But an investigation carried out in more than 100 countries revealed in 2010 that 46% of the news, both in print media and TV, promote gender stereotypes and only 6% promote gender equality (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2010). The Chilean press is no exception: the front page of *La Cuarta* that declared that a man "made a kebob with his girlfriend" or the headline of *La Tercera* that said that Juliana Acevedo had died "from the jealousy" of her partner, are only a few of the most controversial cases.

The dossier "Women, Violence and Communication Media" disseminated in Spain summarizes some of the main errors of the press when reporting on gender violence. It must be noted that when speaking of "errors" in this line of work, it is based on two definitions from the Real Academia Española: "mistaken concept or false judgment" and "something done wrongly" (Real Academia Española, 2016a). Under no circumstances does it refer to a casual mistake. The discoveries of this dossier were: lack of strong female images, the little to no reflection, the loss of subtleties due to excessive summarizing, using clichés, morbidity and sensationalism in headlines and throughout the article, justify the attacker and lack of appropriate sources are a few examples (Instituto Oficial de Radio y Televisión, 2002).

It is for this reason that this work analyzes from the gender perspective the informative treatment of femicide in Chile's main digital communication media, specifically in regards to eight cases of femicide that

occurred in March 2016, the month in which Women's Day is celebrated.

Although there are numerous investigations on this subject in Spain, Latin America and Chile (in Chile there is the thesis of Claudia Lagos and Juan Manuel Cabrera), there are no studies centered on digital media, despite a recent study from the Reuters Agency showing that half the people surveyed (52%) got their news from social networks (Mis, 2016).

## 2. Referential Framework

Before analyzing, it is necessary to define concepts like "violence against women" and "femicide" (or feminicide), as well as the role that communication media play in the eradication of violence against women.

### 2.1 What Is Violence Against Women?

Gender violence is a relatively new concept both in Chile as well as in the rest of the world. Until the 90's people only spoke of "mistreatment" inside the home. Not until 1993, in the World Conference on Human Rights, did they draft the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This declaration defined the expression "violence against women" as referring to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm to women, including threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. This can encompass physical, sexual, or psychological violence occurring in the family, in the community or all that violence against women perpetrated or tolerated by the state (Human Rights Commission, 1993).

Later, in 1994, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women declared that violence against women is "any act or conduct, based on gender, that causes death, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or private sphere" (The National Commission on Human Rights, 2013). It also specifies that it "constitutes a violation of human rights" and that it "is an offense against human dignity and a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between women and men". It should

be noted that this phenomenon is present in all sectors of society, regardless of age, race, class, culture, income, education, or religion (National Commission on Human Rights, 2013). This form of violence is used when men "feel threatened or challenged (...) typically they feel they have the right to use any force necessary to maintain their power" (Russell en Solyszko, 2013).

### 2.2 Violence Against Women As A Structural Problem

It is a type of structural violence given that it occurs within a patriarchal society. As Marcela Lagarde explains, it is "a solid construction of social relations, practices and institutions (including the State) that generate, preserve and reproduce powers (access, privileges, hierarchies, monopolies, control) of men over women and, at the same time, violates social, sexual, economic, political, legal and cultural powers of women" (Lagarde, 2005: 151- 164).

Women and their bodies become objects of attack that do not seek to harm, but rather subdue. As indicated by Foucault, the social construction of the body as an object and target of numerous attacks, for a body that is manipulated, obeys and educates. In other words, it responds to the power discourses (Foucault en Sossa, 2011).

The symbolic dimension of domination relationships are found inscribed on the body as habitus, the great stability of a social order to have achieved immediate submission, almost natural, of the dominated. The symbolic violence, more than physical violence or any other form of mechanic coercion, constitutes the main mechanism of social reproduction, the most powerful means of maintaining order. Bourdieu observed that the nucleus of symbolic violence is found in the 'double naturalization' that is the result of the 'inscription of the social on things and on the body, (Bourdieu en Germaná, 1999: 181).

## 2.3 What is femicide?

Contrary to the perception that communication media gives, femicide is not the murder of a woman. The term “femicide” was coined by Diana Russel in 1992 and sought to describe misogynous murders perpetrated against women, distancing them from the neutrality of the word “homicide”.

Marcela Lagarde of Mexico later translated the word to Spanish as “*feminicidio*”. It is characterized for pointing to chauvinism and misogyny as being guilty of the death of women. To use it “implies referring to a social phenomenon whose cause is not isolated from the social structure and therefore is a theoretical term and with a political sense” (Solyszko, 2013).

Calling femicide misogynous murder eliminates the ambiguity of the asexualized terms of homicide and murder (...) it is the extreme of a continuum of anti-feminine terror that includes a great amount of forms of verbal and physical abuse... as long as these forms of terrorism result in death, they are femicide (Russell en Solyszko, 2013).

Furthermore, Russell clarifies that this type of violence is a way of maintaining the patriarchy and even is a form of controlling those women who “get out of line” from their traditional roles. The main objective of this term is “break down the definitions of crimes against women and murders of women due to domestic violence, intrafamily violence or crimes of passion. These terms hide the sex of the victim and victimizer and also hide the intentional use of the violence on behalf of the man” (Monárrez, 2006).

Monárrez talks about three types of femicide: intimate femicide, where the assailant is intimately known by the victim; of femicide due to stigmatized occupations, such as the case of dancers and prostitutes; and systemic femicide, where there is a continuum of violence, such as the cases where women are found mutilated, raped and abandoned in remote locations. Despite these specifications of the concept, in Chile, the law limits this crime to certain cases.

Recently in 2010 was the term femicide introduced into the Chilean penal code, via the creation of Law 20,480. It states “if the victim of the crime is or has been the spouse or partner of the perpetrator, the crime will be called a femicide, having the same punishment as that of patricide, that ranges from 15 years and one day to

life in prison” (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer). In other words, the crime is linked to the Law on Intrafamily Violence and requires a certain degree of intimacy, such as having lived under the same roof, having children in common or having been legally married. It does not include other hate crimes against women.

## 2.4 Communication Media and the Eradication of Violence

Communication media have been indicated as responsible for helping eradicate violence against women. However, the social construction that journalists and editors have on the body, sexuality and power may not be compatible with this new perspective of gender when elaborating news related to violence. This was manifested in the World Women’s Conference in Beijing, where it was determined that communication media, advertising companies and their professionals should examine “the consequences of the dissemination of sexist stereotypes in content, including those (...) that promote gender violence and discrimination, and take measures to eliminate these negative images” (Vega, 2014).

For this reason it has been recommended to encourage the participation of women in these media, as both owners and content writers. And finally, they should become aware of their important role in “informing and educating the public about the causes and effects of violence against women and to encourage public debate about the topic” (Vega, 2014).

Despite all these conventions, decalogues, and treaties, communication media continue to portray women in stereotyped roles. As Aimeé Vega writes in one of her articles, “communication media, far from encouraging the human rights of women to a life without violence, promote their discrimination (...) and profit from the opportunity to broadcast gender violence” (Vega, 2014). In summary, this author indicates that generally women are given traditional roles or are represented as sex objects or consumer groups. Women are rarely portrayed as social agents in areas like education, science, economy, culture and politics.

In Chilean communication media, the concept of femicide bursts on to the news scene in 2007, as shown in the investigation by Claudia Lagos. The first to adopt the

concept is *La Cuarta*, March 21st of that year (“Man guilty of femicide freaks out and he turns himself in”). *El Mercurio*, *La Nación* and *La Tercera* would use the word in May of that same year, when the sentence for the Neira case was issued<sup>2</sup>. That is, as Lagos describes, this term appears as “a resource that is barely descriptive –femicide, therefore homicide of a woman- and not in its political dimension with connotations of gender inequalities” (Lagos, 2008).

Errors in the reporting of news on violence against women in the Chilean press are frequent, according to this researcher. Differentiation of the victims according to their social strata and education level, sensationalist narration, misspelling the names of the people involved, missing information, justifying the perpetrator with psychiatric conditions, portraying the femicide as a drama or unavoidable tragedy, portraying the femicide as a “fit of rage” or as an effect of “passion”, attributing it to alcohol or drugs, the dissemination of stereotypes and lack of specialized sources were some of the problems identified (Lagos, 2008).

Ford and Longo indicate that when a journalist case is told with a narrative discourse, it takes on the very attributes of the story or crime novel: a main character; beginning, climax and denouement; an increase, fall or change of luck and an identifiable narrative voice (1999). But can these poorly developed news stories affect the reality of the women in a country? In March 2016, in Chile, eight women died at the hands of their husbands or partners and many of the crimes occurred during the same week. In fact, two of these cases of femicide happened on the same day: March 8th, Nelly Leighton was killed in Tijeral and Amelia García in Paredones.

The explication for this phenomena can be found in the doctoral thesis of Isabel Marzabal, who analyzed the “imitation effect” in 30 cases of femicide committed in Barcelona between 2004 and 2009, concluding that the probability that a new femicide will be committed increases when news of murders of women appears in communication media. “It has to do with what is known as the imitation effect: the power of communication media to provoke an epidemic of similar conduct” (Red Chilena contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres, 2016).

You can also appeal to the social construction of the violated woman in the news. There are two key stereotypes when reviewing a news story related to femicide.

There is the good woman and the bad one or instigator, as Gallagher indicates:

The virginal woman (virgin) of communication media is associated to the masculine subordination (the lack of freedom, to puritanism [or the man’s sexual control] and sacrifice. In comparison the man represents independence, strength and tenacity. The woman vampire is cruel, inhumane, insensitive and unscrupulous. She is a powerful sexual object that can be subordinated to the good qualities of the man (Gallagher en Contreras, 2008: 35).

This would prove that a poorly-developed news story on violence against women and with vivid details of the aggression or murder without mentioning the sentences or punishments of the assailants, would have an affect on other aggressors. In other words, communication media have a practically direct influence on the eradication or the increase of this problem.

## 2.5 Possible Solutions for Provision of Information with Gender Perspective

Communication media must take a more active role, not in the victimization of the population or in instilling a constant fear, but in collaborating with state agencies in order to work on the prevention of gender violence, instead of covering cases of femicide when they have already occurred. This is indicated by the Brazilian researcher Rita Laura Segato “there is an essential condition: media dissemination of rights. The visibility of rights builds, persuasively, jurisdiction. Rights are rhetorical by nature, but the rhetoric depends on the channels of dissemination. It needs advertising. It’s necessary for the propaganda and the communication media in general work in favor of the avoidance, and not against it” (Segato, 2003).

When we refer to press media and the use of language within a context of gender violence, it should reject certain expressions and stereotypes taken from the crime novel, like for example, using the headline: he killed her for love, phrases that ultimately reestablish the traditional and sexist notion of a culture composed of women and men that deserve equal informative treatment.



In Spain the press kit, “Women, Violence, and Communication Media”, where 16 headlines are indicated that can help avoid falling into biases when disseminating information related to domestic violence. Among these headlines there is one that says the communicator must avoid the narcotic effect. He or she must keep in mind that this is not a conventional news story, and therefore should not be developed with the same template, but carefully and, after a rigorous investigation, clearly identifying the aggressor and avoiding the criminalization of the victim. It also indicates that it is important not to fall into morbidity, draw attention to testimonials of those close to the assailant or victim, note if there were previous reports or judicial processes, use clichés and be careful with the adjectives used (Instituto Oficial de Radio y Televisión Española, 2002). “Words rarely turn out to be innocent and bits of information or commentaries which appear inoffensive can critically distort information. This type of news requires being as careful as possible with the drafting of the news story, even despite a supposed loss of originality or sparkle”, (Instituto Oficial de Radio y Televisión Española, 2002).

It is important to study how digital communication media develop news on violence against women resulting in death because together with school and society, they are makers of opinions and our notion of the world. This is explained well by the Theory of Social Mediation, which studies the production, transmission and usage of the culture; something absolutely necessary if you consider that culture can be used as domination procedure.

“The participation of the mass communication media in the development of a representation of what happens in the world starts when the media institution or other social agents select certain happenings in order to make them public” (Martín Serrano, 1993). Such is the case when the media choose to inform or not a case of violence against women.

The Theory of Mediation also explains that in mass communication media there are two types of mediation, “cognitive mediation” which “is focused on achieving that which changes to have a place in the audience’s world view, although in order to provide this place, it is necessary to transform that world view” (Serrano, 1993). In this case, it has to do with the transformation of a historically chauvinist society. We also consider that there is an absence of investigations in the area of Social Communication that possess a methodology

that includes the gender perspective. This is, as indicated by the Costa Rican attorney Alda Facio: express a theory of how to proceed to use the same methods that traditional analysts use to arrive at conclusions and solutions that are non-sexist or androcentric (Facio, 1999: 99-136).

This, of course, part of a theoretical framework that allows for theoreticizing as to how to proceed with a news text uploaded to the web, to analyze it using a non-sexist method. Included in the steps mentioned are: be aware of the subordination of the feminine sex, identify the different ways in which sexism is manifested in the journalistic text, identify which is the woman who is identified in the news, identify what is the view of the woman who serves as support to the text and expand the awareness of what sexism is and how it can be present in the text to a higher or lower degree (Facio, 1999: 99-136). This study is also framed within the Theory of Agenda-Setting, given that “there is a high correlation between the topics to which media deem important and those that interest their audiences” (López-Escobar, Llamas & McCombs, 1996: 9). Based on this, we will analyze how much coverage each femicide was given and we will reflect on why more space on the agenda was given to some victims and not others.

The Theory of Framing also gives us important conceptual and methodological tools for analysis, given that this focuses on “the cognitive effects of the communication media, in the knowledge that the news provides based on above all the redundancy, repetition, and often the emphasis on determined aspects of the communicative messages” (Carbadillo, 2010). This particular theory goes beyond what is proposed by the Theory of Agenda Setting, “focusing on how topics are addressed that are an object of attention on behalf of the communication media. Above all, it is about analyzing the perspectives or points of view from those that address these problems or topics and as a result, what interpretation or image they offer of them” (Carbadillo, 2010).

## Methodology

The month of March 2016 was chosen to be analyzed given that there were 8 women killed at the hands of their spouses or partners in the same month in which Women's Day is celebrated. Moreover, several of the cases occurred within a few days of each other. Then, the area of analysis was reduced to four communication media. The newspaper La Cuarta was not included in this study given that it has been widely studied in its printed form (such as in the research of Claudia Lagos) and because it doesn't have the same reach on the web. The media to be analyzed are:

**BioBioChile.cl:** 6th most visited website according to Alexa ranking (June 2016), second most read digital media of Chile.

**Lun.com:** 7th most visited websites according to Alexa ranking (June 2016), third most read digital media of Chile.

**LaTercera.com:** 41st most visited website according to Alexa ranking (June 2016), fourth most read digital media of Chile.

**SoyChile.cl:** 96th most visited websites according to the Alexa ranking (June 2016), sixth most read digital media of Chile. One of the most reported for making errors by Chile's media observatory agency.

After completing a search of each medium and via Google Search, the body of analysis was reduced to 35 news stories. After analyzing manuals like the press kit, "Women, Violence and Communication Media" of the Spanish government, a table was created of the most common errors made by communication media, dividing them into seven categories. We took two definitions from the Real Academia Española to specify what we would call "an error" in this work: "mistaken concept or false judgment" and "something done wrongly" (Real Academia Española, 2016). It must be noted that when a journalist reports on violence against women incorrectly or mistakenly, he or she does it with a personal social bias and from a society that is patriarchal. Therefore, it is an individual error as well as a social and structural error.

### The seven categories to analyze are:

**Coverage:** To Publish / Not to Publish. The non-visualization of the subject is as bad as bombarding the public with news about violence against women. If the media do not accept official cases in order to include them in their agenda, the topics will not be included in the Chilean population's agenda either.

**A.- Use of erroneous concepts.** Such as "crime of passion", "matrimonial fight or dispute", "basic instincts", "crimes of love or honor" and "due to jealousy". All of these phrases tend to justify or mitigate the crime.

**B.- Lack of sympathy towards the victim.** Not publishing sensitive information correctly, affecting the victim and her family. Presenting them as responsible for their own abuse. Call more attention to her physical aspects or her role as a mother/wife.

**C.- Justification of the aggressor.** Not delving into attenuating circumstances such as a clean rap sheet or his work in the community. Do not justify it with pathologies ("he was insanely jealous?") or addictions (alcoholism, drug addiction).

**D.- Morbid and Sensationalism.** Phrases that emphasize the details of the act of violence, forgetting how reprehensible the situation is and the privacy of the victim. Shocking, frivolous, or discriminatory headlines. Trivialization of the news story. Use of unnecessary adjectives. Overusing pictures of the victim. The morbid has been defined as an "attraction to unpleasant occurrences" or "unhealthy interest in people or things" (Real Academia Española, 2016b). Sensationalism has been defined as the "tendency to produce sensation, emotion or impact using news, happenings, etc." by the same dictionary (Real Academia Española, 2016c).

**E.- Lack of Contextualization of the News.** The news story should contain a series of useful tips to help victims and show how intolerable the aggression is. The femicide should not be shown as an isolated event, or as a tragedy or drama that was impossible to prevent. The news story should offer tools to victims (help hotlines, foundations or guidelines to following in the event of experiencing violence). It should mention if there were reports or previous preventive measures and remind the public of the punishments for femicide, in order to dissuade aggressors of committing future aggress-

sions. It should also feature specialists that explain the phenomena from the psychological, sociological, anthropological angles as well as from other fields of social and humanistic sciences.

**F.- Discrimination Due to Ethnicity, Religion, Social Condition, Sexuality or Nationality.** Emphasize details like their country of origin, profession, or social segment more so than the act of violence. Consider cases of violence against women in middle to high-class families as “strange”.

The cases of femicide of March 2016 to be analyzed in these 35 news stories are: Karen Wilson (age 31, killed March 3), Silvana Sepúlveda Durán (age 41, killed March 5), Magali Carriel Garrido (age 63, killed March 7), Nelly Leighton Salazar (age 45, killed March 8), Juliana Andrea Acevedo (age 21, killed March 9), Nancy Arenas Astudillos (age 60, killed March 10) and Yuri Álvarez Valderrama (age 28, killed March 25).

## 5. Analysis

Analysis of the informative treatment of cases of femicide that occurred in March 2016. The number and facts of the case were provided by SERNAM. After determining the eight official cases of femicide during this month, information and main facts delivered by the media was analyzed.

### Case 1: Karen Wilson

March 3, Antofagasta (Region of Antofagasta). Karen Wilson, 31, Biology teacher, mother of a 6 year-old daughter and a 4 year-old son, was strangled by her

husband, Ricardo Huerta, who transported the victim’s dead body to different parts of the city. No reports registered. It was the 5th case of femicide of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 1:** *BioBioChile* published only one news article on the case and *SoyChile*, four. *La Tercera* and *Las Últimas Noticias* did not cover the case, providing for a total of 5 news stories to analyze. Both media that picked up the case have ample regional coverage and tend to make the same mistakes when developing the news story. In the case of *BioBioChile* you can see problems of grammar and spelling, that imply careless work when analyzing the facts and, on the other hand, the excessive morbidity and the little sympathy towards the victim, of which we are told practically nothing. All the information that we are given by this medium is that “the attacker, a 37-year-old man, who was arrested after confessing to the crime, was the dead woman’s boyfriend” (*BioBioChile*, March 3, 2016).

The medium *SoyChile* makes ethical mistakes related to justifying the aggressor and giving little information about the victim. It says that Karen was filing divorce papers and that she was in a new relationship. According to this media “the one-sided effort to start divorce proceedings and her ex-husband’s jealousy of her new relationship were causes of the femicide that took the life of the biology teacher at Netland School in Antofagasta, Karen Wilson Villagrán, age 31”, [*SoyChile*, March 5, 2016, emphasis added]. On a third note, we know that she was a biology teacher, that SERNAM would file a lawsuit for femicide and her relatives would paint a mural in her honor in order to make the population aware of gender violence.

**Table 1**

MEDIUM	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	X	X	X	X	X	-
LA TERCERA	-	-	-	-	-	-
LUN	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOY CHILE	XXX	XX	XX	XX	XX	-
TOTAL	4	3	3	3	3	0



## Case 2: Silvana Sepúlveda Durán

March 5, Maipú (Metropolitan Region), Silvana Sepúlveda Durán (41) was mother of two sons and a daughter. She was murdered by her live-in boyfriend, Francisco Marchant Marchant, who later committed suicide. The perpetrator called her daughter, who lived in another city, and she was the one who alerted the neighbors who discovered the body. It was the 6th case of femicide of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 2:** Again, this femicide was only covered by *BioBioChile* (one news story) and *SoyChile* (two news stories), giving it a total coverage of three stories. Neither *LUN* nor *La Tercera* included it in their agenda. Emphasis is given to the morbidity of the crime, providing violent details of the event, revealing that Francisco Marchant hit Silvana with a baseball bat in front of one of her small children and that he told everything that had happened to a daughter that lived in another city. It is also worth noting that the name of the perpetrator is not released, despite having committed suicide after the fact. We know no other information about Silvana except for her role as a mother and the cruelty of the murder. "The terrible crime occurred in the presence of a child only 3 years old, who was son of the victim, and it was revealed that after the murder the aggressor

called her daughter before killing himself" (*SoyChile*, March 6, 2016).

## Case 3: Magali Carriel Garrido

March 7, Talcahuano (Region del Bío Bío). Magali Carriel Garrido's (63) throat was cut by her husband, Carlos Delgado Delgado. There were previous reports of domestic violence. Magali had been bed-ridden for almost a year after suffering a stroke. The man cut himself in the jaw before being arrested. This was the 7th femicide of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 3:** This news was covered by *BioBioChile* (with two news stories) and *SoyChile* (four news stories). Neither *La Tercera* nor *LUN* covered this case, providing for a total body of analysis of 6 articles. In this death, the morbidity related to the murder appears to a more important aspect than the femicide itself. *SoyChile* disseminates more than 4 pictures showing neighbors looking upset over the news. We do not know much about Magali, except that she had been bed-ridden for almost a year due to a stroke. Of the victim, *BioBioChile* only says that "the woman was identified as Magaly Carriel Garrido, age 63 (*BioBioChile*, March 7, 2016). *SoyChile* pointed a guilty finger at the woman for her own femicide:

**Table 2**

MEDIUM	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	X	X	X	X	X	-
LA TERCERA	-	-	-	-	-	-
LUN	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOY CHILE	-	X	-	X	X	-
TOTAL	1	2	1	2	2	0

**Table 3**

MEDIUM	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	-	XX	-	-	XX	-
LA TERCERA	-	-	-	-	-	-
LUN	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOY CHILE	-	XX	XX	XX	X	-
TOTAL	0	4	2	2	3	0

Although the woman’s husband did not confess to the crime, we know that the victim had filed reports on her husband twice for abuse. Nevertheless, these accusations did not reach court due to the fact that Magaly Carriel did not confirm the reports given that she defended her aggressor [SoyChile, March 9, 2016, emphasis added].

Both media that covered the news -*SoyChile* and *Bio-bioChile*-, took declarations issued by the authorities. However, they include no previous reporting. There is a likeness in articles suggesting that they were press releases.

### Case 4: Nelly Leighton

March 8, Tijerales (Region of la Araucanía). Nelly Leighton Salazar (45) was killed by her partner José Arriagada Baeza, who later committed suicide. Everything was done in the presence of their 9 year-old son. This was the 8th femicide of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 4:** The case was covered by *BioBioChile* (two articles) and *SoyChile* (one article), giving a total coverage of three articles. Neither *La Tercera* no *LUN* included this case in their agenda. In the media that covered it there are errors when describing the location (SoyChile said it occurred in Manzanares, then in Malleco, although it occurred in a place called Tijerales), which implies a lack of reporting.

This victim is described by BioBioChile as his girlfriend. No more information about her is given: “This Tuesday, Nelly Leighton Salazar, age 45, was killed this Tuesday in Renaico by her partner, José Arriagada Baeza, age 49, who later committed suicide” (BioBioChile, March 9, 2016).

*SoyChile* explicitly blamed the attack on jealousy and put much emphasis on the morbidity and tragedy of the scene:

An argument, apparently motivated by jealousy, brought about the crime that ended the life of Nelly del Carmen Leighton Salazar (46), who was attacked by her husband, José Rolando Arriagada, who inflicted an axe blow to her head. The tragedy occurred close to 6pm at the entrance to the property that the couple shared in the rural sector of the capital of the province of Malleco, and in the presence of two of the three children that the couple had. After attacking his wife with the axe, the aggressor fled the scene towards a place near to the home of the sector and later committed suicide by hanging himself [SoyChile, March 9, 2016, emphasis added].

The follow-up coverage done by both media informs that SERNAM as well as SENAME would become involved in the case due to the psychological shock experienced by the couple’s child. The news stories allude to a possible press release from both communication media. Although use of press releases are very useful when reporting, it is necessary to verify the information and go further in depth.

**Table 4**

MEDIUM	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	-	XX	-	XX	X	-
LA TERCERA	-	-	-	-	-	-
LUN	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOY CHILE	X	X	-	X	-	-
TOTAL	1	3	0	3	1	0

**Table 5**

MEDIUM	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	-	X	-	-	X	-
LA TERCERA	-	-	-	.	.	-
LUN	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOY CHILE	-	-	-	-	.	.
TOTAL	0	1	0	0	1	0

### Case number 5: Amelia García

March 8, Paredones (Region of O'Higgins). Amelia García 47, housewife and mother of one daughter, was murdered by her husband, Juan Humberto Cornejo González. This femicide occurred the same day that she filed a complaint in VIF. It was the 9th femicide of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 5:** What is interesting is the little to no coverage that this case received. Only *BioBioChile* covered it (only one article). Neither *SoyChile* nor *La Tercera* nor *LUN* included it in their agenda. In the case of the only news story published, it was written with little information, and showed errors like the lack of sympathy and poor contextualization.

We know little about the victim except for the fact that she had filed a complaint for violence the very day she was murdered. This detail, more than causing awareness among readers, becomes a warning for future women who want to file complaints:

Juan Humberto Cornejo González, age 49, was accused of murdering Amelia del Carmen García Correa, 47, mother of 5 children. According to the case facts, the woman, on the morning of March 8 had reported psychological abuse in the local police station. Afterwards, she went to visit some friends, and the suspect is said to have arrived there during the afternoon. There they argued, and then the man took a knife from the kitchen and killed his victim, [BioBioChile, March 12, 2016, emphasis added].

It is sensed that the rest of the media did not publish this case because: (a) news coverage in regions outside Santiago, like Paredones, is low, (b) the profile of a 47-year-old mother and housewife is not a very attention-

grabbing news story y (c) the case did not have many graphic or violent details like other cases of femicide, such as those of Juliana Acevedo and Magali Carriel.

### Case Number 6: Juliana Acevedo

March 9, Santiago (Metropolitan Region). Juliana Acevedo, 21-year-old worker, was killed and her body cut into pieces by her live-in boyfriend, Edwin Vásquez Ortiz. Her remains were found in the Mapocho River. It was recorded as femicide number 10 of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 6:** This femicide was one of the most covered this month, totaling 11 news stories in four communication media: two news from

*BioBioChile*, three from *LUN*, four from *La Tercera* and two from *SoyChile*.

One of the most common errors is the lack of contextualization of the news, given that techniques like including help hotlines, punishments of aggressors and explications from experts on violence against women were not included in the reporting by journalists. *Las Últimas Noticias* was not able to identify how the aggressor went breaking her contact with family and friends and isolating her, signs that were present in their journalistic narration, but were not identified because they did not consult with experts:

Luisa María says she does not know if Yuliana stopped contact with her group of friends because her relationship with Edwin took all her time or because he did not let her see other people often. 'She did not come back and speak to any of us in her group of friends. We didn't

go out together anymore, because she was always with him’, says Luisa María. ‘No one knew about the relationship that they had. Then I heard she was going to go with him to Chile. On top of that, we didn’t even say goodbye. I don’t know what happened to the friendship.

I don’t know if it was him who wouldn’t let her see me or what was going on. I never wanted to ask her’, she confesses [Las Últimas Noticias, March 11, 2016, emphasis added].

Johan Acosta, neighbor and friend of Yuliana, provided more details. ‘I knew them both. Edwin was jealous when he was with his ex-girlfriend, one with which he has a 7 or 8 year-old son. He was very impulsive at that time, he couldn’t control his temper’, he says (ídem).

The second error category that was the most repeated was that of morbidity and sensationalism: the majority of the news sources gathered excessive details of the fight between Edwin and Juliana and the later cutting up of her body and discarding of it in the Mapocho River. La Tercera gave such a detailed description of her death that it seemed like an instruction manual on how to kill. The news article titled “From Jealousy to Horror” received so many complaints that it was later removed from its website:

During the argument, Vásquez began to strangle Juliana, harder and harder until she stopped moving. Then he hit her three times in the trachea. The dead body of the young girl stayed in the studio apartment while the suspect went out for a while. He came back that evening and carried the body to the bathtub where he dismembered it. He used tourniquets, like shoe strings and shirts, to stop the hemorrhaging from the extremities. For this same reason, he also splashed them with hot water and

salt. Around 11pm that night he hid the torso and the head in a suitcase. He took this luggage and stopped a cab that took him to the Cal y Canto Bridge. Then he threw it into the Mapocho River. He went back to the apartment, slept, and the next morning he put the extremities in grocery bags. He took another cab to the same bridge and repeated the action [La Tercera, March 2016, emphasis added].

The third most important category is the lack of sympathy for the victim: some media accused Juliana of “mutual violence” and others barely gathered information about her life, leaving her invisible in the story. La Tercera published another questionable article titled “The Story of the Beautiful Young Girl Who Was Dismembered by Her Boyfriend”, which again received complaints and was removed from its website:

Jealousy provoked heavy fights that were frequent. One of them is what caused rage in Edwin Vásquez, and resulted in him killing his girlfriend inside the apartment they shared. According to the details of the investigation, that Saturday afternoon the couple began an argument caused by jealousy that grew more and more intense.

The young lady hit him in his chest, to which Vásquez responded with a slap. Aguirre defended herself with a punch, after which the suspect took her by the neck, strangling her [La Tercera, March 2016, emphasis added].

BioBioChile also blamed the argument and provided further graphic details:

*Both became involved in an intense argument in the apartment they both shared on the street*

Huérfanos in downtown Santiago. This caused Vásquez to choke and strangle his girlfriend with a rope and

**Table 6**

MEDIUM	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	-	X X	X X	X X	X X	-
LA TERCERA	X	X	X	X X X	X X X	X X
LUN	X X	X X X	X X	X X X	X X X X	X
SOY CHILE	-	X X	X X	X X	X X	X
TOTAL	3	8	7	10	11	4

later take her to the bathroom inside the apartment where, with a butcher knife, he dismembered her to later discard her in the river [BioBioChile, March 9, 2016, emphasis added]

Meanwhile, her killer was noted for his knowledge of human anatomy and for being very formal and kind, to the point that he turned himself in to the police:

Vásquez, overcome with guilt, confessed the murder to his boss who encouraged him to turn himself in to police. Furthermore, he said he was an ex-member of rural police in Colombia and that his behavior was due to his experience related to this position and the fact that his relatives owned a funeral home in said country [BioBioChile, March 9, 2016, emphasis added].

Moreover, online communication media put excessive emphasis on the fact that Juliana was a foreign woman, from a numerous and poor family in Colombia, violence against women being a society-wide problem in all countries, cultures and social classes. Another error detected were the constant changes to the name and job held by the victim in the different news stories (she was called by her Facebook username, "Yuliana") and the overexposure of the public to images of her that circulated the social networks, including post mortem pictures of the tattoos on her extremities. In fact, Las Últimas Noticias published a news story titled "Why Did Juliana Have the Name Juan David Tattooed on Her Wrist?" with the images of her removed extremities that the investigative police disseminated in order to identify her.

This case seems to have had more coverage than those of other murdered women, because (a) there were shocking details of the murder and dismemberment of Juliana, (b) Juliana was a young woman who was even qualified as "pretty" by journalists (c) it happened in

Santiago, and therefore was easier for the communication media –each one with an office in this city – to cover the story. This leads us to understand that there is a "show-business" aspect of femicide. In other words, expanded coverage is given like it were something of the entertainment world when it gets a lot of views; this translates into more revenue for websites, from which you can speak of a profiting from the violence against women.

## 5.7. Case Number 7: Nancy Arenas Astudillo

March 10, Rinconada de Los Andes. Nancy Arenas, 60, was murdered by her husband, Fernando Gómez Muñoz, who later committed suicide. This was femicide number 11 of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 7:** The case of Nancy Arenas was only covered by BioBioChile (one article). This medium published a news story that was too short, poorly contextualized and once again, barely gave information about the victim. All the information provided by this medium is summarized in one paragraph:

*The event occurred in Rinconada, where a man shot his wife in the face and later committed suicide. Gutiérrez said that they were both over 60 years old and lived alone on a piece of land they both managed (BioBioChile, March 10, 2016).*

You could say that the digital media did not take up her case, because: (a) her murder occurred in a small town, (b) Nancy was a rural woman, senior citizen, and housewife, (c) because there were no more graphic information about her death, and (d) because the case of Juliana Acevedo was taking all the journalists' attention.

**Table 7**

MEDIUM	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	-	X	-	-	X	-
LA TERCERA	-	-	-	-	-	-
LUN	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOY CHILE	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	0	1	0	0	1	0

### 5.8. Case number 8: Yuri Álvarez

March 25, Quillón. Yuri Álvarez (28), worked in sales and mother of one child, was murdered by her husband, Ángel Iturra. There was a report filed in 2014. This femicide was recorded as number 12 of 2016.

**Analysis of Case 8:** This case was picked up by two media that often cover news in regions outside of Santiago: *BioBioChile* (two articles) and *SoyChile* (three articles), making for a total coverage of five articles; neither *La Tercera* nor *LUN* featured it in their agenda.

Again, the error category that appeared most was the lack of contextualization of the news, given that the journalist are satisfied with reporting on femicides as an isolated event, without giving more information in order to educate the population or seeking to create awareness about the topic. After that comes the lack of sympathy for the victim –of whom no additional information is given about her age or if she were married - and the justification of the aggressor.

*The woman, after locking herself in her child’s bedroom (who at that time was at his grandparents’ house) was followed by the man, who used a hammer to break the lock and once inside the bedroom, proceeded to hit her many times, causing her death (SoyChile, March 29, 2016).*

The public defender, Antonio Guerra, argued that the man had at least two extenuating circumstances in his favor for having turned himself in to the Quillón police [SoyChile, March 29, 2016, emphasis added].

Only one article from *SoyChile* said that Yuri sold ice cream and had a child. Institutional sources were included, specifically the one from Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, but no statements from experts on gender violence were obtained.

### Total Coverage and Errors

These eight cases of femicide were covered in 35 news stories, in these four digital communication media. They showed errors such as lack of sympathy for the victim (68.5%), morbidity and sensationalism (60%) and especially, lack of context in the news (77.1%), as the following table shows.

There was also inequality in the individual coverage that each medium gave the cases of femicide. The Chilean digital media with most daily visits and that covered the problem the most were *BioBioChile* and *SoyChile*, as summarized in the following table.

**Table 8**

MEDIUM	COVERAGE	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
BBCL	PUBLICA 2	-	X	-	-	X	-
LA TERCERA	NO PUBLICA	-	-	-	-	-	-
LUN	NO PUBLICA	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOY CHILE	PUBLICA 3	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	5 NOTICIAS	0	1	0	0	1	0



**Tabla 9**

	COVERAGE	CATEGORY A	CATEGORY B	CATEGORY C	CATEGORY D	CATEGORY E	CATEGORY F
Nº NOTICIAS	35	10	24	13	21	27	4
%	100%	28,5%	58,5%	37,1%	60%	77,1%	11,4%

## Conclusions

The digital communication media of Chile are committing serious mistakes when it comes to reporting sexual violence against women, errors that are similar to those of its predecessors, the print media. Not even the technological advantages of these platforms or the ability to use multimedia or link to other pages have allowed the improvement in quality of information provided to readers regarding cases of femicide.

As indicated in Table 10, coverage of femicide was especially low in the highest selling newspaper in the country, *LUN* (8.5%) and the second most important newspaper in the country, *La Tercera* (11.4%), in which they only featured violent cases involving young women within the Metropolitan Region like that of Juliana Acevedo as well as another case of violence that was not recorded as a femicide by Sernam: the murder of Alison Calderón, age 17. *BioBioChile* and *SoyChile* maintained more constant coverage (34.2% and 45.7%, respectively), given their wider presence, resources and teams in regions. Nevertheless, the articles of *BioBioChile* were too short and poorly contextualized, based on radio dispatches or institution press releases, while some news stories of *SoyChile* had an excessive focus on the children of the victims and not on the woman murdered.

**Table 10**

MEDIUM	COVERAGE	%
BBCL	12	34,2%
LA TERCERA	3	8,5%
LUN	4	11,4%
SOY CHILE	16	45,7%
TOTAL	35	100%

As indicated in Table 9, communication media showed a marked lack of sympathy towards the victim (68.5% of the news analyzed). Very rarely were details about their lives given beyond that of their relation with the aggressor and whether or not they had children. In some of the new stories, their names were misspelled and in the case of Juliana Acevedo, her place of work was changed several times; only *LUN* emphasized that she had taken a course to be an accountant.

While many victims' images were overexposed to the public, rarely were the assailants' names given or photographs featured, even though a few had confessed to the crime. Some of the news stories justified their behavior (37.1%), especially in the case of Juliana Acevedo, where her murder and dismemberment was attributed to mutual violence, jealousy, love or the heat of the argument. In the case of Karen Wilson, much emphasis was put on that she had just asked him for a divorce and that she was in a new relationship.

Not many erroneous concepts were found in terms of ethics in journalistic texts (28.5%), except for a few articles on Juliana Acevedo, which talked about the "alleged aggressor" or "alleged parricide", despite the suspect having confessed. In other articles, there was the lack of attention to correcting spelling mistakes or grammar. In addition, there was excessive morbidity –attraction to unpleasant events – and sensationalism in the provision of information (60% of the news analyzed), especially in the case of Juliana Acevedo.

The most common error was the lack of contextualization (77.1% of the news analyzed). This indicates that journalists do not include interviewing experts or learning in detail about the lives of the victims in their routines. They also do not provide tools that are useful to other victims or mention the punishments of femicide. They limit themselves to reading police reports or interviewing the victim's friends and family. Therefore, there is no explanation as why violence against women

occurs or what the warning signs are. There is no attempt to spread awareness in the public or and much less, promote prevention.

Although this investigation into Chilean digital media is exploratory, the results indicate it is urgently necessary to educate journalists and future journalists to provide information with gender perspective, that offer solutions and raise awareness about the subject. The launching of manuals is not enough. For instance, in 2016, Chile's National Human Rights Institute presented the Human Rights Manual for Communicators. The hectic routines of journalists, the lack of support –monetary or permission– for their specialization, constant personnel turnover and the shift system does not allow for information to flow to the pressrooms or much less in regional media. For example, this manual was only launched in one university of Santiago-. For this reason we believe it is necessary to go directly to the media and generate opportunities for dialogue and constant training, supported by media directors and editors. Reporters. This is the only way to generate information and the public will stop seeing these cases of violence against women as isolated events, or belonging only to certain social classes, and begin to perceive them as something widespread in our society, but that duly reported and made known, can be prevented and stopped.

## Notas

1. Newspaper La Tercera (December 13, 2011). Half of Chileans believe that the role of the woman is to take care of the home. Taken from: <http://diario.latercera.com/2011/12/13/01/contenido/tendencias/16-93790-9-la-mitad-de-los-chilenos-cree-que-rol-de-la-mujer-es-cuidar-el-hogar.shtml>

2. December 19th, Alfredo Cabrera Opazo hit his ex-wife, Claudia Neira Oportus until almost killing her. Their daughter, age 6, Javiera, tried to defend her. For this, Alfredo took the girl up in an elevator to the 7th floor and threw her off the balcony, killing her instantly.

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