A FOCUS ON 3R DYNAMICS (ROYAL, RELIGION, RACE): ANALYSING NEWS PRIMING AND SOCIAL MEDIA SENTIMENT VIA FACEBOOK

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Abstract

The associated realms of race, religion, and royalty (3R) have a significant impact on society narratives and perceptions in the modern world of global communication particularly in the multicultural community in Malaysia. Though they can promote social cohesion, there is a concerning pattern in Malaysia where some individuals or organisations take advantage of the complexities of race, religion, and royalty for their benefit, hence escalating conflict and division. News outlets and social media platforms are powerful tools for influencing public opinion, but they also make hate speech easier to spread, especially when it comes to targeting racial and religious groups. Hence, this study aims to identify the fundamental mechanisms influencing societal viewpoints by looking at how Malaysian news outlets frame on 3R subjects in their Facebook postings and how those priming affect public perceptions and sentiments on social media. Qualitative method is being employed by reviewing selected articles published from 2019 onwards from Google Scholar and Scopus database, with inclusive criteria that focus on the specific keywords which are news-Priming, 3R (Royal, Religion and Race), Facebook and social media sentiments. Secondly, this study analyses the Facebook post data mining conducted by using a Social Listening Tool called DXT360 to understand how these news outlets framed issues related to the 3R dynamics and the corresponding sentiment expressed by social media users. In the end, the research findings are intended to guide tactics for cultivating a more harmonious and inclusive social fabric in the face of persistent obstacles to national cohesion.

Keywords: News-Priming, 3R, Facebook, Social Media Sentiments

1.0 Introduction

The interconnected realms of Royal, Religion, and Race (3R) continue to have a significant impact on social narratives and perceptions in the dynamic world of global communication. The relationships that surround these three pillars are crucial in forming societal unity, cultural identities, and public perceptions. The spread of information via news sources and social media platforms becomes a potent tool for defining conversations and influencing public consciousness as the world grows more interconnected.

But in the middle of this vibrant cultural tapestry, Malaysia has seen a troubling trend where some organisations and individuals take advantage of the complex relationship between race, royalty, and religion (the three Rs) to further their own goals. Rather than acting as cohesive elements, these essential foundations of society identity are cunningly exploited to further individual agendas, planting the seeds of conflict and division. The deliberate abuse of racial identity, royal connections, and religious feelings has seriously harmed national unity, escalated tensions and cultivating a climate of distrust and hostility among the general public. Along with technological advancement, the emergence of the Internet and social media has

empowered individuals to freely express their opinions, albeit regrettably contributing to the rise of hate speech. According to [1], most of the hate speech circulating in the online environment is more on racial and religious discrimination, and social media has contributed to its exacerbation. The anonymity provided by social media has enabled individuals to express discriminatory views freely, leading to an increase in racial tensions. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) received over 1,700 complaints related to hate speech in 2022, specifically targeting race, religion, and royalties (3 R). This trend is concerning as it may lead to extremism and radicalisation, which can result in violence [2].

Therefore, this study's main goal is to comprehend how news Priming, particularly on Facebook, by Malaysian news outlets on 3R topics affects social media sentiments. We seek to explore the fundamental processes that underlie the development and propagation of societal perspectives regarding the 3R dynamics by focusing on this dynamic junction of modern social media and traditional journalism. The pressing necessity to address and correct the damaging impacts of such manipulations on the social elements of the country motivates this research. In light of ongoing threats to national unity, the study's conclusions may help direct efforts to promote a more robust, inclusive, and peaceful social structure.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1.   Media Priming in Malaysia

Several research have demonstrated the impact of priming in psychology and the media on public opinion and decision-making. It fluctuates depending on how individuals perceive, act, and judge a certain stimulus or piece of content. Priming is an important concept in media effects. As agenda setting brings out only the importance of the issue, priming offers explanation on how the information from the media are stored in the human mind and how it influences in making decisions. Media affect the judgement or behaviour by stimulating the associating thoughts which are caused due to the mental relationships created inside the memory. The Malaysian news outlet plays a crucial role in media priming by selectively presenting and emphasising particular topics, which can have a significant impact on public perception and agenda-setting. According to research by Singh, D [3] Malaysian news media tends to overemphasise legal issues related to drug use, while underemphasising health and harm reduction aspects, potentially contributing to a moral panic surrounding drug use in Malaysia.

The media in Malaysia has been found to have a significant influence on public opinion and agenda-setting through media priming. For example, a study conducted by Imran, M. in 2022 [4] stated that Malaysian media plays a moral guardianship role in promoting traditional family roles and elder care, partnering with the government to support filial piety and alleviate government costs.This suggests that the Malaysian news outlet has the power to shape public discourse by setting the agenda and influencing the topics that are discussed within the community.

Additionally, the media in Malaysia can also indirectly affect individuals' political concerns by determining what issues receive attention. For instance, Malaysian mainstream media's Priming of the 1MDB scandal has evolved beyond the development model, with political actors influencing news frames, tone, and source selection [5]. If the media devotes more time and attention to other political matters, rebuilding political stability in Malaysia would not have been an issue to begin with.

Ultimately, media priming in Malaysia is influenced by so many factors. It is crucial to examine individual media organisations, their ownership structures, editorial policies, and the media landscape as a whole in order to comprehend the precise priming effects of Malaysian news outlets. This can be used to detect priming patterns and the ways in which various media influence public opinion on different subjects.

2.2.   3R (Royal, Racism & Religion)

The complex intertwining of Malaysia's diverse sociocultural structure is closely linked to the incorporation of 3R (religion, race, and royal) elements. Malaysia is known for its multicultural society that embraces a wide range of racial and religious backgrounds [6]. The political system of the nation, which is frequently referred to as an "ethnic democracy," is centred on the three largest ethnic groups: Malays, Chinese, and Indians [7]. Religion is very important to the culture in Malaysia, in which about 54% of the population follows Islam, which is the official religion [8]. This religious plurality highlights the essential role that religion plays in forming society norms and values and includes Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, among other important faiths [9]. The culture of Malaysia fosters harmony amongst many ethnic and religious groups, resulting in a unique multicultural identity based on tolerance, kindness, and respect for one another. Furthermore, the concept of royalty also holds significance in Malaysia [10]. The monarchy in Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy system, where the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (the King) acts as the head of state [11] along with the Malay Royal Institutions have significant roles in ensuring the stability of the multicultural society of Malaysia.

In Malaysia, the Federal Constitution, which consists of 181 articles, is the supreme law of Malaysia. It was drafted based on the advice of the Reid Commission, and came into force on 27 August 1957. The Federal Constitution of Malaysia provides protection for religion, royalty, and race. The Constitution's Article 3(1) declares Islam to be the official religion of the federation while preserving people's right to peacefully practise their respective faiths. Nonetheless, there are some restrictions on this freedom, such as those related to morality, public health, and order. Furthermore, the Constitution guarantees the maintenance of the advantages and immunities granted to the Malay Rulers and the State Rulers by acknowledging their distinct position. According to Muslim & Umar [12], The Royal Council, as established in the Federal Constitution, has several functions, including choosing the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Deputy of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, agreeing or disagreeing with actions and laws, appointing members of the Special Court, and considering questions regarding national policy. In Malaysia, the role of monarchy is not limited to ceremonial duties. Through its roles in the political system, including the nomination of the Prime Minister and the use of pardoning power, the institution not only represents tradition and legacy but also plays a crucial role in maintaining the stability of Malaysia [13]. In terms of race, the constitution seeks to uphold and foster harmony and unity among Malaysia's various racial groups while acknowledging the unique status of the Malays and the legitimate concerns of other ethnic communities. This acknowledgement of the nation's multi-ethnic foundation highlights how crucial it is to protect and honour the cultural diversity and legacy of every community. For instance, the freedom of speech of all people regardless of religion or race background according to Article 10 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of speech, assembly, and association, but it also imposes certain restrictions on these freedoms such as speech that incites racial hatred or promotes discrimination.

The dissemination of information through news sources and social media platforms has become a powerful instrument in shaping discussions and exerting influence on public awareness, particularly as global interconnectivity continues to expand. Within the Malaysian context, several groups and people have taken advantage of the 3R dynamics to further their own objectives, resulting in discord and fragmentation instead of fostering social cohesion. The intentional exploitation of racial identity, royal affiliations, and religious sentiments has significantly undermined national cohesion, intensified conflicts and fostering an atmosphere of suspicion and animosity within the broader populace. The proliferation of hate speech on social media platforms has intensified racial and religious tensions. Castaño-Pulgarín et al. [14] define online hate speech as a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of factors, including individual characteristics, social and cultural norms, and the affordances of online platforms. The study identified several types of online hate speech, including political-ideological, gendered-sexual, racial-ethnic, and religious hate speech. This is supported by Zamri et al. [1] who discuss in Malaysia context, Malaysians' understanding of hate speech is similar to other regions but leans towards racially and religious loaded toxic content. Since Islam is the official religion in Malaysia based on Articles 3 of Malaysia Federal Constitution, the debate in social media platforms is always circulating around it. It is also worrying as a

lot of politicians or entities often manipulate 3R issues (race, religion, and royal institution) in order to sway public sentiment for their self-interest, thus influencing the people to misunderstand about it, thus creating debate and slur among the public particularly in social media. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has issued a stern warning to all parties not to exploit issues related to race, religion, and the royal institution (3R), which have the potential to divide the nation. Government bodies, including the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM), will closely monitor the situation, leaving no exceptions [15]. Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye through his statement in The Star also suggested that the Government should seriously consider The Malaysian Bar's proposal to introduce three new laws to deal with hate crime and speeches relating to the 3R [16].

Fahmi Fadzil, the Minister of Communications and Digital of Malaysia, has issued multiple statements regarding 3R matters. Among his notable assertions is Fahmi Fadzil has expressed approval for the proposal of a new legislation that would impose civil sanctions on individuals who manipulate the 3R dynamics for their personal objectives. Yusry [17] held the belief that this Act would uphold the peace and security of Malaysia and, (ii) According to Fahmi Fadzil, any content deemed offensive on social media platforms can be removed, even if it does not involve the 3R concerns [18].

Recently, the Malaysian government and relevant authorities have implemented various measures to tackle 3R (Royal, Religion, Race) concerns. Several pivotal actions comprise:

(i) Social Media Platform Engagement: The Communications and Digital Ministry has been actively collaborating with suppliers and operators of social media platforms to enhance their comprehension and resolution of 3R concerns on their respective platforms [19].

(ii) Surveillance of 3R-linked Content: The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has been conducting surveillance on social media platforms to monitor content linked to the principles 3R. This monitoring is done to ensure adherence to legal requirements and safeguard public safety [20].

(iii) Investigations: The police are conducting inquiries into the involvement of specific groups in 3R concerns, as stated by Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil.

In July 2023, the Malaysian government proposed a new legislation to enforce civil penalties on individuals who incite attitudes pertaining to race, religion, and royalty, also referred to as 3R concerns. The forthcoming legislation, tentatively titled the "State and Nation Act," is anticipated to have resemblance to Singapore's Maintenance of Racial Harmony Act, however tailored to suit the specific circumstances of Malaysia [21]. Presently, any transgressions pertaining to 3R matters are examined within the framework of the Sedition Act 1948, which enforces penal consequences such as monetary penalties and imprisonment. Nevertheless, the process of investigating and convicting individuals under the Sedition Act is time-consuming due to the intricacies of legal procedures [21]. In July 2023, Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil expressed approval for the proposal of a new 3R Act as a method to safeguard Malaysia's peace and security [17]. The Malaysian Cabinet has also consented to reassess the Sedition Act with the intention of restricting its application solely to instances of incitement against the royal institution [22]. The police are conducting an investigation into the involvement of specific individuals in 3R concerns, as stated by Communications and Digital Minister Fahmi Fadzil [17]. The Malaysian government's dedication to tackling 3R challenges and fostering a more strong, inclusive, and peaceful social structure is seen through these efforts.

Ultimately, the 3R dynamics, encompassing the interrelated domains of Royal, Religion, and Race, exert a substantial influence on societal narratives and perceptions in Malaysia. These three pillars, namely societal unity, cultural identities, and public perceptions, are of utmost importance in their formation. Nevertheless, the intentional exploitation of ethnic identity, royal affiliations, and religious sentiments has

significantly damaged the cohesion of the nation, intensified conflicts and fostering an atmosphere of suspicion and animosity among the populace.

2.3.   *Social Media and Information Dissemination*

In today's digital age, social media platforms have become essential to people's lives, allowing them to stay in constant contact with their networks and the world. Furthermore, social media also allows for greater user participation, as individuals can share and comment on news articles, videos, and opinion pieces. This level of engagement has transformed the traditional one-way model of news consumption into a two-way conversation, allowing for active discussions and debates on various issues. However, the rise of social media as a news source also brings with it certain challenges.

With the widespread availability of smartphones and internet connectivity, Malaysians have increasingly turned to social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as their primary source of news and information. With distinct unique features, these platforms offer a convenient and accessible way for both individuals and news organisations to disseminate information quickly to a large audience. According to Malaysia Digital Report 2023 published by Kepios [23], Malaysia has a strong internet infrastructure, with a penetration rate of 96.8% over the total population in 2023. It is an increase by 1.1% from 2022. The nation's online economy is further fueled by the growing usage of smartphones, especially in the social media space where there are 26.8 million social media users in January 2023, equating to 78.5% of the total population. According to recent data, Malaysians are spending an average of three hours a day on social media, a trend that highlights the increasing importance of these platforms in daily life [24].

Facebook is one of the top three that dominated the list of most used social media platforms in Malaysia, with 84.8% users [23]. With the latest data published in January 2023, Oosga [24] reported that at the growth rate of 0.97%, there are now around 28.18 million Facebook users in Malaysia. With male users account for around 51.34% and female users account for around 48.66%. In most parts of the world, social media is dominated by millennials and Gen Z. However, in Malaysia, users between the ages of 35-54 are a significant user base, accounting for around 30% of the ad audience in Malaysia for Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger. Even though TikTok is more skewed towards youngsters and young adults, Facebook users in Malaysia dominantly are those aged 25-34, accounting for approximately 30% of the user base, followed by those in the 18-24 age range at 22%. Data also shows a significant presence of individuals aged 35-44 (19%) and 45-54 (11%), with senior citizens (above 55 years) having comparable numbers to the youth and teenagers in Facebook realm [25].

Facebook has several features that distinguish it from other social media platforms. These include broadcasting, directed communication, content consumption, and information regulation. Broadcasting involves sharing personal updates, photos, and videos with a wide audience, while directed communication provides various tools for one-on-one or small group communication. Users can consume a wide range of content on Facebook, including news articles, videos, and posts from friends and pages they follow. These unique features contribute to the diverse ways in which users of different age groups engage with and derive enjoyment from Facebook [26]. News outlets in Malaysia also have their own online page in Facebook, to widely disseminate their news updates on issues as people have started shifting their readership and media consumption behaviour from physical to online, due to the accessibility factors. This has been proven through the report by the National Union of Journalist Malaysia (NUJ)[27], 72% of respondents, the majority, believe that social media has altered how they consume media content. With over half (52%) choosing Facebook as their primary source, Facebook continues to be the most widely used medium for information. Afterwards by YouTube with 5% and WhatsApp with 12%. Conversely, 17% claim that social media is not one of their primary sources of information. With the features of Facebook, such as like, comments and share, the issues being framed by news outlets have catalysed the societal discourses among the public.   It is undeniable to assert that Facebook holds significant importance among millennials, being

widely recognized as a platform that actively engages in opinionated social discourse spanning various aspects through its discourse features and how news outlet posting can be the catalyst to societal discourse.

Social media has the power to trigger social discourse on a wide range of issues in Malaysia, creating various sentiments among the public. When important news or controversial topics are shared on social media platforms, it often sparks heated discussions and debates among users birthing diverse opinions and viewpoints, ranging from support to opposition, and everything in between. While social media has provided a platform for diverse opinions to be expressed, it has also unfortunately become a breeding ground for hate speech and racism when discussing sensitive topics such as religion, race, and royalty in Malaysia [28]. Social media's anonymity and distance might give people the confidence to voice discriminating opinions and act aggressively, which exacerbates already-existing tensions in Malaysian society [29],[1]

2.4.   *Public Perception & Sentiments*

To strengthen our study, we will touch on the public perception and sentiments. Opinions and attitudes about media priming theory among the general public might differ greatly depending on personal experiences, values, and beliefs. According to the media priming hypothesis, people's perceptions and interpretations of events can be influenced by the way the idea is exposed to one stimulus and how they respond to it in a subsequent stimulus without conscious guidance or intention. A study by Ahmad et.al, [5] stated that political actors and journalistic practice influence news frames, selection of news sources, and tone embedded in news, affecting people's perception in Malaysia.

Awareness means knowing about something, understanding its importance or existence, without necessarily actively supporting it. It's about being conscious of different issues, situations, or facts without necessarily taking any action or promoting them.To touch on awareness, some individuals acknowledge news priming theory as it brings attention to the role of media in shaping the people's opinion. This also helps the people or receiver of information and news to be more aware and attentive when receiving news as it encourages critical thinking. Study by Jamil S. in 2020 [30] stated that Malaysian right-wing rhetoric during the 2013 general election focused on maintaining the privileged Malay position, highlighting the normalisation of nationalistic and racist rhetoric through fear.

Next is in the enforcement context of news. "Enforcement" refers to the act of ensuring compliance with laws, regulations, or rules through the application of authority, penalties, or other measures. Those who share specific news may find it useful for reaffirming their pre-existing opinions and ideas. It could be their method of drawing attention to causes close to their hearts. Malaysian newspapers primarily frame the no-smoking policy as a law enforcement issue, with mainstream media often favouring it and alternative media presenting it in a neutral and balanced manner [31]

Rather than that is sensationalisation. It refers to the practice of presenting information, events, or stories in a highly exaggerated, dramatic, or sensational manner in order to attract attention, provoke strong emotions, or generate increased interest, often at the expense of accuracy or context. Some news are also primed to be sensational. Sensational news is where topics in news stories are selected and worded to excite the people. In the Malaysian context, it could be related to politics. Based on a study by Jamil S. [30] Malaysian right-wing rhetoric during the 2013 general election focused on maintaining the privileged Malay position, highlighting the normalisation of nationalistic and racist rhetoric through fear. To talk about the perception of the public this type of Priming could lead to scepticism and distrust.

Lastly, on a news frame which focuses on advocacy, this could leave a significant impact on social issues. Advocacy refers to the act of actively supporting a particular cause, idea, or group of people in order to influence public opinion, policies, or decisions. In the context of building public perception and persuasion, advocacy involves promotion of ideas or causes, persuasion and influence, public engagement and also public advocacy. A study by Selvanathan, H., & Lickel, B. [32] stated that alternative media consumption in Malaysia led to more positive attitudes towards the Bersih movement, potentially

legitimising the cause for social change. This helps in putting unreported issues to the centre stage and influence public opinion in hopes for a positive social change.

3.0 Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilising content analysis to examine the coverage of 3R issues by news outlets on Facebook pages. The analysis aimed to explore how these outlets framed 3R dynamics and the corresponding sentiments expressed by social media users. Given Malaysia's diverse media landscape, the study focused on selected outlets: Berita RTM, Harakah Daily, Malaysiakini, and Sinar Harian.

The Facebook pages of these outlets boast significant followings: Malaysiakini with 1.8M likes and 1.8M followers, Sinar Harian with 4.5M likes and 5.6M followers, Harakah Daily with 1M likes and 1M followers, and Berita RTM with 240k likes and 548k followers.

The findings indicated considerable variation among the news outlets in how they primed 3R dynamics, reflecting their unique reporting styles and affiliations. Berita RTM, as a portal associated with Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM), the nation's public broadcaster, emphasises news aligned with governmental goals and interests, focusing on national projects, events, and policies.

Harakah Daily, affiliated with the Islamic Party of Malaysia (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia, PAS), reflects the political objectives and Islamic worldview of the party. Its coverage highlights social issues, political developments, and Islamic values from the perspective of PAS, serving as a platform for the party's advocacy and engagement with its audience.

In contrast, Malaysiakini is known for its independent, investigative reporting and critical analysis. It offers a broad spectrum of news and commentary on various topics, reflecting a more liberal and progressive stance compared to mainstream outlets. Malaysiakini fosters diverse viewpoints and promotes public discourse on social, political, and economic issues.

Sinar Harian, a Malaysian newspaper, covers a wide array of subjects, including politics, current affairs, sports, and entertainment, catering to a broad readership. It aims to provide informative content that reflects the diversity of Malaysian society's opinions, thereby enhancing public awareness and engagement.

Through this examination, the study sheds light on how different media outlets in Malaysia approach and portray 3R dynamics, contributing to a nuanced understanding of media influence and societal discourse on these crucial issues.

Data collection

TABLE 1
Search results based on selected media and total engagement

Facebook Page	Search Result	Percentage	Engagement	Percentage
Berita RTM	701	30%	18,307	6%
Harakah Daily	274	12%	78,589	23%
Malaysiakini	474	21%	119,875	36%
Sinar Harian	866	37%	118,864	35%

The process of data mining Facebook posts utilised the Social Listening Tool DXT360. Data collection involved specific criteria: Facebook posts from July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, containing

keywords such as race, religion, royal, *bangsa*, *agama, institusi kerajaan*, or 3R, and focusing on posts explicitly mentioning the 3R concept.

Subsequently, the raw data underwent refinement. Non-relevant terms, such as those related to environmental concerns (reduce, reuse, recycle), were excluded. Further filtering was conducted to extract data pertinent to the research and segmented according to the selected news outlets.

The initial search yielded a substantial volume of results, as depicted in Figure 1. The subsequent evaluation involved scrutinising various scenarios involving race, religion, royal institutions, and related terms like *"bangsa," "institusi raja,"* and *"agama,"* as illustrated in Figure 2. However, to ensure a targeted analysis, only statements directly referencing the 3R concept were retained.

A total of 81 posts, with the highest engagement metrics, were selected for in-depth analysis. This figure aligns with the dataset's median value of 81.

TABLE 2
Findings on 3R Keywords in Facebook Page of Malaysia News Outlet

Facebook Page	Filtered Search Result	Percentage
Berita RTM	54	18%
Harakah Daily	21	7%
Malaysiakini	110	38%
Sinar Harian	109	37%

The selected posts were sourced from Berita RTM, Harakah Daily, Malaysiakini, and Sinar Harian. Each platform's contribution varied, with Malaysiakini having the highest volume of posts at 38%, followed by Sinar Harian and Berita RTM at 37% and 18%, respectively, and Harakah Daily with 7%.

The approach consisted of selecting specific media outlets and analysing 81 top-engaged posts to provide a comprehensive thematic analysis of 3R discourse. The varying contributions from each platform offer insights into the diversity of perspectives and narratives within the 3R discourse. Malaysiakini's high volume of posts suggests a significant online presence and influence, while Sinar Harian and Berita RTM's contributions indicate a balanced representation of mainstream media. Harakah Daily's lower contribution may suggest a narrower focus or a smaller audience, highlighting the need to consider the reach and impact of different media outlets when analysing the discourse.

While public perceptions and sentiment were also considered in this study, time constraints and the vast amount of untagged and unfiltered data limited the analysis. Comments were randomly selected from the most engaged posts on the Facebook pages of Berita RTM, Harakah Daily, Malaysiakini, and Sinar Harian. Data collection for comments focused exclusively on precise terms associated with positive, negative, and neutral sentiments within the sentences.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

TABLE 3
Percentage of Race, Religion and Royalty based on Selected Facebook Page

Facebook Page	Frequency & Percentage (Race)		Frequency & Percentage (Religion)		Frequency & Percentage (Royalty)	
Berita RTM	44	32%	48	34%	47	34%
Harakah Daily	32	35%	43	47%	17	18%
Malaysiakini	44	33%	44	32%	48	35%
Sinar Harian	45	32%	49	35%	47	33%

Berita RTM demonstrates a commendable commitment to balanced coverage, allocating roughly equal attention to race, religion, and royalty in its reporting. This approach reflects a diligent effort to mirror Malaysia's diverse cultural landscape. Conversely, Harakah Daily prioritises religious topics, dedicating approximately half of its content to such matters. This focus aligns with the Islamic principles of the party associated with Harakah, underscoring its dedication to fostering religious dialogue and promoting core values

Malaysiakini, an independent news platform, strives to offer equal coverage of race, religion, and royalty, although with a slightly elevated focus on royalty compared to the other two categories. Similarly, Sinar Harian, akin to Berita RTM, maintains a balanced approach by allotting equal attention to these three realms. This dedication underscores Sinar Harian's commitment to providing comprehensive coverage that reflects the varied interests of its audience. While each news outlet exhibits a unique emphasis within the 3R framework, collectively, they endeavour to enrich Malaysia's intricate media landscape, catering to the diverse perspectives and preferences of its populace.

4.1. News Priming Theme

TABLE 4
Theme of News Priming of 3R in Malaysia News Outlet on Facebook

Facebook Page	Frequency & Percentage (Advocacy)		Frequency & Percentage (Awareness)		Frequency & Percentage (Enforcement)		Frequency & Percentage (Sensationalism)	
Berita RTM	10	9%	25	47%	16	30%	2	4%
Harakah Daily	22	42%	3	6%	11	21%	16	31%
Malaysiakini	17	32%	3	6%	26	49%	7	13%
Sinar Harian	18	34%	10	19%	21	40%	4	7%

Berita RTM's Facebook page adopts various approaches to address issues related to race, religion, and royalty in Malaysia. Serving as an educational platform, it dedicates 47% of its content to raising awareness about significant developments and events across various domains. Additionally, it allocates 30% of its content towards enforcing societal norms and values associated with 3R concerns. Despite comprising only 9% of the total content, advocacy remains influential in shaping narratives and advancing

specific viewpoints. Infrequent use of sensationalism (4%) underscores a commitment to delivering reliable and informative content while minimising sensationalist tactics.

In contrast, Harakah Daily prioritises advocacy, with 42% of its content dedicated to promoting specific ideas or causes related to religion, ethnicity, and royalty. This emphasis reflects its commitment to championing particular narratives or agendas within these realms. Furthermore, the platform utilises sensationalism in 31% of its material, employing attention-grabbing strategies to engage its audience and stimulate discourse on these sensitive topics.

Malaysiakini takes a different approach, focusing primarily on enforcement by devoting a significant 49% of its content to ensuring accountability and adherence to 3R principles. While advocacy remains strong at 32%, it complements the emphasis on enforcing norms and scrutinising relevant developments. Sensationalism, present at 13%, is used sparingly, indicating a deliberate effort to maintain credibility and integrity in reporting while capturing audience interest.

Sinar Harian adopts a balanced stance, distributing content that encompasses awareness, advocacy, and enforcement. Each component receives considerable emphasis, with 34% dedicated to advocacy, 19% to awareness, and 40% to enforcement. With minimal impact of sensationalism (7%), the content aims to be educational and thought-provoking, fostering positive discussions and raising awareness about 3R concerns in Malaysia. By maintaining a balanced approach, Sinar Harian caters to diverse audiences and promotes a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding religion, race, and royalty in the Malaysian context.

Theme 1: *Advocacy*

Advocacy is a comprehensive strategy that entails actively promoting specific issues or concepts to mould public opinion and impact decision-making procedures. In the context of 3R (royal, religious, and racial) issues, advocacy is essential for raising awareness and gaining support for projects on sensitive subjects. To further their goals, advocates employ a variety of tactics, such as promoting concepts or causes related to 3R concerns, such as racial equality, religious tolerance, or the upholding of royal institutions. Advocates work to change public perception of 3R issues and motivate individuals, groups, and governments to take action through persuasion and public engagement.

Based on the sample of Facebook postings, it is clear that conversations about the 3R (royal, religion, and race) issues in Malaysia are directly related to both advocacy and enforcement initiatives, with each playing an important role in influencing public discourse and action. Advocacy entails aggressively supporting specific causes or ideas to influence public opinion and policy decisions concerning the 3R, whereas enforcement entails the application of laws, regulations, and processes to uphold standards and assure compliance when dealing with 3R-related issues.

When it comes to the 3Rs, advocacy activities frequently focus on advancing freedom of speech and the value of open discussion when tackling sensitive topics like race, religion, and royalty. Various individuals and organisations push for the right to discuss and confront these issues without fear of censorship or retaliation, emphasising the importance of constructive dialogue in raising dignity and preserving rights linked with the 3R. Former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, for example, have expressed frustration with perceived constraints in debating the importance of race, religion, and royalty, emphasising the need for greater participation and discourse on these matters.

Theme 2: *Awareness*

In the realm of media functions, awareness encompasses the pivotal role played by news outlets and social media platforms in disseminating information to the public regarding pertinent issues, events, or developments. This involves not only spotlighting social, political, or cultural topics but also providing insights into the intricate dynamics of Religion, Race, and Royalty (3R) or other significant matters.

The aggregation of Facebook posts highlights the urgent need to increase awareness and understanding of 3R concerns in Malaysia. These posts consistently emphasise the importance of responsible engagement with social media content, advocating refraining from spreading anything that could escalate tensions or perpetuate contentious narratives surrounding 3R issues. The readiness to report such content to authorities reflects a collective commitment to maintaining social harmony and countering the spread of inflammatory rhetoric. Moreover, the discourse extends beyond mere precautionary measures, demonstrating a concerted effort to enhance public understanding of 3R issues through formal and informal educational avenues.

The posts advocate for proactive measures to enhance knowledge and understanding of 3R concerns, stressing the significance of public discourse in reshaping societal attitudes and fostering cohesion. These initiatives aim to cultivate a more inclusive and empathetic society by promoting responsible communication and dialogue that transcends divisive rhetoric. The call to raise awareness through educational endeavours underscores a commitment to fostering a deeper understanding of Malaysia's religious, racial, and royal traditions. Essentially, these posts highlight a collaborative effort to elevate awareness and understanding of 3R concerns as essential steps toward fostering a more harmonious and just society.

Theme 3: *Enforcement*

Enforcement in the context of media functions pertains to the role of news outlets in promoting adherence to regulations, laws, or ethical standards. When news outlets focus on the theme of enforcement in their coverage of the 3R dynamics, they emphasise the importance of upholding related principles and guidelines. By highlighting instances of enforcement or lack thereof, news outlets can influence public perceptions and expectations regarding the implementation and compliance of 3R-related policies and initiatives.

In the realm of media, the theme of enforcement plays a critical role in shaping public attitudes and behaviours. News outlets that prioritise this theme contribute to the accountability and transparency surrounding the 3R dynamics, thereby fostering a culture of responsibility and compliance within society. Furthermore, by drawing attention to enforcement actions or shortcomings, these outlets can stimulate public discussions and debates on the effectiveness and challenges associated with enforcing 3R-related measures.

The gathered data leads to the conclusion that authorities are closely monitoring and taking significant action on issues related to 3R (religion, race, and royalty), especially during the campaign period of the by-elections in Parlimen Pulai and Dewan Negeri Simpang Jeram. The seriousness of such challenges is underscored by authorities who are vigilant and have special measures and procedures in place to address anyone attempting to ignite 3R issues. Statements from high-ranking officials, including those from the Ministry of Home Affairs' Shamsul Anuar and Deputy Chief of Police Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay, also highlight the legal and procedural frameworks in place to address similar situations. These frameworks include specific protocols for investigations and potential penalties for offenders.

Theme 4: *Sensationalism*

Sensationalism in media functions refers to the practice of employing exaggerated or attention-grabbing methods to attract and maintain audience interest. This involves highlighting dramatic or controversial aspects of news stories, often at the expense of accuracy and balance. From a functional perspective, sensationalism can be a strategy for news outlets to capture public attention, increase engagement, and drive traffic to their platforms.

The data gathered highlights the prevalence of sensationalism in Malaysian discussions on race, religion, and royalty (3R). The criticism against PAS indicates how political groups are depicted as using sensationalist tactics to influence public opinion, moving away from meaningful discussions and resorting to scare tactics and misinformation. Spreading false or exaggerated claims on social media platforms exemplifies this sensationalist approach, undermining the integrity of public discourse and exacerbating societal tensions by promoting distrust among different ethnic and religious groups.

In response to this sensationalist environment, there is a noticeable effort from authorities such as religious leaders and government bodies to counter the spread of sensationalist discourse and maintain societal harmony. Calls for responsible communication and legal action against those spreading misleading information demonstrate a commitment to preserving the integrity of public discourse and national unity. Additionally, the government's reaffirmation of its commitment to upholding the rule of law and the sanctity of Islam acts as a barrier against attempts to incite discord through sensationalism. Promoting responsible debate and combating misinformation will be essential for fostering a more cohesive Malaysian society amidst the threat of sensationalism.

4.2. Public Perception and Sentiments

Comments are also analysed based on the most engaging post and reflect the sentiment conveyed by the commenter. Three distinct tones—positive, neutral, and negative—can be discerned, although interpretation may vary.

Positive remarks on sensitive topics such as 3R are uncommon, with many tending towards neutrality. However, in such instances, commenters express appreciation for the public's increasing discernment, noting a shift towards prioritising practical issues such as the rise of the cost of living over outdated discussions on 3R. The majority of comments on popular posts lean towards neutrality or subjectivity. The public acknowledges the importance of addressing 3R issues within legal and respectful boundaries, emphasising adherence to the nation's laws while upholding values such as diversity, religious tolerance, and loyalty to the monarchy. Negative reactions become more apparent when the 3R issue is brought up. Based on high-engagement posts, negative comments express scepticism and discontent, citing instances of selective enforcement and political manipulation.

The diversity of comments and perceptions reveals a wide spectrum of viewpoints and attitudes towards the discussed topics. While some express gratitude for the increased focus on practical concerns, others express scepticism and frustration over what they perceive as the politicisation and selective application of 3R laws. The prevalence of neutral sentiments suggests a balanced perspective, recognizing the importance of discussing these issues within legal and respectful parameters while promoting diversity and religious tolerance. Overall, these comments reflect Malaysia's complex socio-cultural dynamics and the diverse perspectives on the 3Rs.

5.0 Limitation

The analysis of social media data, particularly from Facebook pages, has several restrictions that hinder the results' comprehensiveness and accuracy. Firstly, the system's DXT360 emphasises tracking public Facebook pages due to the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) in restrictions to protect the user data and information. This eliminates data from private accounts and groups, reducing the amount of data available for analysis. This exclusion dramatically decreases the amount of information available, most likely missing out on significant insights from limited societies or individuals who choose privacy settings.

Furthermore, the system's reliance on registered Facebook pages may cause it to overlook freshly formed pages, resulting in insufficient data representation and possible gaps in analysis.

Another key obstacle is the diversity of language used in social media posts, as shown on platforms such as Malaysiakini, which provides content in English, Bahasa Malaysia, and Chinese. Despite efforts to capture a wide range of linguistic diversity, the research may fall short of providing a thorough evaluation, particularly of the Chinese community's attitudes and points of view, due to language limitations. This constraint hampers the ability to fully understand details and attitudes communicated across linguistic groups, thus skewing the interpretation of data and insights.

Furthermore, the large number of comments that surround social media posts makes it difficult to precisely determine intonation, sentiment, and intention. The complexity stems from the wide diversity of phrases, slang, and language used by users, including sarcasm and informal expressions, which can be difficult to grasp. This underlying ambiguity raises the potential of bias in the analysis, since different interpretations of comments could lead to conflicting results and potentially misleading insights.

6.0 Conclusion

The analysis of news Priming and social media sentiment in the context of Royal, Religion, and Race (3R) dynamics has illuminated the profound influence of these interconnected elements on societal cohesion and public perceptions in Malaysia. The deliberate exploitation of these dynamics by various entities has resulted in discord, suspicion, and animosity, eroding national unity and exacerbating conflicts. These findings underscore the critical role of news outlets and social media platforms in shaping public perception and influencing societal perspectives on 3R issues.

Moreover, the study has revealed the diverse Priming strategies employed by Malaysian news outlets, ranging from informative to sensationalist approaches. These strategies significantly impact public opinion and contribute to the spread of sentiments related to 3R dynamics. The implications of these findings emphasise the urgent need to address and rectify the damaging impacts of manipulations related to 3R dynamics on the social fabric of the country. Notably, Malaysia currently lacks specific laws and regulations addressing 3R issues, complicating efforts to define violations and enact appropriate legislation to combat actions that sow chaos among the populace. Although actions against manipulations of 3R issues currently fall under the framework of the Sedition Act and Penal Code, discussions are underway within the Malaysian government to enact new legislation specifically targeting 3R dynamics.

In response to the challenges posed by the exploitation of 3R dynamics, the study's conclusions aim to inform efforts aimed at promoting a more inclusive, peaceful, and cohesive social structure in Malaysia. By understanding the mechanisms through which news Priming and social media sentiment influence public perceptions of 3R dynamics, stakeholders can work towards mitigating divisive effects and fostering a more harmonious societal landscape. Initiatives for promoting media literacy should include educating the public about discerning between different news sources, improving communication between stakeholders, and extending media literacy education to young people. Additionally, proactive efforts should be made to cultivate positive media portrayals of the 3Rs, further contributing to a more unified and understanding society.

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