

Article

A Content Analysis of the 2023 Israel-Palestine Conflict News Reporting in *The Star Online*, Malaysia

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Abstract: The Israel-Palestine conflict is a complex geopolitical struggle which captivated media attention worldwide. On 7th October 2023, Hamas militants initiated a momentous attack on Israel from the Gaza Strip, resulting in the tragic loss of over 1,400 lives and the capture of more than 200 individuals. In response to these hostilities, Israel has launched counterattacks on Gaza, which brought the unfortunate losses of more than 10,000 people. The news coverage of this conflict revealed the multifaceted dimensions of the struggle between the two countries, stemming from historical, geographical, and political disparities. The media's portrayal of the conflict significantly influences public perception and policy decisions. This study analyses how *The Star Online*, a prominent Malaysian news outlet, frames the Israel-Palestine conflict. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study employs both quantitative and qualitative content analyses. Keyword searches, including "Israel-Palestine conflict" and "Gaza War", were conducted to gather relevant news articles from 7th October 2023, to 7th January 2024. The aim is to identify prevailing topics and sources that subsequently help reveal the media treatment frameworks in this event. Examining these frameworks sheds light on how media representations shape the audience's understanding of the conflict and its implications for regional stability. Both thematic and episodic frames are found in the findings where the thematic frames appear dominant. Solving the conflict is assigned as a societal responsibility. The frames proposed solutions and consequences of the conflict despite the conflict's root causes are not discussed.

Keywords: Israel-Palestine conflict; Gaza War; content analysis; conflict reporting; news coverage

Introduction

The continued conflict between Israel and Palestine is one of the most enduring and controversial issues in contemporary geopolitics, with its history being rife with complex political, historical, and socio-cultural factors. Since 7th October 2023, an armed conflict has been unfolding in the Gaza Strip between Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups and Israel. It began with an unexpected attack by Hamas on Southern Israel from the Gaza Strip (Fabian, 2023; Waghorn, 2023). The conflict resulted in an estimated 1,139 Israeli and foreign nationals killed, with 253 Israeli civilians and foreigners taken captive. Following this, Israel swiftly targeted Hamas militants before initiating a large-scale ground invasion on 27th October 2023. This military escalation has resulted in the death of more than 32,000 Palestinians, including 13,000 children. Israel's attack and tightening blockage have been regarded as a humanitarian crisis where nearly 2.3 million population in the Gaza Strip have been internally displaced. Palestinian infrastructure was extensively devastated, leading to the collapse of the healthcare system and an ongoing famine. By January 2024, an estimated Israelis killed more than 10,000 Palestinian militants, while Israel lost over 250 soldiers (Jason, 2023; *Israel social security data*, 2023).

Mass media, especially online journalism, has been important for documenting significant events and modern wars to the international community. These media outlets monitored the war and conflict during this period by shedding light on Israel's military operations which involved bombing and killing civilians while recording the military response of Hamas (Alkalliny, 2027; Jason, 2023). By providing rigorous and instant news coverage and updates, online news can shape and influence public opinion towards the Gaza conflict. It directly and indirectly impacts international repercussions. It is also notable that media reporting plays a specific role in prejudice creation, policy influencing, and international understanding of the issues witnessed in the region (Ahmad et al., 2023; Arrosyid & Halwati, 2021). Given the growing importance of digital media, understanding how these entities report the conflicts seems crucial for interpreting public discourse and the resulting media influence.

A significant portion of the criticism has been aimed at the Western media for their coverage of Israeli aggression in Gaza. Many studies demonstrated against media bias by comparing the media reporting between the West and the East (Bhowmik & Fisher, 2023; Alkallini, 2017; Al-Salhi, 2014). To fill in the gap in the current literature, this study seeks to conduct a content analysis of *The Star Online*'s reporting of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2023 from Malaysia's perspective. It aims to draw on scholarship on the media's representation of conflicts, focusing on topics and themes that have attracted discussion in the literature. The existing literature provides valuable insights into the emphases, news sources, and patterns of journalistic treatment of conflict reporting. Based on the news coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that happened in the year 2023 in *The Star Online*, this study attempts to provide an account of media representation and thematic focus relating to these enduring geopolitics insights into findings that can contribute to understanding how digital media coverage plays a role in complex conflicts and contribute to public discourse and understanding. It seeks to explore how this Malaysian-renowned online newspaper covered the 2023 Gaza conflict regarding content and topics, sources cited, and journalistic treatment frames. Thus, this study enhances the overall understanding of media representation and its implications for public discourse and policy considerations in the context of conflict reporting. The study utilises media frameworks theory to examine and analyse how *The Star Online* addressed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2023. It aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What topics did *The Star Online* newspaper focus on the 2023 Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

RQ2: Who are the sources cited in *The Star online* newspaper in the 2023 Palestinian-Israeli conflict reporting?

RQ3: What media treatment frameworks were used by *The Star Online* newspaper for the 2023 Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

Literature Review

Alkalliny's (2017) study focused on the apparent bias in CNN and FOX news coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These biases permeated various aspects of media representation, including treatment of events, source credibility, visual content, and justifications for the Israeli side. The politics of those events, along with U.S. and Israeli political interests, have additionally played an essential role in their narrative framing and selective coverage, serving as a tool to support a particular foreign policy. Aziz (2007) examined in detail *The New York Times* and *Associated Press* coverage of the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006, which revealed a pro-Israeli bias in two news sources. The findings showed that these two news sources legitimise Israel killings while de-legitimise Palestine killings. The killings in Israel are justified, while killings in Palestine are condemned. The study indicated bias where the intensity of the conflict in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah overshadowed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in media reporting. Schweitzer (2011) pointed out the media's crucial role in shaping public opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, especially among Western audiences, highlighting the importance of how media influences public sentiment. Schweitzer also pointed to potential changes in Palestinian public communication. If Palestinian leaders use the media effectively, they could deliver the message from their side and shift perceptions towards traditional narratives. These changes can be achieved by providing a new perspective on Middle Eastern politics beyond traditional discourse.

McTigue (2011) examined bias in media coverage of conflict, which stems from several factors that greatly affect reporting. These biases are not limited to conflict reporting but extend to news coverage in other forms. Examining media sources and usage patterns is essential to understanding their reporting complexity. In this regard, a news source like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) strives to maintain impartiality to the best of its ability when reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The BBC journalists with global broadcasters and satellite channels are the “truth” seekers whose journalistic practices are drawn from their journalists’ reports and news engagements with leading regional and global news organisations such as the Associated Press and Al Jazeera. This practice ensures a robust and diverse approach to reporting international events. Research by Makhareh, Alharethy, and Campbell (2022) identified the critical role of major media outlets in portraying the image of minorities and the Arab Islamic world from Western perceptions. The finding showed how media often depict these groups of people as foreign devils and comic villains or highlight historical events like the creation of Israel, the Iranian Islamic revolution, and the demise of the Soviet Union. This portrayal contributes to fostering animosity and biases amongst Western audiences.

Turning the focus to the study by Ahmad et al. (2023), the aim is to investigate how Jordanian online newspapers covered the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in 2021. The study used a content analysis approach, examining news content from Jordanian daily newspapers, *Alrai*, *Addustoor* and *Alghad*, primarily citing information from field informants as primary sources. Notably, the study identified four key themes that are highly significant in terms of coverage: Advocacy for support for Gaza, critical scrutiny of Israeli actions and violations, emphasis on escalating conflict and identifying Arab positions on the conflict. This comprehensive analysis of the intensity of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict attests to its portrayal of calls for solidarity for Gaza, Israeli actions and abuses, and the escalation of the conflict, shed light on the subtle framing strategies the Jordanian media employs.

Faraj (2011) examined the coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in three Arab newspapers in 2009. The study found that by featuring various editorial preferences and regional interests, *Alrai* provided more detailed coverage of the conflict than Egypt’s *Ahram* and *AlQuds Alarabi*. According to the findings, there was more coverage (42%) of themes of the political fallout from the conflict than there was for the effects on the Palestinian people (26.5%). Ananza (2017) conducted an in-depth analysis of Palestinian-Israeli conflict coverage by examining three Jordanian online newspapers, namely *Ammon*, *Saraya*, and *Al-Sawsana*, in 2014. He found that the conflict is covered, generally, indicating its high presence in Jordanian media discourse. Al-Salhi’s (2014) study focused on how Egyptian online newspaper websites address Arab political problems and found that the Palestinian issue received minimal attention among the Arab issues, accounting for only 10% of the coverage. Thus, this finding highlights the selectivity of topical priorities in Egyptian media, reflecting broader local dynamics and editorial decisions.

Turning to the American media, Stawicki (2009) set out to reveal how three American newspapers cover the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The analysis reflected the Israeli government’s focus on legislation, policy, security, and conflict at the individual level, highlighting specific aspects emphasised by these newspapers. Tenenboim (2017) analysed and studied Twitter messages posted by 40 international and Israeli journalists related to the conflict. The analysis revealed that Israeli media concentrated on rocket attacks targeting Israel, whereas international media emphasised events in the Gaza Strip and the conflict’s humanitarian impact. This gap in information coverage reflects the diversity of perspectives and priorities in the media. Durante and Zhuravskaya’s (2018) study highlighted how the timing of Israeli government attacks is strategically planned to minimise negative publicity in the US.

Arrosyid & Halwati’s (2021) study painted the different compositions of news about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in Indonesia’s two largest news platforms *republika.co.id* and *kompas.com*. The study highlighted how journalists’ characteristics and attitudes shape international news coverage, especially of the conflict. *Republika.co.id* comments focused on the perceived failure of the United Nations Security Council to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, highlighting the plight of the Palestinians and the need for international assistance in formulating argumentative strategies to present Palestine as a vulnerable entity worthy of global attention. In contrast, *kompas.com* took a neutral stance, reporting on efforts to de-escalate the conflict without explicitly favouring one side over the other. These differences in coverage reflect different editorial preferences and local interests in media organisations.

This research employed Framing Theory, which measures the implicit meaning of the media message. The theory asserts that media shapes individual opinions and ideas on salient issues the media highlights. News is the window for reality perception on various issues and events. It focuses on specific parts while omitting others. As a result, a particular aspect of reality is seen as more prominent than the others and subsequently forms the interpretative framework for the audiences to understand the message. The media frame highlights specific parts of reality where the media text influences readers' decoding abilities. It entails the salience and selection processes. to draw attention to a certain reality in the news (Tuchman, 1978; Entman, 1993).

The framing process, also called frame building, starts with highlighting a specific aspect of a news event, identifying the problem, diagnosing the cause, and recommending solutions to the problem (Gamson, 1992). Media news is built from journalist's perspectives to provide a framework for their audience's consumption. The audience then stores the interpretation of the event in a scheme that could be joined to decode new events. The framing process will determine if people pay attention, understand, and remember a problem, affecting how the audience evaluates and responds to the problem. The same new story may involve different frames depending on how the story is structured, which could trigger different audience perceptions derived from the media frames. Once a term is widely accepted, framing, like affirmative action, could exert great social power. However, the frame generally affects a large portion of audiences; it does not imply that the effect is universal (Gamson, 1992; Entman, 1993; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984, p.343).

The two types of frames are thematic and episodic frames. Episodic frames are news stories that take "the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depict public issues in terms of concrete instances" (Iyengar, 1991, p.14). On the contrary, thematic framing refers to news stories that place "public issues in some more general or abstract context and takes the form of a 'take out', or 'backgrounder', report directed at general outcomes or directions" (Iyengar, 1991, p.14). Episodic frames are a potent form of communication that transmits information to audiences by reducing the complexity of social problems (Bas & Grabe, 2015; Zillmann, 2006). The human mind can store and recall information better with concrete examples (i.e. episodic frame) rather than thematic information (Schmierbach & Boyle, 2020). Using episodic framing to portray social problems as individual cases shifts the responsibility onto the individual rather than addressing it at a broader societal level (Iyengar, 1991). Comparatively, when an individual encounters a news story focused on a specific case (episodic framing) rather than a broader narrative linked to societal patterns (e.g., thematic framing), they tend to internalise the issue, viewing it as a personal concern rather than a societal one. This shift leads to a greater sense of personal responsibility and involvement in the issue at hand (Iyengar, 1991; Rucinski, 1992).

On the contrary, thematic news frames highlighted the environment and trends over time on the issue covered. A thematic frame focuses on the context where it defines an "issue" as public in nature, and thus, it outlines how to address and rectify the conditions that caused the problem. Thematic framing asks for better policies that are appropriately solved in the realm of the policy. When a piece of news is framed episodically, it is more likely that audiences hold the authority to solve the problem. The more news is covered in context and theme, the more likely the audience will perceive the issue as appropriate for collective action (Framework UK, 2017).

Methodology

This study analyses how *The Star Online*, a prominent Malaysian online news outlet, frames the Israel-Palestine conflict. It combines quantitative and qualitative content analysis using a mixed-methods methodology. From 7th October 2023 to 7th January 2024, keyword searches such as "Israel-Palestine conflict" and "Gaza War" are performed to obtain pertinent news articles. Since this study aims to examine the topics, the sources cited, and the media framework treatments for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict 2023 from a Malaysian media perspective, only national news is selected. It also excludes other journalistic categories, such as commentaries, editorials, opinions, etc, and merely focuses on news coverage. The entire news story, including the headline, is scrutinised to find the relevant topics discussed and subsequently reveals the media framework treatment in this prominent Malaysian online newspaper. The units of analysis are the news

headlines and the paragraphs of the story. Paragraph by paragraph is content analysed to look for the sources and the protruding topics covered in the story. Subsequently, the themes are revealed.

The media depict an issue or event using words, sentences, phrases, and images, shaping the frames through which they are presented. These frames guide the audience in deciding on an issue and potentially form public opinion. A theory of framing judges content analysis and concludes by coding the dominant meanings that are salient and influential. The process aims to measure how the most significant clusters of message frames relate to the audience's schemata (Boukes, 2022; Entman, 1989; Entman & Rojecki, 1993; Tuchman, 1978). A manual content analysis was performed to identify the main topics discussed in the Gaza conflict and determine whether they were presented with an episodic or thematic frame. Themes were found by selecting the keywords from the text, coding, categorising, and lastly, interpreting the categorisation. Content analysis was conducted to determine the textual meaning and, subsequently, to identify the frames.

The Findings

1. Topics Covered & Sources Cited in Israel-Palestine News Reporting

A total of 113 national news that covered the Israel-Palestine conflicts were analysed. The finding, as shown in *Table 1*, revealed that the top 6 topics covered in *The Star Online* include: Humanitarian aid to Palestine (15.93%, N=18), Malaysia urged ASEAN, Islamic countries, and the international community to end the Gaza conflict (15.04%, N=17), Malaysia and international communities condemned and boycotted Israel and its supporter countries (11.50%, N=13), Malaysian Prime Minister met world country leaders to resolve conflict (10.62%, N=12), Malaysia asserted firm support to Palestine (10.62%, N=12), United Nations pressure Malaysia for her stand (10.62%, N=12).

The top 6 topics covered were followed by other topics such as Malaysian schools urging to remain neutral (7.08%, N=8), Malaysia and international communities urging for a ceasefire in Gaza (5.31%, N=6), Malaysian victims in Gaza (4.42%, N=5), Social media blocked Malaysia videos showing support to Palestine in Gaza conflict (4.42%, N=5), Malaysia is urged to support Palestine refugees (1.77%, N=2), and others (2.64%, N=3).

Table 1. Topics covered in *The Star Online*

Topic	No.	%
Humanitarian aid to Palestine	18	15.93
Malaysia urged ASEAN, Islamic countries and the international community to end the Gaza conflict	17	15.04
Malaysia and international communities condemned and boycotted Israel and its supporter countries	13	11.50
Malaysian Prime Minister met world country leaders to resolve conflict.	12	10.62
Malaysia asserted firm support for Palestine.	12	10.62
UN pressure Malaysia for her stand	12	10.62
Malaysian schools urged to remain neutral	8	7.08
Malaysia and international communities urged for a ceasefire in Gaza	6	5.31
Malaysian victims in Gaza	5	4.42
Social media blocked Malaysia videos showing support to Palestine in Gaza conflict	5	4.42
Malaysia urged to support Palestine refugees	2	1.77
Others	3	2.64
TOTAL	113	100

2. Media Treatment Frameworks in Israel-Palestine News Reporting

Table 2 shows the topics and media treatment framework covered by *The Star Online* by sources. Sources cited in this conflict are dominantly the Prime Minister of Malaysia (38.05%, N=43), Malaysian Ministers (10.62%, N=12), Members of the Parliament of Malaysia (10.62%, N=12) and Malaysian Foreign Ministry (8.85%, N=10). A small portion of coverage goes to sources such as Non-governmental Organisation (7.96%, N=9), politicians & advocates (7.08%, N=8), Malaysian rulers (5.31%, N=6), Palestinian / Lebanon Ambassador to Malaysia (2.65%, N=3), Inspector-General of Police (2.65%, N=3), World Health Organisation & Malaysia representative to United Nations (1.77%, N=2), ASEAN countries (0.89%, N=1) and others (celebrities, commercial organisation, expert & public) (3.54%, N=4).

Table 2. Topics and media treatment framework in *The Star Online* by sources

Source(s)	Media Treatment Framework N (%)	Total framework(s) N (%)	Topic(s)
Prime Minister of Malaysia	Strategic - 21 (20.39%) Episodic - 14 (12.39%) Humanitarian - 5 (4.42%) Religion - 3 (2.65%)	43 (38.05%)	1. Urged ASEAN, Islamic countries, International community to end the conflict
			2. Call for ceasefire in Gaza
			3. Meeting world countries' leaders to resolve conflict
			4. Showed firm support to Palestine
			5. Condemned and boycotted Israel and its supporter countries
			6. US and UN pressure Malaysia
			7. Urge for support in APEC
			8. Humanitarian aid to Palestine
			9. Denied army support to Palestine
			10. The world must be against Western hypocrisy
			11. Malaysia is upset with the US for vetoing the UN resolution to ceasefire in Gaza
			12. Malaysia banned vessel from Israel
			13. Thai thanks Malaysia for helping to free Thai hostage
			14. Malaysian students know the conflict by no force
Malaysian Ministers	Episodic - 10 (8.85%) Strategic - 1 (0.88%) Humanitarian - 1 (0.88%)	12 (10.62%)	1. Condemned on Israel regime
			2. Tik-tok blocked/removed Malaysian content on the Gaza conflict
			3. Support for Palestine
			4. Monetary aid to Palestine
			5. Palestine refugees issue not discussed in Cabinet
			6. PM is not weak in this issue
			7. Guidelines needed for Palestine Solidarity Week
			8. Complaints to social media
			9. Malaysia's peacekeeping effort
			10. No threat to Malaysia
			11. Solidarity Week is about peace and love.
Members of Parliament (MP) of Malaysia	Strategic - 5 (4.42%) Episodic - 4 (3.545) Humanitarian - 3 (2.65%)	12 (10.62%)	1. The US did not pose a threat to Malaysia
			2. Support for Palestine and its refugees
			3. UN urged to mediate ceasefire
			4. Cabinet supports for Palestine
			5. Calls for solidarity for Palestine
			6. Urged to pray for children
			7. MP had a diplomatic protest over bloodshed in Gaza
Malaysian Foreign Ministry	Strategic - 5 (4.42%) Liability - 2 (1.77%) Episode - 3 (2.65%)	10 (8.85%)	1. Urge Saudi Arabia, China, Turkey to support Palestine
			2. Malaysian victims in Gaza
			3. Demarche notice from the US is serious
			4. Raised funds for Palestine
			5. Condemned Israel for being inhumane and violating international laws.
NGO	Episodic - 5 (4.42%) Strategic - 2 (2.65%) Liability - 1 (0.88%) Religion - 1 (0.88%)	9 (7.96%)	1. Asked for rallies and gatherings to support Palestine
			2. Urge to cut ties with Israel
			3. Urge aggressive diplomacy against Israel
			4. Urge to stop killing
			5. Stop violence against journalists
			6. Reject Israel & support Palestine
			7. Urge to be neutral in school

Politicians & Advocates	Episodic - 5 (4.42%)	8 (7.08%)	1. Oppose on supporting Israel
	Religion - 1 (0.88%)		2. Support for Palestine
	Liability - 1 (0.88%)		3. Palestine Solidarity Week in school is unwise and without clear guidelines
	Strategic - 1 (0.88%)		4. Isolate Israel, improve Palestine's lives
Malaysian Rulers	Strategic - 1 (0.88%)	6 (5.31%)	1. Urged global leaders and global community to ceasefire in Gaza
	Episodic - 1 (0.88%)		2. Condemned Israel
Palestinian / Lebanon Ambassador to Malaysia	Strategic - 1 (0.88%)	3 (2.65%)	1. Palestine appreciates Malaysia's support
	Episodic - 1 (0.88%)		2. No celebration on Christmas
Inspector-General of Police	Humanitarian - 1 (0.88%)	3 (2.65%)	3. Assured Malaysia is safe and no threat against Malaysia on its stand in supporting Palestine
	Episodic - 3 (2.65%)		
WHO & Malaysia representative to the United Nations	Humanitarian -1 (0.88%)	2 (1.77%)	1. Urged to stop damage
	Episodic - 1 (0.88%)		2. Urged 121 countries to stand up for Palestine
ASEAN countries	Strategic - 1 (0.88%)	1 (0.89%)	3. ASEAN urged to help to end the conflict
Others (Celebrities, organisations, Expert & Public)	Episodic - 3 (2.65%) Strategic - 1 (0.88%)	4 (3.54%)	1. Pledge donation
			2. Malaysia's approach to Palestine effective
			3. Parents disagreed with Palestine Solidarity Week in school
			4. Defamation claim for supporting Israel

There are 5 media treatment frameworks found in this study , namely episodic frame (44.25%, N=50), strategic frame (34.51%, N=39), humanitarian frame (12.39%, N=14), liability frame (3.54%, N=4), and religious frame (5.31%, N=6) (See *Table 3*). Less than half of the news coverage employs an episodic frame (44.25%, N=50), where it focuses on the event without providing context that furnishes the audience with the background story of the event. This framework usually portrays the issue as an individual factual event.

On the other hand, there are about 55.75% (N=63) of the stories employ a thematic frame in which the events are discussed in the political, economic, or social context. Among the thematic frames, there are the strategic framework, humanitarian framework, liability framework, and religious framework. Strategic frameworks concentrate on events within the context of their action plans, influencing the national security of the state and aligning with political and military outcomes. Liability frameworks attribute responsibility for an event to an individual or entity involved. The humanitarian framework introduces a human or emotional aspect to the event through thoughtful language and a dramatic portrayal. In contrast, the religious framework examines a story from the faith perspective.

Table 3. Media treatment framework in *The Star Online*.

Framework	No.	%
Episodic	50	44.25
Thematic – Strategic	39	34.51
Thematic – Humanitarian	14	12.39
Thematic – Liability	4	3.54
Thematic – Religion	6	5.31
TOTAL	113	100

For the thematic framework, most of the strategic framework was cited from the sources of the Malaysian Prime Minister (20.39%, N=21), Members of Parliament (MP) of Malaysia (4.42%, N=5), and the Malaysian Foreign Ministry (4.42%, N=5) whereas Humanitarian frames were mostly cited from the source of Malaysian Prime Minister (4.42%, N=5), Malaysian Rulers (2.65%, N=3) and Malaysia MP (2.65%, N=3). Liability frames are cited from the Malaysian Foreign Minister (1.77%, N=2), NGO (0.88%, N=1), and politicians & Advocates (0.88%, N=1). Religion frames come from the source of the Malaysian Prime Minister (2.65%, N=3), NGO (0.88%, N=1), politicians & advocates (0.88%, N=1), and Malaysian Rulers (0.88%, N=1). On the other hand, the episodic framework is cited from the source of the Malaysian Ministers

(8.85%, N=10), NGO (4.42%, N=5), Politicians & advocates (4.42%, N=5), Foreign Ministry (2.65%, N=3) and Inspector-General of Police (2.65%, N=3).

Discussion

The Star Online's coverage of this conflict is mostly thematic. It is discussed in the political, economic and social context where it asserts Malaysia's stand on supporting Palestine while condemning Israel's attack on Palestine. Islamic countries and international communities are urged to cease fire and end the Gaza conflict. Thematic frames dedicate the responsibility of the event to society and the community as a whole. A substantial part of the story involved the Malaysian Prime Minister, who discussed the event in the context of political collaboration, humanitarian aid, and the responsibility of the regional and international community to resolve the conflict. Religion is a salient topic where the Islamic countries figured and met to help solve the Gaza conflict. On the other hand, the news story's episodic framework was presented as an isolated case where the complexity of the conflict is reduced in the coverage. It does not relate to a broader societal problem. The way of reporting leads the individual to place the responsibility on himself.

The Star Online emphasised the humanitarian aid and the support Malaysia gives to Palestine while condemning and boycotting Israel for its brutal attack in Gaza. *The Star Online* conveys the Malaysian Government's and its leaders' stance, urging the ASEAN, Islamic countries, and the international community to stop the conflict. The coverage highlighted Malaysia's leaders' initiative to urge other countries' leaders to resolve the conflict. More than half of the media frames are thematic, where the story is discussed from a wider lens and in societal, economic, and political contexts. Strategic, humanitarian, liability and religious frameworks are among the thematic frames found in this study.

This study's finding is consistent with Ahmad et al. (2023) and Tenenboim's (2017) results, where *The Star Online*, like any international media, concentrated on the humanitarian impact. The four key themes Ahmad et al. (2023) identified, namely advocacy for support for Gaza, critical scrutiny of Israeli actions and violations, emphasis on escalating conflict, and identifying the country's positions on the conflict, are very similar to what this study found. However, contrary to the findings of other scholars (Stawicki, 2009; Al-Salhi, 2014), topical priorities are found in the humanitarian and religious contexts in *The Star Online*. The Malaysian Government focuses on security and conflict at the societal level and from a religious perspective.

Conclusion

News stories are always valuable sources of information for audiences to gauge the significant events around the world, especially those that involve international battles like the Gaza conflict, where the global audience is watching from a distance. News stories offer content communicating salient points that could impact public opinion, policy formation, and reaction. This study's results indicated that thematic and episodic frames were found in *The Star Online* coverage, where the thematic frames appeal as the dominant one. Solving the conflict is the societal responsibility where ASEAN, Islamic, and international communities are expected to work hand-in-hand to the conflict's ceasefire.

The media frames scrutinised consequences and proposed solutions to the conflict despite the conflict's root causes needing to be discoursed. The main topics found reflected Entman's frames in solving the problem, including humanitarian aid to Palestine; Malaysia urging ASEAN, Islamic countries, and the international community to end the Gaza conflict; Malaysia and international communities condemning and boycotting Israel and its supporter countries; Malaysian Prime Minister met world country leaders to resolve conflict; and Malaysia showed firm support to Palestine. In showing firm support for Palestine, the coverage is dominantly linked to religious sentiment, particularly Islam. The reporting is moving towards peace journalism, in which most stories concentrate on solutions and peace-making rather than conflict, dispute, and disagreement. Authority such as the Malaysian Prime Minister, Malaysian Ministers, and the Malaysian Foreign Ministry appeared as dominant sources in the stories where the authority's stands are depicted as Malaysians' stand. This study contributes to filling the literature gap of conflict reporting from Malaysia's media perspective. Malaysia, a secular country with its official religion as Islam, has its unique stand among ASEAN and Asia countries. Therefore, this study contributed to understanding conflict reporting and how it could impact public discourse, political resolution, and regulations. However, it focused on the new media coverage, where online

media was taken as a sample. In the future, a comparison study could be conducted to investigate the new media coverage as opposed to the traditional media coverage in conflict reporting, keeping in mind peace journalism where “peace” is not merely the absence of conflict but coverage that promotes justice, equity, and harmony.

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