# Framing Palestine in Malaysian Online Media: A Content Analysis of Major Newspapers Prior to the Recent War

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**Abstract**

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This study analyzes the coverage of the Palestinian issue in major Malaysian online newspapers prior to the recent war. Employing content analysis, the research categorizes the types of issues addressed, including political, economic, security, social, humanitarian, media-related, and regional/international relations. It also examines the representation of Israeli violations in the occupied Palestinian territories. To ensure the accuracy and reliability in measuring and classifying the coverage of these issues and violations, a specialized tool was developed. To verify the credibility and stability (Test-retest reliability) of the tool, a Test-retest was conducted along with Factor Analysis, and necessary adjustments were made. The findings are expected to highlight the centrality of the Palestinian cause in Malaysian media discourse, reflecting Malaysia's political stance and public solidarity with Palestine. The study contributes to the broader field of international media studies by situating Malaysia's coverage within global narratives of the Palestinian issue.

## 1. Introduction

The Palestinian issue has long occupied a central place in the political, social, and media discourse of many Muslim-majority countries. For decades, Palestine has symbolized not only an enduring struggle against occupation but also a unifying cause that resonates strongly with broader questions of justice, human rights, and anti-colonial resistance. Among these countries, Malaysia has consistently voiced strong political and humanitarian support for the Palestinian people, both in international forums such as the United Nations and within the realm of domestic public opinion. Successive Malaysian governments, regardless of political affiliation, have articulated clear positions rejecting normalization with Israel and advocating for Palestinian statehood. This official stance aligns with the wider sentiment among the Malaysian public, where solidarity with Palestine is deeply rooted in religious affinity, historical memory, and a broader sense of Muslim brotherhood.[1]

The Malaysian press functions not only as a reflection of political orientations but also as a significant actor in shaping public perceptions and mobilizing collective sentiments. In Malaysia, the media has often played the role of an agenda-setter by highlighting Palestinian suffering, reporting on Israeli violations in the occupied territories, and framing the conflict in ways that resonate with domestic audiences.[2] Such framing processes are not neutral; they involve choices about language, images, and interpretive frames that can either amplify or diminish empathy and solidarity. Media outlets, particularly online platforms with wide readership, therefore operate at the intersection of politics and public opinion, influencing how international solidarity is constructed and maintained.[3]

This study examines how major Malaysian online newspapers covered the Palestinian issue in the period preceding the recent war. Specifically, it focuses on four dimensions: (1) the range of issues highlighted, including political, humanitarian, security, and economic aspects; (2) the representation of Israeli violations in the occupied Palestinian territories; (3) the framing references employed, such as religious, humanitarian, or geopolitical frames; and (4) the reasoning patterns, both logical and illogical, adopted in the coverage. By systematically

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Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, *Media, Politics and Society in Malaysia* (London: Routledge, 2014), 112–115.[1]

Cherian George, *Freedom from the Press: Journalism and State Power in Singapore and Malaysia* (Singapore: [2] NUS Press, 2012), 89–93.

Syed Arabi Idid and Shamsul Zain, "Media and Malaysia's Foreign Policy on Palestine," *Jurnal Komunikasi:* [3] *Malaysian Journal of Communication* 35, no. 3 (2019): 1–18.

analyzing the content of leading Malaysian online outlets, the study seeks to provide insights into how international solidarity with Palestine is discursively constructed, reproduced, and communicated through media narratives.

In addition, this research contributes to the broader literature on media framing of international conflicts, particularly in non-Western contexts. While much scholarly attention has been devoted to the representation of Palestine in Western media, where coverage is often critiqued for bias, imbalance, or the privileging of Israeli perspectives,[1] comparatively less work has explored how media in Muslim-majority societies construct the Palestinian issue. The Malaysian case is especially significant because of the country's consistent foreign policy stance, its vibrant domestic media landscape, and the salience of the Palestinian cause in shaping national identity and foreign policy discourse.[2] By situating the Malaysian press within this broader scholarly and political context, the study aims to shed light on the interaction between media narratives, political identity, and transnational solidarity.

## 2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

### 2.1 Research Questions (RQs)

RQ1: What are the most prominent Palestinian issues covered by Malaysian online newspapers prior to the war?

RQ2: How are Israeli violations in the occupied territories represented in the coverage?

RQ3: What framing references are most frequently employed in the coverage?

RQ4: What types of reasoning patterns are used in constructing arguments about the Palestinian issue?

RQ5: How are Palestinian issues positioned in terms of page placement and visual representations?

RQ6: What journalistic forms are most commonly used in the coverage?

RQ7: To what extent do variations exist between state-owned and privately-owned newspapers in their representation of the Palestinian issue?

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Greg Philo and Mike Berry, *More Bad News from Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 24–30.[1]
Kai Ostwald, "Malaysia's Foreign Policy and the Palestinian Issue," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 42, no. 1 [2] (2020): 54–72.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1 Media Coverage of the Palestinian Issue: A Global Perspective

The representation of the Palestinian issue in global media has been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry. Western media, particularly in the United States and Europe, have often been criticized for adopting frames that align with Israeli narratives, emphasizing "terrorism," "security," and "violence," while underreporting Palestinian perspectives [1] Similarly, scholars argue that Western media representations of Islam and Palestine are filtered through a framework of suspicion, which marginalizes Palestinian voices and legitimizes Israeli state policies.[2] Wolfsfeld further emphasized that conflict coverage in Western media tends to privilege official sources, thereby limiting the diversity of perspectives on contentious issues like Palestine.[3] More recent studies confirm that these patterns persist, with research showing that mainstream U.S. and European outlets continue to disproportionately highlight Israeli security concerns while neglecting Palestinian suffering, particularly during episodes of violence such as the Gaza wars of 2014 and 2021.[4] Scholars also note that digital and social media have introduced some counter-narratives, yet these remain overshadowed by dominant mainstream framings.[5] By contrast, Arab and Islamic media have traditionally highlighted the Palestinian struggle as a legitimate liberation movement and a humanitarian cause. Scholars note that these outlets employ a counter-discursive strategy, positioning Palestine not only as a political issue but also as a symbol of pan-Islamic and pan-Arab solidarity.[6] Recent scholarship indicates that pan-Arab satellite networks, such as Al Jazeera, have amplified Palestinian voices and foregrounded civilian suffering, challenging Western-centric narratives and shaping global discourses on justice and human rights.[7] This duality between Western and Islamic narratives underscores the importance of studying Palestinian coverage in non-Western contexts, where framing may better reflect local political and cultural orientations.

### 3.2 The Palestinian Issue in Asian and Muslim-Majority Media

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Philo and Berry. "Bad News from Israel", 24–30.[1]

Edward Said, Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World. [2] New York: Vintage, 1997.

Gadi Wolfsfeld, Media and the Path to Peace. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.[3]

Shahira Fahmy, "U.S. Media Framing of the Gaza Conflict: Israel's Security vs. Palestinian Suffering." [4] Journal of Middle East Media 17, no. 2 (2021): 45–67.

Mohamed Zayani, Digital Middle East: State and Society in the Information Age. London: Hurst, 2021.[5]

Lawrence Pintak, The New Arab Journalist: Mission and Identity in a Time of Turmoil. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.[6]

Mohamad Elmasry and Hanan Al-Sayed. "Al Jazeera's Coverage of Palestine: A Counter-Hegemonic Narrative?" [7] Media, War & Conflict 16, no. 1 (2023): 34–56.

Research on Asian and Muslim-majority countries indicates that Palestine often functions as a unifying theme across national boundaries. Karim observed that Muslim media consistently construct Palestine as a central axis of global injustice, framing it within narratives of colonialism and resistance.[1] In Indonesia, for example, the press often frames the Palestinian issue through religious solidarity and humanitarian concern, while in Turkey, it is framed within broader foreign policy debates.[2] Recent studies confirm this trend: Indonesian media continue to present Palestine as a moral and humanitarian issue, mobilizing public opinion in support of international solidarity campaigns.[3] Similarly, Turkish media portrayals of Palestine are often intertwined with critiques of Western foreign policy and domestic political discourse, especially under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government.[4] These studies highlight the role of transnational Muslim identity in shaping the ways the media frame Palestine, distinguishing them from Western-centric portrayals.

Malaysia, as a Muslim-majority nation with a strong record of political support for Palestine, fits within this broader pattern. However, unlike Arab countries, Malaysia is geographically distant from the conflict, which makes its media coverage particularly interesting: it reflects solidarity without direct local involvement. Recent analyses reveal that Malaysian media continue to highlight Palestine as a humanitarian and moral struggle, often linking it to Malaysia's foreign policy stance and national identity as a defender of Muslim causes.[5] This creates a unique form of mediated transnational advocacy that bridges distance through symbolic representation.

### 3.3 Malaysian Media and Political Communication

The Malaysian media system is characterized by a complex relationship between state control, political ownership, and journalistic practice. Scholars argue that the media in Malaysia often function within the boundaries set by the state, especially on issues of national and foreign

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[1] Karim H Karim, Islamic Peril: Media and Global Violence. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2002.

[2] Pintak, "*Arab media and political renewal,*" 117.

[3] Saad Nordin and Barakat Hossam, "Indonesian Media Narratives on Palestine: Between Solidarity and National Politics." Asian Journal of Communication 31, no. 5 (2021): 501–520.

[4] Erdem Yoruk, "Media, Politics, and the Palestine Question in Turkey." Turkish Studies 23, no. 4 (2022): 589–608.

[5] Mohd Azizuddin Sani Mohd, "Malaysia's Media Representation of the Palestinian Struggle: Solidarity and Symbolism." Kajian Malaysia 40, no. 2 (2022): 23–45.

policy[1]. Weiss (2014) highlights that while there is a degree of pluralism, particularly in online spaces, political and ideological control remains significant in shaping news narratives[2].

Within this environment, the Palestinian issue has historically occupied a special place. Malaysia's foreign policy has consistently endorsed Palestinian statehood and opposed Israeli occupation. This political orientation is echoed in domestic media coverage, where Palestine is framed positively as a "just cause" and aligned with Malaysia's Islamic identity. At the same time, alternative and independent outlets, such as Free Malaysia Today and The Malaysian Insight, may offer more diverse or critical approaches, creating a spectrum of coverage that warrants systematic analysis.

## 3.4 Framing Palestine in Malaysian Media

Empirical studies examining the representation of Palestine in the Malaysian press are relatively scarce but growing. One of the pioneering works, found that Malaysian newspapers consistently framed Palestine through political and humanitarian lenses, portraying the conflict as both a diplomatic issue and a moral obligation[3]. Similarly, content analysis was employed to show that political and religious frames dominated, with significant emphasis on Malaysia's official solidarity with Palestinians[4]. Rahim (2019) highlighted how Malaysian mainstream newspapers employed news frames that reinforced Malaysia's foreign policy stance while minimizing coverage of Israeli perspectives[5].

These findings suggest that Malaysian media adopt a framing strategy that both reflects and reinforces state policy while simultaneously catering to public sentiment rooted in Islamic and humanitarian solidarity. However, most of these studies focus on one or two outlets, leaving a gap in systematic comparative research across the wide spectrum of Malaysian online newspapers.

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Anuar Mustafa Kamal, "Politics and the Media in Malaysia," *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World* [1] *Studies* 20, no. 1 (2005): 25–47., Cherian George, "*Contentious journalism and the Internet: Towards democratic discourse in Malaysia and Singapore*" (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2006), 214.

Meredith L Weiss, "Malaysian Media Studies: History and Political Context," *Asian Journal of Communication* [2] 24, no. 5 (2014): 435–450.

Asem Al-Najjar, "The Image of the Palestinian Cause in the Malaysian Press," *Journal of Arab & Muslim Media* [3] *Research* 10, no. 2 (2017): 145–162.

Ahmad Fawwaz Fadzil and Norhayati Musa, "Framing Palestine in Malaysian Media: A Content Analysis [4] Approach," *Malaysian Journal of Communication* 36, no. 4 (2020): 89–106.

Norazlina Rahim, "Boycott as Media Discourse: Malaysian Coverage of Economic Solidarity with Palestine," [5] *Journal of Contemporary Southeast Asian Media* 11, no. 2 (2019): 88–104.

**3.5 Theoretical and Analytical Framework**

This study is grounded in framing theory and agenda-setting theory, two key approaches in media studies. Entman (1993) defines framing as the process of selecting certain aspects of reality to make them more salient, thereby promoting specific interpretations[1]. In the context of Palestine, frames may highlight humanitarian suffering, political legitimacy, or religious symbolism, depending on the media outlet. Similarly, the agenda-setting function of the media suggests that the more prominently and frequently an issue is covered, the more significant it becomes in public perception.[2]

Applying these frameworks to Malaysian online newspapers allows for an understanding of both what issues are emphasized (agenda-setting) and how they are constructed (framing). By combining these theories with a systematic content analysis, this study seeks to identify not only the prevalence of Palestinian issues in Malaysian media but also the underlying logics, frames, and narratives that structure such coverage.

**4. Methodology**

**4.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a **qualitative-quantitative content analysis** approach to examine how major Malaysian online newspapers covered the Palestinian issue prior to the recent Gaza war. Content analysis is selected because it enables a systematic categorization of media texts, providing both numerical indicators of coverage patterns and interpretative insights into framing strategies. The method allows the identification of recurring themes, issue domains, and frames, while also evaluating the logic and coherence of argumentation.

**4.2 Population and Sample**

The population of this study consists of **leading Malaysian online newspapers**, recognized for their wide readership and influence on public opinion. From this population, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select a set of newspapers that are considered among the most

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Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 [1] (1993): 51–58.

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion* [2] *Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176–187.

prominent in Malaysia, namely: Bernama, Astro Awani online, Berita Harian online, Harian Metro online, The Star online, Sinar Harian online, Siakap Keli, The New Straits Times, Free Malaysia Today, Harakah Daily, The Malaysian Insight, Malay Mail online, and 13. These outlets represent a diverse spectrum of Malaysian press, including mainstream English-language, Malay-language, and independent online journalism.

## 4.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is each **news item** (article, report, editorial, feature, interview, or investigative piece) published about the Palestinian issue. Each item constitutes an independent unit for coding and analysis.

## 4.4 Categories of Analysis

The study employs a coding scheme consisting of several dimensions:

**Types of Issues Covered:** Political issues, Economic issues, Security issues, Social and humanitarian issues, Media-related issues, and Regional and international relations.

**Representation of Israeli Violations:** Settlement expansion, Violations against Al-Aqsa Mosque, Refugee issues, Prisoners, Killings and assassinations, The blockade and siege, Settler attacks, Military operations.

**Framing References:** Political, Historical, Economic, Humanitarian, Legal/International law, Security, Religious, and Social.

**Reasoning Patterns:** Logical reasoning (fact-based, evidence-driven arguments) and Illogical reasoning (emotional appeals, unsubstantiated claims).

**Journalistic Characteristics:** Section placement (front page vs. inside page), Use of photographs and visual elements, Genre of reporting (news reports, features, editorials, interviews, investigative stories).

## 4.5 Data Collection Procedure

Articles were retrieved using the online archives and search engines of the selected newspapers. Keywords such as *"Palestine," "Gaza," "Israel," "Al-Aqsa," "settlements," "refugees," and "siege"* were used to identify relevant items. All retrieved articles were cross-checked for relevance, and duplicates were removed.

**4.6 Coding and Reliability**

A coding sheet was developed based on the categories outlined above. To ensure reliability, two independent coders were trained on the coding scheme. Inter-coder reliability was tested using Cohen's Kappa, aiming for a score above 0.80 to ensure consistency in data coding.

**4.7 Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using a mixed approach: **Quantitative analysis** to measure the frequency and distribution of issue types, frames, and journalistic characteristics, and **Qualitative interpretation** to assess the underlying framing strategies, reasoning patterns, and the broader implications of coverage.

**5. Results** and **Discussion**

The findings indicate (Table 1) that The Malaysian Insight (16.3%), Malay Mail Online (12.9%), and Free Malaysia Today (13.6%) contributed the largest proportion of articles, whereas outlets such as Bernama (2.04%) and The New Straits Times (2.7%) provided relatively less coverage. This distribution suggests that independent and digital-first newspapers were more active in reporting the Palestinian issue than traditional mainstream or government-affiliated outlets. The results are consistent with prior studies showing that independent online media in Southeast Asia often take a more proactive role in international human rights coverage[1].

Table 1: Digital Newspapers

| Newspapers | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| --- | --- | --- |

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Rosnani Ismail and Siti Ahmad, "Online Journalism and the Framing of International Issues: The Case of [1] Palestine in Malaysian News Portals," *Asian Journal of Media Studies* 15, no. 3 (2021): 55–72.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1.  Bernama | 3 | 2.0 |
| 2.  Astro Awani online | 9 | 6.2 |
| 3.  Berita Harian online | 11 | 7.5 |
| 4.  Harian Metro online | 12 | 8.2 |
| 5.  The Star online | 12 | 8.2 |
| 6.  Sinar Harian online | 13 | 8.8 |
| 7.  Siakap Keli | 6 | 4.1 |
| 8.  The New Straits Times | 4 | 2.7 |
| 9.  Free Malaysia Today | 20 | 13.6 |
| 10. Harakah Daily | 9 | 6.1 |
| 11. The Malaysian Insight | 24 | 16.3 |
| 12. Malay Mail online | 19 | 12.9 |
| 13. 13 | 5 | 3.4 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

In terms of issue coverage (Table 2, Figure 1) political issues (25.4%) and social issues (21.4%) were the most frequently reported, followed by humanitarian issues (17.15%). Economic and security issues, while present, constituted smaller proportions. This aligns with previous research indicating that Malaysian media emphasize political solidarity and humanitarian narratives when covering Palestine [1] [2](Hamzah & Yusof, 2020; Rahim, 2019). The prominence of social issues suggests that journalists actively framed Palestine as a human-centered concern, highlighting the

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Hamzah Azmi, and Noraini Yusof,  "Malaysia's Foreign Policy and the Palestinian Cause: Media Perspectives," [1] *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23, no. 2 (2020): 245–262.

Rahim, "Boycott as Media Discourse," 88.[2]

societal and human impact of the conflict, which resonates with the public's moral and religious solidarity[1].

Table 2: Types of Issues

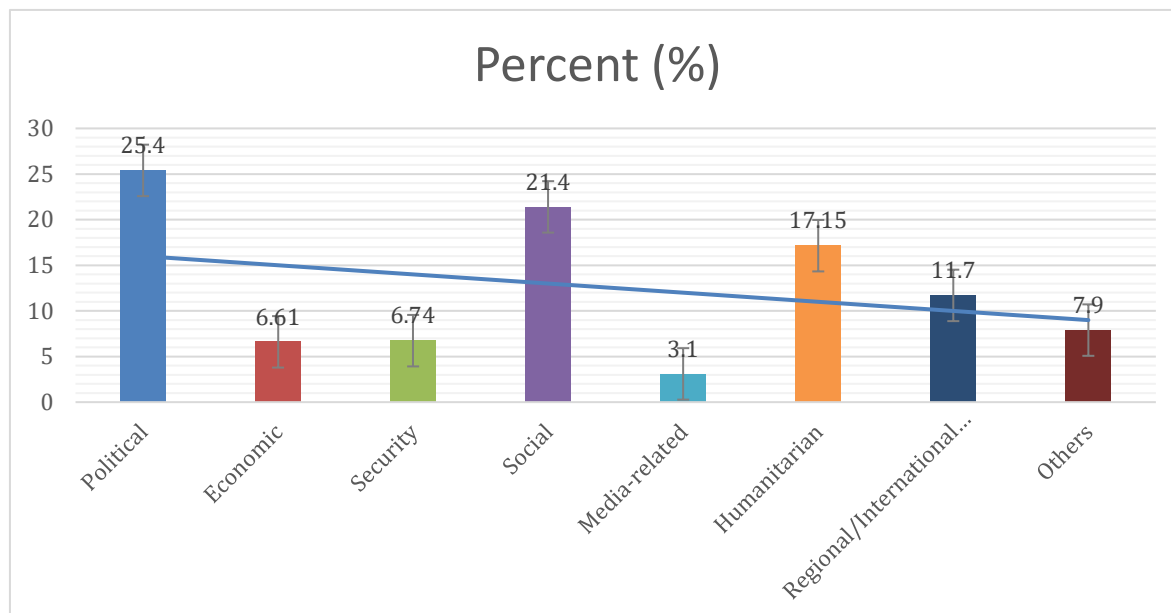| Code | Category | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Political | 679 | 25.4 |
| 2. | Economic | 177 | 6.6 |
| 3. | Security | 181 | 6.8 |
| 4. | Social | 572 | 21.4 |
| 5. | Media-related | 83 | 3.1 |
| 6. | Humanitarian | 313 | 17.1 |
| 7. | Regional/International relations | 213 | 11.7 |
| 8. | Others | 459 | 7.9 |
| | Total | 2677 | 100.0 |



Figure 1: Types of Issues

Naomi Sakr, *Transformations in Egyptian Journalism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 114. [1]

The examination of reported violations (Table 3, Figure 2) shows that killings and executions (42.26%) and military operations (25.45%) dominated the coverage. Other significant but less reported violations include prisoners (11.12%), settlement expansion (8.82%), and refugee issues (4.14%). The low coverage of settler attacks (1.95%) and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (3.12%) may reflect editorial prioritization toward more dramatic or newsworthy events, such as military confrontations, which align with news values theory emphasizing prominence, conflict, and human interest[1].

Table 3: Areas of Israeli Violations

| Code | Category | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. | Al-Aqsa Mosque | 40 | 3.1 |
| 2. | Settlements | 113 | 8.8 |
| 3. | Refugees | 53 | 4.2 |
| 4. | Prisoners | 143 | 11.1 |
| 5. | Killing | 541 | 42.2 |
| 6. | Siege | 40 | 3.2 |
| 7. | Settler attacks | 25 | 1.9 |
| 8. | Military operations | 325 | 25.5 |
| | Total | **1280** | %100 |

Pamela Shoemaker, and  Reese Stephen, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology* [1] *Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 87.
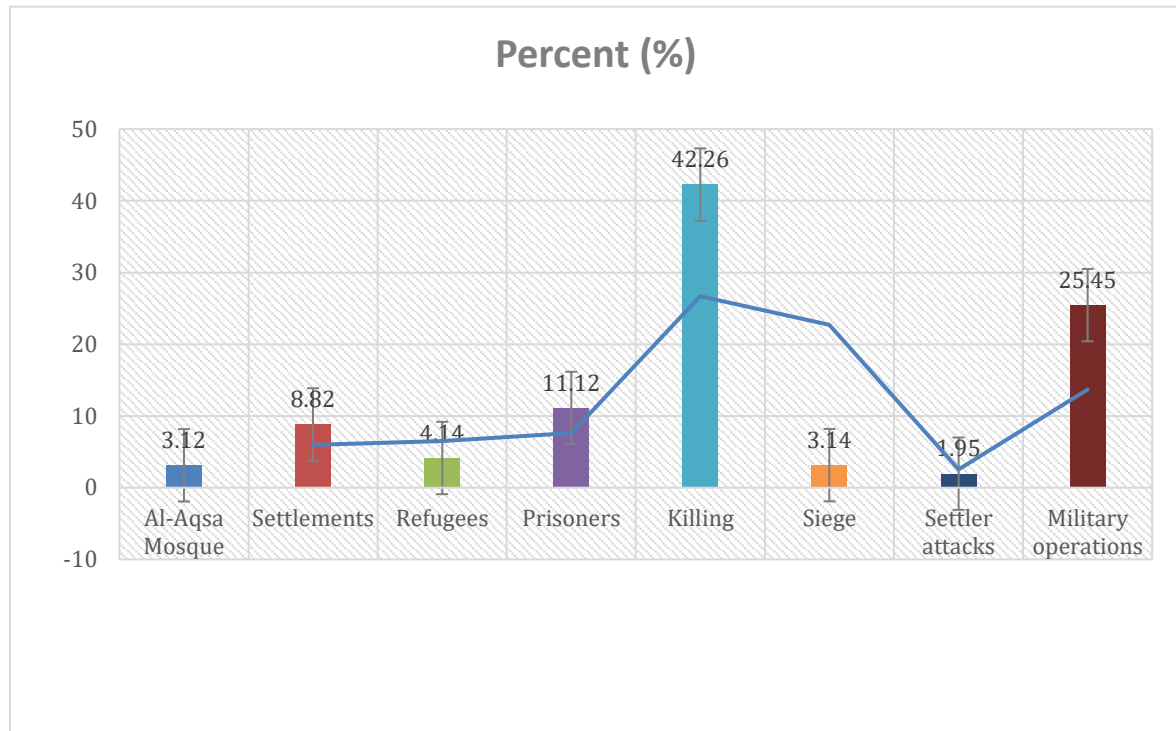
Figure 2:  Areas of Israeli Violations

Analysis of framing references reveals that (Table 4, Figure 3) political frames (34.04%) and humanitarian frames (27.82%) were the most common, followed by religious references (17.11%). Economic, historical, legal, security, and social frames were less frequent. This pattern demonstrates the dual focus of Malaysian media: emphasizing political advocacy and moral responsibility while also appealing to humanitarian and religious sentiments. The relatively high presence of religious framing reflects Malaysia's socio-cultural context, where Islamic values often shape public discourse on international issues[1]. The findings also show limited reliance on legal and historical frames, suggesting that journalists prioritize current events and moral imperatives over historical context or legal frameworks [2].

Table 4: Framing References

| Code | Frame | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------|-------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. | Political | 1205 | 34.1 |
| 2. | Historical | 154 | 4.4 |
| 3. | Economic | 185 | 5.2 |

Khairil Mustafa, "Media Solidarity and Muslim Identity: Reporting the Palestinian Struggle in Malaysia,*" Jurnal* [1] *Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 34, no. 2 (2018): 67–82.
Sakr, *Transformations in Egyptian Journalism, 175.,* Hamzah & Yusof, " Malaysia's foreign policy," 262.[2]

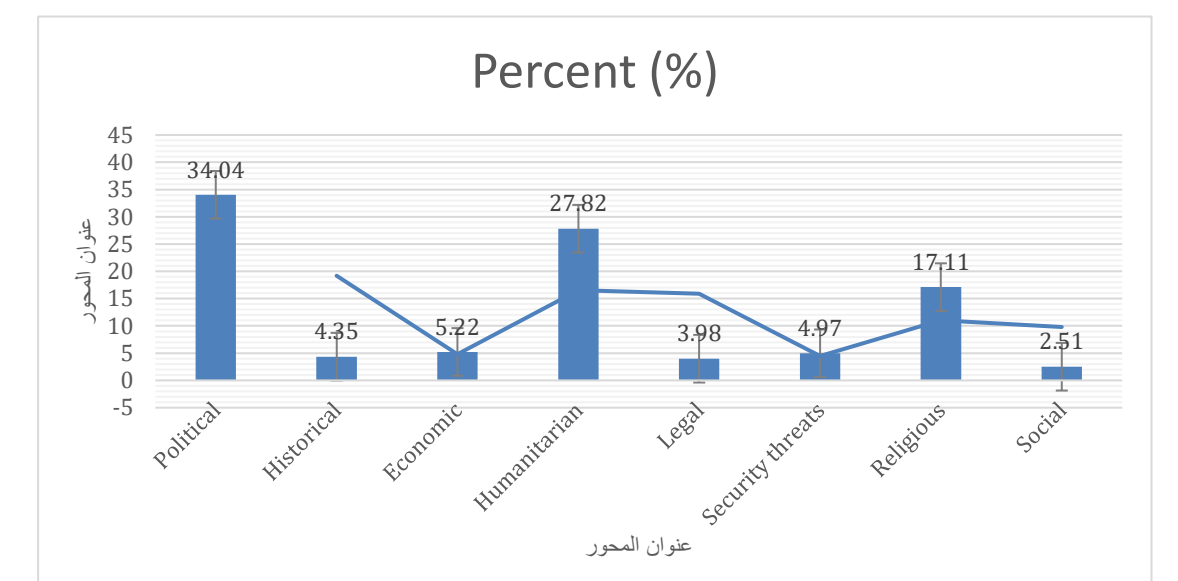| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4. | Humanitarian | 984 | 27.8 |
| 5. | Legal | 141 | 4.0 |
| 6. | Security        threats | 176 | 4.9 |
| 7. | Religious | 606 | 17.1 |
| 8. | Social | 89 | 2.5 |
| | Total | **3540** | **%100** |



Figure 3:  Framing References

The analysis of reasoning patterns in Malaysian online newspapers demonstrates (Table 5) a strong predominance of logical reasoning (94.94%), with illogical reasoning constituting only 5.06% of the cases. Further examination of logical reasoning pathways shows (Table 6, Figure 4) that events, data, and reports from international organizations (53.59%) were the most frequently employed evidence sources. Justifications based on political, religious, legal, military, security, economic, or social reasoning accounted for 22.25%, historical references 9.75%, and statistics 14.41%. This pattern underscores the media's reliance on internationally recognized sources and quantitative evidence, reinforcing credibility and strengthening the persuasive power of coverage[1]

Despite the dominance of logical reasoning, the minority of illogical reasoning exhibited notable tendencies. Bias (81.52%) was the most common form, followed by generalization (8.28%), exaggeration (6.38%), and presenting a single perspective (3.82%). This suggests that while

Shoemaker and  Stephen, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century*, 110. [1]

Malaysian online newspapers largely maintain professionalism, certain editorial choices reflect ideological or emotional positioning in favor of Palestine[1].

Table 5: Reasoning Strategies

| Code | Category | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. | Logical | 3325 | 94.9 |
| 2. | Illogical | 177 | 5.1 |
| | Total | 3502 | %100 |
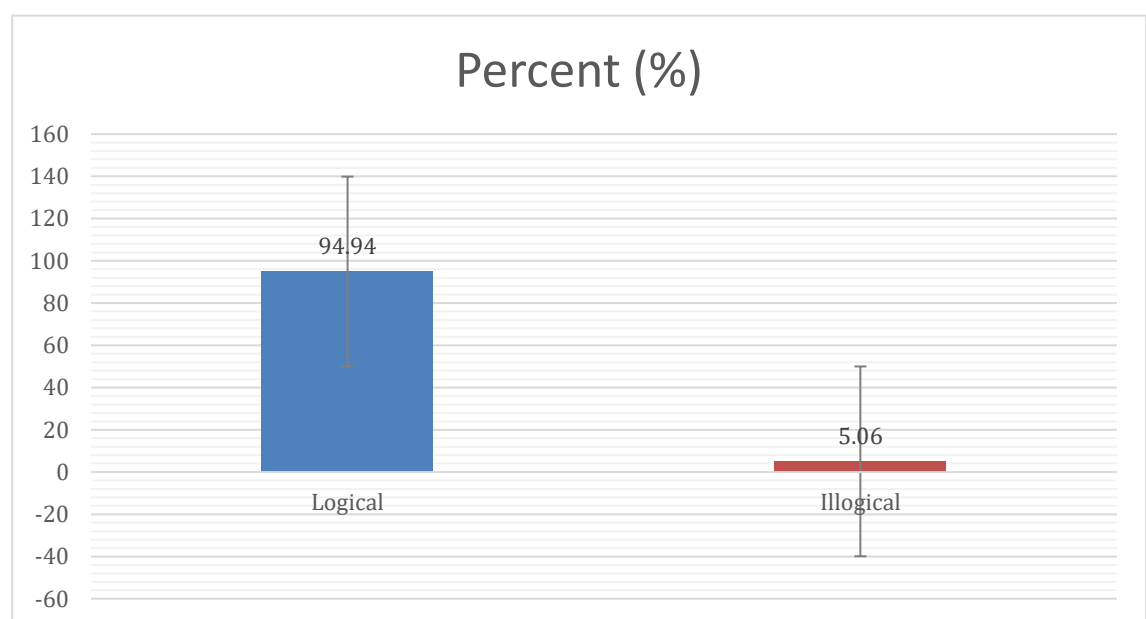


Figure 4:  Reasoning Strategies

Table 6: logical and Illogical Reasoning

| Code | Category | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------|----------|-----------|-------------|
| | Political, legal, Religious, Military, Security, Economic, Social | | |
| | | 738 | 22.2 |

Ahmad Khalil, "Media Narratives and the Politics of Solidarity: Palestine in Arab and Muslim Press," *Journal of* [1] *Arab Media Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015): 32–48., Hamzah & Yusof, " Malaysia's foreign policy," 253.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| logical Reasoning | International Reports | 1777 | 53.6 |
| | Historical | 323 | 9.8 |
| | Statistical | 478 | 14.4 |
| | Total | 3316 | %100 |
| | | | |
| Illogical Reasoning | One-sided argument, | 6 | 3.8 |
| | Exaggeration | 10 | 6.4 |
| | Bias | 128 | 81.5 |
| | Generalization | 13 | 8.3 |
| | Total | 157 | %100 |

The placement of articles within the newspapers shows a clear preference for the front page (61.9%) over inside pages (38.1%). This indicates that editors considered the Palestinian issue to be of high importance and relevance to their readership, reflecting agenda-setting practices where prominence signals priority to the public[1].

Table 7: Placement of articles within the newspapers

| Code | Category | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Front page | 63 | 42 .8 |
| 2. | Inside pages | 84 | 57.2 |
| | Total | 147 | **%100** |

The analysis of visual elements shows that a total of 119 photographs were included, with an average of 0.81 images per unit of analysis and a standard deviation of 0.73. Visuals in coverage of the Palestinian issue often serve to humanize the affected population, illustrating the humanitarian consequences of military operations, displacement, and social suffering. This aligns with prior research emphasizing the role of visuals in reinforcing humanitarian frames and evoking empathy among readers[2].

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McCombs and Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," 176–187. [1]
Khalil, "Media Narratives and the Politics of Solidarity," 32–48., Rosnani Ismail and Siti Ahmad, "*Online* [2] *Journalism*", 55–72., Paul Messaris, and Linus Abraham, "The Role of Images in Framing News Stories," *Journal of Communication* 51, no. 2 (2001): 48–64.

Table 8: Visual elements

|          | Sum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------|-----|------|----------------|
| Pictures | 119 | .972 | .404           |

The analysis of journalistic (Table 9, Figure 5) forms reveals that news reports constituted the majority of coverage (43.3%), followed by reports/features (18.55%), opinion articles (9.83%), and minimal presence of investigative reports (0.51%) and story-based narratives (0.51%). Dialogues or interviews were not represented. This demonstrates that Malaysian online newspapers prioritize straight news reporting, focusing on factual recounting of events rather than interpretative or investigative journalism[1].

Collectively, these results indicate that Malaysian online newspapers provide serious, structured, and ethically motivated coverage of the Palestinian issue, balancing professional journalism standards with moral advocacy. Visuals, logical reasoning, and front-page prominence reinforce the salience and credibility of reporting, while minor biases reflect socio-political solidarity. These findings contribute to understanding how Muslim-majority media frame international conflicts and serve public and political discourse[2].

Table 9: Journalistic forms

| Code | Form | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|------|------|-----------|-------------|
| 1. | News | 84 | 43.3 |
| 2. | reports/features | 36 | 18.6 |
| 3. | opinion articles | 19 | 9.8 |
| 4. | Dialogues or interviews | 0 | 0.0 |
| 5. | story-based narratives | 1 | 0.5 |
| 6. | investigative reports | 1 | 0.5 |
| 7. | Religious | 53 | 27.3 |
| 8. | Total | 194 | 100% |

Shoemaker and Stephen, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century*, 97., Khairil Mustafa, "Media Solidarity and [1] Muslim Identity," 67–82.

Sakr, *Transformations in Egyptian Journalism, 132.,* Rosnani Ismail and Siti Ahmad, "Online Journalism," 55–[2] 72.
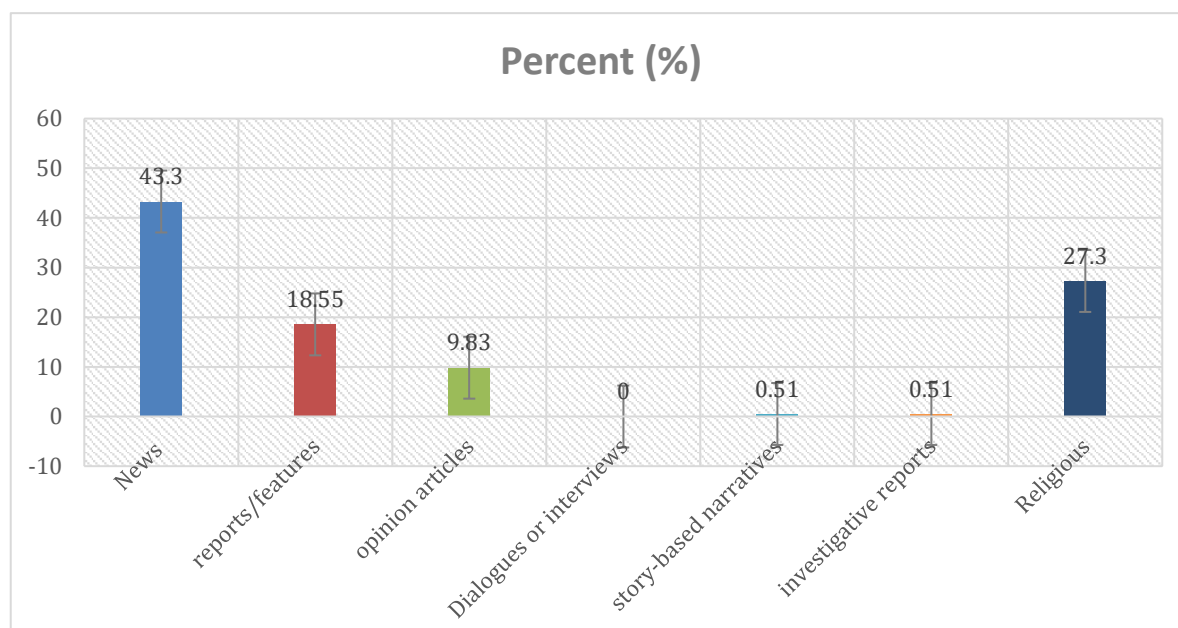
Figure 5:  Journalistic forms

## 6. Conclusion

This study analyzed the coverage of the Palestinian issue in major Malaysian online newspapers prior to the recent Gaza war. The findings reveal that Malaysian online newspapers prioritized political, social, and humanitarian issues, framing Palestine as a victim of military aggression and highlighting moral and religious dimensions. Logical reasoning dominated the coverage, supported by data, reports from international organizations, historical references, and statistics. Front-page placement and moderate use of photographs reinforced prominence and emotional impact. News reports constituted the majority of journalistic forms, reflecting an emphasis on factual reporting and credibility. Overall, Malaysian online newspapers provide structured, credible, and morally engaged coverage, balancing professional standards with public advocacy.

## 7. Recommendations

1. Diversification of Journalistic Forms: Expand investigative reporting, interviews, and feature stories to provide deeper context and include voices of affected Palestinians.
2. Balanced Framing: Include more legal, historical, and economic perspectives to enhance analytical depth.
3. Visual Enhancement: Increase and strategically use photographs and infographics to illustrate complex issues and humanitarian consequences.
4. Cross-Media Integration: Integrate coverage across multiple platforms for broader audience reach.
5. Longitudinal Research: Conduct longitudinal studies to monitor shifts in coverage, framing, and reasoning during conflict escalation.

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Azmi, Hamzah, and Noraini Yusof. "Malaysia's Foreign Policy and the Palestinian Cause: Media Perspectives." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23, no. 2 (2020): 245–262.

Elmasry, Mohamad H., and Al-Sayed Hanan. "Al Jazeera's Coverage of Palestine: A Counter-Hegemonic Narrative?" *Media, War & Conflict* 16, no. 1 (2023): 34–56.

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