Watching VAW:

A survey of the perceptions on violence against women depicted in Philippine television

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Violence against Women is a popular issue when people talk about the struggles of the women. The issue became more popular with the media portrayal of violence directed against the women, through the different kinds of media programs. This research answered how violence against women was depicted in the television programs today. The research also laid objectives helpful for the study, which included knowing how media frames violence against women, or how the issue of violence against women is packaged by the media to the audience being presented; examining what the framing done by media tells about the women of today, or what does this framing imply to the women; and gathering perceptions of people on how the media depicts violence against women. The study used interviewing and focused group discussion to obtain primary information; and along with the secondary data gathered, the data for this study was analyzed using Media Dependency Theory. The theory explained that people were dependent on media as a primary source of information while media depended on people for profit. Marxist-Feminism and Ideological State Apparatus also explained why the media depicted violence against women as patriarchal and how the media produced conventional definitions by which the people were accustomed of. The research found that media depicted violence against women as a reflection of the reality, but lacked in showing the roots of such violence due to their value of their own profit.
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Violence against Women is a popular issue when people talk about the struggles of the women. It has already become a harsh reality that women have to struggle with everyday. And it becomes intensified with the political and/or economic condition of the society where that particular woman lives in. This issue became more popular with the media portrayal of violence directed against the women, through the different kinds of media programs. Gruesome accounts and narratives of violence committed on women have become a common matter in television, radio and print media. As violence against women is portrayed and transmitted through the lenses of media, the issue of violence expands its breadth, and even reaches the people who do not experience the different forms of violence on a first-hand basis. Having access to media provides the people an access to information and access to know the current state of the society, with the society adapting advancements in technology making media readily accessible in the households.

This research explores how violence against women is depicted in the television programs today. Through the interviews and discussions conducted, the researcher has gathered a survey of the perceptions of people on how the media depicts violence against women to make visible the influence of television on the viewers’ perspectives. The accomplishment of the objective would be helpful to the audience to be aware of the ways on how women are depicted in the mainstream media, particularly the television, and would also be of help to others who are researching on the same topic. As violence against women has become a common fare in the television, it would be best to dissect the ways on how media depicts the issues of violence
Watching VAW committed against women. The ways of how violence against women was depicted would be a helpful tool not only for the audience, but also to the authorities to improve their legislations on violence against women.

To obtain the objectives presented above, the researcher used interviewing as a method to obtain primary information. Key people such as Miss Mary Joan Guan of Center of Women’s Resources and Miss Tesa de Vela of Isis International were able to give insights, as well as in-depth interviews from specific respondents. Focused group discussions consisting of three to four participants were also conducted to support the insights provided by the other interviewees. In order to show that there is violence against women depicted in the television, a visual analysis of some of the episodes of recent television programs were conducted. This is also to establish the premise that violence against women is a common fare in the television. Secondary data such as journals and articles were also helpful for this research, as also suggested by the interviewees mentioned above.

Along with these methods, the researcher also set the scope and limitations of the study in order to it narrow down since the issue of violence committed against women is very broad. By means of media, it would refer collectively to all the media technologies which have the forms of television, radio, newspaper, internet, or film. For the purpose of this study, it would only focus on the television as it focuses on the visual aspect of media, and the depiction of violence against women would be evident than in the radio or newspapers. Television is also a form of media that highly influences the perception and awareness of the audience, as this is more accessible to the households. Respondents for the research (both in-depth interviewees and focused group
Watching VAW discussions) were chosen because they are viewers of television programs, regardless of their gender and their age. With regards to violence against women, there are seven forms of violence committed against women, but it would be limited to the physical forms of violence, which are domestic violence, rape, and incest, or sexual harassment. Other forms which were not chosen for the study include vulnerability and sexual discrimination in the workplace, lack of access to health services, prostitution and trafficking, and human rights violations (acts of violence attributable to actions by the state). These three forms of physical violence were also the usual forms of violence being portrayed by the television in the news reports, documentaries, dramas or soap operas among others. Media framing would be defined in the study as the term used in media studies, sociology, and psychology that refers to the social construction of a specific social phenomenon by the mass media sources or specific political or social movements or organizations. As Entman (1993) puts it, framing defines the packaging of the element of rhetoric in such a way as either encourage certain interpretations or discourage others. However, Dunn (1996) simply defines framing as the way of providing a means to construct the world, through segmenting events and meaning making of things. Further explanation of media framing would be discussed in the following chapter.

The objectives would be attained using the aforementioned methods, and would be analyzed using various theoretical frameworks. One would be the Media-System Dependency or the Media Dependency Theory. The Media-System Dependency or Media Dependency Theory is defined by its proponents Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976 as the relationship in which the capacity of the individuals to attain their goals is contingent with the information resources of the whole media system. According to Baran and Davis (2009), the media
dependency theory assumes that the more a person or an individual depends on having his or her needs being met by his or her media use, the more important would be the role played by media in the life of that individual, and hence the more that media would have an influence on that individual (p. 273). This means that as the world becomes more and more complex, people turn to media to make sense of what’s happening around him or her. Media Dependency Theory further states that the more that a person relies on media for information, the more that he or she is influenced by media. The early principles of the theory described media-system dependency in relation to meeting the information needs of the people which were: understanding the social world (i.e. current events), conforming to the social norms (i.e. trends and pop culture), and fantasy-escape from social reality (i.e. entertainment). Dependency was then understood to increase as an individual’s needs increase. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) provided an example, that during large-scale social crises such as war, fantasy-escape needs increase dramatically, which result to the increasing dependency of people on media as a source of entertainment. But through the course of time, the theory developed and suggested that it involves more than just meeting the needs of the audience. In 1989, Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur suggested that there are three factors that influence the dependency on media, and these were: the information needs, the individual personalities (i.e. values), and the stage of development (i.e. age) of the viewers themselves. These factors according to Miller (2005) cause the media to have a “selective influence” over a particular audience. An example given was the lyrics of an explicit song that could mean nothing to a young child, but might be popular among the teenagers or college students and might mean socially unacceptable to the parents and grandparents (p. 250-251). In modern society, media-system dependency is utilized most significantly by political and economic systems. Ball-Rokeach (1985) suggests that there is even interdependence between
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them, with each helping the other attain fundamental goals. The goals of each system create a symmetrical, mutual need or contingency with the other. These systems known as the central dependency systems, rely so heavily on one another wherein efforts to create asymmetry by one system or another are generally circular in nature. The same contingencies are not present in family, educational, religious, and those other systems not considered as central dependencies (Ball-Rokeach, 1985). There were also goal contingencies mentioned by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1985), which included the: (1) Economic-media goal contingency, like teaching and reinforcing free enterprise/capitalist values, linking the production and consumption sectors (advertising), and conflict management; (2) Media-economic goal contingency, profit (via advertising), technology development, corporate growth, and political enhancement; (3) Political-media goal contingency, through teaching and reinforcing political values and norms, maintaining order and obedience, mobilizing the public, and by controlling and winning intra-system conflict; (4) Media-political goal contingency, through judicial protection or facilitation (First Amendment rights), executive and legislative protection, legitimacy, and political conflict and drama as fodder.

Another theoretical framework that could also be used in the analysis is the Ideological State Apparatus framework. Ideological State Apparatus present themselves to the immediate observer, or to the target audience in the form of distinct and specialized institutions. It includes religious institutions (system of the different churches), educational institutions (both private and public schools), the family, the political system (including political parties), and the apparatuses for communication (press, radio, television, etc.). These apparatuses are used to impose ideologies and embed them to the people without the use of force or repression. The research
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would focus on the media being one of the ideological state apparatus that influences the perception of the viewers. According to Wolff (2004), Althusser saw these institutions such as families, churches, schools, mass media, and so on “call” individuals in particular ways that prescribe and enforce: “(a) thinking in specific ways about their identities, relationships with other individuals, and their connections to social institutions, and (b) acting accordingly.”

Althusser was said to have also focused on the “subjectivity” of such interpellated individuals. He saw the Ideological State Apparatuses as literally imposing very particular subjectivities upon the individuals. Ideological State Apparatuses also aim to have such subjects or individuals to imagine that their subjectivities/identities are internally self-generated and not imposed or brought about by the apparatuses (p. 4-5). The ideology of the subject that Ideological State Apparatuses impose on individuals affirms that their subjectivity on perceiving things consists of a radical independence and autonomy. That is, individuals are said to have interpellated as free subjects who caused or originated their own belief systems, their own actions, and their own social institutions.

Feminism is a theory that focuses on the gender dimension of the society, and since the issue at hand is violence against women, the theory would be helpful in explaining the relation of the gender roles portrayed by media. Feminism mainly focuses on the women’s issues, and seeks gender equality not only based on their sexes but also in their social, political, economic and cultural roles. Feminists are “person[s] whose beliefs and behavior[s] are based on feminism.” In this theory, the public sphere affects the private sphere through the policies that the public sphere (specifically the government) is implementing or imposing on the private sphere (household and the individuals). The private sphere is also magnified as being affected by
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the patriarchal or the male-dominated society. Marxist Feminism is a theory that could also be used in the analysis part of this research. This theory draws on the political economy of a certain society with reference to the gender roles present. Marxist Feminism also highlights the occurrence of class contradiction, and states that the struggle over power of women has something to do with the class struggle. It then directs to the question of how the resources are distributed resulting from the power struggle among the people in the society.

In the following chapters, the study will focus on how the violence against women is depicted on television programs today. Moreover, it will provide sections in response to the objectives presented. Looking back, the objectives include knowing how media frames violence against women, or how the issue of violence against women is packaged by the media to the audience being presented; examining what the framing done by media tells about the women of today, or what does this framing imply to the women; and gathering perceptions of people on how the media depicts violence against women. A background of the study would be presented on the next chapter, including the works of various authors on the concepts related to the study, to provide foundation and structure in order to answer the objectives above.
As this research aims to answer the research question presented, and that is to know how violence against women is depicted in the television programs today, there is a need for a brief yet detailed literature to have a background on the concepts and issues that will be used in analyzing the data to be gathered. This chapter would also discuss some of the literature that would answer some of the objectives presented in the previous chapter. These objectives include knowing how media frames violence against women, or how the issue of violence against women is packaged by the media to the audience being presented; examining what the framing done by media tells about the women of today, or what does this framing imply to the women; and gathering perceptions of people on how the media depicts violence against women.

Media framing is a term used in the media studies, sociology and in psychology and refers to a social construction of a specific social phenomenon by the mass media sources or specific political or social movements or organizations. Entman (1993) states that: “A frame defines the packaging of an element of rhetoric in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others.” These frames provide the people or the viewers an immediate and easy way to view and process information. However, Dunn (1996) stated that:

The notion that the “world is a ‘systematic place’ is at odds with post-modern assumptions, but somehow provides the epistemological underpinning of a pre-modernist literature, of scientific method, of the cognitive psychology, and of everyday experience. Systemization is performed by the culture itself as it assimilates and orders the world,
imposing the structure on what is amorphous. Framing thus provides a means of “constructing” a world […] of segmenting events within that world, and so on.”

Not only does media packages that element of rhetoric to certain interpretations, but it also “constructs” the world by segmenting or selecting events that are in the world. Dunn (1996) continues by saying that we frame what we read in very much the same way as we negotiate the solid objects and the cultural artifacts that surround us through exercising both our depth perception and our peripheral vision. This exercise, he explains, that intertextuality operates wherein authors enter into relation between readers and texts by framing us within the text and by ‘framing’ us into believing that we participate in a repertory of supposedly shared assumptions. The relation between the readers and the text could also be seen in the media effects research, that though its course, there is relatively little attention paid to how news is framed, and it is still less been written on the political consequences of the media frames. The frames are said to be the central organizing idea for making sense of the relevant events and suggesting what is the issue at hand. The news and information that is being used by the media has no intrinsic value unless they are embedded in a meaningful context which organizes and gives coherence. These news stories were sometimes understood as narratives, including information and factual elements, and at the same time carry an implicit message. The medium, where the information is being delivered, is the ultimate message. (London, 1993)

The construction of the world that media framing does could be found in one literature by Lily Chen (2004) titled the Evaluation in Media Texts: A Cross-Cultural Linguistic Investigation. It is said that it is certainly true that the rise of mass communication, especially
Watching VAW television, has brought profound changes to the ideological landscape. “The increasing variety and liveliness of cultural entertainment forms, together with a reduced, explicitly propagandist content, has resulted in a proliferation of new symbolic forms. This does not mean, however, that the media are no longer doing ideological work or politically dominating.” Two countries were being compared in the literature, showing two kinds of framing by their respective media. China and United Kingdom were from the east and the west, from Asia and from Europe, but we could not generalize that the data that the author gathered was being applied to all their neighboring countries. In the case of the United Kingdom, “much work has been done on debunking, for example, the idea that news coverage of events is the unbiased reporting of “hard facts” (e.g., Fowler 1991; Glasgow University Media Group 1976, 1980; Hall et al. 1978, 1980)” (Chen, 2004). The literature of United Kingdom was also tagged by Fowler in 1991 as being good in analyzing the “social construction of news” through their “process of selection” (i.e., choices about what has "news value") and “transformation” (i.e., choices about how news is presented - often linguistic choices, but also involving elements such as lay-out, headline size, and position in a newspaper (e.g., Glasgow University Media Group 1976, 1980; Hall et al. 1978; Philo 1983) (Chen, 2004). There were also attempts by the UK to match what they call the “situational factors” with the “linguistic features” in written media texts – which is to look at how these situational constraints such as the commercial pressures and the assessed expectations of the target audience act in influencing the linguistic features chosen in presenting the news. It matters heavily on how the media frames, packages, and presents the situation in order to appeal to their target audience. In China, it has over been a decade or so that there have been significant changes in their news media. According to a former Chinese journalist named Zhao, it is still (as of the year of publication) the Chinese Communist Party having an “overt political control” of
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the news media, which role is to serve as a government mouthpiece. (Chen, 2004) Another comparison made in the article was that the mainstream Chinese media tend to accentuate the positive, while the British and the British-influenced newspapers appear to thrive on conflict and negative news stories. Matter of differences is due to various factors. It could be attributed that the media company’s reason for advertising and reporting is to run for profit or for commercial purposes only. It could also be of the influence in power of the company’s authority, wherein he wants to accentuate news which he/she has a bias on. Or it could be the reporter or the writer’s own perspectives and ideologies. These reasons could be some of the factors why media frames the news articles that they produce and report on different modes of media to reach their targeted audience.

On Violence Against Women

Media frames different issues, ranging from political, economic, cultural and social issues. One of which is violence against women, which is a technical term that collectively refers to the violent actions that are primary or are exclusively directed and committed against the women sector. According to Kofi Annan, in a United Nations General Assembly held at New York in June 2000, “Violence against Women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.”

Violence Against Women has various categories, either as domestic or state violence; either as physical, cultural, social, or emotional violence as has been enumerated by various online sites as executed through the following: acid throwing, bride burning, murder of pregnant
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women, human trafficking, harassment, physical abuse, sexual slavery, and forced prostitution of women especially minors, sexual violence such as rape, violence against prostitutes, female genital cutting, and infibulations as among others. In the literature Gender, Threat/Control-Override Delusions and Violence by Brent Teasdale, Eric Silver and John Monahan in 2006, violence was defined in three groups: which is as (1) batteries that resulted in physical injury or involved the use of a weapon, (2) threats made with weapon in hand, or (3) sexual assaults (Appelbaum, Robbins, & Monahan, 2000) In the Philippines, the Center for Women’s Resources have classified violence against women to seven forms, as a result of the rising poverty in the country. These seven forms include (1) domestic violence, (2) rape and incest, (3) sexual harassment, (4) job insecurity, and vulnerability and sexual discrimination in the workplace, (5) inaccessibility of health services, (6) prostitution and trafficking, and (7) acts of violence attributable to actions by the state. In Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence against Women (1995) by Michael P. Johnson, a graphic representation of the general control of men over women was shown. The graphic representation shows that the person, who initiates abuses, in this case usually the men, uses any combination of the said tactics that would eventually (1) control his partner, and (2) satisfy his need to display control over his partner.

There have also been various studies and research in the Philippines that shows the trend on the violence against women. The number of Violence against Women Cases Reported to the Philippine National Police is shown below, dating from 1997 to 2009. The latest year on the graph showed the highest number of VAW cases, ballooning to 9,845 cases. It has a record of its lowest cases during the 2006, having cases not more than 5000. The trend, however, cannot
conclude if the incidence of Violence against Women has decreased or increased in the country because data are based only from what was reported to PNP. After the downward trend after 2001, the trend changed to an upward trend from 2006 up to the present. (See Figure 1)

Number of Violence against Women cases reported to the Philippine National Police from 1997 to 2009

In the next figure, it showed the breakdown or the distribution of the cases of Violence against Women. Some of the reasons brought up include Physical Injuries and Battering, RA 9262, Threats, Concubinage, Rape, Attempted Rape, Acts of Lasciviousness, and Others. Physical Injuries hold the record of the highest number of cases, showing that a large portion of the women experiencing violence are suffering from the physical abuse of person/s having higher authority or power. It was almost half of the cases, or 45.5% of the cases came from this group. Next highest record came from the cases inclusive in RA 9262, having a percentage of 17.8. Threats, Concubinage, Rape, Attempted Rape, and Acts of Lasciviousness share the remaining one-third of the pie. (See Figure 2)
Percent Distribution of Average Reported Violence against Women Cases in the Philippines from 1999 to 2009

These statistics show an alarming scene not only for the women sector, but also for the current government. Despite the existence of the act that is supposed to protect women and children, there is still a significant increase in the cases being reported to the authorities.

According to the Center for Women’s Resources, the trends show that the cases of violence against women continue to increase because of the rising poverty in the country. The feminization of poverty, alongside the pervasive social and cultural practices that discriminate against women; these limit the women’s opportunities and access to the economic and social resources. In the Asia Pacific, there are numerous cultural practices which could be considered discriminatory towards women and in which perpetuates forms of violence against women. The cultural and the religious leaders, who are predominantly men, hold tremendous power and
In domestic violence, women become direct targets of aggression and physical assault from men in the households because of the increasing joblessness, employment instability, and food insecurity. According to the 2004 study by the US Department of Justice, it was revealed that unemployed men are more likely to become abusive than men who are employed. Alcoholism, gambling, and illicit drug use were used by men to escape their predicament and frustration; and they resort to aggression and commit violence against their wives or children. The trends that the violence against women cases escalated in the form of domestic violence were shown in the supported statistics provided by the Center for Women’s Resources (CWR). Per CWR monitoring based in PNP data, 12,072 reported cases of battering were reported in 2010 or approximately one woman was beaten every 43 minutes. This trend shows that women are vulnerable to violence even in the premises of their own houses and this continues to escalate in terms of the number of their incidence. It also indicated a 75% increase from the statistics of 2009, wherein, 6,888 cases were reported. Cases of domestic violence experienced by children were also increasing alarmingly, as shown in the data provided by the Center for Women’s Resources and the PNP. Even cases of rape and incest reached an alarming level, having a 35% increase in the reported cases of rape and incest in 2010. What is more alarming is that the significant increase of cases reported involved minor victims or female children. Moreover, even the resistance from the victims was also prevented through the use of propagandas. Studies have shown that governments and its politicians tend to manipulate the information in order to prevent dissent using two strategies. These two strategies were the disinformation or releasing partial and
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unverified information, and the promotion of a media spin on a new issue to drown out the earlier or previous issue. Even sexual harassment cases also increased in 2010, showing a 31% increase from the cases being reported from the previous year.

The increased number of reported cases of violence against women was just a number that is only the tip of the iceberg, as CWR believes that more women choose not to disclose their traumatic experiences about violence against them, or the harassment that they experience. In their 2003 study, they disclosed that women who have experienced such violence consider such experience as part of the disadvantage of being a woman. Thus, lowering their self-esteem and making themselves used to those harassments and violence that they thought are typical practice in a feudal-patriarchal society.

And despite the legal protection which were afforded or given to the women and children, which is the Republic Act 9262, or the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act, the incidence of violence against women continues to escalate and remain unabated due to the defects of the implementation of the law. It’s effective enforcement and implementation, according to the CWR, is hindered by the prevailing feudal and patriarchal viewpoint that discriminates against women and creates a culture of tolerance for these acts of violence committed against the women and children. Even the Anti-Rape Law or RA 8353 has unsuccessfully prevented cases of rape and incest, and failed in providing legal relief for the women who are victims of violence.
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Even the media contribute to the “gendered and racialized” constructions of the urban areas. Selective news coverage of urban crimes, for instance, perpetuates Americans’ disproportionate fear on African American men (Glassner 1999). The gendered geography of fear that the women experience and how they assess their vulnerability and fear in public or outdoors can be greatly influenced by how the media create social constructions of the urban areas.

This media construction of a “gendered and racialized” perspective of the urban areas influences the perception and hence, the awareness of the people. One group which was highly influenced by media is the youth. Though they are also influenced by the other institutions, such as the family, the school and the religious institutions, the media plays a big part in shaping the awareness of the youth in this technologically advanced time. Kimberly Gross and Lisa D’Ambrosio’s work in 2004, Framing Emotional Response, states that framing affects the emotional response as well as the cognitive appraisal theories of emotion from social psychology. Such theories posit that the emotional responses are somehow rooted in some cognitive context. “When people evaluate a situation, they experience emotions according to the information and beliefs accessible to them at that time, as well as their feelings of whether the situation violates their values or affects their pursuit of a goal.” The literature highlights that the audience viewing such media were affected not only in their course of thinking, but also with their emotional feedbacks.

In William P. Eveland, Jr. and Dhavan V. Shah’s work in 2003 titled The Impact of Individual and Interpersonal Factors on Perceived News Media Bias, there was an enumeration
of the diverse labels on the perceptions of media bias and their antecedents. They were
umerated as media credibility, trust of the people in the news, and the hostile-media
phenomenon. Scholars who focus on the media credibility look onto the source variables of the
news such as media organization or the actual content of the news and consider those to be of
prime importance. (Lichter, Amundson, & Noyes, 1988; Lichter & Noyes, 1996; Lowry &
Shidler, 1995; Sigelman, 1973) Those who trust the news argue that the individual cognition and
the motivational factors like their involvement and attitude strength should be the focus of
scholarly inquiry and be given emphasis.

Scholars who perceive bias in news reports overwhelmingly perceive this bias to run in a
counter-attitudinal direction. An example in the literature states that “Democrats believe that
news is tilted in favor of Republicans, and Republicans believe that news is tilted in favor of
Democrats. Results of both studies suggested that when bias was perceived it was more likely to
be seen as bias against one's own position. Moreover, bias perceptions were more likely among
those who were strongly committed to the relevant issue (i.e., partisans) than among those who
were neutral (see also Dalton et al., 1998). The spiral-of-silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1993),
for instance, suggests that perceptions of the climate of public opinion are drawn not only from
examinations of representations of public opinion in news content, but also from the frequency
of opinions heard in public discussion.” (Eveland, Jr. & Shah, 2003)

According to Eveland & Shah (2003), the perceptions of individuals on media reality
may be shaped by a range of factors. This includes the cues within the media environment
concerning press bias particularly among conservatives, given the recurrent claims of liberal bias
Watching VAW in media self-coverage; the individuals' ideological leanings and extent of partisanship; and the ideological similarity or dissimilarity of political discussion partners. These three factors may operate both independently and interdependently shape bias perceptions of the individuals. They further stated that:

“This is because partisans who surround themselves with people sharing their political views may develop a distorted view of news bias. This would be above and beyond the effects of party identification or extent of partisanship because such interpersonal environments may not only reinforce and strengthen previously held beliefs about media bias, but may also serve as conduits of information concerning elite claims of bias.”
As stated in the first chapter of this study, that in order to show that there is violence against women depicted in the television, an analysis of some of the episodes of recent television programs was conducted. This is also to establish the premise that violence against women is a common fare in the television. In the programs of GMA 7, there were afternoon programs which were recently aired that showed violence against women. Though the physical violence that occurred in the show only lasted for a number of episodes, it was still a highlight that shows the occurrence of violence committed against women.

Some of the television programs of media portrayed women as victims of violence. An episode of Kokak during the first week of February showed a scene wherein a man was beating the mother of the female protagonist, because she of her decisions and thoughts in contradiction with that man. The woman suffered from beating, and was tied and locked up in a dark room for days. The scene, though not centered on the protagonist, showed that the violence committed against women. The woman was also helpless as she could not escape from that room even though her daughter and the other household staff were in that house. On another program entitled Ikaw Lang ang Mamahalin, the female protagonist was constantly abused physically during the early part of the story by her employer, because of being a maid who does not satisfy the requirements of that employer. There were scenes wherein the protagonist was locked up in a dog house, or beaten until she got bruises in her arms. She was constantly picked on by her employer as the maid was only relying and depending on her for income and for shelter. Later on, she was able to get out of that condition with the help of the male protagonist. She was also
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able to love comfortably afterwards, after the program revealed that she was a daughter of a well-off man whom she got separated when she was young. These programs were just examples of how violence committed against women are portrayed in the television programs. The scenes have explicitly shown the physical violence, and formed a crucial part of the storyline of the drama. The next section would elaborate further on how the television depicted violence against women.

Depiction of Media on Violence against Women

These episodes of the television programs let us know that there is a recurring pattern in television programs by which they depict violence committed against women as part of the stories they construct. From these programs, we can see how the issue of violence committed against women is depicted. One, it constructs conventional definitions of women as victims of violence. By conventional definition, this means that there is a characterization of women born out of the media portrayal and that this characterization has been accepted by the audience as acceptable, normal or customary. Mary Joan Guan of the Center of Women’s Resources stated that media has a portrayal of boxing one framework of what a woman is, that media produces conventional definitions of what defines or constitutes a woman (Translated, Personal Communication, 2011). Guan further elaborated that there are certain points in a program that depicts these conventional definitions. First, women are portrayed as ‘complete’ only if they have a relationship. Women in programs are happy if there is a corresponding man that would save her, or that would help her. In the soap operas or dramas, the beginning of the story shows that protagonists are the women who were mistreated or are helpless. They often cry at the first part but will eventually fight back to those who mistreated them with the help of their male
counterpart or partner. Both the programs Kokak and Ikaw lang ang Mamahalin of GMA7 showed the role of the male protagonists as those who help the female protagonists to overcome their distress and difficult living conditions. Looking back, on the episode of Kokak during the first week of February which showed a scene wherein a man was beating the mother of the protagonist showed the woman as being helpless. The woman suffered from beating, and was tied and locked up in a dark room for days. This portrayal of women was a common fare for women who contradict the men who were very assertive of their ideas. Second, women were always subjected to authorities in the television programs. Guan continues that there is a feudal portrayal in the media that shows that women were always dependent and submissive to those authorities. From the same set of programs mentioned above, there were scenes which show that the women in these programs depend on the authorities or influential figures that possesses wealth and power. Women were further seen as helpless under the guise of those who are wealthy and powerful, and hence strengthen the conventional definitions portrayed by media. Third, programs which include women who were assertive from the beginning of the drama were usually the antagonists, or the roles that help make the protagonists more helpless, abused and mistreated. De Vela states that these portrayal or depiction of media of women as victims and helpless is very problematic (Personal Communication, 2011). And not only through these three main points mentioned above does the media produce conventional definitions of women. Even the mere physical characteristics were given conventional definitions on what is beautiful and what is not. These conventional definitions on the physical characteristics of women were not only shown on the television dramas and soap operas but also on the television commercials, like the advertisements of beauty products. Fair or white skin, nicely shaped nose, pimple free cheeks, and a curved shape of the body were some of the usual characteristics of women that
Watching VAW were portrayed by media and seen on the television that were accepted by the audience as acceptable, normal or customary. In one drama shown in GMA7, entitled Nita Negrita, the protagonist was continuously bullied as for having dark complexion. The conventional definition of having a fair and white skin then contributes to the characteristic of the protagonist as a helpless or mistreated person. All these characteristics or conventional definition enumerated above boxes up or frames the women in a specific framework that people get used to by merely watching television programs.

And through these depictions of women on television programs, through the conventional definitions that they produced, the media is said to have eventually desensitized or simplified the issue of violence against women. One participant from the Focused Group Discussion raises that violence committed against women were so normal these days that many of the population just shrugs it off whenever they see it on the television and don’t think that it’s not good (Personal Communication, 2011). Thus, the media portrayal of violence committed against women being a common fare in the television programs and dramas lessens the magnitude of the issue. This also happens as what Guan says that media portrayal of violence against women also simplifies the issue because they do not explain comprehensively what the issue is all about and that the portrayal of the media fails to analyze the root of such violence (Translated, Personal Communication, 2011). It always starts and ends with the depiction of women victims of violence, without clearly showing or explaining why they are being violated. De Vela also believes in this idea that media’s role of raising awareness by its portrayal of violence against women do not extend to providing the roots, actions and solutions to the struggle of women being victims of violence (Personal Communication, 2011).
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However, it is a good note that the depiction of violence committed against women on the television mirrors or reflects what is happening in reality. The current state of the violence committed against women continue to escalate as the years passed, and this might be the reason why the depiction of violence committed against women has been a common fare in the television programs. Specifically, the publication of Center for Women’s Resources, Ulat Lila (2011) showed that domestic violence has escalated, in reference to the reported cases of battering in 2010, wherein one woman was beaten every 43 minutes. (p. 18) Guan supports this by saying that physical injuries committed against women hold the record of the highest number of cases, showing that a large portion of the women experiencing violence are suffering from the physical abuse of person/s having higher authority or power (Translated, Personal Communication, 2011). The reports and trends of various studies on violence against women show that there were increasing numbers of cases of violence committed against women especially among the younger women. These cases involving younger women mostly involve cases of rape or sexual harassment. According to NCSB (2010), one in every five women aged 15-49 experienced physical violence since age 15. What is more alarming is that many of the cases of violence against women often go unreported (Mallorca-Bernabe, 2000). And despite legal protection afforded to women and children through RA 9262 or the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children (VAWC) Act, incidence of VAW has remained unabated due to defects in the implementation of the law (Guan, Personal Communication, 2011) The effective enforcement and implementation of this act is also hindered by the prevailing feudal and patriarchal viewpoint that discriminates against women and creates a culture of tolerance for acts of violence committed against women and children (CWR, 2010). Looking back in the previous discussion, these trends on the current state of the violence against women were reflected
Watching VAW through the portrayal of media of violence in their dramas and programs. On the other hand, it could also be stated that the depiction of the media of violence and their production of conventional definitions might contribute to the wrong notion of the people against the women of our society, leading to the violence committed against them.

Implications on the Women of our Society

The implications of these depictions on the women of our society were the result of the continuous portrayal of media of violence committed against women. These suggest that the society is still patriarchal or that women were still dominated by the men. Guan and the other two interview respondents all stated that the premise that men are still overpowering women in the society, and this could be shown in the depiction of the media of women in their programs. They stated that there are more cases of violence in women done by men than their same sex, and they also said that based on the Filipino social norms, men are more aggressive than women and they are more prone in doing violent things to be able to get what they wanted. (Personal Communication, 2011) One respondent also stated that media showed that men overpowered women because women that are portrayed in the television are helpless (Personal Communication, 2011). The domination of men over the women in the television programs could be evidently seen, as the female leads in the programs seek the aid of the male characters and depend on them whenever they need help. This showed that the women were helpless without the presence of a character that would help them, which were mostly represented by men. Looking back, the programs mentioned in this chapter exhibited this kind of setting by which they portrayed women as helpless, and in need of the male counterparts to support them from their distress and difficult living conditions.
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Another implication of the depictions on the women of our society that resulted from the continuous portrayal of media of violence committed against women, include the portrayal of the issue of violence against women as a source of profit. Guan stated that media, though they claim that they are in the service of the people, the foremost objective of their existence was still business. And that if they saw violence against women as being popular with the viewers, they bombard the people with this issue and make it a usual content of their programs. (Personal Communication, 2011) And this was also the reason why issues like violence against women get weak or simplified in nature, by bombarding the audience with the same themes were women act as victims of violence. There was no doubt that sex and violence is really marketable. Guan also shares that through their experience in submitting press releases, what were usually sold among viewers were those pertaining to issues of violence against women. Another interview respondent stated that people nowadays were always tuned in to watching programs which show that women were abused and helpless and were seeking help from others. The respondent further stated that the more that the media portrays violence, the more audience they get, hence the more profit that they earn from it. He further elaborated:

“It’s pitiful yet they still film it and air it, whether if it is raped by a person or a group, battered by her husband, boyfriend so on and so forth they still interview her in those harsh and inconsiderate questions, without caring much to her feelings and pain she’s going through. This is [one of the] cons of media, though they are helping others to understand what happened and happening but still they are hurting and putting the victim in to a scene that no one would be wished to be in there. Like putting your rape into the limelight and no one wants that” (Personal Communication, 2011)
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This response could be attributed to the media’s inefficiency of not showing the roots of the violence and just merely depicting or portraying the violence that took place against the women. This showed that there was a shallow perspective on the issue of violence against women and the depiction of women by the media, as they do not address the roots of this violence nor they provide solutions to the problem. As this kind of issue get a lot of viewers, a participant of the conducted Focused Group Discussion stated that though it is informative in a way, that they show or reflect what is happening in the women of our society, the media portrayal is still profit oriented because they chose this issue to attract more viewers and gain more profit (Personal Communication, 2011).

Perceptions on Media Portrayal of Violence against Women

These implications discussed above brought by media’s depiction of violence against women influence the perception of the viewers who were watching the television programs shown by the media. The perception of the viewers was influenced because they think that the media is a primary source of information. The media according to Guan is responsible for the transmission and dissemination of information about violence against women may it be in the form of print, visual or radio. Media also influences the perception of the viewers since they show a real life situation and mirrors what is happening around especially to women (Personal Communication, 2011). The perception of people from watching the programs depicting violence against women varies from positive to negative notes. The participants of the Focused Group Discussions conducted were able to provide some of the general perceptions of viewers watching television programs that depicted violence against women. Some participants say that the portrayal of the media on violence committed against women is very realistic, and that there
is no trace of exaggeration on things because what were shown really happens in reality. They also added that the media portrayal is good, in that it showed the extent of the violence. While others only took notice of the media’s depiction, others looked into the role of media in their portrayal of violence against women. Some participants from the Focused Group Discussion stated that media is a good medium of campaign against violence against women because it makes people aware that there exists violence committed against women. This media portrayal would be particularly helpful now that most of the people are involved with almost all forms of medium of communication and information dissemination wherein it would be more encompassing than the traditional way of campaigning like posters (Personal Communication, 2011) Guan also addressed that media is a good tool to inform others about violence against women, and that “The media helps in awareness campaign. The problem is, if their role is incomplete or not comprehensive, or stops at awareness. And in that awareness, the danger is that, the explanation is incomplete” (Personal Communication, 2011) The pros and the cons of media portrayal were also known to the people, as the interview respondent stated that the media portrayal of violence and crimes among helps the people, “especially the women to be more cautious and aware about the pros and cons on the actions undertaken by the hideous people behind it and they are going to be reminded what kind of doings do bad people can do to them every time they go out. They are more aware that streets are no longer safe for a girl, a lady or a woman to walk to” (Personal Communication, 2011). De Vela supported the claim that the people are aware, but she also made a remark that the awareness that media portrayal brought to the viewers was too shallow, because it did not explore much about the violence against women and just depicted violence as committed against the women (Personal Communication, 2011). A contrasting response from a participant of the Focused Group Discussion however stated that the
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media portrayal is showing more of physical violence, while the violence against women covers a lot of different types. Media portrayal was said to have insufficiently portrayed what violence against women really was, and only focused on the physical violence as this is more attractive to the viewers. The participant also stated that media only adds drama and usually presents it one-sidedly. Another participant from the same Focused Group Discussion stated that there were some parts that were presented in an exaggerated way that they were too wild or eccentric to what really happens in reality (Personal Communication, 2011).

Based on the data presented above, the current state of violence against women continuously deteriorates, hence the increase of the reported cases of violence directed against the women. This does not include the many unreported cases of violence which they experience, yet they do not disclose due to sensitivity or fear of sharing their experiences. The statistics shown and presented in the background of the study that showed the trend on violence against women also supported this conclusion that the cases of violence against women alarmingly increased and affected not only the lives of the women but also the children – as cases of sexual harassment, rape and domestic violence being reported involve more children, thus bringing down the average age of victims. Reported cases of violence against women were also delivered nowadays through reports on the television, in news reports, and through the different kinds of programs that a network has.

Programs such as television dramas and soap operas were also used as means to deliver the issues of violence committed against women. As they deliver the issues on violence against women, the media was said to provide conventional definitions of what a woman is, and this prevents or limits the perception of the viewers as they only know of the construct of woman that
Watching VAW is fixed or was defined according to the definitions provided by the media. The portrayal of media also lets the viewers perceive that the women were helpless enough that they need a male counterpart to help them, in order to achieve success or social status. Though, even with the conventional definitions provided by the media, their portrayal of the issues on violence against women help the viewers to raise their awareness regarding the experiences of the women who are victims of violence, and the seriousness of the issue which is disturbingly ballooning in numbers. This also makes the media a tool for channeling and relaying issues to help people aware, through their portrayal of issues in different approaches. Using the Framing Theory, the television as a form of media could influence the awareness and hence the decision of an individual or the viewer through the frames that it portrays. According to the respondents of the in-depth interview and the participants of the focused group discussion, the media helps in the awareness of the audience, as they were responsible for channeling into them the real life situation of the women who are victims of violence, and that it was an effective tool in relaying issues such as violence against women. They also see media as an effective and important factor in providing the pros and the cons – the good and bad angles of the issue which also leads the youth to critically think how to analyze and perceive the issue. As the people also continue to see the issues of violence against women through the media, they see it as having an important role in their lives; hence, the continuation of the audience to remain dependent to these forms of media, and thus the continuity of the influence of media on raising their awareness and shaping their perceptions. This is supported by the Media Dependency Theory of Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1989). The theory states that not only the people depend on media for information, but more like a two-way dependence observed between the media and the audience. One of the goal contingencies of this theory states that media has an economic related goal (media-economic
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goal contingency), wherein they also depend the audience for their profit, technology
development, corporate growth, and for political enhancement.

The dependency of the media on their audience explained by the Media Dependency
Theory of Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1989) explained why the media, who portrays the violence
against women, also sees the issue of violence against women not only as a social or political
issue but also as their source of profit. As their foremost objective for staying in the public
sphere is for business, they chose issues which would gain popularity among their viewers.
Gaining more viewers means they would be gaining more profit, so the issues that would entice
the people or the youth to watch would be benefitting for the media companies. As the issue of
violence against women continue to become rampant in our society making it a hot issue, and
with the experiences of the women that could get sympathy or empathy from the viewers, media
uses this opportunity to portray violence against women not only to inform, reflect reality, and
raise awareness of the viewers, but also to earn good terms of finances. This goes well with the
capitalist tendencies of businesses to find ways to earn profit even with putting into risk the basic
social services, social justice and equality.

And as the media also holds the power through their accumulation of wealth and the
dependence of the audience to media as a primary source of information, it becomes a tool or
apparatus for to imposing ideologies and embedding those ideologies to the viewers without the
use of force or repression. As explained by the Ideological State Apparatus, media is one of the
apparatuses used to impress the people with information without forcing them just to believe the
validity of information. Looking back, the conventional definitions of women and men produced
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by media were embedded to the people as the normal or the standard characteristics that a woman or a man should possess. And these definitions were imposed to the people without the use of force, but through the constant portrayal of media of violence against women, with women as being helpless and the men being capable beings that would help the women.

But also through the portrayal of media by which the audience depends on for information, the audience saw the violence of women as the portrayal of the dominance of the men over the women, as the television programs often portray women as the helpless victims, and the men as powerful or capable characters that would help the women. This shows that the men were still illustrated to be standing a level above the women, either through the use of physical dominance, use of force and violence as a means of showing hierarchy or by the mere roles that media portray. And the viewers were instilled with this setting, because of the media portrayal of women as helpless, and being subjected easily to the will of their male counterpart. The women being helpless were even portrayed with their character being deprived in terms of wealth, power or influence in the environment they were situated in. The Marxist Feminist Theory could be of use, in which it states that there occurs class contradiction, and states that the struggle over power of women has something to do with the class struggle. The helpless women portrayed in dramas are usually underprivileged in terms of wealth; and as media portrayal depicts violence against women as reflected of what is happening in the reality, the women of our society were said to be hindered by them being underprivileged and helpless and their gender being a woman, to be empowered and comparable with men. Having said that, violence against women depicted in the television programs of media evidently portrays that women usually
Watching VAW become victims of violence due to their economic conditions and their predetermined social roles.
Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the data presentation and analysis discussed on the previous chapter, the current state of violence against women continuously deteriorates, hence the increase of the reported cases of violence directed against the women. The statistics that have been shown and presented in the background of the study that showed the trend on violence against women also supported this conclusion that the cases of violence against women alarmingly increased and affected the lives of the women. The issues of violence against women were also delivered nowadays through reports on the television, in news reports, and through the different kinds of programs that a network has.

Programs such as television dramas and soap operas were also used as means to deliver the issues of violence committed against women. They deliver the issues on violence against women, and provide conventional definitions of what a woman is, and this prevents or limits the perception of the viewers as they only know of the construct of woman that is fixed or was defined according to the definitions provided by the media. The portrayal of media also lets the viewers perceive that the women were helpless enough that they need a male counterpart to help them, in order to achieve success or social status. Though, even with the conventional definitions provided by the media, their portrayal of the issues on violence against women help the viewers to raise their awareness regarding the experiences of the women who are victims of violence, and the seriousness of the issue which is disturbingly ballooning in numbers. This also makes the media a tool for channeling and relaying issues to help people aware, through their portrayal of issues in different approaches.
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It was also shown that people were dependent on media for primary information and the media is also dependent on the people in return. The dependency of the media on their audience explained by the Media Dependency Theory of Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1989) also explained why the media, who portrays the violence against women, sees the issue of violence against women not only as a social or political issue but also as their source of profit. As their foremost objective for staying in the public sphere is for business, they chose issues which would gain popularity among their viewers. Gaining more viewers means they would be gaining more profit, so the issues that would entice the people or the youth to watch would be benefitting for the media companies. As the issue of violence against women continue to become rampant in our society making it a hot issue, and with the experiences of the women that could get sympathy or empathy from the viewers, media uses this opportunity to portray violence against women not only to inform, reflect reality, and raise awareness of the viewers, but also to earn good terms of finances. This goes well with the capitalist tendencies of businesses to find ways to earn profit even with putting into risk the basic social services, social justice and equality.

The conventional definitions of women and men produced by media were embedded to the people as the normal or the standard characteristics that a woman or a man should possess. These definitions were imposed to the people without the use of force, but through the constant portrayal of media of violence against women, with women as being helpless and the men being capable beings that would help the women.

In the portrayal of media by which the audience depends on for information, the audience saw the violence of women as the portrayal of the dominance of the men over the women, as the television programs often portray women as the helpless victims, and the men as powerful or capable characters that would help the women. And the viewers were instilled with this setting,
Watching VAW because of the media portrayal of women as helpless, and being subjected easily to the will of their male counterpart. The women being helpless were even portrayed with their character being deprived in terms of wealth, power or influence in the environment they were situated in. The helpless women portrayed in dramas are usually underprivileged in terms of wealth; and as media portrayal depicts violence against women as reflected of what is happening in the reality, the women of our society were said to be hindered by them being underprivileged and helpless and their gender being a woman, to be empowered and comparable with men. Having said that, violence against women depicted in the television programs of media evidently portrays that women usually become victims of violence due to their economic conditions and their predetermined social roles.

The awareness of the people were also mentioned, but could further be discussed on future studies which would look at the level of awareness on violence against women that people had as a result of watching television programs. There was awareness, but the level of awareness that media had influence the people was not indicated. It would also be good to further elaborate which of the age groups was most influenced by the media, as it is an apparatus imposing ideology without force or repression. A policy review of the Violence against Women policies could also be a good venture for next study, on how effective these policies were in the continuation of violence committed against the women.

To end, the viewers perceived through media that the society remains dominated by men, that the dominance of men over helpless women being subjects of violence portrayed by the media shows the patriarchal society. The current state of violence against women also continues to remain widespread as the continuance of dominance of men exists. Media is also seen by the people as an effective tool in raising their consciousness or awareness on violence against
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women. As television is a readily accessed medium today, more people could easily access the information being transmitted by the media. Making it easily accessible also makes it more effective and influential to the people as an apparatus. Yet despite the awareness that media induce on the viewers, the violence still persists, the media gains profit from portraying violence directed against women, they get to influence the perception and awareness of people how they want it to, and the women subjected to violence continuously struggles for their rights.
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