



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MALAYSIAN NEWSPAPER  
JOURNALISTS KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND LAW-ETHICS  
PRIORITY AND POSSIBLE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR***

**NAFISE ESMAEL MOTLAGH**

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ATTITUDE AND LAW-ETHICS PRIORITY AND POSSIBLE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR**

By

**NAFISE ESMAEL MOTLAGH**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Philosophy**

**June, 2013**

## DEDICATION

“Journalists are the lifeblood of democracy in every country”

I would like to dedicate this study to those Iranian journalists who have put their lives in danger throughout decades to expand freedom of speech in my homeland; Iran.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**June, 2012**

**Chairperson: Professor Md Salleh Bin Hj Hassan, PhD**

**Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication**

This research is about journalism ethics in Malaysia. The main objective of this study is to determine the relationship between Malaysian newspaper journalists' knowledge, attitudes, law-ethics priority and their possible ethical behavior. To achieve this objective, a KAP study (Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice) was applied to reveal what Malaysian journalists know about journalism ethics; how they feel about it, and how they possibly behave in uncertain ethical situations. This study also tried to find out if journalists' behavior affected by their gender, journalism education and experience.

The methodology of this study was based on two approaches: a quantitative survey and a few supporting interviews. Self-administered questionnaires were used as the instrument to collect the data from 231 full-time journalists. The journalists were selected from five highly-circulated newspapers by non-probability sampling

(convenience).The questionnaire was divided into five sections under the following headings: 1. profile of respondents, 2. knowledge about journalism ethics, 3. attitude towards journalism ethics, 4.possible ethical behavior and 5.Law-ethicspriority.

The data were analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics, Chi-square test, Pearson correlation test, independent sample t-test, normality test and multiple regression test were used to achieve the objectives. The results showed that almost half of the 231 journalists (49.8%) who participated in this study had low knowledge about journalism ethics,51.8% had unfair possible behavior in uncertain situations and58.9% of them had unfavorable attitude towards journalism ethics. It was also revealed that Malaysian journalists cared more about law rather than ethics in their profession. They consider law as obligatory and ethics as aspirational. Based on the two different schools of thinking, they were mostly into “separate realms model” which is not based on social responsibility theory.

This study also found that there is a significant relationship between journalists’ possible ethical behavior and their knowledge and attitude, but no relationship was found between their ethical behavior and law-ethics priority. In other words, the journalists’ knowledge and attitude towards journalism ethics could make a difference in their possible ethical behavior. According to the results, work experience also played a significant role in journalists’ possible ethical behavior. This study found attitude and

work experience as two predictors which contributed most in journalists' possible ethical behavior.

In the supporting interviews, two important concerns were mentioned by senior local journalism regarding to ethical journalism practice in Malaysia, including governmental media ownership and Asian social-religious values. The majority of interviewees believe that in order to understand the journalists' perception about journalism ethics and the restrictions against ethical/professional behavior the structure of media and society should be considered. They also said the media companies, the union of journalist and other related media organizations play an important role in improving the level of ethical journalism in Malaysia by conducting trainings and open discussions.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA SIKAP PENGETAHAUN WARTAWAN UNDANG-  
KEUTAMAAN ETIKA DAN KELAKUAN ETIKA MUNGKIN**

Oleh

**NAFISE ESMAEL MOTLAGH**

Jun, 2013

**Pengerusi: Profesor Md Salleh Bin Hj Hassan, PhD**

**Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi**

Kajian ini adalah tentang etika kewartawanan di Malaysia. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan hubungan antara pengetahuan dan sikap wartawan akhbar Malaysia mengenai etika kewartawanan dan keutamaan undang-undang etika dengan kemungkinan tingkah laku beretika mereka. Untuk mencapai matlamat ini, satu kajian KAP (Pengetahuan, Sikap dan Amalan) telah digunakan untuk mendedahkan apa yang wartawan Malaysia tahu tentang etika kewartawanan, bagaimana mereka merasakan tentang hal itu, dan bagaimana mereka mungkin bertindak dalam situasi etika tidak menentu. Kajian ini juga cuba untuk mengetahui jika tingkah laku wartawan dipengaruhi oleh jantina, pendidikan kewartawanan dan pengalaman.

Metodologi kajian ini adalah berdasarkan kepada dua pendekatan: satu kajian kuantitatif dan beberapa wawancara sokongan. Soal selidik yang ditadbir sendiri telah digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk mengumpul data daripada 231 wartawan sepenuh

masa. Para wartawan telah dipilih dari lima akhbar yang paling tinggi edaran di Malaysia secara persampelan bukan kebarangkalian (kemudahan). Soal selidik ini dibahagikan kepada lima bahagian di bawah tajuk berikut:. 1. profil responden, 2. pengetahuan mengenai etika kewartawanan, 3. sikap terhadap etika kewartawanan, tingkah laku 4.possible etika dan 5. keutamaan undang-undang etika.

Data yang diperolehi dianalisis dengan Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) versi 17.0 untuk Windows. Statistik deskriptif, ujian Chi-square, ujian korelasi Pearson, bebas sampel ujian-t, ujian normal dan ujian regresi berganda telah digunakan untuk mencapai objektif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa hampir separuh daripada 231 wartawan (49.8%) yang terlibat dalam kajian ini mempunyai pengetahuan yang rendah mengenai etika kewartawanan, 51.8% mempunyai tingkah laku yang tidak adil dalam situasi tidak menentu dan 58.9% daripada mereka mempunyai sikap yang tidak positif terhadap etika kewartawanan. Ia juga mendedahkan bahawa wartawan Malaysia lebih memberi keutamaan kepada undang-undang dan bukannya etika dalam profesion mereka. Mereka menganggap undang-undang sebagai wajib dan etika sebagai aspirasi. Berdasarkan dua buah sekolah yang berbeza pemikiran, mereka kebanyakannya menerima "model alam berasingan" yang tidak berasaskan teori tanggungjawab sosial.

Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara tingkah laku beretika mungkin wartawan dan pengetahuan dan sikap mereka, tetapi tiada kaitan didapati antara tingkah laku etika dan keutamaan undang-undang etika. Dalam erti kata



lain, pengetahuan dan sikap wartawan terhadap etika kewartawanan boleh membuat perbezaan dalam tingkah laku etika mungkin mereka. Menurut keputusan, pengalaman kerja juga memainkan peranan penting dalam kemungkinan tingkah laku beretika wartawan. Kajian ini mendapati sikap dan pengalaman kerja sebagai dua peramal yang paling menyumbang kepada kemungkinan tingkah laku beretika wartawan.

Dalam temu bual menyokong, dua isu penting telah disebut oleh wartawan kanan tempatan mengenai amalan etika kewartawanan di Malaysia, termasuk pemilikan media kerajaan dan nilai-nilai sosial-agama Asia. Majoriti yang ditemubual percaya bahawa untuk memahami persepsi wartawan tentang etika kewartawanan dan sekatan terhadap tingkah laku beretika, struktur professional media dan masyarakat perlu dipertimbangkan. Mereka juga berkata syarikat-syarikat media, kesatuan wartawan dan organisasi media yang berkaitan memainkan peranan penting dalam meningkatkan tahap etika kewartawanan di Malaysia dengan mengadakan latihan dan perbincangan terbuka.

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'Life is a journey, not a destination'. I have always profited by this wise saying. My amazing journey from Iran to Malaysia made me a stronger person who is willing to see farther horizons by standing on the past experiences. I would like to salute the Universiti Putra Malaysia for giving me the opportunity both in Masters and Ph.D. programs.

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the great help from several people. First, I want to offer my sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Md. Salleh Bin Hj Hasan for his constant sensible advice in supervising me through the process of this study. Special thanks also go to Dr. Jusang Bin Bolong and Dr. Mohd Nizam Osman for their precise comments and guidance. Learning from them –especially in many committee meetings that we had – was valuable experience. I would also like to thank three particular Malaysian journalists who helped me in accessing to respondents; Mr. Richard Philips- the NUJ Executive Secretary-, Lisa Goh, a senior journalist from The Star, and Hani Mazrita Hamzah –from Human Capital of NSTP Berhad. Their tremendous kindness is unforgettable. My sincere appreciation also goes to my beloved husband, Alireza Jafari, who showered me with love and understanding, especially in the challenging times of this study. Last but not least, I would like to send my special gratitude to my lovely parents – Ali Akbar Esmael Motlagh and Tahereh Hajibagheri - for all their kindnesses and supports; living far from them is not an easy task!

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 10 June 2013 to conduct the final examination of Nafise Esmael Motlagh on her thesis entitled "Relationship between Malaysian Newspaper Journalists Knowledge, Attitude and Law-Ethics Priority and Possible Ethical Behavior" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Examination Committee were as follows:

**Siti Zobidah bt Omar, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
University Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Abdul Mua'ti @ Zamri b Ahmad, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
University Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Megat Al-Imran bin Yasin, PhD**

Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
University Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

**Jane Elizabeth Kirtley, PhD**

Professor  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of Minnesota – The United States  
(External Examiner)

---

**NORITAH OMAR, PhD**

Assoc. Professor and Deputy Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 16 August 2013

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Md Salleh Bin Hj Hassan, PhD**

Professor  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
University Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

**Jusang Bin Bolong, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
University Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

**Mohd. Nizam Osman, PhD**

Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
University Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

---

**BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD**

Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

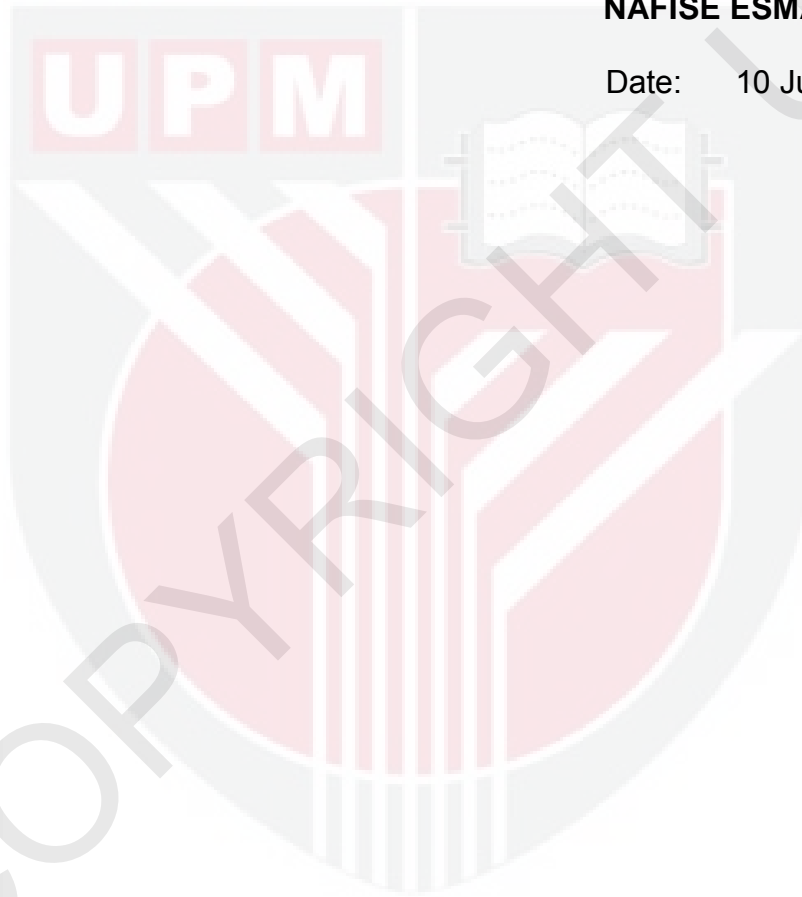
Date:

## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

**NAFISE ESMAEL MOTLAGH**

Date: 10 June 2013



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