Framing a Pandemic: Analysis of Malaysian Mainstream Newspapers in the H1N1 Coverage

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ABSTRACT

The importance of the mass media as carriers of information especially in time of crisis, for instance war and outbreak of disease, in an epidemic or pandemic, have been discussed widely. During a crisis situation, the mass media especially the newspapers, due to their inexpensiveness and accessibility, become an important vehicle that is being sought by people to get an in-depth coverage and updates on the latest information and advice pertaining to the crisis. Since its outbreak in April 2009, H1N1 or commonly known as swine flu has become a global concern, especially among the Asian countries where medical research, facilities and medication for this disease are scarce. Like HIV/AIDS, H1N1 has become a pandemic and has been reported to reach level 6 in terms of seriousness by WHO on 11 June 2009. Using the newspapers to change the behavior of the people to adopt to the standard health procedure in order to minimize the spread of the disease has been the general practice of health practitioners and departments. In order to create awareness as well as facilitate the needs of health authorities, the newspapers through their reporters and gatekeepers will try to package the news in such a way which may benefit the target audience. Hence, various strategies including media framing have been adopted by the newspapers to impart information to the public with the hope to control or minimize the spread of the disease. This paper will focus on the findings of a content analysis based on Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) framing analysis of H1N1 pandemic in the four Malaysian mainstream newspapers namely Utusan Malaysia, New Straits Times, The Star *and* Berita Harian. *The study also seek to find out to what extent the newspapers are involved in framing a pandemic, which is another kind of war (just like war against crime and war against drug) and whether Semetko and*

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Valkenburg framework is workable or applicable in a pandemic situation. Furthermore, the paper will also highlight the process of prevention and intervention efforts undertaken by local authorities in managing the crisis.

Keywords: *Pandemic, War against Disease, Crisis, Media Framing, Health Communication.*

Introduction

Today's war has gone beyond the conventional war and is widely known as asymmetrical warfare. Traditionally, wars were fought between states but today's war is a different kind of war. We talked about war against crime; war against terror and non-state actors; war against drugs; war against prostitution; war against disease; and the list can go on and on. In cyberspace, war can be waged by an individual through information warfare. With intellectual weaponry, 'info-warriors' can disseminate viruses through computer networks, causing tremendous damage to government's business networking, sabotage diplomatic systems and distort the public mind (Mohd Rajib Ghani and Taylor, 2006). Likewise, a similar situation can also happen in a pandemic where an outbreak of deadly disease could result in the collapse of many nations' economy due to lack of investment and re-channelling of nations economic and monetary resources to control the spread of disease and enhance medical infrastructure.

H1N1 flu is one instance where a pandemic is creating massive fear and global panic. All over the world, governments, scientists, scholars, NGO's, health organisations, citizens groups and the like are looking for ideas and innovations to win the war against this deadly virus.

In Malaysia, war against H1N1 has been going on ever since the first case was reported in June 2009. H1N1, swine flu and "selsema babi" (in Malay language) seemed to be of different terminologies but actually they are referring to the same disease. The flu virus is officially designated by the WHO as "Influenza A (H1N1)", following a name change from "swine flu" to avoid suggestions that eating pork products carried the risk of infection, and is referred as such by Malaysia's Health Minister. However, Information, Communication and Culture Minister, Dato' Seri Utama Dr. Rais Yatim suggested on June 25th, 2009 that the local media use "swine flu" (*selsema babi* in Malay language) instead, justifying that the dangers of the flu would be better understood by the public, and that the flu would be easily described in Malay, a language

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which is officially used by news programmers of government-owned television and radio channels.

As of August 11th, 2009, the country has over 2,253 cases, beginning with "imported" cases from affected countries, including the United States and Australia from May 15th, 2009 onwards, and the first local transmission on June 17th, 2009. From August 12th, the Malaysian Health Ministry said that it had discontinued officially updating the total number of H1N1 cases within Malaysia in line with guidelines issued by the World Health Organization. As of August 21st, 2009 the unofficial number of cases reported in the media is 5,876 so far. The first death related to the H1N1 virus was reported on July 23rd, 2009 and so far there have been 78 deaths reported. On July 6th, 2009 Malaysia announced that it was shifting from containment to mitigation to tackle the spread of the virus. The federal government has declared a national health emergency in Malaysia due to the H1N1 outbreak and is considering imposing a health curfew similar to the week-long shutdown of non-essential services and industries in Mexico.

Review of Literature

Since its outbreak in April 2009, the report on H1N1 pandemic has never reached the ending sign. Categorized as a global threat, H1N1 received intensive coverage in the national and international media, even in countries where the disease did not establish itself. The media seems to shape the public's opinions about what issues are important and emphasizing certain features in their coverage, such as the causes of the disease, who is responsible for addressing it, and what groups are affected. People get much of their information about an issue or health issue from the news and research demonstrates the media's influence across cultures and settings (Seale, 2003).

Media coverage of H1N1 is not a simple reflection of the health issues that are most prominent in society. Rather, coverage patterns are the product of a competitive process among multiple actors vying for finite amounts of attention and space in which to define a problem, assign blame, and suggest who is responsible for addressing it (Blumer, 1971; Gusfield, 1981; Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988). According to Gollust and Lantz (2009), media coverage can influence the public through at least two processes: *agenda-setting* and *framing*. Agenda-setting is the news media's selection of which issue to cover. Whether or not a problem

appears in the news influences which problems the public considers important (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987).

The second major process of news media influence is framing i.e. the media's selection of particular aspects of social problems to emphasize (Entman, 1993). Gamson and Modigliani (1987) tell us that a frame can be further viewed as a "central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning" to the events related to a story or issue. Those looking for such frames can identify them through the use of five common devices: catchphrases, depictions, metaphors, exemplars and visual images (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).

On the other hand, Zoch and Molleda (2006) write, "here the metaphor of a window frame comes to mind. The message framer has the choice of what is to be emphasized in the message, as the view through a window is emphasized by where the carpenter frames, or places, the window. If the window had been placed, or framed, on a different wall, the view would be different".

Cobb and Elder (1972) wrote about another aspect of framing. They argued "the symbols, or language, in which an issue is phrased will affect those who become aware of the issue". The decisional aspect of choosing the right words or symbols to convey a particular meaning is part of a conscious effort to frame an issue in a certain way. By using one or more framing devices and creating a storyline to organize the message (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989), the organizational communicators can better emphasize their frames in the news stories.

Various studies on framing of health issues have been undertaken by researchers in this discipline. A study by Park and Reber (2010) on health organisations' public relations efforts to frame issues through press releases found that three American organisations namely the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society and the American Diabetes Association revealed that medical research frame is the most popular frame used with emphasis on societal responsibility for health issues. However to show their strong initiatives, all the organisations used the social support/educational frame. Another study on framing looked at framing of health messages through spiritual themes and scriptures (Holt et al., 2010).

De Zwart et al. (2009) looked at perceived threat, risk perception and efficacy beliefs related to SARs and other emerging infectious diseases. Through a phone survey with 3,436 respondents, they found that perceived threat of SARS in case of an outbreak in five European and three Asian countries, was higher than that of other diseases.

Perceived vulnerability of SARS was at an intermediate level and perceived severity was also high compared to other diseases. The relatively high perceived threat for SARS indicate that it is seen as a great risk to public health and that communication is needed in case of an outbreak.

Central to the process of framing is the role of the mass media. The way issues are framed by the media could also trigger different perceptions among individuals. People respond differently when information is framed either positively or negatively (Ferguson and Gallagher, 2007). Hence, the mass media are important carriers of information that have the potential to shape people's opinion towards certain issues.

According to Ahmad et al. (2009) the outbreak of H1N1 pandemic, SARS epidemic in 2002/2003 and the growing number of human cases infected with H5N1 avian influenza virus have intensified efforts to manage pandemic outbreak worldwide. Based on a study on SARSControl, a project funded by the European Commission, this group of researchers argued that a lack of knowledge and delayed international communication has resulted in the rapid spread of SARS. This study implied that there should be a global system for rapid transfer of information, a sound health-care infrastructure and huge investment in medical supplies.

During a disaster, people need to access to accurate information, and gather clear and specific instructions to help them act appropriately. Tanner et al. (2009) found in a content analysis study on 293 emergency-related stories on 119 local television websites that nearly 96 percent of these stories on natural disasters and multiple disasters such as war, hurricanes and pandemics contained mobilising information (MI) which can cue people to act on pre-existing attitudes. Hence, based on the importance of information dissemination and the way in which the pandemics is structured by the media, this study used frame analysis to examine media presentations of H1N1 and how these frames of news stories may differ among the media.

Research Questions

Based on the review of the literature, the researchers formulated the following research questions related to framing of H1N1 news stories in the media:

RO1: To identify the terminologies applied by the respective daily newspapers.

RO2: To examine if there are significant differences in framing the news stories by respective daily newspapers.

Methodology

This study employed the method of content analysis in scrutinising the terminologies used and frames portrayed in news stories on H1N1. Four mainstream daily newspapers were selected based on their circulation and geographical coverage. *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia* are the two most influential Malay dailies meanwhile *New Straits Times* and *The Star* represent the English sector. Research framework plays an important role in providing a structure and in detailing the linkages among all variables in this study. The framework demonstrated in Figure 1 depicts the work carried out in content analysing the news reports on the issue under study.

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┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
│ Malay Daily 1│ │ Malay Daily 2│ │English Daily 1│ │English Daily 2│
│(Berita Harian)│ │(Utusan Malaysia)│ │(New Straits Times)│ │ (The Star)  │
└──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └──────────────┘

            ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
            │  News reports on the health issue of │
            │       H1N1 Pandemic              │
            ├──────────────────────────────────┤
            │  Measures of terminologies and   │
            │    news frame attributes         │
            └──────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────┐
│   Terminologies     │          │      News Frames         │
│                     │          │                          │
│ • H1N1              │          │ • Responsibility         │
│ • Swine flu         │          │ • Conflict               │
│ • Both H1N1 and swine flu │    │ • Morality               │
│                     │          │ • Economic consequences  │
│                     │          │ • Human interest         │
└─────────────────────┘          └──────────────────────────┘
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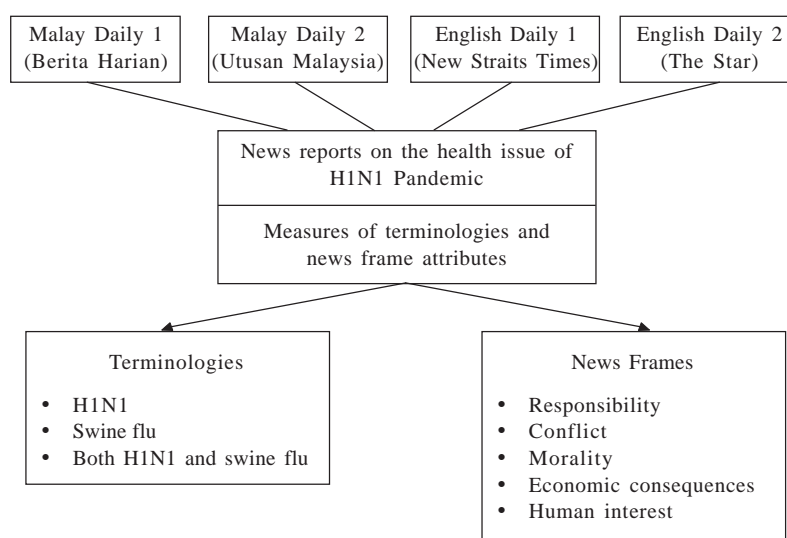
Figure 1: Research Framework

The outbreak of swine flu in Mexico was announced by World Health Organisation (WHO) on 23 April 2009. The sampling for the study duration of content-analysing daily newspapers has various versions. The present

research study took a period of 98 days. It covered 49 days before and another 49 days after 11 June 2009 – the day WHO raised the pandemic threat level to 6, i.e. the phase denoting high level of community transmission. Hence, the duration of study was from 23 April to 29 July 2009. In other words, it covered seven weeks each before and after the alarming level of swine flu or H1N1.

Eight coders were engaged to carry out the coding of the data from the selected newspapers. They were university undergraduate students who had passed the research methodology course and familiar with the issue under study. Prior to coding, they were trained for important concepts and procedures in content analysis. The instruction in choosing a unit of analysis which is the key element for content analysis had also been made clear to all coders. Common choices of unit have been listed down by Berelson (1952) and Weber (1990), such as word, word sense, sentence, theme, paragraph, whole text, character, item, space, time, and many others. In this study, the whole text of a news article was taken as units of analysis for measurements.

Other than training the coders in determining the units of analysis and recording them into a standardised coding sheet, they were also instructed to focus not only on the main paper for relevant news stories, regional, sports and entertainment sections were included too. Every news story appeared in the newspapers under study during the research period were identified for wordings made of either a direct or indirect reference to the issue. All coders were asked to review all of the elements for their respective categorisations in the coding process. They were provided with a list of possible wordings or expressions to be used in the news stories for their frequent references when queries arisen. This coding book contained detailed instructions on how to codify these elements or the variables to be analysed.

For the terminologies used in the news coverage, three possible ways of reporting were identified in the pilot study. The initial period of coverage used the common term of "Swine Flu" and in a later stage the scientific term of "H1N1" was employed. There were also some news applied both expressions in the coverage. As for analysing the news frames, the generic frame measurements that developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) were adopted in this study of health communication. The same measures were also adopted in another study on source framing by Chang, Fauziah and Wan Amizah (2010). As illustrated in the above research framework, five generic frames were to be measured. The scheme for coding the frames applied the same format of taking the marks by ticking

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"yes" or "no" if the attribute statements correspond with the unit of analysis. The simple yes-no categories were chosen measure the occurrence of frames portrayed in the respective daily newspapers. For an answer of "yes" in corresponding to the statement, the coders marked "1" point while "0" point for answering "no" or non-correspondence. Scale constructed for each of the five frames was by averaging the points on the statements that were placed under the factor that they were predefined. The Human Interest frame had five attribute statements, in which each affirmative answer to the attribute statement contributed 0.2 score to the frame. If all five statements were to tick "yes" it indicated the human interest frame was fully present. The four attribute statements in the Responsibility frame carried a weight of 0.25 score each, while three attribute statements in the Conflict frame, Morality frame, and Economic Consequences frame gave about 0.33 score each. The values ranging from "0" indicating that a particular frame was not present at all to a perfect "1" indicating the frame was fully present. In every unit of analysis, five scores were to be obtained and high scores on any frames would reflect the scenario as exhibited in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Explanation of High Score on Five Generic Frames

High score on:	The scenario
Responsibility frame	High degree of attributions of responsibility for its cause or solution to the government.
Human Interest frame	High degree of bringing human interest or emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem.
Conflict frame	High degree of conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest.
Morality frame	High degree of putting the event, problem, or issue in the context of moral prescriptions.
Economic Consequences frame	High degree of reporting event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences and its economic aspect on an individual, group, institution, region, or country.

Source: Adapted from Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)

In categorising and measuring a content element, there is a risk of subjectivity in interpreting the context units. The defect of wrong decision would definitely bring to a low quality research outcome. To tackle this issue of reliability, inter-coding among coders was the most appropriate approach in identifying and correcting the semantic problems within the

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coders. To ensure high reliability in this study, various rounds inter-coder reliability tests were conducted. The coders' decisions in categorising the units during the pilot study were checked against each others' decisions and Holsti's (1969) percent agreement index was applied in this statistical procedure. Reconciliations were conducted among the eight coders for the low agreement indexes found. It was until all indexes achieved the required value of .7, or the acceptable level by convention, the coders were then allowed to proceed with data collection. Randomised dates from four different daily newspapers were selected and assigned to these eight coders and this procedure was to ensure equal treatment.

Findings

The first news coverage of such scary incident in Malaysia was reported by *The Star* on 25 May 2009, two days after WHO's announcement on the outbreak of H1N1, with the headline "US and Mexico reel from deadly swine flu" that was brought by the wire service of AFP. In total, there were 1,542 news articles in relations to the issue throughout the study period. From Table 2 below, it shows the units of analysis were unevenly distributed. More units were seen at the second weeks of both significant WHO announcements – the outbreak of H1N1 on 23 April 2009 and the elevation of seriousness to level 6 on 11 June 2009.

Table 2: News Articles According to Week

Week	Date (2009)	Frequency	Percentage
1	23 April – 29 April	103	6.7
2	30 April – 6 May	237	15.4
3	7 May – 13 May	92	6.0
4	14 May – 20 May	200	13.0
5	21 May – 27 May	76	4.9
6	28 May – 3 June	43	2.8
7	4 June – 10 June	39	2.5
8	11 June – 17 June	91	5.9
9	18 June – 24 June	169	11.0
10	25 June – 1 July	170	11.0
11	2 July – 8 July	86	5.6
12	9 July – 15 July	71	4.6
13	16 July – 22 July	62	4.0
14	23 July – 29 July	103	6.7
	Total Sample	1542	100.0

In terms of daily newspaper, *Utusan Malaysia* contributed the most units with 487 counts or 31.6% of all. It follows by *The Star* (389 units or 25.2%), *New Straits Times* (386 units or 25.0%), and *Berita Harian* (280 units or 18.2%). In other words, both English dailies of *The Star* and *New Straits Times* contributed quite equal amount of news pertaining to H1N1. However, *Utusan Malaysia* seemed to pay more attention on this issue than its counterpart *Berita Harian*.

Table 3: News Articles According to Daily Newspaper

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
Utusan Malaysia (Malay)	487	31.6
The Star (English)	389	25.2
New Straits Times (English)	386	25.0
Berita Harian (Malay)	280	18.2
Total Sample	1542	100.0

A cross-tabulation of units of analysis according to these daily newspapers by the terminologies used in the news coverage is displayed in Table 4. All dailies mostly applied the term of H1N1 in their news reporting. Nonetheless, both English dailies used this scientific term more than both Malay dailies. There were 86.0% of the news items from *New Straits Times* and 80.5% from *The Star* solely used the term H1N1 that applied internationally. *Berita Harian* was slightly lower with 73.6% but *Utusan Malaysia* had less than half with only 49.1%. The latter mentioned Malay daily on the other hand used fairly much of both H1N1 and Swine Flu in explaining this incident, in which it attributed to 37.0% of the total news items from *Utusan Malaysia*. This followed by *Berita Harian* (18.6%), *The Star* (7.5%), and the least from *New Straits Times* (2.6%). The percentage of news items from respective dailies that solely used the common term of Swine Flu ranging from the lowest 7.9% for *Berita Harian* to the highest 14.0% for *Utusan Malaysia*.

A Chi-Square test was conducted to answer the first research question of identifying the terminologies applied by the respective dailies. The test statistics of X^2 (6, N =1542) = 232.59 with p = .000 has ascertained the significant relationship between the daily newspapers and the terminologies used in their news coverage. The above descriptive statistics by themselves had explained that both the English newspapers had a clearer stand in either using the term of H1N1 and Swine Flu as their sequence of arrangement was H1N1 (86.0% and 80.5%), Swine

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Table 4: Cross-Tabulation of Daily Newspaper and Terminology Used

Newspaper	H1N1	Swine Flu	Both	Total
Utusan Malaysia	239 (49.1%)	68 (14.0%)	180 (37.0%)	487 (100%)
The Star	313 (80.5%)	47 (12.1%)	29 (7.5%)	389 (100%)
New Straits Times	332 (86.0%)	44 (11.4%)	10 (2.6%)	386 (100%)
Berita Harian	206 (73.6%)	22 (7.9%)	52 (18.6%)	280 (100%)
Total Sample	1090 (70.7%)	181 (11.7%)	271 (17.6%)	1542 (100%)

Note: Values in parentheses represent percentages within daily newspapers.

Flu (12.1% and 11.4%), and both terms (7.5% and 2.6%). On the other hand, their Malay counterparts, especially the *Utusan Malaysia*, seemed to skew towards the usage of both terms interchangeably in a news story. The sequence of arrangement for the Malay newspapers was still headed by H1N1 (73.6% and 49.1%); and followed by both terms (37.0% and 18.6%) and Swine Flu (14.0% and 7.9%).

In terms of framing the news stories by the respective daily newspapers, five generic frames with the measurements of 18 attribute statements that developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) were applied. As illustrated in Table 5, Responsibility frame received the highest score amongst other frames with the total sample mean of $M = .649$ ($SD = .324$). This followed by Morality frame ($M = .316$; $SD = .289$), Human Interest frame ($M = .269$; $SD = .228$), Conflict frame ($M = .141$; $SD = .199$), and lastly Economic Consequences frame ($M = .038$; $SD = .152$). This sequence of arrangement for framing the news stories on H1N1 applied to all daily newspapers under study. In other words, all newspapers showed high degree of attributions of responsibility for its solution to the government. On the other extreme, they did not pay much attention on reporting this issue in terms of the economic aspect and its consequences. The other two frames that received moderate level of scoring, such as Morality frame and Human Interest frame, depicted the modest degrees of putting the problem in the context of moral prescriptions and bringing the emotional angle to the presentation of such incident. There was a mild level of conflict frame that was mainly brought about by the opposition political party and non-governmental activist.

The second research question is to examine if there are significant differences in framing the news stories by respective daily newspapers. One-way ANOVA tests were applied on the five generic frames and Table 6 exhibits the results for these five statistical tests. The *F*-ratio for Responsibility frame obtained $F_{\text{Responsibility}}$ (3, 1538) = 2.779 with $p =$

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Table 5: Mean Scores of Visibility of Frames by Daily Newspaper

Newspaper	Responsibility	Morality	Human	Conflict	Economic	N
Utusan Malaysia	.670 (.320)	.311 (.289)	.263 (.214)	.128 (.191)	.028 (.124)	487
The Star	.609 (.331)	.309 (.298)	.266 (.234)	.147 (.209)	.048 (.176)	389
New Straits Times	.660 (.321)	.301 (.274)	.274 (.239)	.136 (.190)	.038 (.145)	386
Berita Harian	.650 (.325)	.357 (.292)	.251 (.226)	.161 (.211)	.042 (.170)	280
Total Sample	.649 (.324)	.316 (.289)	.264 (.228)	.141 (.199)	.038 (.152)	1542

Note: Values in parentheses represent standard deviations.

Table 6: ANOVA Table for Determining Differences of Frames in Daily Newspaper

Frame		SS	df	MS	*F*	*p*
Responsibility*	Between Groups	.874	3	.291	2.779	.040
	Within Groups	161.243	1538	.105		
	Total	162.117	1541			
Morality	Between Groups	.592	3	.197	2.375	.068
	Within Groups	127.736	1538	0.83		
	Total	128.328	1541			
Human	Between Groups	.087	3	0.29	.560	.642
	Within Groups	79.691	1538	0.52		
	Total	79.778	1541			
Conflict	Between Groups	.211	3	.070	1.776	.150
	Within Groups	60.918	1538	.040		
	Total	61.129	1541			
Economic	Between Groups	.091	3	.030	1.303	.272
	Within Groups	35.677	1538	.023		
	Total	35.768	1541			

Note: * Significant at 95% confidence level.

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.040 and hence significant differences among the daily newspapers were determined. From the *Post Hoc* test, *Utusan Malaysia* (M = .670; SD = .320) was found to be significantly greater than *The Star* (M = .609; SD = .331) with a mean difference of .061. Whereas, *New Strait Times* (M = .660; SD = .321) and *Berita Harian* (M = .650; SD = .325) were ascertained of having no significant difference with other newspapers. This means *Utusan Malaysia* seemed to emphasise on the Responsibility frame than *The Star*. On the other frames, no significant differences were found among the daily newspapers as all the significant level $p > .5$ with the test statistics as follows: $F_{Morality}$ (3, 1538) = 2.375, F_{Human} (3, 1538) = .560, $F_{Conflict}$ (3, 1538) = 1.776, and $F_{Economic}$ (3, 1538) = 1.303. It can be concluded that all newspapers under study tended to frame the H1N1 issue in almost a unified manner. This can also be seen in the choice of news headlines (see Table 7). Table 7 showed that the four mainstream newspapers tend to highlight somewhat similar issues and orientations in their headlines based on Semetko and Valkenburg generic frames.

Discussion

This study tries to examine to what extent the mainstream newspapers in Malaysia frame a pandemic. The process of media framing uses Semetko and Valkenberg's five generic frames which also help to explain to what extent the newspapers are helping the relevant bodies especially health authorities and the government to disseminate pertinent information regarding H1N1 flu pandemic in order to mobilise the masses to take the necessary steps. The study also seek to find out whether the generic frames are applicable in explaining the extent of the authorities' involvement in the process of prevention and intervention efforts in managing a crisis caused by the pandemic.

Findings from the study indicate that all four mainstream newspapers namely *Utusan Malaysia, New Straits Times, Berita Harian* and *The Star* placed the issue of H1N1 flu pandemic as similar in importance, with *Berita Harian*, at the lesser end. The choice of naming the flu has also caused some concern and a stir among the Malaysian multi-ethnic society and several ministers. The analysis of the mainstream newspapers in Table 4 illustrates this concern. Indeed, the spread of H1N1 flu pandemic has become not only a global and national issue but also individual concern. The pandemic has caused a massive panic among

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Table 7: Examples of Headlines under the Five Generic Frames

Generic Frames	Headlines
Responsibility frame	New viral warning, world on alert as fear of flu outbreak grows (NST, 27/4/09)
	Don't panic, says Liow, as government takes action (27/4/09)
	Minister to take aggressive measures (NST, 30/6/09)
	H1N1: 11 kem PLKN ditutup (UM, 31/7/09)/trans: H1N1: 11 NS camps closed
	UiTM Sri Iskandar tutup seminggu (UM 23/7/09)/trans: UiTM Sri Iskandar closed for a week
	People urged to stay calm (NST 21/5/09)Step in place to deal with viral flu outbreak (NST, 5/5/09)
Human Interest frame	*WHO isytihar pandemic H1N1 di seluruh dunia* (BH 12/6/09)/ trans: WHO declares H1N1 pandemic all over the world
	1390 H1N1 cases now, 10-years-old could be death No 5 (TS 2/8/09)
	Flu in almost all countries, H1N1 could mutate to be more severe (TS, 25/7/2009)
	60 pelajar UiTM di Lendu dikuarantin (BH 14/7/09)/trans: 60 students in UiTM, Lendu quarantined
	Wanita 20 tahun korban keempat virus H1N1 (BH 30/7/09)/trans: 20-year-old woman fourth H1N1 virus victim
	Student is sixth victim of Influenza A (NST, 6/6/09)
	WHO: Selsema babi berlarutan 2 tahun (UM 13/6/09)/trans: WHO: Swine flu will continue for two more years
	Lagi 32 kes selsema babi (15/7/09)/trans: 32 more cases of swine flu
	Vaksin H1N1 diperolehi akhir tahun ini (UM 15/7/09)/trans: H1N1 vaccine is ready end of the year
Conflict frame	Government: Avoid going to flu-hit areas (TS 28/4/09)
	Influenza A: Imigresen nafi kakitangan lewa (BH 3/5/09)/trans: Influenza A: Immigration Department denies staff not alert
	Kerajaan nafi tidak proaktif kesan wabak (BH 19/5/09)/trans: Government denies not proactive in identifying the flu
	Liow: It's not swine flu; Ministries told to use the term Influenza A (H1N1) (TS 1/7/09)
	Doktor gagal patuhi arahan akan dipanggil (UM 31/7/09)/trans: Doctors failed to follow orders will be called
	Jangan kuarantin pelancong; Malaysia masih selamat dikunjungi (UM 15/7/09)/trans: Don't quarantine tourists, Malaysia is still safe for visitors
	Accurate data vital for a flu fix (NST 16/7/09)
Morality frame	PM: Cooperate to contain flu outbreak (TS 23/6/09)
	Let this flu be a test of our resolve (TS 2/8/2009)

(*Continued*)

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(*Table 7 - Continue*)

	Golongan risiko perlu waspada (UM 31/7/09)/trans: Risk groups need to be vigilant
	Jail, fines for those who break home quarantine (NST 22/6/09)
Economic Consequences frame	Pork sellers expect slight short-term drop in demand (28/4/09)
	20 countries freeze imports of pork (NST, 5/5/2009)
	Demand for chicken in Kedah on the rise (NST, 5/5/09)
	Ekonomi Negara tidak terjejas (UM 21/6/09)/ trans: The nation's economy is not in jeopardy
	Old and sick barred from haj (NST 27/6/09)

people in most nations, and Malaysia is without exception. At the early stage, it was called swine-flu (*selsema babi* in the Malay language). Soon, it was renamed H1N1. However, in Malaysia, both terminologies swine flu and H1N1 were used interchangeably as demonstrated in Table 4, with *Utusan Malaysia* taking the lead in using both terminologies. Nevertheless, H1N1 is the popular terminology used by all newspapers selected in this study.

To what extent are the relevant authorities involved and committed in prevention and intervention efforts in managing the crisis caused by the flu pandemic? Findings from Table 6 that utilised the five generic frames by Semetko and Valkenberg showed some significant results. Responsibility frame received the highest score amongst other frames. This is followed by Morality frame, Human Interest frame, Conflict frame, and lastly Economic Consequences frame. This sequence of arrangement for framing the news stories on H1N1 applied to all daily newspapers under study. In other words, all newspapers showed high degree of attributions of responsibility for its solution to the government. Information in the responsibility frame contained mobilising information (MI) that helped readers to make decisions and take appropriate actions. This study is in line with earlier study by Tanner et al. (2009) who found that disaster and multiple disaster stories tend to contain mobilising information, although identificational MI is more dominant as compared to either locational or tactical MI. On the other extreme, they did not pay much attention on reporting this issue in terms of the economic aspect and its consequences.

The findings in this study implied that in time of war and crisis, particularly those that warrant immediate actions such as war against deadly disease – the H1N1 flu virus – the role of the mass media is

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crucial and very relevant. This is so because during disasters and multiple disasters, people need to have access to important, current and accurate information to help them make decision. Hence, greater and continuous attentions are given towards seeking, gathering and using information. With the power to persuade and the tendency to shape people's perception, the mass media need to be more careful in choosing the right terminologies, words and facts to ensure proper and accurate framing. Using Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) with the five generic frames can help media gatekeepers and journalists to provide a meaningful and balanced view about a pandemic. This will ensure practical and accurate decisions among readers and the public.

Conclusion

Media framing and frame building, of late, have become the continuous product of the mass media and elements of scholarly research. Although framing helps media audience to understand issues better, it should be emphasised that framing is a mere shortcut to media categorisation and easier strategies to describe or explain about an issue. But where issues of life and death are concerned, especially where asymmetrical warfare is predominant brought about by the onslaught of globalisation, media practitioners should pay more attention to the use of appropriate frames.

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