

10 Family and Domestic Violence in the News

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Introduction

As was presented in the introductory chapter of this book, the terms ‘family violence’ and ‘domestic violence’ are often used interchangeably. There remains a lot of confusion about the terms, which can often be assumed to mean the same thing. However, as there are differences in the scope for each term, data results can vary. Individual countries, organisations, and regions can have unique definitions for each term.

Sometimes the term used changes over time. There has been an expansion in focus on family violence matters in many countries, where increasingly there are policies and procedures in workplaces and schools, media stories, support organisations, and rallies/marches. This chapter examines how family violence is presented through print media in Australia and examines the reporting of family violence events at holiday times and family events.

Literature review

The study of family violence commenced around 50 years ago in the 1970s. Before the 1970s, the topic was not researched. By way of example, the *Journal of Marriage and Family* commenced in 1939 and between its first edition and 1969, there is not one article in which the word “violence” can be found in the title (O’Brien, 1971). The *Journal of Marriage and Family* is regarded as the leading academic journal in the field of family and remains one of the most cited journals in family science, with a citation score of 6.3 and a journal impact factor of 3.4 at the time of writing this chapter.

Before scholarly interest in the field, family violence was considered to be rare and occurred in households that were either poor or perpetrated by people suffering from a mental disorder (Gelles, 1980). Since the topic of family violence was scarcely spoken of, this seemed to confirm the conviction that family violence was a rare occurrence.