"Gatekeeper or Crisis Manager? Coverage of "Lahad Datu" Conflict"

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Abstract

Lahad Datu conflict also known as "Sabah standoff" conflict, is unforgettable tragedies until killed about 10 of Malaysian security personnel and impacted economic, social and emotion of citizens especially at Lahad Datu, Sabah. The objective of this research is to examine the portrayal of solution from Malaysian Government for the "Lahad Datu Crisis" through newspaper framing in Malaysian mainstream newspapers namely Utusan Malaysia, The Star, Sin Chew and Nanban daily. The measurement for the crisis response will be measure through few independent variables such as category of "Lahad Datu" news; between problem, solution, people or neutral category. The following independent variable is through the slants of news; whether news is slanted in positive, negative or neutral slant. With the assistance of "Situational Crisis Communication Theory", this research employed a systematic quantitative content analysis to gather the data. Finding revealed that, category of solution appeared most in Utusan Malaysia, The Star, Sin Chew and Nanban daily and news in positive slants were covered in all the selected dailies. In providing responses for the crisis, Justification and Concern crisis response portrayed most, however, through Kruskal Wallis test, data found that The Star and Utusan Malaysia portrayed most of the Justification and Concern responses compare to Sin Chew daily and Nanban daily.

Keywords: Lahad Datu Conflict; Crisis Response; Content Analysis

1. Introduction

Crisis becomes a situation when a problem in a particular organization is continued with or without solution taken by responsible people. Coombs (1) said crisis is a sudden and unexpected event effecting an organization's reputation in financial and reputation operation. It can make people think badly of the organization. Crises can be divided into few types, such as health crisis, economic crisis, natural disaster crisis, organization crisis, international crisis and so on. In this research, the researcher will focus on the security crisis, also known as terrorism crisis.

Crises threaten to damage reputations of any organization and state because a crisis c a n i n f l u e n c e people's perception to think bad about the organization or state. News in media play a critical role during a crisis because most of the citizens get updated information about crisis from news reports.

This study will focus on media coverage of the Lahad Datu Invasion. Lahad Datu Invasion is aggression by an armed group from Sulu Sultanate in Lahad Datu. On 9th February 2013, a conflict between Sulu and Malaysian security forces continued to grow, threatening the peace of the people of Sabah. A total of 100 people from the Sultanate of Sulu from southern Philippines have been smuggled into Lahad Datu, Sabah on the ground of taking back their land. They challenged Malaysia's alleged ownership of Sabah. This negotiation has evolved into a clash of weapons of up to ten armed Malaysian personnel. The incidences of aggression by terrorist groups in Semporna and Lahad Datu have enormous impact on the political, social and economic sectors, particularly Sabah (The Star, 2013)

The invasion of the terrorist group in Lahad Datu Sabah, gave off many negative effects such as the death of security officers and innocent people, losses of property from the battle. Furthermore, it has impacted the number of tourists and the economy. Most of the villagers felt fear and anxiety all the time thinking about the safety of their lives. Schools were closed. Bank and machines closed and ATM machines ran out of money. Overall, it has affected the citizens of Sabah physically and emotionally (The Star, Utusan Malaysia, Sin Chew and Nanban Daily, 2013).

Lahad Datu crisis falls into the terrorism type of crisis because (2) defined terrorism as a violent and aggressive action performed by a group of people for political and economic reasons with the aim to win the publicity to get something. Additionally, extremism seek to blowout anxiety and worry among a large group of public and can impact the reputation of any organization such as the security forces, the local authorities, the mayor, the government and so on. This is because terrorists plan their attacks to influence public's opinions and finally, tarnish the government's reputation. Hence, an effective response is needed by governments to combat the terrorist attacks.

News in media plays an important role because public depends on media especially during emergency to get an immediate and updated information. Media is effective in portrayal of issue to generate interest from audiences based on media's different functions (3). During crisis, portrayal of news reporting can provide crisis managers with useful information about the appropriate information and relevant crisis response strategies to be sent to the public in order to minimize the damage to an organization's image (4). Thus, this study is about how Malaysian government used Malaysian mainstream newspapers to frame the Lahad Datu conflict in providing solution for the crisis.

The main objective of this study is to identify and examine the function of government as a gatekeeper or crisis manager in providing information and solution for Lahad Datu crisis through newspaper reporting. In answering the main objectives, few sub objectives were created by the researcher such as:

1. To identify the category of "Lahad Datu" news in mainstream printed newspapers.
2. To examine the portrayal of slant of "Lahad Datu" news in mainstream printed newspapers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Crisis, Crisis of Terrorism and Responses

Crisis is known as a sudden event that looms to disrupt an organization's or state's maneuvers, mainly in its finance and reputation. Crisis threatens to damage the reputation because crisis can create a bad perception about the organization or country. Furthermore, a crisis is a situation that gives off negative and unexpected impact for a country and government (1). A good communicative response to a crisis can limit and minimize any types of future damage (5).

(5), a crisis can be perceived as an event that threatens the important expectations of stakeholders. As a consequence, it can impact the organization and state's performance. He also added that, to be effective in crisis response, spokesperson or appropriate people should be acquainted because they are expected to produce or use the appropriate solution and response.

There are multiple ways to analyze a crisis communication strategy. (4), states to organize a proper crisis communication strategy. Initially, Coombs categorized a problem into four types of crisis such as faux pas; unintentional action performed by external people or outside people from an organization or country, terrorism; intentional action performed by external people or party in order to damage the organization or country and state directly or indirectly, accidents; unintentional action from government's operation works and transgressions are intentional actions performed by the state to reduce the severity of crisis.

Crisis of terrorism is known as using aggressive acts of violence to harm people physically and mentally to make them scared and fearful from sabotage, riots, kidnappings, mass poisoning, rape, bombing and unlawful imprisonment(6). Examples of the terrorism acts are suicide attacks by terrorists. In the United States (U.S) Marine Barracks in Beirut on October 1983, the suicide attempts succeeded after they convinced the U.S. to withdraw their soldiers from Lebanon. The same phenomena happened that resulted the U. S to pull out their soldiers from Saudi Arabia two years after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Again the same thing happened to the Filipino government when they called back their soldiers from Iraq after Iraqi extremists kidnapped a Filipino truck driver (7).

(7) said that terrorism works well because it causes individuals, government or state to respond to the terrorist's goals. The first principal strategy used by terrorists is attrition. Attrition means terrorist try to persuade the enemy through showing them that the terrorists are strong enough to cause destruction. The second type of principal of terrorist strategy is to use intimidation. Intimidation is when terrorists try to convince the public through revealing that they able and willing to do any extreme things in order to affect normal citizens and trying to frame the government or authority as being incapable to stop them. The third type of terrorist strategy is to use provocation; it's an act to persuade the government to respond to terrorists in order to stop them from violent behavior. This is followed by the use of spoiling strategy, which is using persuasion to negotiate with the government with the perception that terrorists are weak and untrustworthy, and lastly is to use outbidding when they are able to influence the public and win public support.

People gain information about the crisis and perceive the cause and solution for the crisis based on media coverage of the crisis (8). Responses should be quick, accurate, honest and relevant to the nature of crisis (9). (10) said public relied on the media for crisis information. Therefore, it is important to look at how the media frame a crisis event, the cause of the crisis, and the actor responsible for it because those frames influence the public's perception and impressions of the organization (11).

Understanding the types of crisis together with the way of how media slant and frame the issue can provide a better understanding to relevant organizations to find the best response strategy in order to cope and provide solution for the crisis (12). Media transfers the crisis information to everybody and it helps to set the conflict agenda among public.

2.3. Malaysian Media and Media Framing

Newspaper played an important role in educating publics on current news and through news coverage, it offers unlimited amount of information about the salience of the issue in the daily news (13). (14) mentioned that newspapers medium in Malaysia able to reach 54% of the population. The component of newspaper in Malaysia is highly predisposed by the multi race and ethnic of the newspaper readers. Therefore, newspapers in Malaysia are published in different language to outfit the respective ethnic group of people. According to statistic, 51 newspapers in Malaysia and distributed between published in peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia for 35 and 16 respectively. Among these 51 publications, 16 newspapers are published in English, 13 in Malay, 19 in Chinese and 3 in Tamil. For the penetration of the population in Malaysia, Malays dailies reach 46.5%, for English newspapers, 28.7%, Chinese newspaper (24.1%) and for Tamil newspapers (0.7%) (14).

Mainstream media in Malaysia especially traditional newspapers in owned by political parties in Malaysia and seriously controlled by government. Restriction is used to control any censor content in as Malaysia to avoid irrelevant disruption for the national security. Mass media freedom in Malaysia are controlled by the "Printing Press" and "Publication Act 1984". Most of the newspaper content in Malaysia is owned and control by the political parties through their share investment. The *Utusan Malaysia* newspaper which represent the Malay community in Malaysia has strong links to ruling party in Malaysia which is United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). *The Star*, representing English daily newspaper is owned by Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) under the name of Star Publication (M) Berhad. Chinese newspaper namely *Sin Chew Daily* is owned and operated by few businessman and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) representing Tamil community in Malaysia is owns The *Nanban daily*.

When the media place stories in specific frames, they lend a different meaning to the news. Furthermore, the media's function is to increase or decrease the salience of issues which can allow the public to remember and make judgments on such issues (15). Media coverage is an appropriate measurement of response effectiveness because the public's primary source of crisis information is the media (9). Frames are concerned about the salience or emphasis of the crisis and operate on two related levels: frames in communication and frames in thought. Frames in communication involved images, words, phrases and many other elements that can present messages such as providing the whole background story of a crisis. Frames in thought involve the cognitive structures (such as scripts or schema) the people utilize when interpreting information (16). As reiterated by (16), framing effects occur when a communicator selects certain factors to emphasize. The people who receive the message will focus their attentions on those factors when forming their opinions and making judgments after reading through the news. The way a message is framed shapes how people define problems, causes of problems, attributions of responsibility and solutions to problems (17).

Through framing, crisis manager connects with the public by telling the crisis story (18). Framing analysis allows researchers to identify how crisis manager narrate their viewpoints of critical issues (19), which in turn can help determine the ultimate effectiveness of their goal or strategy (8). Crisis communication scholars consistently have identified four general crisis frames that crisis manager use to help the public interpret crises: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences and human interest (20, 21). Kiousis (22) contends that the salience of an issue can be measured by the frequency of its publication in the media, its prominence or where it is physically located (e.g. front page) and its valence, which relates to the tone (positive, negative or neutral) in which the issue is portrayed.

(17) has identified four locations for frame to be placed within the communication process: communicator, text, receiver and culture. The text contains frames which are displayed by the existence or nonexistence of certain key words, stock phrases, conventional images, source of information and sentences that provide thematically solidification constellations of facts or judgments. By the method of textual analyzing, the researcher might be able to identify what frames are used by the media outlets to portray certain issues, and in ways that might influence the individuals' frames. In this fashion, (23) noticed that framing is an applicable way to examine media power by knowing how dominant one frame is that can make people accept it without noticing or questioning.

(19) added that frame could be defined as a message's meaning by shaping the inferences that individuals make about the message. Journalists use frames to put information into a usable context for readers, to make stories accessible and meaningful to their audiences, and to enable readers to act upon information when appropriate. Framing is doing its job effectively in mass media while emphasizing an issue's importance through the selection of photos, interesting texts, portrayal of actors, attractive headlines and so on to define the problems and find solutions for the problems (17).

The slants media use to disseminate news tell the audience not just news, but also the opinion of a particular news organization. The tone, or valence, is one part of media framing and agenda setting that influences audience members into thinking in a certain way about a particular issue. Organizing news stories based on slant can have a tremendous impact on a reader's understanding and perception of the issues. Slant provides personal news report from reporter and editor's point of view (24). Understanding the types of crisis together with the way of how media slant the issue can provide a better perception to a crisis managers to find the best response for the crisis (12).

2. Methodology

This study employed quantitative content analysis in order to achieve the research objective. Quantitative content analysis method has been used commonly by researchers (3, 13, 25, 26). Four selected Malaysian mainstream newspapers were chosen for this study based on their circulation in the Audit Bureau Circulation Malaysia (Refer to Table 1). Quantitative content analysis is used to identify portrayal of news through news coverage. The focus of this research is on printed media which is newspapers. The rationale choosing printed media is because, sources are most often quoted in the print media, and the print media reaches out to the mass audience (27).

The selection of newspapers in this study were selected from four different ethnic orientation such as *Utusan Malaysia* newspaper to represent Malay community, *The Star* to represent many ethnic in Malaysia, *Sin Chew* to represent Chinese community and finally *Nanban* daily to serve Tamil community in Malaysia. The unit of analysis for this study is news articles on Lahad Datu crisis. Malaysia is a multi races country mainly with Malay, Chinese and Tamil community. *Utusan Malaysia* publication is published to give latest and updated news to Malay community, *The Star* is

published to serve English readers and it's owned by Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) a Chinese political association under Barisan Nasional coalition in Malaysia. *Sin Chew daily* is published to Chinese mandarin readers and *Nanban daily* is publish to serve Tamil newspaper readers in Malaysia and it's owned by Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), Tamil political association under Barisan Nasional coalition in Malaysia. *The Star* is a tabloid newspaper however, *Utusan Malaysia*, *Sin Chews daily* and *Nanban daily* are broadsheet newspapers.

Census is used for this content analysis study. The census was drawn from 9th February 2013 until 31st March 2013 which represent the earliest coverage of the crisis. *Utsuan Malaysia*, *Nanban daily*, *Sin Chew daily* and *The Star* were chosen for this study due to their highest circulation as per recorded in Audit Bureau of Circulation Malaysia. Circulation of the newspapers as of June 2013- per year is depicted in Table 1:

Table 1: Circulation of selected mainstream newspapers in Malaysia

Newspapers	Circulation
Utusan Malaysia	191, 302
The Star	289, 362
Sin Chew	385, 299
Nanban	55, 000

(http://abcm.org.my/Jan-2013-to-June-2013-ABC-Circulation-Figures-PM-Price-Band.pdf)

Standardized coding sheets were prepared and a coding book was generated for the categorizing and inter-coder reliability test. The coding book consist detailed instructions on how to codify the variables to be analyzed. To avoid redundancy and ambiguous meaning while categorizing the units, inter-coder reliability test was conducted to ensure a high quality research outcome. 10% articles were taken to test the reliability of the data as suggested by (28). Intercoder reliability test was conducted by two coders with Holsti's formula. For an average 0.78 value, 0.78 for the *Utusan Malaysia*, 0.75 for *The Star*, 0.78 for the *Sin Chew* and 0.80 for the *Nanban* newspaper, which indicates a satisfactory level of agreement being reached by two coders.

For the category of the articles in this study, the researcher herself created the category of articles from extensive reading and understanding of news articles of Lahad Datu crisis news in all the dailies and from relevant journals. The researcher used four categories to see how the newspapers report the crisis such as:

- Problem: Revealing that the country is in a dangerous, potentially uncontrollable situation.
- People: News focusing on victims, victim's families, security personnel and all types of individual involved in a crisis.
- Solution: News revealing solutions and responses to overcome the conflict and to remain in a stable situation.
- Neutral: News is in a neutral situation. Any news which does not fall under the categories of 'problem', 'people' and 'solutions' is a neutral news.

Coding for the slants of the articles applied for the Lahad Datu crisis was used and adapted from Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (29) studies on framing analysis of online news sites in coalition countries and the Arab world during the Iraq war from online news sites such as:

- Positive: Positive toward the issue; supportive; provide justification and solution for the issue.
- Negative: Carries negative aspects/ meaning towards the issue or events; causes the readers to form a negative opinion towards the issue or event and contains unfavorable descriptions of the issue or event.
- Neutral: News is neither in positive or negative slant in the news articles.

Coding for crisis response strategy is adapted and modified from Coombs (9) for crisis responses. The researcher grouped the types and nature of solutions based on:

- Denial: Responsible people or actors through news cov-

erage in newspaper who denied that there is no crisis or dangerous situation in the country and they admit that all the operations are under normal situations.

- Excuse: Responsible parties or actor or management minimize the crisis impact by giving a lot of excuses in order to escape from the impact of crisis.
- Justification: Responsible parties or actor try to minimize the impact of crisis by suggesting appropriate solutions and responses to overcome the crisis.
- Concern: Responsible parties or actor felt sympathy and concern for victims of crisis.
- Compensation: Responsible parties or actor contribute money or other forms of compensation to the victims of crisis.
- Apology: Responsible parties or actor requesting apology for their mistakes.
- Regret: Relevant actor or crisis manager felth deeply sad and regret for the severity of crisis.

The total number of articles collected from the four newspapers is 466 articles which were then analyzed by using SPSS Statistics version 22. To summarize the data, descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentage were used. To test the significance difference between the variables and the different newspapers, this study used Pearson Chi-Square Test and Kruskal Wallis Test.

4. Results and Findings

4.1. The Coverage of Lahad Datu Crisis News

This study has found 466 news of LD crisis throughout four newspapers namely *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star*, *Sin Chew daily* and *The Nanban daily* from 9th February until 31st of March 2013. Since Lahad Datu crisis is an unusual situation among publics in Malaysia, the researcher is interested to know about the frequency of news in all mainstream newspapers in Malaysia.

Table 2: Frequency of Coverage of the LD Crisis by different Newspapers

Newspaper	Frequency	Valid percentage
Utusan Malaysia	159	34.1
The Star	105	22.5
Sin Chew	113	24.2
Nanban	89	19.1
Total	466	100.0

Table 2 indicates the number of articles and percentage of news based on the type of the newspapers and news report on the Lahad Datu crisis during 2013. It was found that *Utusan Malaysia* carried the largest coverage - 159 (34.1%), followed by *Sin Chew Daily* - 113 (24.2%), *The Star* - 105 (22.5%), and *Nanban Daily* - 89 (19.1%). In measuring the coverage of the Lahad Datu crisis, *Utusan Malaysia* which representing Malay community in Malaysia covered the highest of publication, followed by *Sin Chew daily*. This data is contradictory by Yang and Ishak (30) study in covering interethnic relation conflict, because according to them, vernacular newspaper is used to represent their community but in this study, researcher found out that, *Sin Chew* covered the second

highest of Lahad Datu coverage after the *Utusan Malaysia* in joining together with government in informing the citizens about the crisis situation that's happening in Malaysia. As a conclusion, all the dailies in Malaysia are doing their job effectively in reminding and educating publics about abnormal situation that's happening in Malaysia.
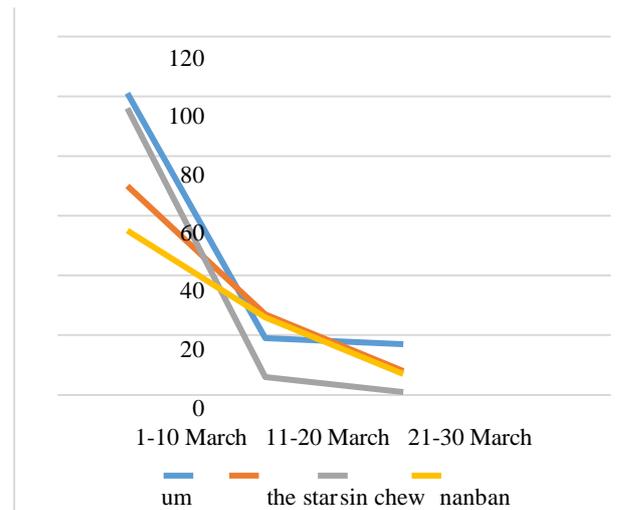

Fig. 1: Total LD News Coverage and Peak Period

Peak period for the Lahad Datu crisis coverage was spotted during the first week of the month of March (8). The reason is because during this week, few Malaysian border officers became victims and lost their lives in the dispute between Sulu followers and Malaysian security forces. Therefore, all the four dailies namely *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star*, *Sin Chew Daily* and *Nanban Daily* portrayed nearly the same peak of coverage for the period of 1st of March until 10th of March 2013 to give awareness to the public that government is ready for the battle and the public are in potentially dangerous situations (Refer to figure 1).

For the first week of the peak coverage which is start from 1st March until 10th of March 2013, researcher found out that, *Sin Chew daily* which is representing Chinese language community are revealing most of the articles on the problem faced by local citizens from Sulu attacks and also revealing more on the severity and pain faced by security officers.

Examples of the news from Sin Chew for the peak period are such as:

- 12 Sulu intruders and 2 security police die in lahad datu attack (Sin Chew, 2 March 2013)
- No more tolerance to Sulu intruders said Najib (Sin Chew, 2 March 2013)
- Najib offers condolences for 2 policeman (Sin Chew, 2 March 2013)
- Sulu sultan claim malaysia attack (Sin Chew, 2 March 2013)

4.2. The Category of Lahad Datu Crisis News

Table 3: Category of News

Category of news	Problem	Solution	People	Neutral	Total
Utusan Malaysia	22	60	48	29	159
	4.7%	12.9%	10.3%	6.2%	34.1%
The Star	25	30	40	10	105
	5.4%	6.4%	8.6%	2.1%	22.5%
Sin Chew	45	28	32	8	113

	9.7%	6.0%	6.9%	1.7%	24.2%
Nanban	21	33	26	9	89
	4.5%	7.1%	5.6%	1.9%	19.1%
Total	113	151	146	56	466
	24.2%	32.4%	31.3%	12.0%	100.0%

The writing styles of news can reveal on how news had been categorized in reader's mind. Some news can direct a reader to a decision that the news editor or gatekeeper wants according to their agenda (17, 18). Data from Table 4.2 revealed that, most of the articles focus on portrayal of solution category in portraying the Lahad Datu crisis which is 151 (32.4%), suggesting that the government is trying to solve the problems through newspaper coverage as compared to 'revealing problem' category coverage which is 113 (24.2%). For example, *The Star* stated, "frequent patrols and 5 road blocks for security in Lahad Datu" (The Star, 3 March 2013). The second focus in the reporting of Lahad Datu incident is on 'people' -146 (31.3%), such as updating information on the safety of the security personnel in Lahad Datu and at the same time, revealing the victims' information to the public and also revealing the compensation amount to the victims and their families. However, 113 (24.2%) news from 466 news articles admitted that there was a crisis and the situation was dangerous. 56 (12%) of the news were in neutral category.

In providing solution category, *Utusan Malaysia* covered 60 news (12.9%) for Lahad Datu crisis followed by *Nanban daily* portrayed for 33 news (7.1%) framed for solution and remedies to overcome the problems in comparison to other categories such as revealing the problems and consequences from crisis and showing con-

cerns and sympathy to the people. However, *Sin Chew's* main coverage of category is on informing people that the situation is dangerous and immediate solution is needed because 45 news (9.7%) from 24.2% of news in *Sin Chew daily* alerted readers that the situation was critical. Surprisingly, *The Star* concentrated on *people* 40 (8.6%) while showing concerns and sympathy to the victims and victims' families and other security personnel. Similar findings were revealed for the category of people news coverage, where *Utusan Malaysia* posted the highest number of articles in updating the public on Malaysian security and victims from the police and army is 48 (10.3%), followed by *The Star* is 40 (8.6%), *Sin Chew daily* is 32 (6.9%) and *The Nanban daily* covered for 26 (5.6%) articles.

To sum up, there is a drastic difference among *Sin Chew daily* and the other three newspapers in portraying the incident as serious and problematic because *Sin Chew daily* portrayed the highest percentage is 45 (9.7%) in telling the public that Lahad Datu conflict is getting worse as compared to *The Star* 25 (5.4%), *Utusan Malaysia* 22 (4.7%) and *Nanban daily* covered for 21 (4.5%) of news articles.

4.3. Chi Square Tests for News Slants and Newspapers

Table 4: News Slants and Newspapers

News Slants	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Total
Utusan Malaysia	61	53	45	159
	13.1%	11.4%	9.7%	34.1%
The Star	53	40	12	105
	11.4%	8.6%	2.6%	22.5%
Sin Chew	28	51	34	113
	6.0%	10.9%	7.3%	24.2%
Nanban	52	28	9	89
	11.2%	6.0%	1.9%	19.1%
Total	194	172	100	466
	41.6%	36.9%	21.5%	100.0%

X^2 for the slants of news=37.151, $P < 0.05$

In order to slant the news to give a particular perception and interpretation of the news, the general three types of news slants are *positive*; positive toward the issue; support or provide justification and solution for the issue, *negative*; carries negative aspects or meaning towards the issues or events; cause the readers to form a negative opinion towards the issue or event and contains unfavorable descriptions of the issue or event and *neutral* slants; news about the conflict are neither positive nor negative. Overall, according to the data showed in Table 4, *positive* slants appeared more dominant in all four mainstream newspapers for the coverage of 194 (41.6%) articles, followed by *negative* slants 151 (32.4%) and *neutral* slants is 146 (31.3%). The data in this research is contradictory to the previous research because when Aday, Livingston (31) examined the objectivity of media coverage during the 2003 Iraq war, it showed that the news was slanted in *balanced* or *neutral* slant. A content analysis of Iraq War coverage

by Dimitrova and Stromback in (32), found that the Swedish newspaper used more *negative* tone as compared to the American counterparts and similar results applied to Dimitrova with Ahern in examining the online coverage of Iraq War which had more *negative* slant.

In this research, the researcher found and concluded that, most of the news is slanted in the *positive* slant to portray that crisis manager is playing a gatekeeper's role while educating and informing the public through news frames that the conflict is under control and publics should feel grateful to government for putting the situation under control (18). In portraying the slants of crisis with respective newspapers, as revealed in Table 4, most of the coverage portrayed Lahad Datu crisis as a positive situation because 194 coverage is on *positive* slants and *Utusan Malaysia* portrayed the highest *positive* slants in the coverage of 61 articles, followed by *The Star*, 53 articles and *Nanban daily* 52 articles.

All the three dailies such as *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star* and *Nanban daily* with the exception of *Sin Chew* newspaper, were portraying the situation as in control and the government and responsible actors are prepared for it. *Positive* slants also reassure the public to not worry about the issue. However, in this study, *negative* slants are the second highest after *positive* slants which were found in 172 articles. It's reminding the public that Lahad Datu crisis is spiraling out of control and everybody is in danger. Among the four dailies, as mentioned above, *Sin Chew daily* portrayed most of the highest slants of *negative* with 51 articles as compared to the other three newspapers that portrayed *positive* slants. The researcher also noted that *Sin Chew daily* covered the least *positive* slants and the data revealed that, *Sin Chew daily* newspaper also covered most of the *problem* category of news as compared to other categories mentioned in Table 3. So, to further analyze the differences among four newspapers in portraying the slants of news, the researcher ran a Chi Square test and the result is a significant difference for the slants of news and newspapers (X^2 for the slants of news = 37.151, $P < .05$). So, it's proven that there is a difference in the portrayal of slants in news among four newspapers whereby, *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star* and *Nanban daily* portrayed the highest coverage of *positive* slants as compared to *Sin Chew*'s predominantly *negative* slants of news.

4.3. Crisis Response Strategies through Newspaper Coverage

Table 5: Crisis Response Strategies and Newspapers

Crisis Response	Utusan Malaysia	The Star	Sin Chew	Nanban	Total (%)
Denial	0.4%	0.2%	1.3%	1.3%	3.2
Concern	6.2%	6.0%	2.1%	3.0%	17.4
Compensation	2.8%	1.3%	1.7%	1.1%	6.9
Justification	19.7%	11.8%	12.0%	9.4%	53.4
Excuse	3.6%	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	7.3
Apology	0%	0%	1.7%	0.4%	2.1
Regret	1.3%	1.9%	4.1%	2.8%	10.1
Total	34.1%	22.5%	24.2%	19.1%	100.0

The frequency of issue, writing styles in news and portrayal of visuals in news, can determine the suggested and most prominent response taken by responsible people to react with the mentioned crisis (33 M, 2017). For the responses portrayed by crisis managers in providing solutions for the Lahad Datu crisis through news coverage, out of 466 articles on Lahad Datu conflict, most of the dailies covering the crisis manager used *Justification* crisis response in newspaper framing for (247) articles (53%) as compared to other responses. This means that, the government through news coverage portraying immediate solution and remedy to protect the public to overcome the severity of conflict by minimizing the impact of crisis. The second highest response after *Justification* response is a *Concern* response, covering (81) articles (17.4%). It showed that the government is concerned about the public and victims by showing deep sadness toward the Lahad Datu crisis to play a crisis manager role. (47) 10.1% of news articles coverage used *regret* response; they wanted the readers to feel regretful and sorry toward the crisis impact. News articles (34) articles 7.3% of the newspaper coverage is giving Excuses that the conflict has happened but not to a level that could cause an alarm. This is followed by *Compensation* response (32) articles 6.9%, *Denial* (15) articles 3.2% and *Apology* (10) articles for 2.1%. *Justification* crisis response appeared most in *Utusan Malaysia* daily. Same applied to *The Star*, *Sin Chew daily* and *Nanban daily*. After *justification* crisis response, *concern* crisis response appeared most in *Utusan Malaysia* and *The Star*. Both of these newspapers portraying news of providing solution for the crisis and also expressing their *concern* response to the affected victims. *Sin Chew daily* and *Nanban daily* also portraying *justification* response as the main crisis response. However, *regret* crisis response appeared most after the *justification* crisis response for *Sin chew daily* and *concern* response and *regret* crisis response appeared most in the *Nanban daily* after *justification* crisis response.

Kruskal Wallis test indicates a strong significant difference between four dailies in response to the *justification* crisis response for the value of .000 (P < .05). The highest mean rank is portrayed by *The Star* (284.62), followed by *Utusan Malaysia* (276.26), and *Nanban daily* (192.92) and the lowest mean rank is (157.79) covered by *Sin Chew daily*. *The Star* newspaper revealed more news coverage of solution through texts and photos in combating the crisis as compared to other dailies.

Portraying and expressing sympathy response is one of the main *concern* response strategies as suggested in Crisis Response Strategies by Coombs. Through drastic news coverage of concern response, readers can be induced into expressing their sympathy and join together with the crisis manager to offer support (10). Choi (34) discussed in their studies that, portraying concern response and express sympathy is the best crisis response strategy. So, the researcher supports their findings with the revelation that Malaysian government also combats the crisis in portraying concern response effectively.

The outcome of the test revealed that the significant value is 0.000 (P < .05) which means that there is a strong significant difference in portraying concern response in combating Lahad Datu crisis. The highest mean rank is performed by *Utusan Malaysia* for the mean rank of (289) in portraying the most concern response, followed by the *Star daily* which has (274.50) mean rank, *Nanban daily* is (194.30) and the lowest mean rank is owned by *Sin Chew daily* for the value of (148.19). *Utusan Malaysia* portrayed *concern* response most frequently in comparison to three other dailies, while *Sin Chew daily* portrayed less of a concern response. As mentioned in Table 4, for the news slants of Lahad Datu crisis, *Sin Chew daily* news portrayed mostly in the negative slant. Due to this reason, *Sin Chew,* which represents the Chinese community in Malaysia, are portraying the root cause more and are warning the people to be more cautious. This is the reason for *Sin Chew daily* for the least of *concern* response coverage.

Some of the headline samples for *Concern* response portrayed in *Utusan Malaysia* are as below:

- "Prime Minister express condolences" (Utusan Malaysia, 2 March 2013)
- "Higher position to Zulkifli and Sabaruddin" (Utusan Malaysia, 3 March, 2013)
- "Prime Minister and his wife pay tribute to 2 heroes" (Utusan Malaysia, 5 March 2013)
- " I'm proud to be son to world hero" "Said son of die police officer" (Utusan Malaysia, (Utusan Malaysia, 5 March, 2013)
- "Donation to die officers" (Utusan Malaysia, 5 March 2013)
- "Government help villagers" (Utusan Malaysia, 7 March 2013)
- "Proud for the Suluk people in Sabah, "Said Najib" (Utusan Malaysia, 8 March 2013)
- "Rosmah felt sympathy for the die officers" (Utusan Malaysia, 8 March, 2013)
- "Prime Minister visited Srjn, Sabaruddin"

(Utusan Malaysia, 9 March 2013)

4. Summary

Quantitative content analysis, together with systematic coding book were able to deliver some interesting and useful data for further understanding of the elements and variables to frame crisis effectively. Throughout this research, the results depicted that 466 news about Lahad Datu crisis were found in the duration of study. From descriptive data analysis, researcher concluded that *Utusan Malaysia* represented Malay community readers covered most of the Lahad Datu crisis news compare to *Sin Chew*, *The Star* and *Nanban daily*. Researcher concluded that *Sin Chew* is good in setting agenda for the Lahad Datu crisis after the *Utusan Malaysia*. Though, *Sin Chew daily* is to represent Chinese reader in Malaysia but *Sin Chew* is good in settting agenda for the Lahad Datu crisis among their community. *The Star* and *Nanban* also doing their coverage role effectively in providing an equal coverage of so-lution category for the crisis as a crisis manager.

For the duration of the one month of coverage studies, the peak period for the coverage was covered during the first week of the month of March. All the selected dailies covered the same peak period of the coverage in informing citizens about Lahad Datu crisis. In portrayal of category of news, finding concluded that *Utusan Malaysia* and *Nanban daily* portrayed most of the solution articles. *The Star* focusing on people category; which mean re-vealing the problem and experience faced by the villagers from affected area and impacted victims from the crisis and *Sin chew's* main category of coverage is on problem category; revealing the root cause for the problem and also alerting people on the danger-ous of Lahad Datu conflict if urgent action is not taken by respon-sible people.

In portrayal of slants for the articles, most of the articles of Lahad datu crisis were slanted in positive slants in all the dailies except for *Sin Chew* daily because majority of the Lahad Datu crisis in *Sin Chew* daily were in negative slants of news which mean remind-ing the public that Lahad Datu crisis is in out of control and coun-try is in danger.

In portrayal of differences among dailies for the slant of news. Chi Square test revealed a significant difference among all the dailies in portrayal of slant of news. Finding can be concluded that all the three dailies such as *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star* and *Nanban daily* slanting the news in positive slant except for *Sin Chew daily*.

In examining the function of government as a crisis manager or gatekeeper, finding revealed that government is doing his duty as a crisis manager in providing justification and concern response mostly to provide solution and at the same time expressing sympa-thy concern response to the victims of crisis.

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