

**SEARCH: The Journal of the  
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for Communication and Humanities**

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the September 2012 issue of SEARCH: The Journal of the South East Asia Research centre for Communication and the Humanities. This peer reviewed Journal publishes original research in communication and the humanities.

This issue has six papers. These six papers examine human communication in its various unique ways. In the first paper, Dumanig *et al.* discuss the relationship between Filipino maids working in Malaysia and their employers. Using Attribution Theory the authors try to explain how miscommunication can result in sour relations between Malaysian employers and Filipino maids. The second paper by Suleiman and Ishak discuss how viewers' opinions vary according to the portrayal by media that is viewed. Using the Media System Dependence Theory they discuss viewers' opinions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the third paper, Nge *et al.* examine consumer behaviour and the use of the Internet among students in the Klang Valley while David *et al.* examine politeness as a strategy to minimise social distance and build relationships. Their study shows that in the service departments of twogovernment-linked companies studied, phatic communication seldom occurs.

The fifth paper by Baharuddin attempts to analyse the degree of democracy using political variables in the Muslim world. Her study shows that civil liberties and democracy are still at an 'illiberal' level. In the last paper Ullah makes a case for the need for a new approach to establish a generic model in journalism by analysing the contemporary global trends of journalism education within the context of new needs and demands arising in South Asian nations.

I would like to thank the authors for their contributions, the reviewers for providing valuable feedback, Ms. Sumangala Pillai of Taylor's Press for her work in ensuring quality for this journal and the management of Taylor's University for financial support in publishing this journal.

We welcome suggestions for improvements to this journal and hope that all readers benefit through the contributions of this issue.

**Associate Prof. Lokasundari Vijaya Sankar**

Editor-in-Chief

*SEARCH: The Journal of the South East Asia Research centre for Communication and the Humanities*



## **Attribution Resulting in Miscommunication between Malaysian Employers and Filipino Domestic Helpers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the attributes of Malaysian employers as perceived by Filipino domestic helpers and shows how such attributions result in miscommunication. Attribution theory focuses on how people make sense of their world; what cause and effect inferences they make about the behaviours of others and of themselves. Attribution theory is used to explain how domestic helpers assign attributes to their employers and how such perceived attributes influence communication. Twenty Filipino domestic helpers were interviewed at the Filipino Workers' Resource Center (FWRC) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The individual narratives of domestic helpers were recorded, transcribed and analysed. The analysis focuses specifically on the attributes assigned by domestic helpers to their Malaysian employers. The themes/attributes emerging from the narratives and their effects on communication are discussed. The findings of the study reveal that Filipino domestic helpers label their Malaysian employers with negative attributes such as abusive, controlling, irritable, inconsiderate and disrespectful. Such negative attributes bring negative stereotypes resulting in miscommunication between Malaysian employers and Filipino domestic helpers.

**Keywords: Attribution theory, domestic helpers, Filipino, Malaysia, miscommunication**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Miscommunication is not widely studied and literature shows that studies have been conducted focusing on effective communication rather than communication breakdown (Coupland, Wieman & Giles, 1991). Studying miscommunication provides explanations why such problems arise. Communication breakdown is inevitable particularly in intercultural communication since speakers from two different cultures do not have the same communicative competence (Saville-Troike, 2003). According to Hymes (1972) communicative competence involves more than grammatical competence where speakers need to know how to use the language in a particular speech community to achieve their communicative

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intent. Consequently, interactions among people who do not have the same communicative competence may result in miscommunication.

People from other Southeast Asian countries, particularly the Philippines, have come to Malaysia to work. Many Filipino women work in Malaysia as domestic helpers (Dumanig, 2010). With little knowledge about the language and cultural differences, problems arise between the foreign domestic helpers and employers. Problems between Filipino domestic helpers and Malaysian employers have at times resulted in abuse and even death.

Despite the implementation of new policies by the Philippine government to minimise such problems, miscommunication between Malaysian employers and foreign domestic workers continue to exist. This study focuses on the linguistic and cultural issues which occur in communication between Filipino domestic helpers and Malaysian employers. More specifically, this study explores the incidences of miscommunication which Filipino domestic helpers face when communicating with their Malaysian employers.



**Figure 1.** Map of the Philippines (Dumanig, 2010)

**1.1 The Philippines**

The Philippines (see Figure 1) is a multilingual and multicultural country consisting of 170 languages (Dumanig, 2007) and has a population of 88.57 million (National Statistics, 2008). People in the Philippines speak different languages and dialects but Filipino, the national language, is widely spoken. Apart from Filipino, English is also used as an official language which serves other functions specifically in the government and education sectors (Dumanig, 2010). Most Filipinos can speak English because it is used as the medium of instruction in the kindergarten, elementary, high school and college (Dumanig and David, 2011). Although multilingual education is encouraged, many people give importance to English because of the economic benefits that it brings, particularly for employment purposes. Due to the high demand for English, some Filipinos tend to compare intelligence with their ability to communicate in English (Darunday, 2006). A person who can express himself or herself freely in English can be regarded as smart but those who have a poor command of English are regarded as less intelligent (Darunday, 2006). Working overseas is one of the aims of many young Filipinos (Dumanig, 2010). Due to economic and political instability in the country, people are motivated to work overseas (Dumanig, 2010). Moreover, the Philippine government has motivated Filipinos to master English because of its aim of sending workers overseas so as to increase the country’s revenue. In some cases, Filipinos marry people of the host country and eventually live and reside permanently in these countries (Japp, 2001).

Since overseas Filipino workers leave their families behind in the Philippines, remitting their monthly income is a common practice. In fact, the remittances of overseas Filipino workers have helped to improve the economy of the Philippines (Manalansan, 2008). In 2008, the monthly remittance average rose to USD1,368,905 as shown in Table 1.

The remittances of overseas Filipino workers(OFW) have increased continuously due to the increase in Filipino workers overseas. The increasing number of OFW in various parts of the world influences the perception of Filipinos in relation to the importance of the English language. As a result, learning English is no longer a choice but a necessity. Learning the language is not just for the sake of communicating internationally but for economic access to the global world. However, the English language learned in the

**Table 1.** OFW remittances by origin (2008-2007)(USD,thousands)

Overseas Filipino Workers(World)	2008 (USD)	2007 (USD)
Asia	1,883,996	1,543,173
Middle East	2,502,639	2,172,417
Europe	2,658,726	2,351,704
Americas	9,213,372	8,244,344
Africa	17,746	16,027
Others	952	846
Land based total	13,392,301	12,213,565
Sea based total	3,034,553	2,236,363
Grand total	16,426,854	14,449,928
Monthly remittance average	1,368,905	1,204,161

Source: <http://www.poea.gov.ph>

Philippines is a distinct Philippine English variety (Dumanig and David, 2011). It is a New English variety that is influenced by the local Philippine languages (Dumanig and David, 2011). This is evident in the lexical, syntactic, and prosodic features of Philippine English (Dumanig and Manuelli, 2009).

Statistics show that the number of OFW from April to September 2007 was 1.75 million (National Statistics, 2008). Based on the special report released by the Philippine National Statistics Office in July 2008 the percentage of Filipinos working in other countries had increased by 15.3% compared to the numbers in 2006-2007.

Table 2 shows the percentage of Filipinos working overseas and their place of origin in the Philippines. It is clear that Filipinos who work overseas come from different regions in the Philippines. However, most Filipino overseas workers come from the Tagalog region like the CALABARZON and the national capital region.

Table 3 shows the percentage of OFW in various parts of the world. In South-east Asia, there is a huge number of overseas Filipino workers and 6% of the OFW work in Singapore while only 2.5% work in Malaysia. In Malaysia, Filipinos work in various professions. However, those who work as domestic helpers outnumber other professions. Based on an interview conducted in the Philippine Embassy at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) there are 10,972 registered legal Filipino domestic helpers in Malaysia (Dumanig, 2010).

**Table 2.** Percentage distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers by region of origin (2006- 2007)

	2007	2006
Region	100.0	100.0
National Capital Region	16.0	16.4
Cordillera Administrative Region	2.1	2.2
I - Ilocos	7.7	7.6
II - Cagayan Valley	5.9	5.3
III - Central Luzon	14.3	14.5
IVA - CALABARZON	17.7	16.8
IVB - MIMAROPA	1.7	1.3
V - Bicol	3.0	2.5
VI - Western Visayas	8.5	9.5
VII - Central Visayas	5.1	5.5
VIII - Eastern Visayas	2.1	2.2
IX - Zamboanga Peninsula	2.0	2.2
X - Northern Mindanao	3.1	2.8
XI - Davao	2.6	3.1
XII - SOCCSKSARGEN	4.2	4.0
XIII - Caraga	1.0	1.1
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	3.1	3.1

Source: Survey on Overseas Filipinos Income and Employment, (National Statistics Philippines, 2008) (<http://www.census.gov.ph>).

**Table 3.** Percentage distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers by place of work abroad (2006-2007)

Place of work	2007	2006
	%	%
Africa	1.2	1.7
Asia	78.1	78.3
Hongkong	6.7	7.0
Japan	5.6	6.0
Taiwan	5.5	6.1
Other countries in East Asia (ex. China, South Korea)	3.1	3.5
Southeast and South Central Asia	10.3	9.9
Malaysia	2.5	2.8
Singapore	6.0	5.0
Other countries in Southeast and South Central Asia (ex. Brunei)	1.7	2.1
Western Asia	46.8	45.8
Kuwait	4.4	4.8
Saudi Arabia	19.8	21.8
United Arab Emirates	12.1	9.2
Qatar	4.5	3.7
Other countries in Western Asia (ex. Bahrain, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan)	6.0	6.3
Australia	1.9	1.2
Europe	9.2	9.5
North and South America	9.3	9.2
Other countries	0.3	-
Country not reported	0.1	0.2

Source: Survey on Overseas Filipinos Income and Employment, National Statistics Philippines, 2008) (<http://www.census.gov.ph>).

The Philippine government ensures that overseas Filipino workers (OFW) are supported by the policies of the government. Guidelines and policies are made by the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA) to ensure the security of Filipinos working overseas. The policy emphasises that Filipinos can work abroad through direct hiring by foreign employers by using POEA licensed recruitment agencies. The agency charges the applicants a service fee to cover recruitment services rendered. The charges paid by the applicants include the costs for the passport, NBI/Police/Barangay clearance, authentication, birth certificate, medicare, and medical examination. All Filipinos who intend to work overseas regardless of the type of work undergo a similar process. However, due to a bigger number of Filipino domestic helpers working overseas and the number of cases of abuse, the Philippine government recently instituted new policies to ensure their security (Manalansan, 2008).

Recently, POEA approved a number of policy reforms to improve the security of Filipino domestic helpers. The policies are wide ranging and include the upgrading of skills of workers, orientation course on country specific culture and language, protective mechanisms at job sites, obliging employers to shoulder the cost of deploying the domestic helper, and increasing the minimum salary to a level commensurate with their acquired competencies.

To upgrade the skills of workers, all domestic helpers undergo skills assessment through the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). However, those with years of experience as household workers overseas can directly go through the TESDA skills assessment system.

To minimise the problems encountered by domestic helpers with their employers, the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) has initiated a pre-qualification system to determine the employer's fitness to hire domestic workers. The POLO and the POEA will blacklist employers who have abused and maltreated Filipino workers or have not made regular payment or underpaid them.

## 1.2 Malaysia

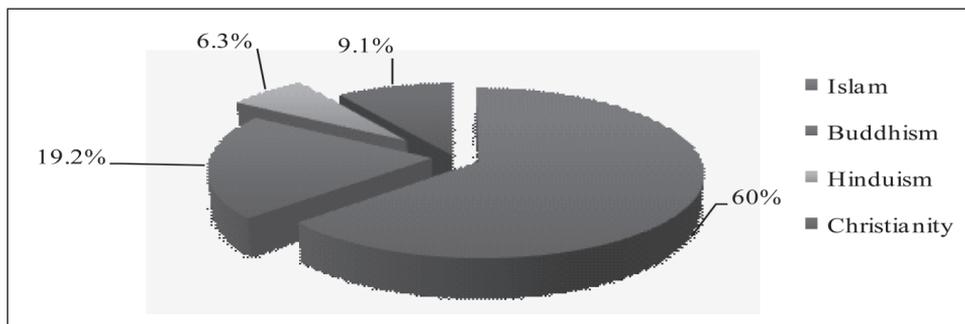


Figure 2. Map of Malaysia (Dumanig, 2010)

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multilingual society with a population of 28.31 million (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2009). Malaysia has three major ethnic groups; Malays, Chinese, and Indians and there are also other minority groups like the Orang Asli and other ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak.

Most Malaysians are Muslims (60%), followed by Buddhists (19.2%), Hindus (6.3%), and Christians (9.1%) (Manalansan, 2008). Bahasa Malaysia is the national language and English is the country's second language. Many people speak English but have different levels of proficiency. The major languages spoken are Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese (Mandarin), and Indian (Tamil).

In the past, English was widely spoken in Malaysia and used as the medium of instruction in schools. However, in 1960 Bahasa Malaysia was introduced and eventually replaced English as the medium of instruction (Venugopal, 2000). Ethnic loyalty has resulted in the establishment of vernacular schools which use their own ethnic languages as the medium of instruction in the formative years in these schools. According to Abdul Rahman Arshad



**Figure 3.** Religious affiliations in Malaysia (Dumanig, 2011)

(2007) there are 1,800 vernacular schools consisting of 1,286 Chinese primary schools and 514 Tamil primary schools. In 1976, all English-medium primary schools were converted into schools where Malay was used as the medium of instruction. In 1982, all English-medium secondary schools were converted to National Schools in Peninsular Malaysia; however it was only in 1985 that the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction was fully implemented in Sabah and Sarawak (Solomon, 1988 as cited in David, 2007). Consequently, Bahasa Malaysia was given a high status while the status of English was changed from the medium of instruction to that of a subject (David, 2007, p. 7).

The use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction led to a decline in the standard of English (David and Dumanig, 2008; Ting, 2003). With the rapid development in information technology, the emergence and popularity of globalisation and the increasing importance of English resulted in a change in the language policy. The Private Educational Institutions Bill (1996) allows the use of English as the medium of instruction with the approval from the Ministry of Higher Education. Slowly, English was introduced in the national and national-type schools as the second most important language. Consequently, in 2003 English was introduced as the medium of instruction to teach Mathematics and Science. However, this policy was reversed in 2009 when Bahasa Malaysia was again implemented as the medium of instruction in teaching Mathematics and Science.

Currently, English has become an important language to many Malaysians. Some families particularly the Chinese and Indians have started using English as the medium of communication even at home (David, 2006).

### ***1.3 Miscommunication in an Intercultural Setting***

The occurrence of miscommunication in an intercultural setting is not new. There have been a number of studies that reveal the occurrence of miscommunication resulting from language issues.. Harnisch, David and Dumanig (2009) argue that crosstalk or communication breakdown occurs due to mispronunciation, conceptual misinterpretations and semiotic interference. Similar findings were revealed in a study on interaction between Malaysians and Filipinos in which miscommunication occurred due to phonological, syntactic and pragmatic differences between the two groups (Dumanig, 2011).

The occurrence of miscommunication does not only exist in the professional setting but even in the classroom. Wang Zhen Xian (2010) studied verbal miscommunication between English native speakers and Chinese learners to reach an understanding on the nature and sources of verbal miscommunication - the problematic face-to-face talk – between Chinese learners of English (CLEs) and native speakers of English (NSEs). She proposed two models: a model of L2 learners' communicative competence which can be used to account for the sources of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication; and a model for the categorisation of CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication. Then instances of the CLE-NSE verbal miscommunication were analysed according to these two models. This model suggests that the miscommunication between the CLEs and the NSEs results from a combination of the following factors such as wrong attitude toward each other's culture, lack of awareness, ignorance of the linguistic, pragmatic or cultural knowledge, and inability to perform correct or appropriate linguistic and pragmatic actions.

Cahillane *et al.* (2009) studied the perception of miscommunication in a coalition environment and the impact of such miscommunication between UK and US military personnel. The perceived frequency and impact of miscommunications arising from different communication media were examined. A secured web-based questionnaire was used to address security issues. The study showed that miscommunication events in a US-UK coalition do occur and these have a significant impact on work performance.

Poteet *et al.* (2008) believe that miscommunication manifests in a number of ways and at different levels of language use. Some instances of miscommunication are simply due to lexical differences, which are not closely related to culture. Differences in styles of communication are more closely associated with cultures. The study looked at a small sample of anecdotes of miscommunication between UK and US military groups. They have identified various types of linguistic variations and cultural differences manifested by the US and UK groups. American English and British English differ in complex ways not only in terms of lexical differences but also, perhaps more importantly, in terms of language use due to cultural differences. The results indicate that much needs to be studied about the current coalition communication patterns, styles and other characteristics of language use. This would then help in identifying appropriate strategies and tools that need to be developed to improve process and cognitive interpretability among multinational forces. Importantly, the current analysis suggests that many relevant issues are largely pragmatic in nature, and move beyond lexical and grammatical differences to 'semantic' similarity of the communication content.

Problems in miscommunication are also caused by negative attributions made by workers of their employers. Such attribution leads to negative stereotyping which influences the communication process. Attribution Theory is used to anchor the current study.

## **2. ATTRIBUTION THEORY**

This paper uses the Attribution Theory to explain the occurrence of miscommunication between Filipino domestic helpers and Malaysian employers. The theory originates from the concept of attribution which is the set of thought processes used to explain a person's

own behaviour and that of others (Wiener, 2000). The theory was founded and developed by Heider, who emphasised the differences between internal and external causes of behaviour (Heider, 1958). Internal attributions are explanations based on individual characteristics, such as attitudes, personality traits, or abilities while external attributions are explanations based on the situation, including events that presumably would influence almost anyone (Wiener, 2000). Internal attributions or dispositional explains that an individual's disposition leads to a specific behaviour. On the other hand, external attributions or situational explains that a specific situation leads to a particular behaviour. Internal attributions occur when information is surprising. Internal and external attributions may lead to misunderstandings between members of different cultures.

Kelley (1967) proposed three types of information when creating an internal or an external attribution for someone's behaviour such as consensus information, consistency information, and distinctiveness. Consensus information focuses on how a person's behaviour compares with the behaviour of others. If someone behaves the same way you believe other people would in the same situation, you make an external attribution, recognising that the situation led to the behaviour. When a behaviour seems unusual, you look for an internal attribution pertaining to the person. Consistency information focuses on the person's behaviour which varies from one time to the next.

Both internal and external attributions are confirmed by certain stereotypes. Such stereotypes strengthen the individual's view of their own and the behaviour of others. Communication is influenced by stereotyping which produces either positive or negative attributions. Stereotyping and attributions can explain the miscommunication that occurs between Filipino domestic helpers and Malaysian employers.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The study used a qualitative approach which specifically employed a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a method of inquiry which is based on the premise that reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived or understood in human consciousness and not of anything independent of human consciousness (Husserl, 1991).

The participants were selected by the Philippine embassy and were Filipino domestic helpers who had left their employers without any formal termination of their contracts. Prior to the interview, an approval from the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) was obtained. Another approval was needed by the officers in the Filipino Workers' Resource Center (FWRC) before the interview was allowed. Detailed information about the research including the interview questions were submitted for checking and verification.

A total of twenty (20) Filipino domestic workers were interviewed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain personal experiences. The interviews were conducted in the Filipino Workers' Resource Center (FWRC) where Filipino domestic helpers facing problems with their employers were housed. The data collected were analysed qualitatively by examining specifically the linguistic and socio-psychological issues in the narratives obtained.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of Filipino Domestic Helpers

The findings of the study show that Filipino domestic workers' age varied from 24-41 years. The majority of the respondents, making up 45% of the sample, are in their early adulthood ranging from 26-30 years old.

**Table 4.** Age of Filipino domestic workers

Age group	No	%
20-25	5	25
26-30	9	45
31-35	2	10
36-40	2	10
41-45	2	10

It is evident that domestic helpers who encountered problems were those who worked in Petaling Jaya, Penang, Perak, and Damansara (a suburb in Kuala Lumpur). There are more single than married domestic workers.. This means that most women who prefer to work overseas are single.

**Table 5.** Marital status of Filipino domestic workers

Marital status	No	%
Single	12	60
Married	8	40

The data further shows that 50% of Filipino domestic helpers who had problems with their Malaysian employers did not complete their college education. However, 25% of them completed their college or university degrees while the other 25% were high school graduates.

**Table 6.** Education level of Filipino domestic workers

Education	No	%
University/College Degree	5	25
Some college education	10	50
High school	5	25
Elementary	0	0

In general, Filipino domestic helpers went to college and as a result they can communicate quite well in English with their Malaysian employers. The languages spoken by the respondents vary. Moreover, 25% of them can converse in Bahasa Malaysia particularly those who had Malay employers.

**Table 7.** Languages spoken by the Filipino domestic workers

Languages	No	%
English	20	100
Filipino	20	100
Bahasa Indonesia	0	0
Bahasa Malaysia	5	25
Chinese	2	10

The Filipino domestic helpers who experienced problems with their employers are all Christians. They are either Catholics or born again Christians.

**Table 8.** Religion of the Filipino domestic workers

Religion	No	%
Christian	20	100
Muslim	0	0
Buddhist	0	0
Hindu	0	0

**4.2 Employment Status**

The data shows that 70% of the participants who came to Malaysia as domestic helpers underwent a legal process required by the employment agency in the Philippines and Malaysia. However, 20% of them came to Malaysia as tourists and later began work as domestic helpers; they had their work permits processed after finding employers. Ten percent (10%) of the domestic helpers were hired directly by the employers. This means that 80% of Filipino domestic helpers have legal documents.

**Table 9.** Employment status of Filipino domestic workers

Mode of hiring	No	%
Direct hiring	2	10
Employment agency	14	70
Tourist	4	20

**4.2 Employment Fees and Procedures**

For Filipino domestic helpers, working overseas as domestic helpers requires them to first pay a considerable sum of money to an agency to process their papers and other relevant documents. During the application process they are required to pay from PhP 2,500-PhP 3000 for the processing fee, PhP 1,200-PhP 2,700 for travel documents PhP 4,000 for air ticket from the province to Manila, and PhP 3,950-PhP 6,000 for medical tests. This would mean that prior to their deployment to Malaysia, they would have spend more or less PhP 30,000 (MYR 2, 310).

In addition they would also have to spend a certain amount for their training. Domestic helpers undergo training in TESDA and OWWA. They are taught how to operate some household appliances and given information about the language and culture of the countries they will be working in. This means that Filipino domestic helpers are equipped with necessary skills before they commence work.

Filipino domestic helpers read and sign their contracts before leaving the Philippines. Consequently, they are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. These include their monthly salary, day off and type of work.

### 4.3 Employment Issues

From the interviews conducted, out of twenty (20) domestic helpers, 16 of them were working for Chinese employers, 3 for Indian employers and 1 for a Malay employer. This means the narratives analysed will be provided mainly by those working for Chinese employers. Some employers did not pay them the salary based on the contract. They received monthly salaries ranging from RM 750 to RM 1200. Their services included *inter alia* cooking, marketing, cleaning, taking care of the children, taking care of the sick/disabled/elderly, laundering, ironing, doing massage, gardening, stitching, car washing, and tutoring.

The domestic helpers narrated the problems they encountered with their respective employers. They stated that their employers were frequently angry with them, and that they had communication problems. The maids were physically abused, had no freedom and received their salaries late. From the interviews conducted, they say:

My boss is very fussy and always angry all the time.  
*Ako po ay lumayas sa bahay kasi sinampal niya ako.* (I left the house because my employer slapped my face).  
 They don't pay me. Delayed payment of salary.  
 We have problems in communication.  
 She doesn't want me to have friends and I do not have freedom to spend my own money.  
 I sometimes cannot understand them when talking.  
 They are too lazy in everything and they want me to do all the work at home.

Because of such issues, all participants were not happy and satisfied with their jobs. When asked if they were satisfied with their job, the domestic helpers gave negative responses. They could not understand their Malaysian employers. It is also evident that Filipino domestic helpers are not understood by their employers. They say:

No, because all the time they are always angry. Always complaining about my work.  
*No, hindi po ako nakatagal kasi masyado po problema ang employer ko pag tapos na po akong magtrabaho parang gusto niya naman akong sabunutan kasi nagpapahinga lang ako saglit.* (No, I can't stand this

because my employer is really problematic; after doing something, when I just rest for a while, then she wants me to do something else. She doesn't want me to rest even for a while).

*No, kasi mahigpit sila sa mga bagay bagay at hindi nila ako pinapahawak nang sahod ko.* (No, they are very strict in all things and they do not want me to keep my salary).

*Wala din daw akong karapatan na makipag kaibigan sa mga kapwa Pilipino.* (They told me I don't have the right to build friendship with other Filipinos)

*No, Minsan di magkaintindihan sa pagsasalita. Lagi sila ang tama.* (No, we don't understand each other. They are always right)

*No, kasi ginawa mo na nga ang lahat di pa sila content sa trabaho mo, palaging nagcocomplain, ayaw nilang nakikita kang nakatunganga ka na walang ginagawa.* (No, because even though you have done everything for them, they are still not contented; they always complain, they do not want to see you not doing anything)

No, because it's my first experience working as a housemaid but I am not happy with my employer because they want me to do everything.

#### **4.4 Language and Communication Problems**

Problems in language is seen to be a major factor why Filipino domestic helpers and Malaysian employers encountered problems. Misunderstandings occur due to lack of proficiency in the English language. Sometimes the message is not understood clearly or it is understood differently.

##### *4.4.1 English language problem*

English is the only language that Filipino domestic helpers and Malaysian employers can use to understand each other. Despite having one common language, miscommunication still occurs due to lack of proficiency. Malaysian employers and Filipino domestic helpers vary in their language proficiency in English. Such different levels of English language proficiency result in problems when communicating. The Filipino domestic helpers commented, "*they want me to understand easily or fully, yet sometimes, they pronounce the words incorrectly, oftentimes, I have a bit of trouble because of their accent and they understand me but I could not understand them because their 'L' becomes 'R'*". Based on the interviews conducted, the domestic helpers say:

*Ang employer ko minsan hindi kami mag-kahintindihan.* (My employer and I sometimes do not understand each other).

*English. Yong matanda di marunong mag English sign language lang kami parati* (we speak English but the old people do not know English, then we just use sign language all the time.)

Sometimes if the parents of my employer do not speak English, we use sign language.

*Mahirap sila intindihin kasi minsan mali mali ang grammar nila at lagi masusungit sigaw ng sigaw. (It's difficult to understand them because they speak with wrong grammar, they are always angry and they keep on shouting)*

*Naiintindihan nila ako, pero diko sila maintindihan kasi yong L nila ay magiging R. Example Table sa kanila Tabor. (They understand me but I could not understand them because their 'L' becomes 'R'. Example 'Table' becomes 'Tabor'.)*

Oftentimes, I have a bit of trouble because of their accent.

Sometimes their English is difficult.

They want me to understand easily or fully, yet sometimes, they pronounce the words incorrectly.

#### *4.4.2 Attributions and miscommunication*

From the narratives of Filipino domestic helpers, it is evident that one of the factors that lead to miscommunication is the quality/qualities that domestic helpers attribute to their Malaysian employers. External attributes are seen to be the common causes of identifying the behaviour and attitude of employers. This means that they tend to focus on situations where they judge their employers' behaviour. Such judgements lead to stereotyping and eventually influence their ways and manners of communication and may lead to miscommunication. In the interviews conducted, the participants perceive their Malaysian employers as abusive (verbal and physical abuse), controlling (financial control), irritable, inconsiderate and disrespectful.

### **1.5 Attributes of Employers**

#### *4.5.1 Abusive employers*

Being abusive is perceived by Filipino domestic helpers as a common attitude of Malaysian employers. The abuse can be classified as verbal which includes shouting and cursing and physical abuse which includes slapping and hitting some parts of the body. Such attribution made by domestic helpers is based on the external causes. This means that the attribution is based on what the domestic helpers actually see. Such abusive character traits of employers are evident in the narratives.

*Ako po ay lumayas sa bahay kasi sinampal niya ako. (I left the house because my employer slapped my face).*

*Naka experience ako dito ng sinampal nila ako paulit-ulit. (I have been slapped on my face many times.)*

*Minsan sasampalin ka at sipain nila. (Sometimes they slap your face and kick you).*

*Minsan hindi kami nagkaintindihan ng amo ko kasi pag meron siyang sinasabi sa akin sinisigawan niya ako.* (Sometimes we don't understand each other because when he says something he shouts at me)  
*Yes, minsan pag may instruction sila na hindi naming makuha yung gusto nila. They simply say I am stupid.* (Yes, sometimes if they have instructions and if I don't understand what they want, they simply say I'm stupid).  
 Sometimes my employer calls me like an animal. He says "Hey, do this".  
 Sometimes they insult me, but I cannot do anything, just cry always.

From the narratives, Filipino domestic helpers claim that they are physically abused by their Malaysian employers. They state that slapping their face seems to be a common physical abuse that they get from their employers. Such abusive behaviour is based on external causes like hurting the helpers physically.

At the same time Filipino domestic helpers claim that they are verbally abused by their employers. They are always shouted at when they do not meet the expectations of their employers. Sometimes domestic helpers are labelled as 'stupid' when they do not perform well in their jobs. Shouting and calling them 'stupid' results in the employers being evaluated as abusive.

The abusive behaviour which is a negative attribute may result in breakdown in communication. Due to verbal and physical abuse, Filipino domestic helpers tend not to talk to their employers and keep their hurt feelings to themselves. Although, they want to say something, they refrain from saying it to avoid verbal and physical abuse. In short, communication is minimised. From the narrative, this reticence and withdrawal on the part of the helpers is clear:

*Tahimik nalang ako, wala ring magagawa kung magsalita.* (I'll just keep quiet, nothing will happen if I do not say something)  
*Mas maganda kung di ka nalang magsalita* (It's better if you do not say something)  
*Mas lalaki ang problema kung magsalita pa.* (The problem becomes worse when you speak)  
*Minsan ayaw ko nalang sumagot sa mga tanong nila baka masigawan pa ako.* (Sometimes I don't answer their questions because they might shout at me)  
*Oo nalang ako n goo kahit ayaw ko.* (I'll just say yes although I don't like it).  
*Wala akong magawa katulong lang ako.* (I can't do anything, I'm just a housemaid)

#### 4.5.2 Controlling attitude of employers

Controlling the financial issues of the helpers such as keeping their salaries and controlling their expenditure is viewed by Filipino domestic helpers as negative behaviour on the part

of their Malaysian employers. The control is seen as a form of not giving them the freedom to keep and spend their own money. The Filipino domestic helpers say “*she doesn’t want me to have friends and doesn’t want me to have the freedom to spend my own money, they are very strict in all things and they do not want me to keep my salary*” Such controlling behaviour of employers is evident in the narratives.

She doesn’t want me to have friends and doesn’t want me to have freedom to spend my own money.

*No, kasi mahigpit sila sa mga bagay bagay at hindi nila ako pinapahawak nang sahod ko. (No, they are very strict in all things and they do not want me to keep my salary). Wala din daw akong karapatan na makipag kaibigan sa mga kapwa Pilipino. (They told me I don’t have the right to build friendships with other Filipinos)*

*Control nila ang pera lalo na pag gusto kong magpadala at kung saan saan din nila ako pinapatrabaho mga kapatid, friends. (They control my money particularly if I send money and they bring me to work for their brothers, sisters and friends).*

*Sila yung namamahala sa pera ko ayaw nila makita na may binibili ako, kahit sariling pera ko yun. (They keep my money and they don’t want to see me buying something though it’s my own money)*

*Kasi sila ang humahawak ng sweldo, kung may ipabibili ako sabihin huwag daw don’t waste money. (They keep my salary and if I request to buy something, they will say don’t waste money.)*

Such control may lead to problems in communication between the employers and domestic helpers. Consequently, the helpers tend to avoid telling their employers of their personal needs and personal problems. Thus it minimises their interactions. In their narratives, they say

*Marami akong kailangan pero di ko nalang sinasabi kasi di rin naman maibigay. (I need many things but I don’t bother to say it because they won’t give it)*

*Minsan gusto kung bumili ng kahit ano pero di ko na sinasabi baka magalit lang. (Sometimes I want to buy something but I don’t say it because they might get mad)*

*Feeling ko nakakulong ako pero ayaw ko nang magsabi sa kanila. (I feel I am in jail but I don’t want to tell them)*

*Gusto ko magpadala pero wala akong hawak na pera pero di nalang ako nagsasalita. (I want to send money but I don’t have money with me, so I just keep quiet)*

#### 4.5.3 Irritable employers

Filipino domestic helpers attributed their Malaysian employers as people who are always angry. Such irritable behaviour is negatively perceived by Filipino domestic helpers and

has also contributed to the negative responses of the helpers when communicating with their employers. They say, “*My boss is very fussy and always angry all the time, I keep on asking because sometimes I cannot understand what they are talking about and they get angry.*” Such behaviour of being always angry is reflected in their narratives.

My boss is very fussy and always angry all the time.  
 No, because all the time they are always angry. Always complaining about my work.  
 Yes, all the time because she is always complaining and angry all the time.  
 I keep on asking because sometimes I cannot understand what they are talking about and they get angry.

The anger that the employers have shown to their employees has resulted in minimal communication. They say:

*Natatakot na akong magsalita baka sila magalit at sigawan lang ako.* (I am afraid to say something because they might be angry and they will shout at me)  
*Kapag nagtanong sila kinakabahan ako baka kung may masasabi ako at magalit ulit.* (If they ask something I am scared because I might say something that would make them angry)  
*Mas mabuti nang tumahimik para di sila magalit.* (It’s better to keep quiet so they will not get angry)  
*Siguro iiyak nalang ako sa kwarto kung di ko masabi ang gusto ko para wala ng gulo.* (Maybe I’ll just cry in my room if I can’t say what I want so there will be no problem)

#### 4.5.4 Inconsiderate employers

Malaysian employers are also perceived by the helpers as inconsiderate. Malaysian employers do not seem to understand the needs of their helpers. The domestic helpers say, “*they don’t pay me, or delay the payment of my salary; sometimes we can’t understand each other because they cannot accept me because they want me to be a perfect maid.*” In the interviews conducted, Filipino domestic helpers narrated:

They don’t pay me. Payment of my salary is delayed.  
 They are too lazy to do anything and they want me to do all the work at home.  
*No, hindi po ako nakatagal kasi masyado po problema ang employer ko pag tapos na po akong magtrabaho parang gusto niya naman akong sabunutan kasi nagpapahinga lang ako saglit.* (No, I can’t stand because my employer is really problematic; after doing something, I just rest for a while; then she wants me to do something else. She doesn’t want me to rest even for a while).

*Minsan di magkaintindihan sa pagsasalita. Lagi sila ang tama.* (Sometimes we don't understand each other. They are always right)  
*Kahit ginawa mo na nga ang lahat di pa sila content sa trabaho mo, palaging nagcocomplain, ayaw nilang nakikita kang nakatunganga ka na walang ginagawa.* (Even though you have done everything for them, they are still not contented, they always complain, they do not want to see you not doing anything)  
It's my first experience working as a housemaid but I am not happy with my employer because they want me to do everything.  
Sometimes we can't understand each other because they cannot accept me because they want me to be a perfect maid.

#### 4.5.5 Disrespectful employers

Filipino domestic helpers feel that Malaysian employers are disrespectful and look down on the maids. They feel that Malaysian employers do not appreciate them and instead belittle them. Such negative attitudes of employers has resulted in reducing the self-esteem of the domestic helpers. As a result, domestic helpers pity themselves. The helpers say, "*sometimes they insult me, but I can do nothing, just cry always, they don't respect a housemaid, they underestimate us.*" In the interviews conducted, they say:

*Mainit ang ulo lagi at minamaliit nila ang kakayahan nang mga Filipino.* (They are always irritated and they look down on the Filipinos).  
*Oo lagi ako minumura pinapahiya sa marami tao.* (Yes, they always curse and belittle me in front of many people.)  
They don't respect a housemaid, they under estimate me.  
Sometimes they insult me, but I cannot do nothing, just cry always.  
I encounter emotional abuse. My female employer always insults me.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It is clear that the Philippine government has implemented a strict policy of hiring Filipino domestic helpers in order to safeguard them while working overseas. However, the problem appears to be personal relationships and communication between the employers and house help. This is the reason that problems of abuse of domestic helpers still exist despite the new policies implemented by the Philippine government. Problems in communication are seen not only in the language used by the Malaysian employer and Filipino domestic helpers but is more evident in the behaviour attributed by the domestic helpers towards their Malaysian employers. Communication breakdowns or miscommunication occurs because of the negative attributions caused by external factors. Negative attributions like abusive, controlling, irritable, inconsiderate and disrespectful lead to stereotyping of Malaysian employers. This in turn results in minimal communication or no communication. Filipino domestic helpers minimise their interactions with their Malaysian employers due to negative attributes and negative stereotypes. When personal problems and other issues

between the employers and Filipino domestic helpers are not resolved due to negative attributes and stereotyping, problems will escalate over time.

It is hoped that such information as provided by this study can be used by the relevant authorities to ensure a more positive attribution of Malaysian employers by their Filipino house helpers.

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## **Depending on the Media: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process in Cross-National Opinions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the relationship between viewers' dependence on major international news media and their opinions on how core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be resolved. The study is premised on the theoretical assumption that Media System Dependency (MSD) can be helpful as a means of evaluating the importance of particular media outlets in determining opinion and behaviour. The study utilises mixed content analysis and survey methods. The content analysis focuses on within-article salience to determine relative media emphasis on core issues of the conflict. The survey involved over 600 viewers of BBC World, Al-Jazeera English, CNN International and Press TV across Nigeria and Malaysia, and focuses on the viewers' opinions on how to resolve core issues of the conflict. Results show that dependence on media sources predicted and explained significant proportions of the viewers' opinions on how each core issues of the conflict, including the status of Hamas in the peace process could be resolved. No significant relationship was found between dependence on media sources and the viewers' opinions on which of the core issues require the most urgent attention in resolving the conflict. In conclusion, media's presence in the viewers' opinions on how core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be resolved was relative to the viewers' dependence on the media sources, thus backing the theoretical assumption of MSD and the proposition that media are able to shape peace in Israel/Palestine by applying coverage to the structure of peace in the conflict.

**Keywords:** Conflict reporting, Israeli-Palestinian, Media System Dependency theory, peace reporting

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The metamorphosing recurrence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its growing chains of link to global terrorism have intensified security surveillance and restrictions on civil liberty all over the world. While this conflict seems to lie at the core of the fatal uprising that swept across the Middle East and North Africa recently, an important experience that has not attracted adequate research attention is how the media operate in what people think about various aspects of the conflict. It is conceivable that in a cultural conflict of global impact such as the Israeli-Palestinian, sentiments are widely shared and people do have opinions on how the issues involved could be resolved. In Nigeria today for example, a protagonist

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group known as 'Christians United for Israel' has been formed, while in Malaysia stickers of 'Free Palestinians' are seen on cars. This is a clear indication of an active global dimension in which people living far outside Israel and Palestine are having strong opinions about the conflict. Yet, a greater majority of these people depend on politically fragmented media for information about the conflict. The question that naturally follows then is: 'Are the opinions held by these people associated with the perspectives represented in the media on which they depend for news about the conflict?'

An impressive amount of research has been conducted on media bias in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Wolfsfeld, 1997; 2004; Gamson, 1992; Viser, 2003; BBC, 2006; Kandil, 2009; Raz, 2008; Said, 1981), but very few attempts have been made to relate media bias to public bias in the conflict. Studies that came close include Glasgow Media Group's 'Bad News from Israel' in which Philo and Berry (2004) established that BBC coverage misleads public understanding of the conflict, and Fahmy and Johnson (2007) who found that a strong majority of viewers of Al-Jazeera Arabic in Arab countries are supportive of the channel's broadcast of graphic images in reporting the conflict. A recent survey of public perceptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Europe by ICM (2011) also came close, but was not related to media coverage of the conflict.

This study is therefore an attempt to fill this gap by examining how cross-national dependence on mainstream western and non-western news media in Malaysia and Nigeria relate to the viewers' opinions on how to resolve core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The research is undertaken as an empirical contribution to the understanding of media's role and potential in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Until about a decade ago, transnational western media had been the only major news sources on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for most of the global audiences. For this reason, most early studies focused mainly on how western media – especially the US media – covers the conflict, with a barrage of conflicting claims by pro-Arab and pro-Israeli critics to media partisanship in the conflict. According to Kressel (1987), the conflict of claims underscored a desire by the early researchers to demonstrate their own biases for or against Israel and Arabs. However, there were structural similarities that tended to validate the claims by both sides. These similarities include the citation by both camps of (1) unbalanced and disproportionately unfavorable coverage; (2) distorted and untrue media portrayals of the conflict; (3) prejudice and stereotyping; (4) employment of double standards; and (5) various unfair political and organisational barriers to an objective coverage (Kressel, 1987: 216). Although the similarities suggest that western media were biased in reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the beginning, they failed to provide a clear perspective on the dominant attitude of western media towards the conflict.

Turning to recent literature, there are by far more of testimonial criticisms than actual studies on media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the predominant view, also supported in many available studies, is that western media have been supportive of Israel – at times even more than local Israeli media, in reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, Viser (2003) did a quantitative analysis of the indicators of bias in the

portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by *New York Times* and *Haaretz* newspaper, and found that *New York Times* demonstrated pro-Israeli bias more than Israel's local *Haaretz* newspaper. *New York Times* framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, drawing on Viser's study, not only indicates superfluous war journalism approach but also reflects the underlying US role in the conflict, which some scholars see as the most powerful driving force behind the conflict (see Smith, 2004; Beinlin, 1998; Bapat, 2011).

A study of the Associated Press (AP) news in 2004 by *ifamericansknew.org* similarly found significant correlation between the likelihood of a death receiving coverage and the nationality of the person killed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Drawing upon results from content analysis, the study specifically reported that the Associated Press – America and the World's oldest and largest news agency– was under-reporting Palestinian deaths in a way that showed more Israelis than Palestinians were dying in the conflict. This finding was corroborated in an official release by Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, which confirmed that between September 2000 (when the second Palestinian *intifada* started) and June 2008, 4862 Palestinians and 1057 Israelis were killed in the conflict (Kandil, 2009: 31).

At about the same time in 2004, Glasgow Media Group published a study of British media coverage of the second Palestinian *intifada* and its impact on public understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a title called 'Bad News from Israel', the group reported that there was a preponderance of official Israeli perspectives on BBC1, and that United States politicians who support Israel were very strongly featured. The study also revealed that BBC1 and ITN News reported almost nothing about the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Viewers' understanding of the conflict, according to the study, was distorted to such extent that 'most did not know that Palestinians had been forced from their homes and land when Israel was established in 1948...; so they thought that the Palestinians were the occupiers' (Philo and Berry, 2004). On the core issues of the conflict, the study indicated that television coverage made some viewers believe that the conflict was merely about border disputes between Israel and Palestine. Israeli settlements in the occupied territories were portrayed as vulnerable communities rather than having a role in imposing Israeli occupation (Philo and Berry, 2004.).

Another important study in this area was conducted on the BBC News by an independent review panel commissioned by the BBC itself, with researchers drawn from Loughborough University Centre for Communication Research. The study, which also relied predominantly on content analysis methods, examined the impartiality of the BBC coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and found that the BBC coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was 'incomplete' and 'misleading' (BBC, 2006). Some notable findings that emerged from the study include:

1. The BBC rarely covered the hardships of Palestinians living under occupation.
2. The BBC notably ignored Israeli annexation of land in and around East Jerusalem;
3. Seldom used the term 'occupation'; mentioned military occupation only once within study period;
4. Misused the term 'terrorism' and only applied it to Palestinians;

5. Consistently portrayed Hamas as formally committed to Israel's destruction; ignored Hamas' acceptance of the Arab peace proposal and its willingness to recognise Israel in return for an end to the occupation;
6. Failed to cite international law and UN resolutions; their call for an end to Israel's occupation; and the fact that Israel ignores international rulings contrary to its interests;
7. Stations none of its correspondents in occupied Palestine; has them all inside Israel; results in a huge disparity in reports favoring Israel while disparaging Palestinians;
8. Portrayed Israelis as peace-seeking and Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims as aggressors;
9. Stressed Israeli victimhood, the importance of Israeli deaths and injuries, and relative unimportance of a disproportionate number of Palestinian ones.

Other criticisms leveled against western media coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict include dearth of reporting, lack of analysis, absence of images and lack of voices describing the experience of the Palestinians under the occupation (Ratzkoff and Jally, 2004 cited in Kandil, 2009: 38). Words referring to the illegality of Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza such as 'occupation', 'occupied territories' and 'settlements' are consistently avoided in western media (Kandil, 2009.).

Studies have also been conducted on how non-western media such as Aljazeera Arabic and English TV responds to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While a few were a survey-based perception study of the networks' coverage attitude (Fahmy and Johnson, 2007; El-Nawawy and Powers, 2008), most were textual and content analysis-based comparison of their coverage with those of western media in terms of newsworthiness, bias, use of language, and influence of political landscape. Kandil (2009) for example conducted a comparative corpus-based critical discourse analysis and found that Aljazeera Arabic corpus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contains more than twice the number of words in the BBC corpus and more than five times the number of words in CNN corpus on the same conflict. What this means, as the study clearly established, is that Aljazeera Arabic devoted significantly larger amount of space to reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than the BBC and much so than CNN (p.47). While this finding appears as simple as many would expect, the implication, according to Kandil, is that followers of CNN will usually get significantly less information about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict compared to followers of the BBC and Aljazeera Arabic. Also of interest in Kandil's study is his findings regarding the variations in media description of the agents of violence, method of violence and outcome/victims of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The notable agents of Israeli-Palestinian violence according to Aljazeera Arabic are the Israelis, while according to the BBC, they are Palestinians, Islam and Hamas. According to CNN, the agents of violence in the conflict are terrorists. On the methods of violence, Aljazeera Arabic noted 'firing' and 'operation', while the BBC noted 'suicide', 'rockets' and '*intifada*'. The CNN also noted 'suicide', 'rockets' and 'blasts' among others. On the outcomes/victims of violence, Aljazeera Arabic will say, 'was/were martyred' while the BBC will say they were 'killed' and CNN will say they were 'killed' or 'wounded' (Kandil, 2009: 56).

In a similar study that compared how ties between government and the media influences framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Aljazeera English, CNN and Haaretz Newspaper, Raz (2008) found that CNN was US policy-oriented in reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: “Although CNN was extremely fact-based and neutral, it had an underlying Israeli focus and latent American bias. The coverage seemed to have an American agenda in framing the Middle East conflict” (pp. 8-9).

Raz did not find much of Qatar’s political influence on Aljazeera English, which she earlier hypothesised, was likely to produce censored and less critical coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because of limited journalistic autonomy arising from “influences from authoritarian Qatar regime”. However, “Aljazeera’s titles often used sensationalised or critical diction...and delivers a rather clear anti-Israeli agenda with one-sided advocacy” (Raz, 2008: 9-10). Sensationalised coverage includes the use of graphic images in reporting sufferings and death in a conflict. Western media ethics discourages the use of war images that depict suffering and death while pre-image warning is considered sufficient for the use of such images in contemporary Arab media ethics.

In a web-based survey that examined how Arab viewers of Aljazeera Arabic TV perceive the network’s visual messages depicting graphic images of suffering and death in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Iraq war, Fahmy and Johnson (2007) found that there was an overwhelming viewers’ support for Aljazeera’s broadcast of graphic images. A significant proportion of viewers, according to Fahmy and Johnson believed that Aljazeera was providing a true and better coverage of the conflict by broadcasting images of death and sufferings.

Compared to the BBC and CNN and Aljazeera, Press TV has attracted less research attention perhaps because it is new and many seem to take it for granted that the state-funded network unambiguously serves the propaganda interests of Iran’s pro-Palestinian regime in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. From available literature, a clear-cut distinction seems to have been made between western and non-western media attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in that the former offers an Israeli perspective while the latter offers a Palestinian perspective. Taking this dichotomy as a point of departure, it can be assumed that viewers who depend mainly on western media (BBC World and CNN International) for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will frame solutions that conform to Israelis interests, while viewers who depend mainly on non-western media (Aljazeera English and Press TV) will frame solutions that conform to Palestinian interests. To investigate this assumption, this study focuses on the five core issues of the conflict and asks:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between viewers’ opinions on how to resolve each core issue and their dependence on media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

In conflict situations, media attention on specific aspects is often based on how contentious such aspects are, or how important and urgent they could be in resolving the conflict. Against this backdrop, the most salient core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in media coverage can be assumed to represent the most important or urgent issue in resolving the conflict. To relate this framing to viewers’ perceptions, data coding of viewers’ opinions on the relative urgency of the core issues in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian was placed in the following question:

RQ2: Is there a relationship between viewers' perceptions of the relative urgency of the core issues and their dependence on media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Another important issue in this conflict is that Hamas (a Palestinian representative organisation that won legislative elections in Gaza strip in 2006) is presently excluded from peace negotiations because it is considered by the United States and European Union as a terrorist group. Studies have shown that western media (CNN and the BBC) have consistently portrayed Hamas as a terrorist group and an agent of violence committed to Israeli destruction (Kandil, 2009; BBC, 2006). Most non-Western media differs in this view as they consider Hamas a legitimate Palestinian party committed to resisting Israeli occupation. This dichotomous view has featured strongly in the debate over whether or not Hamas should be included in the US-led Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. It can be assumed that viewers who depend mainly on western media (the BBC World and CNN International) will frame opinions that favour the exclusion of Hamas from the peace talks, while viewers who depend mainly on non-western media (Aljazeera English and Press TV) will frame opinions that favour inclusion of Hamas in the peace talks. To investigate this assumption, this study asks:

RQ3: Is there a relationship between viewer opinions on the exclusion of Hamas from peace talks and their dependence on media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

### 3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Experiences in developing countries have shown that news about important international events, and in some cases local events, are usually first heard from global networks like the BBC World and CNN International, Al-Jazeera English and Press TV before the local networks broadcast or publish them. This situation not only underscores the pervasiveness of these networks, but also suggests a critical extension of Media Dependency from the domicile level to international level. In Nigeria and Malaysia, viewers mostly depend on these international media outlets to get news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, Media System Dependency might be useful in explaining framing effects that are contingent upon local reliance on the foreign media outlets for news about the conflict.

Media System Dependency theory, credited to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) is an attempt to explain how the media could have varying cognitive, affective and behavioural effects on different people (Riffe *et al.*, 2008). The theory emanated from the assumption that as society becomes more urbanised, life becomes less organised around traditional social groups, thus making the people more dependent on the media which thence provides support and guidance to get people through daily life (Bentley, 2001). Furthering explanation on this, Tolbert and McNeal (2003) stated that "Individuals need more information than they can themselves obtain due to costs...the public relies on media to subsidise for them and provide them with the information they need" (p. 1). Media System Dependency proposes that when an audience depends on a particular media outfit for news or information to meet his/her needs, such audience becomes predisposed to the framing effect of the media to the extent that he/she depends on it. Of course the ultimate goal of framing is to define public

opinion and determine people's actions and perceptions, more specifically under certain circumstances when the public highly depends on media sources (Weaver, 2007; Galander, 2008).

Thus, Media System Dependency theory describes framing effects that are contingent upon audiences' dependence or involvement with media or media content (Sun *et al.*, 2008), and serves as a means of framing and opinion cultivation (Hayden, 2003), and a means for evaluating the importance of particular media outlets in determining opinion and behaviour (El-Nawawy and Powers, 2008; Powers and El-Nawawy, 2009).

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

This study relied on mixed scientific procedures of content analysis and survey methods. Content analysis was used to determine how the media framed urgency of core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in terms of relative within-article salience. This was necessary to answer our research Question 2. Survey was mainly applied in seeking the data required to answer research Questions 1 and 3. The content analysis was based on a systematic random sample of 1,200 stories ( $n=300/\text{network}$ ) from a total of 2,708 stories produced by the BBC World News, CNN International, Al-Jazeera English and Press TV on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between January 1 and December 31 2011. Data for Al-Jazeera English was augmented with 2010 coverage because of difficulty in accessing some news transcripts within the study period. Units of analysis were the key words that describe each of the core issues of the conflict i.e. Refugees; Jerusalem; Settlements; Border and Security. The words were allocated nominal numeric values that simply represented the frequency of occurrence of the frames, which we coded into the broad category of 'Attention on Core Issues'. Key Word in Context (KWIC) analysis was done to ensure that coded words were actually used in relation to the conflict. The period covered in the study represents the most recent experience on media coverage of the conflict. Content data were obtained from broadcast transcripts through the web archives of respective media outfits and Lexis-Nexis data base.

Coding involved two coders, and inter-coder reliability was tested with *ReCal2* web-based instrument. Results ranged between 80 and 93.3 for per cent agreement; .59 and .86 for Scott's *Pi*; .59 and .86 for Cohen's kappa; .60 and .86 for Krippendorff's Alpha across the coded contents. A reliability test that yields a Kappa coefficient of .21 and .40 is considered fair, while a test that yields .41 and .60 is considered moderate. A range of between .61 and .80 kappa coefficient is considered substantial (Landis and Koch cited in Stemler, 2001: 6). Based on this benchmark, inter-coder reliability in this study ranges between medium and substantial reliability scale.

As for the survey, the participants were Nigerians and Malaysians – 18 years and older who have acquired at least secondary level of education. The participants included Muslims and Christians who have access to, and are viewers of at least one of the following: BBC World, CNN International, Al-Jazeera English and Press TV. To accommodate population difference between Nigeria and Malaysia, proportionate population reduction was used to draw 389 participants from Nigeria and 260 participants from Malaysia, resulting in a total of 649 survey participants from both countries. The study employed multiple non-probability procedures, including purposive, snow-ball and accidental to reach the survey participants. Overall response rate was 98.92% based on 636 questionnaires completed, 4 refused and

mid-terminated; 6 did not qualify and 3 could not be contacted. The analysis varies between percentage descriptive, chi-square, correlation and linear regression using SPSS16.0.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1 RQ1: *Opinions and Media Dependency*

The first research question seeks to know if a relationship exists between viewers' opinions on how to resolve the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their dependence on media sources for news about the conflict. The database for this question is Table 1– viewers perceptions of core issues of the conflict, and Table 2 – viewers dependence on the selected media outfits for news about the conflict. The results and interpretation are focused on each core issue.

#### 5.1.1 *Refugees*

Overall, the majority (74.8%) of the viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict support the right of return for refugees. This view is shared by the majority (64.6%) of viewers who depended on the BBC World, and also the majority (59.9%) of viewers who depended on CNN International and majority (64.7%) of the viewers who depended on Press TV for news about the conflict.

Specific to each country, the majority (86.8%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict think that Palestinian refugees should be granted the right of return. The majority (82.4%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on the BBC World also think that the refugees should be granted the right of return. The majority (55.9%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on CNN International for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are equally of the view that the refugees should be granted the right of return. The majority (70%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Press TV are also of the opinion that the refugees be granted a right of return.

The majority (68.8%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English are of the opinion that the refugees should be granted a right of return. Similarly, the majority (56.6%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on the BBC World think that a right of return will be better for the Palestinian refugees. The majority (65.6%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on CNN International also think a right of return will be better for Palestinian refugees. The majority (60%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on Press TV also approve the right of return.

Evidence of an association was found between viewers' opinions on how the refugees issue could be resolved and their dependence on media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $r(634)=.118, p=.003$ . What this means is that the opinion of viewers across Nigeria and Malaysia on how best to resolve the Palestinian refugees issue is likely to be predicted and explained significantly by their dependence on the investigated media networks as sources for getting news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A linear regression confirms that media dependence predicted viewers opinions on how best to resolve the refugees issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $\beta=.118, t(634)=2.981, p=.003$ , and explained a significant proportion of the variance in the viewers' opinions on how best to resolve the refugees issue  $R^2=.014, F(1, 634)=8.884, p=.003$ .

**Table 1.** Viewers perceptions of core issues of conflict (% of n)

	n=	Nationality				Religion			
		NG	MY	MU	CS	BD	HD	JD	OTr
<b>Refugees (%)</b>									
Right of Return (67.1)		376	260	323	239	46	24	0	4
Compensate (23.9)		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Don't know (9.0)		63.6	72.3	75.9	53.1	78.3	62.5	0.0	100
<b>Jerusalem (%)</b>		26.6	20.0	15.2	36.8	13.0	37.5	0.0	0.0
Neutral Zone (36.3)		9.8	7.7	9.0	10.0	8.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
All for Israel (24.8)		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
East for Palestine (31.6)		34.6	38.8	32.5	34.7	63.0	41.7	0.0	100
Don't know (7.2)		29.0	18.8	8.4	46.9	28.3	25.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Border (%)</b>		28.5	36.2	50.8	12.1	4.3	25.0	0.0	0.0
1967 line (50.2)		8.0	6.2	8.4	6.3	4.3	8.3	0.0	0.0
Land swap (31.3)		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Don't know (18.6)		47.1	54.6	60.4	37.7	47.8	33.3	0.0	100
<b>Settlements (%)</b>		33.0	28.8	24.8	40.2	28.3	41.7	0.0	0.0
Discontinue (63.4)		19.9	16.5	14.9	22.2	23.9	25.0	0.0	0.0
Continue (26.9)		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Don't know (9.7)		57.4	71.9	78.9	46.0	43.5	58.3	0.0	100
<b>Security (%)</b>		29.5	23.1	14.9	39.7	43.5	33.3	0.0	0.0
Independence (67.5)		13.0	5.0	6.2	14.2	13.0	8.3	0.0	0.0
Israel in charge (20.1)		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Don't know (12.4)		63.3	73.5	73.4	57.7	73.9	66.7	0.0	100
<b>Urgency (%)</b>		23.4	15.4	12.1	31.8	17.4	20.8	0.0	0.0
Refugees (13.8)		13.3	11.2	14.6	10.5	8.7	12.5	0.0	0.0
Jerusalem (29.6)		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Border (16.0)		10.9	18.1	14.9	10.0	21.7	16.7	0.0	50.0
Settlements (17.5)		30.6	28.1	32.5	31.4	10.9	12.5	0.0	0.0
Security (23.1)		13.6	19.6	20.4	9.2	15.2	29.2	0.0	0.0
		26.1	5.0	16.7	21.3	10.9	4.2	0.0	0.0
		18.9	29.2	15.5	28.0	41.3	37.5	0.0	50.0

Codes: NG: Nigerian, MY: Malaysian, MU: Muslims, CS: Christians, BD: Buddhists, HD: Hindus, JD: Judaists, OTr: Other Religions.

### 5.1.2 Jerusalem

The issue of Jerusalem made a slight departure from that of refugees in terms of viewers' relationship to the media. The viewers' opinions tended to reflect western and non-western media dichotomy, as the majority (43.9%) of viewers who depended on Aljazeera English indicated that Jerusalem should be made a neutral international zone. This opinion is shared by a weak majority (33.5%) of viewers who depended on the BBC World for news about the conflict. However, the majority (42%) of the viewers who depended on CNN International are of the opinion that Jerusalem should be the undivided capital of Israel. For the majority

**Table 2.** Viewers dependence on media networks

<i>n</i> (%)	Nationality			Religion					
	NG	MY	MU	CS	BD	HD	JD	OTr	
AJE	154	76	153	73	2	2	0	0	
230 (36.2)	41.0	29.2	47.4	30.5	4.3	8.3	0.0	0.0	
BBC	113	51	65	72	17	10	0	0	
164 (25.8)	40.1	19.6	20.1	30.1	37.0	41.7	0.0	0.0	
CNN	64	93	42	74	25	12	0	4	
157 (24.7)	17.0	35.8	13.0	31.0	54.3	50.0	0.0	100	
PTV	45	40	63	20	2	0	0	0	
85 (13.4)	12.0	15.4	19.5	8.4	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	

*Codes:* NG: Nigerian, MY: Malaysian, MU: Muslims, CS: Christians, BD: Buddhists, HD: Hindus, JD: Judaists, OTr: Other Religions.

(49.4%) of the viewers who depended on Press TV, East Jerusalem should be capital of Palestine.

Specific to each country, the majority (50%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English think that East Jerusalem should belong to the Palestinians. However, the majority of Malaysian viewers (45.1%) who depended on the BBC World think that Jerusalem should be made a neutral international zone. The majority of Malaysian viewers who depended on CNN International (37.6%) believe that Jerusalem should be the undivided capital of Israel, while the majority (55%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on the Press TV think that East Jerusalem should belong to Palestinians.

The majority of Nigerian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English (43.5%) are of the opinion that Jerusalem should be made a neutral international zone. The majority (36.3%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on the BBC World think that Jerusalem is better off as the undivided capital of Israel. The majority (48.4%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on CNN International suggest that Jerusalem should be the undivided capital of Israel. The majority of Nigerian viewers who depended on Press TV (44.4%) think that East Jerusalem should belong to Palestinians.

Generally, evidence of an association was found between viewers opinions of how the status of Jerusalem could be resolved and their dependence on the investigated media sources for getting news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $r(634)=.086$ ,  $p=.031$ . This means that viewers' opinions on how best to resolve the Jerusalem issue is likely to relate to their dependence on media sources for getting news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Regression analysis reported that media dependence predicted viewers opinions on how best to resolve the Jerusalem issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $\beta=.086$   $t(634) = 2.168$ ,  $p=.031$ , and explained a significant proportion of the variance in the viewers' opinions on how best to resolve the Jerusalem issue  $R^2=.007$ ,  $F(1, 634) = 4.701$ ,  $p=.031$ .

### 5.1.3 Border

The majority (62.2%) of viewers who depended on Aljazeera English think a return to the 1967 line will resolve the Israeli-Palestinian border issue. This view is shared by a weak

majority (47%) of viewers who depended on the BBC World for news about the conflict. The majority (42.7%) of the viewers who depended on CNN International suggested that a balanced land swap between Israel and Palestine would be best, while the majority (43.5%) of the viewers who depended on Press TV think a return to the 1967 line will be the best solution to the border issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Specific to each country, the majority (81.6%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English for getting news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict think that there should be a return to the 1967 border line while the majority of Malaysian viewers who depended on the BBC World (52.9%) also think that there should be a return to the 1967 borderline. Malaysian viewers who depended on CNN International mostly (45.2%) think that a balanced land swap between Israel and Palestine will be better than a return to the 1967 borderline. Most of the Malaysian viewers who depended on Press TV (40%) think that a return to the 1967 borderline will better resolve the issue.

The majority (52.6%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English for news about the conflict think that there should be a return to 1967 line to resolve the border issue while the majority of those who depended on the BBC World (44.2%) also think that a return to the 1967 line will be better. Nigerian viewers who depended on CNN International for news about the conflict are symmetrically tied in the opinions that there should be a return to the 1967 borderline and there should a balanced land swap between Israel and Palestine – both positions attracted 39.1% of the viewers' opinion. The majority (46.7%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on Press TV are of the opinion that there should be a return to the 1967 borderline.

Overall, evidence of an association was found between viewers' opinions on how the border issue could be resolved and their dependence on the investigated media sources for getting news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $r(634) = .180, p < .001$ . This means that viewers' opinions on how the border issue could be resolved is likely to be explained or predicted significantly by their dependence on the investigated media sources for getting news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Regression analysis confirms that dependence on media sources predicted viewers opinions on how best to resolve the border issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $\beta = .180, t(634) = 4.598, p < .001$ , and explained a significant proportion of the variance in the viewers' opinions on how best to resolve the border issue  $R^2 = .032, F(1, 634) = 21.145, p < .001$ .

#### 5.1.4 Settlements

The issue of settlement presented a scenario that is closely similar to the refugees issue in terms of relationship between viewers' perceptions and their dependence on media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The majority (77.8%) of viewers who depended on Aljazeera English suggested that Israel should discontinue settlement expansion in occupied territories and swap lands with Palestine as may be convenient for coexistence of both countries. This view is shared by the majority (57.9%) of viewers who depended on the BBC World. Viewers who depended on CNN International were nearly tied between the choices of Israel discontinuing settlement expansion for land swap (45.9%) and continuing expansion (45.2%). The majority (67.1%) of viewers who depended on Press TV are of the

opinion that Israel should discontinue settlement expansion in occupied territories and swap lands with Palestine as may be convenient for the coexistence of both countries.

Specific to each country, the majority (97.4%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English suggests that Israel should discontinue settlement expansion in occupied territories and swap lands with Palestine as may be convenient for the coexistence of both countries. The majority (72.5%) of those who depended on the BBC World are also of the opinion that Israel should discontinue settlement expansion in occupied territories while the majority (51.6%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on CNN International are equally of the opinion that discontinuing Israeli settlements in occupied territories will be a better option for resolving issues relating to settlements in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Similarly, the majority (70%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Press TV think that Israeli settlements in occupied territories should be discontinued in the interest of resolving the conflict.

The majority (68.2%) of viewers in Nigeria who depended on Al-Jazeera English think that Israel should discontinue settlement expansion in occupied territories while the majority (51.3%) of those who depended on BBC World were similarly of the view that settlement expansion in occupied territories should cease. The majority (50%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on CNN International are of the differing view that Israel should continue expansion of its settlements in occupied territories and preserve the existing ones. Nigerian viewers who depended on Press TV are mostly (64.4%) of the view that Israel should discontinue expansion of its settlements in occupied territories.

Overall, evidence of significant positive correlation was seen between viewers' opinions on how best the settlement controversy could be resolved and their dependence on media sources for news on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $r(634) = .136, p < .001$ . This means there is likelihood that viewers' perceptions of how to resolve the settlement dispute is predicted and explained significantly by their dependence on the investigated media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Further analysis shows that dependence on media sources actually predicted viewers opinions on how best to resolve the settlement issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $\beta = .136, t(634) = 3.459, p = .001$ , and explained a significant proportion of the variance in the viewers' opinions on how best to resolve the settlement issue  $R^2 = .019, F(1, 634) = 11.964, p = .001$ .

### 5.1.5 Security

On security matters, the majority (73.5%) of viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English supported independently secured territories between Israelis and Palestinians. This sounds like the two mutually independent state solution advocated by western countries, because the position also enjoys the support of majority (67.1%) of viewers who depended on the BBC World and CNN International (62.4%). The majority (61.2%) of viewers who depended on Press TV are also of the opinion that security matters should be handled independently by Israel and Palestine.

Specific to the countries, most (88.2%) Malaysian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English are supportive of independently secured territories between Israelis and Palestinians. The majority of those who depended on the BBC World (80.4%) are also of the

same opinion. Most (65.6%) of the Malaysian viewers who depended on CNN International equally share the view that security matters should be mutually exclusive and handled by independent Israel and Palestine states. Malaysian viewers who depended on Press TV were also mostly (55%) of the view that security matters should be the exclusive business of independent Israel and Palestine states. Viewers in Nigeria who depended on Al-Jazeera English are mostly (66.2%) of the opinion that independently secured boundaries will best resolve the Israeli-Palestinian security challenges. This view is shared by the majority of Nigerian viewers who depended on the BBC world (61.1%) and the majority of those who depended on CNN International (57.8%). This is the same view held by the majority (66.7%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on Press TV for getting news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Overall, evidence of strong positive correlation was seen between viewers opinions on how best to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian security challenges and their dependence on the investigated media networks as sources for getting news about the conflict  $r(634)=.096$ ,  $p=.016$ . Further analysis shows that dependence on media sources predicted viewers opinions on how best to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian security challenges  $\beta=.096$   $t(634) = 2.422$ ,  $p=.016$ , and explained a significant proportion of the variance in the viewers' opinions on how best to resolve the security challenges  $R^2=.009$ ,  $F(1, 634) = 5.866$ ,  $p=.016$ .

**5.2 RQ2: Urgency of Core Issues**

In our second research question, we sought to know if there is an association between viewers' perception of the relative urgency of the core issues and their dependence on media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To answer this question, we drew on our coding for media attention on the core issues of the conflict (Table 3) and viewers perceptions of the relative urgency of the core issues of the conflict (Table 1), and viewers dependence on the media networks under investigation (Table 2).

Overall, as shown in Table 3, security matters attracted the highest attention in global news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the period investigated (29.5%). This was closely followed by Jerusalem (28.4%). The third most salient of the core issues in global news coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was settlements (20.1%). The border issue closely followed settlements as the next most salient of the core issues of the conflict

**Table 3.** Attentions on core issues of conflict [n (%)]

	Al-Jazeera English	BBC World	CNN International	Press TV	Overall
Core Issues					
Refugees	69 (5.2)	60 (5.5)	85 (4.9)	13 (3.2)	320 (6.8)
Jerusalem	404 (30.4)	370 (29.7)	413 (23.7)	45 (11.2)	1343 (28.4)
Border	188 (14.2)	246 (19.7)	380 (21.8)	31 (7.7)	713 (15.1)
Settlements	366 (27.6)	246 (19.7)	305 (17.5)	144 (35.7)	951 (20.1)
Security	301 (22.7)	318 (25.4)	562 (32.2)	170 (42.2)	1395 (29.5)
	$\Sigma n=1328(100)$	$\Sigma n=1246(100)$	$\Sigma n=1745(100)$	$\Sigma n=403(100)$	$\Sigma n=4722(100)$
	$\chi=3.32$	$\chi=3.30$	$\chi=3.48$	$\chi=4.02$	$\chi=3.37$
	$S=1.262$	$S=1.280$	$S=1.289$	$S=1.113$	$S=1.342$

within the period investigated (15.1%). The issue of refugees attracted the lowest of global news attention within the period investigated (6.8%).

At the individual network level, the media differed in framing core issues of the conflict. In Al-Jazeera English, Jerusalem got the highest news attention (30.4%), followed by settlements, 27.6%. Security was framed as third most important core issue in the conflict with 22.7%, while refugees received the lowest (5.2%) attention in Al-Jazeera coverage of core issues of the conflict within the period investigated.

Like Al-Jazeera English, BBC World's attention fell on Jerusalem (29.7%) within the period investigated. This was followed by security matters which took 25.4% of the network's attention on core issues of the conflict. Refugee matters received the BBC's lowest attention (5.5%) just as did Al-Jazeera English.

CNN treated security matters as the most critical in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with 32.2% of its attention on the core issues of the conflict within the period investigated. This was followed by Jerusalem, which took 23.7%, and border which took 21.8% of CNN's attention on the core issues of the conflict within the period investigated. Refugees issue was treated with the lowest attention (4.9%) by CNN International.

Similar to CNN, the most featured core issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Press TV was security, which took 42.2% of the network's attention within the period investigated. This was followed by settlements with 35.7%. Jerusalem, which Press TV prefers to call Al-Quds, took 11.2% of the network's attention on core issues of the conflict within the period investigated. Like other networks, Press TV gave the refugee issue the lowest attention (3.2%) compared to the attention received by other core issues in the network's coverage of the conflict within the period investigated.

In terms of the viewers' perceptions, a weak majority (28.7%) of the viewers who depended on Aljazeera English for following news on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict thinks the status of Jerusalem requires the most urgent attention in resolving the conflict. This opinion is shared also by a weak majority (26.8%) of viewers who depended on the BBC World, and another weak majority (33.8%) of viewers of Press TV. A weak majority (38.8%) of viewers who depended on CNN International are of the opinion that the security matter is the most challenging issue that requires urgent attention in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Specific to the countries, a weak majority (26.3%) of viewers in Malaysia who depended on Al-Jazeera English think that the security arrangement is the most challenging issue requiring the most urgent attention in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This, they think, is closely followed by the border and refugees issues – 25% and 23.7% respectively. Comparatively, issues relating to Jerusalem were most saliently emphasised in Al-Jazeera English coverage of the conflict within the period investigated.

Malaysian viewers who depended on the BBC World are mostly (27.5%) of the opinion that the status of Jerusalem should be resolved with priority attention, and closely followed by refugees and security matters – 23.5% and 21.6% respectively. The BBC World had correspondingly paid the highest attention on Jerusalem (29.7%) and security (25.4%) in framing the core issues of the conflict within the period investigated. However, the network's attention on the refugees issue was the lowest (5.5%) comparatively.

Malaysian viewers who depended on CNN International for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are mostly (40.9%) of the opinion that security arrangements should be accorded priority attention in resolving the conflict. This, they suggest, should be followed by the status of Jerusalem (23.7%). Issues of border and refugees attracted equi-distributed levels of opinion (15.1%) as the third most urgent matter in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict among viewers of CNN International. Correspondingly, CNN International placed most of its emphasis on security matters (32.2%) and Jerusalem (23.7%) in framing core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. The refugees issue was however the least attractive (4.9%) to CNN coverage of the conflict within the period investigated.

Most (50%) Malaysian viewers who depended on Press TV for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are of the opinion that the status of Jerusalem requires priority attention in resolving the conflict. This, they suggested, should be followed by border and security issues –20% and 17.5% respectively. Again comparatively, Press TV paid the highest attention to security (42.2%) and settlement (35.7%) matters in framing core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the period investigated in this study.

The majority of Nigerian viewers who depended on Al-Jazeera English for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (31.8%) are of the opinion that the status of Jerusalem should be resolved as a priority and followed with settlements (24.7%) and border (16.2%) issues respectively. There appears to be an agreement between viewers' opinion and Al-Jazeera English framing which placed emphasis on Jerusalem and settlement issues in reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the period investigated. Nigerian viewers who depended on the BBC World were mostly (28.3%) of the opinion that settlement matters should be accorded the most urgent attention in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This, they suggested, should be followed by the status of Jerusalem (26.5%) and security (24.8%). Comparatively, the BBC World's attention was mostly on Jerusalem (29.7%) and security (25.4%) matters, meaning that the perception of viewers who depended on the BBC World does not conform to the BBC World framing of the core issues.

The majority (35.9%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on CNN International think that the status of Jerusalem is most urgent in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This, they think, should be followed with settlement (26.6%) and security (23.4%). Again this perception seems to be divorced from CNN International's framing which emphasised security matters more than other core issues in the conflict. Nigerian viewers who depended on Press TV mostly think of Jerusalem (28.9%) and settlements (24.4%) as requiring the foremost attention in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Overall, there was no evidence of a significant association between viewers' perceptions of the relative urgency of the issues in resolving the conflict and the framing attitudes of the media networks on which they depended for following news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict  $r(634)=.026, p=.507$ . Regression analysis reported that dependence on the investigated media networks as sources for following news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not predicted the viewers' opinions on which core issue requires the most urgent attention in resolving the conflict  $\beta=.026 t(634) = .664, p=.507$ , and has not significantly

explained the variance in the viewers' opinions on which core issue requires the most urgent attention in resolving the conflict  $R^2=.001$ ,  $F(1, 634) = .441$ ,  $p=.507$ .

### 5.3 RQ3: *Hamas and Peace Talks*

The third research question seeks to know if there is a relationship between viewer opinions on the exclusion of Hamas from US-led peace talks and their dependence on the investigated media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Answers to this question were drawn for data coding for media dependency and viewers opinions on the exclusion of Hamas from the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. The opinions are grouped in the range of options 1) "Hamas is a terrorist group [exclude from peace talks]"; 2) "Hamas is not a terrorist group [include in peace talks]" and 3) "Don't Know". A comparison was first done between the viewers' responses to know if a significant difference existed between them. This was followed by a test of relationship between the viewers' opinions and their dependence on media sources.

Beginning with the 3-item options listed above, a simple Chi-Square reported a mean of 1.64 and standard deviation of .764 in the distribution of opinions. A significant difference was seen between the occurrences of these opinions  $\chi^2(2, n=636) = 128.151$ ,  $p<.001$ . To be more specific with viewers' opinions on whether or not Hamas is a terrorist group that should be excluded from the peace talks, we extracted the values for options 1 and 2 above for comparison of opinions. Results show that viewers who think that Hamas is not a terrorist group and should therefore be included in the peace talks significantly outnumbered those who think Hamas is a terrorist group and should remain excluded from peace talks  $\chi^2(1, n=524) = 46.443$ ,  $p<.001$ .

To find out if viewers' opinions on Hamas relate to their dependence on media sources for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a cross-cultural dimension of viewers' perceptions was necessary. This was done by cross-tabulating media dependency and viewers perceptions of Hamas, and then controlling for nationality and religion.

Based on nationality, the results show that the majority (68.4%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Aljazeera English for news about the conflict think that Hamas is not a terrorist group and should therefore be included in the peace negotiations. This view is shared by the majority (40%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on Press TV. However, the majority (49%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on the BBC World think that Hamas is a terrorist group, and should therefore be excluded from the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Excluding Hamas from peace talks is also approved by the majority (36.6%) of Malaysian viewers who depended on CNN International for news about the conflict.

The majority (64.3%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on Aljazeera English think that Hamas is not a terrorist group and should therefore be included in the peace negotiations. This view is shared by the majority (64.4%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on Press TV. Again, the majority (57.5%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on the BBC World think that Hamas is a terrorist group, and should therefore be excluded from the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. This view is also shared by the majority (43.8%) of Nigerian viewers who depended on CNN International for news about the conflict.

Based on religion, a weak majority (42.3%) of Christian viewers across Malaysia and Nigeria think that Hamas is a terrorist group, and should therefore be excluded from the peace talks. This is comparable to 40.3% who think that Hamas is not a terrorist group, and should be included in peace talks, and other Christians (17.2%) who said they don't have any suggestions on the matter. As for the Muslims, a strong majority, (64.4%), think Hamas is not a terrorist group, and therefore should be included in the peace talks. This is comparable to 20.4% who think that Hamas is a terrorist group, and should be excluded from peace talks, and other Muslims (16.2%) who said they don't have any suggestions for this matter. Generally, the majority of Christians who participated in our survey indicated that they depended mostly on CNN International, while the majority of the Muslims indicated that they depended mostly on Aljazeera English for news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Table 2).

Overall, there is evidence of a significant positive correlation between viewers' perceptions of Hamas and their dependence on the investigated media networks as sources for following news on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This means viewers' opinions on whether or not Hamas is a terrorist group that should be excluded from the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations is likely to be predicted and explained by their dependence on media sources for news about the conflict. Regression analysis confirmed that media dependence predicted viewers perceptions of Hamas  $\beta=.194$   $t(634) = 4.987$ ,  $p<.001$ , and explained a significant proportion of the variance in viewers perceptions of Hamas  $R^2=.038$ ,  $F(1, 634) = 24.872$ ,  $p<.001$ .

## 6. DISCUSSION

How the media operates in how the public thinks about conflicts has been studied with different approaches. Philo and Berry (2004), in a Glasgow Media Group publication titled 'Bad News from Israel', had examined 200 programmes on BBC One and ITV News and questioned over 800 people to establish how news from these media outfits influenced viewers understanding of a range of issues relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Huang (1996) conceptualised and measured media frames as an independent variable and audience frames as the dependent variable to examine the extent to which media frames are operative in audience perceptions of the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas controversy (see Scheufele, 1999: 110-111). Kavoori (1999) had similarly studied the broadcast texts of ZDF, A2N, ITN, BBC and ABC television networks, and conducted Focus Group Interviews in Britain, Germany, France and United States to examine how audiences relate to the narrative events of news frames on a case of rioting among South Korean students and a politically motivated massacre of train passengers in South Africa.

This study offers a slightly different quantitative contribution to the above path of knowledge in that it considers framing effects as contingent upon the audiences' dependence or involvement with the media or content (see Weaver, 2007; Sun *et al.*, 2008 and Galander, 2008). Media System Dependency, which is seen as a means of framing and opinion cultivation (Hayden, 2003), has largely been missing in empirical studies checking for consistency of viewers' perceptions with media bias or framing in conflicts.

As it turned out, viewers' opinions on how best to resolve each of the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian, including the status of Hamas in US-led peace process were predicted and explained by their dependence on the media for news about the conflict. Although dependence on media varied across nationality and religions, each context of dependence was found to associate with the viewers' perceptions of related issues. It is important to point out that Media System Dependency (MSD) does not see the audience as passive as the name suggests. The theory understands the audience "as an active and influential variable in the media-effects process" (El-Nawawy and Powers, 2008: 61). However, in the circumstance of high dependence on media, an audience is open to the effect of the media depending on varying social psychological factors of the individuals that qualifies the media for their information needs (Ball-Rokeach, 2005). For example, the Muslims could think Al-Jazeera represents the interests of Islam while the CNN International does not. Dependence on Al-Jazeera among Muslim viewers will likely therefore not be the same as their dependence on CNN International. By extension, CNN International and Al-Jazeera will likely therefore have varying effects on Muslim viewers over the same issue. This theoretical assumption was reflected in the results of this study in different contexts. For example, the majority of Muslim viewers depended on Al-Jazeera English for following news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There were also Muslims who depended on CNN International for the same. However, the majority of Muslim viewers were of the opinion that Hamas should be included in peace talks. Placing this result in the context of the dichotomous perspectives offered by western and non-western media in the conflict, it means the media produced effects on viewers' perceptions of Hamas only to the extent that viewers depended on them as sources for following news about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This pattern of results occurred for refugees, Jerusalem, settlement and security issues, where viewers' relative dependence on media predicted and explained their opinions on how each of the issues could be resolved.

In conclusion, the social psychological factors of the individuals such as religion, education, experience etc., which according to Ball-Rokeach (2005) underlies varying levels of dependence on the media, are capable of putting a viewer in active status in relation to the media, as it appeared to be in the absence of important relationships between viewers' opinions on which core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires the most urgent attention and their dependence on media for news about the conflict. The same factors are also able to make the viewer vulnerable to unnoticeable media effects. Thus, as this study shows, the media's presence in viewers' opinions on how the key issues involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be resolved was relative to the viewers' dependence on the media sources, thus backing the theoretical assumption of Media System Dependency and the proposition that media are able to shape peace in Israel/Palestine by applying coverage to the structure of peace in the conflict.

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## **The Internet and Online News: A Case Study of Urban Youths in the Klang Valley**

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### **ABSTRACT**

When the Internet was introduced, there were comparatively few websites, especially news websites. Furthermore, only those who were privileged could have access to the Internet. These mostly comprised political parties who developed and maintained discussion groups and websites to disseminate news. Today, new media technology's drastic developments in the communications field has had a big impact on society at large. The development and pervasive availability of information and activities seem to offer people the opportunity of quick access, and systematically allowing for, in seconds, what would have previously taken months, pursuing newspaper stacks of microfilm rolls. These features supersede the more traditional print medium in terms of delivering news with immediacy and impact, and act as a powerful lure that continually draws readers. This paper questions online consumer behaviour with regard to the use of the Internet and explores the reasons for this use. From a survey of 1,000 students of institutions of higher education in the Klang Valley, findings reveal that youths still rely on traditional media to obtain news. Hence, it is not 100% migration to new media, unlike in the United States and Europe. However, almost all respondents own a computer and go online daily. Only a few areas of consumer behaviour show some significant differences between gender and ethnic groups in terms of their online activities. Findings also reveal that the top online news site is *MalaysiaKini* with all others coming in a pale second. It can, therefore, be said that there is no complete migration to the Internet for news. Students' access of online news is still very much in the one-way communication mode (i.e. to get facts and not necessarily to interact or dialogue).

**Keywords:** Consumer behaviour, Internet, online, youth

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

New technological developments have brought about a revolutionary change in the way news is presented. Previously, people relied on traditional media such as print, radio and television for their daily dose of news – waiting for the news broadcast or the next day's papers. News organisations served as gatekeepers, controlling information flow.

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However, with the advent of the Internet, news is no longer the domain of large news media conglomerates. New media is often deemed to be inherently democratising and liberating, offering the prospects of freeing all from long-standing dependence on a few powerful information providers and their ‘mainstream’ discourse (Paterson, 2007: 2), allowing the average citizen to put forth his views for public viewing and consumption. Because of the relatively free space for articulation of news and views, the Internet has gained a strong following, especially among news junkies. Online news websites are able to present news and disseminate information more attractively by inserting video and audio clips, as well as animated graphics together with the written news report. Such additions enhance the experience of the end-user/reader. Online news is able to combine the characteristics of all three traditional media – print, radio and television – into one medium, thus making it an efficient method of news delivery and consumption.

In addition, information can also reach the audience immediately – especially breaking news. People no longer have to wait a few hours to know what is happening around the world. They can get information at their fingertips every minute. What’s more, Internet sites can be updated any time of the day. News can be delivered 24/7 – something that is lacking in traditional media. This is also one factor that has caused more and more people to turn to online news as their primary source of information.

The development and larger availability of digital news archives seem to offer people the opportunity to access a large corpus of quality news materials quickly, and systematically providing, in seconds, what would have taken previously months of pursuing newspaper stacks or microfilm rolls (Deacon, 2007: 7). These features supersede the more traditional print medium in terms of delivering news with immediacy and impact, and act as a powerful lure that continually draws away readers.

The embrace of online news by users over the past few years has become so great that communities are moving from traditional media of print and broadcast to online media. For Americans younger than 30, the Internet, compared to TV, was the main news source in 2008 as 59% said they got most of their national and international news online, up from 34% in 2007. There was a reverse trend for young Americans who watched TV news. In 2007, 68% of young Americans claimed TV news was the news main source but that figure dropped to 59% in 2008 (Pew Research Centre for People and the Press, 2008).

**Table 1.** Internet rivals TV as main news source for young people in the US

Main news source	2006	2007	2008	07-08 change
Television	62%	68%	59%	-11
Internet	32%	34%	59%	+25
Newspapers	29%	23%	28%	+5
Radio	16%	13%	18%	+5
Magazines	1%	#	4%	+4
Others (Vol.)	3%	5%	6%	+1

Source: Pew Research Centre for People and the Press (<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1066/internet-overtakes-newspapers-as-news-source>).

NB: Figures are >100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Online news sites have turned out to be the news platforms with the highest increase in use – half of the respondents said their use of online sites for news had increased over the past two years (Cauwenberge *et al.*, 2010: 336). Alternative sources of news and information are a growing phenomenon, increasing from an estimated 30,000 in 1998 to at least three million by the beginning of 2004 (Johnson and Kaye, 2004: 622).

The growth of online news readership and decline in print circulation has pushed news organisations to venture into the new and uncharted Internet world by launching their own news websites, in a desperate bid to attract new audiences and revive sagging fortunes. Some news organizations, due to lack of resources or incentives, use the ‘shovel ware’ format (Meyers, 2003), which is the direct transfer of information from print to the online edition. Others seek to break new ground by offering original news found only on the Internet and adding audio-visual materials to enhance the end-user’s experience.

The differences between traditional newspapers and online news services are still being explored. Some aspects of the newspaper cannot, at present, be transferred to the digital medium. The physical process of news consumption alters dramatically. For instance, the see-at-a-glance big pages that can be spread on the table or folded on the train – factors that influence people to choose newspapers rather than watch or listen to news – are not reproducible on the computer screen. Nevertheless, technology has allowed news to be received and read on WAP-enabled Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) and iPads, thus dispensing the need for large print newspapers.

The Internet and its World Wide Web graphic interface are reaching a level of saturation and widespread adoption throughout the world. Thus, there is a need to explore the impact of this global system of networked computers on journalism and news consumers. The key characteristics of online news – hyper-textuality, interactivity, multi-mediality – have enhanced the ‘added value’ of news. It also provides three specific strategies for news reporting that may be used to further improve the potential of journalism online: annotative reporting, open-source journalism and hyper-adaptive news sites. Relative to traditional newspapers, Internet-based papers provide fewer cues about news story importance, giving readers more control over story selection (Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000).

Previously, the Internet was seen as a supplementary news medium to traditional print news. Online newspapers, websites and blogs were just alternative sources. In fact, at one point in time, blogs were seen as unreliable and not credible (Johnson and Kaye, 2004). Today, alternative media has become mainstream, with Internet news sites being far more popular than the print, which has suffered a decline in readership. Newspapers are being read by a smaller percentage of the population and the trend is unlikely to change. According to a 2008 survey by global market research company Synovate, 45% of Malaysian youths between 8 and 24 said they would use the Internet more often compared to the TV (22%), mobile phones (11%) and newspapers (7%) (Market Research World, 2009). They spend an average of 1.2 hours a day on e-mail, 1 hour and 36 minutes a day with online communities, 2 hours 48 minutes on instant messaging and 2 hours 36 minutes on other Internet activities (Adoi Magazine, 2009).

According to Wong (1998), Internet users in Malaysia can be divided into three categories – home users (60%), students (30%) and organisations (10%). Those with a

**Table 2.** Young Malaysians' media use

Media Use	Percentage (%)	Internet activities	Time
Internet	45	E-mail	1 hour 30 mins
TV	22	Online communities	1 hour 36 mins
Mobile phones	11	Instant messaging	2 hours 48 mins
Newspapers	7	Other Internet activities	2 hours 36 mind

Source: Market Research World ([http://www.marketresearchworld.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2550&Itemid=77](http://www.marketresearchworld.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2550&Itemid=77)); Adoi Magazine 2009 (<http://202.75.43.26/index.php/news/153-news-2009/4068-survey-reveals-top-online-habits-of-malaysian-youth->)

**Table 3.** Demographic information of Internet users in Malaysia

Categories of Internet users	Percentage (%)	Educational level of Internet users	Percentage (%)
Home	60	Higher education	67
Students	30	Diploma	21
Organisations	10	Secondary school	11
		Primary school	11

Source: Wong (1998); Marlin (2008)

higher education were the highest Internet users at 67%, followed by diploma holders (21%), secondary school (11%) and primary school (11%) (Marlin, 2008). The Malaysian society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century lives in a globalised era enveloped by science and technology and this pattern has changed due to globalisation (Rozinah, 2000). The researchers hope to explore online consumer behaviour and news reading patterns of youths as compared to traditional media and to examine the reasons for their preference.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Loo and Yeap (1998), the inherent features of the Internet and its interactive dimensions allow users to control the navigation of information. Thus, it enables users to source for various forms of information. In the world of urbanisation and globalisation, the advent of online news has helped reverse the trend of declining news consumption among young people. This is especially evident in most research conducted in China or the United States. However, recent findings indicate that young people are using mobile phones to download music, message and call. The Internet is also used mostly for chatting, e-mailing, blogging – in fact, doing everything else except accessing news (Mindich, 2005). This is a startling fact and one that is of concern to the researchers who are undertaking this study to determine if the same structure or patterns in news consumption can be generalised to Malaysian youths. According to Fallows (2004), adolescent access to the Internet may focus more on recreation and entertainment, similar to their use of other media such as radio and television.

During the 1990s, the Internet grew to be one of the most important technological advancements in society. It became so popular that people relied on it not just for work and

study but also entertainment and news. Online news is today's modern-type digital newspaper as it is no longer in printed format. Research has found that online audiences go to news websites to get information that is unavailable elsewhere. They also find it convenient to search for news on particular topics. Nozato (2002) points out that online media distinguish itself from traditional media because its users can browse not just text but also digital images. Online media can also present the most recent information and link related news articles from local to international. The Internet's interactive features imply that online media is more advantageous than traditional forms. In fact, some readers now see that the Internet is a good alternative to traditional media. More and more students, especially those who have higher educational levels, tend to believe online news more since they are used to new technology. Ascione (2006) mentions that for students and educators, judging the reliability of online information can pose a challenge.

In a survey to identify news consumption patterns in Ireland and the European Union (EU), O'Donnell (2003) found that in Ireland, 56% said they personally use the Internet. Of that number, 36% use it every day or nearly every day. The population percentage of Internet users in EU countries can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Population of EU countries who use the Internet daily or almost daily

Countries	Percentage (%)	Countries	Percentage (%)
Denmark	39	Greece	5
Finland, Sweden	34	Portugal	12
Netherlands	33	Spain, Italy	14

Source: O'Donnell (2003)

The survey found that of all EU Internet users, 71% used it to look for news or topical items. The most significant feature of Internet users is their youth (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Percentage of Internet users by age group in the EU

Age group	Percentage of Internet users (%)
15-24	81
25-39	64
40-54	51
55 and above	17

Source: O'Donnell (2003)

Among daily Internet users, the age difference has become much less pronounced, with 38% between 15 and 24 using it daily or nearly every day compared to 34% aged 55 and over. Of those in the middle-aged group, 43% use it daily or nearly every day.

**Table 6.** Percentage of daily Internet users per age group in the EU

Age group	Percentage (%)
15-24	38
25-39	43
40-54	43
55 and above	34

Source: O'Donnell (2003)

Another feature of Internet users is their high level of education as seen in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Level of education and Internet use in the EU

End of education (Age)	Percentage of Internet use (%)	End of education (Age)	Percentage of daily Internet use (%)
≥ 21	77	≥21	50
≤ 15	18	≤15	32

Source: O'Donnell (2003)

Gender is another significant feature of EU Internet users (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Gender and Internet use in the EU

Internet activity/Gender	Male (%)	Female (%)
Percentage of Internet use	56	40
Percentage of daily Internet use	46	33

Source: O'Donnell (2003)

According to Laudon and Laudon (2000), the Internet provides so many benefits to the community such as global connectivity, ease of use, low cost, and multimedia capabilities. Pasek *et al.* (2006) found that media use, whether for information or entertainment, facilitates civic engagement. News media is especially effective in promoting political awareness. The researchers examined the role of mass media in young people between the ages of 14 and 22, and found that they had 12 different uses of the mass media, including awareness of current national politics and time spent on civic activities. Meanwhile, Bleakly *et al.* (2004:744) examined Internet use and the factors associated with online health information-seeking among a sample of youths aged between 15 and 30 years in New York city. Findings from street intercept surveys indicate substantial computer access at home (62%) and frequent (everyday or a few times a week) Internet use (66%). Meanwhile, 55% of the sample reported seeking health information on the Internet which was associated with positive beliefs about getting a health checkup and frequent Internet use.

According to Marlin (2008: 6), research has shown that Malaysia was ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in a list of 25 top countries with the highest number of Internet users. However, it was not on the list for highest user penetration. Records in 2005 showed 10,040,000 Internet users – 38% of the overall number of Malaysians. Largest numbers were recorded in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Johor and Penang. Since 2000, Internet use in Malaysia has increased at a greater speed, almost 200%.

In 2008, Marlin conducted a study on Internet use by Indonesian students in University of Malaya. The purpose of the study was to examine the benefits of Internet use in information searching, as well as patterns and frequency in the learning process. The survey of 200 students found that Internet use was optimal and beneficial to their learning process (91%). The Internet is attractive and useful to the students because of its updated and global information. About 25 to 50% of information used was beneficial to their studies. They use the Internet every day, spending between two and four hours. Unfortunately, this study did not reveal where the students accessed their information from. In another study, Ali Salman *et al.* (2010), examined the factors that had positive and negative effects on the sustainable use of the Internet among Malay youths, and identified the predictor factors. The study found, from interviews of 225 respondents in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, that interpersonal and social networks, as well as perceived and realised benefits of the Internet have significant positive effects on the sustainability of its use. Issues relating to security concerns and interruptions have a significant negative effect. Therefore, factors which affect sustainability of usage should be given priority in the implementation of Internet and ICT-related projects.

Salman and Hasim's (2010) recent study on the patterns of Internet use of 303 Malays living in Kajang district found that e-mail was the main use of the Internet as a medium of communication (see Table 9). This pattern of Internet use among the respondents is very encouraging. According to Salman and Hasim (2010:13), one important use of the Internet is that of a news source. They said, "What this means is that the pattern of obtaining news by Internet users is changing and newspapers can't afford to miss the opportunity to have online presence."

In 1999, Pawanteh and Samsudin (2001) conducted a research on Internet use and the extent of media penetration among adolescents, by surveying 2,500 young people between the ages of 13 and 25, of which 516 were adolescents. The researchers explored the media environment and media use, and discovered that Internet use was a social event that is shared with peers. The Internet was more of an entertainment rather than educational tool. It gave the adolescents a sense of empowerment, freedom and collective belonging. The question now arises in this study if youths in institutes of higher learning have similar experiences,

**Table 9.** Internet use among Malays in Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia

Internet Use	Percentage (%)
E-mail	91.7
Reading online news and searching for information	85.8
Hobbies, games, entertainment	70.3
Buying prepaid materials	16.2

Source: Salman and Hasim (2010)

and if so, what are they doing online? What are the online news consumption patterns of urban youths?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The research team began with one brain-storming session, followed by a focus group discussion with about 15 students to identify various possible online media use among post-secondary school students and their likely attitudes towards online media. These viewpoints were coded into a 15- to 20-minute questionnaire. A small-scale pilot run was conducted on the drafted questionnaire to sharpen the language and to ensure building a smooth rapport between the respondent and the interviewer. Subsequently, a large scale quantitative survey was conducted with this questionnaire.

The college student population changes so frequently from cohort to cohort that it did not allow the researchers time to access or build a sampling frame for probabilistic sampling. Hence, a quota sampling scheme was adopted for this survey. The sample of 1,000 interviewees entailed 9 public and 29 private institutions in the Klang Valley – chosen as it has the highest Internet penetration and largest college student population. Thus, Klang Valley youths can be deemed to be trend setters for Internet media use among Malaysian college students. The quotas were enforced by the field supervisors who controlled the ratio on gender, race and size of institution. The researchers also spread out the sample among major institutions such as Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) to ensure representativeness of the sample.

The data was captured directly into the SPSS format and scanned for errors with the SPSS frequency table functions before it proceeded to further analysis. For the online usage habit, the researchers mainly tabulated the frequency tables and correlated the usage pattern with the students' attributes to track their online usage behavioural pattern. As for their attitude towards online media, the researchers applied various data reduction techniques like factor analysis to extract the essential features of the respondents' mindset.

The sample of 1,000 respondents was equally distributed in terms of gender and conformed to the average age of undergraduate students – between 18 and 23 years old. The ethnicity and gender distribution can be seen in Tables 10 and 11. Among the Indians, the gender proportion is about equal. Table 12 shows the breakdown in terms of religion.

Two-thirds of the sample were from private colleges and universities (IPTS) in Malaysia, while the remaining one-third were from public institutes of higher education (IPTA). It is a known fact that private institutions have more non-Malay students, which is why the percentage of Chinese (50.3%) and Indian (17.1%) students sampled from the IPTS population is more than Malays (30.3%). For the IPTAs sampled, 78.9% were Malay students compared to 17.7% Chinese and 2.1% Indians.

**Table 10.** Ethnicity of respondents

Ethnicity	Percentage (%)
Malay	46.1
Chinese	39.6
Indian	12.3

**Table 11.** Respondents by ethnicity and gender

Gender	Percentage (%)	Gender	Percentage (%)
Malay Males	17.9	Chinese Males	24.0
Malay Females	28.2	Chinese Females	15.6

**Table 12.** Respondents by religion(%)

Religion	Percentage (%)
Muslim	46
Buddhists	30
Catholics/Christians	10
Hindus	12

**Table 13.** Respondents by ethnicity and public/private institutes of higher education

IPTA	Percentage (%)	IPTS	Percentage (%)
Malay	78.9	Malay	30.2
Chinese	17.7	Chinese	50.3
Indian	2.1	Indian	17.1
Others	1.2	Others	2.4

**Table 14.** Respondents by educational level

Educational Level	Percentage (%)
Master's	3
Bachelor's	62
Diploma	28
Certificate	9

**Table 15.** Respondents by type of primary and secondary schools attended

Type of Primary School	Percentage (%)	Type of Secondary School	Percentage (%)
Kebangsaan	67.2	Kebangsaan	75.9
Jenis Kebangsaan	32.7	Jenis Kebangsaan	6.6
		Religious schools	5.0
		Private schools	6.6
		Others	5.4

The majority of the respondents are currently doing their undergraduate degree (62%), while 28% are pursuing their diploma. A small number (9%) are in the process of obtaining their certificate or Master's degree (3%).

The researchers also found that two-thirds of the respondents were from national primary schools (Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan) while the remaining one-third was from national-type primary schools (Sekolah Rendah Jenis Kebangsaan). After finishing primary education, the majority of the students (75.9%) continued their secondary education at national secondary schools (Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan) (see Table 15).

#### 4. FINDINGS

Since the respondents were youths in their late teens and early 20s, the majority (94.9%) own a computer, but still rely on traditional media to obtain news (93.8%). The newspaper is still the most favoured traditional medium to get news, followed by TV, then radio (see Table 16). Only 26% said that TV was the most important source of news, followed by newspapers and radio.

**Table 16.** Media choice of respondents

Media Choice	Percentage (%)
Newspaper, Radio, TV	11.9
Newspaper, TV, Radio	42.0
Radio, Newspaper, TV	5.3
Radio, TV, Newspaper	3.9
TV, Newspaper, Radio	26
TV, Radio, Newspaper	4.7

It is possible that the youths still rely on traditional newspapers because broadband speed is still relatively slow, and streaming of news and videos is still very inefficient in Malaysia. Since speed and convenience are important to youths, it could be much faster to read newspapers than go online.

The survey results clearly indicate that a high percentage (a total of 70%) of both male and female students go online daily. However, males are more hardcore users of the Internet because in a day, 61% of males go online approximately three to five times compared to 38.4% for their female counterparts. About 10% of females surf about one to two times a week, and this is also disproportionately higher than the male students who only make up 3% of those who surf infrequently.

**Table 17.** Gender and Frequency of Internet use by gender

Frequency of Internet Use/Gender	Male (%)	Female (%)
Use Internet 3-5 times a day	61.0	38.4
Use Internet 1-2 times a week	3.0	10.0

However, the duration of time both sexes spend online is comparable. Between Chinese and Malay students, the amount of time spent online is also comparable at 46.3% and 41.2% respectively, as both groups tend to go online for longer periods of between 3 and 5 hours. Indians students, on the whole, spend only 1 to 2 hours when they are online at a much smaller percentage of 10.9% compared to the Malays and Chinese. In general, most Malay and Indian students tend to access the Internet away from home i.e. in university/college, cybercafé, Wifi hotspots. The Chinese students also access locations away from home but a proportionate amount spent online is within the home.

The students' activities online (in order of frequency) include surfing, e-mailing, updating and checking social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and Friendster.

Other activities include chatting, reading and updating blogs or tweets, playing online computer games and posting in forums. While blogging/tweeting are activities that registered equally in terms of frequency for both sexes and also across ethnic groups, other activities indicated a marked difference across sex and ethnicity.

Surfing the Internet – the top activity among Klang Valley students (89%) – is mostly done by females (53.1%) compared to males (41.3%) – a 12% percentage point difference. In terms of ethnic differences, Chinese students (32%) tend to surf less than the Malays (42%). The high percentage of Internet surfing among students can be attributed to the fact that information search and research are their core activities. Since a higher percentage of females are Malay, it is possible to conclude that a higher proportion of Malay females surf the Internet compared to others.

**Table 18.** Surfing the Internet by gender and ethnicity

Gender	Surfing the Internet (%)	Ethnicity	Surfing the Internet (%)
Male	53.1	Chinese	32
Female	41.3	Malay	42

Male students, unlike females, spend more time playing games online (34%) and posting on forums (26%) compared to females (18% and 20% respectively). Ethnic differences were less pronounced in online gaming – 12.7% of Chinese and 10% Malays engage in this leisure activity – and not significant among those posting on forums.

**Table 19.** Online games and posting on forums by gender

Activity/Gender	Male (%)	Female (%)
Playing online games	34	18
Posting on forums	26	20

The Internet as a tool of communication is undisputed in the findings. E-mails and social network sites are among the top three student online activities. Gender and ethnic differences are either very small or not significant. Among female students themselves, 50.2% check e-mails very often, compared to 44.6% of male students who e-mail very often in their own gender category. There are no statistically significant differences between females and males when it comes to social networking sites but ethnic differences exist. Of the respondents who go on social networking sites very often, the majority are Malays (47.5%) followed by Chinese (37.7%) (see Table 20).

**Table 16.** E-mails and social networking by gender and ethnicity

Gender/Activity	Checking e-mails very often (%)	Ethnicity/Activity	Access social networking sites very often(%)
Male	44.6	Malays	47.5
Female	50.2	Chinese	37.7

Among those who chat online regularly, there is no significant statistical difference between the genders. However, a significant proportion of female respondents have never chatted before (76.7%) compared to males (23.3%). Chinese students tend to chat more than other ethnic groups. Of those who chat very often, Chinese students were the highest (48.1%), followed by Malays (36.4%) and Indians (13.7%). This finding is consistent with the percentage between IPTA and IPTS students because 64% of IPTS respondents chat compared to 52% of IPTAs.

**Table 21.** Chatting online by gender and ethnicity

Gender/Chat	Never chatted before (%)	Ethnicity/Chat	Chat very often (%)
Male	23.3	Malay	36.4
Female	76.7	Chinese	48.1
		Indian	13.7

E-mails, social networks and chats are very similar in that they provide a means for students to communicate. All three involve communication through writing; however, it is only via e-mails that longer tracts of private, written communication are given free reign. The findings indicate that females are predominantly e-mail users, which could be due to its lack of anonymity. E-mails are generally between two or more people who know each other, and it affords a more private, sustained correspondence compared to social networking sites or chat rooms. Although social networking sites do afford their participants some privacy, depending on the settings imposed by the users, the amount of text allowed is not unlimited. The more conversational nature of such sites is similar to that of chat rooms, although the latter is much more governed by the dictates of real time.

Chats can be anonymous, with private chat rooms available for those who do not want others to read their conversations. But the risk of danger is ever present. News stories about male perpetrators who use chat rooms to target and attack unsuspecting female victims are common. This could explain why female students, by and large, participate much less in online chats than their male counterparts. Females prefer the safety of e-mails, where both parties are more likely to know each other. There is also less interference from outside parties, unlike social network sites and chat rooms. Thus, more male students engage in chats, forums and social networking than females.

The activity that is least participated by students is online shopping. Across gender and ethnic lines, one in five youths have shopped online at least once, but close to two-thirds have never done so. Possible reasons could be lack of money. Online shopping requires shoppers to have access to credit cards or a payment account, e.g. PayPal, which students may not have. In some cases, parents may also discourage or disallow their children from shopping online, especially for those who are still below 21. Among the 8% who shop, the majority are Malays (54.5%) followed by Chinese (31.8%).

With regards to online news consumption, almost two-thirds (64%) of the respondents indicated that they read *Malaysiakini*, making it the most popular news website across all the ethnic groups. More than three-quarters (78.9%) of the Indian respondents read it,

followed by Malays (65.3%) and Chinese (57.6%). In fact, Malay (69.8%) and Indian (82%) men are more avid fans of *Malaysiakini* compared to Chinese (60.4%). A similar trend is found among Malay (62.4%) and Indian females (75%) compared to Chinese females (53.2%). It is clear from this finding that the Chinese readership of *Malaysiakini* is the lowest among the ethnic groups.

**Table 22.** Reading *Malaysiakini* by ethnicity and gender

	Overall (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)
Malay	65.3	69.8	62.4
Chinese	57.6	60.4	53.2
Indian	78.9	82.0	75.0

In general, readers of *Malaysiakini* go there to get very specific kinds of news i.e. socio-political. The high number of Indian readers could be due to the awakening of socio-political awareness in their community due to the Hindraf issue around the time when the survey was conducted (Oct-Dec 2009). Also, the Indian students may find that the mainstream press do not have sufficient coverage on issues relating to them, and therefore turn to the Internet to find news outlets that are relevant to their needs. Contrary to popular belief that youth rely a lot on blogs for information and news, the statistics show that on average, less than 30% refer to blogs, and this is true across all ethnic groups.

The results also show that more students (72.1%) in public institutions of higher learning (IPTA) read *Malaysiakini* compared to those (56.7%) in private institutions (IPTs), which is consistent with the ethnic data. IPTA students could be more exposed to socio-political issues during their campus elections, student councils and societies. Since *Malaysiakini* focuses on socio-political news and issues, it might relate to their interest. In comparison, IPTs students have more distractions, having to work part-time due to higher tuition fees and cost of living, and thus have less time to read news. They could also be apathetic because they are of a different social class and such news or issues are not so important to them. IPTs students may be living at home and spend a considerable amount of time travelling to campus, and thus have less time after class to hang out and chit-chat on campus. In comparison, the majority of the IPTA students are from out of state and live in centralised dorms on campus, which are cheaper compared to private housing outside campus. Thus, they have more time to spend within campus and are more involved in campus activities, whereas IPTs students may have to work in their spare time to earn extra money for their living and accommodation expenses.

Very few respondents read the other online news websites listed, for example, *Merdeka Review*, *Agenda Daily*, *The Nut Graph*, *Malaysian Insider* and even *Malaysia Today*. A cursory check on these websites revealed some possibilities as to why they are less appealing to youths. One possible reason could be the less appealing and less user friendly design of these websites and the prevalence of 'serious, heavy' news on Malaysian politics and economy, which may not appeal to youths. In comparison, *Malaysiakini* is the most established and well-known news website; it has a more user-friendly interface as well. Its

real-time live coverage especially during election results has given it an advantage compared to others. This inference is consistent with the findings from the survey which shows many students relied on *Malaysiakini* for the 2008 election coverage, across ethnic groups.

Surprisingly, youths are less likely to obtain news from blogs, forums or gossip sites. They still go online to read the news but many of these sites are actually online versions of the mainstream print media, rather than alternative news media. Examples include online print media such as *The Star*, *The Sun*, *NST*, *Utusan Malaysia*, *Berita Harian*, *Harakah*, *Sin Chew*, *China Press*, etc. Aside from these media channels, students also visit international news sites such as *MSN news*, *CNN*, *BBC*.

The main reason why the respondents prefer to get their news online is because they can get additional information not found elsewhere (56.1%). They also prefer online media because it gives them timely news (60.6%) and presents different views (47%). It would seem that students prefer substance (i.e. facts) over opinion or styles. This shows that what is lacking in mainstream media are facts or substance. Once the news website has sufficient facts, then design and style matters. Thus, it is not surprising that *Malaysiakini* is popular because it delivers updated facts and their webpage design is attractive enough to appeal to students.

Less important are interactivity, multimedia and critical style of writing. Students do not seem to see news as an arena for a two-way communication dialogue – it is more for information gathering rather than sharing. Generally, more men prefer online news due to multimedia (56.6% compared to women 43.4%). Perhaps males are more audio-visually oriented, which is why the multimedia function is important to them. Interestingly, among those who prefer multimedia and designated this as their top three reasons for online news preference, the majority were Chinese (47.5%), especially the males. In comparison, the Malay and Indian students prefer online news because of its timeliness (65.4% and 66% respectively).

When asked if they send links and/or forward online news/articles to other people, 65.6% said they did not. Of those who do forward links, most of them forward lifestyle articles (25.8%), followed by entertainment (25%) and politics (15%) and sports (15%).

**Table 23.** Forwarding online news and articles to others

Forward online news/ articles to others	Percentage (%)	Types of online news/ articles forwarded	Percentage (%)
Yes	34.4	Lifestyle	25.8
No	65.6	Entertainment	25
		Politics	15
		Sports	15

More men forward links on politics and sports (72.2%) than women (27.3%). Among those who forward links, Chinese students forward links more than others and a majority forward links on politics (39%) followed by lifestyle (21%), entertainment (7%) and business/economics (6%).

**Table 24.** Types of links forwarded

Types of links forwarded	Percentage (%)
Politics	39
Lifestyle	21
Entertainment	7
Business/Economics	6

Those who send these links or forward these news articles do so because they want to share information (43%). Indian students forward mainly sport links (32%) and political links (30%). As the sample respondents were students, most were unwilling to pay to read news online (85%). Among the reasons given were that they are students and do not have much money. Some said that the news is already free, and do not see the necessity to pay. Of the 15% who said they were willing to pay, a large percentage were women (61.6%) compared to men (38.4%). More Malays were also willing to pay (60.9%) compared to other ethnic groups.

**Table 25.** Willingness to pay for online news by gender

Pay to read online news	Percentage	Gender	Willing to pay for online news
Yes	85%	Men	38.4%
No	15%	Women	61.6%

Overall, 40% were willing to pay RM10 or less per month, while 24% were willing to pay between RM20 and RM30 monthly. Another 20% would pay between RM10 and RM19 a month, but only a minority of 9% would pay above RM30.

**Table 26.** Monthly subscription to online news

Monthly Amount	Percentage (%)
<RM10	40
RM10<amount<RM19	20
RM20<amount<RM30	24
>RM30	9

## 5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

It is not surprising that an overwhelming majority of respondents own a computer (95%) and access it daily. This is consistent with Wong's (1998) and O'Donnell's (2003) findings that those with higher education were the highest Internet users. What is surprising is that despite the constant exposure to the Internet, Malaysian urban youths still rely on traditional media to obtain news (94%). One possibility could be because broadband speed is still relatively slow and wi-fi access is still not widespread for people to access online news on the go. Thus, for the youth, it is more convenient to pick up the newspapers to read when

they are outside the home. Interestingly, male students are more hardcore Internet users (61%) than females (38.4%) as they go online more frequently – up to five times daily. This situation is similar to that of the EU where more men use the Internet more frequently compared to women (O'Donnell, 2003). Chinese (46.3%) and Malay (41.2%) students tend to spend more time on the Internet compared to Indian students (10.9%). Malay and Indian students also tend to access the Internet away from home, for example, at their university or college, cybercafés or wi-fi hotspots whereas Chinese students use the Internet at home.

When they are accessing the World Wide Web, the students' top activities are surfing, e-mailing and checking social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and Friendster. Other activities include chatting, reading and updating blogs or tweets, playing online computer games and posting in forums. This phenomenon is very similar to what is happening abroad. Mindich's (2005) findings indicate that the Internet is used mostly for chatting, e-mailing, and blogging – doing everything except accessing news. According to Fallows (2004), adolescents who access the Internet focus more on recreation and entertainment, which is consistent with the youths in the Klang Valley.

The study also found gender differences in terms of Internet use. More females surf the Internet for information compared to males who prefer to play online games and post on forums. Malay students also tend to surf the Internet more than Chinese. Since a higher percentage of females were Malay, it is possible to conclude that a higher proportion of Malay females surf the Internet compared to others. This corresponds to Marlin's 2008 study on Indonesian undergraduates in Universiti Malaya whereby the respondents found that the Internet was optimal and beneficial to their learning process due to its updated and global information.

E-mails and social networking sites are the most popular online activities among the respondents. The researchers found that females also use email more often than males. This is not surprising given Ali Salman *et al.*'s (2010) study which found inter-personal and social networks have a significant positive impact on Internet use. Salman and Hasim's (2010) study of Internet use among urban Malays also found that e-mail is the most popular use of the Internet, followed by reading online newspapers and information searching. When it comes to social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, Malay students tend to enjoy this activity more than Chinese. Pawanteh and Samsudin (2001) found that the Internet is a social event that is shared with peers. The youths also chat online but more male students indulge in this activity rather than females. In fact, the study found quite a significant number of female students who have not chatted before. Females probably prefer e-mail to communicate as the risk of chatting with strangers could compromise their personal safety. It is also possible that females generally have more real time, face-to-face communication with friends, whereas males prefer to hide behind the safety of the computer screen. Chinese students tend to chat more than Malays or Indians, consistent with the percentage of IPTA students who chat more than IPTS. IPTS students have more real-time contact in campus, reducing the need to chat online.

Most students do not shop online. Of those who do, there were more Malays than Chinese or Indians. This is consistent with Salman and Hasim's 2010 study of Kajang residents where only 16.2% use the Internet to buy prepaid materials.

Consistent with the trend as indicated in the 2008 research conducted by the Pew Research Centre for People and the Press, online news websites can no longer be considered as 'new media' but are firmly part of the mainstream. Thus, it is not surprising that *Malaysiakini* was the favourite online news source. In fact, Malay and Indian students are more avid fans compared to Chinese. More IPTA students read *Malaysiakini* compared to their counterparts in private institutions. One reason why they prefer online news is because they can get additional information that is not found elsewhere, as well as timely news that presents different views. This view is echoed in Deacon's (2007) findings that the availability of digital news archives enable people to quickly access large bodies of information. Online news can also lure readers away from print media because of the immediacy and impact of its news. The students were not so concerned about opinions or presentation styles. Hence, the lack of facts or substance in mainstream traditional media has been driving consumers towards online news. It is no wonder that *Malaysiakini*, which provides additional timely information which is different from mainstream traditional media, has become so popular. This corresponds to a Nielsen/Net Ratings survey in 2000 where it found that online news readership increased during the Sept 11 tragedy and Iraq war where people turned to the Internet for supplementary information which television and print could not offer. Interestingly, students hardly get their news from blogs, forums or gossip sites, or other alternative news websites like *Merdeka Review* or *Malaysian Insider*. Instead, another important news source is the online versions of mainstream print media. This could be linked to the students' level of familiarity with mainstream newspapers as a source of information, which drives them to seek the same source online rather than seek new pastures.

According to Laudon and Laudon (2000), the Internet provides so many benefits such as ease of use, global connectivity, low cost and multimedia capabilities. Surprisingly, the Internet's interactivity and multimedia functions are not features that attract the students, who use the Internet more for information-gathering. This again corresponds to findings by Marlin (2008). Salman and Hasim (2010) also found that other than e-mail, their respondents used the Internet for reading online newspapers and searching for information. In this study, the researchers found that generally, Chinese men prefer online news due to its multimedia functions, compared to Malays and Indians.

Most of the students do not forward links to others. If they do, it is usually on lifestyle and entertainment, followed by politics and sports – usually men. Chinese students forward the most links on politics followed by lifestyle. Indian students forward mainly sports and political links. The reason why they forward links is because they want to share the information that they found with their friends – similar to Pawanteh and Samsudin's (2001) findings that Internet use is a social event that is shared with peers. With regard to payment for online news, it is not surprising that they were unwilling to pay. As students with tight budgets, they are already getting most of their news for free and do not see the need to pay. Of those who were willing to pay, more were women from the Malay community. This shows that the educated Malay woman is a force to be reckoned with in the near future as they are willing to pay to be informed and educated.

The development and larger availability of information and activities on the Internet seem to offer youths not only the opportunity for quick access, which supersedes the news

delivery of traditional print medium in terms of immediacy and impact, but also acts as a powerful lure that continually draws readers because of its ability to connect with other people and bridge divides, leading to an even playing field. Today's growth of blogs and online news websites have given youths the opportunity to pick and choose information that suit their personal gratification. It is surprising to note that even with the proliferation of online news websites, Malaysian youths still rely on traditional media to obtain news. Hence, it is not 100% migration to new media, unlike in the US and Europe. Online media is still not mainstream in Malaysia. Students' access of online news is still very much one-way communication – to get facts, not to interact nor dialogue.

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## **Politeness Strategies in Openings and Closings of Service Encounters in Two Malaysian Agencies**

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### **Abstract**

Opening and closing a conversation can be activated both verbally and non-verbally, depending on participants, topic, and setting. While some types of opening and closing of conversations are perceived politely, others are perceived impolitely because cultures vary. Politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction and when taken in that light, politeness enhances rapport and establishes convergence in communication. Politeness can be used as a strategy to build relationships and minimize social distance between speakers and in any communication, it is of importance. This paper focuses on the politeness strategies used by front counter staff of two government-linked full-fledged companies: Post Offices and the EPF (Employees Provident Fund) based in an urban area of the Klang Valley. The study observed both verbal and non-verbal cues used in openings and closings during service encounters in these two government linked companies. Data were obtained through audio and manual recordings of the said interactions which occurred during office hours. In particular, a total of seven staff were observed i.e. five in the post offices and two in the EPF. The total interactions encountered and recorded were 228 and they were transcribed orthographically. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of Face Threatening Acts (FTA), findings suggest that both staff and the public seldom perform openings and closings. Both parties also rarely greet and address each other. Although data is limited to only two government-linked companies, findings indicate that phatic communication hardly takes place between service providers and service takers. This finding could therefore be used by researchers in communication as one step towards developing training courses for service providers of government-linked companies who meet the general public on a daily basis.

**Keywords: Politeness, phatic communication, rapport management, verbal communication**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Conversation is an essential activity in people's lives as communication helps them to achieve certain ends. While politeness has played an important role in daily conversations, what is deemed polite may vary from culture to culture. Service encounters may be an inevitable process for many people whose lives revolve around filling forms, making claims,

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making payments, making enquiries, to subscribing new accounts and making purchases. All these transactions involve human beings. Politeness, when applied, makes such encounters more endurable. To be polite simply means to exhibit behaviour both in manner or speech which shows a considerate regard for others. Nonetheless, there are degrees of politeness but as long as there is no offence or the offence is light, such transactions are allowable.

The emphasis on politeness is made because it plays an important role in conversations since politeness creates solidarity among interlocutors. Consequently, the rapport made by both parties may lead to convergence and cooperation. Convergence arising from a need to be polite occurs when speakers develop a certain understanding of what is considered linguistically polite. However, it is essential to understand that politeness is culturally specific when politeness theories are used in research, because the norms practised by one culture may not be acceptable by another culture.

## 2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The term, 'politeness' is a technical term used in pragmatics and socio-linguistics. Politeness is more often manifested in verbal interactions but it cannot be denied that some forms of non-verbal acts can also be perceived to be polite or impolite. The notion of studying 'politeness' first appeared in Western Europe in the late 60s and early 70s with the introduction of the Gricean Maxims, cooperative principles introduced by Grice (1989) and the speech acts theory supported by works of Lakoff (1973: 296), Leech (1983: p.7, 80) and Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]: p. 5) which focused on the strategies for constructing, regulating, and reproducing forms of cooperative social interaction. In short, politeness as a concept is associated with a display of respect and it comprises strategies aimed at obtaining a favour. Politeness describes a behaviour which is formal and distancing and where the intention of the speaker is not to impose or to intrude into the other party. Politeness is a way of maintaining non-imposing distancing behaviour in order not to offend other speakers, and expresses a positive concern towards others (Mills, 2003).

Lakoff (1975: p.64) explains that "politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction" and when taken in that way, build prelatships and establishes convergence in communication. Lakoff's description proposes that politeness is socially constructed by people who create certain norms in a certain community that are deemed acceptable and polite by members of the speech community. Brown and Levinson (1987) view politeness essentially as a complex system for softening face-threatening acts (FTA). They also provided several strategies which people employ to offset FTA. In that regard, politeness can be taken as a communication strategy that helps to build rapport and minimise social distance between speakers.

Since politeness is socially constructed by the people in a society, politeness can be defined in a number of ways. Hill *et al.* (1986: p.349) provide a more positive definition saying that politeness is one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others' feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort, and promote rapport. This idea correlates with the definition provided by Lakoff (1975: p.64), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Mills (2003) which indicates that politeness helps to establish rapport and solidarity between interlocutors. If both interlocutors do not display consideration for each other,

rapport and solidarity between them cannot be achieved. Watts (2003) suggests that 'politeness behaviour' consist of 'mutually shared forms of consideration for others' (p. 29) and likewise, displays consideration for others thereby becoming cooperative in social interactions and polite behaviours are universal characteristics of every social cultural group. Therefore, a conversation where politeness strategy is not applied could result in social distance and promote disharmony among speakers.

### ***2.1. Post-modern View on Politeness***

This study has been conducted to assess politeness strategies in the encounters occurring between staff and their customers in two Malaysian government-linked companies. This kind of communication is conducted on a less personal level and follows a specific purpose (providing the consumers with a specific service). The interactions between the interlocutors (speaker and hearer) conducted in this context are short and mostly hearer oriented. The discourse and type of communication involved makes it difficult to assess the politeness issue using the classical politeness theories. Therefore the so-called post-modern views on politeness inspired mostly by (Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003) were used as the theoretical model to assess politeness strategies in these encounters. This theory was chosen based on its features and assumptions, which suit the characteristics of the discourse under investigation. A brief explanation of the post modern view on politeness is presented below followed by some explanations and examples from the Malaysian context.

These theories are based on two principles: first, a distinction between the dictionary-meaning or the commonsense notion of politeness (first-order politeness)(Kasper, 1994) and the technical term which covers face-saving/constituting behaviour (second-order politeness). This distinction was first initiated by Watts (2003) and later expanded by Eelen (2001). The second principle that differentiates post-modern theories is the inclusion of social-theoretical perceptions. One of the most influential of these theories has been Bourdieu's (1991) "Beyond the micro-level in politeness research practice-based sociology of language."

The post-modernists emphasise rapport management over information and give more importance to the addressee's interpretations rather than the speaker's intentions. They stress the importance of situated evaluation for politeness, stating that evaluations of politeness presume specific addressees in specific encounters, thus the consequences of linguistic expressions cannot be predicted unless one knows the specific context in which they were used. The focus of post-modern theories on order-one politeness highlights that participants in a conversation do not always assume politeness as a 'good' thing. Watts (2003) calls this phenomenon as "the discursive dispute over first order politeness". That is, politeness itself is evaluated, and it can be awarded either a positive or a negative value, as for instance when it is perceived as an attempt to manipulate a situation for one's own benefit, or in the case of this study, when the characteristics of the context imply very short specific exchanges where many people are waiting to be served. The post-modern theories emphasise the need for a "process-oriented view of conversation" (Mills, 2003: p. 38). In this view, politeness is a dynamic concept, and consequently, particular utterances are merely "open to be understood as polite from the addressee's/hearer's point of view" (Watts, 2003).

## ***2.2. Phatic Communication***

Politeness can be expressed via openings and closings of a conversation, that is, in greetings and leave-takings. Normally, an average day is filled with features of phatic communication, which encompass saying 'hello', 'good morning', 'bye' or 'see you'. These are frequently used in greetings and leave-takings. Such phatic communication has been deemed important in human interactions because it not only paves the way for communication to be smooth but is also perceived to be an example of displaying polite behaviour.

Phatic communication can be verbal or non-verbal. A simple wave at a co-worker or a thumbs-up signal to a friend can be considered phatic communication. Phatic communication also contains small talk since it is not easy to convey a message without some form of phatic communication. Sociologists who have studied the art of human communication suggest that phatic communication, for instance, discussing the weather, opens up a social channel. This in turn, can lead to more substantial or factual communication. Observations show that few people start and end conversations with straightforward facts and so phatic communication helps set the stage first.

Phatic communication exists in the workplace, for example, receptionists use routine greetings to begin and end phone conversations. In some organisations, co-workers often have social 'water cooler' conversations about common events or issues. Much of social daily work routines revolve around these apparently non-momentous moments of social communication.

While it is important to develop effective phatic communication skills, one must understand that some people are not comfortable with the idea of making meaningless 'small talk'. In sharp contrast, others seem to embrace the social ritual of phatic communication, even to the point of avoiding much factual conversation with others. Communication experts suggest finding a middle ground, using phatic communication as a means to open up more substantial conversation. In fact too much emphasis on small talk can make a person seem chatty, while too little can make someone appear unapproachable.

Phatic communication is actually using conventional messages to establish rapport, to break the ice, and/or to end a conversation. One might hug, kiss, shake hands, bow, smile, make eye contact, and face one another. One might exchange pleasantries by using clichés. Clichés are overused expressions that have lost their original (content) meanings and have taken on new relational meanings. People expect phatic communication at the beginning and end of every conversation, regardless of their feelings about a person. Examples are 'How are you?', 'Hello', 'Hi', 'Have a nice day,' and 'Thanks', 'You are welcome' and so on (Zegarac, 1998). Where these features are non-existing, observers perceive such transactions to be robotic, cold, rude and so on because it is human nature to want respect or to be well regarded by others. This is considered as impolite. When people sense a lack of high regard, respect or consideration by others and in contrast senses impoliteness, their face is threatened and they become offended. This affects the interaction.

## ***2.3. Features of Politeness in Malaysian Culture***

While western culture accepts directness as a polite way of conveying their meanings or message, the Malaysian culture perceives indirectness as being polite because it is non-

face threatening, particularly when making a request (see Asmah Haji Omar, 1993; Jamaliah Mohd. Ali, 2000). Much work has been conducted on the norms of politeness in different cultures, which explain the complexity in understanding politeness in various cultures. Studies on politeness from different cultures have been conducted by Blum-Kulka (1989) who focused on requests and apologies; Ting-Toomey (2005) looked at challenges in facing work, Holmes (1995) focused on women, men and politeness while Held (1995) looked at verbal politeness which studies the ways of theorising linguistic politeness. These few studies suggest that different cultures have different perspectives of politeness

#### ***2.4. Openings and Closings in the Malaysian Context***

Opening a conversation can be done by using both verbal and non-verbal codes. Normally a conversation starts with a greeting or any phatic form of communication before the real message is conveyed. However, this may vary depending on the participants, topic, and setting. Moreover, openings also vary from culture to culture and so openings can be perceived positively (polite) or negatively (impolite) by speech partners. In the Malaysian context, for instance, “Have you eaten?” (in any of the languages commonly spoken in Malaysia) is an opening, much like a greeting. “Where are you going?” is also another form of phatic opening/greeting (David, 2008) in the local culture.

If some people find it difficult to start a conversation, others may find it difficult to close a conversation. Therefore as a participant to an interaction, one can either shift to talking about another topic or move away to talk with someone else. Closing a conversation suddenly may appear rude and ill mannered while to interrupt and walk away from someone in the midst of a conversation might make others think poorly of you. In practice, if you do a closing well you will only leave your other interlocutors with a warm glow. There are some guidelines in closing a conversation and this includes bringing a conversation to a close by thanking, or providing a reason for retreating from the discourse for instance, “My class is waiting for me.”

### **3. AIMS**

This research focuses on politeness strategies observed in the encounters occurring between front counter staff who are serving customers in two government-linked full-fledged companies based in an urban area in the Klang Valley. Three post offices and the Employment Provident Fund (EPF) office were selected based on accessibility. Both verbal and non-verbal cues used in openings and closings in such encounters were noted.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

Data was gathered using audio recordings as well as manual recordings of public interactions at front counters of these agencies. Seven staff from EPF and Post Office were involved in the observations while 228 customers served as the focus of observation. This therefore provided a reasonable number of instances for the data to be categorised according to openings and closings and whether or not these two were present in the transactions observed. Initial transactions were audio recorded but as the research site became crowded and noisy, the quality of the sounds became affected by noise from the environment. To

overcome this barrier, notes of the interactions were then taken based on close observations. This was practical as the interactions were short and at times not much was said. The notion of opening and closing in conversations were based on conversation structures (Kuang *et al.*, 2011) while the politeness strategies identified were based on the context of the encounters. For example, where there were words used, they included greetings, forms of address and non-verbal cues such as smiles and nods which were considered polite. An absence of such signals was considered impolite.

## 5. ANALYSIS

The first stage analysis was focused on openings and closings initiated by service providers in these two government-linked full-fledged companies and the politeness strategies identified were then categorised. This was then followed by openings and closings made by members of the public. Examples will be provided in both instances to illustrate the context.

### 5.1 *Openings and Closings by Serving Staff*

As mentioned above, openings refer to how a conversation is initiated and openings in the local context can include the use of address forms, greetings, exchange of positive non-verbal movements like a smile, wave of hand, and eye contact. In contrast, closings refer to how a conversation is closed and may include thanking someone or saying goodbye with positive non-verbal acts like a smile, wave of hand or eye contact. Data presented in Table 1 shows the breakdown of the total of 228 transactions between serving staff and the Malaysian public. In total only 18% contained openings with 7% of these being non-verbal acts. The majority of the interactions, which amounted to 80%, does not contain openings. Only 19% of the transactions observed contained closings while 80% did not contain any form of closing.

Findings show that openings, whether verbal or non-verbal, were not used by staff of these two government-linked companies. This occurs in 80% of the exchanges while serving 228 people. It was observed that staff merely fulfilled the requests of the public without any small or phatic talk. In cultures where such phatic talk is considered important and denotes politeness, the lack of use of such discourse markers would appear rude and impolite. However, in the Malaysian setting the lack of such phatic talk does not appear to be important in the service encounters. This could be due to the high tolerance level of Malaysian for what DeVito (2008) terms as ‘high tolerance for the unknown’. It appears that

**Table 1.** Openings and closings by serving staff

	Openings observed		No Openings	Closings observed		No closings
	Verbal	Non-Verbal		Verbal	Non-Verbal	
Use of address forms						
	7/228 (3.07%)	19/228 (8.33%)	186/228 (81.58%)	18/228 (7.89%)	26/228 (11.4%)	184/228 (80.7%)

Malaysians do not complain about this lack of phatic communication as shown in the smooth transaction provided as evidence. It appears that service providers working in these two government-linked companies merely performed their tasks in a perfunctory manner. Examples of transactions without openings are provided below. The staff is coded as 'S' while the general public is coded as 'P'. Data in languages other than English have been translated and placed in parenthesis.

### 5.1.1 *Openings by service providers/staff*

More than three quarters of the transactions observed indicated that they lacked any openings or closings. About 80% of these transactions were clearly short of these two structures. Some examples are presented to show the nature of these transactions.

#### Example 1. Service Encounter in the Post Office

- P: (Passes the letter to the staff)  
 S: *Tiga puluh tiga ringgit.* (Malay - thirty-three ringgit)  
 P: *Tiga puluh tiga ringgit?* (Malay - thirty-three ringgit?)  
 S: (nods)  
 P: (Pays and leaves)

Example 1 shows that the service was exchanged without any greeting or address form made by the staff at the post office. The female staff accepts the letter from the public and tells the client how much he had to pay. There is minimal interaction between the two except for the task to be undertaken. Likewise, the Malaysian public does not spend time on small talk or perform small courtesies like thanking the staff for the service rendered. This can be justified by Watts' (2003) argument that there is no universal standard to classify utterances as polite; consequently, he uses Bourdieu's theory as intellectual grounds to rationalise when and why individual language users classify utterances as polite or impolite.

#### Example 2. Service Encounter in the Post Office

- P: *Surat ini nak hantar ke mana?*  
 (Malay - Where should I send this letter?)  
 S: *Tingkat tiga.* (Malay - third floor)

There was also no sign of phatic talk in Example 2 where the staff serving in the post office did not indulge in openings or closings in the transaction. It appears that the Malaysian public is more pragmatic oriented and have no demand for courtesies like greetings when dealing with staff in service counters. The client instead went directly into the need to be performed that is, making an enquiry on his part. There is also no acknowledgement of thanks for the reply received and after being provided the information required, the customer left without thanking the staff as illustrated in Example 2.

Analysis of the 228 interactions collected also demonstrates that staff in these two government-linked companies only addressed their clientele 3.07% out of the 228 times as shown in Table 1. This phenomenon may be the rare occasion when the Malaysian public was addressed as shown in Example 3 that follows.

### 5.1.2 *Absence of politeness markers*

Example 3 highlights a case, which implies that the words uttered during those transactions were task-oriented. In this example, the staff greeted the Malaysian public with ‘*ya, encik*’ (Yes Sir) but the greeting was actually a polite request for what was required. ‘Yes’ in this context was a way of encouraging the public to say what he/she wants. However, ‘Yes’ can also be interpreted as a question asking the people “What do you want?” In this conversation, ‘yes’ was used as an opening statement by the staff to inquire from the client what he/she requires. In Example 3, ‘Yes’ is followed by a term of address ‘Mr’ (*encik*) which is a show of politeness. The same example also indicates that the Malaysian public does not use any marker of politeness with the service provider. They tend to use bald responses stating directly what they want without any openings or closings.

Example 3. Service Encounter at the EPF

- S: *Ya, encik?* (Malay: Yes, Mr?)  
 P: Nak check KWSP. (Malay: Want to check EPF)  
 S: (gives him a number)

As highlighted in Table 1, only 8% of the 228 interactions contained some form of opening that was initiated by the staff. In this small category, conversations were commenced by staff with greetings like ‘good morning’, ‘yes’ or “excuse me” as shown in Example 4.

### 5.1.3 *Non-verbal markers of politeness*

In public transactions, it may be common to have staff closing interactions with non-verbal actions such as a smile as is presented in Example 4. The example indicates that the service provider initiated the conversation but the client went direct into the task by making enquiries on what his visit was meant to accomplish. It was noted that there were non-verbal exchange of politeness and in this case, there was an exchange of smiles.

Example 4. Service Encounter at the Post Office

- S: Morning.  
 P: (Making an enquiry)  
 S: *RM 52 yang surat itu.* (Malay: RM 52 for the letter)  
 P: (Smiling)  
 S: (Smiling)

### 5.1.4 *‘Yes’ as a common marker of opening*

The data also indicate that the Malaysian form of greeting generally used in these government-linked companies was the lexical item ‘yes’ as it appeared to be used often and was articulated with a rising intonation which was interpreted as meaning: “Yes how may I help you?” Data seem to suggest that Malaysian service providers in these two government-linked companies believe in brevity of discourse. The greeting was condensed to a simple lexical item with a rising intonation denoting enquiry. Example 5 is presented as a sample of this type of opening.

## Example 5. Service Encounter at the EPF

S: Yes?

P: *Nak permohonan pinjaman.* (Malay: Want to apply for the loan)

S: *Pinjaman apa tu?* (Malay: What kind of the loan?)

P: *Tak tahu, kejap ya, I nak tanya.* (Malay: Don't know, please wait, I have to ask)  
(The person is making a call)

P: *Pinjaman rumah.* (Malay: House loan)

S: *Ya, tolong isikan form ini.* (Malay: Yes, please fill up the form)

## 5.1.5 Muslim greeting as a marker of opening

Another form of greeting detected in the service encounters between Malaysian Muslims is the religious greeting as shown in Example 6 below.

## Example 6. Service Encounter at the Post Office

S: *Ya cik?* (Malay: Yes sir?)

P: *Salamualaikum* (Smiling and nods uttering the Islamic greeting)

S: *Ya, Salamualaikum* (Malay: YES, responds with an Islamic response to such a greeting).

## 5.2 Closings by Service Providers/Staff

How one closes a conversation can also signify polite or impolite behaviour. If an interaction comes to an abrupt end with no signals suggesting that the interaction is at its tail end then that interaction can be perceived to be impolite. From the total of 228 observed interactions between serving staff and the public, it was noted that the staff observed only used closings in 19.3% of their interactions. Of such closings 7.89% were verbal and 11.4% were non-verbal.

## 5.2.1 Simple acknowledgements

Of the few interactions in which closings were observed, all were confined to simple acknowledgements of thanks, which may sometimes be made by the staff.

Example 7 illustrates.

## Example 7: Service Encounter at the Post Office

S: Yes? (Smiling)

P: *Nak timbang ni.* (Malay: Want to weigh this)

S: Thank you.

At other times, the closing was made by the public. Example 8 is provided to illustrate such an interaction. Here, the serving staff closed the talk by acknowledging the thanks rendered, saying, '*Sama*' (welcome). The data in this example showed the staff using an address form '*Cik*' in his opening and this is followed by the religious greeting between the two Muslims. In response, the staff reciprocates the thanks by saying '*sama sama*' (welcome).

## Example 8. Service Encounter at the EPF

S: *Ya cik?*

P: *Salamualaikum* (Smiling and nod her head with a Malay greeting)

S: *Ya, Salamualaikum* (YES, respond with the same Malay greeting)

P: *Nak minta borang pinjaman ya.* (Malay: I would like to ask for the loan form.)

S: *Boleh, ini.* (Malay: Can, here it is)

P: *Terima kasih.* (Malay: Thank you)

S: *Sama-sama.* (Malay: You are welcome)

## 5.2.2 Non-verbal cues

There are also occasions where the staff closes conversations using non-verbal cues like smiles or nods as seen in Examples 9 and 10. The staff in example 9 closes her conversation with a smile and a nod of head in response to the member of the public who says 'thank you'. In Example 10, almost the entire conversation is non-verbal. The client starts his conversation with a smile, and the staff responds likewise with a smile. After receiving the service required, the client expresses his thanks with the words 'thank you', and the counter staff responds with a smile to show politeness.

## Example 9. Service Encounter at the Post Office

P: Want to post something (a big box with money)

S: Just take the box.

P: Thank you.

S: (smiles and nods her head.)

## Example 10. Service Encounter at the MPBJ

P: (Smile and passes the letter to staff)

S: (smiles and takes the letter.)

P: ok, thanks.

S: (smile)

## 5.3 Openings by Members of the Public

In this section, the discourse is analysed from the perspective of the public to determine if they make use of phatic talk or other politeness indicators as openings or closings for the interactions. Table 2 shows that only about 9% of the 228 members of the public used greetings (both verbal and non-verbal) in their openings. About 28% used closings in their

**Table 2.** Openings and closings by the public

Address form	Openings		No openings	Closings		No closings
	Verbal	Non-Verbal		Verbal	Non-Verbal	
12/228 (5.26%)	13/228 (5.7%)	7/228 (3.07%)	196/228 (85.96%)	47/228 (20.61%)	17/228 (7.46%)	164/228 (71.93%)

interactions with the staff. The data showed that 3.07% of the public performed openings by using non-verbal cues for example, smiles or nods when they want to be served.

It appears that openings and closings made by the public are minimal since most of the interactions did not contain openings and closings. Such an occurrence may imply that the discourse of service providers and members of the Malaysian public are often kept to a minimum for obvious reasons i.e. to accomplish some kind of need with as little hassle as possible. In other words Malaysians tend to be more pragmatic in their markers of service-oriented transactions. Through this preliminary study with its limitation of involving seven staff, the general public would get an insight of the kind of communication and interaction to be encountered in the two government-linked full-fledged companies.

### 5.3.1 Openings

Of the limited openings seen, however, some were in English as shown in the following examples. The member of the public started his conversation with the word 'Excuse me' to get the attention of the civil servant.

Example 11: Service Encounter at the Post Office

- P: Excuse me. (Gives 30 cents)  
 S: (takes the money and gives the stamp)  
 P: (takes the stamp and leaves.)

Apart from this, the use of address forms can also be seen as a strategy to get the attention of the counter staff as is illustrated in Example 12 where '*Cik*' meaning 'Miss' is used to get the attention of the staff before making the request. The use of the address terms like '*Cik*' is a polite strategy, which is used to build solidarity. The member of public even thanked the civil servant and in return got a reciprocal response i.e. '*Ya, sama*' means 'Yes, you are welcome.'

Example 12. Service Encounter at the Post Office

- P: *Cik, nak beli setem dan tu envelope.* (smiling)  
 (Malay: Miss, I want to buy stamp and the envelope.)  
 S: (takes the money, gives the stamp and envelope.)  
 P: *Terima kasih.* (Malay: thank you)  
 S: *Ya, sama.* (Malay: yes, welcome).

### 5.3.2 Non-phatic talk

Of the 228 interactions recorded, it seems that majority (85.96%) of the public do not perform openings or phatic talk as illustrated in Example 13.

Example 13. Service Encounter at the MPBJ

- P: (passes the letter)  
 S: *tiga puluh tiga ringgit.* (Malay: thirty three ringgit)  
 P: *tiga puluh tiga ringgit?* (Malay: thirty three ringgit?)  
 S: (nods)  
 P: (pays money and leaves)

#### **5.4 Closings by Members of the Public**

Similar to the openings, only 28.07% of the members of public closed their conversation after they receiving the service. The data indicate that 20.61% were articulated verbally and 7.46% were via the non-verbal means. There was hardly any conversation transpiring between the person who served and the person who was being served in many of the interactions.

##### *5.4.1 Silent transactions*

It appears that many transactions had taken place in silence (non-verbal). This is exemplified through Examples 14 and 15.

Example 1.: Service Encounter at the Post Office

- P: (gives thirty cents to the staff)
- S: (takes the money and gives a stamp)
- P: (takes the stamp and leaves.)

Data also indicate that non-verbal indicators may be employed by members of public as a strategy to close interactions. Example 16 illustrates a member of public closing the interaction with non-verbal signals.

Example 15. Service Encounter at the MPBJ

- P: *Bayar sewa- tingkat berapa?* (Malay: Pay rent- which floor?)
- S: *Tingkat tiga.* (Malay: third floor.)
- P: MAS office?
- S: *Bawah sana.* (Malay: down there.)
- P: (smiles and nods his head)

##### *5.4.2 Rare examples of using openings and closings*

Example 16 is a rare transaction in this data since it contained both an opening and a closing. The person, who came to get the service initially, started her conversation with a simple opening 'excuse me' followed by the enquiry (how to apply for the internet). Even though the staff did not respond to the enquiry directly, the staff did acknowledge her presence by instructing her to get a number first. The member of public did not show any annoyance and in spite of that still thanked the staff.

Example 16. Service Encounter at the MPBJ

- P: Excuse me, how to apply for the Internet?
- S: You have to take the number first.
- P: OK, thanks. (After taking the number she leaves)

##### *5.4.3 Minimal words*

Sometimes minimal words may be used in the entire transaction as shown in Example 17. Only one word 'stamp' was used during the short service transaction to let the staff know what was required. The data show that there were a number of such interactions displaying only one or two words being uttered during the duration of the service transaction. Often

after getting what they had come to purchase or do at these government-linked companies, the client would leave without saying anything.

#### Example 17. Service Encounter at the Post Office

P: Stamp (give thirty cent)

S: (collects the money and gives a stamp)

P: (takes the stamp, smiles and leaves)

## 6. DISCUSSION

An analysis of both openings and closings used by service providers in two government-linked companies and by members of the public show both parties to the transactions were not likely to use markers of politeness. Politeness appears to be not only culture specific but is also based on experience or habitué as argued by Watts (2003). In the above examples, the staff of the two government-linked companies observed at the service counters and the Malaysian public visiting them were keeping the interactions brief, pragmatic, and with no phatic communication in the form of greetings or address terms probably because of common practices happening around them, especially in these agencies. To Malaysians, such behaviours were probably polite enough because they go to such agencies for a specific purpose only. When such a purpose has been accomplished, there is little necessity to develop solidarity or friendship. Since there were only seven staff involved, the findings can provide some useful preliminary insights into these behaviours. This phenomenon echoes Fukushima (2004), Watts (2003) and Mills (2003) who claim that the hearer in any communicative event appears to play a very important role in interpreting and determining what he hears as polite or impolite. This is very much dependent on how the Malaysian public and the staff serving them evaluate polite behaviour. Rules of standard politeness are taught and learned in schools but in real life they are not easily practised due to limited time at the service counters. What is constituted as polite or impolite expressions or behaviour is highly dependent on a shared understanding between the parties involved.

Under normal circumstances, when making a request, the speaker expects some form of polite action from the addressee. However, social norms relating to politeness at the service counters as perceived by the Malaysian public may differ from one individual to another as their perceptions of what is polite or what is acceptable could have been acquired based on upbringing and exposure. The data collected for this study were not able to indicate the background of the Malaysian public and this limitation had disabled the researchers' ability to confirm whether or not different age, gender or ethnic group have an effect on behaviour. Nevertheless the evaluation of what is polite and what is not depends on the social perception of the general public. It is clear that the staff did not use many openings whether verbal or non-verbal and this finding appears to be consistent with Kuang, David, Lau & Ang's (2011) study of front service counters in public hospitals. Basically staff merely performed the request of the public without much small or phatic talk. The conversation of the transaction revolves around the task, required by the general public. There was no greeting and address form used by the staff for the majority of the instances as the data highlight. There were, however, minimal interactions, which were manifested by 'ya' or 'yes'

and an indication of amount of money to be paid for the task to be undertaken. The staff responded in non-verbal ways to the requests and needs of the Malaysian public or clients more frequently. Likewise, the Malaysian public did not spend time on small talk nor even on small courtesies like thanking, as most instances indicated. This lack of social niceties and phatic talk both in the openings and closings is clearly apparent in the service counters. Most of the few interactions in which closings were observed were confined to simple acknowledgements of thanks sometimes by the staff and sometimes by the general public. This occurrence could be explained with the post-modern theories of politeness advocated by Eelen (2001), Watts (2003) and Mills (2003), which argue that there are no universal standards for politeness. They claim that politeness is a discourse bond concept, which is specifically determined by the context in which the hearer (addressee) and the speaker (addressor) interact.

However, when the member of the public started his conversation politely for example by the word 'Excuse me' (Example 12) and address forms (Example 12), it helped in getting the attention of the counter staff. This is again in line with Watts' (2003) argument that the hearer's demand can affect the level of the politeness in a linguistic interaction. Data show that the Malaysian public and the staff of these two government-linked full-fledged companies can choose to be polite; they can choose to avoid being rude' or they can choose to maintain the norm. Our preliminary finding of seven staff has shown that the Malaysian public and staff in the two government-linked full-fledged companies perform their respective tasks and accomplish their respective goals with the least risk of losing face. This was apparently accomplished through minimal talk and non-verbal cues.

Minimal words are used in most transactions with many transactions displaying the use of one or two words in the duration of the service transactions. Hardly any talk occurs between the Malaysian who serves and the Malaysian who is being served. In that regard, it appears that transactions can even take place without any words. The Malaysian public who had patronised these agencies for particular tasks would leave without saying anything.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted that service encounters of two Malaysian government-linked companies are usually less verbal, in other words service providers and members of the Malaysian public seldom make use of openings and closings in their conversations. Both parties seldom greet and address each other. This implies that phatic communication is not a required form of communication in the service counters of the two government-linked companies. The analysis also shows that Malaysian service providers in two Malaysian government agencies do not consider using politeness cues as an important factor in their communication skills and neither does the Malaysian public complain about it. This can be attributed to what Devito (2008) says of the Malaysian society: a society with a high tolerance for the unknown which does not complain. If the use of greetings and address forms were treated as one way of showing politeness, then it would seem that service encounters between the staff and the Malaysian public could not be regarded as polite in a standard universal setting. Data also indicate that in such service encounters, both the service providers and members of the public place the task at hand as the priority of their

interactions. This behaviour was subconsciously revealed through how the transactions were performed. It is therefore deduced that Malaysians staff of these two government-linked companies and the general public were not as sensitive towards the need to create a rapport at the service counters and on that basis, such transactions are the way they are because of the nature of the task.

In cultures where such phatic talk is considered important and denotes politeness, the lack of use of such discourse markers would appear rude and impolite. However, in the Malaysian setting of the service encounters, the lack of such phatic talk does not appear to be important.

The examples provided in this study show that Malaysians do not chide or challenge one another at the service counters of these two government-linked companies. It is hoped that the data in this study, which is aimed at better services in the service counters, will lead to a comprehensive study on politeness in other government-linked companies.

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## **Trends and Development of Elections, Civil Liberties and Democracy in the Muslim World (1998 – 2008)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the trends, development and practices of democracy (DV), civil liberties and elections (IVs) in 47 Muslim countries between the years 1998 to 2008. Based on secondary quantitative data primarily collected from Freedom House and analysed using SPSS, this study demonstrates the aggregate findings as follows - the 'not free not fair' elections, the 'limited' civil liberties and the 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' were the most dominant nature of elections, civil liberties and democracy practised in the Muslim world; and with 66.67% occurrences, elections proved to be the better predictor of democracy compared to civil liberties with only 31.58%. While this study concentrates on political variables as determinants of democracy, future research may consider other socio-economic variables such as economic development, citizens' level of education, social mobilisation activities, etc.

**Keywords:** Civil liberties, democracy, election, Muslim world politics

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The period between the late 1980s and early 1990s embraced democratisation and liberalisation waves throughout the developing world, including the Muslim world. This period witnessed widespread return to elected civilian governments and expansion of people's civil liberties. To trace it, democratisation is not actually a new phenomenon. The first wave began as early as 1828 to 1926 which witnessed about 29 democracies. However, Mussolini's era, starting from 1922 to 1942, marked the first 'reverse wave' of democracy, resulting in a decreased number of democratic states to only 12. This was followed by the second democratisation wave from 1943 to 1962 initiated by the triumph of the Allies in World War II where 36 countries were seen to be practising democracy. Similarly, this second wave also experienced a 'reverse wave' for 15 years (1960-1975), which reduced the democratic countries to 30. However, the democratic breakthrough process was later extended to the third wave which began in 1974 and lasted till 1990. Here, the role was played by the European Community (EC) through the establishment of 'democracy' as a pre-requisite for economic privileges of EC members and also American power and influence in spreading their ideas and model of democracy worldwide (Huntington, 1991).

In measuring the performance of democracy, two variables have long been used – election and civil liberties. The Freedom House, for example, defines democracy as “a

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political system in which people choose their authoritative leaders freely from among competing groups and individuals who are not chosen by the government [election], as well as the chance to act spontaneously in variety of fields outside the control of government and other centres of political domination [civil liberties]" (2007: pp. 876-877).

Generally, this study is about elections, civil liberties and democracy in the Muslim world from 1998 - 2008. It attempts to identify and ascertain the practices, variations and pattern of election, civil liberties and democracy practised in Muslim societies. Specifically, this study attempts to seek answers for the following research questions;

1. How far are civil liberties practised in the Muslim world?
2. How far are elections in the Muslim world free and fair?
3. What variations of democracy are mostly practised in the Muslim world?
4. What is the best predictor of democracy in the Muslim world – elections or civil liberties?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many scholars involved in the study of elections and civil liberties. However, not many of them specifically study both subjects simultaneously. This might be the result of the 'established' assumption that when we talk about democracy, both civil liberties and elections are inseparable - thus, liberal democracy. In general, the scholars' views can be divided into three categories – the pro-civil liberties, the pro-election and the middle roaders.

The proponents of civil liberties claim that in order to democratise a country, liberties must grow and be strengthened first (Fareed Zakaria, 1997; Krastev, 2006; Anwar Ibrahim, 2006; Sharansky, 2004). If elections are held before constitutional liberalism takes place, they will destroy civil liberties. This group is headed by Fareed Zakaria, who popularised the term 'illiberal democracy'. Fareed Zakaria claims 'constitutional liberalism has led to democracy, but democracy does not seem to bring constitutional liberalism' (1997: p. 28). Instead, it has resulted in the centralisation of authority - a force that could possibly undermine liberty - as unchecked centralisation has been the enemy of liberal democracy. He further proposes to the United States to encourage gradual development of constitutionalism outside the Western world as a better effort in consolidating democracy, rather than searching for a new land to democratise by holding elections. For him, "democracy without constitutional liberalism is not simply inadequate, but dangerous, bringing with it the erosion of liberty, the abuse of power, ethnic divisions, and even war" (1997: pp.42-43). Krastev affirms that "a more potent threat to freedom is posed by the rise of democracy's doubles" (2006: p. 52) – a term he coined to elucidate the regime which claims democracy, looks democratic, and is in fact democratic (elected), but rules like autocrats. Bell *et al.* (1995) argue that (non-Western) countries conduct democratic elections with the aim of promoting stability, but not actually to promote freedom, unlike their Western democrat counterparts. Furthermore, Anwar Ibrahim (2006) emphasises that democracy cannot prevail in a society without the commitment of its political leaders to protect liberties. According to him, these liberties must be safeguarded by an independent judiciary, which functions as a check and balance against the elected executive and legislature.

On the other hand, the proponents of elections reject the idea that liberty should be established first, instead of having an election, in an attempt towards liberal democracy

(Smith and Ziegler, 2008; Kupchan, 1998; Carothers, 2003; Holmes, 2003; Diamond, 2003; Mahmood Monshipouri, 2004). Smith and Ziegler (2008) accept the phenomenon of illiberal democracy (condemned by pro-civil liberty scholars), arguing that illiberal democracy would provide an identifiable gateway to liberal democracy, as proven by their study on democracy in Latin America. According to them, illiberal democracy provides a common pre-condition – neither necessary nor sufficient, but nonetheless recurrent – for the achievement of liberal democracy. Kupchan (1998) concurs with the position of the proponents of civil liberties when they say liberties precede democracy, but only in the case of the Anglo-Saxon West, not the entire world. He further explains that the current democratisation process is taking place in countries with little or no background of constitutional liberalism. The citizens' participation in democracy particularly through elections helps bring changes in the political culture necessary for liberal governance. In fact, many of today's liberal democracies passed a long illiberal period before finally becoming liberal, such as the case of Germany, Japan and Mexico. For him, if the United States stops promoting democracy, as Fareed Zakaria suggested, we would find the "world not just less democratic but also less liberal" (1997: 32). In a similar vein, Carothers (2003) agrees with this opinion claiming that the expansion of democracy around the world in the past 20 years has brought with it great achievements in liberty (though bedeviled by many problems). Holmes (2003) strengthens the idea and the fear that some elements in constitutional liberalism - divided government, freedom to preach and proselytize - might not lead a country towards liberal democracy, but would possibly go the opposite way, which may even be the worst way - the extremist violence. Diamond (2003) could not imagine that greater protection of individual freedom can be safeguarded in a political system that is less accountable for popular control – that has no competitive multi-party elections, no elections that are free and fair, or even no elections at all. Furthermore, according to Mahmood Monshipouri (2004), elections are so important; a phenomenon which is likely to deepen democratic habits as well as liberal habits over time.

Instead of taking the side of either civil liberties or elections, there are a few scholars who attempt to reconcile civil liberties and elections, and call for simultaneous implementation of both (Plattner, 1998; Dahl, 1971; Bassam Tibi, 2008; Shattuck and Atwood, 1998). Plattner (1998) highlights that overstating the disjunction or dichotomy between civil liberties and elections can finally lead to a new misunderstanding of democracy. In general, countries that hold free and fair elections are overwhelmingly more liberal than those that do not. Similarly, countries that protect civil liberties are more likely to hold free and fair elections than those that do not. This is because, logically speaking, free and fair elections require the guarantee of certain civil liberties such as freedom of speech, association, assembly, etc. The same applies to liberty. Civil liberties are always assumed to include some kind of right to electoral participation, to the point that 'universal and equal suffrage' was endorsed by the world community in 1948 as a human right. Dahl (1971) supports this stance while illustrating the integration of elections and liberties. He claims that citizens in a democratic country are supposed to enjoy the right to vote as well as to have free and fair elections. In addition, to guaranteeing these two rights, certain institutional mechanisms - freedom to form and join organisations, freedom of expressions, eligibility for public office, right of

leaders to compete for support, and alternative sources of information - have to be put in place. Bassam Tibi (2008) elucidates that democracy is not all about instituting elections; rather, it is about building a civil society with full respect for universal human rights. Shattuck and Atwood (1998) answer the criticism of pro-civil liberties scholars who claim that the United States democracy assistance programme aimed only to promote election and undermine liberalism. According to them, these programmes are promoting not only elections, but also some elements of liberties such as the creation of legislatures, judiciaries, executives, independent media, trade unions and non-governmental organisations. These programmes help institutionalise the rule of law and foster greater respect for human rights, besides establishing elections, as the United States understands that both are important and necessary.

Almost all the literature reviewed discuss the problem either by making a general survey of the Muslim world (Fareed Zakaria, 1997; 2003; Fatima Mernissi, 1992; Yahya Sadowski, 2006; Price, 1996), selecting certain countries as case studies to be discussed (Steele, 2006; Abdul Rashid Moten, 2009; Kienle, 1998; Ali Gheissari and Nasr, 2006; Osman Bakar, 2006; Hussin Mutalib, 2000; Philips, 2008; Akhbar Ganji, 2007), focusing on certain Muslim regions such as the Middle East and Southern Asia (Smith and Ziegler, 2008; Rizal Sukma, 2009; Lust-Okar and Zerhouni, 2008; Harris *et al.*, 1997; Lewis, 2005; Jawad, 1994; Plattner and Brumberg, 2003) or selecting a few countries to be discussed comparatively (Krastev, 2006; Amaney Jamal, 2006). No literature reviewed has given an examination of the entire Muslim world. In addition with the exception of Amaney Jamal's (2006) as well as Smith and Ziegler's (2008) works, all the researchers studied the cases qualitatively and relied heavily on secondary sources. Therefore, this study will do an aggregate evaluation of democracy covering all Muslim countries using quantitative data, and suggest ideas on ways to be adopted so that liberalism and democracy can be amalgamated in the Muslim countries.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Briefly, this study will use elections and civil liberties as the variables to measure democratic level and performance in Muslim countries. The relationship between varying degrees of elections – 'free and fair', 'free not fair' and 'not free not fair' combined with varying provisions of civil liberties – 'expansive', 'limited' and 'repressive' are expected to produce seven types of democratic levels – liberal democracy, illiberal democracy, liberal partial democracy, illiberal partial democracy, repressive partial democracy, illiberal non-democracy and repressive non-democracy as illustrated in the Table 1.

#### 3.1 Definition of Terminologies

This paper groups civil liberties into three – expansive, limited and repressive. 'Expansive' is full recognition and protection of all citizens' rights (liberal), 'limited' refers to ensuring certain civil liberties but intervening in others (illiberal), whereas 'repressive' means repression of people's civil liberties (repressive).

Similarly, elections are also categorised into three – 'free and fair', 'free not fair', and 'not free not fair'. Elections which are 'free and fair' (democratic) include regular elections,

universal suffrage and party's competition with equal opportunity and prospects for campaigning, mobilising support and winning as well as overseen by a non-partisan body. In contrast, 'free not fair' elections (partial democracy) are meaningless elections, which reflect the presence of regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, but with the absence of equal treatment and equal chances to certain candidates and supervision by a partisan electoral body. Meanwhile, elections that are 'not free not fair' (non-democracy) apply to governments without elections, headed by un-elected rulers, or held under military occupation, or invasion of foreign power.

**Table 1.** Relationships between elections, civil liberties and democracy

Civil Liberties \ Liberties	Free and Fair	Free not Fair	Not Free Not Fair
Expansive	Liberal Democracy	Liberal Partial Democracy	
Limited	Illiberal Democracy	Illiberal Partial democracy	Illiberal Non-Democracy
Repressive		Repressive Partial Democracy	Repressive Non-Democracy

*Source:* Adapted from Smith and Ziegler (2008:33).

The mixture of different variants of civil liberties and elections are expected to produce seven types of democracy with varying degrees. The first one is 'liberal democracy', which refers to a democratic government that practices regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, with equal opportunities and prospects for campaigning, mobilising support and winning as well as overseen by a non-partisan electoral commission. This type of regime recognises and protects freedom of arbitrary arrest, freedom of (lawful) assembly, organisation and movement, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of press. 'Illiberal democracy', on the other hand, also conducts regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, with equal opportunity and prospects for campaigning, mobilising support and winning as well as overseen by a non-partisan electoral body, but ensures only certain civil liberties are guaranteed by a liberal democratic regime, and intervenes in others. The third type of democracy is 'liberal partial democracy'; this regime type differs from liberal democracy as it recognises and protects all types of civil liberties mentioned earlier, and the government is elected through regular elections, universal suffrage and party's competition, but fair-play competition among electoral candidates is not guaranteed and the elections are conducted by a biased non-neutral organisation. In contrast, 'illiberal partial democracy' not only ensures selected civil liberties and abandons others, but lacks fair-play competition among electoral candidates with a biased electoral supervision body, though the government is elected. Meanwhile, 'repressive partial democracy' is the

result of an elected government which wins an election without providing an equal chance for all candidates to campaign and win, and eventually denies the rights of people to enjoy civil liberties. ‘Illiberal non-democracy’ and ‘repressive non-democracy’ are, among others, the worst types of democracies. Both governments are either non-elected (monarchy or military) or taken over by a foreign power through invasion. However, the former, to some extent, recognises certain, though not all, people’s civil liberties, while the latter rules dictatorially, with people not having the opportunity to enjoy their civil liberties at all.

### 3.2 Hypotheses

The framework shows that the type of democracy is contingent upon the type of elections held and the extent of prevalence of civil liberties in the country. The framework yields the following hypotheses:

#### **H1: The nature of elections is related to the type of democracy**

Hence, if a country practices ‘free and fair’ elections, the country is expected to fall under the type ‘Democracy’. However, if ‘free not fair’ election prevails in the country, then that country might belong to ‘Partial Democracy’ category. On the other hand, a country which practices ‘not free not fair’ election will be categorised as ‘Non-Democracy’.

#### **H2: The extent of civil liberties is related to type of democracy**

Similarly, the extent of the prevalent civil liberties determines the level of democracy of a country. If ‘expansive’ civil liberties exist, then the country is considered either a ‘Liberal Democracy’ or a ‘Liberal Partial Democracy.’ Meanwhile, if a country only guarantees ‘limited’ civil liberties, then the country falls under the ‘Illiberal Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’ or ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’ type. On the other hand, if absence of civil liberties prevails in a country, then the country belongs to either ‘Repressive Partial Democracy’ or ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

This study is a survey and document based study, using both primary and secondary sources, and relying mainly on quantitative analysis. The primary source from which the data are mainly derived are the Freedom House Annual Report. In addition, secondary sources include data from various books, theses and articles published in various journals. Among the important ones are *Journal of Democracy*, *Democratization*, *Middle East Review* and *International Affairs* and *Foreign Affairs*, of various volumes and numbers.

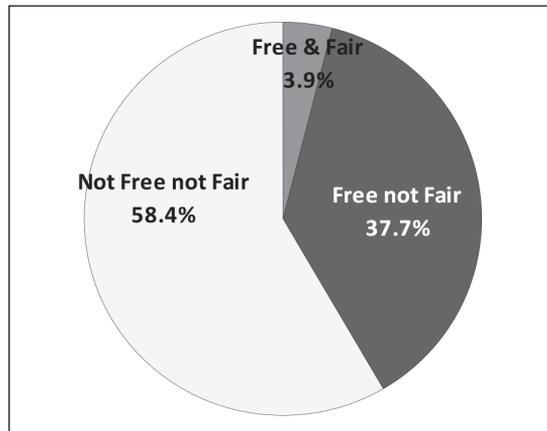
The unit of analysis of this study is the Muslim world in the year 1998 to 2008. This study includes all of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Muslim majority states (with the exception of Palestine as the data for this country is not available), plus non-OIC members with a majority Muslim population such as Eritrea. Thus, this study defines the Muslim world with reference to these 47 countries from four different regions – 19 countries from Africa: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia: 11 from Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Maldives,

Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan: only one from the European continent: Albania, and 16 countries from the Middle East: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

## 5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Development of Elections: Domination of the Worst

Figure 1 reveals the practices of elections in the Muslim world, 1998–2008. The first finding highlights the performance and development of the ‘free and fair’ elections. As Figure 1 reveals, this type of election achieved the lowest with only 3.9% out of the overall total performance, which equals to 20 cases from 517 altogether. Browsing through the countries’ performance, this type of election was practised nine times in Mali (2000-2008), six times in Senegal (2002-2007), four times in Indonesia (2005-2008) and once in Bangladesh (1998). However, none of these Muslim countries had ‘free and fair elections’ consistently throughout these 11 years.



**Figure 1.** Practices of elections in the Muslim world, 1998 – 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, ‘Freedom in the World Survey’. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

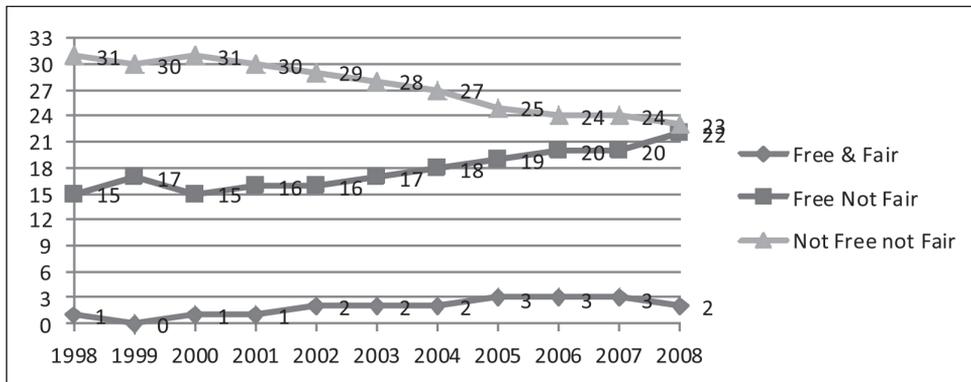
Meanwhile, the Muslim countries scored 37.7% for ‘free not fair’ elections, which equals to 195 cases. There were a total of seven countries that continuously practised this type of elections between the years 1998–2008. These countries were Albania, Burkina Faso, Kuwait, Malaysia, Morocco, Sierra Leone and Turkey.

In addition, during these 11 years, 58.4% or 302 out of 517 cases reflected ‘not free not fair’ elections. There were 19 countries that experienced ‘not free not fair’ elections consistently from 1998-2008 such as Algeria, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan. These governments cannot be

changed democratically. They were either governments without election, led by un-elected rulers/monarchs, unfair competition for political power, or/and held under/backed up by the military.

### 5.2 Trends of Elections: A Gradual Improvement

Figure 2 illustrates the trend of elections in the Muslim world from 1998 – 2008. It witnesses an almost straight linear line of ‘free and fair’ electoral trend without major fluctuations. Besides, the figure shows a stable and consistent upward sloping of the performance of ‘free not fair’ elections except in 2000 (decreased by two cases). In addition, though ‘not free not fair’ election dominated the Muslim world, it consistently decreased over these 11 years, except in 2000 (increased by one case) and in 2007 (remained constant). However, its decrease was somehow slow and gradual - by one or two cases only per year - but still consistent and continuous.



**Figure 2.** Trend of elections in the Muslim world, 1998 – 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, ‘Freedom in the World Survey’. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

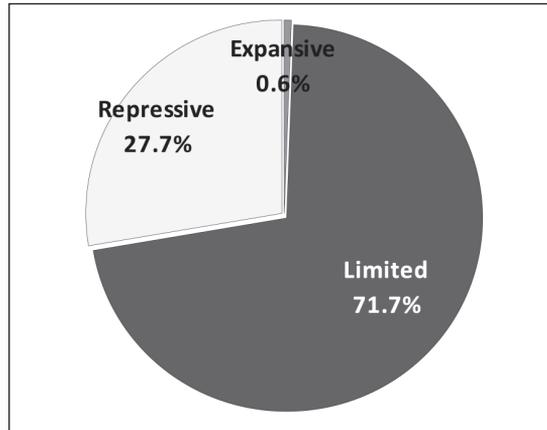
At a glance, it might be easy to conclude that the Muslim countries’ performance in free and fair elections has been declining as the number of ‘free not fair’ elections increased over the 11 years. Nonetheless, it actually shows remarkable improvement in the freeness of elections as the number of ‘free not fair’ elections increased due to the transition of the ‘not free not fair’ elections to the ‘free not fair’ elections.

In a nutshell, though Muslim world performance of ‘free and fair’ elections is low, it is predicted that Muslim countries would perform better as time passes by. Despite this hopeful trend, it appears that the transitional process from ‘not free not fair’ and ‘free not fair’ elections to ‘free and fair’ elections in the Muslim world would be very slow and gradual.

### 5.3 Development of Civil Liberties: Expansion of the ‘Limited’

From elections, we move on to development of civil liberties in the Muslim world from the year 1998 to 2008. Here, the overall findings witness better results compared to the

development of elections, as shown in the Figure 3. Despite much achievement, the development of 'expansive' civil liberties amongst Muslim countries was still low, amounting to 0.6% or three out of 517 cases throughout the 11 years. These cases were contributed by Mali in the years 2003, 2004 and 2005. In other years, 'expansive' civil liberties were totally absent.



**Figure 3.** Practice of civil liberties in the Muslim world, 1998 - 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey.' Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

In Mali, freedom of speech, press and association were basically granted and respected. The media were allowed to broadcast different worldviews and perspectives. In addition, many interest groups such as human rights groups and women's groups were established and operated without government intervention. While the judiciary was not totally independent from the executive's interference, it did acquire legitimate authority especially with regard to rendering anti-bureaucratic decisions that had long been practised by the government (Piano *et al.*, 2006).

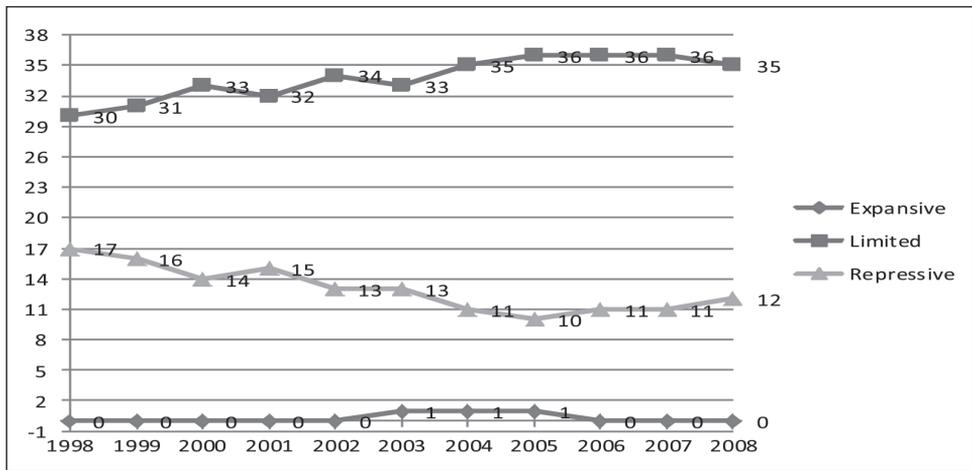
Unexpectedly, the majority of the Muslim countries practised 'limited' civil liberties (71.8%) instead of the 'repressive' one. Figure 3 illustrates 71.7% cases of 'limited' civil liberties between 1998 - 2008. There were 26 countries that consistently adopted 'limited' civil liberties, but with varying degrees of elections. These countries were Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Gambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

In contrast, the 'repressive' civil liberties was not the major political culture in the Muslim world, as claimed by many. In fact, only 27.7% (143 cases) belonged to this group. Looking at the performance by country, only eight out of 47 countries (17%) continued with 'repressive' civil liberty practices from the year 1998 to 2008. These countries were Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

**5.4 Trends of Civil Liberties: The Downfall of the ‘Repressive’**

In Figure 4, we can see almost a straight linear line for trend of ‘expansive’ civil liberties without major sloops, across the years 1998 – 2008. ‘Expansive’ civil liberties prevailed only in Mali in the years 2003, 2004 and 2005. Other than that, it was totally absent. In spite of the improved performance of ‘free and fair’ elections in the Muslim world throughout 1998 to 2008, the Muslim countries scored lower with regard to the performance of ‘expansive’ civil liberties. In addition, we can see that the performance of ‘repressive’ civil liberties generally declined inconsistently, whereas the performance of the ‘limited’ civil liberties generally rose, also inconsistently, over these 11 years.

In a nutshell, the Muslim world performed better in civil liberties practices compared to elections. About 72.4% of the Muslim world practised ‘expansive’ and ‘limited’ civil liberties, while only 41.6% adopted ‘free and fair’ elections as well as ‘free not fair’ elections.



**Figure 4.** Trend of civil liberties in the Muslim world, 1998 – 2008

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, ‘Freedom in the World Survey.’ Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

**5.5 Development of Democracies: ‘Middle-Range’ Achievement**

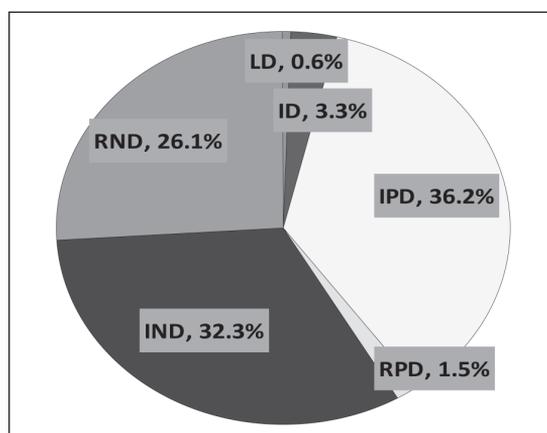
To clearly demonstrate the relationship between elections and civil liberties and relate it to the practice of democracy in Muslim countries, Table 2 presents a cross-tabulation of all elections and civil liberties performance in the 47 countries from 1998 to 2008. This is followed by Figure 5 which offers a summary of democratic practices in the Muslim world.

Figure 5 shows a clear domination of ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’ as well as ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ in the Muslim world in 1998-2008. Out of these three, the most number belonged to the middle range democracy - the ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’, with 36.2% or 187 cases out of 517, followed by the ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’ with 167 cases, which constitutes 32.3%, while the ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ gained a total of 26.1%, which equals 135 cases altogether. The other three types of

**Table 2.** Cross-tabulation of elections and civil liberties in the Muslim world, 1998-2008

Civil Liberties	Election			Total / %
	Free and Fair (Democracy)	Free not Fair (Partial Democracy)	Not Free Not Fair (Non-Nemocracy)	
Expansive (Liberal)	3	0		3(0.6%)
Limited (Illiberal)	17	187	167	371(71.8%)
Repressive		8	135	143(27.7%)
Total	20(3.9%)	195(37.7%)	302(58.4%)	517(100%)

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey.' Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

**Figure 5.** Democratic practices in the Muslim world, 1998 - 2008

Key: LD=Liberal Democracy; ID=Illiberal Democracy; IPD=Illiberal Partial Democracy; RPD=Repressive Partial Democracy; IND=Illiberal Non-Democracy; RND=Repressive Non-Democracy.

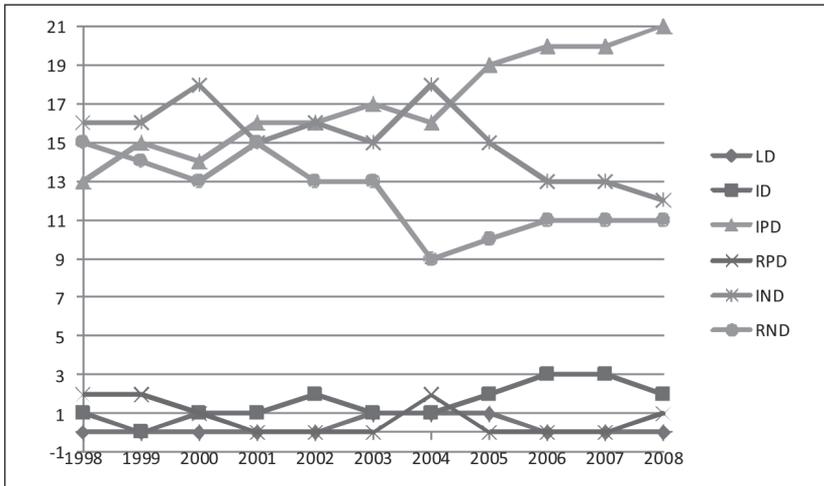
Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey'. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

democracies – 'Illiberal Democracy', 'Repressive Partial Democracy' and 'Liberal Democracy' contributed less than 4% each, while the 'Liberal Partial Democracy' did not contribute at all to the overall democratic performance in the Muslim countries.

## 5.6 Trends of Democracies: The Absence of 'Liberal Partial Democracy'

### 5.6.1 Liberal Democracy

Looking at Figure 6, there were only three cases of 'Liberal Democracy' in the Muslim countries, each in 2003, 2004 and 2005 in Mali, as Mali practised a combination of 'free and fair' elections with 'expansive' civil liberties. Other than Mali, the practice of 'Liberal Democracy' was totally absent in any Muslim country in the world. In addition, it is quite a



**Figure 6.** Trends of democracies in the Muslim World, 1998 – 2008

Key: LD=Liberal Democracy, ID=Illiberal Democracy, IPD=Illiberal Partial Democracy, RPD=Repressive Partial Democracy, IND=Illiberal Non-Democracy, and RND=Repressive Non-Democracy.

Source: Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey'. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

a hard task to predict the performance of 'Liberal Democracy' in the future; whether it will improve with an additional numbers of countries involved, or become extinct and remain totally absent in the Muslim political regimes.

In earlier times, Mali did implement 'free not fair' elections (1998 and 1999). Its democratic success story started in 1999, when the Secretary of the United States of America, Madeline Albright, assembled the core group of the Community of Democracies and included Mali which was the first African country invited to join. This constituted a democratic benediction of Mali. Consequently, Mali adopted 'free and fair' elections for eight consecutive years (2000-2008). Though international observers did note some irregularities, they agreed that most of its presidential and legislative elections were generally credible and reliable (Piano, *et al.*, 2006). Besides, since 1991, Mali adopted a highly progressive constitution with extensive guarantees of freedom of speech, press and association. For instance, the constitution encourages the existence of political parties through public funding. It also remarkably stipulates freedom of media and allows applicants to operate one if they do not get any response from the state after three weeks' submission of an application (Traub, 2008).

Ironically, though considerably democratic, Mali is an extremely poor country. Mali represented a relatively new type of state – the 'feeble democracy' (Traub, 2008). This was something different from what Diamond (2003) calls the 'electoral democracy', or what Fareed Zakaria refers to as 'illiberal democracy'. In Mali, a functional democracy presided over crushing poverty. Perhaps, in a strange inversion of modernisation theory, Mali was

democratic not despite its poverty but because of it. Neither Aristotle nor Lipset would have predicted that a country consisting almost wholly of poor people would form a democratic republic.

Another issue in Mali is problem of representation. Mali had more than 100 political parties, but they were not membership bodies, rather, simply vehicles for individuals to achieve their political ambitions. Parties were differentiated less by ideology or programmatic concerns than by the narrow interests of clientelist networks. Besides, there was no party that represented workers, teachers or farmers (Traub, 2008).

Despite the severe impoverishment, even the humble citizens seemed proud of Mali's democracy, and felt that it had brought them lots of benefits. When asked about what he thought about democracy, a Malian peasant answered, "...we were afraid. A peasant would not have the opportunity to speak to a functionary...Democracy has erased the fear and given free expression to everyone. So I think democracy is a good thing" (Traub, 2008: p.194). Mali, thus, had a culture that made democracy possible plus political leaders who were committed to the principles of democratic rule.

### *5.6.2 Illiberal Democracy*

As for 'Illiberal Democracy' in the Muslim world, it had improved slightly throughout these 11 years, but interrupted by a few fluctuations. A total of 17 cases of 'Illiberal Democracy' can be reported from the graph – one case in 1998 (Bangladesh), one case each in 2000 and 2001 (Mali), and 2003 and 2004 (Senegal), two cases in 2002 (Mali and Senegal), two cases in 2005 (Indonesia and Senegal) two cases in 2008 (Indonesia and Mali), and three cases in 2006 and 2007 (Indonesia, Mali and Senegal). However, none of the Muslim countries practiced 'Illiberal Democracy' in the year 1999. Fareed Zakaria claims that 'Illiberal Democracy' has arisen all over the world and describes it as "a disturbing phenomenon in international life" (1997: p. 22). However, the finding records only 3.3% of overall performance and proves that his claim is not necessarily correct, at least not in the Muslim world.

Four out of the 17 cases of 'Illiberal Democracy' were contributed by Indonesia. This occurred from the end of Suharto's long authoritarian regime in 1998. Indonesia had implemented a vast number of political reforms that placed it among the healthy electoral democracy and boosted its democratic performance from 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' in 1998 to 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' in 1999 – 2004. Furthermore, the 2004 election noted the first ever direct presidential election in the country. The process was fair, smooth and without violence and further boosted Indonesian democracy from 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' to 'Illiberal Democracy'.

There were some basic procedures implemented in Indonesia that were broadly associated with greater democratic freedom; loose restrictions on freedom of association; the freedom of political parties to raise funds and run in elections; the freedom of the press to report and voice political differences; and a possibility that a ruling party can be overturned through the ballot box (Bertrand, 2010). All of these characteristics of procedural democracies were improved vastly in the process of determining the Indonesian government, in comparison to Suharto's period. Indeed, Indonesian democracy had flourished since 1998 and further strengthened since 2004.

Despite the improvements, Indonesia is not yet a consolidated democracy. First, Indonesia continues to rank among one of the most corrupt countries in the world. It continued to get a low score in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Since there is high expectation that democracy would reduce the level of corruption, this sustained high corruption has undermined the legitimacy of the Indonesian regime. Secondly, Indonesia's military continues to operate in a semi-autonomous fashion, and the military command structure has not been completely subsumed under civilian authority. Thirdly, Indonesia's judicial system is still subjected to interference from the political and business elites. According to its Attorney General, Abdul Rahman Saleh, the country's judicial system was so mired in corruption that "justice typically was awarded to the highest bidder" (Piano *et al.*, 2006: p.234). These are some of the features of Indonesia's democracy that can either threaten its stability or reduce its quality.

### 5.6.3 Liberal Partial Democracy

Unlike other types of democracy, there is no graphical representation for 'Liberal Partial Democracy'. This is because after analysing the performance of elections and civil liberties together to get their meeting point, it was noticed that none of the Muslim countries practised 'free not fair' elections and 'expansive' civil liberties, together, thus producing 'Liberal Partial Democracy'. This finding is somehow surprising. It is expected that 'free and fair' elections cannot go along with 'repressive' civil liberties, nor can 'expansive' civil liberties be practised together with 'not free not fair' elections, as the elections and civil liberties in these cases are both at extreme points. However, the fact that 'expansive' civil liberties cannot be exercised together with 'free not fair' elections is unpredictable, thus making 'Liberal Partial Democracy' totally absent in the Muslim countries from 1998 to 2008. Referring to a similar study conducted by Smith and Ziegler (2008) in the Latin American context, the same problem occurred. The 'Liberal Partial Democracy' stood as the least favoured among all types of democracy with six cases over 513, that is, about 1.17% only.

### 5.6.4 Illiberal Partial Democracy

Moving towards 'Illiberal Partial Democracy', this type of democracy experienced more drastic changes. Besides, it is exclusive because it is the type of democracy mostly practiced in the Muslim world from 1998 to 2008. Figure 6 illustrates that starting from only 13 cases in 1998, it increased up to 21 cases in the year 2008. The graph did dip twice in 2000 and 2004, though. Other than that, it continuously moved upwards with the exception of 2002 and 2007 where the graph remained constant. There were seven countries which completely adopted this type of democracy for 11 years and one of them was Albania. Since Albania is the only Muslim majority country in Europe, it is interesting to discuss its case and identify its uniqueness.

Starting from the year 1998 onwards, elections in Albania were recognised as 'free not fair' because they only complied partially with the international standards. Though local politicians made a positive evaluation of their elections, international observers often concluded that the pools were marked by some improvements but they still did not meet international standards yet as external observers noted flawed procedures such as

irregularities, multiple voting, violation of secrecy, etc. (Freedom House, 2006). Albania also ranked as the worst performer in the region by a wide margin as the electoral administration failed to satisfy even the minimum requirements of international standards. Some of the electoral issues needed to be addressed are the mishandling of voters' lists and registration, non-transparent party financing, flawed media coverage, mismanagement of election by the Central Election Commission (CEC), and abuses of the electoral procedure and rules (FRIDE, 2010). Besides, there were serious allegations concerning inappropriate conduct over the course of the election campaign. For example, in the 2007 local election only, some 144 complaints against election results and invalidation requests had been filed and 36 election-related criminal charges were reported (OSCE, 2004).

Moving towards civil liberties, the Albanian constitution guarantees freedom of expression. Although freedom of the press had improved since the fall of communism, problems remained. The intermingling of powerful business, political and media interests inhabited the development of independent and objective media. The government controlled crucial subsidies that were doled out to those outlets providing sympathetic coverage. Freedom of association was generally respected, although the police had been known to use excessive force against protesters. Independent NGOs were active and their impact on the government was slowly growing, in contrast to the trade unions which were considered weaker in their influence (Piano *et al.*, 2006).

Moreover, Albanian political parties were also problematic. Despite serving as legal power competition entities, they suffered from many problems. First, they were deeply rooted in the concept of party-state inherited from the communist legacy and considered the state as the property of the party in power. The party that came to power would completely overthrow what the previous regime had done and make a new beginning, which actually cost and wasted millions of dollars of government money. Secondly, parties too often did not accept the legitimacy of the elections they lost and continuously contested the elections' results (Server, 2001). The opposition parties had boycotted the parliamentary institution, leaving it unable to perform as a forum for political debate and decision making (Kaisiu *et al.*, 2001). Finally, they also created new institutions that represented only parts of society where channels for citizens' engagement and participation remained underdeveloped resulting in one way communication only, that is, top down communication (FRIDE, 2010).

However, the situation has changed since the year 2005 with the involvement of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Since then, the Albanian electoral process has been reformed. For instance, votes started to be counted by the local electoral commissions in limited and selected designated locations. Besides, administrative and judicial review procedures for the case of post-election disputes were improved and new laws for campaign finance were enforced. Though the Freedom House scores for Albanian elections in the year 2005 onwards remained unchanged (Piano *et al.*, 2006), it is believed that these reforms will mark a positive improvement in the future. Perhaps, we can conclude that Albania is moving from a transition phase into a phase of setting transition effects as standards, rather than towards a consolidated democracy.

### 5.6.5 Repressive Partial Democracy

The fifth type of democracy is the 'Repressive Partial Democracy' – the combination of the 'repressive' civil liberties with the 'free not fair' elections. As shown in Figure 6, out of 517 cases throughout the 11 years, this type of democracy contributed a total of eight cases, constituting 1.5%. Two cases happened in 1998, two more in 1999 (both years in Djibouti and Yemen), and another two in the year 2004 (Afghanistan and Eritrea). Other than that, one case occurred in 2000 (Yemen) and another one in 2008 (Afghanistan). By analysing the line, we can see that the graph is unstable and fluctuated over the 11 years without any significant or remarkable pattern. Thus, like 'Liberal Democracy', this study finds it difficult to predict the performance of 'Repressive Partial Democracy' in the future; whether the number of cases will increase, decrease, remain constant, or become totally absent in the Muslim world.

A total of three out of eight cases of 'Repressive Partial Democracy' were contributed by Yemen. The Republic of Yemen was created on May 22, 1990, unifying both Northern and Southern parts of the country. Since then, the Yemeni political system has been buzzing with optimism. It was the first in the Arabian Peninsula to declare a participatory parliamentary democracy. Voting and candidacy rights were granted to all citizens over the age of 18 (including women), along with far greater freedom in expression and in political organisation as well as judicial independence (Carapico, 1998). The political parties and the election laws paved the way for the establishment of an abundance of political parties. But again, with the aim of preventing people from 'misusing' their new rights, the government prevented political parties that 'threaten the unity of the country and people' (Yemeni Constitution, Law No. 66: Governing Parties and Political Organizations, Article 8, 1991) which indirectly means threatening the power of the ruling elite.

These moves, particularly the inclusion of women in the electoral process, earned Yemen the curse of neighbouring Saudi Arabia for being 'un-Islamic' (Carapico, 2004). However, the dramatic political reforms enacted by the new government moved Yemen towards a vibrant transitional democracy. It is because neither the Northern nor the Southern parts of the country had an established history of electoral or democratic politics before their unification. Similarly, the new press law in 1990 made considerable promises regarding the right to freedom of expression, press and access to information, which led to an almost overnight explosion in the number of publications in Yemen and in the public's potential to scrutinise the government. However, the new law also stipulated strict requirements that journalists had to meet and other restrictive conditions under which an organisation could publish material. Furthermore, the Yemeni constitution grants the right to form associations which resulted in an abundant emergence of NGOs in Yemen (Piano *et al.*, 2006), although they were not fully viable and independent.

In sum, reforms had largely evaporated in Yemen after its unification that portrayed what Carothers (2002) refers to as political 'gray zone', - being neither fully autocratic nor genuinely democratic. The Yemeni regime had promoted a limited political opening, but that reform had not consolidated democratic practices in the regime, opposition or society. However, the country had not reverted to the level of oppressed opposition.

### 5.6.6 *Illiberal Non-Democracy*

As reported earlier, the dominant types of elections and civil liberties practised in the Muslim world in 1998-2002 were the 'not free not fair' elections and the 'limited' civil liberties. Both types of elections and civil liberties, if performed together at the same time, will ultimately produce 'Illiberal Non-Democracy'. Hence, it is expected that 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' will be the dominant type of democracy over the remaining six types. Nevertheless, it did not happen this way. As explained before, the type of democracy mostly practised in the Muslim world was the 'Illiberal Partial Democracy' and the 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' appeared to be the second highest with 32.3% (167 cases). Figure 6 also illustrates the downward sloping nature of the 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' performance over the 11 years, with a few fluctuations. From the graphical pattern, it is predicted that the practices of 'Illiberal Non-Democracy' will decrease continuously due to its consistent downward slope since 2005. Out of 167 total cases, some 66 cases were contributed by six countries through their 11 years of continuous performance. The countries involved were Algeria, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Guinea, Kazakhstan and Tunisia. Representing Muslim countries in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is chosen as a case study in discussing the practices of 'Illiberal Non-Democracy'.

With the breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1989, Kazakhstan was thrust into statehood and self-governance. It was the last of the former Soviet republics to declare independence on December 16, 1991. However, Kazakh's elections - both presidential and parliamentary - had been considered neither free nor fair since independence. Piano *et al.*, (2006) state that though establishment and operation of political parties were allowed, certain types of parties especially ethnic, religion or gender-based were strictly prohibited. The opposition parties were not given equal treatment; they faced harassment, surveillance, denial of access to the state-run media and arbitrary bans of registering candidates. Additionally, Kazakh's constitution provides freedom of press, but the government had repeatedly harassed, confiscated, and shut down many independent media outlets. Widespread self-censorship was practised especially in reporting on the President, as the country's criminal code prohibits insulting his honour and dignity. Similarly, despite constitutional guarantees, the government imposed restrictions on freedom of association and assembly. Through measures such as investigations and surveillance by security agencies, the government harassed NGOs that addressed 'sensitive issues'. Political parties were weak, including the presidential party. The weakness of the political parties subsequently reinforced the weakness of legislature, which remained a largely consultative body. In practice, legislations were typically drafted by the executive, and discussed and modified by the legislature (Olcott, 2010).

However, the 2004 national election drew some positive signs. The voting was considered significantly improved over past Kazakh experience. Besides, a few opposition parties were able to win seats in the parliament, which was seen as an important sign in Kazakh's democratic development. Looking back at other countries that had completed a successful democratic transition, opposition seating was normally a key point to reflect. In fact, one election observer, Frederick Starr, as cited in Fossedal (2004: p. 1) – commented that, "Overall...the election was a step forward, notwithstanding the imperfections."

After almost two decades of post-Soviet independence that witnessed the development of democratic-like institutions, and the growth of civil society in the form of grassroots organisation, Kazakhstan has not fully democratised. Apart from the adoption of a Western style constitution and the institutionalisation of legislative and judicial branches, the political situation does not appear to have changed much. According to Olcott (2010), it would be difficult to see a democratic Kazakhstan until it has had a democratic transfer of power. In contrast, Fossedal (2004) believes that Kazakhstan is moving in the democratic direction; a little slow, but steady and not going the inverse way as the citizens enjoy more freedom, not less, since the country achieved independence in 1991.

#### *5.6.7 Repressive Non-Democracy*

The lowest degree of democracy belongs to the ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ – the combination of ‘repressive’ civil liberties and ‘not free not fair’ elections. Figure 6 signifies the performance of this type of democracy in the Muslim world in 1998-2008. A few observations can be made from the graph. Firstly, it shows a downward trend over these 11 years. Secondly, though moving downward, its movement is somehow inconsistent, interrupted by a few fluctuations – both upward and constant movements. For example, the graph increased twice in 2001 and 2006, but also remained constant in 2003, 2007 and 2008. The ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’ constitutes 32.3% of the overall democratic performance. It stands as the third highest democratic type mostly practised in the Muslim world, after the ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’ and the ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’. It is predicted that this type of democracy will move downward also in the future with few inconsistent fluctuations. There were eight countries – Iran, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – which continuously adopted this type of democracy for 11 years. This study has selected Iran as the case study for the discussion on the practices of the ‘Repressive Non-Democracy’.

After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the new post-revolutionary constitution was drafted by a popularly elected assembly and was further approved by a referendum. Ever since, regular and relatively competitive elections for presidential, parliamentary and municipalities have been taking place in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Currently, all citizens with a minimum age of 18 years are eligible to vote in both the parliamentary and presidential elections. According to France-Presse, as cited by Tezcur (2008), the regime did not only grant the people the right to vote, but also waged an energetic propaganda mission to encourage citizens to vote by Khamenei’s declaration that voting was a ‘religious duty’. Even with such encouragement, voters’ turnouts faced large fluctuations, and it never went beyond a total of 75%.

Freedom of expression and press in Iran was severely restricted. The government directly controlled the electronic media and strongly prohibited the Western broadcasting media. However, President Khatami who ruled Iran from 1997 – 2005 did give a new direction towards Iranian printed press. He relaxed the control over newspapers, arts and cinema. Some newspapers started to raise the standards of journalism both in form and content, by covering previously avoided subjects such as mismanagement, corruption and political repression (Ali Gheissari and Nasr, 2006). Compared to freedom of expression, freedom of

association and assembly in Iran were slightly freer. The Iranian constitution allowed for the formations of political parties and interest groups as well as public demonstrations. In contrast, its judicial system was highly subservient to the executive interference as the Supreme Leader appointed the head of judiciary, and this power is specified by the constitution.

Notwithstanding, elections in Iran were still considered as ‘not free not fair’ and its civil liberties as ‘repressive’ mainly due to the unelected Guardian Council which served as the ultimate gatekeeper in Iranian politics. The Council not only decided on who is eligible to run in the election, but also had the authority to invalidate electoral results (Tezcur, 2008). These powers not only restricted the scope of political competition and pluralism, but also put the credibility of the results in question. In fact, the elected officials were subjected and subordinated to them.

In brief, Iran’s case stands unique where guardianship is explicitly justified in the constitution along with the coexistent of popular sovereignty. In fact, these two elements sometimes fundamentally contradict each other. While the Guardians strictly supervised elections, this political process nonetheless introduced a degree of uncertainty, pluralism and public participation into Iranian politics unprecedented in its authoritarian regime. Ultimately, elections and civil liberties provide for formal channels of sustainable political participation that regulate limited competition and pluralism within the boundaries set by the Guardians. However, they cannot be considered as agents of democratisation or de-democratisation in Iranian’s unique case.

### ***5.7 The Best Predictor of Democracy***

In the hypotheses, this study explains that level of democracy (dependent variable) is dependent on the nature of elections and civil liberties (independent variables) of that particular country. As such, the intertwined elections and civil liberties are expected to produce seven types of democracies – the ‘Liberal Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Democracy’, ‘Liberal Partial Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’, ‘Repressive Partial Democracy’, ‘Illiberal Non-Democracy’, and ‘Repressive Partial Democracy’.

This study attempts to further analyse the relationship between democracy, elections and civil liberties. Though agreed that civil liberties and elections are the main political determinants of democracy, it aims to identify which variable, either elections or civil liberties, is the best predictor of democracy.

Table 3 demonstrates the transitional trends from predictors (civil liberties and elections) to democracy. Since we are interested in finding the best predictor to democracy, only two transitional trends will be considered here which are the upward and the downward trends, while the stagnant trend of civil liberties and elections will be abandoned because it does not affect the level of democracy, either towards the better or the worse level.

Several observations can be deduced from the table. Firstly, changes towards better levels of democracies due to improvements in civil liberties equaled to 11 cases, while changes towards worse levels of democracies due to suppression of civil liberties amounted to 7 cases altogether. Moving towards elections as a predictor, we note that there were 23 cases of improvement in the nature of elections that brought to better standards of

**Table 3.** The transitional trends: from predictors to democracy

IVs (Predictor)	Transitional Trends	Democracy		Total	Net Total	Percentage (%)
		Origin	Endpoint			
<b>Civil Liberties</b>	Upward (Improvement)	ID	LD	1	11	31.58%
		RPD	IPD	2		
		RND	IND	8		
	Downward (Suppression)	LD	ID	1	7	
		IPD	RPD	1		
		IND	RND	5		
<b>Elections</b>	Upward (Improvement)	IPD	ID	3	23	66.67%
		IND	IPD	18		
		RND	RPD	2		
	Downward (Suppression)	ID	IPD	2	15	
		IPD	IND	11		
		RPD	RND	2		
<b>Civil Liberties &amp; Elections</b>	Upward (Improvement)	RND	IPD	1	1	1.75%
<b>Grand Total</b>				<b>57</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*Key:* LD=Liberal Democracy, ID=Illiberal Democracy, IPD=Illiberal Partial Democracy, RPD=Repressive Partial Democracy, IND=Illiberal Non-Democracy, and RND=Repressive Non-Democracy.

*Source:* Adapted from the Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World Survey'. Retrieved May 11, 2010 from <<http://freedomhouse.org>>

democracies. On the other hand, 15 cases of suppression of elections occurred and drove the levels of democracies downward. Meanwhile, there was also one unique case that happened in Egypt in 2004 which witnessed improvement of both civil liberties and elections simultaneously, resulting in the improvement of the level of democracy too. Counting the directions of transition, 35 cases out of 57 moved towards better levels of democracies, either contributed by elections or/and civil liberties, and only 22 cases reverted towards worse democratic levels.

Overall, we can see that elections contributed more towards a shift of democratic levels, both for the better and for the worse, compared to civil liberties. Out of 57 transitions to democracy, elections scored 38 cases (66.67%) altogether (23 upward transitions and 13 downward transitions) while the remaining 18 (31.58%) were gained by civil liberties (11 upward transitions and seven downward transitions), and another case (1.75%) contributed by upward movement of both predictors concurrently.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The first finding reported that the most dominant nature of election practised in the 47 Muslim countries throughout 1998-2008 was 'not free not fair' elections with a total score of 302 out of 517 cases (58.4%). Though winning over the 'free and fair' and 'free not fair' elections in total score, its overall performance decreased slowly and gradually by one or two cases per year, but almost consistently over these 11 years, except in 2000 and 2007.

The second finding specifically talked about the civil liberties performance in the Muslim countries. Here, the middle type of freedom – the ‘limited’ civil liberties – championed over the other two levels of civil liberties with a total of 371 out of 517 (71.8%) occurrences. Its development was somehow unstable and fluctuated, but on average, it improved over time.

The third finding of this study tackled research question number three with regard to the type of democracy mostly practised in the Muslim countries. This study found that it belonged to the middle-range of democracy – the ‘Illiberal Partial Democracy’ – resulting from a combination of ‘limited’ civil liberties and the ‘free not fair’ elections. It constituted a total of 187 (36.2%) out of 517 overall cases.

This study also aimed to identify which proved to be the better predictor of democracy-elections or civil liberties. The findings conclude that transitions to democracy in the 47 Muslim majority countries between 1998–2008 were contributed mainly by elections as a better predictor by 66.67%. In contrast, civil liberties served as the weaker predictor with a total of 31.58% only.

This study measures the aggregate democratic performance of Muslim majority countries throughout 1998–2008 using the main political variables which are elections and civil liberties. However, we have to admit that there are many important socio-economic predictors that contribute towards the democratic performance of a country, such as economic development, inflation, citizens’ level and system of education, social mobilisation activities, globalisation, etc. Thus, it is suggested that future research on this subject should include some of the important socio-economic predictors in addition to the political predictors in measuring democratic performance.

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## **Paradigm Shift in Journalism Education at University Levels in South Asia: In Search of a New Adaptive Model\***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Journalism and media sectors in South Asian countries have been experiencing significant developments since the 1990s with the emergence of a good number of newspapers and magazines, inception of news agencies and private radio and television channels equipped with modern technology. Journalism educators often try to keep pace with this fast-moving media industry despite their numerous limitations. In fact, any change in the industry influences or affects the syllabus redesigning process. As the profession changes its nature in the face of new challenges from factors like corporatisation of the industry, globalisation and new media intervention along with the dispute between educators and professionals, journalism departments at universities are struggling to adapt to the changing scenario. These changes are also puzzling journalism educators in reaching any comprehensive agreement on what syllabi would best fit the potential needs of the emerging sectors. The challenges discussed in this article would help find a contextual solution in regard to preparing a suitable and adaptive course curriculum for journalism students at universities in South Asia. Focusing on the reasons for accepting the western notion of journalism education, the failure of readymade curricula - the UNESCO model- and the complexity of journalism education and practices in various regions, this paper offers a new approach to form a generic model by analysing the contemporary global trends of journalism education and the context of new needs and demands arising in South Asian nations.

**Keywords: Common model, journalism education, media industry, paradigm shift, South Asia**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Journalism has now become a glamorous profession across South Asia. Muppidi (2008), Ullah (2008) and Pant (2009) observed that the proliferation of private television channels and radio stations in different countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal in the recent past made young people enthusiastic about taking journalism as their career choice, hoping for instant recognition and exercising power with the privilege of professional

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identity. Muppidi (2008:58) pointed out that anyone now gets to be on microphone, camera, thereby garnering instant recognition and popularity through television journalism. Two of the South Asian nations – Bhutan and Sri Lanka – have also began their journey towards a free media climate by deregulating restrictive media laws. In fact, South Asia is witnessing a significant growth in the private media after experiencing years of restrictive media environment, state-controlled terrestrial broadcasting systems and poor technological media infrastructure. This media growth is in turn fuelling an increased demand for trained professionals, especially for journalists with a good analytical sense and a strong passion.

Studies by Ullah (2008) in Bangladesh, Pant (2009) in Nepal and Murthy (2010) in India have, however, recognised that the media sectors are running with incompetent workforce and professionals who, in many cases, tend to focus only on the glamour factor rather than engage themselves in the pursuit of adequate intellectual capacity to analyse the contexts of the news event. Earlier, Hussain (1996) writing on Pakistan, Foote *et al.* (1997) on South Asian countries and Khan (1998) on Bangladesh also observed similar trends of professional journalists practising very minimal professional ethics. Low quality journalism and a weak relationship between professionals and academics have been reported in their findings. In addition, Murthy (2010:4) has pointed out that changes in the mass media market and the influence of globalisation have also generated challenges requiring a new orientation of professional journalists.

Since journalism demands a close understanding of the socio-political and economic contexts of nations, regions and the world as a whole, the above mentioned research findings show that an urgent demand for well-trained journalists has been augmented among civil societies, academia, professionals, politicians and even among the illiterate mass people of this region. To standardise the quality of the profession, a well-designed journalism education with suitable curricula is required at university levels. But journalism educators and professional journalists in this region, like those in the developed countries across the globe, are divided on the necessity of a university degree in journalism. The division of opinion relates to whether journalism education should be a vocational training course or a degree in liberal arts or social sciences to prepare one better for a career in journalism. Besides, a clash of opinions is also persisting between professionals and academicians on whether the existing syllabi are up-to-date and the teaching method in journalism is suitable in the local context because of their theory focus.

Despite these controversies with regard to the curricula and pedagogues, journalism educators of the majority of South Asian countries have been training young people for about four to six decades at different universities (India for 60 years, Bangladesh for 50 years, Pakistan for 48 years, Nepal and Sri Lanka for 35 years) with curricula offered by Western media educators, mainly from the USA, most of whom developed those curricula under the Fulbright umbrella during the 50s and 60s of the previous century. Thus, a common complaint persisting is that these curricula remain inadequate to meet the local media requirements. Professional journalists usually complain that the educators have never seriously tried to find out the requirements of the industry and failed to keep pace with the advancement of a new media climate and continue to pursue their own curricula which followed more or less the west-centric professional values highlighting the issues of

journalism like watchdog, objectivity and an inverted pyramid. Foote *et al.* (1997), analysing the relations between academy and professionals of South Asian journalism culture, claimed that media management and senior journalists have continued to undervalue graduates in journalism/ media/ mass communication in the recruitment process. Journalism graduates, under these circumstances, continue to face an unwelcome treatment in the tradition-trammeled profession and the media industry. Similarly, the media professionals, on their part, have never ventured to inform educators of their needs but just criticised the curriculum and the manner of teaching. The scenarios remain almost the same till now. For instance, analysing the Indian context, Murthy (2010:6) claimed, “One of the perceived deficiencies in journalism education is an absence of a direct link between journalism departments and the industry.”

Facing pressures from the industry, globalisation, arrival of new media and technology interventions over the last couple of years that demand a competent workforce for the industry, journalism educators are now compelled to rethink about redesigning the course curricula. Examining both the well-accepted ‘craft’ and ‘professional’ curricula models accredited in the western world, mainly in the USA, where journalism education blossomed in the early 20th century, South Asian journalism educators like Goonasekera (1995), Thakur and Eapen (1996), Hussain (1996), Khan (1998) and Muppidi (2008) have found that the curricula and study of journalism still remains agonisingly poor in describing the media’s role and tasks in the society. The tasks are, for instance, how media professionals can play a role as ‘watchtower’ in a developing country to pull out millions of illiterate and marginally poor people in the overall development process or how they can contribute to ensuring good and accountable governance as the fourth estate. But the answers are still absent in the curricula. This intellectual challenge is becoming more and more acute at a time when civilisations are clashing and media are converging after the intervention of new media technologies. The apparent failure of the west-centric curriculum for journalism education proves that South Asian countries require a different approach to course contents and need to emphasise the value of research as a pedagogical and epistemological tool. After having an overview of the common journalism practice and paradigm shifts in this region the following discussion would try to suggest an adaptive model of journalism course curriculum for South Asian universities.

## **2. JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA: EMERGENCE AND ITS PARADIGM SHIFT**

The emergence and advancement of journalism in the South Asian region except for Bhutan can be classified into two major phases: pre-independence and post-independence. According to Muppidi (2008), the pre-independence era of journalism was marked by different newspapers with two distinct ideologies: the first was propagated mostly by Englishmen who supported the British rule and the second by the educated natives who promoted nation-building and, later, the freedom of struggle. Ullah (2008:2) found that the emergence of journalism in the sub-continent underlines the overriding aim of common welfare and a missionary role to disseminate information in the context of a nationalist movement of tens of millions of illiterate and poor people to stand against colonial rule.

Since then, many nationalist politicians have begun to publish newspapers and engaged themselves as working journalists in their own newspaper in a missionary zeal. The politician-turned media owners and journalists had used their publications to challenge the colonial rule and tried to galvanise support for nationalist movements. Ullah (2008:2) describes "...the spirit of the press and its influence on society took sides with the oppressed since the beginning of journalism in this land. Political and social thinking in South Asia embraced the ideals of journalism as a mission."

Journalism, in this context, blossomed in a supportive role in the nationalist political thinking and social reforms and became an important political, social and cultural vehicle to reach the people; not in the line of a profession like in the West because of the absence of any model in this society. It was at a much later stage that progressive and educated people took an interest in looking at journalism from professional perspectives, which boosted the demand for trained and skilled human resources for the industry. To meet the growing demands of an ever-increasing number of newspapers, the need for trained journalists in the print media became obvious. Consequently, Aligarh University of undivided India introduced an instruction course in journalism in 1938. But the course only survived a couple of years. The Department of Journalism of Punjab University was established in 1941 to offer a one-year diploma as an evening course designed for working journalists. That was the first institution of journalism education in the sub-continent. Journalism education since then, as pointed out by Datta-Ray (2006), Ullah (2008) and Murthy (2010) has run through paradigms that include (a) vocational training to diploma; (b) shift from mere journalism to mass communication and journalism; (c) a shift towards an interdisciplinary integrated approach; (d) a shift from the liberal humanistic approach to a social and scientific approach; (e) a shift from technology-less approach to technology plus approach; (f) a shift towards the privatisation of public education; and (g) collaborative efforts with foreign universities.

After the initial phases, the college-based certificate courses were replaced by university-based second generation journalism departments by the end of the 60s. During this period, journalism education also found its base in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The second generation continued during the 60s and 70s, when several journalism departments changed their nomenclature from 'journalism' to 'journalism and mass communication' and incorporated subjects such as communication and public relations alongside the traditional subjects like reporting, editing, news gathering and report writing. During the same period, the mostly western and Anglo-Eurocentric universalisation process began to leave its mark on journalism education across South Asia where many journalists were exposed to training from Thomson Foundation, UK, International Institute of Journalism, Germany and International Press Institute, USA.

The third generation of journalism education began its journey during the early 90s when a shift in multidisciplinary approach took place and included subjects like sociology, economics and even political sciences in the curricula. During the shift from technology-less to the technology plus era, journalism education tried to cope with the advancements in information and communication technologies and broadcast relating equipment albeit with some apparent failures. During the fourth generation, private institutes developed a

strong industry linkage, diversified the syllabi, hired faculty from allied fields and emphasised research. More importantly, they realised the value of building brands, creating niche markets admitting students from all over the country, and recruiting faculty with some industry experience. The latest generation of journalism/ media education in South Asian nations is in the making. It can be seen in collaborative efforts and memoranda of understanding between native and foreign, mainly European, universities such as Norway funded NOMA project with universities in Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan, IJG-Germany with Asian College of Journalism in India, University of Chittagong of Bangladesh with the Jonkoping University, Sweden and Peshawar University of Pakistan with Leipzig University, Germany. This trend is evident in the increased stress on 'internationalisation' and 'study abroad' programmes and their focus on Asia. Professionals argue that the media industry, breaking its tradition as a role model in the society, has become corporate and commercial and demanding a recast of journalism curriculum with less theory and more focus on journalism tools that include skills of information gathering and writing news stories, and cultivating news sources with assertion and communication skills. In the post-liberalisation era, print media in particular has exercised comparatively more freedom in criticising the government and other institutions to protect good and accountable governance, which is a major need in this region.

The overall situation of journalism education and the media scenario indicates some major sources of influence that calls for redesigning journalism curricula. Ullah (2008), Lee (2008) and Murthy (2010) listed some of these sources : (a) coping with the industry that faced a sea of changes during the past few years - both in nature and trends; (b) introduction and use of ICT and other modern technologies both in print and broadcast media; (c) emergence of corporatised media sectors instead of missionaries; (d) competitive job markets with professional risks and attitudes; (e) effect of globalisation on the industry as well as in the journalism/ media schools; (f) adaptation of updated western media education curricula; (g) brilliant journalism graduates and their enthusiasm towards western knowledge for status; (h) mission of university education to prepare all-round talents; and (i) necessity for attention to local culture.

### **3. PARADIGM SHIFT AND CURRICULA DEBATE**

The paradigm shift and demand from the industry side indicates that journalism education and curricula can either be developed in the light of a 'Professional Model' or a 'Craft Model'. The professional model emphasises the development of critical thinking of the graduates/future journalists regarding society, culture and economy, while the craft model is more concerned about the development of skills required for practical journalistic purposes. However, research evidence by Datta-Ray (2006), Muppidi (2008) and Murthy (2010) indicate that media academics in South Asian nations have now accepted that journalism/media/communication education requires both, because they consider a blending of professional and craft models may yield much more benefit for the graduates. But the question remains as to what should come first. Some argue on learning by doing where techniques are seen as integrated in the opening courses, while others stress that critical thinking has to be developed among the graduates first, so that they can locate and contextualise the story intellectually.

Gaunt (cited in Servaes, 2009) found six types education in the university journalism programmes being practised worldwide. These are: (i) orientation (media system); (ii) basic skills (language); (iii) technical skills (programming, writing, production and equipment); (iv) advanced skills (for highly qualified journalists for improving skills); (v) liberal background (social, economic, political and cultural background); (vi) specialised applications (specialised area of journalism and mass communication). Studies by Datta-Ray (2006), Melkote (2008), Muppidi (2008), and Freedman *et al.* (2009), however, indicated that there is no clear-cut direction or consistency in the various journalism courses offered across South Asia. Melkote (2008:69) found that three tiers of journalism education – liberal arts, social sciences focus and vocational diploma - exist in this region without mentioning any clear-cut regulations either by the University Grants Commission or by any accredited agencies like the Association of Mass Communication and Journalism Educators. In fact, these three tiers of journalism education indicate that the liberal arts curricula focus more on news gathering, enhanced writing skills, editing, presenting and so on, while the social sciences focus integrates subject matter including sociology, political and administrative development of their region, whereas the vocational courses provide some technical education on subjects like basics of news gathering, writing, TV reporting, editing and desktop publishing.

The World Journalism Education Council (WJEC)(2012) has recorded a total of 160 universities (India -102, Pakistan- 35, Bangladesh- 14, Sri Lanka- 6, Nepal- 3) now providing journalism education in this region. However, it has been noticed that most of the universities did not update their syllabi for ages despite a clear paradigm shift in journalism education in this region. Muppidi has found that whatever changes made have been very cosmetic. For instance, journalism teachers in India follow the normal route of post-graduate PhD at journalism institutes, but a majority of them have no experience of the media whatsoever. He opined, “What they teach is completely from (often outdated) textbooks which have no relevance when students enter the industry (2008:58).” To include these critical issues for journalism education, at least four major concerns should be addressed in this region. These are; (a) lack of regulation and oversight; (b) lack of resources and infrastructure; (c) lack of consistent course curriculum; and (d) lack of industry collaboration.

#### **4. DEBATE ON JOURNALISM CURRICULA: THE WORLD PERSPECTIVES**

Journalism education at university levels has a history of a little over a hundred years, though evidence shows that journalism education was even more alien than mass communication and was not well respected by professionals and even by some journalism educators. Journalism educators had a difficult time overcoming the commonly held notion that journalism is nothing more than a trade, where university training or degree is not necessary. Academic critics argue that it might best be taught in a trade school rather than in a college or university, and many journalists insist that it could be better learned on the job. However, by the 1930s, many journalism educators, mainly in the USA, became concerned about the specialised nature of the liberal arts courses their students were getting, particularly in social sciences, and began to devise more social science-based courses in their curricula. Dennis (1984: 85) listed three major complaints against journalism education

at the university level. One is that a pure liberal arts education without journalism courses is far superior to the journalism-liberal arts balance advocated by the journalism schools. The second is that the journalism schools teach too much theory and not enough practice. The third complaint is that the journalism schools are far too vocational. He also noted that while almost 85.0% of new recruits at U.S. newspapers are journalism school graduates though many leading editors openly scorn journalism education.

The answer to questions raised by Dennis could be found in a radio talk on Journalism Education in the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in June 2005. Lucinda Duckett, the National Editorial Development Manager of News Limited, said during the ABC talk (Duckett, 2005) that a degree is not a requirement for a good journalist. What is needed from a journalist is somebody who can find stories rather than wait for them to be given to them. She said, "We need good, sound, basic writers; people who can communicate at a simple level. But beyond that, we need people who can really sniff out stories, who can go beyond and find out what's really going on." Complaining that many journalism courses are very theoretical, Duckett said that the mistake is to think that that [journalism courses] would produce a work-ready journalist, because the two things are completely different. One is work training and the other is academic study. The universities may have lost their way a little in their direction. "Are they trying to offer trade courses or degrees?" Duckett asked. About her observation, Associate Professor Wendy Bacon from the University of Technology, Sydney, also a journalist, argued that in a university, "you can't really pretend to have a journalism course unless you also study what journalism is about, what is its role in society and what is the media about". "Also prepare your graduates to go out and be in a workplace where, if they are to put into practice, their highest ideals in terms of professional practice and ethical practice, he added. "In fact, they need to understand the environment in which they work in order to maximise their opportunities to produce a high quality of journalism."

Similarly, analysing journalism education trends and needs in Asian countries, the former Deputy Secretary General of the Asian Media and Information Centre (AMIC), Goonasekera (1995:21), concluded that ... "one should not look only at media teaching institutions and their curricula, but also the needs of the media industry and the priorities of governments and how they impinge on media and vice versa." Apart from the skills and knowledge imparted to students, one should also look at the values underlying the various components of communication teaching programmes and put them in the context of broader social values. "The communication policies and programmes of governments, and the place occupied by media education within them, are also highly relevant", he opined. Against the backdrop of this debate, it is obvious that the foremost issue for journalism educators is to redefine the mission of journalism education in the midst of a communications revolution.

The question implies, correctly, that journalism programmes already are changing into media studies programmes. Therefore, educators must ask some questions of themselves as to what this means not only in terms of course offerings but also of the philosophical rationale. It is insufficient to merely tack new classes onto the curriculum without addressing their broader implications in terms of the scope and purpose of the programmes. Educators must take a visionary look at the communications revolution that surrounds them and see

how they can articulate a new mission that incorporates the best of what they have already done in the past with socially desirable goals for the future. By analysing Indian journalism/communication alumni's attitudes to their degree, Thakur and Eapen (1996:54) commented that journalism education needs "more insight into philosophical questions so that universities do not produce mere technicians, but journalism scientists." They continued, "... journalism department trains students to be socially responsible and critical professionals aware of the power as well as the responsibilities of the media and of the need to defend press freedom and live up to the highest ethical norms."

## **5. UNIVERSALISATION, UNESCO MODEL AND DE-COLONISATION OF THE CURRICULA FOR SOUTH ASIA**

"Universalism, rooted in the Western values, has influenced journalism curricula, training and professional practices as seen through the normative role of journalists in promoting democracy, the latter being a concept is not shared and understood in the same way by all" (Lee, 2008). Even international organisations, like UNESCO, are promoting the normative approach, through efforts at creating a model journalism curriculum in which the relationship between democracy and journalism is reasserted. By using a 'Western Model' as a generic term to refer to mainstream press organs that have editorial independence from governments or political parties, that have adequate financial resources to sustain that independence, and that display a professional commitment to fairness, balance, accuracy and ethical conduct by their journalists, Freedman *et al.* (2009:16) claimed, that in "the UNESCO model, it is evident that intentionally intervention is omitted as an objective for journalism training and practice, and thus the model is inherently Western in ideology, content and preferred practice." The model is also similar to the principles and accreditation for journalism education set by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (Freedman *et al.*, 2009:17)

UNESCO developed the set of model curricula for journalism education in 2007 in response to an urgent demand for well-trained journalists, especially in developing countries and emerging democracies. The curricula were developed over a period of two years by a committee of four - Stuart Adam (The Poynter Institute, Florida), Hans Henrik Holm (Danish School of Journalism), Magda Abu Fadil (American University of Beirut) and Michael Cobden, (University of King's College, Halifax, Canada) – the latter as a coordinator and writer. The curricula were launched at the first World Journalism Education Congress in Singapore held in June, 2007 which recommended offering programmes for three-year and four-year undergraduate degrees and two forms of master's degrees, as well as undergraduate and post-graduate diplomas. They consisted of course listings for each program, course descriptions, and a set of 17 full syllabuses, as well as a set of journalism competencies.

UNESCO model – *Model Curricula for Journalism for Developing Countries & Emerging Democracies* - was formed around three axes: (1) An axis comprising the norms, values, tools, standards and practices of journalism; (2) An axis emphasising the social, cultural, political, economic legal and ethical aspects of journalism practice both within and outside the national borders; (3) An axis comprising knowledge of the world journalism's intellectual challenges (UNESCO, 2007). However, the contents of the model reflect its

West-centric focus though it claims... 'a generic model that can be adapted according to each country's specific needs'. For instance, the curricula suggested 23 subject topics for electives, e. g. covering conflicts, social movements, deprivation, diversity etc. Only seven of those are related directly to the UN Millennium Development Goals and the others are similar to those in the syllabi from the west (See UNESCO model 2007: 25-2). Thus, this syllabus demonstrates a strong emphasis on western-style journalism and to a lesser stress on journalism targeted for developing countries like those in South Asia. Freedman *et al.* (2009: 22) claimed, "The model suffers from the fact that its origins are in universities or foundations, rather than in newsrooms or professional journalism organisations." Thus, it is obvious that an exposure to this curriculum would create empathy to the existing West-centric universal understanding of journalism which in turn refuses to accept any local model. However, the crux of the issue is whether or not the 'universal model' and UNESCO model try to provide good quality training and meet local needs. Lee (2008: 59) therefore suggested, "a chauvinistic approach to communication teaching, research and practice will retard this important field in Asia if we cannot find a better model."

The problem intensified when both the state-run and private universities (to be read as central, state and private in the Indian context) failed to formulate a common core curriculum with relevance to the fast changing industry. As a result, media education suffered from the lack of standardisation of the content to be taught while the courses offered in many institutes and the universities just dealt with the basics and not with applications and appropriate discourse. In this context, a survey by Murthy (2010:7) found that "...most of the educators and media professionals indicated a general agreement that there is a need to change the present curriculum and the treatment of curriculum of journalism and mass communication in India should be multi-task oriented rather than industry focused." India's neighbouring countries can follow the same curricula, as they all share the common cultural, political and even somewhat economic traditions due to their common colonial legacy. However, the search for a local perspective does not imply an outright rejection of the West or Euro-centric universal models. What is at issue is the uncritical acceptance of those models and the neglect of the cumulative wisdom embodied in the South Asian culture and literature. Asian media appears to be under constant pressure to prove its maturity.

## 6. SEARCHING FOR A MODEL

The overall situation of journalism education and the media scenario in this region clearly indicates that the increasing domination of Western education, knowledge and information through globalisation and internationalisation of higher education needs to be redesigned. Also seen is an increasing awareness that Western approaches, including journalism curricula models, do have their limitations. Journalism researchers, outside the predominant Anglo-American orbit, therefore started challenging the established paradigms. As the South Asian region had experienced colonisation and imposition of the Western educational systems, the continuation of local ways of knowing was undermined. Globalisation has enhanced a 'Universal hegemonic' practice in journalism education too. Papoutsaki (2007) identified three major issues in this context: (a) dominance of western values and knowledge on the non-western educational system; (b) Western influence on journalism/ media/

communication studies curricula; and (c) insufficient locally produced research on journalism curricula and practice and lack of confidence in abilities to deviate from the dominant paradigm. She also remarked two major influences - internal and external - in the process of curriculum development. The internal force, as she describes, emphasise imported knowledge rather than generating knowledge; courses ill-adopted for local needs, pre-dominantly Western in approach and content, blind adherence to Western news, values, limited local material and access to it, low priority to journalism research and practices in journalism curricula and poor link with courses on local knowledge and societal needs... and for external, she cited the wider impact of Western journalism education models; impact of western journalism/ media theories and lack of text books on local curricula (Papoutsaki, 2007: 80).

The dominant Anglo-American model of journalism curricula manifested that South Asian media educators have very serious drawbacks in term of a rigorous examination of a suitable model for them. In fact, a handful of scholars from the US and the UK came to this region under the Fulbright umbrella and made notable contributions in the development of the profession; yet they could make very limited contribution in curriculum development to suite the local context. The latest example of such a project is the one in 1997 by the University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale - Strengthening Journalism Education in South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)'. However, most of the recommendations emanating from the project are yet to be implemented, because of the absence of any clear mission by the universities and the departments, lack of research evidence by local media and journalism educators, inadequate facilities and budget constraints at the institutions. However, the development of one's own model depends on sufficient knowledge, experience, conceptual thinking and teaching material. All these depend on research and accumulation of findings and experiences in one's own social context. The lack of adequate communication researchers in the South Asian nations is the principal constraint in developing appropriate journalism curricula for universities.

Similarly, it is well known that due to the dual nature of providing both academic and professional training in journalism, the curricula designed for both the domains need to strike a balance between 'theory' and 'practice'. Then, the question remains - what should be the curricula for South Asian universities? As it is observed a three-tier curricula - vocational training, one-year diploma and graduate studies - is existing in universities across South Asia. Therefore vocational training needs to concentrate on reporting and editing. The diploma degree can focus on journalism courses including some core communication courses for expanding their understanding of the society and people where they live. At the graduate stage, an integration is mandatory, because the mission of a university is to create a comprehensive human being and scholar, not only producing competent human resources for the job market. Scholars must discard any short courses in journalism at university and should rather concentrate their efforts on establishing independent institutes or schools of journalism and communication instead of departments under the social sciences faculty and offer Bachelor and Master degrees in Social Sciences.

## 7. CURRICULIM MODEL FOR SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITIES

Journalism education is an art, not a science, and there can be no universal formula for preparing students for journalistic careers, just as there can be no universal model of a press system. Despite this drawback in constituting a common curricula, there exists a notion that any system of journalism education and its institutions must infuse students with theory and practical skills, must nurture their sense of curiosity, and must enable them to understand the role of the media in their widely divergent societies. Today's journalists, first and foremost, must be strong critical thinkers who know enough about geography, history and the human conditions to understand why events play out as they do. Thus it is obvious that the ultimate objective of journalism education should be to improve the practice of journalism not only by training skilled practitioners but also by teaching how journalism impinges on other areas of public life and illustrates critical social issues.

The second issue is that the philosophy of university education is not to provide a competent workforce to the job market, rather to produce an intellectual human being by disseminating adequate knowledge. An integrated syllabus is thus the most suitable option for higher studies in journalism. The author of this paper would like to propose to his colleagues in this region to consider an option: all integrated courses should be included at the Honours (Undergraduate) level and the masters' course should be divided into two separate tracks – the first would cover mere journalism that includes investigative reporting, reporting on special issues, radio and TV production and the second to cover 'Communication' - which puts more focus on media research, development communication, media education and socio- cultural changes of media trends.

The model extrapolates that journalism curricula should be forward-looking and future oriented. Students must be provided appropriate skills to cope with the emerging 'information society' that has emerged across the region. The advent of new communication technologies presents many challenges to journalism education in addition to striking a balance between vocational and academic training, adapting to social changes due to globalisation and the growing demand for communication personnel capable of handling the market imperatives. In this context, the conceptual and theoretical courses are to be aimed at developing critical and creative thinking which would contribute to a generation of greater awareness of one's duties and obligations as a journalist or a media activist in one's own society. Practical and skills courses, on the other hand, must not be limited to emphasising communication and writing skills needed for the job, but must also give equal emphasis to the ethics of the profession. The University Grants Commission in individual countries of the region must shoulder the responsibility of offering a generic curriculum for maintaining standards in journalism education in their respective countries.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The South Asian media climate in the post-liberalisation era indicates that a rapid market expansion demands extensive personnel recruitment. Many young journalists began working from their fascination for glamour and without having undergone any professional socialisation in this climate. Under these circumstances, educators need to understand that

their students as potential journalists need to be well read, well informed of local, regional and even international affairs, sensitive to the environment, capable of thinking critically of their life's goals and of reflecting on issues and implications on the community from the stories they produce. The proposed curricula would work in generating a well-equipped graduate shouldering the journalism profession, as the model focuses on the needs of this region from professional and cultural perspectives. However, a shift from the 'dominant' model to the 'local' would take time; because it is difficult to say 'what is right' with journalism education in the South Asian countries today. In fact, nothing is right for such a subject which is still struggling for recognition as an independent discipline.

Today increasing interest in media courses is observed among the new generation. Many even skip business management and engineering courses and opt for media and journalism, but are quickly disillusioned because of the way it is taught at the conventional colleges and universities across the region. The growing interest in this discipline is certainly a positive development, but academics have not been able to live up to the expectations of the new generation partly because it is hard to change the existing system and partly because of our own limitations of not recognising the need for convergence of thoughts - the different technologies and the disciplines that are coming together to teach the media and communication subjects. Similarly there is a growing number of research projects being undertaken on media subjects which is another positive development.

Journalism education across South Asia is yet to attain the 'rigour' that can take the subject to the status of a front ranking independent discipline. This is because of the failure of journalism professionals and academics who never agree despite the discipline having all the potential of being one of the most sought-after subjects and commanding a very promising market. The controversy between the professionals and academics would continue, as it does in other countries as well; yet, they need to work together on the vital issue of raising the quality and the status of journalism education in this region. To have a generic model of journalism curricula, South Asian media educators must fight hard simultaneously on three fronts - getting adequate quality people for teaching and research, obtaining necessary funding and designing curriculum of local relevance through research of local relevance. South Asian educators need to confront these vital fronts for keeping alive any realistic hope of formulating a meaningful local model for media and journalism education. The given model of curricula could be suitable for the time being in addressing the present challenges as a culture-centric approach; and more comprehensive models would emerge through trial and error in the coming days - models that would be based on local culture and traditions.

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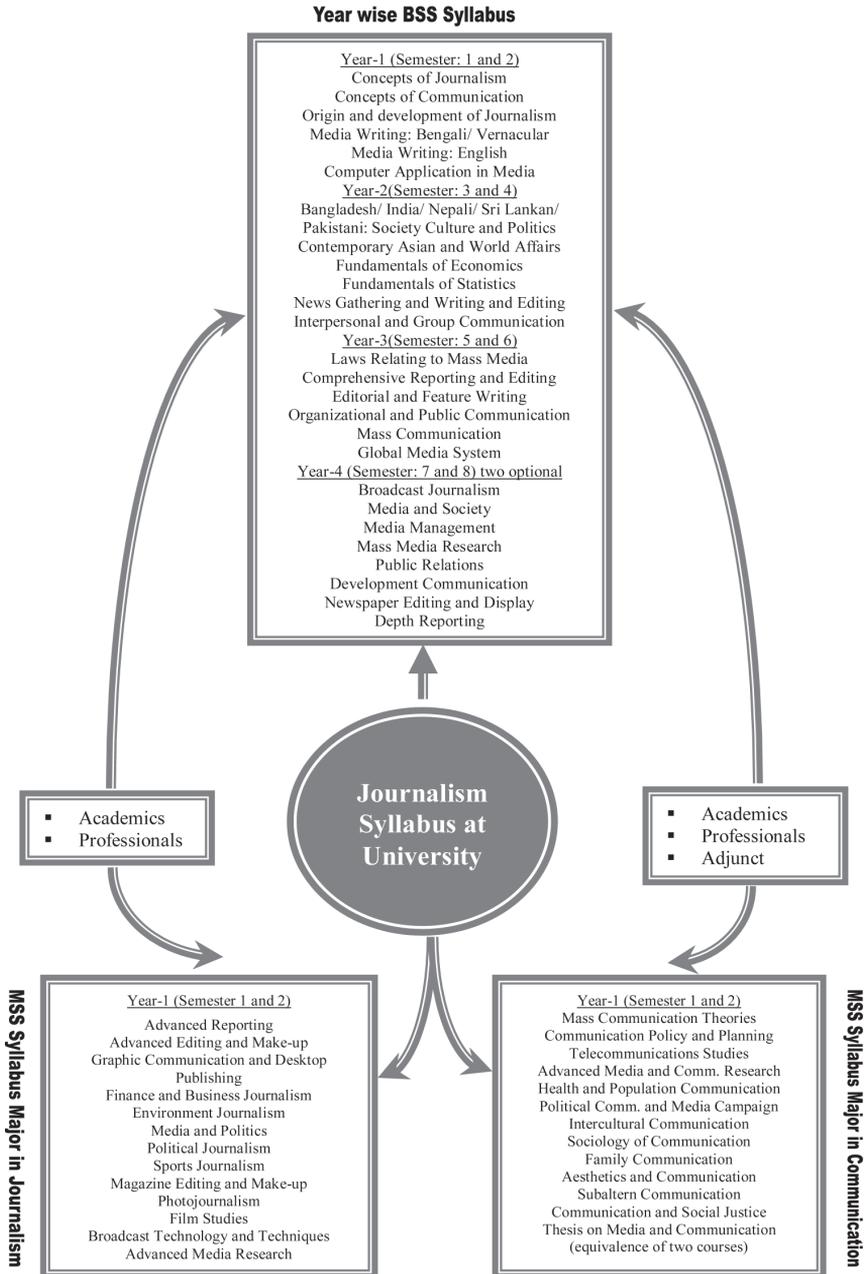
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**Appendix**

Proposed Journalism Curricula Model, developed by Mohammad Sahid Ullah- 2010



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