

# News values as evaluation. Main naming practices in Violence Against Women news stories in contemporary Spanish newspapers: *El País vs. El Mundo* (2005-2010)

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**Abstract** – Violence Against Women (VAW) is a very sensitive, and highly ideological, topic in the Spanish society, as well as in Western societies generally. In Spain, media accounts of VAW are very closely related to two quality newspapers, *El País* and *El Mundo*, providing a variety of naming practices for VAW, with differing ideological and evaluative implications. In this paper, I compare and contrast these two dailies in their use of the three main naming practices —*violencia de género* ‘gender-based violence’, *violencia doméstica* ‘domestic violence’ and *violencia machista* ‘male violence’— used in VAW news. To do so I resort to the news values approach proposed by Bednarek and Caple (2012, 2014, 2017), which involves paying attention to the combined insights from both Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (cf. Baker *et al.* 2008, Partington *et al.* 2013).

**Keywords** – Violence Against Women; naming practices; news values; evaluation; *El País*; *El Mundo*

## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that today Violence Against Women (VAW) is a serious issue within the Spanish society. According to official statistics,<sup>2</sup> 73 women were killed in 2010 and 43 in 2020 at the hands of their (male) partners or ex-partners. In spite of the many efforts carried out by public institutions and society as a whole, the number of casualties has not decreased significantly. Today’s Spanish society is characterized, among other things, by

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://observatorioviolencia.org/documentos/20206/>



a growing awareness of gender and sexual issues, and this includes a perception of VAW as a serious social malady, as well as a crime. Over the last few decades, an increasing number of people have broadened their conception of what VAW is, to include not only deaths but also a range of acts or behaviors that involve sexual, physical, economic or psychological abuse. In this heightened awareness of VAW, mass media have been instrumental.

There is, indeed, a widespread belief that killing or abusing women is a very serious social and political issue that must be fought against. The situation has changed a lot in recent times —whereas 20 or 30 years ago media coverage was anecdotal and highly uncritical, today VAW is part and parcel of the social and political agenda, thus helping to increase the social conscience around the issue. There are numerous books, university courses and public lectures on the topic, and there is a combined effort by public administrations and institutions, associations and families to combat VAW. There have also been specialized courts for VAW since 2005, but their activities have been hindered by criticisms from conservative judges' associations and by a chronic lack of public expenditure on social matters.

Scholarly research at the turn of this century (Bengoechea 2000; Lledó 2002; Fernández Díaz 2003; Jorge Alonso 2004; Zurbano Berenguer 2012; Menéndez Menéndez 2014; Carratalá 2016) still shows that Spanish media discourses tend to naturalize male aggression not as violence but as part of the (private) sexual arrangement between the sexes, thus reproducing the existing asymmetrical relations between the two sexes. In spite of the increasing 'routinization' (Fagoaga 1994) of VAW news stories in the Spanish press that has been observable since the late 1990s, with more serious analyses than in previous decades, male aggressors are still mostly absent from the texts and their violent acts projected as episodic incidents unrelated to power differentials or sexual politics, leaving women as the only protagonists of most violent episodes (see Santaemilia and Maruenda 2014). Therefore, no policies or regulations had dealt with this issue until the last decade, when we witnessed a battery of legal measures, accompanied by public and private attitudes, which seemed to indicate that all gender or sexual identities were finally accepted or respected. It is worth mentioning here the 2004 *Gender-Based Violence Act* (Ministerio de Igualdad 2004), the 2005 Act legalising gay marriage (Ministerio de Igualdad 2005) and the 2007 Act establishing effective equality between men and women (Ministerio de Igualdad 2007). The fact is that the return to

power of the conservative *Popular Party* (PP) in 2011, coupled with the economic and institutional crisis, led practically to stagnation in all gender-related legislation. Today, with a new progressive coalition government, new gender-related measures are expected, with drafts on gender equality and equal payment in the workplace, on sexual freedom or on transgender rights on the way.

At a theoretical or formal level, the Spanish institutions are officially committed to fighting VAW in all its forms. The issue is also part of the media agenda —dailies, TV and radio stations, all feature VAW news on a regular basis, either for recounting gender-based deaths and aggressions or for encouraging public campaigns for the eradication of this social malady. It is mostly deaths that attract public media attention, though they are only the tip of the iceberg of gender-related violence taking place today, while an important number of violent behaviors against women never even get reported.

Article 3(a) of the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (2011: 3) defines WAV as:

a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Although most sensible citizens would surely agree with this definition, not proper attention is probably given to the frequency (and variability) of violent behaviors towards women. What is undeniable, however, is that VAW is particularly newsworthy in contemporary Spanish media and, as it turns out to be the case with sensitive social issues, one of the key elements in the public media representation of VAW is the variety of naming practices associated with it. How the law and —even more importantly— the mass media conceptualize and construct a specific social issue is essential to understanding how this issue ends up being categorized, understood, talked about, and narrated by average people. The naming practices employed by the media are powerful mechanisms serving a variety of public and private (political) agendas —and most importantly, shaping public opinion. The range of media available to a society are instrumental in bringing a specific social issue to the consciousness of the public and, simultaneously, in providing (ideologically) acceptable social representations of the said issue.

Contemporary Spanish media discourse seems to have consecrated a few recurrent, preferred, seemingly interchangeable terms such as *violencia de género* ‘gender-based violence’, *violencia doméstica* ‘domestic violence’, *violencia machista* ‘male violence’, and others (see Section 2 for a detailed list), which are meant to cover the range of individual and social experiences evoked by the daily reality of VAW. Choosing one term over another may be relevant, as it is likely to impose a category of thought, convey more or less negative values, attribute blame or praise, or shape a certain evaluative stance. It is equally relevant which of these terms (and in which circumstances) are omitted and, therefore, which associations tend to be avoided.

In this paper I compare and contrast two of the most important Spanish dailies, *El País* and *El Mundo*, in their use of the three main naming practices (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*) used in VAW news. Differences in frequencies will be explored as well as the main collocations and concordances surrounding these terms. Apart from looking at the distinctive lexis of each newspaper, the diversity of associations and ideological implications will also be analyzed. Are there any idiosyncrasies in the representational practices in either *El País* or *El Mundo*? Are there marked preferences for any of these terms? Which newspaper tends to be harsher in terms of social critique? What are the evaluative implications of the different terms? These are some of the questions I wish to address in this paper. The corpus for this study is a subset of our *GENTEXT-N Corpus* (cf. Santaemilia and Maruenda 2013) which comprises around five million words on VAW featuring all the newspaper articles from the Spanish quality dailies *El País* and *El Mundo* for the period 2005–2010. The data were extracted through the *Lexis Nexis* database<sup>3</sup> and analyzed using *AntConc* (Anthony 2019).

Although I am not assuming the presence of completely opposing discourses in both dailies, my initial hypothesis is that *El País* —a newspaper which belongs to a social-democratic tradition, historically close to the Spanish Socialist Party— will offer more explicit social criticism and consequently show a harsher condemnation of VAW and point at male responsibility. By contrast, *El Mundo*, more conservative in social and political issues, will be more anecdotal in its depiction of VAW and is likely to use a neutral lexis when attributing blame. For a more consistent analysis, I resort to the news

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-us/professional/nexis/nexis.page>

values approach proposed by Bednarek and Caple (2012, 2014, 2017), which involves paying attention to the combined insights from both Corpus Linguistics (Baker *et al.* 2008) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough and Wodak 1997) —that is, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches with an overriding critical position, popularized by Partington (2004) through the coining of the term ‘Computer-Assisted Discourse Analysis’ (CADS).

## 2. VAW IN THE SPANISH PRESS, A RECENT PHENOMENON: *EL PAÍS* AND *EL MUNDO*

In Spain, newspaper accounts of VAW are very recent phenomena, closely related to two quality newspapers based in Madrid: *El País* and *El Mundo*. *El País* is the highest-circulation Spanish daily newspaper, serious and progressive. It was first published in 1976, and from the beginning, it has featured a number of news articles on VAW (around 50 texts in 1976 and 1977, according to Fagoaga 1999). *El Mundo* appeared a few years later, in 1989, and seems more conservative and sensationalist; it was, however, the first Spanish newspaper to explicitly offer a wider coverage of VAW in 1997. Both newspapers are probably the two most well-respected dailies in Spain today, thus constituting important references not only for the population at large but also for politicians or legislators.

Today we can observe increased, sustained media coverage of VAW. This coverage, however, has significantly changed over the last four decades. Fagoaga (1994, 1999), Alberdi and Matas (2002) and Jorge Alonso (2004) have identified three different phases. The first goes from the 1970s to the mid-1980s, when a modest number of news reports on the issue (e.g., 229 texts for the years 1982 and 1983) were published (see Fagoaga 1999). These were short, irrelevant texts that were found in the crime sections of the newspapers. VAW was not identified as such, nor was it even characterized as a social problem at all. Rape or even murder were placed along other news items such as armed robbery, corruption scandals or non-sexual murder, narrated from a predominantly judicial or police perspective. No contextual information —that is, causes and consequences, perpetrator(s) and victim(s)— was offered. Some 30 years ago, in the Spanish press, media discourses on VAW tended to naturalize male aggression not as violence but as part of the (private) sexual arrangement between the sexes. Gender violence episodes, therefore, were treated as individual instances of violence inflicted by individual men on individual women in an intimate relationship, mostly due to jealousy

and a range of mental pathologies, thus constructing VAW “as stories about the vulnerability of men rather than men’s abuse of women” (Boyle 2005: 78). Victims were practically disregarded and no authorial or editorial reflection was offered.

From the mid-1980s to the end of the century, a second phase was identified. As a consequence of the work of feminist groups and of raising social awareness, VAW turned from a “secret, private object” into an “object of public communication” (Fagoaga 1994: 88), and by the end of this period gender-based violence news stories had definitely found their way onto the hard news agenda of the two major Spanish daily newspapers. From the mid-1990s onwards, in particular, there has been a substantial increase in the quantity of news items published according to Fagoaga (1999: 69–71): *El País* published 754 texts in the years 1997 and 1998. These texts constitute more serious narratives, with growing contextual information (actors involved, circumstances, locations, and so on) and the consolidation of a specific vocabulary to deal with this issue: *malos tratos* ‘maltreatment’ or *violencia doméstica* ‘domestic violence’. For Fagoaga (1994) VAW, though under another name, has become thematized or ‘routinized’. Besides, the news items swapped the crimes section for the current news section. Largely responsible for this new social awareness was the shocking murder of Ana Orantes, a woman from Granada, in December 1997. She was set on fire by her ex-husband only a few hours after appearing on a TV talk show to describe the domestic abuse she had suffered while she was married. This case drew extraordinary public attention and was to bring about public campaigns against gender-based violence as well as legislative measures —e.g., successive modifications of the Spanish Penal Code in order to accommodate restraining orders (1999) or protection orders (2003), which culminated with the approval of the pioneering 2004 *Gender-Based Violence Act* (Ministerio de Igualdad 2004).

The third phase starts with the twenty first century and seems to confirm the process described thus far. Without a doubt, VAW is today a major topic in the Spanish press. As an illustration, *El País* published around 615 news items on the issue in 2010, 368 in 2015, and 401 in 2020, while *El Mundo* reached 411 in 2010, 337 in 2015, and 359 in 2020. This bears witness to an effective and sustained public interest and has contributed to generating a more serious treatment. Media texts, in fact, offer more analysis and interpretation, with a wealth of statistics, figures, graphs, and so on, which helps to contextualize better this serious social problem, and which frequently leads to the demand of more legal and political measures. However, and in spite of growing social awareness,

a number of news stories still present the view that only ‘abnormal’ men resort to VAW, thus implying that male behavior is stereotypically non-violent (Adampa 1999: 22). Carter (1998: 230) talks about the “relative over-representation of femicide in the tabloid press compared to its actual occurrence” —an idea also shared by Formato 2019 and Maruenda-Bataller 2021— and, while this is slightly attenuated for quality papers like *El País* and *El Mundo*, I agree that this over-representation “encourages (if not guarantees) female readers to infer that the risk of them becoming a victim is high, and that should they become the victim of sexual violence it is most likely to result in their death or rape” (Carter 1998: 230). In fact, manifestations of daily sexual abuse or harassment other than rape and murder —i.e., verbal, economic, emotional, and so on— tend to remain largely unknown. This is especially important because most of our knowledge, our image(s) and our discourse(s) of VAW, come from media constructions, which are (re)interpreted and made sense of in terms of our personal experiences and our social membership. Regrettably, it still seems that, overall, the Spanish (quality) media continues to construct VAW as a symptom of individual pathology rather than as a complex social problem.

Though there is an important body of research addressing the portrayal of VAW in the Spanish media (Fagoaga 1994, 1999; Bengoechea 2000; Alberdi and Matas 2002; Lledó 2002; Fernández 2003; Jorge Alonso 2004; Zurbano Berenguer 2012; Menéndez Menéndez 2014; Carratalá 2016), both the significance of the topic in contemporary Spanish society and its controversial nature offer ample opportunity for further investigation, in a variety of fields and directions. Suffice it to mention 1) the images or stereotypes offered by quality as opposed to tabloid (or local) newspapers, 2) the social attitudes toward the issue, 3) the implicit and explicit definition of VAW offered by the mass media, 4) the (de)legitimized voices and sources of information on the topic, and 5) the representation (and construction) of the main actors in gender-based violence, from victims to perpetrators and official authorities, and many others. In this paper, I am concerned with an analysis of the main labels used (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*) and their discursive and ideological implications. For Ehrlich (2004: 226) discursive representations of VAW “have regulatory (i.e., material) effects,” as they delimit what is (or is not) gender-based violence, which stories are newsworthy, which attitudes or emotions are to blame or praise, which evaluative stances are encouraged, and so on.

### 3. NAMING PRACTICES AND MEDIA CONSTRUCTIONS OF REALITY: VAW NEWS STORIES IN SPANISH MEDIA

Naming sensitive issues such as VAW is, in media discourse, far from innocent and constitutes a powerful, disciplinary discourse that confers strengths and limitations, thus delineating a locus for ideological debate. Media discourse is powerful, as it creates expectations, imposes socially accepted images and consistently reinforces constructions of behavior, endowing them with a commonsensical status. Fairclough (1989: 193) underlines “the dramatic growth in the importance of the media as an institutional site for political struggle.” Public discourses around sensitive issues —whether abortion, homosexuality or VAW— tend to follow the (sometimes fierce) discursive struggles and the ideological negotiations voiced by the mass media (see Santaemilia and Maruenda 2010, 2013).

VAW is a very sensitive (and highly ideological) topic in the Spanish society, as well as in Western societies generally. In Spanish, a variety of naming practices for VAW coexist (i.e., *violencia de género*, *violencia machista*, *violencia doméstica*, *violencia contra las mujeres*, etc.) with a wide range of political and ideological implications, showing a “terminological tension” (Menéndez Menéndez 2014: 54) around this issue and betraying a mixture of ideological uncertainties, business priorities and ignorance of VAW (Zurbano Berenger 2012: 27). Fairclough (1989: 52) emphasizes “the power to disguise power” through naming practices in the media. In Adampa’s (1999: 18) words:

It is the power to choose certain ways of naming events, while excluding others, and, consequently, favoring certain interpretations, while rejecting others. When a particular pattern emerges or where one form is used persistently, then the selection becomes more meaningful, a specific worldview is put forward and a particular way of attempting to position the reader is constructed.

The way VAW is discussed, defined or portrayed is part of an ongoing debate on how to place it in public and institutional discourses and on how to constitute it through discourse. In the twenty first century, media constructions become essential in understanding and regulating public discourses around all social or political issues, let alone VAW. An initial corpus-assisted analysis of all news articles published in *El País* and *El Mundo* from 2005 to 2010 shows an enormous variety of naming practices. Tables 1 and 2 show the ten most frequent phrases used to name VAW in both journals.

<b>Naming practice</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
<i>Violencia machista</i>	208	149	232	453	269	283
<i>Violencia de género</i>	213	224	182	267	246	146
<i>Violencia doméstica</i>	396	298	204	216	119	91
<i>Violencia sobre la mujer</i>	59	48	46	57	21	16
<i>Violencia contra las mujeres</i>	24	24	19	14	15	8
<i>Violencia contra la mujer</i>	26	24	17	15	12	7
<i>Violencia familiar</i>	14	15	4	3	2	3
<i>Violencia sexista</i>	21	30	14	13	6	3
<i>Violencia sexual</i>	2	---	1	1	5	1
<i>Violencia hacia las mujeres</i>	9	5	1	4	2	---

Table 1: Most frequent phrases to refer to VAW in *El País* (2005–2010) and occurrences per year

<b>Naming practice</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
<i>Violencia de género</i>	441	580	403	738	799	574
<i>Violencia machista</i>	10	24	42	157	189	119
<i>Violencia doméstica</i>	228	223	175	243	148	117
<i>Violencia sobre la mujer</i>	41	59	42	77	56	26
<i>Violencia contra la mujer</i>	19	19	7	19	33	18
<i>Violencia contra las mujeres</i>	21	20	25	20	17	17
<i>Violencia sexual</i>	4	---	2	1	10	5
<i>Violencia hacia las mujeres</i>	2	5	2	3	7	2
<i>Violencia sexista</i>	2	3	6	3	1	1
<i>Violencia familiar</i>	6	5	2	4	2	1

Table 2: Most frequent phrases to refer to VAW in *El Mundo* (2005–2010) and occurrences per year

What is immediately noticeable is that there are three phrases (*violencia machista*, *violencia de género* and *violencia doméstica*) that stand out as the most frequent ones. Simple frequency is not in itself a definite indicator of a discourse or an ideological trend, but in this case these three phrases (overwhelmingly present in our corpus) can undoubtedly “become fixed phrases that represent a packaging of information. Such phrases thus become entrenched in language use” (Baker 2010: 127–128). In this case, both dailies analyzed have chosen their favored naming practices in order to refer to and to construct a discourse around VAW, and they have done it consistently from 2005 to 2010.

The rest of naming practices have clearly become marginal across the period under study, thus paving the way for an uniformization of discursive and rhetorical routines. At least four observations can be made here:

- (i) A trend is perceived towards minimizing, and perhaps even eliminating, the very object of this kind of violence (women). In fact, in *El País* references to violence against *la mujer* ‘woman’ or *las mujeres* ‘women’ have progressively disappeared. By contrast, in *El Mundo*, references to woman/women are comparatively more numerous, though also on the decrease.
- (ii) When the VAW naming practices include women, the use of singular/plural forms and of prepositions is unstable. Examples from Tables 1 and 2 include violence *contra la mujer* ‘against woman’, *contra las mujeres* ‘against women’, *sobre la mujer* ‘on woman’ or *hacia las mujeres* ‘towards women’.
- (iii) A trend is also discernible towards eliminating the sexual nature of VAW. Only two instances are included in Tables 1 and 2: *violencia sexual* ‘sexual violence’ and *violencia sexista* ‘sexist violence’. In *El País*, for instance, the phrase *violencia sexista* has gone down from 25 instances in 2005 to only two in 2010.
- (iv) Men are (practically) absent from VAW naming practices: only very rarely do we find examples such as *violencia masculina* ‘masculine violence’, *violencia de hombre* ‘man’s violence’ o *violencia del varón* ‘male’s violence’.

In both newspapers interesting evolutions can be seen. At the beginning of the period under study (2005), *El País* favored the term *violencia doméstica* (with 396 occurrences), followed by *violencia de género* (213) and *violencia machista* (208), whereas *El Mundo* practically ignored *violencia machista* (10) and, instead, used almost exclusively *violencia de género* (441) and *violencia doméstica* (228) throughout (cf. Tables 1 and 2). At the end of this period (2010), the situation has somewhat changed: *El País* unambiguously favors the term *violencia machista* (283 occurrences), followed by *violencia de género* (146) and *violencia doméstica* (91). *El Mundo* still maintains the term *violencia de género* as its main naming practice (with an astonishing figure of 574 occurrences) but has also decidedly incorporated *violencia machista* (119) and maintained *violencia doméstica* (117). In the next section I will explore these three naming practices in more detail, trying to critically delve into their ideological and evaluative dimensions.

#### 4. IDEOLOGICAL AND EVALUATIVE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE MAIN VAW NAMING PRACTICES IN SPANISH MEDIA: *EL PAÍS* VS. *EL MUNDO*

The passing of the *Gender-Based Violence Act* in 2004 constituted a landmark in the history towards sexual equality and has also sparked a profound social debate about the term ‘gender’ and its derived meanings, as well as its ideological associations. Except for academia, where the term has been accepted and used as a powerful tool to fight essentialism and reinforce feminists’ conceptualizations, the term ‘gender’ continues to be thought of as an Anglicism that has not found accommodation in Spanish political scene (see Santaemilia 2013 for an ongoing debate on how to translate the term into Spanish).

The Royal Academy for the Spanish Language (RAE), a highly conservative linguistic institution, has recommended avoiding the term *violencia de género* (as it is alien to the language) and using *violencia doméstica* instead.<sup>4</sup> The 2004 Act, however, opted almost exclusively for two naming practices that were used throughout: *violencia de género* and *violencia sobre la mujer* ‘violence on/over women’. Contemporary media language in Spanish (represented here by its two main dailies, *El País* and *El Mundo*) seems to have favored, over the last few years, the three naming practices (*violencia de género*, *violencia machista*, *violencia doméstica*) shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Not long ago, *El País* and *El Mundo* were thought to stand for two oppositional attitudes towards the political agenda to be implemented in Spain. Against today’s backdrop of narrowing differences between these two media groups, the three most common naming collocations (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica*, *violencia machista*) will be explored and discussed in order to find similarities and differences, and even contradictions, that may offer insights for the social understanding of an issue such as VAW. This analysis will benefit from the ‘news values’ approach developed by Bednarek and Caple (2012, 2014, 2017), as well as from a combination of corpus linguistic techniques with a Critical Discourse Analysis (Baker *et al.* 2008; Baker 2010; Caldas-Coulthard and Moon 2010; Baker and Levon 2015). In order to gain access to

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<sup>4</sup> See *Informe de la Real Academia Española sobre la expresión violencia de género*, 19 May 2004, at <https://www.rae.es/>

reliable insights into a five-million-word corpus extracted from *El País* and *El Mundo*, concordances for the three main naming strategies were examined.

It must be borne in mind that the official definitions of *violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista* are far from clear and show a great deal of overlap. The 2004 Act defines *violencia de género* as “violence directed against women for the mere fact of being women; considered, by their aggressors, as lacking the most basic rights to freedom, respect and power of decision” (Ministerio de Igualdad 2004; my translation).<sup>5</sup> The official website of the British Government<sup>6</sup> provides a definition of *domestic violence* (DV) as:

any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse [psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional] between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

Finally, *violencia machista* has not been officially defined and is not used in the text of the 2004 Act, though it is commonly used by most feminist associations, by (mainly left-wing) politicians and dailies such as *El País*. It is, without doubt, the most ideological of the three denominations, and it has often been translated as ‘macho violence’, thus clearly pointing to the concept of ‘machismo’, a peculiar Spanish term defined in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (2014) as an “arrogant attitude of men towards women” (my translation).<sup>7</sup> It is a term hotly debated for and against within Spanish society, a term that leaves probably no one indifferent as it unambiguously places the blame for patriarchal attitudes (including violence) on a tradition of *prepotencia* (i.e., something like arrogance or cockiness) of men towards women. Unlike the two other terms (*violencia de género* and *violencia doméstica*), *violencia machista* contains a strong note of social condemnation, of critical contempt and of historical denunciation.

Although assessing the significance of linguistic devices is very difficult in large corpora, corpus linguistic techniques have “the potential for uncovering a wide range of discourse positions” (Baker 2010: 125) that may escape a more traditional, qualitative analysis. A concordance search may help us focus on those linguistic items that are closer

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<sup>5</sup> “Se trata de una violencia que se dirige sobre las mujeres por el hecho mismo de serlo, por ser consideradas, por sus agresores, carentes de los derechos mínimos de libertad, respeto y capacidad de decisión” (*Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género*).

<sup>6</sup> UK Government 2012: 3. See <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/violence-against-women-and-girls-guidance>

<sup>7</sup> “Actitud de prepotencia de los varones respecto de las mujeres” (DRAE 2014).

to the terms under study (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*) and that are likely to “uncover evidence for various ‘prosodies’ or ‘preferences’” (Baker 2010: 132) as part of a ‘discourse constellation’ which, as pointed out in Santaemilia and Maruenda (2013: 450), may be defined as:

a form of organising the multiplicity of conceptual representations subject to ideological negotiation and social and political pressure in/between communities of practice. These are nebulous realizations of conflicting ideological concepts/discourses in today’s societies and as such they are imprecise and constantly changing, in continuous struggle to become legitimised or core, subject to processes of pragmatic adjustment when meaning negotiation comes into play.

This way, corpus techniques can have the potential to indexically tell us “as much about the values of societies they came from as they do about language” (Baker 2010: 121), with important consequences for meaning, evaluation and ideology.

Concordance evidence from my corpus reveals that four news values (as defined by Bednarek and Caple 2012, 2014, 2017) seem to emerge as the most widely used, namely NEGATIVITY, IMPACT, SUPERLATIVENESS and, perhaps most importantly, ELITENESS (or maybe a special form of ELITENESS, which can be labelled as INSTITUTIONAL ELITENESS or INSTITUTIONALIZATION).

As for the first three news values (NEGATIVITY, IMPACT and SUPERLATIVENESS) they go hand in hand in VAW news stories and are somewhat to be expected as part of a conventionalized media rhetoric of violence and conflict. These three news values reinforce the message of VAW episodes as being constructed through linguistic intensification and quantification, as having significant effects and tragical consequences, and, on the whole, as conveying a thoroughly negative message to the readership (see Bednarek and Caple 2017). NEGATIVITY is, perhaps, the most distinctive trait of contemporary media language and for Bell (1991: 156) it is “the basic news value.”

A concordance search of the three main naming practices (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*) yields surprisingly uniform results for both *El País* and *El Mundo*. A few aspects stand out from concordance lines (tragical quantification, very negative impact, references to perpetrators and overall characterization of VAW). These aspects will be explored below. Firstly, it is remarkable that VAW episodes are (tragically) quantified over and over again. Table 3 shows a few examples:

<b>Term</b>	<b><i>El País</i></b>	<b><i>El Mundo</i></b>
<b>Violencia de género</b>	<i>72 murieron ... 63 mujeres muertas ... Cada 12 minutos se detiene a un hombre ... Y los números hablan por sí solos ...</i>	<i>195 mujeres víctimas ... Las denuncias superan el listón de 60000 ... los datos son inquietantes ...</i>
<b>Violencia doméstica</b>	<i>99111 denuncias ... aumentaron en un 63.5% ... Al menos 102 países carecen aún de legislaciones ... ya suman 160 ...</i>	<i>100 muertes ... siguen disparándose ... 2007 superará las cifras ominosas ... Sube en un año un 30% el número de víctimas ...</i>
<b>Violencia machista</b>	<i>tantas y tantas víctimas ... crecen un 43% ... Asesinadas 75 mujeres ... Los datos sobre violencia machista asustan ...</i>	<i>víctima número 13 ... Ya son 54 ... excesivos casos ... han muerto 69 mujeres ... un 1'7% más que el año anterior ...</i>

Table 3: Tragical quantification (SUPERLATIVENESS) of VAW episodes

In order to make VAW episodes newsworthy, both dailies use a wealth of figures, statistics, quantifiers, intensified lexis or metaphors, and other resources which add dramatic overtones to the news stories and convey an idea of unusual intensity. SUPERLATIVENESS is used rather uniformly for the three main naming practices (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*). Perhaps a few indicators seem to point to a harsher social criticism in the pages of *El País* placing the blame unmistakably on men (*Cada 12 minutos se detiene a un hombre por violencia de género*; ‘Every 12 minutes a man is arrested in connection with gender-based violence’) or on politicians (*Al menos 102 países carecen aún de legislaciones sobre la violencia doméstica*; ‘At least 102 countries do not have yet any domestic violence legislation’). Nevertheless, only a more refined, qualitative analysis could provide a more definite conclusion.

Concordance lines also prominently show VAW as producing a very negative impact, especially in terms of personal casualties or suffering. Table 4 below is illustrative:

Term	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>
<b>Violencia de género</b>	<i>víctimas ... víctimas mortales ... mujeres muertas ... mujeres asesinadas ... fallecimientos ... lesiones ...</i>	<i>víctimas ... víctimas mortales ... mujeres asesinadas ... lesiones graves ... maltrato machista ... vejación ...effect</i>
<b>Violencia doméstica</b>	<i>víctima ... mujeres muertas ... muere apuñalada ... mató ... descuartizó ...</i>	<i>víctima ... mujeres fallecidas ... asesinada ... cadaver ... lesión ... agresión ... malos tratos físicos ... acoso psicológico ... angustia ... el alcance letal del hombre abusivo ...</i>
<b>Violencia machista</b>	<i>víctimas ... víctimas mortales ... mujeres maltratadas ... fallecidas ... malos tratos ... abusos ... acoso ... brutal apuñalamiento ... quemar ... atropellada ... agredida ...</i>	<i>víctima ... víctimas mortales ... mujeres asesinadas ... acoso ... malos tratos ... cuchilladas ... apuñalamiento ... muerte ... catástrofe natural ...</i>

Table 4: Negative effects or consequences (IMPACT) of VAW episodes

An immediate realization from the concordance search is the predominance of the term *víctima* as an overall denomination for the women suffering VAW (see Bou-Franch 2016 for a thorough analysis of the term). Another realization is that, while both Spanish quality dailies use a similar set of terms to describe the consequences of VAW, perhaps, *El Mundo* explicitly shows a wider range of VAW effects other than death, especially when characterizing *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*: *lesión* ‘injury’, *agresión* ‘aggression’, *malos tratos* ‘maltreatment’, *acoso psicológico* ‘psychological harassment’, *angustia* ‘anguish’, etc. By contrast, *El País* appears to focus almost exclusively on death (and similar terms) as the only newsworthy outcome of VAW (the overrepresentation of VAW resulting in death being a recurring shortcoming identified by researchers in media representation (see Zurbano Berenguer 2012; Gámez Fuentes and Núñez Puente 2013; Formato 2019; Maruenda-Bataller 2021).

A very important part of the negative characterization of VAW rests on the way both perpetrators and VAW itself are defined and referred to. What seems especially relevant is the relative absence of perpetrators close to the key denominations *violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*. Only a handful of references has been found in a five-million-word corpus (cf. Table 5).

Term	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>
<b>Violencia de género</b>	<i>agresor ... delincuente ... pareja ... ex-marido ... marido ...</i>	<i>maltratadores ... presunto autor ... imputado ... pareja o ex-pareja ...</i>
<b>Violencia doméstica</b>	<i>maltratador ... homicida ... presunto autor ... detenidos ... ex-marido ...</i>	<i>agresor ... maltratador ... acusado ... presunto homicida ... detenido ... marido ... pareja ... un traumatólogo en depresión ... un argelino de 33 años ...</i>
<b>Violencia machista</b>	<i>agresores ... maltratadores ... asesino ... verdugos ... culpables ... sentenciados ... arrestado ... condenado ... detenido ... pareja o ex-pareja ... ex-marido ... marido ...</i>	<i>agresor ... denunciados ... asesino ... asesinos condenados ...</i>

Table 5: References to perpetrators (NEGATIVITY) in VAW episodes

Overall, victims are much more present than perpetrators or, to put it another way, in the corpus there seem to be more references to the harm suffered by women than to the aggressors' blame. In Adampa's (1999: 20) words, "[t]he fact that violence flows from the male to the female is backgrounded and what is foregrounded is the goal (the victim) and the act (the attack)." Though the term *agresor* 'aggressor' is comparatively frequent, it is not found throughout all the corpus, and other more neutral, family-related denominations ((*ex-*)*marido* '(ex-)husband', (*ex-*)*pareja* 'ex-partner') are found instead. Some references in *El Mundo* to the aggressor's nationality (*un argelino de 33 años*, 'a 33-year-old Algerian man') or mental condition (*un traumatólogo en depresión*, 'a depressed traumatologist') seem to take us back to the issues of racist discourse against foreigners (Baker *et al.* 2008) or of VAW as a private affair between individuals in media representations. Other terms (though not very frequent) attach blameworthiness to perpetrators and are mainly law-related: *delincuente* 'offender', *imputado* 'charged with, suspect', *acusado* 'accused', *denunciados* 'defendants', (*presunto*) *homicida* '(presumed) murderer', *condenados* 'convicts'. By far, it is *El País* which distils most negativity and heavy social censure towards VAW perpetrators, when characterizing the phrase *violencia machista*: *agresores* 'aggressors', *maltratadores* 'abusers', *sentenciados* 'sentenced', *condenados* 'convicts', *culpables* 'culprits', and even *asesino* 'murderer' and *verdugo* 'executioner'.

Table 6 illustrates the way VAW itself is characterized. Two basic trends are observed here. On the one hand, there is a set of terms that are neutral and seem to be intended as euphemistic descriptors: *casos* 'cases', *episodio* 'episode', *problema* 'problem', *asunto* 'matter', *acto* 'act', *fenómeno* 'phenomenon', and others. These terms

are mostly associated with *El Mundo* and its allegedly conservative position on social matters. On the other hand, there is another set of terms showing a uniformly negative *evaluative prosody*, that is, their “overall attitudinal ‘halo’,” as Bednarek (2006: 209) puts it. These highly evaluative terms are associated with *El País*, including (quasi-)legal terms such as *delito violento* ‘violent crime’, *asesinato* ‘murder’, *homicidio* ‘manslaughter’, *una forma más de terrorismo* ‘another form of terrorism’; moral concepts such as *brutalidad* ‘brutality’, *lacría social* ‘social disgrace’; and strongly evaluative adjectives such as *dramática* ‘dramatic’, *grave* ‘serious’ or *execrable* ‘abominable’. All of them are indicative of outright social, legal and moral condemnation, and would be consistent with a more progressive position on social issues. Concordance lines, however, do not show perceivable differences between the three naming practices analyzed (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica* and *violencia machista*).

Term	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>
<b>Violencia de género</b>	<i>casos ... delito violento ... asesinato ... crimen ... homicidio ... brutalidad ... cada vez más dramática ... algo tan grave ... bajas pasiones asesinas ... una forma más de terrorismo ...</i>	<i>casos ... acto ... fenómeno ... crimen ... lacra ... delito ... tragedia ... el terror y la barbarie ...</i>
<b>Violencia doméstica</b>	<i>casos ... episodios ... problema ... situaciones ... suceso ... crimen ... homicidios ... hechos delictivos ... horrors ... lacra social ... manifestación más execrable ...</i>	<i>episodio ... caso ... problema ... fenómeno ... tema ... incidente ... asunto ... acto ... otra triste historia ... pesadilla ... asesinato ... delito ... crimen ... enseñamiento machista ... lacra ... matanza ...</i>
<b>Violencia machista</b>	<i>casos ... fenómeno ... episodio ... asuntos ... acto ... agresión ... suceso ... lacra infame ... lacra social ... crímenes ... crimen pasional ... delito ...</i>	<i>caso ... acto ... episodio ... crimen ... delito ... lacra ... desgracia ...</i>

Table 6: References to VAW (NEGATIVITY) in news stories

The connection between the news values of SUPERLATIVENESS, IMPACT and NEGATIVITY in VAW news stories is somewhat to be expected from a certain media rhetoric that places conflict and violence at the centre of newsworthiness. In the remaining of this paper a fourth news value will be explored, as it is essential to understand how VAW news stories are constructed in contemporary Spanish media discourse. This trait may well be part of what Bednarek and Caple (2012, 2014, 2017) identify as ELITENESS, that is, “the high status of individuals, organisations or nations involved in an event” (Bednarek and Caple

2014: 156).<sup>8</sup> But, to be more precise, the type of ELITENESS I am analyzing here could be labeled as INSTITUTIONAL ELITENESS (or even constitute a news value in itself, perhaps INSTITUTIONALIZATION), as it refers to a large network of institutions, (women-related) associations, government bodies and other entities that contextually (and co-textually) surround VAW and its victims, providing them with emotional, material and legal support and protection. What seems to be relevant is the social and institutional support, safety and solidarity to be derived from the institutions involved rather than the high status or popularity of the institutions involved. In this modality of news value, prestige or status is subordinated to support, welfare, comfort, care, respect, understanding and protection. According to Maruenda-Bataller (2021: 158), “POSITIVITY often combines with ELITENESS to construct a discourse of safety and protection for female victims.”

As shown in Table 7, the list of institutions or organizations working towards preventing VAW includes, among others: generic institutions (*poderes públicos* ‘public authorities’, *poder judicial* ‘judicature’; political institutions, local, national or international (*Gobierno* ‘Spanish government’, *Parlamento* ‘Spanish Parliament’, *Generalitat* ‘Catalan government’, *Ministerio de Justicia* ‘Ministry of Justice’); courts (*juzgados de violencia de género* ‘gender-based violence courts’, *juzgados especializados* ‘specialized courts’) and court officials (*jueces* ‘judges’, *fiscal especial* ‘special public prosecutor’); women-related (or feminist) institutions or associations (*Instituto de la Mujer* ‘Women’s Institute’, *asociación de víctimas* ‘victims’ association’); official observatories (*Observatorio para la violencia de género* ‘Observatory for Gender-based Violence’); international organizations fighting for women’s rights (UNICEF, ONU ‘UN’, *Amnistía Internacional* ‘Amnesty International’); the police; and many others. Concordance lines provide an impressive array of institutions or organizations, which certainly testifies to an important media effort (in this case, by *El País* and *El Mundo* alike) to send society, VAW victims and women generally a message of social and institutional support.

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<sup>8</sup> In fact, ELITENESS of this sort is profusely present in our corpus, with multiple references to political institutions, government officials (ministers, PMs), experts in feminist issues, lawyers, judges, journalists and others.

Term	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>
<b>Violencia de género</b>	<i>poderes públicos ... Parlamento ... comunidades autónomas ... juzgados de violencia de género ... asociaciones de mujeres ... Observatorio para la violencia de género ...</i>	<i>juzgados de violencia de género ... juzgados especializados ... jueces ... fiscal especial ... asistentes sociales ... Red Feminista contra la violencia de género ... Parlamento ... policía ...</i>
<b>Violencia doméstica</b>	<i>poder judicial ... juzgado específico sobre violencia doméstica ... juez de violencia doméstica ... fiscal ... fiscal delegada ... Generalitat ... Ministerio de Justicia ... Registro Central ...</i>	<i>juzgados de violencia doméstica ... juzgados especializados ... CGPJ ... juez ... fiscal ... Observatorio ... centro para víctimas ... asociación de víctimas ... Generalitat ... Gobierno ... Ministerio de Justicia ... Unión Europea ...</i>
<b>Violencia machista</b>	<i>juzgados contra la violencia machista ... fiscales de guardia ... abogados ... TSJC ... Observatorio ... Instituto de la Mujer ... centros de acogida ... Gobierno ... Parlamento ... Unicef ... Unesco ... ONU ...</i>	<i>juzgados especializados ... jueces ... CGPJ ... Observatorio ... Ministerio de Justicia ... Ejecutivo ... Senado ... ayuntamientos ... OMS ... Amnistía Internacional ...</i>

Table 7: Web of institutions and associations surrounding VAW victims (INSTITUTIONAL ELITENESS or INSTITUTIONALIZATION)

Finally, Table 8 comes to exemplify the material, emotional and legal support emanating from the institutions listed in Table 7. It includes general actions (*actuaciones* ‘actions’, *iniciativas* ‘initiatives’, *medidas* ‘measures’, *prevención* ‘prevention’, *protección* ‘protection’, *apoyo* ‘support’), legal and legislative measures (*Ley Integral contra la Violencia de Género* ‘the 2004 Gender-Based Violence Act’, *tolerancia cero* ‘zero tolerance’, *denuncias* ‘complaints’, *protocolo* ‘protocol’, *orden de protección* ‘restraining order’, *informe* ‘report’, *sentencia judicial* ‘court ruling’, *castigos* ‘punishments’), educational measures (*cursos* ‘courses’, *reeducación* ‘(batterers) reeducation’, *investigación* ‘research’, *taller* ‘workshop’), social activism (*lucha* ‘fight’, *campana* ‘campaign’, *encuentros* ‘seminars’, *homenaje a las víctimas* ‘a ceremony to pay tribute to the victims’), medical care (*ayuda psicológica* ‘psychological support’) and economic measures (*fondo de ayuda* ‘relief fund’), among others. Leaving aside the presence of rather vague terms, which are difficult to materialize, what is remarkable is the effort of media to generate a supportive atmosphere for VAW victims and women, thus reflecting the combined effort of institutions and society in order to counter the devastating effects of VAW. Female victims are “surrounded by a discourse that conveys social and institutional care and support” (Maruenda-Bataller 2021: 152). This welfare network frames woman as a helpless individual, deprived of agency and in constant need of institutional care (cf. Gámez Fuentes and Núñez Puente 2013; Maruenda-Bataller 2021).

Term	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>
<b>Violencia de género</b>	<i>Ley Integral de Medidas ... medidas ... actuaciones ... iniciativas ... lucha ... informe ... protección ... Día Internacional contra la violencia de género ... denuncias ...</i>	<i>Ley Integral ... Plan de Sensibilización ... medidas ... fondo de ayuda ... asilo ... asistencia ... ayuda psicológica ... estudio ... tolerancia cero ... homenaje a las víctimas ... denuncias ... erradicación ...</i>
<b>Violencia doméstica</b>	<i>medidas ... denuncias ... protocolos ... orden de protección ... informe ... memoria ... cursos ... reeducación ... campaña ...</i>	<i>protección ... lucha ... prevención ... denuncias ... plan conjunto y de choque ... presión policial ... legislación ... atención ... castigos ... detenciones ...</i>
<b>Violencia machista</b>	<i>investigación ... sentencia judicial ... denuncia ... tolerancia cero ... órdenes de protección ... cursos ... documentos ... actuación ... campaña ... encuentros ... taller ... casas de acogida ... lucha ... ley integral ... manifestación ...</i>	<i>lucha ... actos ... código ... medidas ... instrumento ... manifestación ... apoyo ... erradicación ... respuesta ... denuncia ... propuesta ... convenio ... centro de atención ... condena ... teleasistencia ...</i>

Table 8: Main nouns materializing INSTITUTIONAL ELITENESS or INSTITUTIONALIZATION

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper I have analyzed and compared the use of the main naming practices (*violencia de género*, *violencia doméstica*, *violencia machista*) in VAW news taken from the two most widely read Spanish dailies, *El País* and *El Mundo*. Differences in frequencies and concordance lines have been explored, in order to assess the most important news values present in VAW news stories. Attention has been paid to the similar (or distinctive) lexis of each newspaper, together with the relevant associations and ideological implications.

It goes without saying that VAW seems to be definitely part of the media agenda, as it is felt to be a serious social issue which, consequently, receives a mainstream treatment. However, given the seemingly diverging ideological projects of *El País* and *El Mundo*, it is more surprising to find out that differences unearthed from a concordance search in naming practices around VAW are fewer than expected. In both quality dailies similar patterns of newsworthiness and evaluative positions were unearthed. When it comes to media treatment of VAW, contemporary Spanish society (though much more plural and diverse than a few decades ago) still seems to favor media narratives that conflate two basic ingredients. On the one hand, a very negative depiction of VAW as social malady (with a combination of three news values, SUPERLATIVENESS, IMPACT and

NEGATIVITY), exploiting (a natural human interest in) conflict and violence coupled with, on the other hand, a message of social relief to VAW victims and women in the form of a network of institutional support (realizing the news value of INSTITUTIONAL ELITENESS or INSTITUTIONALIZATION). Minor differences would perhaps point towards a harsher social criticism at and a more severe condemnation of VAW in *El País*, and a more neutral or institutionalizing treatment in *El Mundo*, but our indicators are far from conclusive. Further research is needed into more recent media coverage, in order to see whether or how the evolving political climate and media landscape are favoring new discursive and ideological articulations of VAW as a relevant social problem.

I believe that analyzing news values (Bednarek and Caple 2012, 2014) provides reliable insights into both average citizens' interests (namely, VAW) and the evaluative dimensions of VAW treatment. Both are inseparable. News values are "practical, common sense evaluation criteria, which allow strategic attention allocation to, and selection of, sources, and source texts, summarization, choice of perspectives, and finally the topic and style structures of the news reports" (van Dijk 1988: 27); they are provisional, contextually-dependent discursive constructions, and are articulated around mainstream social perceptions. The three naming practices present in Spanish media discourse (*violencia de género*, *violencia machista* and *violencia doméstica*), which seem to exclude nearly all other denominations, are consistent with the prior evaluative judgements made by citizens on VAW, and are instances of a plurality of voices and of an ongoing public debate which is profoundly ideological. Newsworthy naming practices, in particular, are powerful indicators of both social positionings on sensitive social issues and of public evaluations of the same issues.

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