



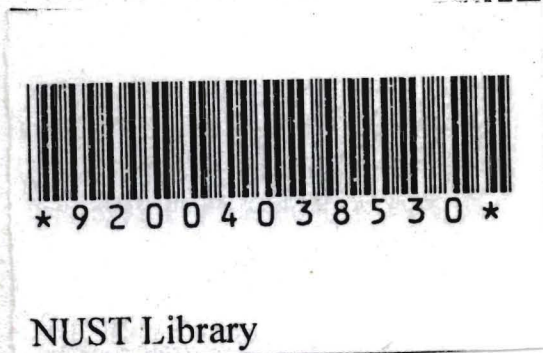
# National University of Science and Technology

Think in Other Terms



FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

**APPLYING FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN ANALYSING THE FRAMING OF  
WOMEN CRIMINALS IN THE MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF *THE HERALD*'S  
COVERAGE OF WOMEN 'RAPISTS' IN ZIMBABWE.**



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## ABSTRACT

This research used feministic perspectives, frame and critical discourse analyses to explore how the print media in Zimbabwe covers women criminality, particularly women 'rapists'. The study sought to explain how female 'criminals' are framed, particularly women 'rapists' in the media; how rape is defined in the representation of women rapists as well as establishing the factors influencing the underlying discourse on women criminality. To do this, the study used a case study approach by focusing on how *The Herald* reported on cases of aggravated indecent assault by women rapists. This research used the views of crimes and court reporters obtained from interviews together with data from Critical Discourse Analysis of court reportage articles on aggravated indecent assault. A thematic analysis of the findings showed that the news articles made use of stereotypical representations of women 'rapists' that characterised them as 'masculine' or deviating from both the law and socially expected gender roles of motherhood and femininity. The evidence in the findings can be used to conclude that the coverage of court cases on women rapists by *The Herald* leans towards the manipulation or usage of language that promotes patriarchal attitudes which in turn trivialises incidences of aggravated indecent assault. This research discovered that crime is treated as masculine, resulting in female crime being treated as more newsworthy. Women 'rapists' are seen as exceptional and unnatural and hence their crime stories are more newsworthy and sensational as shown by the findings of the research. This research also argues that the representation of women offenders is rooted in patriarchal perceptions of the women and her place in society and examines how themes such as that of the prostitute, nymphomaniac teenage maid and the manipulative hormonal pregnant woman are used in perpetuating misconceptions about women and crime.