

PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING JOURNALISTS IN
REPORTING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Sevara Ishmuratova

Independent Researcher, National Centre of the
Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada gender zo'ravonlik tushunchasi, uning huquqiy va sotsiologik ta'riflari hamda amaliyotda uchraydigan asosiy shakllari tahlil etiladi. Muallif qonun hujjatlari va xalqaro standartlar asosida jismoniy, jinsiy, psixologik va iqtisodiy zo'ravonlik turlariga alohida e'tibor qaratadi. Shundan kelib chiqib, maqolada milliy va xalqaro tajribalar miqyosli tahlil qilinadi va gender zo'ravonlikka qarshi samarali choralar belgilanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: gender zo'ravonlik, jinsiy tenglik, jismoniy zo'ravonlik, psixologik bosim, CEDAW.

Abstract: This article analyzes the concept of gender-based violence, its legal and sociological definitions, as well as the main forms encountered in practice. Based on national legislation and international standards, the author pays particular attention to physical, sexual, psychological, and economic forms of violence. Accordingly, the article provides a comprehensive analysis of national and international experiences and identifies effective measures to combat gender-based violence.

Key words: gender-based violence, gender equality, physical violence, psychological pressure, CEDAW.

Аннотация: В данной статье анализируется понятие гендерного насилия, его правовые и социологические определения, а также основные формы, встречающиеся на практике. На основе национального законодательства и международных стандартов особое внимание уделяется физическому, сексуальному, психологическому и экономическому видам насилия. В этой связи в статье проводится комплексный анализ национального и международного опыта и определяются эффективные меры по противодействию гендерному насилию.

Ключевые слова: гендерное насилие, гендерное равенство, физическое насилие, психологическое давление, КЛДЖ (CEDAW).

Reporting on gender-based violence is not a routine act of information delivery for a journalist. The moment a journalist engages with this topic, they cease to be a mere observer and become a witness. A witness, however, is always accountable. Every written sentence touches someone's inner world; it may break someone's silence or, conversely, force them into deeper silence.

The essence of responsibility in covering gender-based violence lies in the journalist's awareness of the weight of their words. An editorial error in political reporting may be corrected or rejected. A careless sentence about violence, however, can remain a lifelong wound. Responsibility in this context is not synonymous with neutrality. On the contrary, neutrality often approaches indifference. If a journalist reporting on gender-based violence limits themselves to the notion that "there are two sides," they risk concealing existing power imbalances. Where violence occurs, equality does not.

Journalists frequently work under the pressure of speed. Yet, in the context of gender-based violence, haste does not grant informational advantage it increases the risk of harm. A delayed but

thoughtful piece may be socially more valuable than an early yet superficial report¹. Thus, responsibility also entails the courage to forgo speed. It is reflected as well in language choices. In the reporting environment, a survivor may feel heard or feel judged once again. A responsible journalist attempts to anticipate this. Journalists often believe they speak on behalf of the public. However, in matters of gender-based violence, the public itself is not always just. Public opinion may deny violence or even justify it. At this point, journalistic responsibility is demonstrated not by following public sentiment but by resisting it. This is not the easy path. Not every detail must be disclosed. Sometimes the most responsible decision is knowing where to stop. Thus, journalistic responsibility in reporting on gender-based violence has clear boundaries.

When gender-based violence is narrated, the first thing often lost is the survivor's dignity. Many reports give the impression that the survivor is at the center of the story, yet in reality they serve merely as background. Their body, age, clothing, marital status, or whereabouts at night are described, while their inner world disappears. In such moments, the journalist may unknowingly turn the survivor into an object. The principle of protecting dignity begins with preventing this objectification.

A survivor's dignity is not confined to the violent incident they endured. Mishandled reporting can become a second blow after the violence itself. Protecting dignity requires careful handling of details. Not every piece of information is beneficial. Revealing every detail does not strengthen the truth. Dignity can also be damaged through language. Even seemingly neutral words may diminish the survivor. Excessive dramatization, meanwhile, traps the survivor within tragedy, turning them from a person into a symbol of an event². Allowing them to speak is not always the right decision; sometimes silence is also a form of self-protection. Journalistic professionalism lies precisely in sensing this delicate boundary. A journalist who protects dignity always asks how the survivor would feel if they read the final text.

Preserving dignity in reporting on gender-based violence protects not only the survivor but society as a whole. A society that cannot respect those who have experienced violence risks normalizing violence itself³. In this sense, the journalist becomes a bridge between the survivor and society. Therefore, protecting dignity is not a secondary matter in journalism. Truth can be told without breaking a person. In this field, however, attention often comes at the cost of human suffering. Sensationalism is not inherently evil; the problem lies in where and when it is used. Ethical norms are frequently perceived as external restrictions, as if they were walls that hold journalists back. In reality, they are internal barriers. This duality creates a constant tension in the journalist's mind. Balance is often understood mechanically "a bit of sensation, a bit of ethics." But such an approach fails, because ethics cannot be measured in portions. Balance is not a mathematical equation but a continuous choice.

¹ Sutherland G., McCormack A., Eastaugh P., Holland K., Pirkis J. Media guidelines for the responsible reporting of violence against women: a review of evidence and issues // Australian Journalism Review. – 2016. – Vol. 38. – P. 8-17.

² Cruz A., Klinger S. Gender-based violence in the world of work: overview and selected bibliography / International Labour Office. – Geneva: ILO, 2011. – 80 p.

³ Palermo T., Bleck J., Peterman A. Tip of the Iceberg: Reporting and Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries // American Journal of Epidemiology. – 2014. – Vol. 179, Issue 5. – P. 602-612.

Journalists often justify themselves with the phrase “the public needs to know.” Yet the need to know and the desire to watch are not always the same. In matters of gender-based violence, the public sometimes seeks spectacle rather than understanding. Sensationalism serves this hidden desire. Ethical norms, on the other hand, demand resistance to it. This conflict is exhausting, because the ethical path is always more difficult. It receives fewer clicks, fewer praises, and its value may not be immediately visible. Where sensationalism overrides ethics, the journalist’s role shifts. They cease to be a conveyor of information and become a stage director of events. Ethical standards do not stop the journalist they return them to their true role.

The issue of balance is also resolved in the editorial process. Sensationalism often arises not in the body of the text but at the headline level. Therefore, an ethical approach is not limited to an individual journalist but depends on the entire editorial culture. This topic can be raised loudly yet carefully. Tough questions can be asked without breaking a person. Balance lives on this subtle line. It cannot be precisely defined; it can only be felt.

Thus, the balance between sensationalism and ethical standards cannot be resolved through ready-made rules. It is an internal struggle that reappears with every story. If a journalist avoids this struggle, they automatically drift toward sensationalism. If they remain within it questioning, doubting, pausing that very state indicates the presence of ethical awareness.

Perfect balance in reporting on gender-based violence may not exist. Yet the very effort to seek balance preserves the human dimension of journalism. Sensation fades. Ethical traces remain.

LIST OF REFERENCES

1. O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Konstitutsiyasi // Qonunchilik ma’lumotlari milliy bazasi – lex.uz. – Kuchga kirgan sana: 01.05.2023. – <https://lex.uz/docs/-6445145>
2. O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Oliy Majlisi Qonuni O‘RQ-561-son “Xotin-qizlarni tazyiq va zo‘ravonlikdan himoya qilish to‘g‘risida” // Lex.uz – 02.09.2019. – <https://lex.uz/docs/4494709>
3. O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti Farmoni PF-87-son “Oila va xotin-qizlarni tizimli qo‘llab-quvvatlashga doir ishlarni yanada jadallashtirish chora-tadbirlari to‘g‘risida” // Lex.uz. – 07.03.2022. – <https://lex.uz/docs/5899498>
4. Axrorova S. O‘zbekistonda xotin-qizlarning ijtimoiy-siyosiy faollashuvi va jamiyat taraqqiyotiga ta’siri: Fal. fan. doktori (DSc) dissertatsiyasi avtoreferati. – Toshkent, 2023.
5. Jamoldinova O.R., Baxronova D.K. Gender: gender tengligi tushunchasi va siyosiy-ijtimoiy munosabatlar // Oriens. – 2022. – № 26 P. 477-483.
6. Saribayeva, U. S. Gender tengligi va kompetentlikning ijtimoiy-psixologik mazmuni, nizoli oilalarda namoyon bo‘lishi. – Yosh olimlar axborotnomasi – Vestnik molodykh uchenykh, 2024, No. 2. – P. 113-117.

INTERNET RESOURCES

7. Birlashgan Millatlar Tashkiloti. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). –1979. –<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>
8. Birlashgan Millatlar Tashkiloti. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. – 1993. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_on_the_Elimination_of_Violence_Against_Women
9. Jahon sog‘liqni saqlash tashkiloti (WHO). Violence against women – Key facts. [Elektron resurs]. – 25.03.2024 –<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>