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A qualitative vignette study of how various factors affect the formulation of media reports about children who are victims or perpetrators of crime

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RESEARCH REPORT

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TOPIC

A qualitative vignette study of how various factors affect the formulation of media reports about children who are victims or perpetrators of crime

A research report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

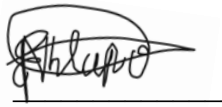
ABSTRACT

Crime is a significant topic that often takes prominence in media reports when committed by or against children. Moreover, when a crime is committed by or against children, news reports are curated differently to those concerning adults, hence the law and journalistic ethics require that the children's best interests always be taken into account. Despite this, stories of this nature are often sensational and dramatic, usually containing no quotations from the children involved and sometimes inadvertently identifying children whose identities should have been protected. Due to such incidents, it is necessary to interrogate the thought process of journalists when they tackle such topics. Therefore, this research project sets out to understand how various factors affect journalists' decision-making. This was done by engaging news journalists in vignette interviews triangulated with thematic content analysis of previously published news reports. Using imagined scenarios, news reporters were asked about the choices they would make when dealing with stories about children who are victims or perpetrators of crime. It emerged that factors including age, gender, guilt, sympathy, convenience, race and social class affect how children involved in crime are portrayed in the media. Moreover, as there are no industry-specific checklists for journalists to use to standardise their decision-making around such stories, personal values and perceptions of individual journalists influence how particular stories are portrayed. There are also grey areas in applying the press code, legislation and journalistic ethics, coupled with knowledge gaps, editing, deadline pressures, bureaucracy, and other forms of red tape. As a result of all these factors, published stories do not always reflect journalists' original intentions.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the Department of Journalism, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This report has never been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Elizabeth Nthabiseng Nhlapo (Ethics clearance number: H21/ 01/ 27)



04 April 2021

DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is dedicated to my loving father, Moses Mofeli Nhlapo, who left us untimely after succumbing to Covid-19. Thank you for always believing in me, I know you would be proud to see me complete this degree.

I would like to thank my mother, Prescilla Moyahabo Nhlapo, brothers, family, colleagues and friends for their support and belief in my potential to complete this project.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The media is a catalyst in the dissemination of news, particularly for prominent institutions with an interest in sharing information with a mass audience (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007 and de Vreese, 2005). Various scholars agree that media consumption profoundly affects its consumers and is the cornerstone of public opinion (Bennett & Entman 2001, McCombs 2004, Weatherred 2015 and Krüger 2016a). In addition to its role of informing the public, the media influences perceptions on pressing issues and depicts topics and people in particular ways (Bleich et al., 2015), thus influencing how society chooses to exist. For instance, these perceptions influence people when they make choices about where to live and work (Baranauskas and Drakulich, 2018). The media also serve as gatekeepers of what the public perceives as relevant based on some news items being placed in prominent positions in publications, while others are consciously excluded from coverage[1] or ignored (Bleich et al., 2015). Hayes and Luther (2018, p.45) point out that the media "may even influence the way [police] officers perform their jobs" and has a wide-reaching impact on the criminal legal system.

An understanding of other social issues is also constructed as a result of media consumption. For instance, child sexual abuse is a persistent problem in most societies, and the public often forms opinions about it based on media reports as they do not have first-hand information (Mejia et al., 2012). Some scholars argue that the media merely creates a platform for discussion while society forms perceptions itself (Meško et al., 2009). However, without the media, even the very topics of discussion among people would be significantly altered. Hence, it is critical that the media operates within a legal framework and employs ethical practice – and this requires some consensus among media producers. Moreover, the rise of citizen journalism has exacerbated the need for ethical practice by professional journalists. Discussions around these issues and what entails ethical journalism are critical, and they are not a contemporary topic that has been birthed with the dawn of new democracies. In the South African context, journalistic ethics has been a topic for intense debate, particularly in instances where journalists' behaviour undermines the integrity of the profession (Krüger, 2016a). According to Lidner et al. (2015), while professional journalism remains authoritative and a legitimate source of information, citizen journalism fills the gaps in

[1] In the context of this study, to cover news refers to the curation process of a news article from the time a journalist is informed of a particular news event until the news story is published on a news platform for public consumption. Coverage is the end-product of such a process.

professional journalism and gives a voice to marginalised groups. Bruns (2011) takes a more compromising stance, proposing that there is a place for both professional and citizen journalists to operate cooperatively as gatekeepers because public journalism does not change any fundamentals of journalistic practice. Both are curators of news and while their newsgathering processes and ideologies may differ, he argues, cooperation is not only possible, it is highly likely as journalism has evolved into a "mass participatory activity".

On the other hand, news consumers are not always able to differentiate between professional journalism and citizen journalism[2], particularly when established journalists fail to uphold journalistic norms in sensitive news reportage, such as reports on crimes that involve children (any person under the age of 18 according to the Bill of Rights s.28 (3)).
Ethical issues that are concerning citizen journalism are its inability to respect privacy, human dignity, grief and mourning, honesty and truth, and the public interest (Moyo, 2015). In its endeavour to 'fill in the gaps' in professional news reports, citizen journalism often identifies minor victims or perpetrators of crime whose identities would have otherwise been protected by professional journalists. Ethics, therefore, is one of the factors that differentiate professional journalism from citizen journalism (Mapudzi & Osunkunle, 2017), and thus, in its reporting, the media ought to adhere to ethical standards. Four ethical reporting standards to be observed include truth-telling, independence, accountability, and minimising harm (Day, 2000). When the first three requirements are satisfied, it should be considered if harm has been minimised in reporting under various situations, including when reporting on minority groups such as children. Also among mechanisms to minimise harm is ensuring that the right to privacy is respected and is only trumped by the public interest in aggravating instances (Krüger, 2016b). Vobič and Milojevid (2014) are concerned about the intensity and pace of online media, which adds to journalists' inability, reluctance or impossibility to adhere to the fundamentals of quality journalism and verification of information. Hurried journalists tend to 'verify' news by the agency of other journalists who are used as primary sources.
The concern is magnified as online media becomes more popularised and newsrooms populated with desktop journalists and newcomers with limited experience who do not regard themselves as true journalists due to their inability to produce fieldwork.

[2] Citizen journalism can be described as the reporting of news events by persons outside news organisations (non-professional people) using various platforms such as social media and blogs. It is often catalysed by easy access to technology and dissatisfaction with the media's coverage of news events (Mapudzi and Osunkunle, 2017).

These journalists, Vobič and Milojevid (2014) assert, "produce their own 'mini cultures' and nurture specific values, practices and ideals distinct from those in print or broadcast journalism".

There are also considerations about how the platform through which news is disseminated affects its production and consumption. Bleich et al. (2015) are of the view that "printed newspapers are better at raising the public's awareness about a range of issues compared to other media types, including TV and online publications". However, contemporary trends indicate the contrary. Digital publications tend to be more influential in forming public opinion, mainly as they often drive social media conversations, albeit there could be a barrier to access in some communities (Hayes & Luther, 2018 and Baranauskas & Drakulich, 2018). Access to the internet expands space for discourse and engagement, which leads to improved social interaction (Mapudzi and Osunkunle, 2017). As space for discourse increases, some of the most salient news themes take prominence, such as crime, which has proven to be a popular topic (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007, Faucher, 2007 and Falodun, 2015) which plays a pivotal role in helping the public to construct a sense of reality. Notably, crime coverage affects a person's estimate of the frequency of criminal activity as well as the interpretations that he attaches to crime in general (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007, p.61). Moreover, media consumers are indoctrinated with ideas of how to assess which members of society they should associate with criminality through the frames that exist in news media, television shows, social media, and the internet (Hayes & Luther, 2018 and Pollak & Kubrin, 2007).

I now turn to discussing how children and their stories about crime are a drawcard for both journalists and news consumers. Case in point, Media Monitoring Africa reports that crime stories involving children often make for more interesting news and this is the second most-covered topic when it comes to coverage of children in the media (Rikhotso et al., 2012). Additionally, the popularity of a crime report increases as the age of the perpetrator decreases. Therefore, crimes committed by children tend to be covered as crises or moral disasters compared to similar crimes committed by adult perpetrators (Falodun, 2015 and Adeniran et al., 2015). As a result, it is imperative to assess the strength or fragility of choice-making in newsrooms based on journalists' level of awareness of the laws and codes that govern reporting on children, as well as the application thereof. This is particularly crucial as crime, and the fear of it, could potentially result in a moral panic, which may lead to a society that is fearful, angry, and exists with an exaggerated sense of feeling threatened due to these

widespread reports (Falodun, 2015 and Meško et al. 2009). According to Davies et al. (2007), the representation of crime victims has become more pivotal in the last few decades as it has influenced justice discourses and the development of crime policy. As a point of entry to understand crime as a universal concept and how it plays out in the media when it involves children, one has to study the role players in criminal acts (in this case, children) and how the media represents them.

CHAPTER 1 - RATIONALE

There is a plethora of coverage on children, and not all of it adequately considers the best interests of the child, as required by legislation and the media's self-regulatory codes. In addition, children who are involved in crime are over-represented in the media (Marinescu, 2018), raising a need to constantly study how they are covered in the media. Another reason is that how people perceive perpetrators and victims of crime is largely influenced by how these parties are represented in the media (Falodun, 2015). As South African journalists interrogate various ways to represent the various role players in news reports, they are also faced with choices around the protection of children who are party to crime stories. One such case is that of Miché Solomon, whose identity was protected by a court order when she became a subject of news after her life story came to the media's attention. She became known as Zephany Nurse after the court issued the order enforcing the protection of her identity. Miché was abducted from her parents at birth and later found her biological parents at 17 years old (Chabalala, May 7, 2019). As a victim of a crime perpetrated in her minor years, Miché needed to apply for a court order to secure her continued protection once she became a major (18 years and older). The order was granted so that her identity could be hidden whenever her story was retold by the media or other entities that distribute news. The order was lifted in August, 2019 after Miché applied to the court to that effect at age 22 (Chabalala, August 13, 2019).

In another case, at the time of writing, a pastor, Timothy Omatoso, was accused of sexual crimes relating to members of his church, many of whom are believed to have been children at the time the crimes were allegedly perpetrated (Ana and IOL, 2019). At the time of conducting this research report, the case was in court and the media had been granted limited access to proceedings. Such cases highlight the importance of journalists' interpretation of legal frameworks and the codes imposed by regulatory media bodies such as the Press Council. These types of stories also reveal themes and frames that are created by coverage. Hence it is critical to understand the thought process and choices that journalists make when reporting on crime and children. This is particularly important as children are the most photographed and most videoed members of the human species (Gillis 2011, p121). They are also stereotypically viewed as vulnerable, uninformed and innocent, even when the perceiver possesses no context or history about the child in question (Rosen and Crafter 2018, p76). This stereotype, however, may fall away in certain extenuating circumstances and may lead to previously protected information entering the public sphere. This is particularly true in

instances where the public interest outweighs privacy concerns (Krüger, 2016b). In such cases, ethical journalism – which includes truthfulness and gathering evidence – is paramount, bearing in mind, as Moyo (2015) explains, that the very concept of ethics is fluid because ethics are "highly individualised, subjective, intrinsic and based on personal impulse, rather than rigid rules".

CHAPTER 2 - AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

For this research, I focused on media coverage of children who are perpetrators (or alleged perpetrators) or victims of crime to assess what inferences can be drawn from coverage of their stories. Firstly, the media's coverage of children who are victims of crimes in relation to their peers who are involved in crimes as offenders was assessed. Secondly, the frames that the media create (consciously, negligently or intentionally) when reporting on children and crime were interrogated, taking into account the effects of gender, age, guilt or innocence, sympathy, race, class and convenience on reportage. As will be shown in the literature review, these seven factors affect how journalists make choices when covering stories. Deadlines, availability of sources, reliance on public officials and the police for information and quotes, as well as personal belief systems of journalists were also to be considered for contextual purposes. Thirdly, journalists' familiarity and application of the parts of the press code and legislation that deal with the protection of children in the media were assessed to determine how they affect coverage. To answer the research questions, I conducted vignette interviews with crime reporters who work in the online section of South African newsrooms. Senior newsroom staff, such as news editors, were not included in the study as they are often not field workers and not the primary decision-makers when stories break. This, however, does not mean their role in reporting on children and crime is insignificant. Instead, the environment in which journalists produce their work has a profound effect on the final stories that are published, however due to the limited scope of this research report and time limitations, this factor has not been interrogated deeply, though it is touched on generally. I also performed a thematic content analysis of previously published news reports to draw emerging themes[3] and frames using the framing theory as a paradigm.

Research questions

In order to fulfil the aims of this study, journalists' choices around reporting on children need to be assessed.

Thus, the main question to be answered is: How does gender, age, guilt, sympathy, race, class and convenience affect how journalists cover stories about children who are perpetrators (or alleged perpetrators) or victims of crime?

[3] A theme is an abstract entity that unifies seemingly meaningless recurring pieces of information – such as words, phrases and images – to capture an overarching idea or deduction (Nowell et al., 2017).

Sub question:

To what extent do preconceived ideas, attitudes and perceptions affect journalists when making decisions around coverage of children and crime?

CHAPTER 3 - LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Crimes committed against children have received increased coverage over the last two decades (Marôpo & Jorge, 2014) since reporting on children were first popularised in the 70s (Saint-Jacques et al., 2012). The positive aspect is that attention is drawn to children's rights through these reports. There are, however, some instances, as Goddard Saunders (2000) points out, where the opposite is true. For instance, through language, tabloids and broadsheets may define child sexual abuse as a less serious, perhaps consensual relationship with an adult. In addition to this, children's rights are infringed more easily by digital media, where images of children involved in crime are shared instantaneously by individuals outside the journalism profession, often without seeking permission from the children and their families or even authenticating the images. This is particularly problematic as it may harm the efforts of professional journalists to conceal the identities of children as pieces of information from different sources can then be combined to form a whole picture for digital media end-users. These examples demonstrate why the balance of serving the public interest while protecting the rights of children should be an issue for discussion among the media, courts, and others in the field of child protection services (Morris & Davies, 2018). With these and other reasons in mind, various scholars, as will be shown below, broadly critique media coverage of children involved in crime, as it tends to be sensational and dramatic.

Since crime stories involving children are widespread, certain narratives form among media users. On constructing these narratives of crime, Davies et al. (2007) highlight the importance of attributing the blame to an individual, society, or institution – particularly when dealing with severe crimes. For this reason, issues of ethics such as protecting the identities of minors may be compromised as both journalists and news consumers endeavour to find individuals to whom blame ought to be attributed. In some instances when the narrative seeks to represent an offender as blameless – such as with child perpetrators – the responsibility may be attributed to an official, an agency, government or institution that has supposedly failed to perform specific tasks that could have prevented the criminal offence from occurring (Davies et al. 2007). When attributing blame, journalists should acknowledge that, as is the case with all citizens, children have an inherent right to privacy. The concept of privacy involves when individuals or groups of people control the mechanisms and limitations through which information about themselves may be communicated and shared by other parties (Wolf & Joye, 2019). Wolf and Joye (2019) assert that contrary to the popular belief that older members of society are more concerned with privacy while teenagers are reckless and

unconcerned, younger members of society do care about privacy issues – possibly more than their older counterparts. Morris and Davies (2018) believe press regulation is a more practical option than litigation to address privacy concerns. They note the fast rate at which digital media is increasing children's vulnerability and invasion of privacy and suggest strict press regulation as a protective measure. It also does not help the plight of children that the media landscape in South Africa (and globally) is relatively unconstrained in legal terms (Krüger, 2016b). Nonetheless, there are various Acts in legislation that regulate reporting on children.

The guidelines for the protection of children in the media are found in these statutes, which, when read together, can offer clarity to journalists. Children are also afforded special protection in the Bill of Rights, Section 28(2), 1996 which states: *A child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.*
Journalists are trained to consult or reference three main sources as guidelines for reporting on children, particularly those who need special protection. These sources are the Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media of 2019, The Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977 and the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

The Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media

The Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media (2019) recognises that a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child. In section 8, it sets out the following protection for children:
The media shall:

> 1) *Exercise exceptional care and consideration when reporting about children*. If there is any chance that coverage might cause harm of any kind to a child, he or she shall not be interviewed, photographed or identified without the consent of a legal guardian or of a similarly responsible adult and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child); and a public interest is evident;*
>
> *2) Not publish child pornography*
>
> *3) Not identify children who have been victims of abuse or exploitation, or who have been charged with or convicted of a crime, without the consent of their legal guardians (or a similarly responsible adult) and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child), a public interest is evident and it is in the best interests of the child.*

The code is silent on children as witnesses of crimes and their continued protection once they attain majority (become 18 years old). In addition to this, it seemingly sets out three requirements that must be met in order for children who are victims of abuse or exploitation or who have been charged with or convicted of a crime or crimes to be named. These requirements are:

1. Consent from their legal guardians (or a similarly responsible adult) and the child (taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child)

2. A public interest is evident

3. It is in the best interests of the child

According to the wording of the press code, consent, public interest and the best interests of the child trump the need to protect the identity of a child. However, there is no scientific definition for 'the best interest of the child'. Among other outcomes, this research sought to assess how journalists understand the phrase. As will be shown below, parts of the press code present a few problematic issues in that they seem to require less restriction than legislation in identifying children who are victims or perpetrators of crime. For instance, the press code has only the three requirements listed above for journalists to identify children involved in crime, while the legislation states that identification is permissible only with the permission of a court (by court order).

In addition, the press code is silent on child witnesses, while, as will be shown later, the court offers direct protection for children who are party to criminal proceedings as witnesses. Consequently, by referring only to the press code without referencing legislation in their reporting, journalists risk breaking the law. It is worth noting that globally, despite press codes attempting to protect the rights of children, there are significant gaps that illuminate limitations in the way press codes respond to children's privacy risks (Morris and Davies, 2018). Marôpo and Jorge (2014) sum up the predicament with professional ethics codes as follows:

> *Internationally, one can refer to a lack of awareness regarding the discrimination of children and young people as a great part of the professional ethical codes advise against social discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, language, civil status, religion or political affiliation but rarely include references to age; and,*

when these do exist, they are interpreted more as a defence for prejudice against the elderly.

The Children's Act

The Children's Act in Sections 42 to 75 deals with children in the courts. In section 74, the Children's Act deals with the publication of information relating to court proceedings and states:

> *No person may, without the permission of a court, in any manner publish any information relating to the proceedings of a children's court which reveals or may reveal the name or identity of a child who is a party or a witness in the proceedings.*

In reading the press code together with the Children's Act, it would seem the provisions in the press code are insufficient to satisfy the provisions of the Children's Act as the code does not require a court order for the identities of children who are involved in court cases to be revealed in news reports.

The Criminal Procedure Act

The Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977 deals with the prohibition of publication of certain information relating to criminal proceedings in section 154. It states:

> *No person shall publish in any manner whatever any information which reveals or may reveal the identity of an accused under the age of eighteen years or of a witness at criminal proceedings who is under the age of eighteen years: Provided that the presiding judge or judicial officer may authorize the publication of so much of such information as he may deem fit if the publication thereof would in his opinion be just and equitable and in the interest of any particular person.*

The Criminal Procedure Act is silent on the protection of the identity of children who are victims of crime. However, in the Miché Solomon case, a review of the Act was ordered as it was deemed unconstitutional. It is thus crucial that South African journalists understand the requirements of the Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media, the Children's Act No.38 of 2005 and the Criminal Procedure Act No.51 of 1977 when reporting on children. Furthermore, journalists have to read together these Acts and others such as the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amended Act 32 of 2007 to ensure reporting which provides the optimal protection of the children involved in crime. In addition to this, it is critical that loopholes in legislation and press codes be

adequately addressed through the application of ethics (Morris and Davies, 2018). Based on the above, it may also be that children's rights may be vague, incongruent and prevent journalists from making the best decisions possible in crime stories involving children.

Journalistic ethics

Coverage of children in the media, particularly when involved in abuse and crime, is a relatively new practice as child abuse was not perceived as a significant problem and did not capture the media's attention until the 1970s (Saint-Jacques et al., 2012). Due to this short history of coverage of children, ethics around reporting on children is still an evolving concept which is constantly being reconfigured on a micro level to be in line with other considerations such as legislation and other regulatory measures such as press and internal company codes that inform how journalists do their work. Nonetheless, a layer of ethics is necessary when reporting on specific stories, such as those of children, to safeguard the rights of the people journalists write about and ensure the continued credibility of the journalism profession. This is particularly important because ethical missteps with children can cause them and their parents or guardians to refuse to cooperate with journalists (Coleman, 2011). Moreover, as Coleman (2011), notes "without children's voices in the news, citizens will not fully understand their worlds. Reports on injustices against children will lack the emotion and credibility that these small voices bring. Society stands to lose as well". Therefore, Jones (2019) argues that South Africa needs to map media ethics that creatively seek to guide journalists into binding people together and exposing what is wrong. The predicament, however, is that when dealing with ethics, there is no one-size-fits-all system that can be implemented. Compounding the challenge of ethics, as Krüger (2004) points out, is that there will be times when a news report may be legally sound but not ethically so and vice versa. In such cases, journalists should be able to justify their decision-making by referring to their ethical convictions.

But what exactly is ethics in the journalistic context? In the broad sense, ethics is a set of values applied to decisions taken in challenging situations that present moral dilemmas. They should exist in harmony with societal values, but not in the same sense that the law does. The distinction is that, as Wasserman (2011) points out, the law sets the lowest bar for behaviour in society, while ethics is concerned with our personal view of what is right or wrong. In essence, it is about deciding and thinking through moral dilemmas for which there are no clear right or wrong answers by way of constant reconfiguration and introspection

(Wasserman, 2011). In addition, Krüger (2004, p13-14) draws attention to the idea that media ethics and journalism ethics are not interchangeable concepts. Journalistic ethics, he contends, concern the decisions made by a journalist as an individual. In contrast, media ethics concern the organisations and mediums through which the work of those journalists are disseminated. Therefore, he points out, a journalist's ethics can be at loggerheads with the media ethics of the company they work for. Hence the distinction needs to be drawn. In this report, I focus on journalistic ethics and decision-making by individual news reporters.

To understand how journalists apply ethical decision-making, one may draw from Krüger's (2004, p13-14) list of four guiding ethical principles for journalists as adapted from *Doing ethics in journalism: a handbook with case studies*[4].

The principles are as follows:

- Truth-telling: Seek truth by informing and engaging with the public honestly and fairly and reporting as fully as possible while being courageous, fair, honest and giving a voice to the voiceless.
- Independence: Act independently without influence or any compromises on integrity. This also includes acknowledging that ethical decision-making requires both individual decision-making and collaborative effort.
- Minimising harm: Minimise harm as far as possible by recognising that sources and subjects are human beings who are entitled to certain rights.
- Accountability: Journalists should be prepared to justify their decisions to those who consume their work and the public as a whole.

Despite offering these guidelines, Krüger (2004, p14) concedes that these principles may conflict, leading to moral dilemmas that require ethical resolutions.

Krüger's guidelines may be applied to journalism in the general sense, while UNICEF (2012) offers more specific ethical guidelines for reporting on children specifically.

These guidelines include six overarching principles as well as nine guidelines for interviewing children. The overarching principles are as follows:

> *1. Respect the dignity and rights of every child in every circumstance.*
>
> *2. In interviewing (and reporting on) children, pay special attention to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality, have their opinions heard, participate in decisions affecting them, and be protected from harm and retribution.*

[4] See Black, J., Steele, B., & Barney, R. (1999). Doing ethics in journalism: a handbook with case studies. Boston: Alyn and Bacon.

3. Protect the best interests of each child over any other consideration, including advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights.
4. When trying to determine the child's best interests, give due weight to the child's right to have their views taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity.
5. Consult those closest to the child's situation and best able to assess it about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.
6. Do not publish a story or an image that might put the child, their siblings or peers at risk, even when their identities are changed, obscured or not used.

As will be seen later, journalists often grapple with deciding whether to interview children or not. However, UNICEF and Media Monitoring Africa encourage child participation and interviewing children, albeit within set guidelines (UNICEF, 2012; Rikhotso et al., 2014 and Rikhotso et al., 2012).
In their guide on interviewing children, UNICEF emphasises informed consent, the child's age, soliciting permission from parents and guardians as checklist items. The guide is also specific in the requirement to change the name and obscure the identity of a child who is:

- *a victim of sexual abuse or exploitation*
- *a perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse*
- *charged or convicted of a crime.*

Despite this, it is not inconceivable that an individual's privacy may be invaded to serve the public interest in some rate instances to serve the public interest (Krüger, 2016b). In the case of children, factors to be considered in such a case are outlined in the Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media, The Criminal Procedure Act and Children's Act, among other sources. Other interested organisations such as UNICEF also have guidelines for such situations and recommend the following:

In certain cases, using a child's identity (their name and/or recognisable image) is in the child's best interests. However, when the child's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported in the event of any stigmatisation or reprisals.

Media Monitoring Africa also has similar guidelines[5]. The UNICEF guidelines are some of the best for journalists to refer to. However, they are not the staple in many newsrooms

[5] See Rikhotso, M., Morwe, K., Namumba, L., Kalu, G., & Singh, R. (2014). Children in the News Seen but Still not Heard.

(Coleman, 2011). It is worth noting that the majority of South African newsrooms respect children's rights, with a small percentage infringing on children's rights mainly by identifying them where they were not supposed to, especially in stories that involve child rape victims, child witnesses and child suspects (Rikhotso et al., 2012).

Another issue that comes up when dealing with journalistic ethics is how far a journalist's duty to care extends as opposed to their role as impartial parties in the news they report on. Smith Fullerton (2004) believes that they have a significant role to play when it comes to children. The scholar goes as far as to suggest that the media's role in protecting children is somewhat similar to that of parents as they are implicitly entrusted with significant responsibility for the care and protection of all children with whom they come in contact. Leshilo (2018) shares a similar opinion, particularly where journalists have to decide between getting a story or saving a life. Leshilo suggests:

> *"Journalists can follow their consciences and intervene to improve the welfare of their subjects, thus alleviating human suffering, while at the same time remaining true to their craft – which is essentially to inform people of what is going on in the world and to promote public accountability. Importantly though, such journalists need to be open and transparent about their biases and motivations for doing what they do."*

As it is evident above, although helpful in the broader scheme of things, the bulk of the literature is not concerned with how journalists decide on issues in specific circumstances. Ultimately, ethics is a very personal concept, and all the regulations and guidelines cannot entirely amend or predict how journalists will act when faced with moral challenges in their work.

Academic literature

I now turn to research by other scholars who have studied coverage of crime, children or both topics. As shown in the previous section, age is one of the factors that influence how a crime story is produced and contributes to determining which aspects of the coverage become salient. Furthermore, the law is clear on the ages of minority and majority in this country. However, in practice, within the ages of minorities, subgroups exist where children of various ages may be treated differently based on their evolving capacity and how close they are to adulthood. Falodun (2015) believes that the ages of the role players in a crime incident may be the most important in determining how a story is covered as there is a difference between the way victims of crime are portrayed when they are minors as opposed to when they are

adults. Put simply, crimes involving innocent victims are newsworthy, to begin with, but the level of newsworthiness increases even more when the victims are young (Pollak and Kubrin, 2007). In addition to this, Pollak and Kubrin (2007, p.75) note that when victims are children, news reports are "disproportionately devoted to documenting and describing the various injuries sustained, as well as creating the image that the victim is an innocent player".

Another issue is that as a result of faster news generation and digital media, media reportage of crimes committed by minors has increased and the exaggeration of crime reports of this nature has also seen an upward turn (Falodun, 2015). This is despite the fact that minors (juveniles) are not often involved in crime. The few stories in which they are involved become the main headlines of the day – with an inclination for reporters to overtly focus on safety and security – even though a large portion of crime (around 90%) is committed by adults (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007). Moreover, instances of reporting on crimes committed by minors are increasing and minor victims seem to receive less attention than offenders in news coverage (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007). Falodun (2015) found that the same concept applies to perpetrators of crime, noting that a perpetrator's age is inversely related to the popularity of the story. This is to say, the younger the victim or perpetrator, the more newsworthy the report is deemed to be. As is the case with stories about crime against children, the researcher noted an upsurge in reporting on child perpetrators of crime, despite a relatively small number of child offenders arrested annually. In addition to the popularity, the media, Pollak and Kubrin (2007) contend, sensationalise juvenile crimes regardless of whether the offender is a victim or perpetrator. The researchers found frames of juvenile offenders being seen as senseless and irrational, while young victims are represented as innocent. Meško et al. (2009) argue that these portraits are not an accurate picture of reality but a mythical construct by the mass media, government employees, police officers and NGOs who play a role in creating myths around crime by focusing disproportionately on specific issues. Other scholars believe that reporting on children, in general, is somewhat out of ratio with the rest of society, with Davies et al. (2007) arguing that when reporting on street crime, journalists tend to focus on youth perpetrators while victims are not afforded the same level of coverage. This creates a narrative where youth are framed as evil criminals, while their experiences of victimisation are relatively ignored or only receive more prominence when the crimes are vicious and result in injury or death (Saint-Jacques et al., 2011). Falodun (2015) argues that these portrayals give reason to the media to instil fear in the minds of their consumers and influence public policy. Conversely, there are some cases where the media may sympathise

with a young perpetrator due to feeling that crime has led them to lose a potential future. In such cases, the victim's plight is often not adequately considered (Hayes & Luther, 2018).

Having established the importance of age in reporting on children and crime, I now call attention to scholars' views on how journalists source news and the emergence of trends and myths in the coverage of children. According to Niblock and Bindel (2016), there is a trend in reporting "to focus on the crime, the justice system, and the perpetrators, possibly at the expense of telling insights about other elements of the reportage". Meško et al. (2009) share similar sentiments, opining that the process of gathering information is orchestrated to focus on the most alluring, sensationalist cases which are appealing to news media consumers. This sensationalist approach may mean that: opinions are presented as fact, there is positivistic confirmation of opinion, heavy use of terminology which includes value judgments, selective presentation of facts, information management, referral to authorities without argument, presentation of the fact without appropriate circumstances and selective interviews. As a result of these factors, myths began to form around news events – rendering the real facts unclear or even distorted. It is noteworthy, however, that these myths cannot be constructed without the participation of consumers of crime news, who then become involved in altering the actual story into a myth, consciously or unconsciously (Meško et al. 2009).

Another critical factor that begs discussion regarding reporting on children and crime is the naming and identification of minors. As a starting point, let us consider the complexities presented in news stories that are broken on social media. Understandably, social media serves as a source for stories for journalists. The challenge, however, is that often the identities of minors who are involved in crime are revealed on social media by the public. This leaves journalists with the challenge of attempting to protect the identities of children whose names and photos are likely already circulating on social media. This phenomenon is mostly seen where a child has been abused, neglected or described as 'at risk'. The opposite may also be true, according to Goddard and Saunders (2000), who refer to some news reports which initially identify certain individualistic features of a child, such as gender, in early reports, however in later reports, the gender and other potentially identifying features are lost. This is particularly true when a hashtag replaces a person's identity. The scholars explain that the gender slippage may be a result of readers or journalists' emotional reaction to an unpleasant story. Among other reasons, these considerations deem it critical to study how stories are affected by journalists' choices during newsgathering, while writing and in the

editing process. This would shed light on whether frame-formation when reporting on children and crime is intentional, accidental or a result of other factors such as negligence.

An international perspective

Having discussed coverage of children in the general sense, I now expand the discussion to highlight the realities as experienced in various countries across the globe compared to South Africa. In their comparative study of fifty-seven press codes, including, The Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media, Morris and Davies (2018) found three approaches to the protection of children. The approaches include "the 'special vulnerability' of children; best interests of the child; and a rights-based approach". They found that significant limitations exist across the board, and they leave loopholes for the exploitation of children's rights and privacy.

The Media Monitoring Project (2004) found that in South Africa, news articles about children are minimal and the bulk of them are adverse reports that focus strongly on crime. In addition to this, children are often not quoted in articles and predominantly framed as victims. The case in Nigeria is no different. In addition to similar themes as South Africa, other prevalent topics are child health and child education, while child labour, child rights, sport and family issues are under-represented (Andeniran et al., 2015). Children are not viewed as newsworthy unless they can be framed as either menacing troublemakers or vulnerable victims. Adeniran et al. (2015, p.174) found that in Nigeria, 95% of content published about children is buried on the inside, less prominent pages of publications, and there is also an underlying concern of under-reporting on issues pertaining to children. Similarly to South Africa, children are represented as passive members of society and in cases where they take on a more active role, they are mostly victims of crime and occasionally perpetrators. Children's voices are rarely heard (Marôpo & Jorge 2014 and Mejia et al., 2012).

In Canada, Faucher (2007) found sympathetic portrayals of youth perpetrators when their actions are seen to be somehow beyond their control or when they are seen to be used or abused by adults. It is worth noting that pregnant women are often also given 'child status' in that crimes against them (or perpetrated by them) are often seen as newsworthy and they are portrayed as innocent and undeserving victims to a larger extent than their counterparts who are not pregnant. Similar to the case of Nigeria and South African, the Canadian and

Ugandan media does not quote children enough, instead they rely heavily on the police as their primary 'quotable' source (Ashaba & Agaba, 2018 and Faucher, 2007). In principle, quoting the police is not a negative practice as law enforcement can utilise media coverage to potentially assist with apprehending crime suspects through, for example, distributing information to the public that may lead to an arrest (Webbink et al., 2015). The problem, however, is when law enforcement replaces the voices of children in stories while children are left out of stories about themselves. Moreover, the relationship between police and journalists leads to disproportionate reporting because reporters are more likely to have a direct line to the police than to the child or parents involved in the crimes they are reporting on. Also, in Uganda, there is often a reluctance or unwillingness to conduct investigations or follow up stories about child abuse.

Furthermore, another reason for the absence of children's voices in stories about themselves is the red tape around journalists' access to the courts and limitations around reporting on court proceedings. For instance, in England and Wales, it is unlikely for minors to attend court hearings, and it is illegal for any party, including the parents of the child, to speak to reporters about evidence in a case before it is in court (Hanna, 2012). As a result, reporters may default to using secondary information to avoid time lapses between the time a story breaks and when they are legally able to report on it. Taking into consideration the child or their family's opinions and quotes then becomes impossible or is deemed as not crucial in determining whether a report goes to publication or not. Faucher (2007) observed similar practices in Canada where the use of "criminal justice government sources (judges, prosecutors, police)" and "other government sources (mostly politicians, and Statistics Canada reports)" to legitimise discourse is prevalent. Themes of fear and violence feature prominently in the Canadian press as a result of this and other related practices (Faucher, 2007). In South African media, similar trends are prevalent.

In Northern Ireland, Gordon et al. (2015) discovered the same modus operandi. People in power set the agenda of the day as their opinions are more trusted and utilised more often than those of other people, particularly child victims and minor perpetrators of crime, who are marginalised because they are not adults and lack institutional power. This is confirmation that those with power and close relations with the police are more likely to express their opinions in the media while the less powerful go inadequately represented. Due to their close alliance with the police, the media is also more likely to represent crime statistics as fact while ignoring the reality that the majority of crime goes unreported (Meško

et al., 2009). In addition, there is inadequate literature on whether journalists make efforts to interview children who are involved in crime and what those interviews entail, despite child participation being encouraged – in South Africa, organisations such as Media Monitoring Africa are vocal about the need for children participating in telling their own stories. Moreover, Webbink et al. (2015) concede that the sporadic, unregulated and unlimited publication of images relating to crime on the internet serves no positive purpose – instead, they contribute to distorted accounts of news events. It is not only social media that manipulates, misrepresents or misreports news. It is common for news incidents to be distorted in the process of gathering information as journalists seldom experience events themselves – that, combined with the journalist's own perceptions of the story and second-hand accounts from eyewitnesses and officials, are the major reasons for distortions (Meško et al. 2009, and Mejia, et al. 2012). However, scholars agree that there are some positive aspects to journalists' close relations with law enforcement, despite the shortcomings of the alliance. For instance, journalists' work has profound effects on law-making. A case in point is found in the United States of America (USA), where several sex offender restriction laws came about as a result of news coverage of child abduction cases and intense lobbying by victims' parents in the 1990s (Weatherred, 2015). In addition, Saint-Jacques et al. (2012) also found that the media play a role in encouraging people who are hesitating to report a child in difficulty to authorities, thus becoming a cog in a larger system intended to protect children from abuse and negligence. Because of instances such as these, Webbink et al. (2015) believe that a strategic approach of community and media involvement in combating crime could be an effective tool in law enforcement.

As discussed earlier, children's voices are largely muted in news reports about themselves. Consequently, themes and frames around children who commit crimes or fall victim to it are open to interpretation. In North Ireland, editors play a significant role in interpreting journalists' stories, often framing young people in distorted and exaggerated victim-like iterations (Gordon et al.,2015). Clear dichotomies of innocent victims and violent perpetrators, with no middle ground, are prevalent. These standards, among other things, lead to problematic frames where children are consistently represented as vulnerable individuals in need of some form of assistance which disempowers them by creating a discourse of victimhood (The Media Monitoring Project, 2004, and Davies et al., 2007). This may also pose a risk of denying children agency (Morris & Davies, 2018). As is the case in South Africa, in Sweden, the right of children to be heard and furnished with information on issues that concern them is crucial, taking into consideration the evolving capacity of the child

involved (Hultman et al., 2019; Morris & Davies, 2018 and The Media Monitoring Project, 2004). As in many other European countries, children are considered social actors (Hultman et al. 2019). However, deciding how to assess the maturity levels of a child and their potential to act, such as to represent themselves in court, is often a contentious issue that attracts differing perspectives from various parts of society. As will be seen in. findings of the vignette interviews of this study, this may deter journalists who wish to interview children who are involved in crime as they struggle to decide how and at what ages it is appropriate to interview the children. In Portugal, the constitution has privacy protection for all people, including vulnerable groups such as children – the Law for Protection of Children and Youth at Risk (Law 147/99) is the equivalent of South Africa's Children's Act and it prevents the identification of children at risk. Many democracies across the globe have similar laws (Marôpo & Jorge 2014). However, the application of such laws is often flawed and inconsistent. This can be illustrated by the case of England and Wales, where the stance on what should be reported on children who are in court differs vastly between court officials and professionals who work with children and the media. While the media believes that allowing reporting on children in court promotes a transparent and fair justice system, detractors are of the opinion that this could be detrimental to the welfare of the children who are involved (Hanna, 2012). This leaves a gap wherein there is no uniform view of how children should be represented among the various role players who have varying degrees of influence over news reports that eventually get published, despite media and child protection laws.

In Uganda, the rights of children are safeguarded by legislation too, and there are several media programs formed in the name of protecting children. However, Ashaba and Agaba (2018) critique these laws, indicating that these programs' framing, prominence, and consistency are a bone of contention. They maintain that the issue is mainly that journalists source articles from civil society organisations and are not adequately trained in child protection. The media is also scarce, and thus there is under-reportage, particularly about injustices that children suffer. In addition to this, secrecy around children who are victims of crime (particularly sex crimes) is a barrier as Ugandan parents and relatives feel shame due to cultural beliefs and refuse to divulge information to reporters. Due to these complexities, some reports never make it to the media or the police as most families prefer out-of-court settlements. Ashaba and Agaba (2018) also point to the inclinations of editors to red tape reporting on children, insisting that as the leader in the newsroom, if an editor is uninterested

in children's issues, journalists do not pursue them and the stories never get to publication. Conversely, as will be seen in the vignette interviews, South African journalists seem to enjoy more autonomy and freedom to present stories of their own choosing at news conferences with limited interference or discouragement from editors.

Turning to the critique of the type of stories that are reported on, Marinescu (2018) notes that in Romania, children are reported on mainly in incidents of crime, stating: "violence against children is overrepresented as a criminal matter in the news. The emphasis on individual cases put in dramatic formats leads to the presentation of the act of violence against children as self-contained and isolated happenings". Marinescu (2018) suggests that journalists would do well to understand and view crime as a general social problem and not isolated or accidental events based on ageism. In Slovenia, in choosing their lead stories, the media tends to follow international trends, Meško et al. (2019, p85) suggest. Crime reports are overreported and often sensational, with a strong focus on deviance. In contrast, the South African media tends to underreport on crime against children, according to Weatherred (2015), who cites that the number of confirmed cases of sexual offences against children is far higher than what is reported in the media. Meanwhile, in the Slovenian press, up to 50% of reportage may be on a certain type of crime while in reality, that specific crime accounts for only a small portion of total crime – and the part that is being reported on is often the most sensational, draw-card angle. However, Meško et al. (2019) also note that in some instances, the media avoids reporting on certain forms of crime in an effort to "protect the illusion of integrity of certain individuals and social systems." The case of Portugal is slightly unique in that crime against property is more prevalent. When crime against people occurs, it is reported mainly because it is not commonplace, and the more heinous the crime, the more newsworthy it becomes (Gomes & Machado, 2011). As is the case for several other countries, dichotomies of criminals being labelled as violent and victims as defenceless and innocent are also prevalent in Portugal.

Having established that reporting on children who are involved in crime is viewed as critical by newsrooms, it is noteworthy to understand whether journalists attempt to offer reasons for crime by or against children in their stories. It would seem that when it comes to explanations of what causes minors to commit crime, not much is reported. However, Faucher (2007) found five explanations that reporters tend to offer in their news reports:

- Alcohol and drug consumption or abuse which leads to irrational behaviour.

- Mental disorders which may lead to actions which perpetrators are unable to control.
- The lure for easy money, particularly for minors who come from underprivileged backgrounds.
- Character flaws such as being vicious, heartless, self-indulgent or sadistic.
- The defect of youth – this refers to the notion that young people have a diminished ability to make rational choices because of perceived immaturity or age.

There is also a concern that these explanations are individually based and do not consider societal, family and media effects. Based on these previously mentioned issues, it would seem that the global media follow similar reporting patterns, with coverage of children still lacking in various ways. Some of the reasons are that the public is less interested in news that is not sensational, varying views of what should make news among journalists and the consumers of news, and the fact that some stories about children are confidential and cannot be disclosed in the media (Saint-Jacques et al. 2012). Evidently, media activities seem to be directed at achieving mass appeal and therefore, content is often created to achieve this goal and not necessarily with other imperatives or agendas – such as explaining behaviour or finding solutions – in mind (Meško et al. 2009). Hence standards and ethics of reporting on children may be widely varied depending on the appeal that each story offers.

Theoretical framework - Framing

As stated above and suggested by Meško et al. (2009), if mass appeal is among the main goals of pursuing certain types of news stories, the resulting reports ought to be interrogated for news frames that emerge. This is particularly critical as the frames that are formed by a particular narrative have an effect on people within society as individuals or as a collective (de Vreese, 2005 and Rosen & Crafter, 2018). This report acknowledges that frames are powerful as they can provide insight into why society and journalists make certain choices and hold specific beliefs and perceptions, bearing in mind that they do not affect people in the same way (Baranauskas & Drakulich 2018). For this reason, frames that emerge in published stories are referred to in the quest to understand the reasons behind how children involved in crime are covered in South African media. In essence, frames put emphasis on certain facets of events and issues and promote a certain way in which the event or issue ought to be understood, interpreted or evaluated (Weatherred, 2015). Hence the frame itself ought to be identified in order to understand its origin and purpose in the text. In this research report,

frames are instrumental in providing reference points that offer a more insightful understanding of the factors that influence decision-making. In accordance with this notion, assessing how news pieces are framed is critical to reveal specific biases and points of view that the media could inadvertently use in their coverage of content. In addition, the concept of framing, though applied in a variety of ways across various academic fields, is highly relevant (Bleich et al., 2015) in identifying salient themes in media texts.

Issues that are considered in cases where, for instance, a crime is committed by a minor include specific language patterns which are utilised in order to tell the crime story. Scholars are of the opinion that this plays a role in forming stereotypes that help society view crime as a distant occurrence from themselves (Falodun, 2015). However, a question that begs to be answered is: what happens when the details of the story do not fit neatly into specific frames and narratives? To answer this question, the stories that are discussed in this report do not represent normative news frames. Instead, they challenge journalists to reveal or acknowledge certain truths about how preconceived frames and ideas, among other things, affect their output. As part of the analysis in this report, editorial angles and vocabulary are assessed to indicate if there are preferences towards specific themes, frames, and language usage based on the role of the child (victim or offender) in news reports. This method is relevant as language plays a critical role in assisting media consumers in forming perceptions and beliefs around crime and its partakers (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007 and Bailey et al., 2014). It was also beneficial to analyse the accuracy of the content and assess if there are any biases in the news articles. For instance, news reports about youth crime are often made up of a particular narrative that portrays young people as dangerous and a menace to society (Falodun, 2015 and Marinescu, 2018), despite the individual traits and history of each child involved. Such narratives could indicate conscious or unconscious bias in reporting. This kind of bias exists in three iterations: it may manifest as distortion bias where a news report is supposedly distorted or falsified, or as content bias when it favours one side as opposed to the other and lastly, as decision-making bias when it promotes the mindsets and motivations of the journalist producing the news item (Entman, 2007). Studying the frames that accompany reporting on children may reveal such subjectivity, which according to Entman (2007), causes favoured individuals to become more powerful while those who are not favoured tend to become weaker and less free to do or say what they want. Some of the frames that exist include young victims being treated more favourably than young perpetrators, with sterile treatment of former victims who later become perpetrators.

As previously stated, children are also framed as having no agency and are often denied the right to reply and their voices go unheard even in news reports that are centered around them. Another prevalent theme is the attribution of sympathy towards female victims or perpetrators as opposed to their male counterparts. These and more frames were tested and discovered in the course of this research. To build frames that are found in narratives, Tankard's 11 framing mechanisms are often used or considered in analysing content, according to de Vreese (2005). These mechanisms included headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts, as well as concluding statements and paragraphs. In this report, due to the data set and the setup of the vignette interviews, only some of Tankard's framing mechanisms were analysed to varying degrees. These included body text (paragraphs and concluding statements), headlines, subheads, sources and quote selection.

In summary, some of the frames and themes that were considered in this report, based on the literature review and when comparing the South African context to global trends, include the following:

- Victims being portrayed as innocent, vulnerable and defenceless
- Portrayals of young people as dangerous troublemakers and a menace to society
- Youth perpetrators framed as senseless and irrational
- Sympathetic portrayals of young perpetrators
- Secrecy around children who are victims of crime
- Young victims being treated more favourably than young perpetrators
- Attribution of sympathy towards female victims or perpetrators as opposed to their male counterparts.

CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGY

Any study of media coverage involves crucial decisions about the choice of sources, and it has to be conducted using the best-suited methods, which are the cornerstone of data collection. As such, the choice of methodology can be "just as challenging as articulating a conceptual or theoretical approach to media analysis" (Bleich et al., 2015). Journalists often make up their own moral judgments, consciously or unconsciously, based on their belief systems (Niblock & Bindel, 2016). Hence it was necessary to interview journalists to determine how seven varying factors, including gender, age, guilt or innocence, sympathy, race, class and convenience, affect reportage. Though there are no perfect methods for conducting research, the best available tools have to be used. Thematic content analysis triangulated with vignettes were used to unearth the effects of various factors on news coverage and to assess themes that emerge on reporting. For both the content analysis and vignette interviews, news articles and interview participants were selected by way of convenience sampling, which is the most frequently used sampling method as it is inexpensive and often more practical than other sampling techniques (Taherdoost, 2016 and Etikan et al.,2016). Its main objective is to collect information from participants or data sources that are readily available and convenient for the researcher. This sampling method is a form of non-probability sampling[6], often associated with case study research, which leans towards studying real-life phenomena (Taherdoost, 2016). Hence this sampling method is suitable for this kind of research. Moreover, sampling for qualitative analysis is not required to meet statistically valid formulae (Macnamara, 2005).

Thematic content analysis

The starting point of this research was to determine the textual meaning of stories that have been published. In order to do this, thematic content analysis proved to be the most appropriate method as it is a flexible qualitative method used for identifying, analysing and reporting on themes within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In its thematic form, content analysis allows for reporting themes found within a data set to produce trustworthy and insightful findings (Nowell et al., 2017). It is also useful for handling an extensive data set as it compels the researcher to take a well-structured approach to work with data to produce a succinct final report (Nowell et al., 2017). It is a systematic and rigorous research technique

[6] This type of sampling does not make statistical inferences to the broader population and does not need to be representative. Regardless, clear grounds are necessary for the inclusion of some cases or individuals as participants instead of others (Taherdoost, 2016).

for making inferences by identifying specified characteristics within the text, including words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated (Macnamara, 2005 and White & Marsh, 2006). Through interpretation, it examines the relationship between the text and its deeper meaning. In this instance, the analysis focuses exclusively on the text, while photos and symbols are mentioned only for contextual purposes. In terms of the text, I did not only analyse the literal meaning, but I also deciphered implied meaning. Using content analysis in this way allowed for conclusions to be made about journalists, the text, circumstances surrounding its creation, and the effects of the text (White and Marsh, 2006).

In the analysis, it also became vital to formulate themes in the messaging, as suggested by Entman (1993), and conducting a thematic content analysis proved to be the ideal way to extrapolate these themes and hidden messages in text. Due to time constraints and the oversupply of available media for inspection, this research was a more manageable project to embark on when the number and type of media being studied were streamlined. Selecting media sources among a plethora of content was a stimulating yet daunting activity (Bleich et al., 2015) as attempting to analyse all available news articles would not have been viable, nor was it necessary. To mitigate an oversupply of content and taking into account time constraints, only cases of children who were victims or perpetrators of crime were discussed, while children who were witnesses of crime were only mentioned for contextual purposes and are largely excluded from this study. As data sources, I deliberately chose two stories that do not sit comfortably within the standard narratives and frames commonly found in news reports. Instead, the ethical challenges and ambiguity of these stories are what makes them newsworthy and suitable options for a study such as this. These stories also provided a firm basis from which to formulate the vignettes by stripping out identifying and other key information and replacing it with imagined details while retaining the material elements of the stories. The two stories received widespread coverage and the data set included articles from a range of South African online news outlets such as Citizen, ENCA, Timeslive, News24, SABC News, IOL, EWN, Daily Voice, The South African and Daily Sun. I analysed a total of 30 published articles chosen by way of convenience sampling.

The first story is that of 30-year-old teacher and water polo coach Fiona Viotti, from Bishops Diocesan College in Cape Town, who allegedly had sexual relationships with pupils at the school (Behr, 2019a; Farber, 2019 and Petersen, 2019). According to Behr (2019a), she was

also reportedly a victim of sexual misconduct when she was a learner at the school and was admitted for psychiatric care when the scandal was exposed. When the story made it to the media's attention, the boys involved were between 17 and 18 years old and reported that the alleged sexual abuse dated back to four years earlier. In addition, another story that shares similar traits to the Bishops incident, with subtle differences in the kind of sexual misconduct in question, the gender of the alleged perpetrator and the outcomes of the incident was referenced for context purposes only. It involves a Parktown Boys High School (Johannesburg) assistant water polo coach, Collan Rex, who was found guilty of sexual assault and common assault committed against students at the school (M&G, 2018; Naidoo & Mothata, 2018 and Nicolson, 2018). The Mail & Guardian reported that the teacher's lawyer had argued that his actions were not wrongful as he was "exposed to a culture of bullying, wrestling and touching of genitals during his time as a pupil at the school and saw nothing wrong with his acts" (M&G, 2018). Finally, the second story used as part of the thematic content analysis is that of an older woman who was bludgeoned to death at her home. It was later reported that her 13-year-old granddaughter was arrested in connection to the murder (Grobler, 2019a; Singh, 2019a and News24 Wire, 2019c).

Vignette interviews

This research seeks to investigate how a set of seven varying factors affect how journalists choose to cover news. Hence it necessitates conversations with journalists about their reasons and attitudes about choosing certain stances as opposed to others. Although tempting, using questionnaires, surveys and interviews may be unreliable for this type of inquiry as they may provide misleading and vague responses from participants (Poulou, 2001). Vignettes are among the best means of analysis in assessing attitudes (Schoenberg and Ravdal, 2000). Vignettes comprise short stories or simulations of real events with hypothetical characters in a set of circumstances that emulate real life and are used with the intention to elicit conversations that reveal information that may not be easily acquired by other means (Barter & Renold, 1999; Erfanian et al., 2020; Azman & Mahadhir, 2017; Poulou, 2001; Wilson & While, 1998). They provide a technique that helps explore people's perceptions, choices and beliefs (Barter & Renold, 1999; Erfanian et al., 2020; Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014).

Vignettes are often used in focus groups and interviews and may be employed in qualitative and quantitative research (Jenkins et al. 2010). Using the imagined stories was useful in

interpreting actions and occurrences as well as clarifying reasons behind individual judgments when people are faced with moral dilemmas in dealing with sensitive issues (Barter & Renold 1999, Erfanian et al. 2020). The topic of children and crime is a sensitive one that is fraught with various moral dilemmas, and this method is appropriate as it addresses selection of images, issues of identification, access and the incorporation of children's voices in news reports. Vignettes can desensitise otherwise difficult subjects and allow participants to respond to situations of the hypothetical characters rather than their own (Erfanian et al. 2020, Bradbury-Jones et al. 2014). To fulfil their purpose, the hypothetical scenarios should not be too outlandish but rather appear plausible, should contain context and be readily understandable (Barter & Renold, 1999). The closer the vignette is to the respondent's reality, the better it performs as a tool (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). To ensure that the vignettes in this study were appropriate, hypothetical stories were created by drawing inspiration from real-life incidents that were previously reported on in the media.

There were also critical methodological issues to consider when choosing content to include in the vignettes to generate journalists' insights. Two vignettes, with four iterations each, were used for the interviews, which were conducted with journalists who produce news for digital newsrooms – editors were not interviewed as they often are not the primary curators of news. Six journalists who produce crime stories (not necessarily exclusively) for South African publications that produce online news daily were selected, by way of convenience sampling, to be interviewed for this research. The journalists who were selected were available for the interviews and had significant experience of working in news media, writing about various topics including crime and children. These participants were selected with no specific pre-requisites in mind, instead, availability and relevant industry experience made them suitable participants for this research project.

Although often done textually, vignettes may be used in video, voice and other forms and can be used in various ways, including the incorporation of open-ended questions or incomplete sentences to elicit responses from participants (Erfanian et al. 2020, Bradbury-Jones et al. 2014). In this instance, Microsoft Teams[7] interviews were held, recorded and later assessed. Poulou (2001) suggests the use of fixed-choice responses or a combination of open-ended questions and for this analysis, the combination concept was applied to promote critical

[7] Microsoft Teams is a business communication platform developed by Microsoft, offering workspace chat and videoconferencing, among other features.

thinking and evoke the imagination among participants. Vignettes were constructed with four considerations in mind: data sources, format, capturing reality and vignette congruence (Erfanian et al. 2020). Azman and Mahadhir (2017) include the fifth consideration: that although vignettes have to be congruent and capture reality, they should also be vague enough to compel respondents to interpret the situation in their own terms – all these considerations were applied during vignette formulation. The vignettes take on a style suggested by Leicher and Mulder (2016), who insists that they be limited to 200-word narratives that include a headline, context in the form of the scenario and be concluded with concise questions. There is limited methodological research into the efficiency of vignettes in qualitative research involving children (Barter & Renold, 2000). However, in phenomenological research, vignettes are a valid, reliable, inexpensive, and practical tool to employ instead (Azman & Mahadhir 2017, Wilson & While 1998). Moreover, one of the main benefits of vignettes is that they eliminate the problem of generality as participants are presented with unambiguous information to reference their responses. In this case, responses from journalists in the vignette interviews were assessed on how seven factors influence journalists' choices, including: gender, age, guilt or innocence, sympathy, race, class and convenience affect reporting on children.

A limitation of using vignettes as a method is that they are unable to capture reality fully, participants may be detached from the characters in the vignette and various participants may interpret the vignettes in various ways (Erfanian et al., 2020). However, this fluidity may not be a hindrance, but one of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of vignettes as journalists may be more inclined to respond to interview questions more honestly as they know these are not real events and their decisions will not be critiqued or present any damaging consequences for them. It should, nonetheless, be kept in mind that due to the nature of vignettes being composed as hypothetical scenarios, participants' future actions are not necessarily guaranteed by their responses (Schoenberg and Ravdal, 2000 and Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014). In this instance, that consideration, although valid, was not a mitigating factor as this research sought to understand motivations for journalists' past decisions (hence the thematic content analysis) and not necessarily those of future actions.

In short, triangulating thematic content analysis with vignette interviews ensured that journalists were able to share their reasons for making certain choices when confronted with stories about children and crime, while analysis of coverage revealed emerging themes that

are a consequence of journalists' choices. Ultimately, these insights provided a realistic understanding of how journalists' choices in relation to a set of seven varying factors lead to certain opinions, ideologies and perceptions about children and crime.

CHAPTER 5 - FINDINGS

Content analysis - Bishops Diocesan College

An analysis of 16 different articles published by various online publications was undertaken via manual analysis as well as with the utilisation of text analysis programmes, NVIVO and Online-Utility.org's Text Analyzer. Below is a content analysis of the said articles.
The first of two stories that were analysed is about a 22-year-old water polo coach, Fiona Viotti, who was accused of having sexual relations with pupils at a private school who were aged between 17 and 18 years old. No criminal charges were pressed and the learners who were involved and their parents did not have an interest in involving the police in the matter. Below are details of some of the top keywords which were either used or expected to have been used in the articles in totality. The text was searched for 32 keywords and phrases. The keywords were chosen in line with the themes of this research report, which are: gender, age, guilt, sympathy, race, class and convenience.

The keywords for the Bishops Diocesan College articles are below:

1. Victim
2. Perpetrator
3. Rape
4. Assault
5. Indecent assault
6. Sexual misconduct
7. Crime
8. Sex
9. Slept with
10. Intercourse
11. Grooming
12. Children/ Child/ Teenager
13. Boys
14. Minor
15. Students
16. Pupils
17. Male
18. Female

19. Woman
20. Men
21. Abuse
22. Violence
23. Innocent/ innocence
24. Guilt/ guilty
25. Scandal
26. Relationship
27. Allegation/ allegedly
28. Arrest
29. Charges
30. Probe/ probed
31. Investigate/ investigated
32. Private school/ elite

Articles selected for content analysis

	Source	**Headline**	**Publication date**
1	News24	Parents of Bishops boys who had sexual 'relationships' with teacher wouldn't allow names to be handed to police – report	19-12-2019
2	News24	Bishops Diocesan College sex scandal: Fiona Viotti's case closed as witnesses refuse to testify	12-12-2020
3	News24	Bishops probe into teacher sex claims begins as more details emerge	19-10-2019
4	IOL	Bishops sex scandal inquiry complete without teacher's testimony	30-11-2019
5	IOL	Ex-Bishops teacher Fiona Viotti was victim of sexual misconduct incident	20-10-2019
6	Eyewitness News (EWN)	Ex-Bishops teacher involved in sexual misconduct wants probe findings	2020
7	ENCA	Bishops Diocesan College sex scandal: Case closed due to lack of evidence	13-12-2020
8	The South	Fiona Viotti: Sex scandal teacher may soon face	16-12-2020

	African	police charges	
9	Timeslive	We're devastated, says father of Bishops teacher probed for sexual misconduct	15-10-2019
10	Sowetanlive	Probe finds teacher 'engaged in sexual misconduct' with five pupils at Bishops	02-12-2019
11	Citizen	Bishops teacher: 'She was a very sweet girl, so we are all shocked,' say parents amid sex claims	17-10-2019
12	Citizen	Bishops teacher: Several boys have been 'affected over a number of years'	15-10-2019
13	Daily Sun	'Sex scandal' – Several boys were affected	11-11-2019
14	News.com.au	Authorities to investigate water polo coach who allegedly slept with five male students	undated
15	Daily Mercury	Teacher's sex acts with 5 students probed	17-12-2019
16	Mail Online	Married female teacher, 30, slept with FIVE pupils at elite South African private school	01-12-2019

* News articles were selected using random convenience sampling

Keyword and phrase analysis

Victim/ Victims

In all 16 articles that were analysed, the words "victim/ victims" appear seven times in total - six times in IOL articles and once in a News24 article. All other publishers used other words and phrases to describe the boys, but never "victims or alleged victims" in the selected articles. In two instances, in an IOL article (Behr, 2019a), "victim" appears referring to the teacher as having previously been a victim of sexual misconduct at the school herself. The same article also refers to the boys as victims in two instances (not alleged victims). Another IOL article (Behr, 2019b) states: "Sources also said seven alleged victims had been identified and more could come forward as the inquiry progressed." In another instance – a secondary quote from IOL in Mail Online (Pyatt, 2019), the word is part of a quote from one of the boys' parents who were in a relationship with a teacher. The quote reads: 'One of the boy's parents told IOL, 'He was a willing participant in the beginning but became effective when he couldn't get out of it.' Similarly, a News24 article (McCain, 2019) reads: "An interview with school principal Guy Pearson had already taken place, and alleged victims and staff are still

expected to be interviewed." In total, in the entire text of all 16 articles, the boys are referred to as victims or alleged victims five times. Ordinarily it would be expected that school children who are in a similar situation would be framed as innocent victims more deliberately, however in this instance the boys are framed as rich entitled boys and thus afforded minimal sympathy with journalists rarely referring to them as victims, but rather willing participants. The case would most likely be different with girls from a poor community.

Perpetrator

The word “perpetrator” (or the phrase “alleged perpetrator”) does not appear in any of the analysed articles, despite the story being about possible sexual abuse of children by their teacher. The use of the word perpetrator would have indicated malevolence and pointed to wrong doing on the part of the teacher, a frame that is largely avoided by reporters. It appears that the gender of the teacher contributed to her being framed as a harmless character. If the teacher was male, having had relationships with schoolgirls, the word perpetrator would most likely have been used despite the ages of the girls.

Rape, Assault, Indecent assault, Crime, Grooming, Sexual misconduct (also includes sexual and misconduct as separate words)

The words “rape, assault and indecent assault” are not used in any of the analysed articles, while crime is used in one instance. In the instance where the word “crime” is used, it is not in reference to the incident, but rather to point to the fact that there are no indications of a crime being committed. The quote from a News24 article (McCain, 2019) reads: “Currently, no crime is under investigation, News24 previously reported.” Although the incident is never referred to as a possible crime, the word “grooming” appears eight times throughout the 16 stories' text, with The South African reporting (Head, 2019): “Viotti could be prosecuted for the sexual grooming.” The word appears six more times in two other articles written by the same journalist for international publications, Daily Mercury and News.com.au (Bedo, 2020 and Bedo, 2019). In sixty-seven instances, the incident is referred to as “sexual misconduct, misconduct or a sexual encounter” across all articles. A few quotes include:

- “The SA Council for Educators (SACE) has closed its file in its probe against former Bishops Diocesan College teacher Fiona Viotti who was found, by the school, to have engaged in sexual misconduct with five boys from 2013 to 2019” (Evans, 2020).

- “Cape Town - The history teacher and water polo coach at the centre of the sex scandal rocking Bishops Diocesan College was the victim of a sexual misconduct incident at the elite school in 2017” (Berh, 2019a).
- “Probe finds teacher ‘engaged in sexual misconduct’ with five pupils at Bishops” (November, 2019).

Journalists were evidently reluctant to refer to the incidents as sexual crimes against school children, instead opting for less blaming words and phrases that denote mutual responsibility on the part of the teacher and pupils, such as 'engaged in sexual misconduct'.

Sex, Slept with, Intercourse

The word “sex” appears nine times in the text as part of the phrase “sex scandal” and in one instance as “sex claims”. On ten occasions, the phrase “slept with” describes the incident between the teacher and the boys, reinforcing the idea that there was consensual intercourse and the boys were of legal age to make such a decision. The teacher and boys’ relationships are framed as not being an anomaly – rather a regular affair among adults, maybe even peers. This frame almost excuses the behaviour, dubbing it as consensual sex among adults with no consideration of the power dynamic created by the teacher/scholar relationship. The relationship between the teacher’s age and that of the pupils may have also been a motivator for this as she is 22 years old while the boys are between 17 and 18. The word intercourse is not used in any of the articles.

Children/ Child, Minor, Boys

The words “child and children” are used a total of four times, two of those being to refer to the child protection and sexual offences unit. On the other two occasions, it is in the context of parents disallowing their children from making any statements to authorities (Evans, 2020 and Peterson, 2019). The children are never referred to as minors but rather as “boys”, in 55 instances. The word child allows readers to see the child as a vulnerable, innocent person who needs protection and to be treated with certain levels of caution – a frame which is prevalent when dealing with children who are victims of crime. Boys, on the other hand, denotes a certain level of maturity and decision-making abilities.

Students, Pupils

“Students” is used on 14 occasions. However, the predominantly used word is “pupils”, which is used 57 times. The use of the word “students” may be viewed as denoting maturity

as it is more commonly used for people who are studying at tertiary institutions rather than people of school-going age. On the other hand, the word pupils clearly points to youth, minority and vulnerability.

Male, Female, Woman, Man

"Male" is used several times in the text while other gender descriptors are rarely used, with "woman" showing up once and "female" in 10 instances. "Man" is not used in any of the stories. This indicates that although the schoolboys are largely treated as consenting adults in the bulk of the published stories, journalists do acknowledge their boyhood and do not refer to them as men.

Abuse, Violence

"Abuse" is used thrice in an IOL article (Behr, 2019a), once in another IOL article (Behr, 2019b) and the last time in a Citizen article (News24 Wire, 2019a). The word "violence" is found twice, in both instances, as part of a description of an interviewee's job title (Bedo, 2020 and Bedo, 2019). The alleged incident is never described as violence, which once again points to the lightness with which the sexual relations are viewed in this instance as opposed to how they may have been viewed if the teacher had been a male teacher.

Innocent/ innocence, Guilt/ guilty

"Innocent/ innocence and guilt/ guilty" do not appear in any of the stories, including those written after the matter was resolved. These words are commonly found in crime stories and journalists have avoided crime themes in the bulk of the accessed articles.

Scandal, Relationship

The incident is described as a "sex scandal" 13 times while, 26 times, the word "relationship" is used to describe the teacher's association with the boys. In many instances, the phrase "sexual relationships" is used instead of just "relationship". The word relationship in this instance can be seen as legitimising the sexual incident, as a relation is largely viewed as a consensual affair between two parties. These phrases frame the stories as salacious news reports rather than reports about a potential sexual crime.

Claims, Allegation/allegedly, Arrest

The reports are referred to as "claims" on ten occasions, while "allegation/allegedly" is used 45 times throughout the text. The text is clear on the unproven claims that are being addressed and it is common for journalists to use these words, particularly when there is no court case underway or when a court case is still in progress with no confirmed guilty parties. The word "arrest" does not appear in any of the articles.

Probe/probed, Investigate/investigated

Interestingly, although many of the assessed stories avoided crime themes, in the bulk of the text (64 times), the teacher is said to be "investigated" or that there is an "investigation underway", which is more closely related to serious matters. However, on 13 occasions, the word "probe/probing" is used instead, somewhat making the issue seem less serious.

Private school/ elite

On 110 occasions, Bishops Diocesan College is referred to as a "school" and four times it is called a "private school". This provides a sense of familiarity for readers and does not communicate how different the school is from most other schools in South Africa. On five occasions, it is called an "elite school".

Prominent frames and themes in published articles about Bishops Diocesan College Scandal

I now turn to the frames and themes that emerged in relation to the main research question. Each decision-making parameter is now considered individually.

Gender

According to the published articles, gender seems to play a role in how those accused of victimising children are represented. In the case of Viotti, news reports were reluctant to refer to her as a perpetrator of a crime. However, in a similar case where the accused was a male water polo teacher, also from an elite private school and with the boys being high school boys, news reports referred to him as a sexual abuser (Mqadi, 2017). In this case, the alleged "victims" are boys, and there is far less sympathy than what it would ordinarily be if it were girls. Besides, one article notes: "she seduced at least five boys over a period of four years" (Behr, 2019). This suggests that these were sexual escapades rather than possible abuse, and it almost places the responsibility of resisting the seduction on the boys. If the teacher was

male, it is reasonable to believe that words such as “lured” or “manipulated” would have been used. The effect of words such as seduce reduces the boys even further in the hierarchy of victimhood. Faucher (2007) highlights the existence of various kinds of victims: innocent and culpable victims as well as deserving and undeserving victims. In this case, gender plays a role in framing the complainants as culpable and deserving alleged victims. It is undeniable that when girls allege such misconduct in many instances, they would more likely be framed as innocent and undeserving victims of a perverted teacher.

Age

The age of consent in South Africa is 16, and it would seem that because of that, reporters were lenient in their reporting on this matter. In an IOL article Behr (2019b) quotes Viotti's father as saying: “The fact that the boys were of consenting age is immaterial.” Though correct and somewhat noble, some readers may read this quote as subtly providing justification for Viotti's actions and once again reiterating that the sexual acts were consensual and thus the boys are not blameless. Undeniably, if the boys had been of any age lower than 16, the narrative may have been addressed. A loophole that was left unaddressed is the ages of some of the boys at the time of the alleged actions. For instance, it is alleged that some of the sexual conduct took place as far back as four years before it was reported (Behr, 2019b). However, this allegation was never linked to possible statutory rape or sexual assault. It appears as though the writers’ primary concern was the present day rather than historical incidents. Therefore, according to these reports, when dealing with sexual matters, power dynamics and the legal age of majority, which is 18, are considered only as secondary factors, if at all.

Guilt

In these stories about the Bishops’ sex incidents, there does not seem to be a clear guilty or innocent party. As a result, the words used to describe the incident which happened are not harsh or condemning towards any particular person or people mentioned in the story. Although there are power dynamics at play, sexual encounters are often described as relationships or sexual misconduct. In analysing all the articles, it is apparent that the teacher is not viewed as guilty due to positive narratives that emerge when she is referred to. Moreover, the boys are not necessarily treated as innocent victims of a possible crime. In various instances, they are referred to as students rather than pupils, denoting a certain level of maturity towards them as students generally referrers to tertiary attendees.

In contrast, people of school going-age are referred to as pupils. The boys are also never referred to as minors despite some being 17 years old and the revelation that the alleged misconduct had been going on for several years as stated: “Several boys have been affected over several years” (News24 Wire, 2019b). Despite this, they are also not called children except when speaking about them to their parents, such as in this instance: “Because no parent was prepared to allow any of their children to make any statements to SACE.” (Evans, 2020). Therefore, the schoolboys are framed mainly as responsible adults who were aware of what they were doing when they had sexual encounters with the teacher. They are, therefore, not the “perfect” victim and not treated as victims or having been taken advantage of despite allegations that the teacher seduced them. One quote from one of the parents perpetuates this frame: “He was a willing participant in the beginning but became a victim when he could not get out of it” (Pyatt, 2019). This frame would not necessarily be accepted or perpetuated if the children involved were girls. The hierarchy of victimisation means that pecking order such that “young, bright, photogenic girls from stable and loving, middle-class family backgrounds” rate high as the “ideal victim” in news reports (Davies et al., 2007 and Faucher, 2007). In this instance, the boys are from an elite school and thus far lower as ideal victims, as evidenced in the themes that emerge.

Sympathy

One headline in IOL read: “Ex-Bishops teacher Fiona Viotti was a victim of sexual misconduct incident” (Behr, 2019a). The headline contains the word “victim” when referring to Viotti, despite rarely using the same description for the boys with whom she allegedly had sexual encounters. Another headline in Timeslive read: “We are devastated, says father of Bishops teacher probed for sexual misconduct” (Chambers, 2019). Similarly, the word “devastated” evokes feelings of sympathy towards the Viotti family and likely Fiona Viotti herself due to the perceived misfortune that her family is experiencing. Other phrases used to describe the incident include “the tragedy” and “devastating events” (Chambers, 2019 and Behr, 2019a). In addition to this, Viotti is described in quotes in a manner that highlights her positive attributes rather than pointing to the day’s problematic events. Some examples of how she is described include: “She was a model teacher”, “a brilliant history teacher”, “a sweet girl” and “Fiona was widely regarded as a thoroughly professional teacher” (Behr, 2019a, Behr, 2019b and News24Wire, 2019a). Hints of sympathy towards the boys are also evident in this quote: “She held power over them, and the boys were her victims, and everyone at the school needs to be sensitive to that. All the boys who have come forward are

shattered and shamed, and so are their families" (Behr, 2019a). However, the boys and their families are hardly referred to as victims. Instead, they are presented as somewhat hostile due to not opening a case or giving evidence in the matter. They are not treated as fearful or traumatised potential victims. Instead, words and phrases used to describe their not giving evidence include: "a lack of cooperation from witnesses", "witnesses refuse to testify", "The parents of five boys… refused to give the school permission to give their children's names to police", "Parents… would not allow names to be handed to police" and "the parents of these boys will not let them speak" (Evans, 2020 and Peterson, 2019). The phrase "lack of cooperation" is used instead of a more neutral phrase such as "inability to cooperate", despite the incident having been revealed at a critical time when the school was in its final exam period for the year. The word "refuse" is used instead of more objective words and phrases such as "declined to comment" or simply saying "did not comment". There is a clear bias in how the fact that parents and the boys did not comment to the media is framed. For instance, a more objective headline is used to refer to Viotti's conduct towards the boys: The headline reads: "Bishops teacher: Several boys have been affected over a number of years" (Daily Sun, 2020). The word "affected" is used instead of more harsh and subjective words such as "violated" or even "raped". However, the same courtesy of objectivity is not necessarily present in the text relating to the boys. They are mostly painted as defiant and unhelpful in their matter. Therefore, it is clear that in this particular instance, the writers of these articles seem to be sympathetic towards Viotti and less so towards the schoolboys she allegedly had sexual encounters with. Instead, they are primarily framed as uncooperative instead of too traumatised to participate. There is no mention of fear of re-traumatising the boys by asking them to testify, as would be the case with more common sexual misconduct incidents that involve girls.

Race

In the given articles, race does not seem to be a factor as all players seem to be of the same racial group. However, in a country with an extensive history of racial segregation, there is bound to be some variances in how different racial groups experience their existence.

Class

The incident took place at an elite school where all role players were in the same class in society. However, despite the incident never making it to court, the story was prominent as it occurred at a well-elite, respected elite school. An article in Daily Mercury (2019) includes

the fees of the school in the following line: “The 30-year-old resigned from the $15,000-a-year (R150,000) Bishops Diocesan School in Cape Town.” Often stories about the rich or famous are topical and more unlikely to be covered if they had happened to working-class people. The participants of the alleged events are framed as “scandalous wealthy people” rather than “troubled ordinary people”.

Convenience

Convenience was a significant factor in how these stories were presented, with most official sources quoted such as regulatory body (SACE), lawyers, the school principal and (ENCA, 2020; News24 Wire, 2020; Head, 2020 and Nombembe, 2019).

Conclusions on articles about Bishops Diocesan College

When considering the words and phrases used when referring to Viotti in the articles, it is evident that the bulk of these writers/ news articles did not necessarily consider the children in the story to be alleged victims. Instead, they are viewed as willing participants, assumed to be of a consenting age, long before any conclusion was arrived at in this particular case. Despite some of the articles mentioning that several children were believed to have been 17 and 18 years old when some of the sexual encounters occurred (Behr, 2019a, Bedo, 2019 and Daily Sun, 2020), they are never referred to as minors in any of the 16 articles analysed in this report. Furthermore, the teacher was also not referred to as an alleged perpetrator or someone who had possibly committed a crime. Instead, in one article, she was referred to as a victim herself. In addition, although the alleged victims’ parents refused to take media interviews, the alleged perpetrator's parents were interviewed in several instances. A Citizen headline (News24 Wire, 2019a). for one of these interviews reads: “Bishops teacher: ‘She was a very sweet girl, so we are all shocked,’ say parents amid sex claims’. A similar article in Timeslive (Chambers, 2019). was titled: “We're devastated, says father of Bishops teacher probed for sexual misconduct.” It is, however, worth noting that the father of the alleged perpetrator was also an employee at the school, which may explain why reporters saw it necessary to interview him. Lastly, an EWN article (News24 Wire, 2020d). mentioned the following: “The lawyer for the teacher involved in a sex scandal at Bishops Diocesan College has written to the school to ask what action would be taken against the boys involved.” It is undeniable that these headlines, phrases and words indicate some bias in the teacher’s favour and sympathy towards the teacher while a more objective approach is taken towards the boys who are consistently assumed to be adults and even called students on several occasions

when people of school-going age are generally referred to as pupils. Taking into consideration all words and phrases used in the analysed articles, as well as their frequency, one may summarise Fiona Viotti to have mainly been represented as a teacher who slept with schoolboys of consenting age, thus finding herself embroiled in scandalous relationships which proved strenuous for her and ultimately led to her losing her job. They were rarely said to be possible victims of a sexual predator. Instead, one article referred to Viotti as a Sports Illustrated model (Pyatt, 2019), thus attributing some assumed privilege of sleeping with her. The boys were also primarily represented as consenting adults who are well-versed in making their own sexual choices, even when the other party holds a particular form of power over them. This is a stark contrast to how male teachers in similar situations are often represented: as sexual predators who commit violence, rape and sexual assault crimes against young girls for their own pleasure.

Content analysis - Grandmother bludgeoned to death

An analysis of 14 different articles published by various online publications was undertaken via manual analysis as well as with the utilisation of text analysis programmes, NVIVO and Online-Utility.org's Text Analyzer. The story analysed below is about a 63-year-old grandmother, Idah Ngcobo, who was bludgeoned to death. Various media houses reported on the incident. On the following day, the police arrested a 13-year-old granddaughter of the deceased in connection with the murder. The girl had initially reported that an unknown man had attacked her grandmother while the grandchild was outside hanging laundry on the line. As a result several media outlets published the photo and name of the deceased along with a picture of her home's exterior. However, on the following day, when it was revealed that the granddaughter was arrested in connection with the murder, some media houses kept the photo and names of the grandmother in the follow-up article and mentioned that a 13-year-old grandchild was arrested. This is an example where journalists would have been required to consider the difference between naming and identifying an individual without necessarily naming them.

Below is an analysis of some of the top keywords which were either used or expected to have been used in the articles in totality. The text was searched for 27 keywords and phrases, which are often used in similar stories. The keywords were also chosen in line with the themes that this research report is addressing, which are: gender, age, guilt, sympathy, race, class and convenience.

The keywords are below:

1. Victim
2. Perpetrator
3. Grandmother/ granny
4. Female
5. Woman
6. Children/ Child
7. Grandchild
8. Granddaughter
9. Family
10. Minor
11. Girl
12. Teen/ teenager
13. 13-year-old
14. Relative
15. bludgeoned
16. Killed
17. Murdered
18. Crime
19. Attack
20. Assault
21. Violence
22. Defenceless
23. Allegation/ allegedly
24. Arrest
25. Charges
26. Probe/ probed
27. Investigate/ investigated

Articles selected for content analysis

	Source	**Headlines**	**Publication date**
1	Timeslive	KZN woman bludgeoned to death in front of teenage granddaughter	18-11-2019
2	Daily Voice	Girl, 13, 'kills granny'	21-11-2019

3	Algoa FM	Child arrested for allegedly killing grandmother	20-11-2019
4	EWN	Tongaat girl (13) arrested for murder of her grandmother	2019
5	The South African	13-year-old arrested after allegedly murdering her grandmother in Durban	20-11-2019
6	Timeslive	KZN girl, 13, arrested after gran found bludgeoned to death	20-11-2019
7	Citizen	Girl, 13, arrested for allegedly bludgeoning grandmother to death	20-11-2019
8	IOL	Mystery as gran bludgeoned to death at home	19-11-2019
9	IOL	BREAKING NEWS: 13-year-old arrested for allegedly bludgeoning Tongaat gran to death	20-11-2019
10	News24	Grandmother bludgeoned to death with a hammer in her Tongaat home	19-11-2019
11	News24	Girl, 13, arrested for allegedly bludgeoning grandmother to death	20-11-2019
12	ECR	Grandmother beaten to death in her Tongaat home	18-11-2019
13	North Coast Courier	Teenage girl arrested for allegedly killing grandmother (63) in Tongaat	20-11-2019
14	Jacaranda FM	KZN teen arrested for grandmother's murder	20-11-2019

***** News articles were selected using random convenience sampling

Keyword and phrase analysis

Victim, Perpetrator

The word "victim" is used in one article to describe the deceased and not in any other instance. This is in a News24 article which states: "The victim appears to have suffered blunt force trauma to her head and face" (Grobler, 2019b). This story is about a crime of murder and although a perpetrator has not been convicted, it is clear that a crime took place, however the deceased is not referred to as a victim in the majority of the articles. The word "perpetrator" does not appear in any of the stories despite the glaring criminality of the incident in question.

Grandmother/ Granny

While the stories do not refer to the deceased as a victim, more emotive words are used, such as grandmother and granny. Seemingly to evoke more emotion, endearing words, such as “gogo” and “Ouma”, are used (Singh, 2019b and Voice Reporter, 2019).

Woman, Female

The word “woman” is used in 23 instances, and it is used in various ways to describe the deceased such as in an IOL article where she is described as “an old woman” and a very "sweet woman" (Singh, 2019b). In various other instances, the deceased is referred to as an “elderly woman”. The description offers detail about her gender but also simultaneously points to the vulnerability of women in society. Hence it is more emotive than words such as “person” or “human being”. Once, the term “female” is used to refer to the 13-year-old who was found on the scene in The South African in the following quote: “The devastated female led police to the lounge where her grandmother's lifeless body was lying on the floor” (Chothia, 2019).

Girl, Children/ Child, Grandchild, Granddaughter, Teen/ Teenager, 13-year-old

In 36 instances, the accused is referred to as “girl”, which is also used in various headlines, including in Timeslive as follows: “KZN girl, 13, arrested after gran found bludgeoned to death” (Singh, 2019a). A Citizen headline reads: “Girl, 13, arrested for allegedly bludgeoning grandmother to death” (News24 Wire, 2019c). It is noteworthy that in most instances, the word “girl” is followed by her age. Meanwhile, “13-year-old” is used in 32 instances. “Grandchild” is used six times, “child” four times and “children” five times, therefore in total different iterations of the word “child” are used 15 times, including in an Algoa FM headline that reads: “Child arrested for allegedly killing grandmother" (Admin Author, 2019). "Granddaughter” is used 12 times throughout the 14 articles. “Teenager” is used seven times, while “teen” appears four times. It is evident from these examples that the youth of the grandchild is central to the story and a factor that makes it sensational. Reporters have capitalised on this and mentioned the actual age, as the child is fairly young, and as previously stated, the younger a victim or perpetrator in a crime story, the more readers and journalists will be interested in knowing about the story.

Family/ Relative, Minor

The accused is neither referred to as a relative or a family member in any of the articles. The word “minor” is also not used in any of the stories analysed. These two words are fairly sterile in emotiveness and more emotive words are used instead such as granny and grandchild among others. Also journalists seemingly wanted to show the close relationship between the accused and the victim by using words that alluded to it.

Bludgeoned, Killed, Murdered

In terms of the crime that was committed, various descriptions are used. “Murdered” is used 37 times, “Bludgeoned” is used 25 times and “killed” is used five times. The predominantly used words communicate the force and brutality with which the crime was carried out in order to inform the reader and to evoke emotion and perhaps anger from the reader.

Attack, Crime, Assault, Violence

The word “attack” is used 18 times, while “crime” is used three times. The term “assault” is used five times. However, the word “violence” does not appear in any text. In analysing the articles, it is evident that the choice of wording vividly communicates the gruesomeness of the crime instead of simply using a more broader and less emotive word such as violence.

Allegation/ allegedly

The word “alleged” is used 17 times, showing that although there has been an arrest, the reports do not necessarily mean that the accused is confirmed to be guilty. In crime stories this is expected.

Arrest, Charged

In 33 instances, the word “arrest” is used while “charged” is mentioned twice in relation to informing readers that the charge is murder (Chothia, 2019 and Dlamini, 2019). The word arrest affirms that this is a crime story.

Investigate/investigated, Probe/probed

“Investigate” and its various iterations are used 13 times and there is no mention of this being a “probe”. The seriousness of the crime is communicated by words such as investigation.

Prominent frames and themes in published articles about the Grandmother who was bludgeoned to death

To conclude the analysis of this story I turn to the frames that emerged in relation to the main research question. Below, each decision-making parameter is considered individually.

Gender

In the story of the grandmother who was bludgeoned to death, gender does not seem to play a significant role as both the alleged perpetrator and victim are of the same gender, which is female. It is, however, to be noted that both their genders are mentioned as gender plays a significant role in helping readers understand various unsaid nuances about an individual. In the South African context, women and girls are vulnerable for various reasons. Thus when a subject is said to be a woman, grandmother or girl, readers can make certain deductions about the individual based on their gender identity and the country's general treatment of women particularly in South Africa where gender equality is yet to be achieved.

Age

There is a significant age difference between the victim and the alleged perpetrator in this story. The age of the victim makes it easier for readers to sympathise with her as she is elderly. However, there is no specific law that requires any protection of adult subjects who are over the age of 18. Hence her identity was revealed from the beginning of the story on the first day that it was reported, with many publishers choosing to publish an image of her with the news report. Furthermore, this was not a sexual crime, and the victim is deceased and thus does not necessarily have any rights or a legal personality. On the opposite end of matters, the alleged perpetrator is a young girl of 13 years old. According to both legislation in the press code, her identity ought to be protected, as stated in The Children's Act: "No person may, without the permission of a court, in any manner publish any information relating to the proceedings of a children's court which reveals or may reveal the name or identity of a child who is a party or a witness in the proceedings". When the issue of her arrest reached the media, the girl was already in custody and thus court proceedings were initiated. Therefore, it was a contravention of the Children's Act to publish any information which may have revealed her identity. As such, a combination of the grandmother's name accompanied by her photo and a photo of her home with the statement that the arrested individual is the grandmother's grandchild could be seen as revealing or at least compromising the child's identity. Therefore, age is a significant factor in writing that story, and all writers took care

not to name the child; however, not identifying her proved to be a challenge. Despite her young age, no article referred to her as a minor or merely a relative of the deceased. Instead, writers were more descriptive, disclosing that she is the grandchild of the deceased and, in some cases, that she is a granddaughter. Below are three such examples, among others:

1. A Timeslive article headlined: “KZN woman bludgeoned to death in front of teenage granddaughter” (Singh, 2019c).
2. An IOL article stated: “A neighbour, who asked not to be named, said Ngcobo's granddaughter came to her gate and screamed for her son” (Singh, 2019b).
3. A News24 article stated: “However, on Tuesday, the granddaughter was arrested for the murder” (Grobler. 2019a).

To mitigate the identification of the teenager, writers may have opted for words such as “relative” if they sought to let readers know of the family relation, or they could have referred to her as a “minor related to the deceased” or a “minor” if they intended to enlighten readers on the age of the child.

Guilt

The issue of guilt or where perceived guilt is placed may explain why the teenage alleged perpetrator's identity was not fully protected. Scholars (note the importance of attributing blame to an individual, society, or institution in stories about severe crime and this case is no different (Davies et al., 2007 and Saint-Jacques et al., 2012). When they wrote these articles, writers seem to have accepted that the teenager ought to be regarded as the “guilty” party. Hence she did not receive sympathy, instead she was framed as a culprit who ended the life of a very “sweet woman”, as she is referred to in an IOL article (Singh, 2019b). Considering only how these articles are presented, it would seem that protecting the child's identity became less of a priority due to her perceived guilt in the killing of her grandmother.

Sympathy

There seems to be a slight bias toward presenting the grandmother as an individual who is close to being what Davies et al. (2007) and Faucher (2007) refer to as the “ideal victim”. The grandmother is referred to in endearing terms such as “gogo” and “Ouma”, and is used (Singh, 2019b and Voice Reporter, 2019). In addition, details are given of how powerless she may have been against the assailant, such as an IOL article that begins with the following sentence: “A sick and defenceless 63-year-old grandmother was bludgeoned to death in her home in Fairbreeze, Tongaat, yesterday” (Singh, 2019b). A News24 article follows suit, stating: “She was reportedly defenceless and partly paralysed” (Grobler 2019a). An IOL

article states: “Speaking after the incident, one of Ngcobo's four children, James said: ‘I do not understand who would attack someone who cannot even fight for herself. She raised us with much difficulty, selling sweets and fruit at school. We were still enjoying spoiling her, as we are now all grown-up and independent. She was our strength and our everything; she raised us and raised our kids for us, and she never complained’,” (Silekwa, 2019). These statements further perpetuate the frame of the victim being regarded as an “undeserving victim”. The child's status, such as trauma, is not referred to in any of the articles, thus pointing to a slight bias favouring the victim.

Race

In this case, both the victim and alleged perpetrator are of the same race, and thus there are no observable race variances to be observed.

Class

Although both the victim and alleged perpetrator are of the same class, it is worth asking if the incident had happened to a different class of people, would the teenager's identity be treated as it was in this instance? This particular story does not provide adequate answers; however, research suggests that it would not, due to the hierarchy of victimisation (Davies et al., 2007 and Faucher, 2007).

Convenience

In these articles, the police are used as the primary sources as they provide all the basic information and images used with the articles. The police have also provided some quotes. IOL managed to interview one of the children of the grandmother who spoke about the kind of person she was (Silekwa, 2019) and a neighbour who wanted to be anonymous (Singh, 2019b). In general, however, the police are the primary source of quotes. The police seem to be the most trusted source of news, and other people are interviewed in addition to what the police have said and not as primary sources. In the bulk of the stories, the police are the only source of information.

Conclusions on articles about Grandmother bludgeoned to death

Taking into account the language used in these articles, it is clear that the writers were sympathetic towards the deceased. She is not referred to as the deceased or a victim often, but

rather as a grandmother, gogo or ouma, which are very emotive words that readers can relate with. She is also referred to as an "elderly woman" and a "sweet woman" in two instances (Singh, 2019b). This story's complexity is that many publications published it upon occurrence when there had been no arrests. At that stage, pictures of the deceased and her name were published and, in some instances, an image showing her home from a distance in the street was also published. On the following day, when police revealed news of the death of the deceased woman's granddaughter, publications had to publish follow up stories. In almost all of the stories, the woman's name was mentioned while the arrested 13-year-old was referred to as the granddaughter or grandchild of the deceased. Even in extreme circumstances, citing that the arrested child is a grandchild of the deceased, particularly a granddaughter, risks her identity being revealed due to the small number of possible grandchildren that any human being may have. Such a description alone makes it easy to identify which child was arrested. This compromises her in her immediate community, at school and even among the larger community. Her risk of identification is aggravated by the fact that her grandmother's photo and the photo of her home were both published in various media. In addition, it also stigmatises other grandchildren of the deceased. This highlights journalists' inability to differentiate between naming and identifying a subject in a story. It would seem that by merely not naming the child, publishers of these articles believe they had done enough to protect the child in place. It's the best interest is its priority as required by both the press code and legislation. It may also be that the fact that the murder was carried out gruesomely end it in cold blood provided enough reason for journalists to reason that the public interest trumped the need to go above and beyond to protect the child's identity. It could also be that when children are perpetrators of crime, they receive less sympathy and care from journalists. This could result in the risk of identifying the children being higher than when children are victims of crime. For example: if the child of an elderly woman had been raped, it would be improbable that the elderly woman would be identified in an article and then in the same article, it is mentioned that her grandchild was sexually violated. It would most likely be apparent to journalists that this would amount to identifying a child victim of a crime, particularly a sexual crime.

However, in the given story, inevitably, every article that either showed an image of the elderly woman or mentioned her name and then mentioned that the arrested party was a grandchild or granddaughter of hers identified the child although none of them named the child.

Discussion of vignette interviews

Two imagined scenarios were presented to six journalists who produce crime stories (not necessarily exclusively) for South African online publications and news media. Questions were then asked about how they would execute these stories in real life, with various factors such as age, gender, class and guilt changing with each new iteration of the scenarios.
The two scenarios that formed part of the vignettes included below:
Scenario A: A 22-year-old female teacher at a high school in rural Polokwane is accused of having sexual relations with learners at the school. The reports came to light after several learners aged between 17 and 18 came forward with the allegations to their parents. It is believed that the sexual encounters may have been consensual. The sexual encounters have been ongoing for about three years. You have the name of the teacher as well as those of all the girls involved. You also have contact details for all the complainants and their families, the school and the accused teacher.

Scenario B: A 65-year-old grandmother was bludgeoned to death in her home. There was one other family member in the yard at the time of the murder, a 13-year-old grandchild. The child was unharmed but reported witnessing an unknown man attacking the elderly woman with a hammer while the child was outside hanging laundry. The motive of the murder is unknown; however, the family lives in an area that's known to be unsafe. The police provide an image of the deceased grandmother and her full name. Police also provide a photograph of the crime scene and the home where the incident took place. You have access to the grandchild and other family members of the victim.

As various factors changed within the stories, consistencies and inconsistencies in journalist's decision-making processes became evident. The participants' responses are discussed and analysed based on the research's aim: to ascertain how gender, age, guilt, sympathy, race, class and convenience affect journalists' coverage of children who are perpetrators (or alleged perpetrators) or victims of crime. Preconceived ideas, attitudes, and perceptions that affect journalists' decision-making are also observed while emerging frames are identified. The responses are compiled under nine categories, which are: guilt, sympathy, age, gender, race, class, convenience, journalists' preconceived ideas and frames that emerge.

In principle, all vignette interview participants agreed that the imagined scenarios presented to them had enough public interest to research further with the aim of writing articles about

them. However, the processes and decisions that journalists made around how to source information, what information to use and how to present their final stories ranged from applying red-light ethics to observing only the law as far as journalists understand it and no other ethical norms.

Gender

The gender of child victims and perpetrators affects the level of importance and public interest that journalists attribute to a news article. Respondent A, believes that whenever men are accused of violating women and girls, journalists should be more vigilant as a way to highlight the women's plight to help curb gender-based violence. Journalists also largely agree that when men are accused of crimes against children, then the stories should be viewed with more seriousness as South Africa's landscape is such that child abuse by men is rife, and journalists must expose such incidents with the hope that perpetrators will be brought to book. One interviewee, Respondent B, explained how the journalist's gender contributes to story formulation:

Being a female, being a mother, just listening to your scenario where you said, it is a male and 15-year-old girl. I felt a little bit of, not anger... I was obviously a bit more upset because I think, in a sense, you can identify with that fear of a woman. So when, when you have vulnerable 15-year-old children being preyed on by men, and reading the room and the temperature of the room in South Africa at the moment, [you would want to be of assistance to] women trying to stand up for themselves.

Consequently stories where women are accused of crimes, particularly against boys, are not immediately viewed as crimes, but rather as sensational scandals. In addition, when interpreting stories, journalists default to cis-gendering victims and perpetrators and making decisions based on whether the people involved are assumed to be male or female without necessarily considering other possible gender identities. However, Respondent C noted that it might be worth mentioning how individuals identify for contextual purposes when dealing with sexual assault cases involving children.

Age

Issues raised in the interviews include the age of consent, which is 16 (and 12 among children who are not more than two years apart in age)[8] and the age at which children become adults, which is 18 as per the Children's Act. Journalists were unsure how these two ages relate to

[8] Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 32 of 2007

each other in terms of how children involved in sexual crimes ought to be reported on. The evolving capacity of children and child participation also present a grey area for journalists. Although most journalists recognise children's evolving capacity, others believe children cannot understand certain complexities of crime. In cases where people over the age of 18 are school learners, one journalist (Respondent D) believes that any claim of violation against them at a school should be treated as a matter of public interest. Other respondents agreed, particularly in the case of girls/ women. Respondent A also agreed but added that such a story would no longer be compelling because it becomes an issue of abuse of power between individuals who are considered adults – in essence, despite being school goers, being over the age of 18 would render them as adults and no longer needing protection from the media. The journalists brought to light the issues of power dynamics. Respondent A referred to school teachers as secondary parents of every child in any school despite the child's age. Respondent A also mentioned the Schools Act[9], commenting that it trumps the age of consent regarding crimes that take place on school premises. Respondent F opined that it is essential to publish such stories. However, "the story is no longer about abuse. It is more about sexual relations at a school". In general, journalists do not agree on how to treat complex stories about crime involving people who are over the age of 18 but still partake in environments that are generally considered to be reserved for children, such as schools.

Interviewing children:

One journalist (Respondent D) communicated that interviewing children about their role in a crime story is essential, as long as they are not named in articles. Three interviewees expressed that they would interview children who were willing to speak on their involvement in crime, while two said they would not interview minors at all despite their willingness to participate in media interviews. One interview participant showed reluctance to interview children due to concerns about causing secondary trauma for the children, instead preferring to interview parents or guardians. Respondent C commented that media law does not allow interviewing children regardless of the type of story a journalist is working on, opining: "Ethically or in terms of media law, you are not allowed to [interview children]. Even if it is a positive story, such as matric results, if a child is under the age of 18, you need to get consent from the school, which often acts as the child's guardian or the parent." However, once presented with a different scenario concerning the rape of a minor, Respondent C had a change of stance, saying that it would be important to interview the child victims with

[9] South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

consent from their parents and while ensuring not to publish any information that may affect any court case should there be one. Several journalists also often changed their opinion on whether to interview children and how to conduct these interviews depending on the situation and their personal feelings about the story at hand.

Naming children:

One journalist (Respondent D) opined that when children commit crimes as minors, they should not be named even if they turn 18 during the court trial. Respondent D is adamant about not naming people involved in crimes involving children either, to avoid the risk of revealing the child's identity. In a scenario where police provided images of a deceased grandmother who was allegedly killed by her 13-year-old grandchild, Respondent D said he would not use the image of the deceased grandmother or anyone except the police and authorities so as to not risk identifying the child. Journalists cite various reasons for not naming children, including caution not to affect police investigations negatively, avoiding possible mob justice and adhering to media law. Asked if he would consider naming an 18-year-old schoolboy accused of a crime, one journalist commented: “If he was 18 and not at school, then I would name him after his court appearance. Nevertheless, if he is still at school, I would not name him at all.” This is an issue that interviewed journalists disagreed on, with some believing that people who are over 18 years old should be named in stories about the crimes they commit. Respondent D preferred to use pseudonyms instead of naming minors or people related to them. Another issue that journalists seem to grapple with is how to refer to children that they cannot name in their articles. In the scenario where a grandmother was bludgeoned to death, many participants said they would refer to the arrested child as the “grandchild” or “granddaughter” of the deceased. This is despite many having said they would also use the name and photo of the deceased woman, who could easily be linked to the child, thus compromising the child's identity. One participant (Respondent A) said they would not mention that the arrested child is related to the grandmother. Instead, referring to her as “a minor” or “a close relative”. Generally, interview participants seemed intent not to name children involved in crimes. However, identifying children by naming or using images of other role players in stories presents a conundrum for journalists – and they may end up identifying children although they intended not to do so. One interviewee participant admitted that although naming a child's relative and then mentioning how the person is related to the child in the story can compromise the child's identity, the public interest may justify the risk of revealing the child’s identity. This is an issue that the

journalist says they would discuss with their editors to determine whether the public interest is significant enough to justify the risk of identifying the child.

Children who turn 18 during a trial

Respondent D would not name a perpetrator or victim of a crime who turns 18 during a trial because "it is a sensitive matter and the family needs space and should not be put in the limelight after suffering such a traumatic ordeal". However, he would name a perpetrator of a crime who is 18 years old when the crime is committed, although he would wait for the accused to appear in court before naming them. Other participants expressed that they would name a child perpetrator who turns 18 during the trial immediately after they turn 18, regardless of how old they were when they carried out the crime in question. Interview participants said they would not name child victims even if they turn 18 while the trial is ongoing or at any point after that.

Variations in ages of perpetrators and victims

Where there are power dynamics, all journalists concurred that the differences in age of the victim and perpetrators are immaterial, especially if the victim is the child in the dynamic. However, in instances where power is not an issue, journalists were less reluctant to run with articles where the victims' ages were close to those of the perpetrator. For instance, in a scenario where an 18-year-old schoolboy is accused of having sexual relations with 14-year-old schoolgirls, some journalists shared that they would be cautious in writing the story. Respondent D said he would continue with the story but would not identify anyone in the article. Respondent C opined that when a schoolchild is 18 years old and accused of having sexual relations with a 14-year-old, the story is no longer hard news and will be considered a soft news/ human interest feature due to the power dynamics being less prominent.

Guilt

Guilt goes far beyond factual innocence or guilt, according to interview respondents. The power dynamic is considered to be a factor that determines whether an individual is deemed guilty or innocent by journalists – before a trial or investigations take place. In cases where innocence or guilt are not apparent, journalists differed on their treatment of those involved in these stories. For instance, when asked about a scenario where a school teacher is reported to have had sexual encounters with 15-year-old schoolgirls who admit that they seduced him as part of a betting game with each other, journalists differed significantly in their approach.

Respondent D admitted this presents a complex problem but said he would still view the person with power (the teacher) in the dynamic as the perpetrator of the crime and the girls as victims. Respondent E had challenges deciding which party is the perpetrator of the crime, saying that both the teacher and the children should be viewed as perpetrators in such an instance. Respondent E was unsure who should be regarded as the victim in the scenario. Respondent C felt the pupils are perpetrators in this scenario, commenting: "As much as they are children, the argument can be made that they are capable of discerning right from wrong." In essence, because the scenario does not fall within the ambit of what is expected in sexual assault stories, journalists were unsure of how to treat the story. As mentioned earlier, on constructing narratives of crime, people tend to assign blame to some or other party. And in the journalistic context where the blame lies often shapes how the story will be presented. However, in the given scenario, assigning blame is not a straightforward task, leaving journalists unsure of what course of action to take.

Sympathy

When there are allegations or claims of crimes against children reporters, tend to be sympathetic. Journalists see themselves playing an essential role in helping families find justice, particularly when they are seen as poor and vulnerable. One interviewee commented:

There is a bit of bias. We will go the extra mile for those with no power, no voice, no money… those in the rural areas. We work harder to make sure we can bolster the public's attention and make them see what is going on there. We celebrate when there is justice and when we have helped someone who would have never seen justice.

Respondent A shared strong feelings about bringing those who commit crimes against children to book. For instance, in a scenario where a teacher is accused of having sexual relations with children, Respondent A alluded to family values, noting that he would want to shame the teacher for his actions, however, would not name him to protect the victims and his children and family who may be embarrassed or become targets of mob justice due to the situation. Sympathy is not necessarily given to children by virtue of their age. A child perpetrator or victim of a crime who is expected or deemed to have been aware of the consequences of their actions at the time of commissioning an act or being violated seems to receive less sympathy. In addition, although journalists are not sympathetic towards people who perpetrate crime against children, when the perpetrators of crime against children also claim to have been victims of crime when they were children themselves, journalists tend to find it necessary to reveal that historical information in their articles.

Race

One journalist (Respondent D) indicated that when dealing with a predominantly white school instead of a predominately black school, it would be more critical to "track down the history of sexual misconduct at such a school" as a point of departure - the same thought process which assumes a pre-existing history of sexual misconduct was not applied in dealing with a black school. Respondent A expressed that due to racial tension in South Africa, it would be ideal to steer clear of mentioning race in articles involving two or more races on opposing sides as it may lead to a racial uproar. Despite this notion, race plays a role in deciding what information journalists seek out when working on stories. When certain racial groups have certain stereotypes attached to them, journalists may adopt a different approach. For instance, Respondent E indicated that when doing an article where a black teacher is accused of a crime in a predominantly white school, it would be best to consider other possibilities, commenting: "If it is a black teacher naturally you would think, could it (the accusation) be a way to get rid of the black teacher. Your mind must be open to that possibility too." On the other hand, Respondent F indicated that when sexual crimes are reported in a predominantly white school, it would be necessary to ascertain if there a history of sexual abuse at the school. Similar comments were not made in examples concerning a rural school with predominantly black children. Instead, the assumption that the children are vulnerable was made.

Class

Class, wealth, and social standards are among the factors that raise the public interest of a story, despite a sense of duty being evident when journalists are dealing with vulnerable people. In instances where crime stories happen at wealthier schools, there is an assumed barrier to getting the stories. Respondent B commented: "There is this thing that rich schools refuse to be in the media spotlight. So, they will do everything possible to come up with counter-accusations or threats, and intimidation, legal letters, they will do everything possible to hide this from the media." More impoverished schools and communities are considered to be more open to communicating information to the media and willing to accept assistance with their issues.

Convenience

Police investigations: People interviewed almost always include the police in their stories, and interview participants said they often begin their investigations about stories by getting information from the police. Several journalists (Respondent D, Respondent A) mentioned that they would intentionally leave out certain information from a story if revealing such information to the public would jeopardise the criminal case. Journalists are also reluctant to run crime stories when there is no criminal case opened. Respondent B commented that not all police information should be used, and journalists should be selective as the police sometimes give journalists information they are not supposed to.

Authoritative bodies: School principals, governing bodies and child welfare organisations are among organisations that reporters say they approach for credible information when writing articles. Witnesses of crimes or other individuals who are deemed to have information about the victims or perpetrators of crime are also seen as sources of information.

Parents and guardians: Interview participants preferred to interview parents and guardians instead of children involved in crime.

Children: Journalists who said they would interview children would use that information for context rather than quoting the children. No interview participant indicated that they would actively seek out children's comments but would conduct interviews if they approached to do so by the children in question.

Journalists' preconceived ideas, attitudes and perceptions

One participant (Respondent D) commented that he would consider covering particular stories because of gender-based violence as it is rife in our country. Respondent A took a more family-centric stance – often pointing out that the dignity of families and traditional values need to be upheld. Respondent E valued child participation, pointing out that children's opinion should be included in journalism, however admitting that age is a barrier to interviewing children. Child perpetrators who were previously abused or victimised in other ways are afforded more sympathy than those who were not. One reporter, Respondent B, values the need to take stories forward and ensure that journalists alert the police where crimes have taken place without the knowledge of authorities. In addition, specific triggers

exist for journalists themselves. For instance, one interview participant noted: “As a woman myself, I do get triggered by specific words.”

Frames that emerge

Poor black children are assumed to be vulnerable victims. However, troubled children, such as those addicted to drugs, are viewed with more suspicion than those who are upstanding. On the other hand, privileged white children are not automatically assumed to be the vulnerable victim in stories.

Final comments from participants

Respondent D emphasised that journalists have a great responsibility in ensuring that they do not name children in stories unnecessarily. Concerns were raised about authorities and parents who refuse to comment on stories involving children as this serves as a red tape, which deters journalists from writing about children who are victims or perpetrators of crime. Respondent A raised concerns about naming and identifying certain people in articles as it may sometimes attract legal claims, not only against news organisations but individual journalists too. As a result, Respondent A avoids disclosing certain information in articles. There seems to be a fear for the court system and a need or desire not to jeopardise court processes. One reporter (Respondent A) said if he received an interview from a child who is an alleged perpetrator of a crime, he would not publish the information before the matter was discussed in court. Although journalists endeavour to assist the people they write about, Respondent B points out that often there is no way of ensuring that justice happens, commenting: “I am a journalist, not an activist, and I cannot persuade them to do the right thing. I can advise them and offer to go with someone to the nearest police station, but I cannot do it for them.” Respondent C noted that editors and the types of publications that stories are published in also determine how children are represented.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS

Having conducted a content analysis on published articles and interviewed journalists, I deduced that there are contradictions between what the interviewed South African journalists aim to do when producing stories about children and crime and articles that eventually get published. This finding, among others discussed below, is not entirely surprising or unique to South Africa. In fact, a US study similar to this one examined the ethical decision-making of United States (US) journalists when children are the subjects of news coverage at two levels: what journalists think they do when it comes to using children in the news and what they actually do. The researcher, Coleman (2011), found that most professional journalists in the US made different decisions and moral judgments when stories involved children than when they involved adults as they felt children deserved more privacy, protection from harm and informed consent than did adults. However, there was a clear disconnect between what the US professional journalists said they were concerned about and would do when using children as sources and subjects of news stories and the choices they actually made. Coleman found that the journalists did not necessarily use better quality ethical reasons when thinking about dilemmas with children, and their moral judgment scores were not significantly different for children than for adults. Coleman also noted a willingness on the part of these journalists to question themselves and examine ethical issues, but in practice, it seemed to be a case of 'do as I say, not as I do'.

I made correlating findings in this study in that there were vast differences in how individual journalists approach articles. To add a layer of complexity, some journalists were inconsistent in their own personal views and convictions. They sometimes changed how they said they would approach stories when given similar facts with different characters. Among other reasons, this fluidity of opinions and beliefs could be because there is no specific template or guideline that all journalists follow when faced with complex decisions around researching and writing stories about children involved in crime. It may also be that interview participants were conscious that they were speaking to a researcher when they gave their responses during the vignette interviews and tried to respond with what they believed to be correct answers. Suppose this was the case and in some instances over-caution was indeed present, one may draw insight that what reporters believe to be the correct thing to do (whether they practice it or not) may not necessarily be so when evaluated against press codes, legislation and recommendations by organisations such as Media Monitoring Africa, who advocate for child participation.

Having established that content and decision-making bias exists, I now answer the research questions based on my evaluation of the available data. As a point of departure, it is worth noting that some journalists seem unaware of their own biases when covering stories about children and crime. In cases where they are aware, they have a high sense of duty towards the parties whom the bias benefits, such as children who are deemed as vulnerable and in need of help and support. On a micro level, different kinds of child victims or perpetrators are treated differently. For instance, a child victim who is perceived to have a certain level of culpability in the crime committed against them is treated with less regard for exposing their identity. This is particularly evident where children are victims or alleged victims of sexual crimes committed by adults, but the actual sexual acts are reported to be consensual, such in statutory rape cases. Other factors such as gender, age, guilt, sympathy, race, class and convenience affect how journalists produce their stories.

I now draw inferences from my findings to address the effects of individual factors on decision-making. As a starting point, I discuss how gender, age, guilt, sympathy, race, class and convenience affect how journalists cover stories about children who are perpetrators (or alleged perpetrators) or victims of crime. First, I explore gender dynamics. Based on vignette responses and deductions from the analysed published articles, the gender of perpetrators and victims of crime plays a role in how urgent, and prominent journalists perceive stories to be. Stories that involve girls are treated with the most urgency and care not to reveal their identities. On the contrary, boys are viewed as less vulnerable, and their identities are less likely to be as aggressively guarded. The gender of the adult party in the crime also plays a role in how journalists handle these stories, with male perpetrators treated with far more suspicion in practice, despite some journalists saying they do not differentiate subjects based on gender. South Africa's high rate of gender-based violence is one reason journalists tend to be more aggressive in pursuing stories about the abuse of girls by men and helping to hold perpetrators to account.

Another major factor that presents challenges for journalists is the children's ages. This is a grey area, mainly when dealing with sexual crime. It is especially unclear for journalists when they are in a situation where they need to consider the legal age of consent, the age of majority and the time at which a child turns 18 after the commission of a crime. In such cases, reporters tend to sympathise with the victim, making it more likely to protect a child victim's identity even after they turn 18. In contrast, the opposite is true for child perpetrators. This brings me to the issue of guilt and innocence. It is worth noting that journalists do not

necessarily make decisions based on factual or legal innocence or guilt. Their views are more based on moral wrongness or rightness. Subsequently, children who are seen as guilty of committing crimes or culpable in their own victimisation receive less sympathy in published articles, despite journalists saying they set out to treat all children equally. There are various other explanations for this, including editing, avoiding being seen as condoning bad behaviour by children or attempting to take the child's evolving capacity into account and hold perpetrators of crime to account (even if they are children), especially when it comes to heinous crimes. On the contrary, when perpetrators of crime report to have previously been victims of crime or are vulnerable in one way or another, reporters tend to show more sympathy towards them, regardless of whether the perpetrator is an adult who committed a crime against a child or vice versa. Journalists are also more sympathetic with child victims or perpetrators whom they can relate to in one way or another on a personal level. For instance, interviewed journalists shared that they are more likely to sympathise with the plight of girl children.

On a more practical front, deciding when to name a child in a story possibly presents the most profound challenge for journalists. For background purposes, it is vital to draw attention to the fact that a majority of children in the media are mentioned only by means of age or reference but are not named or accessed (Rikhotso, 2012). This is not necessarily a result of decision-making that prioritises child participation. Instead, in some instances, it may be a result of practising red-light ethics, whereby challenging decisions are avoided by not attempting to find common ground, instead opting for the safest, most convenient solution, such as eliminating the child's voice in a story. More specifically, journalists do not readily recognise the difference between naming children and identifying them, often believing that not naming a child involved in a crime incident is adequate protection of the child’s identity. This sometimes leads to children being identified in news articles by virtue of identifying people and places that are closely linked to those particular children. In addition, journalists rely disproportionately on information from the police to do their stories, sometimes choosing to abandon stories that do not have police confirmation. This leads to most quotes in crime stories involving children being from authorities rather than the people involved. Journalists are also unclear about the guidelines around interviewing children and choose to rather speak to parents or guardians.

I also noted that race and class issues somewhat affect journalists’ choices, though not to a large extent. Due to South Africa's racial divides, journalists seem to use red-light ethics

when dealing with race, choosing to mention it only when it is material to the story. Where journalists feel the race of subjects involved in crime is irrelevant, they do not mention it. Moreover, journalists generally believe wealthier people and children from such families are far more privileged and less vulnerable. Hence they do not have as high a sense of duty and need to shield them from harm. Such children are treated with more suspicion, while children from low-income families are framed as innocent, vulnerable, and in need of help until the opposite is proven true.

From the observations above, it can be deduced that preconceived ideas, attitudes and perceptions of journalists form the basis of most decisions when faced with complex ethical problems. However, because each journalist has their own set of values, how one journalist approaches a story may be completely different from how another approaches it. Lastly, when acknowledging biases that exist, we should not discount the role of editors in shaping articles they receive from journalists before publication. This is a significant factor because in formal newsrooms, editing is a compulsory step in the news cycle and thus, editors have significant influence over what eventually gets published. Therefore, published articles are somewhat affected this reason and others, including deadline constraints, convenience, bureaucracy and other forms of red tape, knowledge gaps and the media ethics of the publications that articles are published in. Some of these areas, such as deadline pressures, interference by editors and red tape require further study to fully interrogate and understand the factors that influence coverage and representation of children in the media.

In summary, though the press code and legislation exist to guide how journalists do their work, some topics are not adequately addressed. Hence, journalists make decisions based on their own understanding of right and wrong, even when they do not necessarily have a solid conviction about the topic at hand.

Moreover, journalists use the press code and media law rarely or vaguely when justifying their decision-making. Furthermore, decisions tend to be inconsistent based on their own assessment of the situation at hand – instead of relying solely on hard facts such as the ages of children involved. For instance, some journalists admitted to not providing the same level of protection for children accused of crimes compared to victims. Furthermore, there are no generic checklists that help journalists assess whether they have protected children enough while upholding their stories' integrity. Therefore, a more structured approach to reporting on

children is needed to promote more ethical and standardised reporting practices among journalists.

CHAPTER 7 - SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The coverage of children who are victims or perpetrators in criminal acts is a broad topic, which cannot be covered extensively based on the scope of this research and time limitations. There are various other factors that were not possible to discuss in this report. For instance, Davies et al. (2007) and Faucher, (2007) explain the hierarchy of victimisation which implies that pecking order is set up such that "young, bright, photogenic girls from stable and loving, middle-class family backgrounds," may rate high as the "ideal victim" in news reports while the opposite applies for their peers who are working-class boys brought up on rough parts of the society – although this issue is discussed herein, it is not adequately addressed. Faucher, (2007) also highlights the dichotomies of innocent and culpable victims as well as deserving and undeserving victims. Factors such as sexuality and education status can at times determine news media interest, however, they need to be viewed with regard to other factors such as the geopolitical landscape and cultural makeup of the time (Davies et al., 2007 and Falodum, 2015) – and these were not covered in this study. Sexuality and educational background were also not taken into account and children were merely viewed in the categories of victim or offender. Thus, there is room for further research to analyse the effects of these demographic facets on the coverage of children who are involved in criminal acts. In addition to this, it would be interesting to apply similar methodologies used in this research report to assess if children's voices (victims or perpetrators) are reflected in news reporting, as well as how and why stories about children and crime are overreported. The evolving nature of legislation around reporting on children, specifically those involved in crime, has been considered up to June 2020 – amendments and proposed amendments may affect parts of this research project and its findings. However, fluidity in legislation does not affect the fundamental purpose of the research: to determine the effects of seven varying factors on how journalists choose to cover stories about children and crime. Nonetheless, the robust nature of law-making in South Africa should encourage ongoing research on issues pertaining to children and crime.

CHAPTER 8 - ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher is an employee of News24 – a Media24 digital publication, and there is no conflict of interest or bias brought on by this association. Ethics clearance was acquired in line with university policy.

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APPENDICES

Vignettes and interview questions

At the start of the interviews the following was communicated to the participants:

This research concerns reporting on children and how reporters decide how to formulate their stories about children who are victims or perpetrators of crime from concept or the time that the reporter is alerted of the story until publication. We will discuss factors that affect your choices during news gathering. You will be given several imagined scenarios and asked questions based on each. Answer the questions as you would on an average day at work and apply the same decision-making parameters you usually would. There are no correct or incorrect answers and you are welcome to express or share any additional views or comments not directly solicited by the interviewer's questions.

VIGNETTES

VIGNETTE A - GENERAL

A 22-year-old female teacher at a high school in rural Polokwane is accused of having sexual relations with learners at the school. The reports came to light after several learners aged between 17 and 18 came forward with the allegations to their parents. It is believed that the sexual encounters may have been consensual. The sexual encounters have been ongoing for about three years. You have the name of the teacher as well as those of all the girls involved. You also have contact details for all the complainants and their families, the school and the accused teacher.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think this is a story worth covering and why?
2. Who would you interview and why?
3. How would you formulate the article – what steps would you follow and what information would you divulge or not in your final story?
4. You discover that your information was erroneous, in fact, the teacher is a 43-year-old man. How would you approach this story now?

5. When you arrive for an interview you discover that the school is a private school with predominantly white learners and the teacher is a black man. How would you approach the story now?
6. How would the article change if, at the time of writing, you discover that all the girls were 18 or older when they had sexual encounters with the teacher?
7. If the learners confessed that the encounters were consensual, how would you report on the story if at all?

VIGNETTE A – ITERATION A

Assuming that all the facts of the general vignette are still true, now consider this additional information:

You discover that the accused teacher is a 22-year-old female. She was also a learner at the same school and suffered sexual abuse while at the school. She is currently receiving psychiatric care for trauma.

The victims and/or their families refused to lodge any complaints or cases against the teacher. One of the other teachers at the school gives you this quote, "The accused teacher is a model teacher and there was never a whisper of gossip about inappropriate behaviour."

QUESTIONS

1. Given that there is no official police case reported, how would you proceed?
2. Who would you interview and why?
3. How does the teacher's age in relation to the ages of the consenting learners affect your story?
4. You discover that the teacher is openly lesbian and so are all the learners she had relations with, all of them were 17 or 18 at the time of the incidents?
5. How would you report on the previous sexual assault that the teacher suffered?
6. After speaking to the white married teacher, you discover that all your information was incorrect. The teacher was in fact given a drink laced with drugs during a matric farewell event at the school and two black boys raped her while she was intoxicated. The boys were both 16 at the time.
7. Would anything change if the boys who raped the teacher were 18 at the time of the incident.

VIGNETTE A – ITERATION B

Assuming that all the facts mentioned previously are still true, now consider the following amendments.

The teacher is male and the sexual acts were not consensual, but rather part of the school's initiation practices that most learners at the school knew of.

The teacher was previously reprimanded for his behaviour by the school.

The complainants are all girls below 15 years old.

QUESTIONS

1. Who would you interview and why?
2. How do the ages of the children affect your story?
3. How does the gender of the teacher affect the article?
4. The girls confide in you that they had a bet to see who would sleep with the teacher first and they each hatched a plan to seduce him, and he fell for each of the attempts. How would you report on the issue, if at all.
5. According to you, who is the victim and who is the perpetrator in this instance and why.

VIGNETTE A – ITERATION C

Suppose the story was wrongly reported to you. The person accused is in fact an 18-year-old matric boy learner at the school who had been having sexual relations with 14-year-old Grade 8 girls.

The encounters were consensual, however, the parents of the girls complained to the school.

QUESTIONS

1. Who would you interview and why?
2. How do the ages of the children affect your story?
3. Who would you identify in the article, why?
4. One of the girls is pregnant and her parents have pressured her to open a case against the boy. Does this change the story in any way?
5. You discover that all the girls were sponsored by scholarships to study at the Camp's Bay private school as they are children of farm workers in the area. A source tells you that the girls have a history of making false accusations against the wealthier boys for extortion. The boy is the son of the school principal and a respected prefect at the school. How would you proceed?

VIGNETTE B - GENERAL

A 65-year-old grandmother was bludgeoned to death in her home. There was one other family member in the yard at the time of the murder, a 13-year-old grandchild. The child was unharmed but reported witnessing an unknown man attacking the elderly woman with a hammer while the child was outside hanging laundry. The motive of the murder is unknown; however, the family lives in an area that's known to be unsafe. The police provide an image of the deceased grandmother and her full name. Police also provide a photograph of the crime scene and the home where the incident took place. You have access to the grandchild and other family members of the victim.

QUESTIONS

1. How would you formulate the article – what steps would you follow and what information would you divulge or not in your final story?
2. Who would you interview and why?
3. How would you use the images provided by the police?
4. Suppose the granny is a well-known business woman in the area, how would this change the story especially in terms of prominence.

VIGNETTE B – ITERATION A

Assuming that all the facts mentioned previously are still true, now consider this additional information:

Police confirm that the 13-year-old granddaughter has been arrested for the murder and that there will be a court appearance three days later. They also provide you with this quote: "The 13-year-old girl who was found at the scene was questioned and she alleged that while she was hanging up her clothes she heard her grandmother screaming for help. She went to investigate and saw an unknown man attacking her grandmother with a hammer." The girl also told police that after witnessing the murder she had gone to ask for help, and upon her return, the assailant had vanished.

QUESTIONS

1. How would you use the information that you have differently from the first scenario?
2. If you have contact details of the accused and she is willing to give you her version of events, how would you proceed?
3. How would you use the images received from the police in this instance?
4. Who would be named in the story?

5. You discover that the girl also sustained injuries which she says are from trying to protect her when the granny tried to stab her in a drunken rage. She says the murder was in self-defence. How do you proceed?
6. You also discover that the grandchild was 17 at the time of the incident and carried out the murder with her 34-year-old boyfriend. How do you proceed?

VIGNETTE B – ITERATION B

Taking into consideration all the facts given previously, now, consider the following amendments to the events in question:

The grandchild is actually a 16-year-old boy who is a known drug addict. He previously dropped out of school and was accused of assaulting the grandmother on previous occasions. The police allow you to speak to him and he confesses to the murder. The police give you this quote after his arrest: "He is being processed and will most likely appear in court after three days."

QUESTIONS

1. How would you use the information that you have differently upon discovering the prior assault claims?
2. How would you use the information from your interview with the accused and how would you refer to him in the story?
3. How does the age of the accused affect your story?
4. How will his confession change your story?
5. How would you use the images received from the police in this instance?
6. Who would be named in the story?

VIGNETTE B – ITERATION C

Assume the story is true as previously told, however, it happened two years ago. Currently, the accused is in court for the verdict and will turn 18 two days after the verdict is handed down. The accused is an orphan girl who had been abused by the grandmother throughout her life. She had been depressed, suicidal and undergoing therapy at the time that she killed the grandmother. She pleaded self-defence.

QUESTIONS

1. How would you use the information that you have differently upon discovering the plea of self-defence?
2. How different would your story be if she turned 18 two days before the verdict was handed down?
3. How different would your story be if she was 18 at the time that she committed the murder?
4. Would you use the information about her abuse and how?

Content analysis articles

Bishops Diocesan College

Parents of Bishops boys who had sexual 'relationships' with teacher wouldn't allow names to be handed to police – report

Compiled by Tammy Petersen
19-12-2019 12:18:27
https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/parents-of-bishops-boys-who-had-sexual-relationships-with-teacher-wouldnt-allow-names-to-be-handed-to-police-report-20191219
The parents of five boys who had allegedly had sexual "relationships" with former Bishops Diocesan College teacher Fiona Viotti refused to give the school permission to give their children's names to police, Netwerk24 reported on Thursday.
This meant that police could not investigate, as the pupils or their parents needed to file a complaint themselves, sources told the publication. One of the pupils is in matric next year, it was reported.
Viotti's lawyer William Booth told Netwerk24 that requests for a copy of the report had been refused.
Viotti resigned from Bishops with immediate effect on October 11, following allegations of a relationship with an 18-year-old pupil.
The school launched its own investigation led by advocate Francois van Zyl SC of the Cape Bar and Graeme Dorrington of Dorrington Jessop Attorneys.
The finding was that, between 2013 and 2019, and while employed as a teacher at the school, Viotti engaged in sexual "misconduct" with at least five pupils.
Viotti is the daughter of Dave Mallett, also a teacher and sports coach at the school. Her grandfather Anthony Mallett is a former headmaster.
Following her resignation, the school said no disciplinary action could be taken by Bishops against her.

Bishops Diocesan College sex scandal: Fiona Viotti's case closed as witnesses refuse to testify
12-12-2020 14:36:07

BY Jennie Evans

https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/bishops-diocesan-college-sex-scandal-fiona-viotti-off-the-hook-as-witnesses-refuse-to-testify-20201212

The SA Council for Educators has closed its file in its investigation against former Bishops Diosecan College teacher Fiona Viotti.

This was because the parents of the pupils would not let them testify.

Viotti resigned from the prestigious Cape Town school after allegations of sexual misconduct were levelled against her.

The SA Council for Educators (SACE) has closed its file in its probe against former Bishops Diocesan College teacher Fiona Viotti who was found, by the school, to have engaged in sexual misconduct with five boys from 2013 to 2019.

This was due to a lack of cooperation from witnesses.

SACE said the investigation report was presented to its ethics committee on 3 December.

"In light of the fact that no parent was prepared to allow any of their children to make any statements to SACE, [the] council had no option but to provisionally close the matter with the hope that maybe we may one day come across witnesses [who] will be willing to assist us with our investigations," SACE spokesperson Themba Ndhlovu said in a statement.

SACE previously postponed the presentation date from 15 October to 3 December because they were directed to another pupil who, they were told, may be of assistance.

"The learner in question, through his legal representative, indicated that he would not be participating in any interview with SACE.

"On that note, we had to submit our final report on the 3rd December to have the matter closed on the basis of lack of cooperation by witnesses. We are now closing the file and will notify the parties accordingly."

After the allegations made headlines, the former Bishops teacher resigned and went into medical care. Her marriage also ended.

An investigation was conducted by lawyers appointed by the school and it was found that she had breached the school's code of conduct and the SACE code of ethics.

Her lawyer, William Booth, told News24 earlier this week that Viotti had been awaiting the outcome of the SACE matter.

He said there was no evidence of criminal conduct either because the witnesses were not prepared to testify against her.

Bishops probe into teacher sex claims begins as more details emerge

- *Compiled by Nicole McCain*

19-10-2019 13:26:07

https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/bishops-probe-into-teacher-sexual-misconduct-begins-as-more-details-emerge-20191019#:~:text=Bishops%20probe%20into%20teacher%20sex%20claims%20begins%20as%20more%20details%20emerge,-19%20Oct%202019&text=A%20Bishops%20probe%20into%20serious,report%20by%20the%20Weekend%20Argus.

A Bishops probe into serious misconduct allegations against a female teacher got under way on Friday, with the principal having been interviewed by the appointed attorney and senior advocate, according to a report by the Weekend Argus.

The boys' school in the well-off suburb of Rondebosch is investigating allegations against history teacher and water polo coach Fiona Viotti regarding a reported sexual relationship with an 18-year-old matric pupil.

The pupil had reportedly tried to break off the relationship, but Viotti reportedly refused to agree to terminate it.

The school's investigation will be led by attorney Graeme Dorrington and senior advocate Francois van Zyl, according to the Weekend Argus on Saturday.

An interview with school principal Guy Pearson had already taken place, and alleged victims and staff are still expected to be interviewed.

Three more pupils 'may have been affected'

The report, citing a source close to the inquiry who did not want to be named, said the school has also established so far that three more pupils may have been affected, with the earliest alleged incident dating back to 2015.

The source described social media gossip that up to 40 boys were affected as "absolute rubbish".

Pearson did not want to comment on any new information, pending the ongoing investigation, saying the school wanted to be fair to all parties.

Currently, no crime is under investigation, News24 previously reported.

Viotti has resigned, but Pearson said earlier this week that several boys "have been affected over a number of years".

"There has been an appeal to boys and parents for any information which would add to our understanding," Pearson previously said.

Pearson said the school was doing everything it could to ensure the mental well-being of pupils, staff, and others affected by the "very sad events".

Viotti has hired top Cape Town lawyer William Booth, who previously said she had not been through a disciplinary procedure before she resigned.

Booth said his client was "stressed" about the situation, and was receiving support from her family.

Power dynamics

Also on Friday, a meeting of Founders House was called by Viotti's father, teacher and coach, Dave Mallet, and Pearson to clarify a letter sent to parents by Mallet earlier in the week.

In the letter, Mallett thanked people for the messages of support received in the wake of the "devastating events" and said he had spoken to the boys at Founders House, the boarding school section he heads, and asked them to adopt a "business as usual" approach around him, News24 reported.

During the meeting, Mallet stated that he did not condone his daughter's actions, according to the Weekend Argus report.

Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Basic Education has also spoken out on the incident, saying that while the pupil may have been the legal age of consent, he is also still a school pupil and there are power dynamics at play, News24 reported.

The committee said on Friday that there had been an increase in the number of reported complaints regarding relationships between female teachers and school pupils.

Parents of former pupils also expressed their shock this week, with one telling News24 that Viotti had taught one of their sons history, and came across as "a sweet girl".

Behr, M. (2019b).

Bishops sex scandal inquiry complete without teacher's testimony

By Mike Behr Nov 30, 2019

https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/bishops-sex-scandal-inquiry-complete-without-teachers-testimony-38240537?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=baobab&fbclid=IwAR3Kq-dz2dfiehHpJgIG3Iq-QE9-DikRT8Z28nUnnRtR0oMeLlfKVpLyC1s

CAPE TOWN - An inquiry conducted by Bishops Diocesan College in Cape Town into alleged sexual abuse of pupils is complete, but the soon-to-be-released report will not include a testimony from history teacher and water polo coach Fiona Viotti, 32, the woman at the centre of drama. “My client was not interviewed,” said Viotti’s lawyer William Booth.
“I advised her not to (comment) because it wasn’t a hearing. There was no disciplinary inquiry because she had already resigned.”
In mid-October, Bishops was rocked by the news that Viotti had immediately resigned after it was claimed she had a sexual relationship with a matric pupil. That was followed by three more boys saying they had sexual relationships with Viotti. At the time, sources alleged the boys were aged between 17 and 18 and the first incident dated back to 2015. Sources also said seven alleged victims had been identified and more could come forward as the inquiry progressed. It was alleged Viotti had sent a pupil a selfie of her wearing skimpy lace panties which went viral on social media, along with a video allegedly of her masturbating on a bed.
After her resignation, Viotti was apparently admitted to a top Cape Town psychiatric clinic and later discharged. Last week, a source claimed the teacher had been readmitted to the clinic for further treatment.
Booth refused to be drawn on this. He did speak about Viotti declining to be interviewed by inquiry attorney Graeme Dorrington and advocate Francois van Zyl.
“The inquiry lawyers interviewed various people at the school.
“They included students and others. And during that period of time, Fiona wasn’t in a state to be interviewed as she was under medical treatment. And we provided the inquiry with her reasons why.
“I can’t say anything more because the reasons are confidential. Once the school releases their report I may be able to explain more. I have requested a copy,” said Booth.
This means that Bishops must wait to hear what Viotti might have to say about the allegations that she seduced at least five boys over a period of four years.
Nor will it yet be able to ascertain her version of the alleged abuse of her position.
Viotti’s alleged misconduct has shocked many, among them her father Dave Mallett, a house master and long-time history teacher at the school.
She was held in high esteem at the school.
“She was a brilliant history teacher,” said a senior colleague.
“She took water polo as a 24-year-old from zero to hero. At 30 she was appointed assistant house director. This is the tragedy. That teacher, who was good at what she did, abused her power. The fact that the boys were of consenting age is immaterial.”

Bishops has refused to comment on Viotti's declining to be interviewed, but confirmed it had received the report from the investigation last week.
It contained "findings and recommendations" that had been considered and the school would issue a public statement on Monday

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Behr, M. (2019a).

Ex-Bishops teacher Fiona Viotti was victim of sexual misconduct incident

By Mike Behr Oct 20, 2019

https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/ex-bishops-teacher-fiona-viotti-was-victim-of-sexual-misconduct-incident-35439291

Cape Town - The history teacher and water polo coach at the centre of the sex scandal rocking Bishops Diocesan College was the victim of a sexual misconduct incident at the elite school in 2017.
This emerged in the same week that the teacher, Fiona Viotti, 32, was admitted to a top Cape Town psychiatric clinic while Bishops, in Rondebosch, began its official inquiry into sexual misconduct allegations made against her.
The inquiry is being led by attorney Graeme Dorrington and the highly respected senior advocate, Francois van Zyl, best known by the public for his successful defence of honeymoon murder accused Shrien Dewani.
Last week, Bishops was rocked by the revelation that Viotti had immediately resigned after her alleged sexual relationship with a matric pupil was exposed. That was followed by three more boys admitting to alleged sexual relationships with Viotti.
The boys are between 17 and 18 years old and the first incident dates back to 2015.
Reliable sources say seven victims have been identified and more could come forward as the inquiry progresses.
In an ironic twist to the scandal, it has now been revealed by several reliable sources that Viotti also reported to headmaster Guy Pearson a sexual proposition emailed to her by two Grade 11 boys.
The boys used Viotti's Facebook photos to compile the proposition and then hacked into the Bishops internal mailing system to mail it to her, using the identity of another pupil.
"The boys behind the sexual proposition and the identity theft were exposed and suspended for a whole term," revealed a reliable source.

The allegations against Viotti have shocked everyone, most of all her father, Dave Mallett, a house master and long-time history teacher at the school.

“He was especially close to Fiona, whose behaviour he does not recognise,” said a source close to him.

And a (former) senior colleague of Viotti’s said of her: “She was a brilliant history teacher. At 30 she was appointed assistant house director. “This is the tragedy. That teacher who was good at what she did abused her power. The fact that the boys were of consenting age is immaterial.

“She held power over them and the boys were her victims, and everyone at the school needs to be sensitive to that.

“All the boys who have come forward are shattered and shamed, and so are their families. There is a lot of hurt at Bishops.”

Another former colleague echoed similar sentiments: “Fiona was widely regarded as a thoroughly professional teacher. She never had any disciplinary problems, her classroom worked like clockwork and the boys knew exactly where they stood with her.

“She was a model teacher and there was not a whisper of gossip about inappropriate behaviour, so I still can’t believe this. We are still shocked.”

Mallett’s attorney, William Booth, confirmed his client’s admission but would not reveal the clinic’s location.

“My client has sought counselling and is under medical care,” he said. “I request that her and her family’s privacy and dignity be respected and that Bishops be allowed to complete their investigation.

“Furthermore, I ask that the family not be constantly contacted by the media for comment as this is a very emotionally trying time for them.”

News24 Wire.(2020).

EX-BISHOPS TEACHER INVOLVED IN SEXUAL MISCONDUCT WANTS PROBE FINDINGS

Eyewitness News | about a year ago

https://ewn.co.za/2019/12/18/ex-bishops-teacher-involved-in-sexual-misconduct-wants-probe-findings

CAPE TOWN - The lawyer for the teacher involved in a sex scandal at Bishops Diocesan College has written to the school to ask what action would be taken against the boys

involved. Teacher Fiona Viotti resigned from the elite private school after it emerged she had sexual contact with some of the pupils at the school. An internal investigation by Bishops revealed at least five boys were involved.

Viotti's lawyer William Booth said he had not been given the final report from the school's investigation despite requesting it.

Booth wrote to the school to find out whether it would take action against the boys involved.

“The whole investigation with regards to the information that came out should have also looked at any responsibility that pupils have had in this whole matter,” Booth said.

In the wake of the scandal, numerous pictures and videos of the teacher were widely circulated. The school could not trace the material to ascertain who distributed it and Booth wants clarity on that.

“It relates to the distribution of the pornographic images and I had to engage forensic experts to have them removed on the sites they’ve been shared on,” he said.

Bishops Diocesan College sex scandal: Case closed due to lack of evidence

Sunday 13 December 2020 - 3:00pm

https://www.enca.com/news/Bishops%20Diocesan%20College%20sex%20scandal%3A%20Case%20closed%20due%20to%20lack%20of%20evidence

JOHANNESBURG - A former teacher at a top Cape Town boys’ school is off the hook on misconduct charges.

This comes after it emerged last year, that Fiona Viotti had been having sexual relations with schoolboys at Bishops Diocesan College.

An investigation by the school revealed Viotti had sexual relationships with at least five boys between 2013 and 2019. But the parents of these boys won’t let them speak to the SA Council for Educators. The council presented its investigation report to the ethics committee on 03 December 2020. It now says it has no choice but to provisionally close the matter unless witnesses will assist in its investigations. While the school laid a criminal complaint against Viotti. Her lawyer William Booth says it's also unlikely to succeed, given the lack of evidence. He says there is also no proof Viotti did anything without the boys’ consent.

Fiona Viotti: Sex scandal teacher may soon face police charges

by **Tom Head** 16-12-2019 11:08

https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/fiona-viotti-latest-news-what-police-charges/

Fiona Viotti is facing more legal woes. Bishops Diocesan College are now "cooperating with authorities" and the teacher could face grooming charges.

The Bishops Diocesan College teacher accused of having multiple inappropriate relationships with her pupils, could soon face the full might of the law.

Fiona Viotti had seemingly escaped punishment after the school concluded their investigation into her in November. But now, the facility has changed its tune after formally reporting the issue to the police.

WHAT THE POLICE COULD CHARGE FIONA VIOTTI WITH

Viotti could be prosecuted for the sexual grooming of the pupils whom she allegedly targeted. That's according to IOL, who published the details of a letter sent to the educator's lawyer William Booth. Headteacher Greg Pearson has confirmed that the school is now "co-operating with the relevant authorities":

"The school was advised of certain reporting obligations which it has in terms of the SA Council for Educators' code of professional ethics and the criminal law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act, 32 of 2007), with which the school complied and in terms of which the school is co-operating with the relevant authorities."

FIONA VIOTTI INVESTIGATION

The school concluded that Viotti had engaged in sexual misconduct with "at least five different pupils" over a six-year period from 2013 to 2019. The investigation was hampered by a couple of dead-ends. We understand that the probe failed to ascertain who had been distributing illicit videos of Viotti, and couldn't trace the person who had put them on PornHub.

The pornographic website has since removed all content purporting to be of the teacher uploaded in October. There was also an issue trying to find witnesses who could corroborate some of the allegations.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Although the school suggested they couldn't take in-house disciplinary measures against a teacher who had resigned, the option of a criminal prosecution still remained on the table.

It’s likely Viotti will have to defend herself in a court of law going forward. The exact details of the charges she may face haven’t been fully explained, but we’re expecting an update this week.

The scandal made international headlines, and reshaped the discussion about sexual predators in South Africa. It now seems another media circus could roll into town.

We're devastated, says father of Bishops teacher probed for sexual misconduct

15 October 2019 - 09:11

BY DAVE CHAMBERS

https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-10-15-were-devastated-father-of-bishops-teacher-probed-for-sexual-misconduct/

The father of the Bishops teacher under investigation for sexual misconduct with pupils has spoken out about the “devastating events” involving his daughter.

Dave Mallett, the teacher in charge of rugby at the elite Cape Town school from which Fiona Viotti resigned last week, broke his silence in a letter to parents.

Mallett is director of Founders House, home for 75 boarders at Diocesan College who each pay R260,000 a year to be educated at the Rondebosch school.

He spoke out following confirmation that Viotti left Bishops — where she was the teacher in charge of water polo — amid an investigation into allegations of relationships with pupils over several years.

Mallett, brother of former Springbok coach Nick Mallett, said in his letter: “Thanks very much for the messages of support we have received in the wake of the devastating events involving my daughter, Fi, and our family as a whole.

“Tough times ahead, no doubt — but I’ll be soldiering on, supporting my family as best I can ... and sticking to my post in Founders House, too.

“I’ve just met with the lads to say that, as far as possible, I need them to keep their heads down (don’t tiptoe around me!) and try to adopt a ‘business as usual’ approach. I can’t let this derail their final term.

“Obviously Fiona’s health and safety is our priority right now and we will be doing all we can to help her pull through this.”

Bishops principal Guy Pearson told parents last week that the school has appointed an attorney to investigate allegations involving Viotti.

“We understand that there will be lots of questions but please appreciate that this is a matter which needs to be managed with utmost sensitivity and I cannot share more information at this stage,” he said.

Adam Pike, chair of the Old Diocesans’ Union, said Pearson and Pete Farlam, a clinical psychologist and head of the support unit at Bishops, would make arrangements “to assist anyone affected by the conduct of the teacher”.

Viotti is the granddaughter of Anthony Mallett, who was the Bishops principal from 1964 to 1982. She married long-term boyfriend Pavo Viotti in September last year. The couple are understood to have separated.

Cullum Johnston, chair of Western Province Schools Water Polo, told the Sunday Times that Viotti had resigned as manager of its under-19 boys team.

“We will appoint a replacement in due course. Any further comment must come from Bishops,” he said.

Dave Mallett began working at Bishops after being ousted as headmaster of Western Province Preparatory School in 2003.

He resigned from the school after seven years as head after a dispute with the governors, who felt he should become more involved in fundraising ventures.

Probe finds teacher 'engaged in sexual misconduct' with five pupils at Bishops

BY PHILANI NOMBEMBE - 02 December 2019 - 11:57

https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-12-02-probe-finds-teacher-engaged-in-sexual-misconduct-with-five-pupils-at-bishops/

An investigation has determined that a former female teacher “engaged in sexual misconduct” with at least five pupils at Bishops Diocesan College in Cape Town.

“The investigators were not able to ascertain with certainty to whom she had sent video or photographic images, as circulating on social media,” Bishops principal Guy Pearson said in a statement on Monday.

The Sunday Times revealed in October that former Springbok rugby coach Nick Mallett's niece had resigned as a teacher at the leading boys' school amid allegations of a sexual relationship with a pupil.

Teacher Fiona Viotti, 30, left the school as an investigation got under way into what the principal described at the time as “serious misconduct”.

Advocate Francois van Zyl SC and Graeme Dorrington of Dorrington Jessop Attorneys were appointed to conduct the investigation.

“The attorney representing the female teacher, in a letter, initially offered the female teacher’s full cooperation with the investigation. However, a request by the investigators for her to attend an interview with them was later refused. Furthermore, the investigators were informed that she was not prepared to make any written comments regarding the merits of the matter,” said Pearson.

The key findings after the probe were that a teacher had engaged in sexual misconduct with at least five pupils between 2013 and 2019.

“No information was received by the investigators that indicated that the school knew anything about the sexual misconduct with pupils. The principal was first notified on the 10th October 2019,” read the statement.

Pearson said as the teacher had resigned on October 11, no disciplinary action could be taken against her by the school.

While the investigation had been completed, the school said further information “may come to light in the future” and encouraged those wishing to engage on the matter to contact the Pearson or Dorrington.

“As a school we are deeply saddened by these events and remain committed to ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of those affected,” said Pearson.

Daily Sun (2020).

‘SEX SCANDAL’ - SEVERAL BOYS WERE AFFECTED!

08-11-2019

https://www.dailysun.co.za/News/sex-scandal-several-boys-were-affected-20191108

The report into the investigation into allegations that a Bishops teacher had a relationship with a number of pupils should be available within the next few days, said headmaster Guy Pearson on Friday.

"This investigation is not yet complete, and we cannot make any comments until it has run its course," said Pearson.
"We will issue a media statement once it is concluded. We expect the report to be available in the next few days."
In October, media reports revealed that an academic and sports teacher at Bishops Diocesan College in Rondebosch, Fiona Viotti, had been reported for having a relationship with an 18-year-old pupil.
She resigned and was subsequently placed under medical care.
Following that, Pearson then acknowledged in a statement that "several boys had been affected" over a number of years.
Netwerk24 reported on Thursday that five males came forward regarding the principal's appeal to anybody else who may allegedly have been affected, to speak out.
The publication reported that of those, two are in matric, one is in Grade 11, and two others have finished school.
It also stated that the school did not want to hand over the names of the pupils to police who approached them for a possible investigation, because the pupils are not underage in terms of South Africa's laws on consensual sex.
Police have been asked about that aspect and if they comment, the story will be updated.
Pearson told News24 by email: "We have cooperated with all the statutory bodies.
"They are satisfied that we are conducting a thorough independent investigation."
Since the allegations surfaced, the school has tried to keep a stiff upper lip by focusing on pupils' achievements in various fields ranging from climbing to public speaking, and celebrating its past pupil, Springbok Francois Louw's contribution to SA bringing the William Webb Ellis trophy home.
It was also drumming up support for the Vusa Rugby Academy in Langa which nurtures young rugby talent.
Viotti's lawyer William Booth told News24 on Friday that he understands that the school will make a decision based on the investigation, and inform him and his client of the outcome.
Two lawyers were appointed by the school to conduct the investigation and the first pupil affected also has legal representation, but they have indicated that they will not be speaking on the matter.
Booth said that no criminal charges had been laid regarding the matter, but cannot discuss finer details of the investigation.

He said it would also be up to the school to decide whether to make the results of the investigation public, or not.
Viotti is still receiving medical care and counselling, and Booth has appointed a forensic company to track down who published intimate videos, some of which were posted repeatedly to a porn site.
Pearson has previously requested privacy for the school during the year-end final exams.
The SA Council of Educators (SACE) has also launched an investigation into a possible violation of the code of conduct which applies to teachers - that they may not have intimate relationships with pupils.
SACE spokesperson Thembinkosi Ndhlovu said the principal requested that pupils be allowed to write their exams to avoid any disruptions, so their investigation has been rescheduled for that purpose.
Booth said that SACE had still not contacted him, and he had only heard of their plans through the media.

Authorities to investigate water polo coach who allegedly slept with five male students
Stephanie Bedo (2020)

https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/real-life/news-life/authorities-to-investigate-water-polo-coach-who-allegedly-slept-with-five-male-students/news-story/cfeca18ca96299fb151b3465cbff11d3

A married Sports Illustrated model who allegedly slept with five students at a prestigious boys' college has been referred to police.
A water polo coach and Sports Illustrated model who slept with "at least" five students at a prestigious boys' college has been referred to the police.
An investigation found married teacher and former model Fiona Viotti slept with her students and sent them explicit photos and videos, which were circulated on social media and even made their way to PornHub.
The 30-year-old resigned from the $15,000-a-year (R150,000) Bishops Diocesan School in Cape Town in October amid allegations of an inappropriate relationship with an 18-year-old student.

Ms Viotti, the niece of former Springboks coach Nick Mallett, reportedly sent threatening messages to the student via WhatsApp when he tried to break off the relationship.

She resigned with “immediate effect” after the news became public, and the school brought in lawyers to conduct an investigation into the alleged “serious misconduct”.

The school later announced that several more pupils may have been involved with the former teen water polo star, who was featured in South African *Sports Illustrated* in 2009 as one of its “Beauties of Sport”.

Earlier this month Bishops announced it had completed its investigation, and Ms Viotti could not be disciplined because she had resigned.

But Principal Guy Pearson revealed yesterday evidence from an independent investigation had been sent to the “relevant authorities”.

A letter seen by the *Weekend Argus* did not outline the allegations against Ms Viotti, but the Cape Town-based newspaper said she could face a probe into the alleged grooming.

Her lawyer William Booth said Mr Pearson had not told him before the news broke in the press.

“Sexual grooming is a very difficult act to prove, and you need evidence from the person or people being groomed,” he said.

“Police would need to get signed statements from those involved. Their names would then be known in public.”

A police spokesman told the *Argus* a representative from the Western Cape family violence, child protection and sexual offences unit had been in touch with the school, but an investigation had not yet been launched “as no official complaint has been laid with the police”.

Independent investigators found Ms Viotti had been sleeping with students for at least six years, making sure boys she targeted were over the age of consent.

The report said the affairs happened before and after she married 32-year-old venture capitalist Pavo Viotti in 2018.

Investigators “were not able to ascertain with certainty to whom she had sent video or photographic images that circulated on social media”, and they found no evidence that indicated the school knew anything about the sexual misconduct.

The investigation concluded that Ms Viotti breached the Bishops Code of Professional Conduct for Teaching Staff and the SA Council of Educators’ Code of Professional Ethics.

“As a school we are deeply saddened by these events and remain committed to ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of those affected,” Mr Pearson said.

Ms Viotti has not yet commented on the findings.

Mr Booth earlier told News24 his client had been placed under “medical care” after the news broke.

Mr Booth said he had also had to deal with getting a video taken down from PornHub, warning that it was a criminal offence to post images without the consent of the person and that his team were investigating who had uploaded the material.

Teacher’s sex acts with 5 students probed

by Stephanie Bedo

17th Dec 2019 12:29 PM

https://www.dailymercury.com.au/news/teachers-sex-acts-with-5-students-probed/3904218/

A water polo coach and Sports Illustrated model who slept with "at least" five students at a prestigious boys' college has been referred to the police.

An investigation found married teacher and former model Fiona Viotti slept with her students and sent them explicit photos and videos, which were circulated on social media and even made their way to PornHub.

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Married female teacher, 30, slept with FIVE pupils at elite South African private school

By JAMIE PYATT IN CAPE TOWN FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 12:33 GMT, 2 December 2019 | **UPDATED:** 13:00 GMT, 2 December 2019

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7746311/Married-teacher-30-discovered-slept-FIVE-pupils-elite-South-African-school.html

- Fiona Viotti, 30, quit teaching job at Bishops Diocesan College in October before 18-year-old pupil claimed he had been in sexual relationship with her
- School called in investigators who found four more boys who had slept with her
- Report said trysts were carried out between 2013 and 2019, before and after she married venture capitalist husband Pavo, 32
- Viotti will face no action from school after she quit, but could be sued by pupils

A married history teacher slept with at least five pupils at one of **South Africa**'s most elite schools, an investigation has revealed.

Fiona Viotti, 30, who is the niece of former South African national rugby coach Nick Mallett, was found to have slept with the boys at Bishops Diocesan College in Cape Town between 2013 and 2019.

The school called in lawyers to investigate Viotti after an 18-year-old pupil claimed he had been involved in an 'intense' sexual relationship with her, saying she became controlling when he tried to end it.

Viotti, who also coached the water polo team, resigned suddenly in October just days before the allegations were made public.

Investigators hired by the school found that she had been bedding pupils for at least six years, targeting boys who were over the age of consent.

The affairs took place both before and after she married 32-year-old venture capitalist Pavo Viotti in 2018, a report into the scandal said.

Ms Viotti is also known to have filmed explicit videos of herself which were circulated within the school and online, but investigators failed to determine who she initially sent the footage to.

The probe found that she breached school codes and the code of ethics laid down by the SA Council of Educators, likely meaning she will never teach again.

However, she will not face any disciplinary action from the school since she has already resigned, local media reported.

The report cleared other school officials of wrongdoing, saying there is no evidence they knew of her behavior.

But Viotti could still face civil lawsuits by families of boys who were affected. Ms Viotti is not alleged to have broken any laws.

She has not spoken publicly since news of the scandal broke, and also refused to comment to investigators - either in person or in writing.
Lawyer William Booth has previously said that she is receiving psychiatric help.
Mr Viotti is said to have separated from his wife and has also refused to comment.
The scandal came to light in October when an 18-year-old sixth form pupil claimed to have been involved in an 'intense' sexual relationship with his teacher.
He claimed that when he tried to end the affair she refused to accept it and pestered him to carry it on.
The teenager then informed his parents, who called in a lawyer.
One of the boy's parents told IOL website: 'He was a willing participant in the beginning but became a victim when he couldn't get out of it.
'The teacher started texting him to come to her house on the campus and that's how it started but it got to the stage where he had had enough.
'But the teacher wouldn't let him go and he went to his parents for help and they went to the headmaster.'
Headmaster Guy Pearson said: 'The school will consider all the findings and recommendations made by the investigators to ensure we continue to make Bishops a safe environment for all our pupils and teachers.
'As a school we are deeply saddened by these events and remain committed to ensuring the mental health and well-being of those affected and no further details of the findings will be made available'.
The school also revealed that it has made a team of psychologists and psychiatrists available to any boy or family member that may have been affected by the events surrounding the disgraced teacher.
The teacher's uncle Nick Mallett , 62, was a former Springbok who played at No 8 and who went on to coach rugby for South Africa and Italy and who is now a Supersport TV rugby commentator.
Viotti's father Dave Mallett is also a history teacher at the same Christian church school and coaches the rugby 1st XV.
Her grandfather Anthony was a former headmaster at the same school.
English born housemaster Dave, who is still teaching at the school, previously sent a message to parents saying his family faced 'tough times ahead'.

Bishop's Diocesan College is a private school founded in 1849 by Bishop Robert Gray to teach Christian values and educate the sons of colonialists in Cape Town and costs £15,000 a year to attend.

Former pupils include astronaut Mark Shuttleworth and South African cricket star Herschelle Gibbs.

Viotti is a former model, was a water polo star as a teenager and was one of the 'Beauties of Sport' featured in Sports Illustrated in 2009 – a year after she met her future husband.

The couple fell in love in 2008 while backpacking in Vail, Colorado, in 2008 and their adventures took them to South America, Europe and South East Asia before they returned together to Cape Town.

They were married in September last year in a white wedding in Plettenberg Bay and seemed the perfect couple and were planning a family together until the church school scandal hit the news.

News24 Wire. (2019a).

Bishops teacher: 'She was a very sweet girl, so we are all shocked,' say parents amid sex claims

17.10.2019 03:18 pm

News24 Wire

https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/crime/2192480/bishops-teacher-she-was-a-very-sweet-girl-so-we-are-all-shocked-say-parents-amid-sex-claims/

The prestigious boys' school is investigating allegations against ex-sports coach Fiona Viotti regarding a relationship with an 18-year-old matric pupil.

The community of Bishops Diocesan College in Rondebosch is reeling in the wake of allegations of serious misconduct by a former female teacher, as 140 boys prepare to write their matric exams at the school.

The prestigious boys' school is investigating allegations against ex-sports coach Fiona Viotti regarding a relationship with an 18-year-old matric pupil.

She has resigned, but school principal Guy Pearson said earlier this week that several boys "have been affected over a number of years".

He asked for pupils to come forward and assist them with their investigation into the claims.

She also resigned from her managerial position at Western Province Schools Water Polo last week.

Viotti is the daughter of Dave Mallett, who is a history teacher at the school and coaches the first team rugby side and the granddaughter of Anthony Mallett, the school's headmaster from 1964 to 1982, Sunday Times reported.

While speculation on what happened is rife, several parents of old boys, speaking with News24 on condition of anonymity, said that the news had sparked much debate and concern.

"I think it is tragic for everyone concerned," one parent said.

Another parent, whose two sons attended the school six years ago, said the news had come as a shock to her.

"Fiona was my one son's history teacher for two years… She was a very sweet girl so we are all very shocked to hear what had been happening," she said.

"We really feel for her parents, her hubby's parents, and also all the boys and their families."

One mother though, whose boys matriculated in 2007 and 2010, said some of the pupils were no "angels".

"When we were at Bishops [some] boys took a picture up the skirt of a Maths teacher and circulated it. There were severe consequences, as I recall," she said.

"However, no person in a position of trust or authority should abuse that, be they male or female. #MeToo cuts both ways."

A fourth parent said that, while she did not know whether Viotti had been teaching those who were making the allegations, no one should get involved with someone over whom they had an influence.

"If she had no dealings with him in any way, through sport or academics, in a way… it's a very grey area."

She made reference to French President Emmanuel Macron, whose wife Brigitte was his drama teacher in high school.

Bishops has a long history of excellent academics in Cape Town, having been established in 1849 by Bishop Robert Gray, with many famous old boys coming from its ranks.

They include DA MP James Selfe, entrepreneur and former astronaut Mark Shuttleworth, former Proteas cricket star Herschelle Gibbs, and businessman and founder of Pick n Pay Raymond Ackerman – patron of the Old Diocesan Union (ODU or Bishops Old Boys).

When considering applications, the school favours boys with all-round talents in academics, leadership, sport and culture.

Sons of old boys and siblings of current pupils are given priority, although admission is not guaranteed, according to Parent24.

Transformation and diversity are also determining factors for admission.

ODU chair Adam Pike said on Thursday that they were passionate alumni and cared for the well-being and reputation of the school.

“Accordingly, we expect the school to do all that is necessary to fulfil our expectations. To date, the union is satisfied that the school is pursuing its processes with sufficient vigour,” he said.

News24 asked Pike whether old boys had raised any concerns, queries or suggestions in relation to the allegations.

He was also asked whether any old boys had shared similar experiences with the same teacher or another teacher, and if this had been forwarded to the person heading the school’s inquiry.

Pike said the ODU was institutionally and legally separate from the school.

“I am certain that once the inquiry has run its course, the findings will be studied and treated in the most fitting and appropriate manner. As for the rest, the matters that you are enquiring about are school-related issues,” Pike said.

Principal Guy Pearson said the school was doing everything it could to ensure the mental well-being of pupils, staff, and others affected by the “very sad events”.

He appealed for respect for the dignity and privacy of the people affected while the investigation continued.

The school has also made psychologists, employed by the Bishops Support Unit, as well as external clinical psychologists and psychiatrists available to any boy or family member that may have been affected by the events.

Viotti’s lawyer William Booth said earlier this week that his client was very stressed over the situation.

“She’s under a lot of stress,” Booth said on Monday. “The family are helping her. They are making sure she can manage all of this that is going on at the moment.”

He denied claims that she had left the country.

Viotti’s father, Dave, sent an email to parents earlier this week saying they were “devastated”, but would be “soldiering on”, TimesLive reported. He thanked the community for their support.

No police case has been laid, Western Cape police confirmed on Thursday.

News24 Wire. (2019b).

Bishops teacher: Several boys have been 'affected over a number of years'

15.10.2019 05:50 pm

NEWS24 WIRE

https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/education/2191620/bishops-teacher-several-boys-have-been-affected-over-a-number-of-years/

The 30-year-old teacher, Fiona Viotti, has in the meantime appointed top criminal lawyer William Booth to represent her and her family.

More pupils have been "affected over a number of years" by the alleged "serious misconduct" of a female former Bishops Diocesan College teacher, the school says.

"We have confirmed that there have been several boys who have been affected over a number of years," school principal Guy Pearson said in a statement on Tuesday.

This follows the resignation of the female teacher who allegedly had a sexual relationship with an 18-year-old matric pupil.

The allegations have rocked the prestigious private Cape Town boys' school in Rondebosch after the Sunday Times reported that the pupil had also tried to break off the relationship.

"There has been an appeal to boys and parents for any information which would add to our understanding," said Pearson.

"The teacher concerned has resigned and left the school."

Pearson said the school was doing everything it could to ensure the mental well-being of pupils, staff, and others affected by the "very sad events".

He appealed for respect for the dignity and privacy of the people affected, while the investigation continued.

The school has also made psychologists, employed by the Bishops Support Unit, as well as external clinical psychologists and psychiatrists available to any boy or family member that may have been affected by the events.

The 30-year-old teacher, Fiona Viotti, has in the meantime appointed top criminal lawyer William Booth to represent her and her family.

Booth was not immediately available for an update on Viotti's situation on Tuesday, but on Monday said no charges had been laid.

She was very "stressed" about the situation, he added.

Viotti got married last year, according to one of the school's newsletters.

TimesLive reported that a letter was circulated to parents on behalf of her father Dave Mallett, brother of former Springbok coach Nick.
Dave Mallett thanked people for the messages of support received in the wake of the "devastating events" and said he had spoken to the boys at Founders House, the boarding school section he heads, and asked them to adopt a "business as usual" approach around him. He said he did not want this to derail the boys' final term at school.
Videos and pictures purporting to be of Viotti have been doing the rounds, and Booth has warned that sharing these would be criminal.
The SA Council of Educators' Code of Conduct posted online stipulates that a teacher:
Refrains from improper physical contact with pupils;
Refrains from courting pupils from any school;
Refrains from any form of sexual harassment (physical or otherwise) of pupils;
Refrains from any form of sexual relationship with pupils from any school.

Grandmother bludgeoned to death

KZN woman bludgeoned to death in front of teenage granddaughter
18 November 2019 - 14:29BY ORRIN SINGH
Singh, O. (2019c).

https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-11-18-kzn-woman-bludgeoned-to-death-in-front-of-teenage-granddaughter/



The scene at Jan Roz Crescent in Fairbreeze, Tongaat, where a 63-year-old woman was found bludgeoned to death on Monday.

A 13-year-old girl described to police how she saw her grandmother being bludgeoned to death by an unknown man in Tongaat, north of Durban, on Monday.

"The 13-year-old girl who was found at the scene was questioned and she alleged that while she was hanging up her clothes she heard her grandmother screaming for help," said police spokesperson Col Thembeka Mbele.

"She went to investigate and saw an unknown man attacking her grandmother with a hammer."

Mbele said the girl told police she had tried to fight the man but he overpowered her, pushed her out and locked the door.

"She alleged that she left the premises to call for help and when she returned with neighbours, the man was nowhere to be found," she said.

When police arrived at the Fairbreeze home, they found the woman, 63, with assault wounds to her head.

“A case of murder has been opened at Tongaat police station for investigation."

Reaction Unit SA's Prem Balram said the elderly woman was found lying in a pool of blood in her living room.

"She showed no signs of life and was pronounced deceased by paramedics," he said.

Girl, 13, 'kills granny'

Voice Reporter | November 21, 2019

https://www.dailyvoice.co.za/news/girl-13-kills-granny-37699586

A 13-year-old girl has been arrested for the murder of her 63-year-old granny, who was found bludgeoned to death in her home in Tongaat in KZN.

Idah Ngcobo, 63, was found lying in a pool of her own blood on Monday by neighbours. They rushed to the house after hearing screams.

Idah's husband went to a shop, leaving her alone with her two grandchildren.



The 13-year-old suspect was arrested by police on Tuesday.

The teen said she was hanging up clothes when she heard her ouma screaming for help, and saw an unknown man hitting the old woman.

The motive for the murder is not yet known.

Child arrested for allegedly killing grandmother

20 Nov 2019 | Admin Author

https://www.algoafm.co.za/domestic/child-arrested-for-allegedly-killing-grandmother

KZN police have confirmed that the person arrested on suspicion of murdering a Tongaat woman is her 13-year-old granddaughter.

The 63-year-old Fairbreeze resident was found bludgeoned to death in her home on Monday.

The woman's grandchild told police at the time that she was hanging clothes on the line outside when she heard her grandmother's screams.

The girl said she ran inside the house to find a man, armed with a hammer, attacking her granny.

She claimed she tried to intervene but the man pushed her out of the house and locked the door.

The police's Thembeka Mbele says detectives found that the girl's statement did not add up and she reportedly confessed to her mother.

She says the child will appear in court soon and is currently in custody.

TONGAAT GIRL (13) ARRESTED FOR MURDER OF HER GRANDMOTHER

Clement Manyathela \ about a year ago

https://ewn.co.za/2019/11/20/tongaat-girl-13-arrested-for-murder-of-her-grandmother

JOHANNESBURG - Police have confirmed that a 13-year-old girl has been arrested for the murder of her 63-year-old grandmother.

The woman was found in a pool of blood, bludgeoned to death in her home in Tongaat, in KwaZulu-Natal on Monday.

Authorities said that the 13-year-old claimed the incident happened as she was hanging clothes on the washing line.

She told the police she heard a noise in the house and when she went to check, she saw an unknown man using a hammer to attack her grandmother.

But police spokesperson Colonel Thembeka Mbele said that new evidence had led the police to arrest her.

13-year-old arrested after allegedly murdering her grandmother in Durban

By Andrea Chothia 20-11-2019

https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/13-year-old-arrested-for-alleged-murder-of-granny-november-2019/

A 13-year-old girl has been arrested in Durban for the alleged murder of her 63-year-old grandmother after she was found bludgeoned to death.

A 13-year-old girl has been arrested for the alleged murder of her 63-year-old granny who was found bludgeoned to death in her home in Tongaat, Durban.

SAPS spokesperson in Durban, Colonel Thembeka Mbele, confirmed that when Tongaat police received a complaint on 18 November 2019, that a 63-year-old woman had been attacked by an unknown person with a hammer and that her granddaughter was screaming for help, they wasted no time and proceeded to Jan Roz Crescent in Fairbreeze.

Mbele went on to describe the scene of the murder.

"On arrival at the scene, they were greeted by the members of the community and a young lady who was screaming and crying hysterically. The devastated female led police to the lounge where her grandmother's lifeless body was lying on the floor," said Mbele.

Mbele said: "We can confirm a 13-year-old suspect was arrested yesterday for murder. She is due to appear in the Verulam Magistrates' court on Thursday, 21 November 2019."

Upon questioning, the 13-year-old described to police what had happened and what she was doing at the time of the murder.

"On questioning, the child stated that she was hanging laundry on the line outside when she heard her granny screaming for help. She went back inside the house and noticed an unknown male assaulting her granny with a hammer. She claimed that she fled and sought assistance from a member of the community who went back to the house, however that man had fled," added Mbele.

Following further investigation, the mother of the 13-year-old brought her to the police station on Tuesday 19 November 2019, where she was arrested and charged for murder. She is due to appear in the Verulam Magistrate's Court on Thursday 21 November 2019.

"A case of murder was opened at Tongaat police station for investigation." said Mbele.

KZN girl, 13, arrested after gran found bludgeoned to death

20 November 2019 - 10:25BY ORRIN SINGH

Singh, O. (2019a).

https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-11-20-kzn-girl-13-arrested-for-bludgeoning-gran-to-death/

A 13-year-old girl has been arrested for the gruesome murder of her grandmother after the woman was found bludgeoned to death in her home in Tongaat, north of Durban, on Monday.

Police spokesperson Col Thembeka Mbele said the teen was arrested on Tuesday and was in custody.

"She is being processed and will most likely appear in the Verulam magistrate's court on Thursday," said Mbele.

On Monday police told TimesLIVE that the girl had said she saw her grandmother being bludgeoned by an unknown man.

"The 13-year-old girl who was found at the scene was questioned and she alleged that while she was hanging up her clothes she heard her grandmother screaming for help," said Mbele.

"She went to investigate and saw an unknown man attacking her grandmother with a hammer."

Mbele said the girl told police she had tried to fight the man but he overpowered her, pushed her out and locked the door.

"She alleged that she left the premises to call for help and when she returned with neighbours, the man was nowhere to be found," she said.

The scene at Jan Roz Crescent in Fairbreeze, Tongaat, where a 63-year-old woman was found bludgeoned to death on Monday.

Image: Reaction Unit South Africa

Girl, 13, arrested for allegedly bludgeoning grandmother to death

News24 Wire

News24 Wire. (2019c).

20.11.2019 09:41 am

https://citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/crime/2207068/girl-13-arrested-for-allegedly-bludgeoning-grandmother-to-death/

A police spokesperson says the girl told police she saw an unknown man using a hammer to attack her grandmother.

A 13-year-old girl has been arrested for the murder of her 63-year-old grandmother, who was found bludgeoned to death in her home in Jan Roz Crescent in Fairbreeze, Tongaat, north of Durban, on Monday.

At about 9.43am, members of Reaction Unit South Africa (RUSA) arrived on the scene and found Tongaat police and the provincial ambulance service in attendance.

Idah Ngcobo was found lying in a pool of blood in her living room. She showed no signs of life and paramedics pronounced her dead. She had suffered blunt force trauma to her head and face.

According to RUSA spokesperson Prem Balram, Ngcobo's 13-year-old granddaughter said she was hanging clothes on the washing line when she heard a noise in the house.

Police spokesperson Colonel Thembeka Mbele told TimesLIVE that the girl told police she saw an unknown man using a hammer to attack her grandmother.

However, on Tuesday, the granddaughter was arrested for the murder.

Mbele confirmed the arrest to News24 on Wednesday and said the teenager would appear in the Verulam Magistrate's Court on Thursday.

According to Daily News, Ngcobo had suffered a stroke last month and could not walk.

Netwerk24 reported that Ngcobo had lived in the house for more than 10 years. She was reportedly defenceless and partly paralysed. She had four children and eight grandchildren.

Police are investigating the incident, Mbele said.

The 2018/2019 National Crime Statistics report shows that murder cases are at their highest level in four years.

There were 21,022 cases of murder, which represents a 3.4% increase over the number from 2017/2018.

The Tongaat police station recorded 48 cases of murder, an increase of 11 from 2017/2018.

Mystery as gran bludgeoned to death at home

By Karen Singh

Singh, K. (2019b).

Nov 19, 2019

https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/news/mystery-as-gran-bludgeoned-to-death-at-home-37559499

Idah Ngcobo was bludgeoned to death at her home in Fairbreeze on Monday Picture: Bongani Mbatha AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY (ANA)

Durban - A sick and defenceless 63-year-old grandmother was bludgeoned to death in her home in Fairbreeze, Tongaat, yesterday.

After receiving a call that a murder had occurred, police arrived on the scene to find the body of Idah Ngcobo on the floor with assault wounds to the head, and she was certified dead at the scene.

Ngcobo's 13-year-old and 2-year-old grandchildren were on the premises during the attack. Ngcobo had been recovering from a stroke when she was killed.

Police spokesperson Colonel Thembeka Mbele said the 13-year-old girl, who was found at the scene, was questioned and she alleged that while she was hanging clothes outside she heard her grandmother screaming for help.

"She went to investigate and saw an unknown man attacking her grandmother with a hammer.

"She alleged that she tried to fight the man but he overpowered her, pushed her out and locked the door," said Mbele.

Mbele said the girl left the premises to call for help but when she returned with her neighbours the man had already left.

A neighbour, who asked not to be named, said Ngcobo's granddaughter came to her gate and screamed for her son.

“Gogo was lying on the floor and I was about to pick her up but I realised that her head was damaged,” said the neighbour. The neighbour said the incident took place after Ngcobo’s husband had left the house to go to the tuckshop.

The neighbour said that after attempting to get the contact details of Ngcobo’s children, she called the police.

“I can’t believe that someone could do something like this. It’s terrible what I have seen, it’s shocking that this happened to an old woman,” she said.

The neighbour said she felt sick over the incident as she had found the 2-year-old grandchild standing next to her grandmother as she lay dead on the floor.

The neighbour described Ngcobo as a very “sweet woman”.

According to the neighbour, nothing was stolen from the house, which contained valuable items.

She believes Ngcobo’s husband is still in shock and may not have come to terms with the fact that she is gone.

The deceased’s son James Ngcobo described his mother, who has four children and eight grandchildren, as a churchgoer, who was humble, hardworking, down to earth and a people’s person.

BREAKING NEWS: 13-year-old arrested for allegedly bludgeoning Tongaat gran to death

By BUKEKA SILEKWA Nov 20, 2019

Idah Ngcobo, 63 was found lying in a pool of her own blood in Fairbreeze on Monday morning by neighbours who rushed to the home after hearing screams. Picture Bongani Mbatha/African News Agency (ANA)

Durban - A 13-year-old girl has been arrested for the murder of a 63-year-old granny who was found bludgeoned to death in her home in Tongaat.

Idah Ngcobo, 63, was found lying in a pool of her own blood in Fairbreeze on Monday morning by neighbours who rushed to the home after hearing screams.

Her husband went to a shop, leaving her alone with her two grandchildren when the attack occurred.

The 13-year-old suspect was arrested by police on Tuesday and taken to a holding cell.

Police spokesperson, Colonel Thembeka Mbele said: "We can confirm a 13-year-old suspect was arrested yesterday for murder. She is due to appear in the Verulam Magistrates' court tomorrow (Thursday)."

The teenager was apparently outside hanging clothes on the washing line when she heard her gran screaming for help, she told neighbours.

She alleged that she ran into the house to find an unknown man attacking her grandmother, who was seated on a sofa in the lounge.

Ngcobo had suffered a stroke last month and could not walk.

When neighbours had rushed to the house after the screams of the girl they told the Daily News that they found a bloody scene. One neighbour said she had "suffered terrible injuries".

Speaking after the incident,one of Ngcobo's four children, James said: "I do not understand who would attack someone who cannot even fight for herself. She raised us with much difficulty, selling sweets and fruit at school. We were still enjoying spoiling her, as we are now all grown-up and independent. She was our strength and our everything; she raised us and raised our kids for us, and she never complained".

Grandmother bludgeoned to death with a hammer in her Tongaat home

- *Compiled by Riaan Grobler*

Grobler, R. (2019b).

19-11-2019 09:32:27

A 63-year-old woman was bludgeoned to death in her home on Jan Roz Crescent in Fairbreeze, Tongaat, north of Durban, on Monday.

At approximately 09:43, members of Reaction Unit South Africa (RUSA) arrived on the scene and found the Tongaat SAPS and the provincial ambulance service in attendance.

It was established that the elderly woman was found lying in a pool of blood in her living room. She showed no signs of life and was pronounced deceased by paramedics. The victim appears to have suffered blunt force trauma to her head and face.

According to RUSA spokesperson Prem Balram, the woman's 13-year-old granddaughter was hanging clothes on the washing line when she heard a noise in the house.

Police spokesperson Colonel Thembeka Mbele told Times Live that the girl saw an unknown man attacking her grandmother with a hammer.

The teenager grabbed a baby who was in one of the bedrooms and fled to neighbours' home where she sought assistance.

"A case of murder has been opened at Tongaat police station for investigation," Mbele reportedly said.

The 2018/2019 National Crime Statistics report shows that murder cases are at their highest level in four years. There were 21 022 cases of murder, which represents a 3.4% increase over the number from 2017/2018.

The Tongaat police station recorded 48 cases of murder, an increase of 11 from 2017/2018.

Girl, 13, arrested for allegedly bludgeoning grandmother to death

- *Compiled by Riaan Grobler*

Grobler, R. (2019a).

20-11-2019 09:32:27

https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/just-in-girl-13-arrested-for-allegedly-bludgeoning-grandmother-to-death-20191120

A 13-year-old girl has been arrested for the murder of her 63-year-old grandmother, who was found bludgeoned to death in her home in Jan Roz Crescent in Fairbreeze, Tongaat, north of Durban, on Monday.

At about 09:43, members of Reaction Unit South Africa (RUSA) arrived on the scene and found Tongaat police and the provincial ambulance service in attendance.

The grandmother was found lying in a pool of blood in her living room. She showed no signs of life and paramedics pronounced her dead. She had suffered blunt force trauma to her head and face.

According to RUSA spokesperson Prem Balram, the 13-year-old granddaughter said she was hanging clothes on the washing line when she heard a noise in the house.

Police spokesperson Colonel Thembeka Mbele told TimesLIVE that the girl told police she saw an unknown man using a hammer to attack her grandmother.

Partly paralysed

However, on Tuesday, the granddaughter was arrested for the murder.

Mbele confirmed the arrest to News24 on Wednesday and said the teenager would appear in the Verulam Magistrate's Court on Thursday.

According to Daily News, the grandmother had suffered a stroke last month and could not walk.

Netwerk24 reported that she had lived in the house for more than 10 years. She was reportedly defenceless and partly paralysed. She had four children and eight grandchildren.

Police are investigating the incident, Mbele said.

The 2018/2019 National Crime Statistics report shows that murder cases are at their highest level in four years. There were 21 022 cases of murder, which represents a 3.4% increase over the number from 2017/2018. The Tongaat police station recorded 48 cases of murder, an increase of 11 from 2017/2018.

- *Compiled by Riaan Grobler*

Grandmother beaten to death in her Tongaat home

Updated Nov. 18, 2019, 5:43 p.m. | By Nushera Soodyal

https://www.ecr.co.za/news/news/grandmother-beaten-death-her-tongaat-home/

An elderly woman has been found bludgeoned to death in her home in Fairbreeze in Tongaat.

Reaction Unit SA

According to police, the 63-year-old woman's granddaughter was outside hanging clothes this morning when she heard her grandmother screaming for help.

KZN police spokesperson, Tembeka Mbele says the 13-year-old went into the house to investigate.

"She noticed an unknown man attacking her grandmother with a hammer. She alleged that she tried to fight the man, but she was overpowered."

"The man pushed her outside and locked the door. She alleged that she left the premises to call for help and when she returned with the neighbours, the man was nowhere to be found."

"A case of murder is still under investigation. It happened this morning so we are in a very early stage of investigation," she said.

The motive for the attack is not known.

Teenage girl arrested for allegedly killing grandmother (63) in Tongaat

November 20, 2019

Sboniso Dlamini

https://northcoastcourier.co.za/143743/shocking-twist-girl-13-arrested-allegedly-killing-grandmother-63-tongaat/

Reaction Unit SA

In a shocking twist police have arrested the 13-year-old granddaughter of a woman (63) who was murdered with a hammer on Monday in Fairbreeze, Tongaat.

The elderly woman was found lying in a pool of blood with assault wounds to the head in her home, said the police.

“The girl was found at the house and when questioned, she said that while she was hanging up her clothes she heard her grandmother screaming for help,” said Colonel Thembeka Mbele.

Speaking to the police, the girl told them that she had witnessed a man attacking her grandmother with a hammer.

“She said she tried to fight the man but he overpowered, pushed her out and locked the door,” said provincial police spokesperson Colonel Thembeka Mbele.

The girl then claimed to have gone in search of help after the man fled, and later returned with neighbours.

On Tuesday the mother of the teenage girl brought her to the police station where she was arrested and charged with murder.

She is due to appear in the Verulam Magistrate’s Court tomorrow (Thursday).

KZN teen arrested for grandmother’s murder

Updated Nov. 20, 2019, 1:32 p.m. | By ECR

https://www.jacarandafm.com/news/news/kzn-teen-arrested-grandmothers-murder/

Police in KwaZulu-Natal have arrested 13-year-old girl in connection with the murder of her grandmother in Tongaat.

Reaction Unit SA

The 63-year-old woman from Fairbreeze was found bludgeoned to death in her home on Monday.

At this stage, police say the 13-year-old granddaughter claims that she was outside hanging the laundry on the line when she heard her grandmother scream.

The girl told police that she ran inside the house to find a man, armed with a hammer, attacking her granny in the house.

She claimed she tried to intervene, but the man pushed her out of the house and locked the door.

The teen told police she then ran to the neighbour's house for help, but by the time she got back to the house, it was too late.

Police spokesperson Thembeka Mbele says the girl's statement did not add up.

"It can be confirmed that a 13-year-old suspect was arrested on Tuesday for murder. It was after the intensive investigation and with the assistance of the suspect's mother.

"She is due to appear in court possibly on Thursday, although for now, it cannot be confirmed. She is in custody," said Mbele.

Meanwhile, sources close to the case say the child confessed to her mother.

Word frequency table - Bishops Diocesan College

Word	Length	Count	Similar Words
schools	7	119	school, schools
teacher	7	82	teacher, teachers
bishops	7	68	bishop, bishops
boys’	5	67	boy, boys, boys', boys’
investigators	13	66	investigate, investigating, investigation, investigations, investigators
pupils	6	63	pupil, pupils
sexual	6	59	sexual, sexually
allegations	11	47	allegations, alleged, allegedly
report	6	37	report, reported, reportedly, reporting
resigned	8	29	resignation, resigned
relationships	13	28	'relationships', relationship, relationships
booth	5	27	booth
misconduct	10	27	misconduct, misconduct'
parents	7	26	parent, parents
coach	5	23	coach, coached, coaches, coaching
affected	8	22	affected, affected'
diocesan	8	22	diocesan, diocesans’
lawyer	6	22	lawyer, lawyered, lawyers
family	6	20	families, family
police	6	17	police
involved	8	17	involved, involving
scandal	7	14	scandal
educators’	10	14	educate, educated, education, educator, educators, educators', educators’
sports	6	14	sport, sport', sports
students	8	14	student, students
matter	6	13	matter, matters
female	6	13	female
history	7	13	history
inquiry	7	13	inquiry
married	7	13	married
news	4	13	news
principal	9	13	principal
sex	3	13	sex
comment	7	12	comment, commentator, commented, comments
findings	8	12	find, finding, findings, finds
consent	7	12	consent, consenting
probe	5	12	probe, probed
claimed	7	10	claimed, claims
interviewed	11	10	interview, interviewed
age	3	10	age, aged
refused	7	10	refuse, refused
revealed	8	10	reveal, revealed

several	7	10	several, severe
evidence	8	10	evidence
power	5	10	power
slept	5	10	slept
source	6	10	source, sources
charges	7	9	charge, charges
abuse	5	9	abuse, abused
attorney	8	9	attorney, attorneys
information	11	9	information, informed
public	6	9	public, publication, publicly
criminal	8	9	criminal
father	6	9	father
victims	7	9	victim, victims
ethics	6	8	ethical, ethics
legal	5	8	legal, legally
men	3	8	men
teach	5	8	teach, teaching
violence	8	8	violence
women	5	8	women
engaged	7	8	'engaged, engage, engaged
authorities	11	7	authorities, authority
child	5	7	child
disciplinary	12	7	disciplinary
elite	5	7	elite
headmaster	10	7	headmaster
model	5	7	model
prestigious	11	7	prestigious
witnesses	9	7	witnesses
shocked	7	7	shock, shocked
inappropriate	13	6	inappropriate
incident	8	6	incident
professional	12	6	professional
devastating	11	6	devastated, devastating
confirmed	9	6	confirmation, confirmed
psychologists	13	6	psychologist, psychologists
offences	8	5	offence, offences
complaint	9	5	complaint, complaints
concerns	8	5	concern, concerned, concerns
sons	4	5	son, sons
daughter	8	5	daughter
male	4	5	male
affairs	7	4	affair, affairs
contact	7	4	contact, contacted
couple	6	4	couple
niece	5	4	niece
place	5	4	place, placed
private	7	4	private
privilege	9	4	privilege

saddened	8	4	saddened
brother	7	3	brother
colleague	9	3	colleague
discomfort	10	3	discomfort
explicit	8	3	explicit
girl	4	3	girl
pornography	11	3	pornography
predators	9	3	predators
privacy	7	3	privacy
press	5	3	press
psychiatric	11	3	psychiatric
psychiatrists	13	3	psychiatrists
sweet	5	3	sweet
testify	7	3	testify
sensitivity	11	3	sensitive, sensitivity
teenager	8	3	teenage, teenager
separated	9	3	separate, separated
structures	10	3	structural, structures
warning	7	3	warned, warning
accused	7	2	accused
activist	8	2	activist, activists
children	8	2	children
christian	9	2	christian
church	6	2	church
community	9	2	community
court	5	2	court, courting
damaging	8	2	damaging
exposed	7	2	exposed
granddaughter	13	2	granddaughter
grandfather	11	2	grandfather
harassment	10	2	harassment
husband	7	2	husband
pornographic	12	2	pornographic
spokesman	9	2	spokesman
testimony	9	2	testimony
threatening	11	2	threatening
tragedy	7	2	tragedy
trauma	6	2	trauma
victimhood	10	2	victimhood
wife	4	2	wife
woman	5	2	woman
boyfriend	9	1	boyfriend
corroborate	11	1	corroborate
defence	7	1	defence
experts	7	1	experts
exploitation	12	1	exploitation
gender	6	1	gender
hubby	5	1	hubby

minor	5	1	minor
movement	8	1	movement
mother	6	1	mother
nepotism	8	1	nepotism
offending	9	1	offending
schoolboys	10	1	schoolboys
sciences	8	1	sciences
scourge	7	1	scourge
seduced	7	1	seduced
spokesperson	12	1	spokesperson

Word frequency table - Grandmother bludgeoned to death

Word	Length	Count	Similar Words
police	6	53	police
grandmother	11	40	grandmother
murder	6	37	murder, murdered, murdering
girl	4	36	girl
arrested	8	33	arrest, arrested
13-year-old	12	32	13-year-old
man	3	30	man
death	5	26	death
bludgeoned	10	25	bludgeoned, bludgeoning
woman	5	23	woman
neighbours	10	20	neighbour, neighbours, neighbours'
alleged	7	17	alleged, allegedly
screams	7	17	scream, screamed, screaming, screams
hammer	6	16	hammer
spokesperson	12	16	spokesperson
investigation	13	13	investigate, investigating, investigation
cases	5	13	case, cases
scene	5	13	scene
granddaughter	13	12	granddaughter
reportedly	10	10	report, reported, reportedly, reporter
blood	5	10	blood
confirmed	9	9	confirm, confirmed
colonel	7	9	colonel
court	5	9	court
granny	6	8	granny, granny'
according	9	7	according
teenager	8	7	teenage, teenager
magistrate	10	7	magistrate, magistrates’
questioned	10	6	questioned, questioning
elderly	7	6	elderly
grandchildren	13	6	grandchildren
mother	6	6	mother

claimed	7	6	claimed, claims
assault	7	5	assault, assaulting
killing	7	5	'kills, killed, killing
children	8	5	children
overpowered	11	5	overpowered
child	5	4	child
dead	4	4	dead
gran	4	4	gran
paramedics	10	4	paramedics
rushed	6	4	rushed
stroke	6	4	stroke
teen	4	4	teen
wounds	6	4	wounds
shocking	8	3	shock, shocking
crime	5	3	crime
custody	7	3	custody
deceased	8	3	deceased
defenceless	11	3	defenceless
paralysed	9	3	paralysed
charged	7	2	charged
confessed	9	2	confessed
grandchild	10	2	grandchild
saps	4	2	saps
sick	4	2	sick
statement	9	2	statement
sweet	5	2	sweet, sweets
apparently	10	1	apparently
attempting	10	1	attempting
beaten	6	1	beaten
bloody	6	1	bloody
bludgeoned	9	1	bludgeoned
churchgoer	10	1	churchgoer
crying	6	1	crying
detectives	10	1	detectives
devastated	10	1	devastated
evidence	8	1	evidence
fact	4	1	fact
female	6	1	female
gogo	4	1	gogo
grabbed	7	1	grabbed
gruesome	8	1	gruesome
humble	6	1	humble
hysterically	12	1	hysterically
independent	11	1	independent
injuries	8	1	injuries
intensive	9	1	intensive
kids	4	1	kids

lifeless	8	1	lifeless
male	4	1	male
school	6	1	school
suspicion	9	1	suspicion
victim	6	1	victim
witnessed	9	1	witnessed
young	5	1	young
sources	7	1	sources