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A Discourse Analysis of news reports on farm murders in South Africa

By

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Year: March 2024

DECLARATION:

I, Noxolo Ntantala, hereby declare that "**A Discourse Analysis of news reports on farm murders in South Africa"** is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.



Signature:

Date: 15 March 2024

Acknowledgements

- I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to God, whose guidance and grace have been my constant source of strength throughout this journey. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29:11

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Farm murder refers to a type of violent crime that takes place in rural farming communities, it is characterized by the deliberate and targeted killing of individuals residing or working on farms (Clack & Minnaar, 2018). This includes farmers, farm workers, and their families. These crimes often involve brutal acts of violence such as robbery, torture, and murder. There is a significant relationship between farm murders and farm attacks, as they both occur within rural farming communities. Farm attacks have the potential to escalate into farm murders. The term farm attack is defined as an act of violence directed against (a) persons(s) who may be staying, working or visiting a farm with the intention to commit rape, murder or inflict bodily harm (The National Rural Safety Strategy, 2011).

Between 2001 and 2006, these violent crimes were officially classified as a separate sub-category in the crime statistics (Rafaely & Nkosi, 2020). However, under the current South African common law, farm murders and farm attacks are no longer regarded as distinct offenses (Burger, 2018). Multiple research projects on this issue strongly advocates for the separate categorization of farm murders and farm attacks within the legal system for a better response. Although these crimes are relatively low compared to overall acts of violence according to the crime statistics, they possess a distinctive significance that has the ability to create a heightened tension, division, and sense of insecurity within our country (Brodie, 2023).

According to the Solidarity Research Institute (2012) these crimes have far-reaching implications for both the farm community and the broader South African communities. They directly impact the fundamental rights to life, jeopardize the sense of unity within the country and have the potential to hinder economic growth. By threatening the safety and security of individuals in the farming community, these crimes undermine the basic principles of human rights and pose significant challenges to the overall wellbeing and prosperity of the country (Bezuidenhout, 2008).

Holmes (2020) asserts that media coverage of crime statistics for particular offences hold both a collective and individual significance as these statistics circulate and are mediated. In the issue of farm murders and farm attacks, researchers widely concur that these violent crimes receive substantial media coverage (Clack & Minnaar, 2018), establishing how the media is a prominent social institution that shapes the discourse surrounding these violent crimes. According to Van Dijk (1998), media representations play a significant role in shaping public perception and attitudes, as the use of language and terminology in news reports can exert influence by employing loaded and sensationalist language by evoking emotions and shaping the perceived severity and urgency of issues. By examining the reporting of these violent crimes and acknowledging the media as a primary source in shaping their discourse, I hope to generate research that provides critical possibilities for thinking about the role of public media in the phenomenon of farm violence in South Africa.

1.2 Research Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the media discourse of farm murders in South Africa. It does not aim to propose solutions to the issue of farm murders and its associated problems. Notably the media is an influential social institution that often shapes the discourse around farm attacks and murders. Their role in reporting and representing farm murders in South Africa has various implications (Burger, 2018).

The study will provide a Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) on news media reports concerning farm murders. Language analysis involves examining the meaning we attribute to language and the actions we carry out when using language within specific contexts (Gee & Handford, 2012). I will conduct an analysis of news reports of farm murders in English language newspaper.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS

The research aims to examine the discursive strategies utilized by the South African media when reporting on farm murders and analyze how these strategies contribute to either reproducing or resisting larger discourse. The first objective is to identify and analyze the specific discursive techniques employed by the media in their coverage of farm murders. This will include exploring language choices, framing devices, and narrative structures used to shape public understanding and perceptions of these incidents. The second objective is to assess the impact of these discursive strategies on the larger discourse surrounding farm murders in South Africa. This entails examining whether the media's reporting reinforces existing narratives, stereotypes, or power dynamics or if it challenges and disrupts them.

1.4 Research Rationale

Taylor (2013) outlines several significant reasons for using Discourse analysis in social sciences. Some of these reasons include investigating the practices and interactions of ordinary social life, investigating a particular culture, obtaining practical information about people's lives and experiences, and exploring people's opinions. One of the rationales for conducting discourse analysis in this study is to investigate how media reporting shapes the publics opinion on farm murders and influences their perception of their daily social lives.

Farm murders is one of the violent crimes South Africa is faced with. Brodie (2022) states that statistics of these crimes are relatively low when compared to the country's overall violent crimes and yet they have a greater impact towards the sustainability of South Africa, since they pose a threat to the safety of its citizens and the country's potential economic growth. These crimes have sparked additional controversies, giving rise to assertions that these killings are strategically aimed at displacing white individuals from their land, since they are perceived as a decline in white power and alleged evidence of black racism against

the white minority, which has led to concerns about potential “white genocide” (Brodie, 2022).

Moolman (2000) argues that studying this violent crime in isolation is inadequate.
Instead, we should examine how it stems from broader issues such as South Africa’s broader colonial history and the legacy of land dispossession, the high crime rates, and socio-economic inequalities (Akinola, 2020). This serves as evidence that the discourse surrounding farm murders is closely intertwined with one of the significant challenges in our country, namely, inequality. This connection aligns with my passion and research interest in advocating for socio-economic issues.

CHAPTER 2:LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This Literature Review aims to explore the understanding of violent crimes in South Africa, including rural crimes. It will provide an overview of farm murders and farm attacks by examining their prevalence and impact on society. Additionally, this review will investigate the factors that influence farm murders, with a specific focus on the role of land reform and ideology in shaping these crimes. The intersections of race in relation to farm murders will also be explored, as this dimension plays a significant role in the dynamics surrounding these incidents. Lastly, the review will examine the role of media in generating discourse around farm murders. By examining these aspects, it seeks to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of farm murders in South Africa and their broader societal implications. It also examines discourses surrounding law enforcement and the South African police system.

2.2 Understanding violent crimes in South Africa

Crime statistics provide evidence that South Africa has a high crime rate, and that violent crime is a widespread issue for many individuals in the country. According to the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2022) crime statistics for the year 2021 and 2022 suggest that there were over 190 000 cases of violent crimes recorded. Included in this category of crimes are murder, attempted murder, aggravated robbery, and rape. Instances of crimes in which victims are subjected to unnecessary and excessive violence are frequently reported (Bezuidenhout, 2012).

2.2.1 RURAL CRIMES

According to Clack and Minnaar (2018) rural crimes in South Africa have three categories namely farm attacks, livestock theft, and poaching and trafficking wildlife. The three crimes have significant social, physical, and political consequences. Farm attacks in this instance are a target to farmers, farm workers, and their families that often results in fatalities, severe injuries as well as theft, robbery, and other forms of violent crimes.

Livestock theft primarily victimizes farmers and has secondary effects on farm workers in terms of income loss due to farmer's losses and a negative impact of the production of farm products for sale (Steyn, 2019).

2.2.2 FARM MURDERS AND FARM ATTACKS

Both farm attacks and murders do not have a crime category of their own (Bezuidenhout, 2011). The criminal justice system of South Africa still perceives them under rural and violent crimes (Akinola, 2020). The definition of farm attacks remains as the intentional act of violence towards any person who resides, works, often visits, or owns a farm. The acts of violence include the intent to rape, murder, rob and inflict serious harms to the victims (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2011). The policy brief by Burger (2018) compares farm attacks and farm murders as the same attacks that take place within the urban areas like house and business robberies.

The definition of Farm is an area of land that is used for agriculture and the safe keeping of livestock (South African human Rights Commission, 2014). This definition provides us a clear picture of the geographical area of the where farm incidents take place. Farmers safeguard the animals used to produce milk, fiber, eggs, and meat. Farms are responsible for the production and provision of food, fiber, and employment within the country. We also grow crops and get our fruits and vegetables from our farms. This geographical area gets affected by these violent crimes.

According to Bezuidenhout (2012) due to the high rate of violent crime in the country there is a new culture of crime that suggests that being a farmer in South Africa is more dangerous than being a police official. Bezuidenhout's assertion implies that farmers are exposed to a greater risk of violent crimes compared to police officers, who are commonly perceived to work in a high-risk profession. This highlights the severity and frequency of violent targeting farmers in South Africa, highlighting the alarming nature of farm murders as a unique form of criminal activity in the country.

Moolman (2000) argues that when looking at the causes of farm attacks we should not be quick to isolate some factors but rather study this crime with a full socio political-economical interaction of the revolutionary and post-apartheid setting. He furthermore

identifies twelve causes which include hate, negative perceptions and racial relations, not having morals, a trend of violence, availability of illegal firearms, economic conditions, perception of farmers as outlaws, unfulfilled expectations, the issue of redistribution of land, hearing of the TRC , escaping of the justice system and seeking revenge. These causes look at the wide range of person's behavior and motives when committing these violent crimes.

2.2.3 IMPACT OF VIOLENT CRIMES: FARM ATTACKS AND FARM MURDERS

The violence towards farm communities does not only negatively affect the community of farmers, but also affects the civil society at large, as well as the growth of the economy (Mare, 2015).These violent crimes have a great impact on both the economy and the psychological wellbeing of the people.

The agricultural sector plays a huge role in the growth and development of our country. Mare (2015) converses on the importance of business around the agricultural sector which not only supplies food and fiber to the general public of the country but also creates employment opportunities and investment opportunities. Statistics South Africa quarter 4 of 2022 (Burger, 2018) estimates roughly 888 000 agricultural employments, including farmers and farmworkers who hold formal employment within the agricultural sector. This figure suggests that farming and farms play a substantial role in our country's economy and society. It signifies the large number of individuals who rely on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods and underscores the sectors contribution to employment generation.

Holmes (2020) traces on an important assumption with regards to farm murders having a distinctive character because of how victims and perpetrators are raced and categorized. The assumption is that the victims of this crimes are white and well off while the perpetrators are black and poor.

2.3 Land Reform and Ideology as factors influencing Farm Murders

The issue of land dispossession remains a pressing concern in South Africa.

Akinola's (2020) research traces the Apartheid system, which is historically recognized for its practices of land dispossession, white dominance, and the disempowerment of the black population, and the Post-Apartheid South Africa that appears to have been unsuccessful in remedying the land-related structural and physical violence within the country. Land has an important role in the country's socio-political and economic sectors, and it represents both materials and collective identity, encompassing family, clan, community, and nation levels (Walker, 2017). This is evident in Clack and Minnaar's (2020) research where they highlight the connection between violent crimes in rural areas and their impact on culture and family identity.

Specifically, their discussion examines the significant effects of livestock theft on cultural practices such as "lobola" or bride-price, as well as the importance of having a home for survival.

The ownership of land and agricultural sectors in the past was divided between white South Africans, who predominantly owned farms and land, and black South Africans, who were mainly farm laborers and landless. In the post-apartheid era, in 2012, 67% of the land was owned by white population, while black communal areas constituted 15%, the state owned 10%, and the remaining 8% was used for other purposes (Akinola, 2020). After the post-apartheid era numerous initiatives have been taken by concerned organization to address the issue of land. In 2012, the South African National Development Plan presented a comprehensive framework aimed at addressing the structural violence that has long characterized the country's landscape. The main aim of the plan was to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (South African Government, 2019b).

Gaining an understanding of the individuals most impacted by the murders, it is crucial to examine the various parties involved in this issue. Various social scientists studying the issue have acknowledged that the farming community is made up of different groups, including farm owners, residents, workers, and labor tenants. Steyn (2019) and Akinola (2020) define these groups as follows. Farm owners are the individuals or entities who own or have legal ownership if agricultural land or farming operations. Farm residents refer to the people who reside on a farm but do not own it. They mainly have permanent or temporary residency and may work on the farm as laborers or perform other functions.

Farm workers are individuals who are employed by farm owners to work on their farms, usually for wages or salaries. Labor tenants on the other hand are individuals who live on farmland and work on the same farm as farm workers, but do not receive wages or salaries.

2.3.1 APARTHEID'S INFLUENCE ON LAND AND AGRICULTURE

The enduring impact of Apartheid on South Africa's land and agricultural sectors is evident in the patterns of ownership, access, and productivity. The systematic policies of racial segregation and discrimination under Apartheid have left lasting effects on land distribution, resource allocation, and agricultural development (Kloppers & Pienaar, 2014). To grasp the complexities and inequalities that persist in South Africa's agricultural landscape today, it is crucial to understand the historical context of Apartheid.

During apartheid, land ownership was intentionally biased in favor of the white minority, thereby disadvantaging the black majority (Thwala, 2001). Legislation such as the Native Land Act of 1913 allocated the majority of land for white ownership, leading to the forced relocation of black South Africans to overcrowded and impoverished homelands known as "Bantustans" (Kloppers & Pienaar, 2014). This displacement disrupted traditional farming practices and worsened poverty and food insecurity.

This colonial system influenced by land boundaries and geographical understanding determined the land range, possession, and usage, often to the disadvantage of native communities. Laws like the Glen Grey Act of 1894 and the subsequent Native Land Act of 1913 codified racial segregation, reserving fertile land for whites while relegating blacks to less productive areas (Mistry, 2003). The act allocated below than 10 percent of bearable land to Africans, reserving the more fertile areas for whites (Anseeuw & Mathebula, 2008). It entrenched territorial segregation into law, prohibiting land sales between racial groups. This legislation perpetuated land inequality, with an imbalanced land allocation which allocated more to whites and less to blacks.

These policies that favored white commercial agriculture included subsidies on electricity and fuel prices, trade tariffs, agricultural extension services, access to credit, and agricultural marketing boards. Concurrently, the development of black smallholder farmers in the homelands was hindered by policies such as Betterment Planning and the effects of

land dispossession, which reduced competition for white producers and provided a cheap labor supply (Kepe & Hall, 2016).

Apartheid policies entrenched a system of labor exploitation within the agricultural sector, where black farmworkers endured harsh conditions, meagre wages, and limited access to basic rights and services (Du Toit, 1994). The migrant labor system, which forcibly displaced black workers to toil on white-owned farms, exacerbated racial disparities in the agricultural workforce. This exploitation enabled white farmers to retain control over land and maximize profits while disregarding the well-being of black laborers.

The legacy of labor exploitation from apartheid persists in today's agricultural sector, predominantly impacting black farmworkers who continue to confront substandard conditions, low pay, and restricted rights and services. Apartheid legislation has forced African communities into overcrowded and impoverished areas such as homelands and townships (Hall, 2009).

In 1993 the repeal of the Native Land Act marked an attempt by South Africa's new democracy to address land dispossession through restitution, land tenure reform, and redistribution efforts (Mistry, 2007).By the late 1980s, the African family farming sector had been eradicated, and African peasants had been transformed into wage laborers on large farms, mines, and secondary industries.

Despite legislative efforts to improve labor conditions, the remnants of apartheid-era practices continue to influence the power dynamics between farm owners and workers. Even with the progress in land redistribution since apartheid's end, the majority of agricultural land remains under the control of white commercial farmers (Kepe & Hall, 2016). Challenges such as slow land reform progress, legal complexities, and bureaucratic obstacles have impeded efforts to address historical injustices and achieve equitable land distribution (Hall, 2007). Consequently, land ownership remains concentrated among a minority, fueling socio-economic disparities in rural regions.

Akinola (2020) explains that the violent attacks on farms and killings of white farmers have led to the racialization of farm conflicts under the label of white genocide. The term white genocide refers to the intentional killing of a large group of people based on their

ethnicity, race, or national origin with the aim of completely wiping out the group. In South Africa, large-scale farming is primarily associated with the white population; thus, many issues related to farming tend to involve this group. As Akinola (2020) highlights, racism is closely tied to the historical reality of South Africa, including the history of land dispossession, evictions, and the dehumanization of farm workers. His conclusion is that it is key to stop using the label white genocide to describe to the land attacks. He also suggests that even though white farmers have experienced consistent attacks, the government needs to address the general trend of crime in the country by investing in security measures and promoting an effective land reform program that benefits all parties involved.

3 Representation of news reports in media

According to Carpentier, Lie and Servaes (2003) mainstream media refers to extensive platforms aimed at broad and uniform audiences, operated by either the government owned entities or commercial enterprises. These organizations typically follow a hierarchical structure with professional staff, and they play a central role in promoting prevalent narratives and depictions. Newspaper contributes to the public discourse by generating articles or stories that present a specific perspective on the subject of investigation (Fairclough, 1995). Discourse offers a framework for discussing a specific topic, involving recurring patterns or groups of ideas, practices, and forms of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Numerous organizations and scholars who examine farm murders agree that media coverage plays a huge role in shaping the discourse surrounding these crimes. It is widely recognized that the primary means of reporting farm murders is through the media. This serves to explain that the examination of media coverage is crucial in understanding the construction and representation of the discourse surrounding farm murders. The media outlets are the primary source of information needed about what is expressed, interpreted, and discussed about farm murders. It is worth noting that there is limited existing scholarly literature concerning the portrayal of farm murders in South African news media.

According to van Dijk (1988), news report discourse can be defined as the communication process through which news information is conveyed, encompassing both textual and dialogical aspects within a broader social context. Its structure involves various levels of

description, including grammatical and semantic features at the word and sentence levels, as well as coherence relations, overall topics, and rhetorical dimensions at higher levels. Additionally, news report discourse considers social factors such as economic conditions and institutional routines, which influence its production and reception processes. This integrated approach offers insights into the complexity of news reporting and its significance within mass communication (Fairclough, 1995).

News reports, as underscored by Yu and Zheng (2022), serve as a form of public discourse that plays a pivotal role for informing individuals seeking information about events occurring both domestically and internationally. This suggests that they serve as a conduit for dissemination of information across various domains such as politics, economics, social issues, and cultural affairs thereby shaping publics opinion and enabling informed decision making (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007). Through agenda settings, news reports influence which topics receive attention and prominence in public discourse, guiding individuals' perceptions of the importance and urgency of different issues (Yu & Zheng, 2022). Additionally, news reports foster public engagement and participation by providing platforms for individuals to express their opinions and contribute to democratic deliberation (Van Dijk, 1988). By exposing audiences to diverse perspectives and experiences, news reports facilitate cultural understanding, empathy, and tolerance, thereby promoting a more inclusive and pluralistic society. Furthermore, news reports play a crucial role in monitoring power and holding individuals and institutions accountable for their actions, contributing to transparency, accountability, and the maintenance of democratic principles (Van Dijk, 1988a)

This research focuses on news reports in the form of newspapers, which are a form of public discourse because they produce articles or stories that construct an object of inquiry from a particular point of view (Fairclough, 1995).

Newspapers are commonly classified as part of the "mainstream media" or "commercial media" category. According to Carpentier, Lie, and Servaes (2003), mainstream media typically refers to large-scale organizations targeted at broad and relatively uniform audience segments. These entities can be either state-owned or operated by commercial companies. Mainstream media organizations are characterized by vertical structures and

are staffed by professionals in the field. Moreover, they are considered carriers of dominant discourse and representations within society.

According to Conrad (1997), analyzing media representations is crucial because media discourse and public opinion are viewed as parallel and complementary systems, rather than media discourse causing public opinion. Conrad suggests that "media discourse is part of the process by which individuals construct meaning, and public opinion is part of the process by which journalists and other cultural entrepreneurs develop and crystallize meaning in public discourse" ~~(p. 140).~~

Fairclough (1995a) suggests that discourse representation in news media can be viewed as an ideological process that is influenced by social determinants and can have social effects. This suggests that the way information is presented in news media is not neutral but is shaped by underlying ideologies and societal factors. Understanding this can help us recognize and analyses how media representations may reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies and power structures. It also highlights the importance of critically examining media discourse to uncover biases, promote media literacy, and understand its broader social implications.

Sensationalism in news reporting, one most important topic widely discussed in the representation of news reports, emphasizes the stimulation of the senses, and prioritizes bodily and non-rational reactions (Wiltenburg, 2004). Media outlets often prioritize sensational or dramatic stories to attract viewership or readership, potentially sacrificing accuracy or context in the process. This approach raises ethical concerns regarding journalists' responsibility to deliver fair, balanced, and accurate information to the public. Scholars have scrutinized the impact of sensationalism on public trust in the media and its broader implications for democratic societies. While some argue in defense of prioritizing sensational news coverage, asserting that it helps the public discern the moral boundaries of acceptability (Stevens, 1985 as cited in Peters, 2011), others contend that sensationalism may compromise the quality of journalism. Additionally, news reports foster public engagement and participation by providing platforms for individuals to express their opinions and contribute to democratic deliberation. By exposing audiences to diverse perspectives and experiences, news reports facilitate cultural understanding, empathy, and tolerance, thereby promoting a more inclusive and pluralistic society. Furthermore, news

reports play a crucial role in monitoring power and holding individuals and institutions accountable for their actions, contributing to transparency, accountability, and the maintenance of democratic principles (Peters, 2011).

3.1 Victim-centric narratives and perpetrator perception

In contemporary discourse regarding the depiction of victims and perpetrators in the media, there is a notable focus on victim-centric narratives, overshadowing any examination of the perpetrators involved (Wilcox, 2005). Victims often receive more attention than perpetrators, both in public discourse and media coverage. This bias is evident in the extensive, emotionally charged accounts provided by media outlets, depicting victims as innocent individuals deserving of sympathy and justice. Altheide (2003) suggests that victims are often portrayed as a by-product of fear and the discourse of fear, constructed by the media as a social group requiring protection (Huhn, Oettler & Peetz, 2009). Conversely, perpetrators are typically portrayed superficially and negatively, with limited exploration of their backgrounds or motives. The use of melodramatic rhetoric further accentuates this dichotomy, framing victims as forces of good and perpetrators as forces of evil.

Ideal victims are often those perceived as innocent and defenseless, such as elderly women and young children, as well as individuals meeting specific demographic criteria, like being white, young, stereotypically attractive, virginal women, or married mothers of small children, preferably murdered by strangers (Greer, 2007; Thorson, Dorfman & Stevens, 2001). Conversely, marginalized groups such as young men, the homeless, and those with drug problems may struggle to be recognized as legitimate victims (Altheide et al., 2001; Greer, 2007).

Altheide (2003) argues that "Victims are the personal side of a crisis; a crisis is where victims reside," implying that victims have assumed a central role in crime reporting, with their suffering becoming the focal point of crime narratives (Reiner et al., 2001, as cited in Smolej, 2010). The media frequently highlights the lives, families, and communities affected by farm murders, depicting victims as committed individuals deeply tied to their agricultural lifestyle and local communities. These portrayals often include personal anecdotes, testimonials from loved ones, and detailed descriptions of the profound impact

of their tragedy. By humanizing the individuals beyond mere statistics, this emphasis on victimhood evokes emotional responses from audiences and garners support for the affected families and rural areas.

The disproportionate focus on victims in crime reporting reflects broader societal biases ingrained within media coverage. The portrayal of victims often serves to underscore the injustice in the world, as it highlights the unfortunate circumstances that have befallen innocent individuals (Van Zomeren and Lodewijkx, 2009). Media outlets may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes about rural communities, depicting them as inherently vulnerable and constantly in need of protection. Additionally, biases related to race, socioeconomic status, and geographic location significantly influence how crimes are depicted and perceived by the public. By critically examining and addressing these biases, we can strive for more balanced representations that authentically capture the complexities of farm murders and their impact on rural communities. Sacco (1995) suggests that news coverage tends to prioritize the random nature of victimization over its true social distribution.

3.2 Representation of law enforcement and perceptions of security

In the realm of law enforcement representation and perceptions of security, several key themes emerge, shedding light on the complex interplay between media portrayals, public perception, and actual safety measures.

Specifically, in South Africa, there is a widespread perception among the public that the state has weakened at a critical juncture when institutions like the police and judiciary are essential for maintaining social order (Ran-Rubin, 2008). Consequently, South Africans consistently rank ‘crime and lawlessness’ as their foremost concern in opinion polls (Ran-Rubin, 2008).

On the other hand, media depictions often portray law enforcement agencies as proactive and attentive to community safety issues. According to research findings, judges and police spokespersons present themselves as advocates for societal interests and impartial overseers of public welfare (Ran-Rubin, 2008). News reports and television dramas often spotlight law enforcement's endeavors to combat crime, depicting officers as committed professionals striving to uphold public safety. Nonetheless, these portrayals may not

consistently mirror the realities on the ground, resulting in disparities between perceived and actual levels of security.

Despite the depiction of law enforcement as proactive, disparities often exist between public perception and the genuine level of safety within communities. Research indicates that media reporting on crime and law enforcement actions can shape public perceptions of safety, occasionally fostering exaggerated fears or misunderstandings about crime rates. Additionally, systemic issues like underreporting of crimes or disparities in law enforcement resources may exacerbate these disparities.

The implications for community security stemming from the gap between perception and reality of safety are significant. Due to perceived police inefficiency, the South African public has increasingly turned to non-state policing options, including commercial security firms and informal vigilante groups (Baker, 2002). Misguided perceptions of crime rates or ineffective law enforcement strategies can erode trust in law enforcement agencies and heighten fear and anxiety among residents. Furthermore, disparities in policing practices may disproportionately affect marginalized communities, exacerbating feelings of insecurity and straining community-police relations. Addressing these challenges necessitates a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing perceptions of security and a commitment to implementing evidence-based strategies that prioritize community safety and well-being.

The connection between the portrayal of law enforcement and perceptions of security is complex, and media depictions heavily influence public attitudes and beliefs. By carefully analyzing these portrayals and tackling underlying systemic challenges, we can strive to cultivate communities that are safer and more resilient.

4 UNDERSTANDING SOUTH AFRICA'S POLICE SYSTEM: CHALLENGES, REFORMS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ADDRESSING FARM-RELATED VIOLENCE

South Africa's police system plays a vital role in upholding law and order and addressing various forms of crime (Brogden and Shearing, 1993) including violence in rural areas, particularly farm-related incidents. Research by Mkhize (2012) on the country's police system offers valuable insights into the challenges, reforms, and implications for tackling

farm-related violence. By addressing systemic issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and resource limitations, policymakers can enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies to safeguard rural communities and support agricultural development (Bruce & Neild 2005). However, Tyler and Huo (2002) emphasize that achieving meaningful reform necessitates a concerted effort to address the underlying reasons for crime and inequality, while also promoting trust and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve.

Brodie (2023) discusses the challenges South African police face in addressing farm-related violence due to the failure to recognize farm murders as a distinct crime. She mentions that prior to 1997, these incidents were reported under specific categories of crime, namely murder, assault and robbery as robbery, assault. In 1998, farm murder and farm attacks were designated as a priority crime and reported separately until 2006, when separate statistics on farm attacks were embargoed.

The significance of definitions is particularly evident in cases of farm murders, as they provide the basis for measurement and quantification (Brodie, 2023). Without clear categorization, it is difficult for law enforcement to allocate resources, monitor trends, and devise targeted strategies to effectively address such violence. This lack of recognition may also impact the gathering and analysis of data on farm attacks, potentially resulting in underreporting or misrepresentation of the problem's magnitude. Furthermore, the absence of official recognition may impede efforts to prioritize farm-related violence within law enforcement, potentially leading to inadequate responses and heightening feelings of insecurity among rural communities.

Having clear definitions for farm murders and farm attacks within the categories of law enables law enforcement agencies to accurately identify and classify these specific types of crimes. This classification allows police to allocate appropriate resources, prioritize investigations, and develop targeted crime prevention strategies tailored to address the unique challenges associated with farm-related crimes. By understanding the distinct characteristics and patterns of farm murders and farm attacks, law enforcement can better analyze trends, identify potential hotspots, and collaborate more effectively with communities to enhance safety and security in rural areas. Additionally, clear definitions facilitate data collection and analysis, enabling law enforcement agencies to monitor the

prevalence and impact of these crimes over time, ultimately contributing to more informed decision-making and improved law enforcement responses.

Brogden and Shearing's (1993) research underscores a multitude of challenges confronting South Africa's police system, encompassing corruption, inefficiency, and resource limitations. Studies reveal that police officers frequently confront deficiencies in training, equipment, and resources, hampering their ability to combat crime effectively, especially in rural regions where farm-related violence is prominent. Furthermore, issues surrounding police brutality and misconduct have been raised, eroding public trust and confidence in law enforcement agencies.

According to Punch (2009) the ongoing endeavors to reform South Africa's police system prioritize enhancing accountability, professionalism, and efficiency. His research indicates that initiatives like the creation of specialized units, community policing forums, and anti-corruption task forces have yielded positive outcomes in tackling systemic issues. Nonetheless, substantial deficiencies persist in training, oversight, and governance within the police force, impeding progress towards substantial reform.

The ability of the police system to tackle farm-related violence holds considerable importance for rural communities and agricultural development in South Africa. Studies such as Roelofse and Helm's (2012) show that perceived shortcomings in law enforcement agencies heighten feelings of insecurity and vulnerability among farmers and farmworkers. Additionally, the politicization of crime, especially regarding land ownership and racial tensions, adds complexity to addressing farm-related violence solely through law enforcement measures.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the literature reviewed and the importance of critical engagement with this topic, my study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do South African media platforms represent farm murders?
2. How do South African media platforms represent victims and perpetrators in reports of farm murders?
3. How do South African media platforms represent law enforcement in cases of farm murders

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the research approach adopted to investigate the discourse surrounding farm murders within the South African context. It outlines the methods employed for data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations, providing insights into the rigor and ethical integrity of the study.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as the process of investigating and comprehending the significance individuals attach to human issues. A qualitative researcher's main goal is to try capture what people say and do (Bryman & Bell, 2017). The research design of this study is a discourse analysis of media reports on farm murders within the South African context. This approach will allow me to explore the media's discursive representation of farm murders together with the context in which this issue occurs.

I have chosen Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework for my study using newspapers to understand farm murders because it offers a systematic approach to examining how language and discourse shape societal perceptions and power dynamics. According to Fairclough (1995), CDA enables researchers to uncover hidden relationships between language use and the exercise of power that may not be immediately apparent. By applying CDA, I aim to critically analyze newspaper texts to explore how the portrayal of farm murders is influenced by broader sociocultural practices and power structures. This method allows me to delve into the linguistic strategies, discursive practices, and social contexts through which newspapers construct narratives about farm murders. Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of representation as discourse, I can investigate how knowledge and power intersect to shape these representations, shedding light on the ideological biases, inequalities, and political implications embedded within media coverage. Through this

lens, I seek to contribute a nuanced understanding of how media discourse contributes to the public understanding and policy framing of farm murders in South Africa.

3.3 Research Paradigm: Social Constructionism

Social constructionism, as outlined by Crotty (1998), suggests that knowledge and meaningful reality are products of human interactions and practices. It emphasizes that our understanding of reality is formed through the ongoing interaction between individuals and their environment within a social context. This perspective highlights the influence of social dynamics on the generation, dissemination, and perpetuation of knowledge. Moreover, language is viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for constructing concepts and organizing experiences (Pfadenhauer & Knoblauch, 2019). Language shapes our thoughts and enables us to make sense of the world around us.

3.4 Sample Selection

The study focused on analyzing South African electronic and print media articles concerning farm murders. A total of eighteen articles underwent analysis. To ensure relevance, the sample encompassed articles published within the last seven years, specifically spanning from 2017 to 2023. I selected a sample of 18 articles to ensure a thorough and detailed analysis of the representation of farm murders. This number of articles allows for in-depth exploration into each text, enabling the identification of recurring themes, linguistic patterns, and discursive strategies employed in media coverage. To determine the sample size, I considered factors such as the richness of content across different sources and the feasibility of conducting a comprehensive analysis within the scope of my research project.

The articles were selected using a systematic sampling method, where I reviewed a range of newspapers and online archives covering the period from 2017 to 2023. Inclusion criteria focused on articles specifically addressing farm murders in South Africa, ensuring relevance to the research topic. I included articles that offered diverse perspectives and representation across various media outlets to capture a comprehensive view of public

discourse. Exclusion criteria involved articles that did not directly discuss farm murders or lacked sufficient detail for meaningful analysis.

This period was selected because it allows for a recent and comprehensive examination of trends, patterns, and discourse surrounding this issue within a relatively recent timeframe. The period selected aims to provide up-to-date and thorough insights into the discourse surrounding farm murders. This timeframe is crucial for capturing the dynamic evolution of media coverage and public discourse on the issue. By concentrating on these years, the study seeks to track the shifting trends and patterns in how farm murders are portrayed and discussed. This approach is essential for gaining a deeper understanding of how narratives and societal perceptions regarding farm murders have developed over recent years.

The selected media outlets for the newspaper articles retrieval included The Citizen, Sunday Independent, Cape Argus, Pretoria News Weekend, Diamond field Advertiser and Daily News. These outlets were selected for their diversity of perspectives, which encompass varying interpretations of events relevant to the topic of farm murders. This selection was based on the frequency of their coverage of the topic of interest, ensuring that my analysis is focused on sources directly pertinent to my research question.

Given that English serves as an official language in South Africa, the study exclusively utilized English-language articles. However, it was acknowledged that this approach may have introduced limitations by potentially excluding the perspectives of non-English news outlets on the topic of farm murders.

3.5 Data Collection Method

The study utilized secondary data, which refers to data that had already been collected by others for research or project evaluation and was readily available for reuse (Kara, 2023). This data was obtained from sources such as online platforms and libraries. However, as Taylor (2013) pointed out, one main challenge of using secondary data was the need to narrow down the information to a manageable size.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) researchers typically approach data collection by selecting a diverse range of texts relevant to their research questions, such as political speeches, media articles, or online forums. They then systematically analyze these texts for language use, power dynamics, and social context to uncover underlying discursive structures and ideologies (Van Dijk,1995).

This research used two sets of data. One set was gathered from SA Media's online collection of South African newspaper articles that depicted "farm murder/s". The search criteria arrived by initially searching the two phrases "farm murder" and "Farm murder in South Africa". The focused time frame was then filtered before the search.

The second set comprised data that was already collected from an ongoing research project conducted by Dr. Daniella Rafaely from the University of Witwatersrand alongside Dr. Mbuso Nkosi from the University of Pretoria. Their research focused on the media coverage of farm violence in post-apartheid South Africa. For the study, articles were selected from various media outlets such as The Citizen, Sunday Independent, Cape Argus, Pretoria News Weekend, Diamond field Advertiser and Daily News. The objective was to include three articles from each of these six outlets, all published between 2017 and the year 2023. The central focus of all the articles was the issue of farm murders in South Africa.

The data from the ongoing study was stored in a database where I was given access to through email. The data was strictly restricted to me while the two other parties who created the database had access already. The articles in the database were already divided according to the years of which they were published and had a limit to the year 2020 and also excluded some of the media outlets the I had selected.

The second search part of the data gathering was as follows. The first step of the data collection process was to identify and select the outlets that were used, which included The Citizen, Sunday Independent, Cape Argus, Pretoria News Weekend, Diamond field Advertiser and Daily News. The articles used for the research were those published from 2017 up to the year 2023. The primary subject of the articles was the topic of farm murders in South Africa.

The following step of the data collection method involved checking how relevant the texts were to my research topic, which focuses on how farmers are portrayed, especially in relation to farm murders. The articles specifically had to discuss the murders, as some were not related to my research topic. This process leads to an exclusion of some articles and beginning a new search to include those that were relevant. The last process was printing out all online articles into hard copies to make analysis easier.

3.6 Data Analysis

The conducted study employed critical discourse analysis to examine the discourse on farm murders within the South African context. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as stated by Fairclough (1995) focuses on the mechanisms of text creation and reception, encompassing the everyday institutional practices involved, as well as the alterations texts undergo throughout these processes. The study selects critical discourse analysis as its primary approach to offer insight into the ways news reports are utilized to shape public perception.

According to Fairclough (1992), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach that explores the relationship between language, power, and social inequality. It involves examining how language is used to shape social reality, reinforce power dynamics, and reproduce social hierarchies. The aim is to reveal underlying ideologies and power relations within language use, promoting social change and challenging dominant discourse (Fairclough, 2013).

The data analysis followed Fairclough's (1992) three stages of analysis, namely the text analysis, the discourse practice and thirdly the sociocultural practice. The goal was to look closely at the words in the newspaper, figuring out their meanings and how they are put together. I wanted to understand what ideas or beliefs might be suggested by the words used or left out. The data was looked at, starting with big ideas and then getting more specific, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The framework of the analysis involved dividing the 18 newspaper articles into different categories according to their main focus. To make it easier to understand the data, I created main discourses according to the focus of the article's extracts. Data extracts from the articles addressing the specific discourse

were included followed by the three-step analysis. The article extracts specified the news outlet, and the publications date.

The first stage, text analysis, involved closely examining the language used in the articles to identify structure and patterns of discourse. The meaning and form or words and sentences were studied. In this phase I closely aligned with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). guidelines by adopting a systematic and reflexive approach. I began by immersing myself in the selected texts, identifying recurring themes, linguistic patterns, and discursive strategies. This process involved close reading and coding of the data to uncover implicit meanings and power dynamics.

Secondly, the analysis of discourse interpreted the meaning of the discourse within its social and cultural context, including social identities, power dynamics, and institutions involved. In my actual data analysis this involved examining how the articles portrayed social identities, power dynamics, and the involvement of various institutions. This included scrutinizing language choices, framing of events, and implicit biases to understand how these factors influenced the representation of farm murders in the media. The text was studied according to the text production process, which involves the procedures of online news creation, and through text consumption, which involves the cognitive processes behind comprehending the text.

The third stage involved analysis of the socio-cultural practice, which explains the social processes hidden within the discourse. This is where the situational and wider context was studied. As a final step, connections between the linguistic structures and patterns identified in the text analysis and the social and cultural context within which the discourse took place were explained. The objective was to highlight how discourse was employed to either reinforce or contest power relations, social conventions, and social factors (Fairclough, 1995).

Additionally, Researchers in this field not only observe and describe language usage in specific contexts but also view their endeavors as a political and ethical responsibility, positioning themselves as catalysts for change (van Dijk, 1997). I engaged in reflexivity throughout the analysis process, acknowledging my own biases and positions of privilege.

This self-awareness helps me critically reflect on how my interpretations may be influenced by my own background and standpoint.

3.7 Ethical Considerations:

Ethical considerations were a major aspect addressed throughout the research process. It was crucial to consider ethical concerns to ensure that the population was represented with autonomy and respect (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). I aimed to represent the farm communities and civil society with autonomy and respect while examining how news reports portrayed the perpetrators, their motives, and their actions.

Sensationalism in the analysis and findings were avoided through careful assessment of the impact on individuals or communities mentioned in the newspaper articles. Interpretations were meticulously balanced to steer clear of exaggerations that could perpetuate stereotypes or lead to harm. Crucially, proper attribution and adherence to copyright laws were prioritized throughout the study. Every newspaper source was cited accurately, and all references to material adhered strictly to fair use guidelines.

As I made use of naturally occurring data, I strove to be mindful and sensitive to the beliefs, values, and cultural traditions of the community and the general population. Additionally, ensuring that the study had social value was a priority (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). I ensured that the study not only benefits myself but also benefits the South African community at large.

For the purpose of the study, I made the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Internal) aware of the study by applying for an ethics waiver. I applied for an ethics waiver for my study involving secondary data, highlighting the minimal risk to participants. Following the review process, I secured an ethics certificate approving the research protocol. I obtained consent to use the collected data for the study through the collaboration partnership of myself and my supervisor, Dr. Daniella Rafaely. All other relevant bodies within the university and other relevant individuals were made aware of the study.

3.7.1 Considerations for Quality and Rigor in Qualitative Research:

Discourse analysis scholars proposed reflexivity and transferability to demonstrate the quality and rigor of the research (Mills & Briks, 2014). Reflexivity involved continuous critical reflection on the data to explore theoretical and practical implications, ethical considerations, and the researcher's role as a human instrument. Transferability pertained to the ability to apply research findings in different contexts, usually on a case-by-case basis (Mills & Briks, 2014).

In the proposed study on the media discourse of farm murders, reflexive techniques were employed to examine both theoretical and practical implications. This involved scrutinizing the underlying assumptions and ideologies present in the media discourse, as well as the potential impact of this discourse on the broader social context. The research was conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, with continuous reflection on the researcher's subjective involvement in the research process, which could influence the interpretation of data and overall study outcomes (Mills & Briks, 2014). Furthermore, transferability was considered by exploring how research findings could be relevant and applicable beyond the context of the analysis.

Reflexivity in my research also involved acknowledging and critically examining how my own subjectivity, perspectives, and potential biases influenced the interpretation and analysis of the selected texts on farm murders. As a researcher, my background, personal experiences, and beliefs shaped how I perceived and engaged with the discourses present in the articles. For example, my understanding of issues related to crime, justice, and media portrayal influenced how I interpreted the language used and the emphasis placed on different aspects of farm murders in the texts.

I recognized the role of my supervisor as a second potential influencer on the reading of the texts. Discussions and feedback with my supervisor during the research process shaped interpretations, analytical frameworks, and methodological choices. Their insights and guidance contributed to refining the analysis and ensuring rigor in examining the discursive strategies employed in the media coverage of farm murders.

By acknowledging these influences, I strived to maintain transparency and rigor in my research process. Reflexivity allowed me to critically reflect on how my background and interactions, including those with my supervisor, might have impacted the findings and interpretations presented in my study. This self-awareness aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of the research outcomes by acknowledging and addressing potential biases and ensuring a balanced interpretation of the textual data analyzed.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

This critical discourse analysis delves into newspaper articles covering farm murders, focusing on three key aspects: the profiling of victims and perpetrators, the description of the unfolding violent events, and the portrayal of law enforcement strategies in response to these crimes. By examining the language and framing choices used in media reports, this analysis aims to uncover the underlying narratives and discourses that shape public perceptions and attitudes towards farm murders in South Africa.

This analysis will focus on how victims and perpetrators are portrayed, using discourse analysis to uncover how language choices subtly shape perceptions. It will specifically observe how certain terminologies and details construct a narrative that influences public understanding and discourse surrounding these violent incidents.

Furthermore, there will be a meticulous examination of the description of the event, including the location of the event, weapons used, methods of murder and other reported aspects of the story. This scrutiny aims to unveil how these unfolding narratives are presented, underscoring the impact of descriptive language on public perception, empathy, and societal attitudes toward violence and its victims.

Lastly, the focus will extend to law enforcement strategies in response to farm murders. By scrutinizing the language and framing choices evident in police statements, I intend to decipher how these communications mold public perceptions of law enforcement efforts. This analysis will offer insight into the ways that law enforcement mobilizes responses to farm murders.

4.1 VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

This section delves into the characterization of the two primary parties involved in farm murders: the victims and the perpetrators. Despite the involvement of multiple individuals in these violent crimes, this portion of the analysis focuses on these two key parties, offering an analysis of the reported descriptions that highlight the selectiveness of journalists in conveying their message. It becomes evident that the portrayal of these individuals is not impartial but rather carefully crafted to convey a particular narrative

(Fairclough, 2001). In the context of this research, it is evident that these descriptions of victims and perpetrators are carefully crafted to convey certain stereotypes or preconceptions that may influence public perception and attitudes towards crime and justice. Existing narratives suggest that victims often receive more attention than perpetrators, both in the public sphere and in the media (Wilcox, 2005), with victims being portrayed as virtuous while perpetrators are depicted as malevolent.

4.1.1 Article 1

The following article reports on a dreadful incident that occurred on the Zout van de Aarde farm in Albertinia. In this incident, suspicion falls on a farm worker for the death of his employer.

*"A FARM worker has been arrested for the alleged murder of his employer on the Zout van de Aarde farm in Albertinia last weekend. S*haron Bester, 52, was killed inside her farmhouse at about 8.30 pm last Saturday. Following his arrest on Tuesday, Johannes Bangisol, 20, appeared in the Albertinia Magistrate's Court on Thursday. Bangisol was charged with murder, burglary, theft and stealing vehicle.
~Farm worker linked to murder (The Citizen, 4 November 2018).

The term "farm worker" categorizes Johannes Bangisol as an individual employed on the farm, implying a subordinate position within the employment context. Its usage suggests a power dynamic where Bangisol is depicted as having less authority or control compared to his employer.

Sharon Bester is identified as the employer that depicts a position of authority or ownership over the farm. The term "employer" conveys a sense of hierarchy and control, indicating that Bester had power over Bangisol in their professional relationship.

"Sharon Bester, 52" and "Johannes Bangisol, 20", Providing Bester's and Bangisol's full names and ages adds depth to their identities and humanizes them. Including their ages serves to provide context and establish them as fully developed individuals with personal backgrounds. Bangisol's age also highlights his youth and potential vulnerability or inexperience. In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), incorporating personal details such as ages holds importance in deciphering power dynamics within discourse (Van Dijk, 2001). By presenting individuals as fully formed with personal histories, discourse can influence

perceptions of their capacity, influence, and susceptibility. For instance, emphasizing Bangisol's youth underscores potential vulnerabilities or lack of experience, potentially impacting power dynamics within the discourse.

The articles also pay attention to the relationship between the victim and the suspect or perpetrator. In some cases, it mentioned that the perpetrator was an ex-employee of the victim, which may suggest that their relationship may have had something to do with the murder. The positioning of the victim is utilized to illustrate the injustice in the world, as it signifies that an undeserved misfortune has befallen a good individual (Van Zomeren and Lodewijkx, 2009). The news report appears to present a balanced and neutral description of the incident, focusing on factual details such as the arrest of the farm worker for the alleged murder of his employer, Sharon Bester. The report provides information about the timing of the incident, the identity of the victim and suspect, as well as the legal proceedings following the arrest. This serves as an example of a news report that refrains from overly dramatizing or sensationalizing the circumstances, instead presenting information in a factual and objective manner.

4.1.2 Article 2

The subsequent article covers the unpleasant murder of an elderly couple on their farm in Cottonlands.

"A VERULAM family was left shattered after the gruesome and violent murders of an elderly couple at their Cottonlands Farm home yesterday. Described by relatives as a religious couple who would not harm a fly, the hard-working couple spent their lives farming vegetables, which they sold at the local Verulam market for income."
~Brutal farm murders (Daily news, 4 September 2018).

The Initial description "elderly couple" conveys a sense of vulnerability and fragility, painting the victims as potentially defenseless individuals. This sets a tone for the tragedy that unfolds and prompts readers to empathize with the victims.

"Who would not harm a fly" used in the extract employs a common idiom to emphasize the perceived gentleness and non-aggressive nature of the elderly couple. This figurative expression implies that the couple was known for their peaceful disposition, contributing

to the shock and tragedy of their violent murders. Van Dijk (1995) highlights the significance of analyzing linguistic strategies, including figurative expressions, in understanding how discourse constructs social reality and shapes perceptions. The choice of language here serves to highlight the contrast between the couple's character and the brutality of the crime, intensifying the emotional impact.

The description of "the hard-working couple" contributes to the discourse by portraying the victims as industrious and dedicated individuals. This characterization suggests a positive image, indicating that they were contributing members of society. The use of "hard-working" implies a sense of diligence and commitment, potentially influencing readers to sympathize with the victims and view their deaths as particularly unjust.

The statement "farming vegetables, which they sold at the local Verulam market for income" provides insight into the couple's livelihood and economic activities. It emphasizes their self-sufficiency and the honest nature of their work. The language used conveys a sense of simplicity and integrity, shaping the narrative to evoke empathy for the victims. This detail may also serve to underscore the tragedy by highlighting the contrast between their peaceful lives and the violent end they experienced.

In typical articles covering incidents involving both victims and perpetrators, specific details such as their names, ages, and their relationship or roles in relation to each other are often included. However, in this article, these details are notably absent. Instead, the descriptions rely on general terms such as "elderly couple". This lack of personalization can serve to depersonalize the victims and the perpetrator, focusing more on the broader context of the crime rather than individual identities. Fairclough (1995) argue that depersonalization in discourse can obscure individual identities and perpetuate broader social narratives at the expense of recognizing the humanity of those involved in the discourse.

The discursive difference between articles that mention only the victim and those that mention both the victim and the perpetrator lies in the focus and scope of the narrative. While the former prioritizes the victim's story and the emotional impact of the crime, the latter aims to provide a more balanced and comprehensive account of the incident, including details about both the victim and the perpetrator.

The most frequently used words to describe the victims include “elderly,” “religious,” “hardworking,” and “couple.” These terms are employed to provide contextual information about the victims, creating a sympathetic image of them as a peaceful elderly couple not involved in any criminal activity. This language aims to highlight their social and personal attributes, casting them as respected members of the community.

4.1.3 Article 3

This article looks into a significant development where a suspect has been identified in connection with a farm attack in Odendaalsrus, Free State. This incident tragically resulted in the death of a farmer.

“One of the attackers shot and died at the scene. Police spokesperson Captain Stephen Thakeng said after an extensive investigation into the murder, a suspect has been identified and connected to the crime scene through DNA evidence. "The individual in question is a 45-year-old prisoner awaiting trial, who was already in custody for a business robbery committed in Odendaalsrus"
– Farm Murder suspect tracked (The Citizen, 23 May 2023).

Conversely, the most common terms used to describe the attacker are “suspect” and “prisoner.” These descriptors serve to identify the individual facing charges in connection with the crime and offer basic background information, such as "one of the attackers", “45-year-old prisoner awaiting trial” and "already in custody" implying that he is a criminal. These are important ways of describing perpetrators, in ways that will convince a reader that this is not the victims' fault at all, and it is definitely the perpetrator's fault.

The use of “one of the attackers” is significant in emphasizing the agency and responsibility of the perpetrators. This choice of language explicitly highlights that the person who died at the scene was involved in the attack, placing accountability on the individuals who initiated the violent actions. By framing them as attackers, the narrative implies that the victims were subjected to an assault, reinforcing the notion that the responsibility for the incident lies with those who committed the crime. This description is crucial in steering readers away from attributing any fault to the victims and firmly placing the blame on the identified attackers.

"45-year-old prisoner awaiting trial" provides context about the suspect's criminal history. This information implies that the identified suspect has a prior criminal record and is already facing charges related to a business robbery. While it does not necessarily prove guilt in the current case, it adds a layer to the narrative by suggesting a pattern of criminal behavior. It also potentially supports the existing narrative that the couple was blameless.

4.1.4 Article 4

This article reports on a search by police for a woman in connection with the murder of a wine farm owner in Stellenbosch.

"A 54-YEAR-OLD woman is being sought by police after she managed to evade arrest in connection with the murder of Stellenbosch wine farm owner Stefan Smit, 62. Police, however, arrested two other suspects yesterday. Smit, the owner of Stellenbosch wine farm, Louisenhof, was murdered when armed suspects entered the residence through an unlocked door 2, June 2019"
~Woman wanted for farm murder (Cape Times, 11 December 2020).

The language used in the extract employs specific details to create a nuanced discourse. Describing the suspect as a "54-YEAR-OLD woman" provides not only her age but also her gender. This choice of language matters as it influences the reader's initial perceptions of the individual being sought by the police. The inclusion of age and gender may contribute to forming a mental image of the suspect, potentially influencing public reactions or assumptions.

According to Lloyd (1995, as cited in Cormack & Brickey, 2007, p. 2), when women commit violent crimes, they are perceived to have violated: the law of the land, which prohibits violence, and the natural law which dictates that women are passive caregivers rather than active aggressors. The inclusion of the perpetrator's gender here ("woman") suggests that perpetrators may be assumed to be male by default, if their gender is not specified. This carries important connotations regarding the way that gender is associated with criminality in South Africa (Clack & Minnaar,2018).

The use of the word "evade" in the sentence "managed to evade arrest" carries connotations of avoidance and stealth. By describing the woman's actions in this way, the language suggests that she actively sought to escape apprehension by law enforcement. This choice

of wording introduces an element of suspicion surrounding her involvement in the crime, implying that she may have had a deliberate intention to avoid facing consequences for her alleged actions. The term "evade" contributes to shaping the perception of the woman as a fugitive or someone attempting to conceal their role in the murder, thereby adding intrigue and tension to the narrative.

On the other hand, the victim, Stefan Smit, is described comprehensively, including his identity as a "wine farm owner," specifying the location of his wine farm ("Stellenbosch wine farm, Louisenhof"), and providing his full name and age. The detailed depiction of the victim creates a more personalized narrative, potentially evoking empathy from readers.

Analyzing the use of age and gender in describing the perpetrators reveals a potential emphasis on individualizing the victim while categorizing the suspect primarily by demographic details. This distinction in language may influence how readers perceive the characters involved in the crime, shaping initial impressions based on gender and age.

Individualizing the victim refers to providing specific details about the victim's identity or personal characteristics that distinguish them as unique individuals. In the provided excerpt, the victim, Stefan Smit, is described as a "Stellenbosch wine farm owner" and his age, "62," is also mentioned. These details serve to paint a more vivid picture of Smit as an individual with a specific occupation and stage of life. By including these specific descriptors, the article gives readers a sense of who Smit was beyond just being a victim of a crime.

The articles frequently use the term "armed suspects" to characterize the attackers, emphasizing their involvement suspects the crime and the fact that they were armed during the incident.

4.1.5 Article 5

The provincial police commissioner in Limpopo, Lieutenant -General Thembi Hadebe, and the police management have welcomed the two life sentences handed down to convicted farm murderer Mpho Penuel Mbuyane on Tuesday.

Limpopo police spokesperson Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo said court found that the 37 -year -old Mbuyane entered the Kalkpoort game farm outside Zebediela on 20 August 2017, robbed and shot an elderly couple several times. "The couple identified as Piet van Zyl, 68, and his wife Tilla, 66, succumbed to the gunshot

wounds at the scene. The intruder then fled the scene with valuables taken from the house, said Mojapelo. "Soon after this horrendous incident, an intelligence driven operation was established to track down the suspects.

– TWO LIFE SENTENCES for farm murder (The Citizen, 26 August 2021)

The article vividly portrays the harrowing ordeal of an elderly couple at a game farm, where they fell victim to a brutal crime committed by Mbuyane. The use of descriptive language such as “entering,” “robbing,” and “shooting” underscores the severity of the actions perpetrated against the couple. Additionally, labeling the perpetrator as a “37-year-old” highlights his age, perhaps suggesting a contrast with the elderly victims and emphasizing the senselessness of the crime. The term “intruder” implies not only unauthorized entry but also a deliberate and malicious intent. The word “fled” conveys a swift escape, indicating a lack of remorse or accountability. By referring to the victims as an "elderly couple," their Vulnerability is emphasized, while the phrase “succumbed to the gunshot wounds” portrays them as defenseless victims disastrously overwhelmed by the violence inflicted upon them. The specific ages of 68 and 66 further accentuate their senior status, evoking sympathy and highlighting the Injustice of their untimely deaths.

The careful choice of words in the article serves to underscore the vulnerability of the victims, the severity of the crime, and the callousness of the perpetrator. Through language, the article brings attention to broader issues surrounding age-based vulnerability, crime, and the tragic consequences of violence in society.

5. DESCRIBING THE UNFOLDING OF THE VIOLENT EVENT

This section focuses primarily on the description of the incident and how the media reports these events. The focus is to offer a thorough account of the unfolding events by analyzing language choices and understanding their impact on public perception. The articles sampled consistently cover key aspects of these violent crimes, including the location of the incident’s descriptions of the physical crime scenes, and the precise manner in which the victims were murdered and any other commonalities across the cases.

Socioeconomic conditions are implied through the setting of a farmhouse, suggesting a rural environment where farm workers might face particular challenges. The need for enhanced security measures and vigilance alludes to potential vulnerabilities within this socioeconomic context.

5.1.1 Article 6

This article reports the incident where a farm worker was arrested for the alleged murder of his employer on the Zout van de Aarde farm in Albertinia.

Sharon Bester, 52, was killed inside her farmhouse at about 8.30pm last Saturday. Police spokesman Captain Malcolm Potjie said Bester's body had been found by another farm worker who had gone to feed the dogs. "She was found on her bed and medical assistance was summoned by the worker. At first, she was thought to have suffered a stroke, but the preliminary autopsy results indicate that she had been strangled to death," Pojie said
-FARM WORKER LINKED TO MURDER (The Citizen, 4 November 2018)

The discursive value of the above description lies in its revelation of the grim reality and suspected involvement of a farm worker in the murder. By detailing that the worker summoned medical assistance upon discovering the victim, the report presents a contrasting initial perception (a stroke) against the subsequent revelation from the preliminary autopsy results (strangulation), indicating foul play.

The mention of the farm worker finding Sharon Bester while feeding the dogs adds a layer of everyday activity to the grim discovery, creating a vivid scene. The progression from the initial assumption of a stroke to the revelation of strangulation in the preliminary autopsy results adds a dramatic and unexpected element, highlighting the evolving nature of the investigation.

"At first, she was thought to have suffered a stroke, but the preliminary autopsy results indicate that she had been strangled to death," Pojie said. This sentence reveals the initial misinterpretation of the cause of death, creating a narrative twist. The mention of "preliminary autopsy results" introduces a sense of ongoing investigation and forensic analysis. The use of "strangled to death" is explicit and stark, emphasizing the violent nature of the crime.

In this extract, the power dynamics are subtly hinted at through the mention of the farm worker finding Sharon Bester's body. The fact that the worker discovered the crime adds a layer to the narrative, highlighting a potential power disparity between the farm owner and the worker. The use of the term "medical assistance was summoned by the worker" emphasizes the worker's role in taking action by being helpful rather than being a criminal.

5.1.2 Article 7

The trial of a farmworker accused of killing his employer on his farm Bonteheuwel near Griquatown during 2017, was unfolding in the Northern Cape High Court.

"The farmer, Willem van der Westhuizen, died after he was shot in the head while sitting in his vehicle. Olyn allegedly went on a shooting rampage on October 31, 2017 after apparently complaining that it was too hot to work".
-FARM MURDER UNFOLDS IN COURT (Diamond Field Advertising, 27 March 2019)

This is a presentation of a farm murder case that unfolded in court, providing specific details about the circumstances surrounding the crime. The report describes the fatal shooting of the farmer, Willem van der Westhuizen, while he was sitting in his vehicle.

Furthermore, the description depicts an individual peacefully sitting in their car and suddenly attacked, which signifies an unprovoked assault. The assailant's motive is attributed to the hot weather, seemingly minimizing any possible reason behind the violent act. This portrayal emphasizes the victim's innocence and separates the perpetrator as the aggressor. Referring to Olyn's actions as a "shooting rampage" in the extract adds a layer of intensity and scale to the incident. The term "rampage" suggests a chaotic and uncontrolled series of violent actions, emphasizing the severity and extent of the shooting. It paints a vivid picture of a situation where the individual went on an unrestrained and widespread shooting spree, contributing to the overall impact and gravity of the reported events.

This incident can be distinguished as a hostile aggression from looking at the motivation and intent described. (Bezuidenhout, 2012) explains hostile (expressive) aggression is shown in situations that elicit anger. The main aim of the aggressor is to hurt or cause suffering to the person. The incident described in the extract can be distinguished as a

hostile aggression based on the motivation and intent mentioned. Olyn's shooting rampage, triggered by a complaint about the weather, aligns with the characteristics of hostile or expressive aggression as explained by Bezuidenhout (2012). In this context, the aggression is driven by anger, and the primary aim of the aggressor (Olyn) is to cause harm or suffering, evident in the fatal shooting of the farmer, Willem van der Westhuizen. This analysis helps contextualize the nature of the aggression in the reported incident.

5.1.3 Article 8

This article discusses the heartbreaking death of a former ward councilor associated with a well-known political party; whose body was discovered in her home. The Democratic Alliance (DA) in Limpopo was mourning the brutal killing of former ward councilor, Annette Kennealy.

Woman found in a pool of blood in her Makhado Farmhouse. On arrival, the deceased was found inside her house lying in a pool of blood, with multiple stab wounds," said Ngoepe.
– TEARS FOR EX COUNSCILLOR (The Citizen, 23 May 2019).

The sub-heading introduces a distressing incident involving a woman, identified as an ex-councilor, found in a pool of blood within her farmhouse in Makhado. The report describes the grim discovery of the deceased woman with multiple stab wounds, emphasizing the shocking and violent nature of the crime scene. In this text, the use of the phrase "woman found in a pool of blood" creates a vivid and distressing image, emphasizing the brutality of the situation. The choice of words like "pool of blood" evokes a sense of horror and violence, highlighting the severity of the incident.

The phrase "her Makhando Farmhouse" emphasizes ownership and possession, indicating that the farmhouse belonged to Annette Kennealy. By specifying that it was her farmhouse, it highlights her right to be there and connection to the property.

The mention of "inside her house" underscores the deliberate invasion of Kennealy's personal space and the violation of her sanctuary. The specifications that she was found in her house emphasizes that the perpetrator intentionally entered her residence which suggests a premeditation and targeted violence. The use of "inside" implies a sense of

enclosure and protection, contrasting sharply with the violent act that occurred within its confines.

The mention of "multiple stab wounds" provides specific details about the cause of the woman's injuries, intensifying the description and implying a deliberate and vicious act. The use of "stab wounds" denotes a personal and intimate form of violence (Comack & Brickey, 2007).

5.1.4 Article 9

An elderly couple was robbed then burnt to death on their farm.

"A 74-year-old farmer and his wife have died after their farmhouse was allegedly set on fire after a house robbery on their farm in Levubu, outside Thohoyandou, Limpopo, on Wednesday, police have said"
- ELDERLY COUPLE BURNT TO DEATH AFTER FARM ROBBERY (The Citizen, 22 April 2022).

The inclusion of "74-year-old farmer and his wife" humanizes the victims, adding a personal touch to the report. It emphasizes their vulnerability due to age and highlights the tragedy of their deaths.

The choice of words such as "allegedly set on fire" indicates a level of uncertainty or ongoing investigation, emphasizing that the information is based on initial reports and may be subject to verification. The term "allegedly" suggests caution in attributing the act definitively.

The phrase "after a house robbery" links the fire to a preceding criminal activity, framing it as a consequence of a specific crime. This connects the incidents and implies a motive related to robbery.

5.1.5 Article 10

Two suspects were killed and six arrested after shoot-out with law enforcement following recent farm robbery and murder in KwaZulu-Natal.

"Police spokesperson Constable Thenjiswa Ngcobo said the Seven Oaks victim, Hans Jurie Venter, was suffocated and strangled to death. Charges of murder and robbery were opened for investigation"
- FARM MURDER PROBE: TWO SUSPECTS KILLED (Daily News, 1 December 2022).

This description revolves around the investigation of a farm murder involving the death of Hans Jurie Venter. The report vividly details the violent and cruel way Venter lost his life, mentioning that he was “suffocated and strangled”. These explicit descriptions highlight the extreme brutality of the crime committed against him. The purpose of this report is to shed light on the specific methods used in Venter's murder, emphasizing the severity and inhumanity of the act.

The descriptions of the victims’ deaths, particularly Hans Jurie Venter’s suffocation and strangulation, are portrayed in vivid detail. Terms like “suffocated” and “strangled” evoke visceral images of violence and suffering, emphasizing the extreme brutality of the crimes. These graphic depictions serve to shock and horrify readers, highlighting the severity of the violence inflicted upon the victims.

The mention of the crimes occurring on farm properties adds another layer of significance to the narrative. Farms are often seen as symbols of safety and sanctuary, places where individuals and families feel secure(Burger,2012). However, the fact that these violent crimes occurred in such settings underscores the vulnerability of rural communities to crime and the violation of the victims’ sense of security within their own homes. The juxtaposition of the peaceful rural setting with the violent crimes committed on these properties serves to intensify the tragedy of the events and accentuate the contrast between the idyllic image of farm life and the harsh reality of crime.

Additionally, the use of adverbs like “brutally,” “allegedly,” “apparently,” and “seemingly” adds layers of emphasis, uncertainty, or possibility to certain details, aiming to engage the reader and provoke a strong emotional response.

In the following extract, we will delve into an incident that transpired in Kapteinsdrift, where a 19-year-old was arrested in connection with the murder and attempted murder of a couple. The aim is to explore the description of the unfolded event by looking at the specific language used by the author.

5.1.6 Article 11

The forthcoming article addresses a young man who was arrested in connection with the murder and attempted murder of a Bonnievale farmer and his wife.

"The arrest comes after Tool and Liezel Wessels, both 55, were brutally attacked on their Kapteinsdrift farm on Monday. According to reports, the two were "Attacked by four men wearing balaclavas. Liezel was stabbed in the chest and had boiling water poured over her back. She managed to escape to a neighboring farm. Meanwhile, the body of her husband was found a few hundred meters from their home in a nearby river"
-Suspect held for Farm murder (Cape Argus, 16 May 2019)

The given excerpt provides a detailed account of a brutal attack on Tool and Liezel Wessels, emphasizing the graphic nature of the violence inflicted upon them. The author uses the adjective "brutal" to convey the severity and cruelty of the attack. "Attacked by four men wearing balaclavas": This sentence discursively conveys a direct and concise account of an attack by four individuals wearing balaclavas. The choice of words and details aims to provide a clear, factual description of the event while emphasizing the anonymity of the attackers who were wearing hats that are not considered normal.

The term "Balaclavas" carry connotations of anonymity and concealment, often associated with criminal activities or nefarious intentions. By mentioning that the attackers were wearing balaclavas, the narrative emphasizes their efforts to hide their identities, suggesting premeditation and a desire to evade detection or accountability for their actions. Additionally, the choice of headwear, which is not considered normal or typical attire in most situations, further underscores the sinister nature of the attackers, and adds to the sense of unease and vulnerability experienced by the victims.

The inclusion of specific details like being "stabbed in the chest" and "scalded with boiling water" aims to shock readers and evoke a visceral reaction, highlighting the severity of the incident. The statement aligns with Comaroff and Comaroff's (2006) analysis of crime narratives, which emphasizes the use of specific details to elicit emotional reactions from readers. They argue that crime narratives are constructed to influence the audience's emotions and perceptions. This deliberate focus on the gruesome aspects of the crime serves to capture the audience's attention and stimulate empathy, potentially provoking a strong emotional response. Evidently in this case newsworthy stories are characterized by elements such as immediacy, dramatization, personalization, titillation, and novelty, appealing to audience interest and curiosity (Bird, 2007; Reiner 1997).

The phrase "in a nearby river" is significant in several ways. Firstly, it provides a specific location where the body of Tool Wessels was discovered, adding detail to the description of the crime scene. This specificity contributes to the overall narrative by painting a clearer picture of the events that transpired.

Secondly, the word “river” evokes imagery of water flowing and suggests a natural landscape. Rivers are often associated with tranquility and serenity, yet in this context, it becomes a site of tragedy and violence. This contrast adds to the sadness of the scene and underscores the brutality of the crime.

Furthermore, the use of “nearby” implies proximity to the victims’ home, indicating that the crime took place within their immediate surroundings. This detail intensifies the sense of danger and vulnerability, as the perpetrators were able to carry out the attack and dispose of the body in close proximity to the victims’ residence.

5.1.7 Article 12

A Verulam family was left shattered after the gruesome and violent murders of an elderly couple at their Cottonlands Farm home.

Dhir Roy Singh,68 and his girlfriend Kay, 65 had lived on the farm for more than 30 years. “Singh is believed to have died from several stab wounds, while Kay is believed to have been strangled to death. They were found locked in a bathroom. Kay, a former resident of Redcliffe, in Verulam, was found lying face down in the bathtub with her hands tied behind her back. Singh's body was found on the floor with stab wounds to his neck. A knife believed to have been used in his murder was found in the living room. Security company Reaction Unit South Africa responded to the scene at about 1mp. On arrival, guards looked through a window and saw blood on the bedroom floor. The blood trail led the guards to the bathroom, which was locked. The bodies were found when they broke the door down”
- BRUTAL FARM MURDER (Daily News, 4 September 2018)

The title "BRUTAL FARM MURDER” conveys severity through the use of the word “BRUTAL.” This strong adjective explicitly emphasizes the vicious and violent nature of the murder. The choice of “BRUTAL” intensifies the impact of the crime, indicating that the incident involved extreme cruelty and severity.

The phrase “more than 30 years” establishes a long-term connection between Dhir Roy Singh, his girlfriend Kay, and the farm. By emphasizing the extended duration of their residence, it implies a sense of ownership and belonging. This duration suggests a deep-rooted relationship with the property, reinforcing the idea that the farm is not just a temporary dwelling but a place that has become an integral part of their lives and that they had a right to be on this property - in other words, they were completely innocent.

The article employs vivid language to evoke the severity and emotional impact of the devastating event. Describing the murders as “gruesome and violent” immediately establishes the tone, emphasizing the brutality of the crime and instilling a sense of horror in the reader. This choice of adjectives sets the stage for a narrative focused on the shocking nature of the deaths.

Furthermore, characterizing the family as “shattered” highlights the profound emotional devastation experienced by loved ones in the wake of the murders. This word choice conveys the depth of grief and trauma inflicted upon those closest to the victims, adding a layer of human emotion to the narrative.

The phrase "believed to have died” introduces an element of uncertainty, indicating that the circumstances surrounding the deaths are still under investigation. This linguistic choice acknowledges the ongoing nature of the investigation and underscores the need for further inquiry to ascertain the facts surrounding the tragedy.

Additionally, the phrases “stab wounds” and “strangled to death” provide graphic details of the violence inflicted upon the victims, vividly illustrating the traumatic nature of their deaths. These descriptions serve to emphasize the brutality of the crime and evoke a visceral response from the reader.

Lastly, the phrase “found locked in a bathroom” suggests a sense of confinement or helplessness, amplifying the sense of horror surrounding the victims’ final moments. This detail adds to the overall atmosphere of tension and dread, further immersing the reader in the harrowing circumstances of the crime scene.

The discursive value of the above description lies in its detailed and graphic portrayal of the violent and gruesome nature of the farm murder. The report vividly depicts the brutality of the crime through the description of multiple stab wounds, strangulation, the victims

being found in a locked bathroom in distressing positions, and the discovery of the murder weapon at the scene. By describing the couple as "found locked in a bathroom" the report emphasizes that the couple was hiding and that they were not trying to fight back. The description of a "blood trail" suggests that violence was enacted not only in the bathroom but at other places in the house, suggesting a drawn-out scene of violence.

The language used by the authors in describing the incidents leans towards conveying the severity, brutality, and tragedy of the crimes. They use descriptive adjectives like “brutal,” “gruesome,” “elderly,” and “violent” to emphasize the seriousness and horror of the events. The choice of verbs such as “died,” “shot,” “robbed,” “strangled,” and “burnt” vividly depicts the violent actions committed in these incidents.

6. LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES IN RESPONSE TO FARM MURDERS

The focus of this section is to analyze how reporters describe the legal response to the crimes. Examining how journalist depict the legal response to crimes holds a significant importance. It initially, it offers valuable insights into how law enforcement strategies are presented into the public, influencing perceptions of efficacy and equity. This understanding is vital as it shapes public confidence in the justice system and may affect community collaboration with law enforcement (Taylor,2006).

Journalistic descriptions of the legal response to crimes can play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of law enforcement efficacy and credibility. In a context where law enforcement agencies are often depicted negatively, descriptions highlighting swift action, successful arrests, and effective investigations can work to counteract these negative portrayals. By emphasizing the arrests made, suspects apprehended, and legal actions taken, journalists may seek to highlight instances where law enforcement agencies are perceived as proactive, competent, and responsive to crime.

6.1.1 Article 13

This article discusses a breakthrough in a farm attack case in Odendaalsrus, Free State, where a suspect has been linked to the incident that resulted in the death of the farmer.

Police spokesperson Captain Stephen Thakeng said after an extensive investigation into the murder, suspect has been identified and connected to the crime scene through DNA evidence "The individual in question is 45-year-old prisoner awaiting trial, who was already in custody for business robbery committed in Odendaalsrus. He has been detained since 2021, in connection with the aforementioned robbery," he said. Thakeng said the suspect, Khulekani Kaizer Mthethwa has been charged with the murder of Regal. He made an appearance in the Welkom Magistrate's Court on Friday. The case was postponed until June for bail application.
~Farm murder suspect tracked (The Citizen, 29 May 2023).

In the given data excerpts, the language used by police spokesperson Captain Stephen Thakeng reflects a professional and matter-of-fact tone in describing the murder investigation. “Extensive investigation” in the context of this discourse implies that the police have invested significant effort, time, and resources into thoroughly examining the murder case. The choice of words emphasizes factual details, such as the suspect’s identification through DNA evidence, prior criminal history, and the legal proceedings. The use of scientific evidence like DNA, the evidence of previous criminal activity, all work to produce this person as the perpetrator, even though he has not been sentenced yet.

The professional and matter-of-fact tone adopted by police spokesperson Captain Stephen Thakeng in discussing the murder investigation conveys a sense of rationality, objectivity, and confidence in law enforcement procedures. Through calm and factual language, Thakeng implies that the investigation was conducted methodically, without bias, and with a systematic approach. Phrases like “extensive investigation” and “connected to the crime scene through DNA evidence” suggest thorough procedures were followed, ensuring the integrity of the investigation. This tone instils public confidence in law enforcement’s ability to identify and hold accountable those responsible for violent crimes.

The statement “45-year-old prisoner awaiting trial, who was already in custody for a business robbery committed in Odendaalsrus” provides context about the suspect’s criminal history. This information implies that law enforcement agencies were able to identify, apprehend, and charge Mthethwa for the previous business robbery, indicating a level of investigative competence and commitment to upholding the rule of law. It suggests that police are actively pursuing criminals and taking proactive measures to address criminal behavior within communities.

The verbs used, like “detained,” “charged,” and “appeared,” convey the procedural aspects of law enforcement actions. The adjectives “extensive” and “aforementioned” underscore the thoroughness of the investigation and link to the suspect’s prior criminal record.

The journalist appears to report on the information provided by the police, presenting the details without injecting personal opinions. The language used aligns with traditional news reporting conventions, emphasizing the who, what, where, and when of the incident and subsequent investigation. According to Peter (2011), criticisms of journalism often center on concerns about the compromised civic role of journalists and how sensationalized coverage undermines the press’s function to inform in democratic societies. This suggests that journalists who aim to maintain their civic responsibility tend to rely on traditional news reporting conventions rather than sensationalism.

In the provided excerpt, the journalist’s reporting aligns with traditional news reporting conventions by presenting factual details without injecting personal opinions or sensationalism. The language used focuses on providing essential information about the murder investigation, including the suspect's Identification through DNA evidence, prior criminal history, and legal proceedings. This approach implies that the public receives accurate and relevant information about the case, enabling them to make informed judgments and understand the implications of the events.

6.1.2 Article 14

This article discusses a police investigation regarding three human remains discovered burnt beyond recognition on a farm.

The police are investigating three counts of murder following the discovery of the remains which was made on (Friday) July 2022 outside Nelspruit," said police Colonel Donald Mdhluli.
~THREE BODIES BURNT BEYOND RECOGNITION (Sunday Independent, 17 July 2022).

The above data excerpt provides information about the police investigation into three counts of murder related to the discovery of remains outside Nelspruit. The language used maintains a factual and formal tone, with an emphasis on presenting the details of the ongoing investigation. The journalist quotes the police spokesperson who uses the word “investigating” which suggests that the law enforcement is looking into the farm incidents

through conducting a search of how the crime was conducted and by who. This also shows the manner in which the law enforcement works and their procedure before coming with conclusions about the crimes committed and the possible suspects.

The choice of words like "investigating," "discovery of remains," and "counts of murder" indicates a serious and systematic approach by law enforcement in response to the incident. The mention of a specific location, Nelspruit, and the reference to the day (Friday, July 2022) provides context and temporal details.

Verbs such as "investigating" highlight the proactive stance of law enforcement, and the adjectives "three" and "outside Nelspruit" specify the scope and location of the incidents. Specifying the scope and location of the incidents with adjectives like “three” and “outside Nelspruit” is crucial for providing contextual information about the crimes being investigated. The adjective “three” indicates the number of murders being investigated, emphasizing the seriousness and magnitude of the crimes. This detail underscores the severity of the situation and emphasizes the urgency of law enforcement action. Additionally, the phrase “outside Nelspruit” provides geographic context, helping readers visualize the events and understand the proximity of the incidents to a specific area. This localization of the crimes raises awareness and concern among residents of Nelspruit and surrounding areas, contributing to a clearer understanding of the investigation’s scope and impact.

The language used is focused on conveying the facts of the case. The journalist made use of direct quotation to precisely and verbatim include the law enforcements spokesperson’s words(Van Dijk,1995). This enhances the creditability of the information as it captures the exact language and nuances used by the source. It also provides the readers with an authentic and transparent representation of the speakers’ thoughts or statements. There is no expression of opinion by the journalist about law enforcement's reaction. These sources function as both supporting evidence and assertions of truth regarding the state of crime (Wallance, 2008). This means that the journalists will use direct quotations as a way of highlighting the facticity of a report.

6.1.3 Article 15

The below article examines a case involving an elderly couple who were robbed and subsequently burned to death.

Police spokesperson Lieutenant- "The victims burned beyond recognition," said Ledwaba. "Preliminary police investigations revealed that the farmer and wife were allegedly accosted by suspects who ransacked the farmhouse and took several items, including firearms and loaded them into the family vehicle. "They apparently then set the hour Activation Plan to hunt down the suspects following the gruesome attack and two people have been arrested. "A task team comprising detectives from provincial, district and station levels was assembled to track down the killers," said Hadebe. "We called on community members with information to come forward and assist the police in the investigations of this horrendous crime." The police opened cases of two counts of murder and one each of house robbery and arson. They had urged anyone with information that could lead to the arrest of the suspects to contact the police
. ~Elderly couple burnt to death after farm robbery (The Citizen, 22 April 2022).

The language used by police spokesperson Lieutenant Ledwaba in this data excerpt reflects a sense of urgency and gravity in response to a farm murder incident. The language expression is serious, highlighting the brutal nature of the attack. The use of the phrase "burned beyond recognition" creates a vivid and distressing image, underscoring the severity of the crime.

The verbs "accosted," "ransacked," "took," and "set" provide a detailed account of the alleged actions of the suspects, contributing to the narrative of a violent and chaotic event. The mention of an "Activation Plan", and “task team” demonstrates a strategic response by law enforcement, indicating a swift effort to apprehend the suspects.

The call for community assistance and the formation of a task team suggests a collaborative and determined approach to solving the case. The formation of a task team comprising detectives from provincial, district, and station levels reflects a concerted effort to address the complexity and severity of the case described. Task teams are typically convened for complex or high-profile cases, pooling resources, and expertise to thoroughly investigate incidents, gather evidence, and identify suspects. In this context, the involvement of a task team signifies a proactive approach by law enforcement authorities to solve the crime and bring the perpetrators to justice. By coordinating efforts across different administrative

tiers, task teams enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the investigative process, demonstrating a heightened level of commitment and prioritization of the case.

The emphasis lies on communicating the details of the crime, the police response, and the call for public cooperation. The journalist seems to be relaying the information given by the police, presenting the details objectively without expressing personal opinions. However, the choice of evaluative words such as "gruesome" and "horrendous" could evoke a sense of empathy or concern from the reader, potentially influencing their perception of the incident. Therefore, the descriptive words used were sensational, focusing on the senses as the primary source of stimulation, and emphasizing bodily and non-rational reactions (Wiltenburg, 2004).

By contrast, law enforcement strategies typically rely on a non-sensational, matter-of-fact approach that prioritizes evidence-based investigation and objective reporting. Police statements often use precise language to convey factual information about the incident, focusing on details relevant to the investigation rather than evoking emotional reactions. By maintaining a neutral and evidence-based tone, law enforcement aims to uphold the integrity of the investigation and ensure fair and accurate representation of the facts. This contrast highlights the different purposes and priorities of sensational reporting and law enforcement strategies in addressing crime and serving the public Interest.

The use of "provincial, district, and station levels" indicates a coordinated and large-scale response in law enforcement. Each level represents a different administrative tier within the law enforcement hierarchy, suggesting a comprehensive approach to addressing the situation. At the provincial level, higher-ranking officials and resources are likely involved, indicating strategic coordination and oversight of the response efforts. District-level involvement suggests the deployment of resources and personnel across broader geographical areas, potentially including specialized units or task forces to address specific aspects of the incident. Finally, station-level engagement highlights the mobilization of local law enforcement agencies and personnel, indicating a community-based approach to addressing the issue.

The use of the term “horrendous crime” by the police spokesperson in this context goes beyond a neutral and factual description. When policeman uses words like “horrendous and “gruesome”, which are more emotional than their usual way of talking, it shows just how bad the crimes were. In other words, when a policeman starts using moral and evaluative language, in a case where only his institutional response is required, the policeman is displaying the severity of the crime This choice of language in the discourse analysis reveals an attempt to evoke a strong emotional response and convey the severity of the situation. By labelling the crime as “horrendous,” the spokesperson not only communicates the gravity of the incident but also seeks to engage public sentiment, urging community members to come forward with information.

While police spokespersons are generally expected to maintain impartiality and professionalism, in certain cases, emotive language may be strategically employed to garner public cooperation or emphasize the seriousness of the matter. In this instance, describing the crime as “horrendous” serves a communicative purpose, aiming to mobilize community involvement and underscore the significance of providing information to aid the investigations.

The ideologies implied in the words “burned beyond recognition,” “gruesome attack,” and “track down the killers “used by the journalist could include a condemnation of violence and a call for community solidarity in assisting law enforcement. The journalist may be framing the incident as a heinous crime that demands collective action and justice

6.1.4 Article 16

This article is about an incident where law enforcement authorities responded to reports of a farm robbery and murder in KwaZulu-Natal.

Two suspects were killed and six arrested after shoot-out with law enforcement following recent farm robbery and murder in KwaZulu-Natal. Police spokesperson Constable Thenjiswa Ngcobo said the Seven Oaks victim, Hans Jurie Venter, was suffocated and strangled to death. Charges of murder and robbery were opened for investigation. Ngcobo said that in the early hours of Tuesday, Greytown police, the Pietermaritzburg Unit, the Pietermaritzburg Trio Task Team and Magma Security and Investigations embarked on an intelligence operation after they received information on the whereabouts of the suspects allegedly involved in the murder and robbery. "They proceeded to the Boston area where they spotted the eight suspects travelling in two

vehicles towards Impendle. "When fronted, the armed men opened fire at police officers and shoot-out ensued during the high-speed chase.

~Farm murder probe: two suspects killed (Daily news, 1 December 2022).

In examining the provided data excerpts, the employed by police spokesperson Constable Thenjiswa Ngcobo conveys distinct urgency and proactive law enforcement response to a farm robbery and murder incident in KwaZulu-Natal. This portrays the law enforcement's immediate and decisive response to the incident. Portraying law enforcement as decisive and immediate in news reports serves two purposes in this article. Firstly, it enhances public confidence in the ability of law enforcement to address and respond effectively to criminal activities. This portrayal fosters a sense of security within the community, assuring citizens that authorities are actively taking measures to combat crime.

Secondly, showcasing law enforcement's proactive approach can positively influence public perception and support for law enforcement agencies. It creates a narrative of efficiency and competence, which is crucial for maintaining trust and cooperation between the community and the authorities.

The portrayal of law enforcement as decisive and immediate in news reports is a strategic communication tool to instill confidence and maintain positive public relations.

The verbs "suffocated," "strangled," "opened," and "embarked" provide details of the alleged criminal actions and the subsequent police operation, portraying a thorough investigation and pursuit of suspects. The adjectives "armed" and "high-speed" intention is to create a narrative that enhances public trust, promotes a sense of security, and encourages community support for law enforcement efforts. Positive portrayals in reports play a crucial role in shaping public perception and maintaining a strong relationship between the police and the community. In the context of critical discourse analysis (CDA), this notion is significant because it highlights the power dynamics inherent in media representations of law enforcement. CDA seeks to uncover hidden ideologies, power relations, and social inequalities embedded in language use, including media discourse. Therefore, analyzing the ways in which police actions and interactions are portrayed in reports can reveal underlying biases, stereotypes, and dominant narratives that may influence public perceptions and attitudes toward law enforcement.

The choice of words like "intelligence operation," "received information," and "whereabouts" suggests a strategic and informed approach by the police, highlighting their efforts to gather intelligence and act on it.

The language used indicates the operational aspects of law enforcement rather than expressing criticism. The general tone suggests a proactive and determined stance by law enforcement in addressing the criminal activities, and the journalist's role seems to inform the public about the events rather than offering a subjective opinion.

6.1.5 Article 17

Five people were appearing in the Howick Magistrate's Court on the 28 April 2021 in connection with the murder of Howick farmer, Trevor Murphy.

Police spokesperson Brigadier Jay Naicker said Howick SAPS detectives, Pietermaritzburg Public Order Police Unit, and security officers from Magma security, followed up on information that Murphy's vehicle was spotted in the Pietermaritzburg CBD. Police intercepted the vehicle and search was conducted. Three people were arrested. Naicker said 9mm pistol and clothing that were taken during the robbery were found in the vehicle. Police proceeded to the Swapo Informal Settlement where two men were arrested. Police also seized number of suspected stolen items. The five men, aged 25 to 47, were charged with murder and robbery. KZN provincial commissioner Lieu- tenant -General Nhlanhla Mkhwanazi welcomed the speedy arrests. "We are saddened by this brutal murder at Howick. We must applaud the team from the SAPS and private security industry who worked nonstop to arrest the perpetrators. We hope that this sends clear message to the perpetrators of such heinous crimes that the police will continue to hunt them down until they are behind bars," Mkhwanazi said. On Sunday, police arrested eight people in connection with robbery at Lammermoor farm in Mooi River. Eleven firearms were recovered. DA MP and chairperson of the party's rural safety workstream, Dianne Kohler Barnard, said their court watching unit would keep close eye on the cases to ensure that the perpetrators were brought to book.
~Five Due in court over farm murder (Daily news, 28 April 2021).

The verbs "followed up," "intercepted," "conducted," "arrested," and "seized" highlight the swift and strategic nature of the police operation, emphasizing their pursuit, apprehension, and evidence collection. The adjectives "brutal" and "heinous" describe the nature of the crime, framing it as particularly severe.

Brigadier Naicker's statement underscores the collaboration between various law enforcement units and private security, portraying a united front against criminal activities. The mention of finding a 9mm pistol and clothing linked to the robbery adds specificity to the investigation.

In this statement, the use of words like “applaud” and “worked nonstop” employs positive and appreciative language. The term “applaud” expresses praise and admiration for the team from the SAPS (South African Police Service) and the private security industry. This choice of language serves to commend and highlight the efforts of these entities.

The use of terms like “court watching unit,” “keep a close eye,” and “brought to book” highlights the proactive stance of law enforcement in ensuring accountability for the perpetrators of farm-related crimes. These phrases position the police as diligent and committed to pursuing justice, instilling confidence in farmers and the community. Additionally, the assertion that “police will hunt them down until they are behind bars” underscores the determination of law enforcement to apprehend criminals and prevent further incidents. These statements serve to reassure the public, particularly farmers, that the police are actively engaged in combating crime and addressing concerns about farm attacks. Furthermore, in the context of discussions surrounding “white genocide,” these reports may serve to counteract such narratives by demonstrating the police’s active involvement in addressing crimes against farmers, thereby fostering a sense of security and trust in law enforcement among affected communities.

The phrase "worked nonstop" emphasizes the dedication and continuous effort put forth by the team in making arrests. This descriptor conveys a sense of diligence, persistence, and urgency in addressing the situation, portraying the team in a highly positive light.

The critical discourse analysis (CDA) reveals several key findings regarding the portrayal of law enforcement and crime reporting. Utilizing direct quotations ensures a tone of neutrality and facticity, while highlighting proactive police efforts challenges prevailing negative stereotypes. Moreover, the discourse of cooperation between farmers and police counters narratives of white genocide, fostering a more nuanced understanding of community relations. The use of evaluative language in institutional reports foregrounds problematic incidents, shedding light on issues within law enforcement practices. These

findings underscore the importance of language in shaping perceptions of law enforcement and crime, emphasizing the need for critical engagement with media representations to uncover underlying ideologies and power dynamics.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This discussion section explores the findings from the analysis of newspaper coverage on farm murders in South Africa. By concentrating on the key themes identified in the analysis—such as the profiling of victims and perpetrators, the portrayal of violent events, and the depiction of law enforcement strategies. This exploration aims to understand how these elements contribute to shaping public perception and influencing discourse.

The key findings in the portrayal of victims and perpetrators reveal how the media emphasizes victims' vulnerability and positive attributes, while focusing on specific demographic details of perpetrators to shape public perceptions and influence societal views. The media portrayal of victims often highlights their vulnerability and positive attributes, using terms like "elderly couple," "hard-working," and "religious" to depict them as innocent, defenseless, and virtuous individuals (Surette,2018). This characterization tends to evoke sympathy and aligns the victims with a narrative of tragic injustice. By emphasizing their specific ages, the media underscores their senior status, further highlighting their perceived frailty and the gravity of the crime committed against them.

In contrast, perpetrators are portrayed with specific demographic details, such as age and gender, such as the term "54-YEAR-OLD woman." This framing introduces the suspect's gender and age into the narrative, which can significantly influence public perceptions and assumptions. Describing a perpetrator with such details can shape how the public views their motivations and characteristics. For instance, the portrayal of a female perpetrator challenges traditional gender roles, where men are more commonly associated with violent crimes. This deviation from the norm can lead to a heightened focus on the unusual nature of the crime, potentially influencing societal views on gender and criminality.

Media coverage of violent events frequently employs detailed and graphic descriptions to convey the extreme nature of the violence. Adjectives like “brutal,” “gruesome,” and “violent” are commonly used to emphasize the severity of the attacks. For example, phrases such as "found in a pool of blood" and “stab wounds” vividly depict the violence inflicted upon the victims, aiming to evoke a visceral response from readers. This explicit portrayal of injuries and crime scenes, with

terms like "strangled to death" and "locked in a bathroom," creates a detailed and unsettling image of the suffering experienced by the victims.

The language used by the media often includes sensational terms to heighten the dramatic aspects of the events. Phrases such as “shooting rampage” and “brutal farm murder” intensify the sense of alarm and underscore the scale of the violence. Detailed accounts of the perpetrators’ actions, such as Olyn’s shooting spree or attackers wearing balaclavas, serve to emphasize the calculated nature of the aggression and the malice of the aggressors. This focus on individual behavior reinforces the perception of premeditated violence. By emphasizing these individual behaviors, the media reinforces the perception of premeditated violence, shaping public understanding of the events in a way that prioritizes the dramatic and the emotionally charged. This aligns closely with the literature on sensationalism in news reporting, as discussed by Wiltenburg (2004).Sensationalism is characterized by its focus on stimulating the senses and evoking bodily and non-rational reactions from the audience

The media portrayal of law enforcement strategies reveals a focus on professionalism and systematic approaches. Police spokespersons consistently use a matter-of-fact tone and terms like “extensive investigation” and “connected to the crime scene through DNA evidence,” which highlight a methodical and evidence-based approach. This language presents the police efforts as thorough and precise. This portrayal aims to convey a sense of competence and systematic action in the pursuit of justice. In line with Fairclough’s (1995) and Denzin & Lincoln’s (2018) discourse theories, the media generates specific narratives around law enforcement by framing their actions within a recurring pattern of professionalism and effectiveness. This contributes to the public discourse, shaping societal perceptions of law enforcement as reliable and competent authorities.

Coverage also emphasizes a strategic and proactive response from law enforcement. Terms such as “Activation Plan,” “task team,” and action verbs like “followed up,” “intercepted,” “conducted,” and “seized” reflect a coordinated and urgent effort to tackle the incidents. This language underscores a sense of competence and organized strategy in addressing the crimes. These portrayals are largely based on police statements, conveying a high level of efficacy in law enforcement. The focus on detailed procedures and proactive measures is designed to boost public confidence in the police, presenting them as decisive, strategic, and effective in managing and resolving violent crimes.

The profiling of victims and perpetrators, the portrayal of violent events, and the depiction of law enforcement strategies are interrelated themes that collectively influence how the public perceives crime and justice. The media outlets often highlight the vulnerability and positive traits of victims, such as their age, innocence, or social standing, while framing perpetrators through demographic details like age, gender, or ethnicity. Victims are also described innocent and undeserving of the violence they endure. This selective reporting shapes societal perceptions by reinforcing stereotypes and assumptions about who commits crimes and who suffers from them. In disparity, the portrayal of violent events is frequently sensationalized, using dramatic language and vivid descriptions of brutality to evoke strong emotional responses from the audience. This heightens fear and outrage, positioning the events as moral crises that demand swift resolution. Meanwhile, law enforcement strategies are shown as methodical, professional, and decisive, supporting public trust in the ability of authorities to restore order and ensure justice.

These themes are connected in how they create a narrative structure, innocent victims are wronged by deviant criminals, while law enforcement steps in as the protector of social order. The media's dramatization of events, coupled with the portrayal of law enforcement's competence, serves to maintain societal norms by reinforcing the roles of victims, criminals, and police in ways that align with existing power structures and ideologies. This structure portrays crime as a threat to social stability that must be managed by the competent authorities. By doing so, these representations shape public discourse, influencing not only individual opinions but also broader conversations about crime prevention, justice policies, and social inequalities. The media's framing of these elements reinforces societal anxieties and moral orders, which in turn shape attitudes toward crime and justice, ultimately affecting policymaking and legal responses to crime.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 CONCLUSION

The present study provides a critical discourse analysis(CDA) of newspaper reports on farm murders in South Africa revealed significant insights into the language choices, framing devices, and portrayal of key actors within the media discourse. This analysis was driven by two primary inquiries: The study aimed to investigate how South African media platforms represent farm murders, specifically focusing on the depiction of victims, perpetrators, and law enforcement. It sought to uncover key statements and strategies employed by these outlets in reporting on farm murders, analyzing how they portray the incidents, individuals involved, and the role of law enforcement.

The findings revealed a prevalent use of direct quotations, particularly from law enforcement officials and family members of victims, shaping the narrative surrounding these tragic events. Journalists commonly rely on direct quotations to convey statements made by these key figures, significantly influencing the narrative surrounding farm murders. Additionally, there is a tendency in media coverage to sensationalize farm murders, utilizing headlines and imagery to elicit strong emotional reactions from the audience. Furthermore, the analysis highlighted the disproportionate focus on victims over perpetrators, reflected in the descriptions used to portray each party. Media coverage often emphasizes the personal stories and contributions of victims, portraying them sympathetically. These findings underscore the power dynamics at play within the relationship between victims and perpetrators, as well as the societal impact of farm murders.

In addressing the first question, this study uncovered various statements and strategies utilized by South African media outlets in their coverage of farm murders. These strategies include emphasizing the innocence and victimization of farmers, depicting perpetrators as young males, and highlighting law enforcement responsiveness. These approaches serve to both perpetuate and challenge broader discourses surrounding farm murders. While portraying farmers as industrious contributors to their communities and emphasizing law

enforcement's swift responses may reinforce existing narratives of victimization and justice, the portrayal of perpetrators and the depiction of unfolding events in a distressing manner provoke critical reflection on the root causes of violence in rural areas. Newspaper reports often criminalize perpetrators, portraying them as dangerous individuals whose violent actions threaten society. Additionally, media coverage frequently examines law enforcement efforts to investigate and address farm murders, shedding light on police responses and strategies for combating rural crime.

Regarding the second question, the media depicts farm murders from various perspectives, often portraying them as shocking and violent events that elicit horror and sympathy from the public. This portrayal is achieved through vivid descriptions of crime scenes and victim details, coupled with the use of emotive language to convey the gravity of the situations. Media coverage extends beyond the immediate incidents to explore their broader societal ramifications, addressing themes such as fear, community cohesion, and the impact on rural life and livelihoods. Fear arising from farm murders can instill a sense of vulnerability among rural residents, affecting their sense of safety and security. Discussions on community cohesion examine how these incidents either unite or divide rural populations as they navigate the aftermath of such tragedies. Additionally, media analysis delves into the implications of farm murders on rural life and livelihoods, including concerns about the sustainability of farming practices, the economic viability of rural areas, and the overall well-being of agricultural communities.

5.1.1 Limitations

Making use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) of newspaper reports from prominent South African media outlets, including The Citizen, Sunday Independent, Cape Argus, Pretoria News Weekend, Diamond field Advertiser and Daily News has provided valuable insights into how language constructs meaning and shapes perceptions of farm murders. However, I must acknowledge the limitations inherent in this methodology. Firstly, my interpretation of language use in newspaper articles is subjective, potentially introducing bias into my analysis. Additionally, focusing solely on newspaper reports may lead me to overlook the influence of other media forms, such as online platforms and social media, on shaping public discourse. Moreover, my selection of articles for analysis may have introduced sampling bias, as I may have chosen certain newspapers or articles over others.

Finally, while CDA typically focuses on linguistic elements of discourse, it may not fully capture the visual or multimodal aspects of media representation, limiting the depth of my analysis. Therefore, while CDA offers valuable insights, I must be cautious in its application and consider employing complementary methodologies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of media discourse surrounding farm murders in South Africa.

In this study, the focus was exclusively on English-language newspapers, which inadvertently excluded valuable perspectives and insights from Afrikaans-language publications. This exclusion is particularly significant concerning the topic of farm murders, where the Afrikaans-speaking farming community represents a key demographic affected by these incidents. By limiting the analysis to English-written newspapers, the study may have overlooked nuanced cultural and linguistic contexts that are uniquely portrayed in Afrikaans media. The voices and concerns of Afrikaans-speaking farmers, who constitute a significant portion of the agricultural sector in South Africa, may not have been adequately represented, potentially impacting the comprehensiveness and accuracy of insights into farm murders. Future research should consider incorporating Afrikaans-language newspapers to capture a more diverse range of perspectives and experiences related to this sensitive issue.

Disadvantages of newspaper as a data source

Newspapers serve as valuable sources of information that provide a wealth of data for researchers. Like any data source, newspapers have distinct advantages and disadvantages that require careful consideration. Examining their strengths in offering detailed accounts and contextual information, alongside exploring limitations such as potential bias, varying reliability, and challenges in digital accessibility, helps researchers develop a nuanced understanding of newspapers' contributions to our understanding of historical and contemporary issues. Comparing newspapers to other forms of media is crucial for comprehending their unique role in shaping our knowledge and perceptions.

Newspapers often exhibit bias because editors decide which stories to publish, how prominently to showcase them, and how they are framed. These editorial choices can reflect the newspaper's political stance or commercial interests, potentially influencing the

information available for study. Despite these biases, newspapers remain valuable for research due to their efficiency and affordability compared to alternative sources. However, their selective coverage—prioritizing certain topics based on reader interest, societal importance, or advertiser preferences—can result in gaps in the data accessible to researchers and distortions in how certain issues are portrayed, aligning with the newspaper's editorial agenda (Galtung & Ruge, 1965).

Another drawback of using newspapers as a source is their limited availability and retrievability, particularly with hard copies that are often not archived indefinitely. This issue is compounded when newspapers classify or restrict access to certain articles due to security concerns. As media increasingly shifts from traditional print formats to online platforms, the accessibility of historical newspaper articles becomes even more uncertain. Unlike digital archives that may offer broader access, physical newspapers are often kept for a limited time or not at all beyond their publication date, making it challenging for researchers to access older editions. This limitation restricts the ability to conduct thorough longitudinal studies or analyze historical trends that span several years or decades. Therefore, while newspapers offer valuable insights, their restricted availability and shift towards digital formats pose significant challenges for researchers relying on them as primary sources of information.

Unlike newer forms of media that foster direct interaction and immediate feedback from users, newspapers maintain a more traditional approach with limited audience engagement, typically restricted to letters to the editor and sporadic polls. This lack of interactive dialogue can constrain the diversity of perspectives reflected in news coverage, impacting the breadth and inclusivity of data accessible for research purposes. While social media and blogs thrive on user-generated content and real-time updates, newspapers rely on editorial discretion and journalistic expertise to curate and analyze information. This editorial oversight contributes to a structured, in-depth presentation of news stories, albeit with potential biases influenced by editorial agendas.

5.1.2 Future Directions for Research

Moving forward, future research in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can expand beyond the scope of this study to explore additional dimensions of media representation and discourse surrounding farm murders in South Africa. One avenue for further investigation is to examine the impact of alternative media sources, social media platforms, and online communities in shaping public perceptions and discourse on rural crime. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions or countries can provide valuable insights into the cultural, political, and historical factors that influence media representations of farm murders. Longitudinal research designs can track changes in media discourse over time, allowing for a deeper understanding of evolving narratives and discursive shifts in public discourse. By addressing these research gaps, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of media representation and its implications for social attitudes, policy-making processes, and community relations in the context of farm murders.

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