



Media Reporting of Suicide: A Comparative Framing Analysis of Malaysian Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

In the next ten years, suicide is expected to emerge as the second highest cause of death in Malaysia. The World Health Organization cautions that media coverage of suicide could either heighten the incidences of suicide or generate a protective effect through responsible media reporting. In light of the role of media, and how the reach of mainstream articles is amplified through new media, the need to study suicide reporting is imperative. This study employed a quantitative framing analysis on suicide-related articles that were published in *The Star*, *Kosmo*, *Sin Chiew Daily* and *Malaysia Nanban*, newspaper dailies with the largest circulation in their respective languages and representative of major ethnic groups in Malaysia. Suicide-related articles for a 5-year period from 2013 to 2018 were studied to ascertain the extent of coverage, frames and sources used in the articles. There was a marked difference in the number of articles published by these dailies with *The Star* and *Sin Chiew Daily* having the highest and *Kosmo*, the lowest. The number of articles in *Sin Chiew Daily* show a declining trend whereas there is an increase in *Nanban*. The most common frame of the reporting was the method of suicide which included details of the methods used by victims. The source of information was predominantly from the authorities, namely the police. Only a limited number of articles mentioned mental health professionals and sources of help—content that could be helpful to readers. In this regard, the focus on suicide methods indicates a lack of adherence to suicide reporting guidelines recommended by several international suicide prevention organisations. Thus, findings of this study could be used to raise awareness on media reporting practices and appeal for more sensitive and positive reporting.

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