

Mediatization and Populism Approach through Media Content Analysis of Newspapers during Sarawak's Election and Midterm Transition Government 2020

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the relationship and adaptation of mediatization of politics with populism into media content of seven (7) Sarawak newspapers, namely Borneo Post, New Sarawak Tribune, Utusan Sarawak, Utusan Borneo, Suara Sarawak, See Hua Daily, and Sin Chew Daily during Sarawak's election and the Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020 by using quantitative content analysis. The Hoslti Inter-coder reliability and validity, Chi-Square, and One-way ANOVA tests were used on 695 news items. The results demonstrate that the Hoslti Inter-coder reliability and validity averaged 93%, above 70%. The Chi-Square test proved the news headline, government initiation, government response, and blame attribution (substance blame and non-policy blame) at the 0.001 level (2 tailed $p < 0.0005$), and we rejected the null hypothesis. As for opposition response, and blame attribution (substance and non-policy blame), the p-value is more significance level (2-tailed $p > 0.0005$), and we do not reject the null hypothesis. For mediatization of politics, only two (2) issues under media logic have p-values above .05, which are conflict (0.054) and opinionated and narrative news articles (0.143) with F values of 6.957 and 6.364. In political logic, result showed that p-value is less than .05 which there is a statistically significant difference in newspaper coverage. Anti-elitism (0.161) has a p-value more significant than .05, with F value is 1.797 in populism. People-centrism and mistrust of experts have p-values less than .05. This results in a statistically significant difference in newspaper coverage.

Keywords: *Mediatization of politics, populism, newspapers, content analysis, Sarawak.*

INTRODUCTION

In a society that being split by political power, religious divisions, cultural and ideological dominances, and media information power, democracy demands unrestricted access to information and free expression. Almahallawi and Zanuddin (2018) claimed geography, political power, religious, cultural, ideological, economic, and information power separate the world. McGuire (1981) and Roger (1983) concur that well-planned, meticulous, and time-consuming media campaigns may alter attitudes, trust values, and practice. The media sends voters election-related messages.

The Influence of Mediatization of Politics and Populism through Media in Electoral Democracy

The media emerged as a populist player in Sarawak's election by seeing it as a contest of manifestos or promises, with populist actors depending on the media to fulfil their aims or disseminate misinformation to affect polling results (Govindasamy, 2021).

Figure 1 shows Sarawak's coordinates: 0° 50' to 5° N, 109° 36' to 115° 40' E. It is 800 km long and 124,449.51 km² on Borneo's northwest coast. Peninsular Malaysia is 600 km away. Brunei is an enclave in Sabah. Kalimantan borders Sarawak. Sarawak contains coastal peat swamps, narrow deltaic and alluvial plains, 300-500 meter hills, and mountain highlands ascending to the Kalimantan border. Batang Rajang runs southwest from the Iran Mountains to Kapit, which swings west to the South China Sea. The river is passable by ocean-going vessels 130 km to Sibu and shallow-draft boats 160 km inland (The Official Portal of Sarawak Government, 2022). A total of 61.2% of Sarawak's 2,907,500 people are Dayak, 20.1% Malay, 17.2% Chinese, 3.0% Melanau, and 0.5% others. Malay Iban, Bidayuh, and Sarawak Malay are widely spoken. Christianity (50.1%) is the main religion, followed by Islam (34.2%), Buddhism (12.8%), and Others (2.9%).



Figure 1: Sarawak map

Source: The Official Portal of Sarawak Government (2022, Sept 5).
https://sarawak.gov.my/web/home/article_view/159/176/?id=159

During 14th General Election (GE14), the media influenced the democratic elections. After GE14, when *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) toppled *Barisan Nasional* (BN), the Malaysian media landscape changed dramatically. Sarawak, a BN stronghold, accepted the people's power in GE14, transforming the political landscape. *Democratic Action Parti* (DAP) and *Parti Keadilan Rakyat* (PKR) won 12 seats (Election Commission of Malaysia, 2018).

Political parties in Sarawak campaigned on local concerns, such as Malaysian Agreement 1963 or MA63 and state nationalism, specifically Native Customary Right (NCR) Land, during GE14, rather than national ones that impacted voting trends (Chin, 2018). COVID-19 has affected practically all worldwide activities. Due to the increasing number of patients and the epidemic's impacts, Malaysia declared an emergency on January 12, 2021, until August 1, 2021, and a movement control order on March 18, 2020, until November 1, 2020. Voting was outlawed. For example, the constitution does not need elections during a pandemic, although the Council of Europe urged it in 2020 (Council of Europe, 2020).

The Sarawak State Legislative Assembly was dissolved on November 3, 2021, as the Malaysian King or *Yang Di-pertuan Agong* revoked Sarawak's Proclamation of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The 12th State Election, or SE12, was conducted

on December 20, 2021 (NST, 2021). 349 candidates from eight parties and independents contested 82 SE12 seats. According to Malaysia's Election Commission, *Gabungan Parti Sarawak* (GPS) formed a new administration in Sarawak in 2021. *Parti Sarawak Bersatu* (PSB) won four seats and is the first Sarawak-based opposition party to win since 2006. PH won two seats, but DAP lost many (Aga, 2021) as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Sarawak election's result for GE14 and SE13

Sarawak Elections' Results		
Party	14th General Election (Parliament)	12th State Election (State)
<i>Barisan Nasional</i> (BN)	19	
<i>Parti Islam Se-Malaysia</i> (PAS)	0	
<i>Parti Keadilan Rakyat</i> (PKR)/ <i>Harapan</i>	4	
<i>Democratic Action Party</i> (DAP)	6	2
<i>Independent</i>	2	
<i>Gabungan Parti Sarawak</i> (GPS)		76
<i>Parti Sarawak Bersatu</i> (PSB)		4
TOTAL	31	82

Along with GE14 and SE12, the government's 2020 transition to the National Alliance or *Perikatan Nasional* has transformed Malaysia's political landscape. Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad resigned and was succeeded by Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. After GE14, PH governed for 22 months. After *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* or PPBM exited the alliance, PH lost its House majority. GPS helps Sarawak's new prime minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. Sarawak's premier stated that the GPS would not join the National Alliance or *Perikatan Nasional* but rather function as an independent party (Astro Awani, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Populism

Marcos-Marne et al. (2021) highlighted that there is a connection between populism with the politician's ideologist. Populism is a growing, multifaceted phenomenon. Populists have exploited the media to relay information, sometimes highlighting the rival party's faults or shortcomings while obfuscating the present government's problems, developing suspicion of the homeland's political climate. Populist campaigns win votes.

Populism is a global political or intellectual conversation, including the media. Populism is connected to a country's socioeconomic state and governing party's image, causing corruption scandals that weaken democracy. In fact, populists on either the right-wing or the left-wing will engage in extensive personal politics to advance their own interests (Aydin et al., 2021). Populism relies on the media. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) say all political phenomena, including populism, are cultural, political and social.

Populism involves sovereignty, the people, the elite and the populist actor. Figure 2 indicates that populists but not elites gain from populism. Populism challenges political parties. Kraus (2021) suggested that understanding the societal roots of populist uprisings will help explain national disparities. Populism has become a catchall word for modern democratic disenchantment. Populism is sloppy. Its use against projects threatening liberal democracies has mixed democratic renewal protest movements with backward trends.

The transition to electoral democracy may worsen, remain stable, or improve. Populist actors utilise communication to push their ideas and get media attention. Media helps people and organisations communicate. Newspaper and TV headlines should demonstrate that politicians care about "the people." They want to display their public service and election-day worthiness.

Positive populism encourages political involvement; bad populism creates civic strife (Muller, 2016). Populism promotes democracy by presenting political concerns and ideas. Populism may cause political divides and impede alliance development.

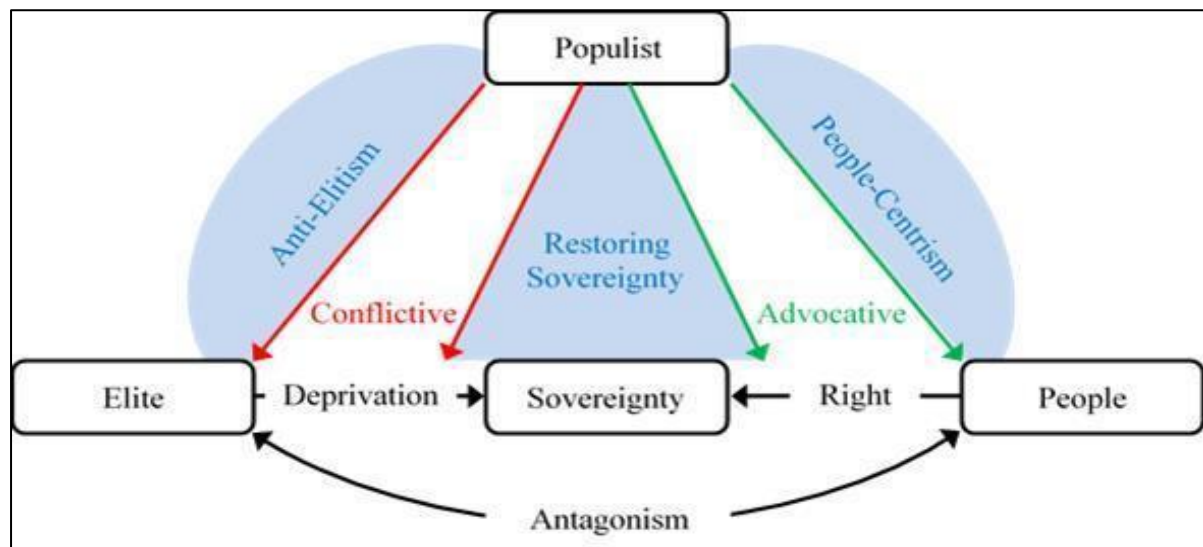


Figure 2: General concept of populist ideology
 Source: Wirth et al. (2016).

Mediatization of Politics

Mediatization refers to how the media influences society's structures and institutions till a social revolution as defined by Strömbäck (2008) between mediation and mediatization. Media connects people to social, political, and economic institutions. Mediatization shows the growth of media logic in politics and political players' reliance on the media.

The media's long-term influence on political, social and economic life is called the "mediatization of politics." Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) studied the mediatization of politics and found that leadership and action have long been mediated in the global political arena (Figure 3). Kho and Zawawi (2023) stated that, regardless of a restrictive media system or a shifting political landscape, there is widespread mediatization of politics. Hence, whether it be conventional media or digital media, political actors are embracing their dependence on media.

Mediating politicians is prevalent. Voters look up to politicians. Manucci (2017) argues that populism and the media have a long-standing relationship; the use of media, especially electronic media, has become a critical medium for political parties to rule through populist messages, so the media industry's role must be adapted to the ruling political party's needs.

Digital mediatization of politics in Malaysia has escalated social media hacks, according to a study (Leong, 2021). These technologies allow citizens, especially youth, to voice their ideas. Kelm et al. (2019) investigated politicians' social media engagement and

impressions. Political mediatization was measured using four polls of German parliamentarians between 2012 and 2016. More MPs use Facebook and Twitter to promote their agenda.

Politicians have begun to follow media reasoning, even if journalists are cognizant of national security and civic unrest (Pintak et al., 2018). Most Pakistani journalists, politicians and media professionals feel the media is influential. Pakistan's media still affect a mature democracy's politics.

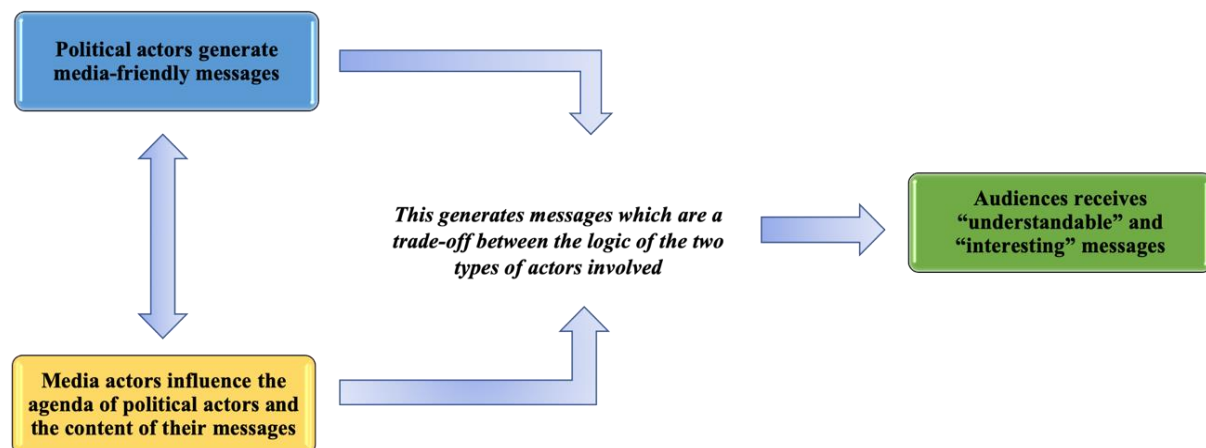


Figure 3: Mediatization of Politics Model
Source: Mazzoleni (2008).

Studies on political mediatization on Twitter during the 2013 German Federal Election reveal several trends (Jungherr et al., 2015). Twitter users are likelier to use #hashtags to discuss political party candidates, Angela Merkel's CDU, left-leaning parties, and important topics or concerns. Twitter was lively during the 2013 German Federal Election. Kho et al. (2015) also assessed *YouTube*, *KiniNews*, and *Media Rakyat* local news material to understand media logic and political logic in developing nations. In December 2014, 118 video clips were studied. Media and politics impacted 20% of the study's outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

This research examines and analyses the mediatization of politics and the populist approach to Sarawak's newspaper content on Sarawak's elections (GE14 and SE12) and the Midterm Transition of Government 2020, in order to answer the following question and hypothesis:

- RQ₁: How does the relationship between the mediatization approach and media populism affect the process of electoral democratic during Sarawak's election and Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020 through media content of Sarawak's newspaper?
- RQ₂: To what extent can the media logic, political logic and populism be adapted through the display of media content of Sarawak's newspaper during Sarawak's election and Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020?

A research hypothesis anticipates an experiment's outcome and quantifies the link between variables. This study's hypothesis addresses the next research goal.

- H₁: There is a significant difference in portraying the aspects in mediatization of politics with seven media contents of Sarawak's newspaper during such events.
- H₂: There is a significant difference in portraying the aspects of populism with seven media contents of Sarawak's newspaper during such events.

Quantitative content analysis was employed. This content analysis is utilised by Saifuddin and Zanuddin (2020). *The Borneo Post* (BP), *New Sarawak Tribune* (NST), *Utusan Sarawak* (US), *Utusan Borneo* (UB), *Suara Sarawak* (SV), *See Hua Daily* (SHD), and *Sin Chew Daily* (SCD) will be utilised.

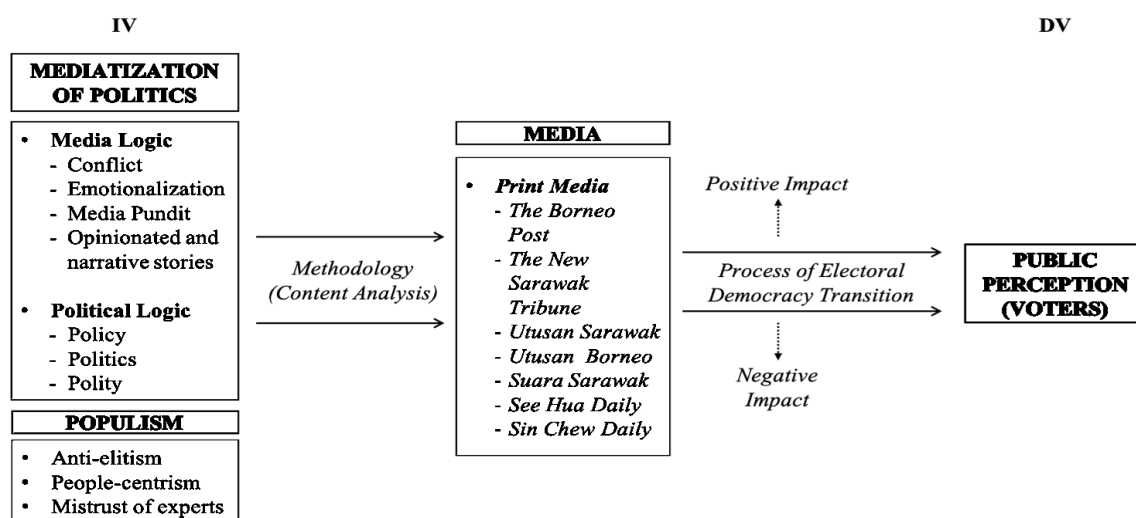


Figure 4: Research framework design

The researcher focused on the front page of news headlines starting with the nomination date on 28th April 2018 until polling day on 9th May 2018 for the 14th General Election. For the 12th Sarawak State Election, the researcher will focus on the nomination date from 6th December 2021 until after the election day (19th December 2021) and the new government transition from 21st February 2020 until 9th March 2020.

This study examines mediatization and populism. Each needs analysis. Opposition parties may need to adjust to media reasoning more than governmental parties, especially those with party problems or objectives (Strömbäck & Aelst, 2013). Figure 4 shows the study's design structure.

For quantitative content analysis, a coding book and sheet were adopted from Karidi (2018), Haßler et al. (2014), and Lynch and Peer (2002). 182 articles (91 per coder) were randomly chosen to test the variable. Inter-coder reliability:

$$CR = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

CR = Holsti's CR, level of agreement
 M = observed agreement
 N₁ = agreement of Coder 1
 N₂ = agreement of Coder 2

Two coders were assigned for this data coding and the results showed the average for seven newspapers is 0.93 or 93% as shown in Table 2 below. The validity and reliability intercoder test result for the selected newspaper samples is over 0.70 or 70% using the Holsti Formula (1980). After collecting the data, SPSS 26.0 was used to evaluate the coding sheets.

Table 2: Holsti inter-coder reliability test

Newspaper / Coder	Coder 1	Coder 2	Total Samples / Articles for each Newspaper	Total of Years	Total of Variables	Intercoder		Intercoder Reliability %		Average
						Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 1	Coder 2	
Borneo Post New	1143	1140	7	2	88	1143 / 1232	1140 / 1232	93	93	0.926 / 93%
Sarawak Tribune	1174	1170	7	2	88	1174 / 1232	1170 / 1232	95	95	0.9495 / 95%
Utusan Sarawak	1091	1116	7	2	88	1091 / 1232	1116 / 1232	89	91	0.895 / 90%
Utusan Borneo	1112	1139	7	2	88	1112 / 1232	1139 / 1232	90	92	0.9125 / 91%
Suara Sarawak	570	567	7	1	88	570 / 616	567 / 616	93	92	0.9225 / 92%
See Hua Daily	1188	1194	7	2	88	1188 / 1232	1194 / 1232	96	97	0.9645 / 96%
Sin Chew Daily	1165	1167	7	2	88	1165 / 1232	1167 / 1232	95	95	0.9463 / 95%
Total Average										93%

Total Average:

$$CR = \frac{6.5163}{7} \times 100$$

$$CR = 0.93 \text{ or } 93\%$$

RESULTS

The Coverage of Sarawak's Elections (GE14 and SE12) and Midterm Transition Government 2020 in the Newspapers

The descriptive statistic's sample was analysed. As shown in Table 3 below, a total of 695 news items were analysed throughout seven newspapers namely, *The Borneo Post* (BP), *New Sarawak Tribune* (NST), *Utusan Sarawak* (US), *Utusan Borneo* (UB), *Suara Sarawak* (SV), *See Hua Daily* (SHD), and *Sin Chew Daily* (SCD) for 14th General Election (GE14) which starting from 28 April 2018 until 10 May 2018, 12th State Election (SE12) from 6 December 2021 until 19 December 2021 and Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020 from 21 February 2020 until 4 March 2020 in Sarawak.

Based on Table 3, UB and NST carried the most significant coverage during GE14 from 28th April 2018 until 10th May 2019, with 47 (7%) and 46 (7%), respectively, followed by the US with 41 (6%), UB with 37 (5%), SHD with 37 (5%) and SCD with 18 (3%). SV has no news coverage since it has not issued newspapers.

From 6th to 19th December 2021, SE12 will have 226 news stories. SHD, UB, and BP covered the most news, 55 (8%), 53 (8%), and 43 (6%), followed by SCD, 30 (4%), SV, 16 (2%), US, and 15 (2%). During the Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020, 243 news

articles were identified, and 60 (12.8%) were from UB, 52 (11%) for BP and 44 (9.4%) from SHD news articles have been reported. This research analysed 25 news stories from the US (5.3%), SCD (5.3%), NST (4.5%), and SV (3.4%).

News direction were examined and there are three (3) types of news direction which are positive, negative, and neutral on the issues which can create the understanding or opinion from the readers based on aspects such as the news headlines, government, and opposition initiation, government and opposition response, and blame attribution (substance or non-policy blame) onto government and opposition.

Table 3: The frequency of news coverage for seven (7) newspapers in Sarawak

Newspaper	Frequency		
	28th April - 10th May 2018	21st February - 4th March 2020	6th – 19th December 2021
Borneo Post	37	52	43
New Sarawak Tribune	46	21	14
Utusan Sarawak	41	25	15
Utusan Borneo	47	60	53
Suara Sarawak	0	16	16
See Hua Daily	37	44	55
Sin Chew Daily	18	25	30
Total	226	243	226
Grand Total		695	

Overall, according to the data provided in Table 4, for the news headline aspect, the positive direction seemed more prominent in all seven (7) newspapers for the coverage of 360 (52%), followed by a negative direction of 207 (30%) and neutral direction is 128 (18%). Most press coverage on initiation is impartial, 367 or 53% for the government and 601 or 86% for opposition. The government has 293 positive news stories, compared to the opposition's 63.

This is the same with response aspect, the neutral direction is the highest direction for government, 431 news and opposition have 606 news, followed by positive direction for the government (226 news) and opposition (59 news) and negative direction is the lowest direction for both government and opposition with total 38 news and 30 news.

Among all the aspects, the researcher pointed out two main aspects of blame attribution in this study: substance blame and non-policy blame. Based on the result above, the neutral direction is the highest for both blame attributions compared to the other direction. Government news is 567 (82% neutral), and opposition news is 654 (94%). Non-policy blame aspects are neutral in 89% of government news and 93% of opposition news.

Therefore, based on further analysis, we can conclude that the neutral direction is the highest direction for all aspects of the news coverage except for the headline with the highest position direction.

Table 4: News direction

Aspects	News Direction		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral
News Headline	360 52%	207 30%	128 18%
<i>Initiation</i>	Government 293 42%	35 5%	367 53%
	Opposition 63 9%	31 5%	601 86%
<i>Response</i>	Government 226 33%	38 5%	431 62%
	Opposition 59 8%	30 5%	606 87%
Blame Attribution			
<i>Substance Blame</i>	Government 89 12%	39 6%	567 82%
	Opposition 12 2%	29 4%	654 94%
<i>Non-policy Blame</i>	Government 52 7%	26 4%	617 89%
	Opposition 8 2%	38 5%	649 93%

Total news for every aspects = 695 news

Thus, to further evaluate disparities across seven (7) newspapers in displaying the directions, the researcher carried out a Chi-Square test (as shown in Table 5 below) on the data and was led by these hypotheses:

Table 5: Chi-Square test results for news direction

News Direction Aspects	Chi-square Test Results		
	X ²	df	2-tailed p
News Headline	101.640	12	<0.0005
Government Initiation	122.512	12	<0.0005
Opposition Initiation	13.921	12	>0.0005
Government Response	116.730	12	<0.0005
Opposition Response	7.852	12	>0.0005
Blame Attribution (Substance Blame – Government)	100.013	12	<0.0005
Blame Attribution (Substance Blame – Opposition)	11.986	12	>0.0005
Blame Attribution (Non-policy Blame – Government)	78.327	12	<0.0005
Blame Attribution (Non-policy Blame – Opposition)	12.390	12	>0.0005

Among newspapers coverage in Sarawak's elections and Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020, Table 5 shows the result that only news headlines, government initiation, government response, blame attribution (substance blame-government and non-policy blame-government) are significant at 0.05, 2-tailed, degree of freedom 12. Therefore, these four (4) elements related strongly to the reader in Sarawak which is their sensitivity towards Sarawak's government action in the election campaign.

Analysis between Media Content of Sarawak's Newspapers and Mediatization of Politics

Table 6: Analysis of one-way ANOVA between media content of Sarawak's newspapers and mediatization of politics

Descriptives								
					95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Min.	Max.
<i>Media Logic</i>								
Conflict		1.8317	.59863	.10076	1.4744	1.8440	1.00	2.00
Emotionalization		1.5504	.48398	.01836	1.5143	1.5864	1.00	2.00
Media Pundits	695	1.6288	.47698	.01809	1.5933	1.6643	1.00	2.00
Opinionated and Narrative Stories		1.6824	.34719	.01317	1.6565	1.7082	1.00	2.00
<i>Political Logic</i>								
Policy		1.6087	.48018	.01822	1.5729	1.6444	1.00	2.00
Politics	695	1.5878	.49057	.01861	1.5513	1.6243	1.00	2.00
Polity		1.7806	.39667	.01505	1.7511	1.8101	1.00	2.00
ANOVA								
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
<i>Media Logic</i>								
Conflict	Between Group	5.343	6	0.890	6.957	0.054		
	Within Groups	85.755	688	0.125				
	Total	91.098	694					
Emotionalization	Between Group	16.641	6	2.774	13.045	0		
	Within Groups	146.022	688	0.212				
	Total	162.663	694					
Media Pundits	Between Group	11.663	6	1.944	8.949	0		
	Within Groups	146.520	688	0.213				
	Total	158.183	694					
Opinionated and Narrative Stories	Between Group	5.224	6	0.871	6.364	0.143		
	Within Groups	81.315	688	0.118				
	Total	86.539	694					
<i>Political Logic</i>								
Policy	Between Group	23.550	6	3.925	20.082	0		
	Within Groups	136.803	688	0.199				
	Total	160.353	694					
Politics	Between Group	19.200	6	3.200	14.949	0		
	Within Groups	147.858	688	0.215				
	Total	167.058	694					
Polity	Between Group	5.86	6	0.977	6.655	0		
	Within Groups	106.622	688	0.155				
	Total	112.482	694					

The researcher examined two aspects of mediatization of politics, such as the Media Logic and Political Logic as shown in Table 6. Media Logic contains four sub-headings covering a few issues that need to be analysed, such as conflict, emotionalization, media pundits and opinionated and narrative stories. Political Logic has three (3) subheadings: policy, politics

and polity. One-way ANOVA was used and the result shows mediatization of politics, such as media logic and political logic, only two (2) issues under media logic have more than .05 for p-value which is conflict (0.054) and opinionated and narrative stories (0.143), where the value of F is 6.957 and 6.364. We can say that there is no statistically significant difference between these issues with the newspaper's coverage.

However, another sub-heading on media logic and political logic is significant, with a p-value of less than .05. Due to that, there is a statistically significant difference between the issues with news coverage in the newspaper.

Analysis between Media Content of Sarawak's Newspapers and Populism

The researcher examined the populist components; anti-elitism, people-centrism, and mistrust of experts as shown in Table 7 below.

Based on the result of the One-way ANOVA between the sub-heading of populism, people-centrism and mistrust of experts, are significant, with a p-value of less than .05. Due to that, there are a statistically significant difference between the issues with news coverage in the newspaper, with the populism spectre.

Table 7: Analysis of one-way ANOVA between media content of Sarawak's newspapers and populism

Descriptives								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
<i>Populism</i>								
Anti-elitism		1.9401	.23724	.00900	1.9224	1.9577	1.00	2.00
People-centrism	695	1.6194	.48419	.01837	1.5834	1.6555	1.00	2.00
Mistrust of Experts		1.7453	.43599	.01654	1.7129	1.7778	1.00	2.00
ANOVA								
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
<i>Populism</i>								
Anti-elitism	Between Group	0.619	6	0.103	1.797	0.161		
	Within Groups	38.527	688	0.056				
	Total	39.146	694					
People-centrism	Between Group	23.238	6	3.873	19.133	0		
	Within Groups	139.554	688	0.203				
	Total	162.792	694					
Mistrust of Experts	Between Group	42.522	6	7.087	54.54	0		
	Within Groups	89.4	688	0.13				
	Total	131.922	694					

THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

Theoretical study shows that Sarawak's political system is mediatized since its legitimizing powers are not reliant on policy achievements or the validity of political party or populist actor arguments. In order to prove its claim of inclusivity, a Hoslti Inter-coder reliability and validity, Chi-square and One-way ANOVA test was used to examine the populist claim that democratic politics relies on publicity by using mediatization of politics, which consists of media logic, political logic, and populism theories that need to be studied. Mediatization of

the political system is a requirement for developing democratic politics and must be simultaneous to populism (Trenz, 2008).

The more a government values democracy, then more it relies on media coverage. When the government and its institutions rely on the media, politics is mediatized. This includes instances in which institutions successfully engage the media and all unsuccessful attempts to get the media on board with their publicity efforts, as well as instances in which the intention to engage the media is stated (satisfying the public's expectation for transparency) but never carried out. Sarawak's publicity efforts (their attempts to become public) must be grounded on democratic publicity that empowers the collective will via educated voter opinion. Hierarchical and neither participatory nor responsive, populist actor-media relationships are formed. Journalists are expected to report essential issues correctly and objectively. When populists dominate media freedom, this strategy will replace media news values with political system epistemic values and public benefit orientations.

Structures prohibit the Malaysian or Sarawak government from reacting directly to the media. There is no media reference system, and only national media exist. According to Cheneval et al. (2013) and Nicolaidis (2004), no attentive audience exists within a democracy with geographical, sectoral and irregular observers.

The political system functions or strives to operate by the ideals of 'enlightened government' reflective governance, i.e., governance that is influenced by and reflects on numerous views that mediate conflicting points of view. This polity's access to and presence in the public realm are mediated through national media, such as newspapers.

The mediatization of politics and populism in Malaysia and Sarawak is not imposed from the outside but produced by the political systems themselves. Legitimacy is affected by the framework news media apply to political processes and events, as well as the visibility filters news media apply to government or opposition arguments and explanations. Populist legitimacy in Malaysia and Sarawak would not exist without the media. How can new and old media reestablish social order and democratic legitimacy at the federal or state level? The news media observe social cohesiveness and discord. Through mass-mediated communication, voters feel like members of a national community and have the right to pick the party or populist actor that can legally and independently fulfil their manifesto or agenda, as stated in the Malaysia Federal Constitution (FC).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

The practical consequences of this research show that the theories about the mediatization of politics and populism are valid and help us to capture the legitimacy influence of media exposure, primarily traditional media such as newspapers in Sarawak, where Internet and technology coverage is weak.

This research is based on the idea that mediatization of politics, populism and the media and political system influence the general representation of the federal or state system of government and its public legitimation chances.

Lobbyists often hold influence against the people's desires. An elite or populist may dominate the entire population. Unfairness may spark violence. If the population believes resources are unfairly distributed, rejects a vertical type of organization and fights for a horizontal one, questions a system based on equal rights rather than absolute equality, feels deprived or has higher unmet expectations, does not identify with the culture or has little

respect for its leaders, the political regime loses legitimacy. Democracy depends on how it works and creates. Therefore, it must provide security, equality, and social cohesion.

Media logic refers to how the media work. Media logic impacts society significantly. All mass media conform to a universal media logic that defines media consumers and, ultimately, the. The media has become an autonomous institution that controls political players and groups.

"Mediatization" refers to negative repercussions of mass media growth. The media affect political processes, players, and institutions. The mediatization viewpoint says media have become self-sufficient with comparable operating circumstances, selection criteria, and display forms. Audiences and politicians rely on the media since it is often the sole source of political information. They must follow media rules, ensuring that media logic will impact political processes over time. New media developments put into question established mediatization assumptions. Specifically, an independent media organization with a unified media logic is complex.

Media logic in the television era involves big-scale, centralized production and transmission of political information to a broad audience. Media cast doubt on universal media logic, resulting in a media dependency on politics. Before the Internet, traditional media, especially television, provided presentation strategies and content categories. In most media organizations, content creation and dissemination are unorganized.

Due to media user empowerment, audience dependency has grown troublesome. Multiplication and diversity of communications allow media users, particularly political players, to bypass mass media screening and gatekeeping, evading media control. Theoretically, consumers no longer depend on prefabricated media material. They may select from many choices and use new media to generate content or adjust media messaging. Even though only a tiny fraction of individuals has used these alternatives, they might erode the mainstream media's autonomy and interventionist power over time.

Media performance in assisting the democratic system has long been considered normative. Although these performance expectations refer to the "old order" of media professionals producing political news and current affairs for a primarily passive mass audience, they are still valid in the "new order," where, on the one hand, mass media are better equipped to serve these functions, such as media have widened citizens' window on the world of politics through an abundance of reports and comments by bloggers, citizen journalists, and web page commenters. These possibilities have sparked discussions about the media as a cure for the looming democratic disaster.

Digital media developments challenge conventional news media. The media ecosystem provides new methods to engage in public discussions and alternate sources of information. Political players depend less on traditional media and news outlets. This does not mean the political media are less important.

Populism is not a democratic dilemma. It is a symbol of people's power. It happens when a crowd or its leaders cannot stand the present situation and are prepared to break the law to alter it. This radicalises populism. Once in power, populist politicians that accept a non-democratic political regime are anti-systemic and opportunistic. The language is anti-status quo, yet the audience expects incremental reforms, not a political rule change. First, mention the latter.

Because a stream of thought is impractical and abstract, it is also thin-centred for being ambiguous yet beneficial in its core ideas, so more people may be convinced that it is what they desire. Populism is not left, right, progressive, or conservative. Populism has several "host ideologies." Populism is a strategy for obtaining what the people desire, not a worldview. This is why some consider it the weakest answer. This difference might benefit comparative research: populism is a discourse, not an ideology. Populism is a powerful message. Anti-establishment respects traditions and institutions that do not represent public will or perception, according to speeches, party platforms, and news releases.

Populism is a strange power grab. Voting behaviour research reveals false dichotomy and prejudice. Because not all populist supporters vote for the same party or subscribe to the same political theory, it is essential to separate populism from coexisting but unrelated qualities. Populism is a mobilizing tool, not a concept. Instead of populists, judicial institutions feared mob violence. Left-wing and right-wing groupings diverge at this level. Social movements consider non-electoral interest groups mainstream players. Movement parties are electoral challengers, whereas political parties are electoral mainstays.

Populism may occur amid economic crises, social unrest, and religious fanaticism. Thus, it is always a political occurrence. According to this notion, everything is political. This concept is practical, though unpopular. Recessions can inspire populism, but not enough. People may feel obligated to resist austerity measures that restrict job prospects or result in high unemployment and taxes if they see imminent economic hardship. Lack of trust in government institutions has undoubtedly mined the field. Lack of representation is another possibility. Economic disparity or social heterogeneity also provides the affluent with disproportionate political influence. The poor and disadvantaged grow enraged at the affluent and influential, causing a snowball effect.

Extreme, anti-systemic, opportunistic: that is populism. It is a social movement, not just a passionate speech or large protest. Populism is not a theory. Adapting to angry people who feel obligated to do something out of the norm to solve their difficulties requires a complex stream of thinking and a chameleon-like mindset. Different groups' thoughts and viewpoints may differ. Right-wing ideas are more popular than left-wing ones. Religious fanaticism, sports hooliganism, media excesses, and other harmful activities may imperil some. People with solid emotional desires may fall victim to radicals if they are not watchful.

Malaysia's electoral democracy system must be understood in terms of media prominence and news coverage of populist leaders, the overall modification of representational politics, and its influence on Malaysia's political legitimacy. To understand the legitimacy effect of media communication on Malaysian integration, we must look beyond political actors/institutions or political parties' instrumental media use and develop a more inclusive methodology to capture how media structures and practices influence Malaysia's political system. Malaysia or Sarawak will likely become examples of mediatized politics and populism if they form a legitimate political body. Malaysian or Sarawakian political integration, mediatization, populism, and democratic legitimacy are connected.

The study does not assume that populist and mediatization of politics will damage democracies. We argue for a more open-ended conception of mediatization's impacts on democracy by seeing it as a meta-process that affects and is impacted by social, cultural, and political processes. Mediatization of politics and populism may benefit democratic processes, says the researcher.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the study, Sarawak's GE14 and SE12 elections shifted the state and federal administrations and influenced many perspectives. Thus, Sarawakians' ongoing dependence on traditional media, like newspapers, as one of their essential sources for political news and current events may have contributed to their pro-establishment posture.

This study examines the relationship and adaptation of mediatization of politics and populism in Sarawak's newspaper during Sarawak's election and Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020, which might affect public perception or voters regarding the electoral democratic system in Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak, using seven (7) Sarawak's newspapers: *The Borneo Post*, *New Sarawak Tribune*, *Utusan Sarawak*, *Utusan Borneo*, *Suara Sarawak*, *See Hua Daily* and *Sin Chew Daily* by using quantitative content analysis. The coding book and coding sheet have been developed in this study. Hoslti Inter-coder reliability and validity, Chi-square, and One-way ANOVA were used to prove the study's research questions and hypotheses.



Figure 5: Public's perception on the mediatization of politics and populism through media content of Sarawak's newspaper
 Model: Adapted and adopted from Asp (1990), Livingstone (2009), Strömbäck (2008), Abts and Rummens (2007), and Oliver and Rahn's (2016).

Figure 5 above shows how quantitative content analysis findings help adjust the study strategy. The GE14, SE12, and Midterm Transition of Malaysia Government 2020 significantly influenced Malaysia's political landscape and social life. This problem hit even remote places like Sarawak too.

Sarawak's high success rate of populist parties or players and a vast array of populist party ideologies make it a kingmaker in Malaysian democracy. Mediatization of politics via media logic, political logic, and populism may influence the country's electoral democratic system. Populists' use of mainstream publications altered popular perception.

The Hoslti Inter-coder reliability and validity of seven (7) newspapers averaged 93%. Validity and reliability intercoder test results for selected newspapers are above 70%.

With the Chi-square test, we rejected the null hypothesis at the 0.001 level (2-tailed $p < 0.0005$). A news headline, government initiation, government response, and blame attribution (substance blame and non-policy blame) for government direction vary. In other news directions, such as opposition initiation, opposition response, and blame attribution (substance and non-policy blame), the p-value is higher than the significance level (2-tailed $p > 0.0005$), but we do not reject the null hypothesis. Insufficient evidence links newspapers to the news, as mentioned earlier directions.

Researchers also employed One-way ANOVA to prove research questions and hypotheses in this study to analyze the link and adaptability of the mediatization of politics and populism using quantitative content analysis. Only two (2) issues under media logic have p-values above .05, conflict (0.054) and opinionated and narrative stories (0.143), with F values of 6.957 and 6.364. No statistically significant difference exists between these issues with newspaper coverage. Media logic and political logic have a p-value of less than .05. There is a statistically significant difference in newspaper articles. In populism, only anti-elitism (0.161) has a p-value above .05, and F is 1.797. This news coverage in the newspaper is not statistically different. People-centrism and mistrust of experts have a p-value below .05. This causes a statistically significant difference between newspaper coverage.

The legitimization needs and restrictions of national political actors and institutions separate mediatized politics from populism. This study showed that research on the mediatization of politics and populism should not be limited to traditional media like newspapers but should be applied to broaden our understanding of Malaysia's politics, particularly in Sarawak, and the increasing legitimacy constraints under which political organizations operate.

In this scenario, mediatization processes of politics and populism are related to requests for the democratization of Sarawak's politics, which are countered by the public's restricting dissensus and scepticism. The mediatization of politics and populist agendas uncovers the link between media exposure filters and democracy by forcing us to evaluate publicity and public justification as parts of political legitimacy.

The media is an essential link between the government and the people. It monitors government and social concerns. Media may impact views, and the government can be held responsible. Mass media in developed and emerging countries establish agendas and reflect the populace. Media influence society's politics.

Populists believe in the power of the media, which stimulates media coverage. Their attempts to be included in media coverage will promote legislative and political engagement. Modern politics have been "mediatized" throughout history, signifying increased media involvement. Political elites' desire for media coverage affects their agendas. Sarawak's citizens are wary of supporting or voting for candidates they do not fully understand. Thus politicians utilize the media to re-elect themselves. The media is also a communicator inside policy-making organizations.

Newspapers are essential in politics because they report election results. Political strategists want to combine newspaper penetration with rallies and personal appearances. Electronic and print media are crucial to each state's political system. Candidates are chosen by preference. Media influence on voter choice is minimal.

Media affects state and local issues. Media and voters have a causal link. The more people see their party's campaigns, the more they like their candidate owing to correct information. Personal experiences and media coverage affects how presidential candidates and other political leaders utilize power. The media may legitimize the politicization of human experiences. Individual experiences influence a culture's social tendencies—the mainstream media abstracts personal experiences to help others view them as social patterns. In the absence of mainstream media, people will use their reasoning to assess policies and leaders.

The media shapes Sarawakians' opinions and undermines federal or state authority. The mediatization of politics and populism via traditional local media during Sarawak's elections impacted voting behaviour and public opinion. According to media politics theory, politicians', journalists', and citizens' interests influence the news. Politicians, the media, and people have different goals. Journalists aim to generate news that appeals to a broad audience and boosts their media outlets' ratings. Citizens want to hold governmental and political officeholders responsible for failing to perform public duties. Politicians dictate people's and journalists' aspirations. Politicians strive to sway voters. Politicians want the media to relay their press releases and statements on every topic. Journalists want unfettered speech and issue analysis.

Media influence a nation's politics. Media coverage affects how people interpret an issue. The media affects decision-making and decision-makers. Political restrictions limit social media despite new media's political promise. It concerns state-regulated financial and regulatory limitations that impede media monitoring and agenda-setting.

Studies show populism as a political approach, especially in a democratic voting system. This approach focuses on policy choices, political organization, and mobilization. The fragility of democratic institutions drives populist politics, which leads people to assume politicians have a right-wing agenda, are corruptible, or are excessively influenced by the elite. Populist politicians employ populist vocabulary to show voters they are not tied to economic concerns. Politicians use populist ideals to convey that future policies will impact people's interests. Right-wing populism might signal to right-leaning followers that politicians oppose left-leaning initiatives.

This worldview allows for ideological variations but regards populist movements and parties as consistent. Those who define populism as a political organization emphasize leaders' identities and affiliations. Personality attributes of political leaders are often discussed in populist studies. However, others warn against utilizing them to operationalize populism. Populism is a political project that challengers and incumbents of all stripes may use to attain social, political, and economic objectives.

The researchers may examine the public sphere's ability for top-down and bottom-up Sarawak people's formation to analyze the link between mediatization, populism, and democracy. Through mediatized democracy, Sarawak or Malaysia may overcome its "elitist bias" and promote "*Malaysiatinization*" Media will make Sarawak's populist actors more emotional, less rational, more popular, and less elite. Mediatization of politics does not inevitably bridge the gap between populist politicians and Sarawak's people, but it does make them more noticeable, authentic, and relevant. Sarawak's engagement is becoming significant in mediatized democracy because it offers a dimension to the legitimacy claims of political players, populists, and institutions, whether they explicitly respond to it. Future studies should focus on how the audience interprets Sarawak or Malaysian politics.

To conclude this study, this research had conquered the theoretical framework and literature review adapted and adopted from Asp (1990), Livingstone (2009), Strömbäck (2008), Abts and Rummens (2007), and Oliver and Rahn's (2016), where the result outputs on mediatization of politics and populism do play a significant role in the electoral democracy system in Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak's politics.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

FUNDING

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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