

# 10 Things to Know About Gender-based Violence in Jamaican News Media

1



There is a proven link between media consumption and cultural attitudes. The news media plays a key role in the development and reinforcement of social beliefs, individual behaviours and policy development.

News media actors therefore have the power to influence the way broader society understands and reacts to issues including violence against women and girls.

2



There is a disproportionate focus on some of the most shocking and socially unacceptable forms of violence against women and girls in local news media. It demonstrates a lack of consideration in accurately framing the range of forms of violence against women and girls.

3



News reports have a tendency to present the behaviour of victims in negative tones. Events would be presented in such a way that indicates a cause-effect relationship between a victim's behaviour and the harm caused to them.

4



The responsibility is on the news media not only to report stories, but also provide information and analysis that explores the broader societal context in which those stories occur. Many stories in the media do not seize the opportunity to highlight violence against women and girls as a broader issue or to link the victimization of individuals to social issues like economic deprivation and dependency.

5



According to extant literature, equitable representation of both women and men in media organisations should lend itself to a balance of perspectives and result in greater levels of gender-sensitive writing. However, within the Jamaican context, although there is greater female representation in media, it did not equate to more gender-sensitive writing or reporting.

6



Male authors were more likely to cover severe forms of violence against women and girls, frequently engage in victim blaming, and present offenders in a passive light. Female authors were found to more frequently present positive attributes of victims, but less likely to explore the broader societal links and complexity related to their victimisation.

7



Half of the sampled media houses have a written Code of Practice or writing guidelines for their writers and editors to adhere to. These guidelines do not speak definitively to gender-based violence. The key guidance available to news professionals, the Jamaican Journalists' Code of Practice also does not have concepts of gender-sensitive reporting explicitly outlined. This means at the internal and at the national level, there is a lack of recognition of gender-related issues expressed for journalists to heed to.

8



All the sampled media houses have a sexual harassment policy. Each policy expresses the respective organisation's "zero-tolerance" for breaches of the act, with a keen focus on power dynamics, and the recognition of victim status regardless of gender. This evidence suggests that journalists do have an awareness of these issues, which might influence how gender-based violence is represented in their writing.

9



The school of media and communication at the UWI Mona Campus, has a nearly equal representation of men and women in the faculty, and an almost three to one female to male ratio student population. It is therefore implied that the content being imparted upon the students is, although primarily objective, less likely to be intermittently guided or influenced by overly dominant male biases as there ought to be female perspectives represented in the curriculum.

10



A number of professionals identified time and resource constraints as significant barriers to gender-sensitive reporting, noting a lack of long-form reporting in this space. Many journalists often do not have the capacity to give the topic the time and consideration it deserves. High turnover rates were also considered a barrier to building pools of well-informed staff who are trained in gender-sensitive reporting.

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