

Print-media discourses surrounding domestic violence in Queensland

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Why study intimate partner abuse?

Media coverage of domestic and family violence is a powerful forum for influencing public views of violence within intimate relationships (Bullock & Cubert, 2002). Misrepresenting this crime may: reinforce dangerous stereotypes; help normalise male violence against females; reinforce dominant patriarchal values in Western societies; and inadvertently encourage abuse within domestic settings (Carlyle, et al., 2008; Lindsay-Brisbin, et al., 2014).

What we know

- Media portrayals are skewed and sensationalised.
- Domestic and family violence is under-reported.
- Articles sympathise with abusers and blame victims.
- Prior abuse is rarely discussed.
- Expert opinion is greatly lacking.

Research justification

- Internationally, scholars highlight the need to reform patriarchal media trends (McManus & Dorfman, 2005; Richards, et al., 2014).
- To date, only one Australian study has explored reporting patterns (Vic; Morgan & Politoff, 2012).
- This study increases Australian research by exploring media articles in *The Courier Mail* (Queensland) between 2008 and 2013.
- Study focus: prevalence and transparency of intimate partner abuse; source selection; blame attribution; and gender portrayal.

Research questions

1. Does the media portray the true nature and severity of IPV?

2. Which sources are quoted and do they include expert/advocacy testimony?

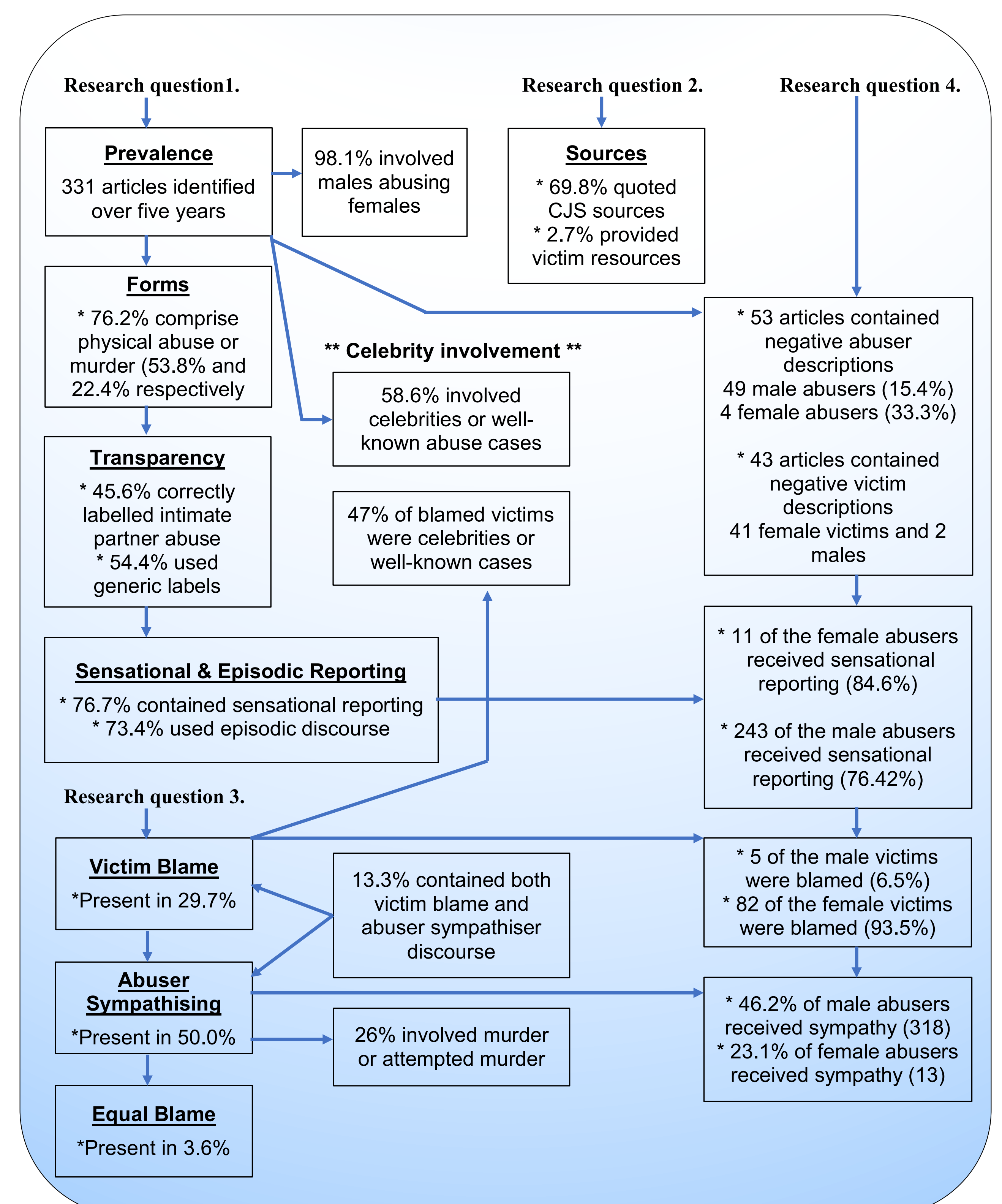
3. Are the societal causes of intimate partner abuse acknowledged?

4. Does the gender of victims and abusers impact reporting trends?

Methods

- A quantitative content analysis was undertaken through the Factiva website.
- Searches were conducted through *The Courier-Mail* and *Courier-Mail* (ABIX abstracts).
- Search parameters included article titles and content.
- 331 articles were identified relating to intimate partner abuse.
- During the coding process 13 simple codes (i.e. victims' gender as female, male or unidentified) and 6 complex codes (i.e. abuser sympathising or victim blaming discourse) were identified.
- The research timeframe coincides with the commencement of the National Awareness Campaign to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children in Australia (operating between 2010 and 2022).

Results



What does this mean?

The media is misinforming the public regarding the true nature of intimate partner abuse by:

- sensationalising most articles and failing to address previous abuse;
- sympathising with many abusers' circumstances;
- blaming almost one third of victims for causing their own abuse;
- displaying patriarchal values through gender bias reporting;
- being over reliant on sources from the Criminal Justice System;
- and failing to present expert and advocacy testimony.

Unless current reporting practices are reformed, patriarchal societal attitudes towards intimate partner abuse are likely to remain. Isolating and further disadvantaging victims.

Acknowledgements

This study was undertaken in fulfillment of a Master degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice. Special thanks to Dr Christine Bond and Dr Samantha Jeffries for their supervision.

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