



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***NEWS COVERAGE ON ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN MALAYSIA AND
INDONESIA BY WALL STREET JOURNAL AND THE TELEGRAPH***

FAUZIAH HASSAN

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

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By

FAUZIAH HASSAN

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

April 2017

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DEDICATION

This thesis is specially dedicated to

My dearest and sweet daughter,

FADHLIN RAFIFA BINTI MOHD FADHLI RAHMAN

who understands all my sorrows, pains and grief throughout my Ph.D journey. Thank you so much baby love for always be my side. Your cheeky, entertaining and bubbly self has brought joys into my life. I love you dearly till the last of my breath.

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

NEWS COVERAGE ON ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA BY WALL STREET JOURNAL AND THE TELEGRAPH

By

FAUZIAH HASSAN

April 2017

Chairperson: Assoc. Professor Siti Zobidah Omar, PhD
Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

This study is essential to be carried out since many of the previous studies has been focusing too much of Muslims and Islamic religion in the West and the Middle-East countries. Therefore, this study is to investigate how two Western newspapers; specifically the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* and *The Telegraph (TT)* currently perceive Islam and Muslims, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia in three consecutive years: 2012 to 2014. This research aims to study the frequency of news reports, the types of the news sources, the themes and slants of the news. Two methodological approaches (quantitative and qualitative with ratio 40:60) have been applied to conduct this study. However, the priority was given to the qualitative approach; especially in the written report of the analysis. The quantitative content analysis has been used to determine the frequencies of news reporting and also to find out the types of news sources being quoted in the news reporting. The quantitative software known as SPSS Version 22 has been used with regard to analyse the statistical descriptive analysis. For qualitative, the researcher employed interpretative phenomenological analysis to determine the news themes, to find out the comparison of news themes and to characterize the direction of the news by using QSR NVivo 11. A total of 145 news articles were taken as samples for the analysis in which were selected through the constructive week sampling technique and specific keywords determined in this study. The findings of this research revealed that *WSJ* has been reporting about Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia within the three years of study more frequently than did *TT* in which both newspapers were covered abundantly on Indonesian issues compared to Malaysian issues. Meanwhile, local sources especially the official sources such as policy makers, educational sources, uniformed officials and judicial institutions were frequently quoted compared to foreign news sources in the news reporting for both newspapers in two countries. Then, seven main themes were identified from the corpus of data: Religious Discourse, Islam and Violence, Governance and Administration, Law and Regulation, Politics, International Affairs and Peaceful Resolution. This study found that both newspapers focused on the theme of Religious Discourse for both Malaysian and Indonesian issues. Surprisingly, the findings revealed that the newspapers used in this study did not associate Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia with the theme of Islam and Violence as only few news articles found under this theme.

However, the Western media still do not favour Islam and Muslims around the world, including Islam and Muslims in Muslim-majority countries because the negative connotations in the news reporting still exist albeit not reporting issues related to violence.



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

**LAPORAN BERITA MENGENAI ISLAM DAN UMAT ISLAM DI MALAYSIA
DAN INDONESIA OLEH WALL STREET JOURNAL DAN THE TELEGRAPH**

Oleh

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Pengerusi: Prof. Madya Siti Zobidah Omar, PhD
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Representasi media Barat dalam melaporkan berita yang berkaitan Islam dan masyarakat Muslim di Malaysia dan Indonesia perlu dikaji kerana kajian yang lepas banyak tertumpu bagaimana media Barat melaporkan berita yang berkaitan Islam dan masyarakat Muslim yang tinggal di negara Barat dan di Timur Tengah. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji bagaimana dua akhbar antarabangsa; *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)* dan *The Telegraph (TT)* melaporkan isu yang berkaitan Islam dan masyarakat Muslim di Malaysia dan Indonesia dari tahun 2012 hingga 2014. Tujuan kajian ini dijalankan ialah untuk mengkaji kekerapan berita, penggunaan sumber berita, tema berita dan arah berita. Dua pendekatan kajian iaitu (kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan nisbah 40:60) telah digunakan oleh pengkaji namun, keutamaan diberikan kepada pendekatan kualitatif terutamanya dalam melaporkan analisis keputusan kajian. Analisis kandungan kuantitatif telah digunakan untuk mengetahui kekerapan laporan berita dan juga untuk mengetahui jenis-jenis sumber berita yang dipetik dalam setiap berita. Perisian kuantitatif iaitu SPSS Versi 22 telah digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk menganalisis data secara deskriptif. Bagi analisis kualitatif, penyelidik telah menggunakan analisis fenomenologi tafsiran untuk mengetahui tema berita, untuk membandingkan tema berita di antara kedua-dua akhbar dan untuk mengenal pasti arah berita dengan menggunakan QSR NVivo 11. Sejumlah 145 berita dipilih sebagai sampel kajian melalui teknik persampelan mingguan dan beberapa kata kunci yang telah ditentukan untuk kajian ini. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa *WSJ* telah melaporkan dengan kerap berita mengenai Islam dan masyarakat Muslim di Malaysia dan Indonesia dalam tempoh tiga tahun pengajian berbanding *TT* dan hasil kajian juga menunjukkan Indonesia mendapat liputan lebih meluas berbanding Malaysia. Sementara itu, sumber berita rasmi lokal seperti para pembuat dasar, ahli akademik, badan beruniform dan institusi perundangan adalah paling kerap digunakan berbanding sumber berita asing dalam pelaporan berita untuk kedua-dua akhbar di dua buah negara. Tujuh tema utama telah ditemui; Wacana Agama, Islam dan Keganasan, Tadbir Urus dan Pentadbiran, Undang-undang dan Peraturan, Politik, Hal Ehwal Antarabangsa dan Resolusi Perdamaian. Hasil kajian mendapati kedua-dua akhbar telah memberi tumpuan kepada tema Wacana Agama untuk berita-berita berkaitan Islam dan masyarakat Muslim di Malaysia dan Indonesia. Lebih menarik lagi, kedua-dua akhbar

yang digunakan dalam kajian ini tidak mengaitkan Islam dan masyarakat Muslim di Malaysia dan Indonesia dengan Islam dan Keganasan kerana hanya sedikit berita yang dijumpai di bawah tema ini. Namun, media Barat masih tidak memihak kepada Islam dan masyarakat Muslim di seluruh dunia termasuk di negara yang majoritinya dihuni oleh orang Islam kerana persepsi negatif masih lagi dilaporkan dalam laporan mereka walaupun bukan menjurus kepada isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan keganasan.



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Regards,

Date:

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on _____ to conduct the final examination of Fauziah Hassan (GS 38460) on her thesis entitled "News Coverage on Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia by *Wall Street Journal* and *The Telegraph*" 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.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WSJ	Wall Street Journal
TT	The Telegraph
US	United State
UK	United Kingdom
UMNO	United Malay Nationals Organization
PAS	Parti Islam Se-Malaysia
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis
QCA	Quantitative Content Analysis
PRB	Population Reference Bureau
AJE	Al-Jazeera English
AP	Associated Press
EU	European Union
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama
IS	Islamic State
ABC	American Broadcasting Company
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
NBC	National Broadcasting Company
MUI	Council of Ulemas in Indonesia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the outline of the research and elaborates the general ideas on how Western newspapers report on issues surrounding Islam and Muslims, particularly in Southeast Asian Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. As the introductory chapter, this chapter identifies the problem statement and states the research questions and research objectives of this study. To add more understanding of this research, the researcher presents the significance of the study, its scope and limitations and, lastly, definitions of the terminology used in this study.

Background of the Study

Relations between Islam and the West have been depicted in many scholarly articles, research studies and media reports. The battle between Islam and the West started from the crusades (1096–1487 CE). In modern times, the conflict emerged with the Iranian revolution in 1978, followed by the rise of Islamophobia, the September 11 attacks in 2001 and others which have associated Islam and Muslims with negative portrayals in Western media (Allen, 2014; Alshammari, 2013; Funk & Abdul Aziz, 2004). The conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan has also increased the international reporting about Islam and Muslims and made the focus of Islam and Muslims become more global (Poole & Richardson, 2006). In addition, the focus of Islam and Muslims has made the terms “Islam” and “Muslims” become important to the news media, subsequently, misrepresent the image of Islam (Kabir & Bourke, 2012).

For this reason, many studies with various methodologies, qualitative and quantitative approaches, have been conducted to analyse the news coverage on Islam in the media, such as those by Perreault (2014), Roose (2013), Magpanthong and McDaniel (2012), Reza (2011), Moore, Mason and Lewis (2008), Papacharissi and Oliveira (2008), Ali (2008) and Ushama and Moten (2006). These researches play a major role in highlighting the most talked-about issues related to Islam and Muslims such as: Islam and terrorism, the relations between Islam and non-Muslims, Islam portrayed by the West and the perception of Muslims in Western countries.

The analysis of news on Islam in the newspapers has been documented, for example, by Papacharissi and Oliveira (2008) who made a comparative analysis of US and British newspapers covering Islam in connection with terrorism. They found that the US newspapers engaged in more episodic coverage than the British ones, covering more thematic issues of terrorism and terrorism-related events. The US news coverage highlighted military-associated news, whereas the British news was more concerned with diplomatic evaluations of terrorist events. According to Papacharissi and Oliveira, there are several possible causes for the differences in coverage. One of the obvious

factors would be national government policy. In other findings, both quantitative and qualitative analyses reflected a tendency for US newspapers to rely on US government and military sources, and for the British papers to select from a wider and global array of expert sources. These differences are explained by government policy, institutional tendencies, and the dominant journalism paradigm in each country.

In this study, the researcher has narrowed down the scope of research by examining the contemporary trends in representing Islam and Muslims, specifically in Malaysia and Indonesia, as presented by the Western newspapers. To realize this, the definition of “representation” must be elaborated further. Stuart Hall (2008) defines the meaning of representation in his video-lecture posted on YouTube. In his lecture, entitled “Representation & the Media”, Hall defines representation as the act of representing a meaning that already exists and about giving a depiction of images and words. Most importantly, Hall concludes that representation has no meaning until it has been represented.

Thus, this study focuses on how two Western mainstream newspapers – one from the US, the *Wall Street Journal* (henceforth *WSJ*) and one from the UK, *The Telegraph* (henceforth *TT*) – reported the news related to Islam and Muslims in the Muslim-majority countries in Southeast Asia; Malaysia and Indonesia, in three consecutive years (2012–2014). The main aim of this study is to provide empirical evidence to shed light on the projected themes about Islam and Muslims in response to any significant events that happened in Malaysia and Indonesia within the period studied. The researcher also seeks to identify the dominant news sources that contributed to the reporting on news related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia in these two newspapers and finally to identify the slant or direction of that reporting based on news stories attributed from the respective news sources.

The Place of Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia

The topic of Islam in Southeast Asia has long been marginalized in the fields of both Islamic studies and Southeast Asian studies. As Hefner and Horvatic (1997) write, “scholars from Western and Middle Eastern alike to place Southeast Asia at the intellectual periphery of the Islamic world” (pp. 8). This region has been observed as “peripheral” and has gained limited attention. In terms of the Muslim population, almost 90% of the more than 230 million population citizens of Indonesia are Muslim and 58% of the citizens of Malaysia are Malays and therefore, they are Muslims too (Houben, 2003). This argument also based on previous study which indicated that Islam and Muslims have been commonly accepted as synonymous (Ridzuan Wu, 1990).

Pew Research Center (2015) reports that Muslims are the major religious group projected to increase faster than other religions between 2010 and 2050. In 2014, there were approximately 18 million Muslims in Malaysia (60.4% of population) and 218.68

million (88%) in Indonesia (Asia Muslim Population, 2014). According to the Population Reference Bureau, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world because of the pace of the demographic transition in the Muslim-majority countries relative to the rest of the world. Malaysia and Indonesia are two countries in Southeast Asia categorized among countries with more than 50% Muslim population. Malaysia falls within the 50–69% band and Indonesia the 70–89% band (Population Reference Bureau, 2013). Based on this forecast, Muslims population will continue to soar in the near future.

The many Muslims in Indonesia belong to a diverse nation which consists of hundreds of different ethnic groups, religions, languages and also cultures. The majority of Indonesians are Muslims who practise moderate Islam, and Islam in Indonesia is substantially diverse in terms of influences, forms and practices (Mahony, 2010). In addition, *WSJ* reported that Indonesia can be categorized as a tolerant country where six religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism can be practised equally under the same law and with equal rights of worship (*WSJ*, 7 August 2013).

In Malaysia, Islam is the official religion as provided by the Federal Constitution. On the contrary, Islam is not an official religion in Indonesia even though Indonesia has an overall majority of Muslim population (Houben, 2003). The government of Indonesia pays close attention to the religious needs of the Muslim community but it has not transformed Indonesia into an Islamic state as this was strongly opposed by the late President Suharto and by the Indonesian armed forces (Desker, 2002). This research is innovative in studying a topic related to Islam and Muslims specifically in Malaysia and Indonesia. The different ideologies about the position of Islam between these two countries will make this study very interesting because, although both countries are dominated by a majority of Muslims and consist of multiple races, cultures and religions, the Indonesian policy is seen to be more flexible and more open towards religious practices compared with that of Malaysia.

Issues Related to Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia

More than 15 years ago, the tragedy of September 11, 2001, followed by the Bali bombings on 12 October 2002 made America perceive Southeast Asia as the second front in the worldwide battle against terrorism. The governments of Southeast Asian nations including the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia also have been forced to join the USA in the so-called antiterrorist coalition (Houben, 2003). As a result, these tragedies, to a certain extent shaped the news reporting on terrorism. The study of Dafrizal, Faridah, Chang and Fuziah (2013) shows the trend of news reporting on terrorism issues in Malaysia and Indonesia. Their study of four domestic newspapers – *Utusan Melayu* and *New Straits Times* (Malaysia) and *Republika* and *Jakarta Post* (Indonesia) – shows that the tone of the news on terrorism was prone to be negative (45.2%, 114 news items) compared with (11.1%, 28 news items) having a neutral tone.

Besides the terrorism issues which have involved Muslims in Malaysia, there are also many other issues pertaining to Islam and Muslims, for example: apostasy, using the word “Allah” for God in Malay-language Bibles, fixing *fatwas*, Muslim faith issues, law and politics, family issues, child custody etc. Husin Mutalib (2008) adds that Malaysian Muslims have experienced several waves of incidents, specifically in 2006 and 2007, involving the issues of apostasy, the burial of Muslims in non-Muslim graves and the critical voices that appeared in blogs and the Internet criticizing the government’s management of Islam.

In comparison to Malaysia, Islam in Indonesia has gained more attention from the media. In particular, issues concerning radical Islam, i.e., the aftermath of September 11 and the Bali bombing tragedy on 12 October 2002 (Eliraz, 2004). Furthermore, issues such as riots, apostasy, terrorism, anti-Islam movements, military intervention etc. are also portrayed frequently by the Indonesian media (Goshal, 2010). On a different note, *The Economist* reported in 9 June 2012 said that the Indonesian President was accused of being lenient in religious matters due to a planned concert by Lady Gaga, an American pop star. The Lady Gaga issue became international news when Islamic hardliners, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), forced her to cancel the concert.

Because of the frequent coverage and reports of these issues domestically, it is not surprising that these issues can attract the attention of Western media and that they finally pick up them as their stories. This has been confirmed by Mahony (2010), who argues that the report on terrorism, interethnic and interreligious issues by the local media, e.g, the Indonesian news agency, have subsequently, provide equal opportunity to Western media to cover similar issues. Therefore, this study is significant in exploring how Western newspapers viewed Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia during three recent years, 2012–2014. In this study, the news articles related to the issue of Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia collected from these two Western newspapers were not limited to any specific events which could potentially limit the representation of news.

Statement of the Research Problem

The representations of Islam and Muslims in the media have been studied extensively especially since the turmoil of September 11 (Poole & Richardson, 2006; Karim, 2003; Poole, 2002). Starting from that point, Islam and Muslims around the world have become a continuous topic for report by the media. Goshal (2010) points out that Islam and Muslims in Asian countries have also become the centre of media attention due to the issues of violence and radical Islamic ideology. This situation apparently encourages the coverage of Islam and Muslims in Asian countries by the Western mass media.

Media misrepresentations of Muslims in Western countries, including Australia, Canada, the USA, the UK and Europe, has fuelled a lot of arguments and misunderstanding towards Islam and Muslims (Rane & Ewart, 2012). There has never been a study that tries to understand how issues surrounding Islam and Muslims in a Muslim-majority context are covered by Western media. Furthermore, Perreault (2014) indicates that not much English language research could be found that investigates how issues related to Islam are covered in Muslim-majority countries, although there are some recent works on the subject of news coverage of Islam in Europe and Asia. Furthermore, many issues discussed previously between these two countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) focus on the issues of politics, economics and trade (Erman, Chang & Wirza, 2014). From that starting point, this study focuses on the issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia.

An important question when examining news reporting on Islam and Muslims around the world is who actually speaks about Islam and Muslims in the media. According to Kabir and Bourke (2012), most of the news on Islam and Muslims in Western media is contributed by overseas news agencies such as foreign newspapers and Associated Press (AP). For example, their study showed that newspapers in New Zealand mostly used international news agencies as their news sources to report on issues related to Islam and Muslims. Manning (2004) reported similar findings in that the images of Arabs and Muslims in newspapers published in Sydney, Australia, were derived from foreign news media and, at that time, were focused on Middle Eastern issues. In this situation, the researcher believes that this scenario has tended to the use of imbalanced news sources, as foreign sources were used to report the issues related to Islam and Muslims in the media. This area is worth explored as to identify the types of news sources used especially when it comes to the reporting of Islam and Muslims.

The framing of Islam as the religion of terrorism and any Muslim as a terrorist by the Western media, especially in the US and the UK, existed long before September 11 (Ibrahim, 2011; Tahir, 2011). According to Allen (2007), the phenomenon of "Islamophobia" has tarnished the image of Islam and Muslims since 1997. Allen describes how the term "Islamophobia" is used to describe the dread and hatred of Islam and consequently to increase feelings of fear and dislike towards Muslim communities. This is in line with Said (1981) who claims that the Western media have been selective in their choice of images about Islam. Western media often frame Islam as oppressive, with symbols like the *hijab*; and outmoded, with hangings and beheadings; and Muslims generally living backward lives, which eventually leads the Western media to cover news on Islam ineffectively.

Previous studies on post-9/11, such as Elgamri (2008), Abdulla (2007), Manning (2006), Poole (2006) and Richardson (2006), have agreed that press coverage became more troubling as it emphasized themes related to terrorism. Islam and Muslims started to become the forefront of the Western media and not for positive reasons. Other media sources, such as CNN, Sky News and BBC News 24, also showed increased bias in their reporting on the issue of Islam and Muslims after 11 September 2001 (Fauziah, 2006). Most importantly, the researcher attempts to find out the themes of the news

reporting about Islam and Muslims apart from the theme connecting Islam and terrorism.

Finally, the researcher found that Western journalists struggle to cover religion in general, except for Islam, which has made Islam and Muslims receive an overwhelmingly negative slant in news coverage throughout much of the world (Marshall, Gilbert & Green-Ahmanson, 2008). Moreover, the September 11 tragedy has become the main source of negative reporting specifically on Muslims (Aly, 2007; Abdulkader Tayob, 2006; Martin & Phelan, 2002). The negative portrayals of religious minorities, such as Muslims in the West, are often affirmed by the reporting with a negative slant. This is particularly true when the news reporting of minority traditions is contrasted with majority traditions (Dahinden, Keel, Koch, & Wyss, 2011). Dahinden et al. noted that the negative slants on reporting on Muslims resulted from overrepresentation relative to their population, one-dimensional portrayals and an emphasis on conflict-driven stories. Broos and Van de Bluck (2012) agree that conflict-driven stories are often linked to the issues of crime, violence and terrorism. Therefore, it can be understood that the mass media associates Islam and Muslims, by and large, with terrorism, portraying the religion and its members most frequently as unreasonable, fundamentalist and/or prone to reactive violence, which has apparently driven the negative slant of reporting. These studies however, are concern with Muslim minorities living in the West. Meanwhile, this thesis focuses on Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia who are considered majority adherents of Islam. For that reason, this thesis aims to identify the extent to which the tragedy of September 11 attacks had a negative influence on the reporting on Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia by Western newspapers.

Up to this point, this section has provided the discussion on how the Western media portrayed Islam and Muslims. The dearth of research on how issues surrounding Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asian Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia are reported by the Western media has inspired the researcher to investigate deeply into this issue. Therefore, this study is believed significantly to fill the research gap found in previous research as this research concentrates on how Islam and Muslims in Muslim-majority countries; Malaysia and Indonesia were reported by two Western newspapers from 2012 until 2014. By selecting three consecutive years of study, from 2012 to 2014, the researcher believes that this study will be very exhaustive and the analysis made will surely contribute to the latest trend of news reporting about Islam and Muslims issues. Most significant and imperative is to discover new knowledge on how *WSJ* and *TT* reported issues related to Islam and Muslims by putting forward Malaysia and Indonesia as the case of the study.

Research Questions

This study examines the frequency of news coverage related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia from the perspective of two newspapers, *WSJ* and *TT*. In addition, it also examines the types of news sources quoted in reporting issues related

to Islam and Muslims. Apart from that, the news themes and news slants are also explored to make the study more wide-ranging. Based on the scenario discussed in the problem statement, this study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) In terms of quantity of coverage, how is news related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia portrayed differently from news related to Islam and Muslims in Indonesia as reported in *WSJ* and *TT*?
- 2) Were different types of news sources used by *WSJ* and *TT* to report the issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia throughout the period 2012–2014?
- 3) Which news themes about Islam and Muslims-related stories in Malaysia and Indonesia emerged as reported by *WSJ* and *TT* throughout the period 2012–2014?
- 4) How did the news themes used by *WSJ* and *TT* in reporting issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia change throughout the period 2012–2014?
- 5) What were the reporting slants by the respective newspapers (*WSJ* and *TT*) based on the news stories on Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia?

General Objective

The general objective of the study is to study the news coverage related to Islam and Muslims-related news stories in Malaysia and Indonesia by *WSJ* and *TT* newspapers.

Specific Objectives

- 1) To determine the different frequencies of news coverage related to Islam and Muslims between Malaysia and Indonesia being reported by *WSJ* and *TT* newspapers;
- 2) To identify the different types of news sources used by *WSJ* and *TT* newspapers in reporting issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia;
- 3) To identify the themes used by *WSJ* and *TT* newspapers in reporting issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia throughout the reporting periods of the study;
- 4) To compare the news themes found in *WSJ* and *TT* newspapers in reporting the issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia within the chosen time frame selected for the study; and
- 5) To characterize the reporting slant of news articles used by *WSJ* and *TT* newspapers to report the issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Significance of the Study

As mentioned earlier, this study is an attempt to discover how issues relating to Islam and Muslims predominantly in Malaysia and Indonesia have been reported by Western newspapers. The main concern is to study the themes on Islam and Muslims that are found in *WSJ* and *TT* newspapers. Since the topic of Islam and Muslims has been widely discussed in the media, therefore, the study is significant in four aspects: policy, practice, theory and methodology.

In the aspect of policy, the study will propose and suggest the best way to report the issue of Islam especially by Western news media organizations. As we know, each media industry has its own policies and standard procedures in writing and producing news articles. So, no matter what, the media practitioners such as editors and journalists have to follow all the rules and procedures and ultimately, without changes, there will be no improvements towards a more positive image of Islam and Muslims. It is true that there is a guideline to report all news fairly and justly. But to what extent is this guideline applied, especially to news related to Islam? Perhaps the findings of this study will give some ideas to the Western news media organizations on how to set up new practices and procedures especially in reporting on Islam and Muslim stories. In this case, the researcher does not aim to have a specific news organization for Islam, but it will be sufficient if the reporters of media organizations have knowledge on how to produce a good style of news reporting specifically on the issue of Islam and Muslims around the globe.

The other significant point to consider is the “practice” part to help news media organization. The practice of the new approach in news reporting may increase the awareness of the public particularly on this global issue. This study could also substantiate and help to increase consciousness on the importance of how the international journalists or correspondents should write about Islam fairly so that the public throughout the world will not be confused when receiving news related to Islam and Muslims from the media organizations.

Agenda Setting Theory, Priming Theory and Framing Theory are of particular interest because these three theories directly address the study of media portrayal and audience impact. The present study looks specifically into the media agenda of two Western newspapers, *WSJ* and *TT*. It is expected that these three theories will eventually support the whole journey of this study as these theories help the researcher to understand how each news item is produced, primed and framed by the newspapers.

Lastly, in terms of contribution to the methodological aspect, the research method employed in this study will help to enrich the data and to fill the existing gaps. The findings obtained in this study will indirectly contribute to the body of knowledge and help the researcher to increase the reliability and validity of the outcomes. The use of quantitative content analysis is very popular and widely used among media scholars

and researchers to analyse news content. Apart from that, the use of an interpretative phenomenological analysis helps the researcher to understand the phenomenon and the hidden message of how exactly news related to Islam and Muslims is reported by these two newspapers. The application of qualitative analysis technique, which follows the steps in coding analysis procedures, can offer deep and critical analysis where every single news source, its themes and slants, will be analysed. Furthermore, assistance from qualitative analysis software (QSR NVivo 11) has enabled the researcher to restore, organize, manage and code the data. The researcher observed that the mixed methods used in this study, quantitative and qualitative analysis, will complement each other in achieving the research objectives with regard to producing a comprehensive finding.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on how two newspapers, *WSJ* and *TT*, reported the issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia from 2012 to 2014. It is important to note that this study does not cover any other issues apart from issues related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia. The selection of these two newspapers (*WSJ* and *TT*) were purposely based on several characteristics determined by the researcher earlier before the research has been conducted. Most importantly, these two mainstream newspapers had high circulations in their respective countries during the three years of completion of this study (see Table 3.1, p 110). On the other hand, the same political stance of both newspapers which refers to the conservative party has attracted the researcher's interest to study their traditional reporting style in two different countries. On top of that, the researcher believes that the "conservative" political stance that they practised has encouraged each newspaper to possess "neutrality" in reporting any issues especially news on Islam and Muslims.

This study involves only online news articles as a sample and employs two methodological approaches: Quantitative Content Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis specifically to explore the hidden message in the qualitative findings. To select the sample for this study, the researcher used purposive sampling. Two Western newspapers, *WSJ* and *TT*, were purposely chosen because these two newspapers represent two different countries: *WSJ* the US and *TT* the UK. Both newspapers also have special columns dedicated to coverage on Asia. Full text databases of these two newspapers were accessed directly from their websites and the newspaper articles from *WSJ* and *TT* were downloaded in the online version. The news sample for this study was selected by using a constructive week sampling technique. Several keywords: "Islam", "Muslim", "Malaysia", "Indonesia", "Islam in Malaysia", "Islam in Indonesia", "Muslims in Malaysia" and "Muslims in Indonesia", were determined in order to specify the news strictly related to Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia. All the data collected were analysed using SPSS Version 22 and QSR NVivo 11 in accordance with the respective research objectives of this study.

Definition of Keywords

Islam

In general, Islam is a religion that offers a complete way of life. Its teachings cater for the whole human and it is not just a religion per se, as is commonly believed in the West. Islam teaches about faith, ritual and dogma and also provides rules for philosophy, economics, social order, rules of government and moral principles to guide all humans to live peacefully, in prosperity, equality and brotherhood in this world (Zulkiple & Safar, 2004). According to Mehden (1987), Islam is professed by the majority of Muslims society in Malaysia and often related to political issues, religious law and education. Meanwhile, Islam in Indonesia, has developed among many Muslim communities. Islam has also evolved in the field of education with the establishment of many Islamic state universities, *pesantren* (religious school) and *surau* (small mosque). Even though Indonesia has more than 230 million Muslims, none of the political parties in Indonesia has an Islamic title or agenda. Indonesia is not an Islamic state and Islam is not the official religion (John, 1987). In the context of this study, all the news articles in *WSJ* and *TT* mentioning the word Islam and anything related to Islamic matters in Malaysia and Indonesia were taken as the sample.

Muslim

Muslim refers to one who is obedient to the command of Allah SWT (Faisal, 2012). In the context of the study, any news articles mentioning the word Muslim/Muslims or discussing anything related to Islam, such as individual Muslims, or Islamic education, politics, activities, practices, events, behaviours and actions, are included in the sample.

News

Stovall (2005) defines news as the major function in the field of journalism. He added that news contributes to society and can be classified into three categories: information, entertainment and persuasion. Stokkink (2001) describes news in a rather different way, as unexpected, a change, negativism, and usually “news” is about a negative event. Shoemaker (2006) widened the definition of news to something that can be bought, sold and traded, calling it a commodity. Journalists manufacture the news and public relations firms manipulate the news. The news is finally consumed by the audiences. Shoemaker continued that news does not only appear in the newspaper or television, radio programmes or the Internet. News also travels by word of mouth and is transmitted from one person to another. In the context of this thesis, only online news articles are taken as the sample. Thus, any features, opinion columns, comments, letters to the editor and so on which talk about Islam and Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia were omitted from the sample. Thus, the selection of news articles was done carefully so that the selected news articles met the objectives of the study.

Coverage

According to Reader (2012), news coverage is defined through the way media cover or portray particular issues, topics, groups, societies, communities and experiences from their particular ideology and perspective. In the present study, only news covering issues related to Islam and Muslims primarily in Malaysia and Indonesia was included in the sample of this study.



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