

Analysis of News Reporting on Violence Against Women and Children in Malaysian and Indonesian Newspapers (2022-2023)

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ABSTRACT

News representation of violence against women and children shapes public understanding, societal attitudes, and policy responses, making it an important area of media research. Such news is widespread in the digital age, especially with the spread of social media. In this paper, the similarities and differences in the representation of violence against women and children in digital news stories published in Malaysian and Indonesian newspapers during 2022–2023 are compared, since this area remains limited. To determine the frequencies and frames of pertinent news articles, a mixed-method content analysis combining quantitative and qualitative analysis was employed. The findings indicate that newspaper media in the two countries (Malaysia and Indonesia) have significant differences in terms of frequency, dominant news frames, and reporting styles. In Indonesia, the rate of coverage of this issue is in great contrast to that of Malaysia. The findings also highlight the importance of ethical journalism practices in representing violence against women and children and shaping public discourse on gender-based violence. Some of the recommendations include accountability and sensitivity required in media coverage to establish awareness and participation in policies. This kind of engagement is critical to informed public discourse and to holding the media accountable as an agent of change. By preemptively addressing ethical issues, journalists will be able to foster a more nuanced interpretation of the issues and eventually produce more desirable outcomes in society.

Keywords: *News representation, gender-based violence, violence against women and children, media portrayals.*

INTRODUCTION

The debate over the portrayal of the issue of violence against women and children in newspapers in both Malaysia and Indonesia has been a prominent issue over the last several years. It has been widely debated, especially concerning the welfare and human rights of women and children. Policies have been established in the two nations to ensure that sexual violence against women is reduced. In a study by Arief and Abdul Rahim (2015), Malaysia and Indonesia have in the past tried to eradicate domestic violence using legislative frameworks. They mentioned the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act of 1994 (Act 521) in Malaysia and the Elimination of Domestic Violence Act No. 23 of 2004 in Indonesia. Each law possesses its own philosophies,

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purposes, and provisions. Based on their study, the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) reported fluctuations in reported cases, with a total of 19,802 cases from 2007 to 2012. Ethnic groups with the highest number of cases in the period between 2006 and 2011 were Malay women, with the highest number of cases (1,635). In Indonesia, on the other hand, as determined by the National Commission on Women (Komnas Perempuan), cases have suddenly soared to 626,570, from 25,522 in 2007 to 124,232 in 2012, with the highest numbers in Sulawesi and Java. Based on the statistics of domestic violence in Muslim-majority countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, the prevalence of violence against women stands in stark contrast to Islamic teachings regarding the roles of husbands.

The analysis of news reporting on violence against women and children can be explored through Le et al. (2024), who mentioned that apart from the issue of domestic violence against women, the issue of sexual violence against women is also becoming another global problem that occurs both in the domestic and public spheres. Coverage in the mass media has made the issue more visible, and many groups are demanding action to address it. Previously, in 2012, Hak and Ibrahim's analysis showed that usually the husbands or other intimate male partners are the ones who commit violence against women or their partners. Surprisingly, the issue not only includes physical violence but also serious mental health violence that women have faced at the hands of their intimate partners.

Continuing to the issue of sexual violence against women, Lektonpessy and Ronaybod (2024) examined the criminal justice system in dealing with cases of sexual violence in Indonesia and Malaysia. They analyzed victim protection, legal mechanisms, and court procedures for sexual violence in the two countries. Their analysis showed that although the two nations penalize sexual violence and have put in place a criminal justice system that ensures these perpetrators are brought to justice, the legal manner of doing so differs in scope and focus. A case in point is Indonesia, whereby the nation has taken it a step further with legal reform, Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes, which expands the definition of sexual violence and is more victim-focused in that it covers the elements of psychological assistance, legal assistance, and protection of the victim during the trial. In contrast, Malaysia has several different laws that regulate sexual violence, including provisions within the Penal Code and laws specific to offenses against children that provide more organized court processes, albeit with fairly limited definitions and a lack of provisions to help victims.

In this manner, this study examines the dominance of news reporting that endorses violence against women and children as one of the problems in Malaysian and Indonesian papers, and establishes the frames that are constructed by the newspaper reports. In general, this study examines the frequency of coverage of violence against women and children by local newspapers, the problems raised by the newspapers, the key reasons contributing to these problems, and the measures or remedies to such problems. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Identify the frequency of news reports representing violence among women's and children's issues in Malaysian and Indonesian newspapers; and
2. Examine the emerging themes in the newspaper coverage of violence against women and children.

Through this study, the importance of this issue can be perceived through the analysis of media coverage and the portrayal of incidents of violence, and it will offer valuable insights into how journalism in these two countries influences the discourse and knowledge that people have about gender-based violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Representation of Violence Against Women and Children

The media play a crucial role in shaping public understanding of social issues by influencing how events or topics are selected, interpreted, and presented to society. Among the social issues frequently covered by the media is violence against women and children, which has increasingly attracted the public's attention. Previous studies have consistently shown that media coverage tends to emphasize sensational incidents while providing limited contextual information regarding the structural causes and consequences of violence. According to the report by Sutherland et al. (2015), the media feature as a primary prevention tool due to their potential to influence public understanding of violence against women through reporting and interpretation. This is in line with Avila and Lopez (2021), who emphasized that media play a fundamental role in shaping public perception and reflecting gender-based violence. The news often addresses violence against women and children in a manner that is highly sensationalistic and utterly devoid of contextual background, furthering stereotypes and inhibiting the visibility of the issue. Several authors indicated that the coverage is based on individual cases rather than the social problem of violence against women, the consequence of which is a distorted view of the audience on the problem. This is consistent with the study by Martinez and Cubero (2022), which found that both newspapers and television opt to produce narratives that highlight sensationalism and the victims, while also perpetuating stereotypes that can eventually reinforce structures of power and discrimination. Impe (2019) stated that the issue of violence against women in the media is not minor anymore but has become a very serious societal problem, to the extent that reports on violence against women are able to change attitudes and drive major legislative and social changes. Collectively, these studies suggested that mainstream news coverage tends to privilege episodic and sensational narratives over contextual reporting, limiting public understanding of violence against women and children as a broader structural and societal issue. These concerns highlight the importance of promoting responsible and ethical journalism that reports violence against women and children in a manner that is accurate, contextualized, and free from sensationalistic elements. As a result, society may perceive violence against women and children as a critical social issue that requires attention, particularly due to the extensive reporting and sensationalistic media coverage. Given the influential role of the media in shaping public understanding of violence against women and children, it is equally imperative to consider the prevalence and significance of this issue within the Malaysian and Indonesian contexts.

Violence Against Women and Children in Malaysia and Indonesia

The increasing prevalence of violence against women and children remains a significant human rights, public health, and social concern in many parts of the world, including Malaysia and Indonesia, where reported cases have continued to rise despite ongoing policy interventions and

legal reforms. This trend underscores the importance of understanding not only the magnitude of the issue but also the social context in which it is communicated through the news media.

Based on the official statistics of the PDRM, it has been revealed that cases of reported domestic violence have increased significantly over the years. There were consistent cases of domestic violence between 2018 and 2022. A total of 5,421 cases were recorded in 2018, increasing to 5,657 cases in 2019 before declining slightly to 5,260 cases in 2020. However, reported cases rose sharply to 7,468 cases in 2021 before decreasing to 6,540 cases in 2022. Although the number of reported cases fluctuated over the five-year period, the overall trend suggests that domestic violence remains a persistent social problem requiring sustained attention from policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and support organizations.

In Malaysia, domestic violence cases rose from 5507 cases in 2023 to 7116 cases in 2024 and are projected to reach 7391 cases by 2025, as reported by Channel News Asia on 29 May 2026. Collectively, these statistics illustrate that domestic violence continues to represent a major societal concern in Malaysia, reinforcing the importance of examining how newspapers report and frame incidents involving violence against women and children.

On another note, Othman et al. (2024) studied 60 news articles on domestic violence against women and children as reported in *Free Malaysia Today* (FMT) and the *Malay Mail* (MM) newspapers during the COVID-19 era (8 March 2020 to 31 March 2022). In their study, they agreed that domestic violence is a pressing social issue in which the mass media have a responsibility and play a critical role in reporting and bringing forward issues of domestic violence to create awareness, advocate, and provide a platform where victims are aware of their rights and information on where to get help in order to help victims remove themselves from any unsafe situations. According to the study, media representations or news reporting of domestic violence are placed at the utmost importance in raising public awareness of social issues in an effort to help survivors of domestic violence report and eventually escape their perpetrators. This is in line with Malaysian government policies that raising awareness on domestic violence issues is very important. Hence, domestic violence news must be angled correctly in newspaper reporting. This is because many cases of domestic violence are usually sensationalized through the headlines of news articles.

With reference to this case, it created much publicity regarding the case due to the level of abuse of a defenceless child in a care facility. It also brought to light key gaps in supervision and responsibility in the welfare setting, and the need for stricter monitoring policies and child safety procedures. The case is also an important one in the research on violence against women and children in Malaysia, especially with regard to the exploitation of vulnerable populations in institutional care.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the news representation of violence against women has been emphasized by several studies. The discourse analysis conducted by Safira and Alatas (2022) on sexual violence against women in *Republika Online* (ROL) has demonstrated that ROL has not taken sides with women as victims. This is marked by the marginalization of the dominant position of women in reporting, both in terms of naming and describing incidents of sexual violence. This marginalization is reflected in the use of passive sentences, nominalization, euphemisms, and naming that is not independent, among other factors, which will weaken the position of women in reporting.

In another study, Nadliyah and Robot (2024) examine femicide cases in *Kompas.com*, *Republika.co.id*, and *Tirto*. IDAC, by analysing nine news articles on a few issues related to harassment, domestic violence, and murder. The study found that women are consistently depicted as weak and powerless, trapped in a patriarchal culture that normalizes violence against them. This type of representation enhances gender stereotyping that undermines the judicial response and extends the rule of men. The study points out the need for more equalizing and enabling media depictions of girls to challenge established gender differences in society.

A recent study by Tiastuti (2025) explained that cases of domestic violence against women are very high, with a total of 32,687 cases of violence against women reported in 2022, increasing to 34,682 cases in 2023, according to SIMFONI-PPA (Ministry of Women's Empowerment), Sintas Puan (National Commission on Violence Against Women), and FPL (Service Provision Forum). According to her study, she also found that not all cases are reported to the authorities and resolved legally. However, she also found that the number of crime news broadcasts on television stations and online media, and cases of domestic violence that are chosen as the object of news, are mostly cases that have been reported and handled by the police or are being handled by community institutions that are engaged in the protection of women and children.

Based on this, it can be inferred that the lack of awareness, empirical understanding, and scholarly focus on emotional abuse, particularly forms such as cold violence, has resulted in insufficient prevention strategies, weak policy responses, and limited support services for victims. Therefore, there is a critical need to examine emotional and psychological abuse within intimate relationships in Malaysia and Indonesia, explore its characteristics and consequences, and highlight its implications for mental health, family well-being, and social policy. In addition, this reporting trend provides an important contextual background for examining newspaper coverage during the 2022-2023 study period. However, understanding the prevalence of violence alone is insufficient; it is also necessary to examine how newspapers construct and present these incidents. Therefore, Framing Theory provides a useful lens for interpreting these media representations and examining how newspapers in Malaysia and Indonesia frame violence against women and children. Understanding these framing patterns is important because news framing influences public interpretation, policy discussion, and societal responses to gender-based violence.

Framing Theory

Framing Theory, in general, provides a valuable perspective for understanding how news organizations select, emphasize, and present particular aspects of social issues. According to Entman (1993), framing involves selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text, thereby shaping how audiences define problems, interpret causes, make moral evaluations, and consider possible solutions. In journalism, framing influences not only what issues receive attention but also how those issues are understood by the public. In the context of this study, media framing plays a significant role in influencing public perceptions of victims, perpetrators, and the broader social context surrounding gender-based violence. Variations in reporting frequency and thematic emphasis may reflect differences in editorial priorities and journalistic practices across media organizations. Therefore, Framing

Theory serves as a useful analytical lens for interpreting the similarities and differences in newspaper coverage between Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly in understanding how recurring themes contribute to the construction of public narratives on violence against women and children.

METHODOLOGY

To explain newspaper coverage of violence against women-related issues in Malaysian and Indonesian newspapers in 2022–2023, this paper employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis to examine the frequency of news coverage and identify emerging themes within news reports. Maier (2017) described that content analysis can be used to analyze content and communicative messages. Meanwhile, Lyhne et al. (2025) note that qualitative content analysis is rooted in the tradition of quantitative content analysis. Emerging in the first half of the 20th century, quantitative content analysis was primarily used to investigate newspaper content and uncover the dominant opinions circulating within society as reflected in the mass media. This is the reason why content analysis was selected, as it provides a chance to conduct a systematic and objective analysis of media texts so that it is possible to determine the pattern, frequency, and representation of violence-related news coverage. In this research, the basic unit of analysis was the news article. Straight news reports were the only type of news report included in the analysis, and opinion news reports, feature news reports, and duplicate news articles were excluded from the analysis to ensure consistency and clarity.

Sample Selection and Data Collection

As this study adopted a comparative approach between Malaysia and Indonesia, the researchers from each country were responsible for analysing the data pertaining to their respective national contexts. In the case of Malaysia, *Harian Metro Online* and *Berita Harian Online* were selected because they are mainstream Malay newspapers with large online archives and substantial followings. The two newspapers are rated among the best newspaper websites in Malaysia (Nain, 2023). Articles in Malaysian newspapers were retrieved from the LexisNexis database platform. The newspapers were chosen based on their relevance to the study, the availability of archival information, and their regular coverage of social and crime issues compared to other English newspapers. Additionally, these two newspapers were selected for their emphasis on news value, as they frequently report on issues related to violence against women and children. Based on this search strategy, 70 news articles on the topic were found in *Harian Metro Online*, 28 of which were published in 2022 and 42 in 2023. Meanwhile, *Berita Harian Online* generated a total of 34 relevant news articles, of which 17 were published annually during the study period using the LexisNexis online platform.

The reason behind the selection of *Detik.com* and *Kompas.com* in the Indonesian setting was that these publications and outlets have large readerships and coverage in the national media (Steele, 2025). The Indonesian research team identified news articles from such sources using the official websites of the particular newspapers. In the course of the study, they identified 117 news articles in *Detik.com* and 85 news articles in *Kompas.com*, respectively. All articles were retrieved electronically by accessing free services and archives offered by each newspaper portal.

The keyword search strategy was used, and the news articles of interest were located. In this analysis, operationally, violence was considered to include any physical, psychological, sexual, or emotional harm inflicted on individuals as reported in the news. The keywords used were: "*wanita*" (women), "*dera*" (abuse), "*mangsa dera*" (abuse victim), "*penderaan*" (mistreatment), "*penganiayaan*" (cruelty), and "*zalim*" (oppression). These keywords did not focus the search on specified gender-related terms.

To maintain uniformity in the coding process of both datasets, researchers developed a codebook. The codebook included a set of analysis categories (such as the date of publication, the newspaper section, the visual type of content (photograph or illustration), the description of the depiction, and the news type). The articles were coded so that they could be compared to conduct a comparative study of Malaysian and Indonesian newspaper coverage. The researchers held several discussions during the coding process to create a shared interpretation of the coding categories and improve coding consistency. To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, a pilot test was conducted before the actual data collection process. The pilot study trained the coders responsible for completing the coding sheet and ensured a consistent understanding of the coding categories and procedures. This process was essential in minimizing coding errors and reducing the possibility of overlooking relevant content during the analysis.

Intercoder reliability is a critical component of content analysis as it assesses the degree of consistency among coders when applying the coding scheme. According to Neuendorf (2017), intercoder reliability refers to the extent to which independent coders achieve the same coding decisions when analysing identical content. In this study, intercoder reliability was assessed using Holsti's coefficient. Lombard et al. (2019) argue that reliability assessment is necessary to demonstrate the consistency and replicability of content analysis findings. The Holsti method is particularly appropriate when two coders analyze the same units of content and when coding categories involve relatively straightforward interpretation. Consequently, the method was deemed suitable for assessing coding agreement in the present study.

The next section gives the results of the content analysis, which was based on the frequency and the emerging themes of violence-related news reporting in Malaysian and Indonesian newspapers.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

The first part of these findings provides the frequency of news coverage of violence against women and children in Malaysian and Indonesian newspapers over two consecutive years. It is through this analysis that the trends of media reporting and the emphasis provided to violence against women and children as reported in newspapers can be understood. Then, this study identified three emerging themes that contribute to the findings: (1) raising awareness of violence against women and children, (2) factors contributing to emotional abuse and neglect, and (3) narratives of violence against women and children.

Part 1: Quantitative Content Analysis

The Frequency of Coverage of Violence Against Women and Children in Malaysia and Indonesia

Table 1: Distribution of news articles representing violence against women and children issues in Malaysian online newspapers (2022-2023)

Newspaper Portal	Number of Articles
Harian Metro Online	70
Berita Harian Online	34
Total	104

Source: Results processed by the researcher (2025)

Table 2: Distribution of news articles representing violence against women and children issues in Indonesian online newspapers (2022-2023)

Newspaper Portal	Number of Articles
Detik.com	117
Kompas.com	85
Total	202

Source: Results processed by the researcher (2025)

Table 3: Comparative distribution of news coverage in Malaysia and Indonesia (2022-2023)

Country	Newspaper Portal	Number of Articles	Percentage (%)
Malaysia	Harian Metro Online	70	67.3%
	Berita Harian Online	34	32.7%
	Total	104	100%
Indonesia	Detik.com	117	57.9%
	Kompas.com	85	42.1%
	Total	202	100%

Source: Results processed by the researcher (2025)

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, Indonesian newspapers published substantially more reports on violence against women and children (n=202) than Malaysian newspapers (n=104). Within the Malaysian sample, *Harian Metro Online* contributed the largest coverage (67.3%), while Detik.com accounted for the highest proportion of coverage in the Indonesian sample (57.9%). Malaysian newspapers published considerably fewer reports on violence against women and children than their Indonesian counterparts, with a total of 104 articles compared to 202 articles in Indonesia.

This is predictable because traditionally *Harian Metro* is defined by content based on human interest and hard-hitting stories on the community, which explains why it reported more on the issues of violence against women. The higher frequency of coverage in *Harian Metro* may reflect the prominence of news values such as conflict, impact, and human interest, which are commonly associated with reports on violence against women and children (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017). In contrast, *Berita Harian* recorded a lower number of reports on violence against women and children throughout the study period. This finding may suggest differences in editorial priorities and news selection practices, as media organizations often assign varying levels of prominence to issues based on their perceived newsworthiness and relevance to audience

interests (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017), resulting in comparatively less attention being given to such issues within *Berita Harian*'s overall news coverage.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, *Detik.com* was the leader in the number of articles released, with 117 articles, and *Kompas.com* released 85. This high frequency gives violence against women and children a high level of prominence in the Indonesian online news cycle. In the Indonesian context, a substantial proportion of the reports appeared in sections such as *Berita*, *Hukum & Kriminal* and *Megapolitan*, suggesting that violence against women and children was predominantly framed as a crime and public affairs issue rather than a health or social welfare concern (Sokowati & Hassan, 2025).

Part 2: Qualitative Content Analysis

Theme 1: Raising Awareness of Violence Against Women and Children

Based on the findings from four digital newspaper platforms, the researchers found that the focus of news reporting on raising awareness of violence against women and children, as highlighted, is somewhat positive. This is in line with educating society and, at the same time, shows that both governments play a role in protecting women and children. The establishment of awareness in Malaysian and Indonesian media is not merely the spread of information, but a means of breaking the silence surrounding social issues, correcting cultural myths, and promoting institutional and communal responsibilities.

The context of awareness-oriented reporting in Malaysia is more concerned with processes of transparency and child protection. *Berita Harian* reports the work of child protection officers, providing details on such steps as rescue, family assessment and evaluation, medical assessment, and court reporting. This sort of explanation demystifies institutional intervention and educates the public about how cases of abuse can be addressed. This form of reporting may result in increased trust in authorities by wider society, particularly in matters involving sensitive cases of children. The articles are all translated from Bahasa Melayu to the English Language for the purpose of this analysis.

These protective officers are tasked with rescuing children after they receive reports that some victims are suspected of being abused either through the police or members of the public. Usually, after being rescued by the police, the victim is taken to the hospital, and the child protector will contact the hospital to find out the victim's condition. Once the victim is well, the protective officer will conduct a thorough assessment within 30 days, including home visits to assess the family's capacity, economic circumstances, and well-being, and then prepare a social report for the court to take further action, he said.

(*Berita Harian*, September 19, 2022)

Therefore, the government's efforts to enforce the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 (Act 792) more strictly and aggressively, including prosecuting teachers, neighbours or members of the public who hide or fail to report the

condemned act, will not only reduce cases, but also ensure that victims receive protection and justice. However, stricter and more aggressive law enforcement alone is not enough; instead, society needs to be equipped with the ability to identify signs of sexual abuse, manage complaint cases with sensitivity, and provide all necessary forms of support to child victims.

(Berita Harian, Oct 25, 2023)

Besides, Malaysian news coverage emphasizes that law enforcement is insufficient. On the one hand, one can speak about the introduction of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 (Act 792) as a necessary action; on the other hand, the media simultaneously encourages the community to be capable of identifying the signs of abuse, professionally addressing complaints, and helping victims, not only emotionally but also socially. This representation highlights awareness as a multidimensional phenomenon that involves legal knowledge, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, reporting on the awareness of protecting wives received extensive coverage from both newspapers. Based on the example of the news excerpts below, the enforcement of the Islamic Affairs Ministry and the law was highlighted to show that violence against women, specifically domestic violence within Indonesian marriages, should be stopped.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) of the Republic of Indonesia emphasized that all forms of domestic violence (KDRT) cannot be justified. This was conveyed by the Special Staff of the Minister of Religion for Ukhuwah Islamiyah, Relations of Community and Social Religious Organizations, and Religious Moderation, Isfah Abidal Aziz. "All forms of domestic violence cannot be justified, let alone hidden under the pretext of the wife's nobility. The attitude of the Ministry of Religion is firm and does not bargain in this matter," Isfah said in a written statement on Saturday.

(Kompas.com, Feb 5, 2022)

In addition, the public is also asked to report if they see acts of domestic violence around them. "The Ministry of PPPA has a SAPA 129 (021-129) service and a hotline 081-111-129-129 as a complaint service for violence against women that can be accessed by all members of the public throughout Indonesia," explained Ratna.

(Kompas.com, Feb 3, 2022)

Tiasri said the police must understand the Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. He said understanding the law could prevent incidents in which the police make it difficult to report suspected domestic violence, and prevent them from recurring. "This actually facilitates the implementation of the law to operate well, one of which is for police as law enforcement officials, to carry out functions and responsibilities to implement the PKDRT Law," he said.

(Detik.com, Nov 23, 2023)

Statements issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama) explicitly reject any justification for domestic violence on the grounds of female obedience, marital harmony, or religious virtue. In Indonesia, public awareness is further reinforced through mechanisms that encourage citizen participation and reporting. Media representations that emphasize national hotlines and complaint services, such as SAPA 129, present citizens as active participants in combating domestic violence rather than passive observers. Thus, social responsibility dictates the need to deal with violence against women. These programs not only focus on the value of harmony in marriage, but also provide channels of help to women to report violence, effectively challenging the normalization of violence at home.

Theme 2: Factors Contributing to Emotional Abuse and Neglect

Emotional strain and neglect emerged as salient themes of violence against women and children in the media upon analysis. The news stories always contextualize the abuse as the culmination of a package of emotional strains, including jealousy, fatigue, pressure, and inadequate caregiving abilities, particularly within the environment of child rearing. These findings are reminiscent of earlier researchers, who have referenced emotional instability and communication breakdown in families as significant factors contributing to abusive behavior. Using the case of family background, lack of religious practice, and lack of communication as determinants of the nature of violence, Mohd Taib and Noor Baidur (2011) also included instability in the economy and the rising cost of living as other determinants of tension within the family and the threat of spousal abuse.

Similarly, prior literature has found structural and demographic factors that predispose one to becoming a victim of violence. The study conducted by Halimah & Sharon (2011) concluded that the age of the husband, household income, and the number of children were extremely significant predictors of increased violence against women. These results were echoed in Malaysian newspapers in 2022 and 2023, where emotional overload, financial pressure, and competence to give care were recurrently cited as push factors that contribute to abusive behavior. The media discourses present violence in this discussion not as a singular, inhuman treatment but as a consequence of day-to-day forces beyond control, even of the most ordinary kind. This humanizing of perpetrators, although intended to humanize them, also runs the risk of lessening accountability by placing the abuse in the context of bigger socio-economic and emotional conflicts, as opposed to foregrounding the suffering of victims.

He said provocative factors, economic turmoil, financial problems, unemployment, frustration in life, excessive jealousy or temperament were the drivers of this abusive behaviour. Most abusers use martial arts tricks, supposedly to solve their problems and dominate others. They are never aware of and want to take responsibility for the behavior.

(Berita Harian, Nov 29, 2022)

According to him, the greedy attitude of daycare centres that employ untrained babysitters and do not have childcare knowledge also leads to cases of abuse. "When a paid babysitter does not have knowledge, it will lead to a feeling of impatience with the child." Lack of interest and knowledge in educating and controlling children causes out-of-control actions that threaten the life of the baby or child under the care of the nanny.

(Harian Metro, Nov 26, 2023)

According to the news snippets above, the accounts of predisposing factors that lead to violence are still concerns of provocation, money, joblessness, emotional disturbance, and jealousy. When it comes to children, this is commonly associated with untrained guardians, work-related stress, and lack of interest or ability to watch over a child. Offering a good social context, this representation is at risk of normalization or justification of abusive behaviour by foregrounding the stress and personal hardship of perpetrators. This can lead to a decline in accountability, with the lived experiences, safety, and long-term trauma of victims, especially children, receiving insufficient attention. The findings highlight why more ethically oriented media coverage that balances context with moral responsibility, focuses on supporting the welfare of victims, and strengthens the basic idea that not a single emotional or economic pressure can be used to justify violence against women and children is needed.

Theme 3: Narratives of Violence Against Women and Children

The paper also looks at the media coverage of violence against women and children, where the manner in which the media constructs and portrays the issue is also examined. It goes on to discuss the creation of meaning in the text by establishing the presence of these issues in the news. The analysis was also conducted with reference to how each media outlet portrays its own underlying views and editorial stance, since there are variations in media practices between newspapers in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Through this, the study selects, emphasizes, and portrays these stories to bring these issues to the audience. The description of victims was given special consideration. This feature is important because it could put violence into context concerning audience perception and response to the question.

The discussion of the way victims were represented in news coverage contributes to the development of how the population perceived cases of violence toward women and children. A few of the news reports tended to create a specific picture of victims, using selective descriptions, focus, and omission of information, which ultimately led to the victims being met with empathy, suspicion, or even blame based on the manner in which the stories were packaged.

Police found a skeleton believed to belong to a five-year-old girl at the search site at Jalan Bukit Zamrud, here, this morning, after a search operation was carried out since March 28. The discovery at around 11 am found skulls, molars and skeletal fragments scattered on the ground and covered with dry leaves about 10 metres from the original location of the search.

(Harian Metro, 13 Apr 2022)

Johor Bahru: "For several months my son endured the pain, pressure and suffering of being left starving and locked in a toilet; the perpetrator should have been sentenced accordingly," said M Ana. Ana said that, based on her sharing, she often drinks toilet water when she is hungry, and sometimes she only touches leftovers. According to her, her son also stated that he had to endure the pain when he was deliberately beaten and set on fire by his husband's girlfriend, and there was no place to complain about his fate.

(Harian Metro, 19 Oct 2023)

There was also a picture of the victim's face covered in blood allegedly due to violence from the perpetrator. The poster also wrote the hashtag #SaveGaby as a form of support for the victim.

(Kompas.com, 13 May 2022)

It can be seen that there was some inclination in the passages given, as victims were depicted in very graphic and even shocking terms. The reporting of the discovery of the skeletal remains of a child, as one example (Harian Metro, 13 April 2022), contains descriptions such as "*tengkorak*," "*geraham*," and "*cebisan rangka dilitupi daun kering*." In another report (Harian Metro, 19 October 2023), it is even proposed that there was prolonged suffering, and it was expressed through an emotionally charged narration by mentioning food shortage, physical torture, and the usage of contaminated water. This visual and emotional impact of the reporting was amplified in the case of *Kompas.com* (13 May 2022), in which an image of the victim bathed in blood is presented, with the hashtag #SaveGaby.

This trend implies that news reporting tends to emphasize the bodily agony and helplessness of victims, and thus, readers have a pictorial view of the violence that takes place. Even though such a depiction might bring about empathy and awareness among people, it also brings serious criticisms of the possible sensationalism of victims' experiences. The explicative and descriptive nature of these stories threatens to shift the focus from the structural nature of violence, e.g., systemic abuse, failure of protection, and inequalities in society, to the spectacle of suffering itself.

Moreover, the focus on the pain and helplessness of victims makes them mainly passive victims of violence. This representation may unconsciously cage the narrative within binary depictions of victims who are merely represented as victims and are not represented through their actions or context. Instead, attention is not commonly given to perpetrators or systemic circumstances that permit such violence to flourish, resulting in unequal narration.

Interestingly enough, there was also a minor difference in the portrayal, as observed in the results. Even though the metaphorical wording used by *Harian Metro* in reporting about the scale of abuse was rather convincing and heartfelt, *Kompas.com* introduced visuals and indicators of digital activism (e.g., hashtags), which can be viewed as an embodiment of a more hybrid approach to journalism and advocacy. This reflects a changing media environment where the representation of victims takes the form not just of text but also of visual and participatory aspects.

The victimization of women and children, as Sokowati and Hassan (2025) suggest, is an act of giving a voice to victims and bringing awareness to the violence that had been hidden in earlier days. However, the paper went a notch higher by indicating that such representations may also be a means of heightening the story, as the agony was elevated to such an extent that it attracted the audience to the action. This dualism, building awareness and possibly contributing to the strengthening of sensationalism, is one of the main contributions of the current study in understanding the nuances of media representation of violence against women and children. These quantitative findings are consistent with Framing Theory, as the newspapers selected in this study emphasize particular aspects of violence against women and children to help the public better understand this issue. This also indicates that media organizations construct distinct narratives through the selection and emphasis of particular themes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the above discussions, media coverage of violence against women and children in both Malaysia and Indonesia has been extensively reported in both 2022 and 2023, specifically addressing two research objectives: (1) to identify the frequency of news reports representing violence against women and children in newspapers from both countries and (2) to examine the emerging themes reflected in the coverage. The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on media representation by providing comparative evidence from two Southeast Asian countries: Malaysia and Indonesia. Based on the findings, the study revealed notable differences in reporting frequency between Malaysian and Indonesian newspapers. Such coverage has definitely helped shape public discourse and sensitize society to these issues. At the same time, however, it also shows the limitations within current news frames. Even though these happenings are mainly publicized, violence in dominant discourse remains an episodic, local crime. This representation may be effectively applied in appealing for immediate attention among people with regard to individual cases, but it is likely to be biased against the structural, emotional, and socio-economic realities that facilitate gender-based violence.

On an encouraging note, the findings also showed that the media's approach to addressing those issues is undergoing a gradual yet steady transformation. In both countries, increasing interest in institutional responsibility and public awareness was observed. Newspapers in Malaysia tended to emphasize procedural intelligibility, law enforcement, and safeguarding of children, thereby enhancing public knowledge about procedural intervention. In turn, Indonesian digital news media were more likely to resort to legal, religious, and moral narration, actively discouraging the normalization of domestic violence and encouraging community actions through reporting options and national hotlines. Such tactics highlight the notion that the media can be more than a reporting tool and can equally be an educational and even preventive tool to ensure that violence against women and children is a societal, and not a family, issue.

Along with all these positive developments, there was no even distribution of humanization of victims. Abuse was oftentimes contextualized in media discourses through references to emotional stress, financial hardships, or the financial burden of care (Sunarto et al., 2023). These explanations admittedly introduced a large portion of social background, but this may be counterproductive and result in emphasis upon the conditions of perpetrators rather than the experiences of victims. As a result, women and children are oftentimes compromised in

their voices, agency, and long-term experiences. The most common representations of victims are likely the powerless and vulnerable individuals who are subjected to violence, largely defined by their distress, rather than the empowered person whose assets, personality, and voice are taken into account (Mardikantoro et al., 2022).

The study, therefore, shows that there is a huge loophole in current-day reporting. Beyond raising awareness, more needs to be done to create morally upright and victim-centered journalism that is no longer event-driven and sensational. The practice of reporting that foregrounds the voices of survivors, structural inequalities, and the representation of violence in larger social contexts can generate a more caring and concerned approach among the public. This is a necessary course of action since what is represented by the media does not just reflect what is going on in society but actively shapes the way society interprets, reacts, and responds to violence against women and children (Ndlovu & Mandiyanike, 2025). Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the analysis was limited to selected newspapers published between 2022 and 2023, and secondly, the study focused on newspaper content and did not examine other media platforms or the perspectives of journalists and audiences. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating a wider range of media platforms such as digital news websites, television news, or social media posts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of media representations of violence against women and children. On the other hand, future research could employ other methodologies such as critical discourse analysis or in-depth interviews with journalists and editors to better understand the factors influencing news production and representation.

In this respect, this study is significant in that it will disentangle the confusions of news discourse in two country contexts, in addition to tracing the subtle features of constructing meaning through the use of language, representation, and narrative choices. The work contributes to current debates on media ethics and gender-sensitive media and press in advancing social change by illuminating the strengths and weaknesses of current reporting methods. Lastly, balanced and humanizing representations are necessary not only to create awareness among the masses but also to be part of the long-term effort to counter violence and shift toward justice on behalf of women and children. Overall, this study reinforces the importance of responsible and gender-sensitive journalism in fostering public awareness, supporting victim-centered narratives and encouraging informed discussions on violence prevention and policy development. In addition, the findings also demonstrate the relevance of Framing Theory in explaining how newspapers construct and prioritize representations of violence against women and children by highlighting the influential role of the media in shaping public discourse on gender-based violence within the Southeast Asian context.

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