



Arabic News Framing of Religious Activities in Indonesia and Malaysia During the Pandemic

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Abstract

One of the crucial issues that emerged during the COVID-19 outbreak was the restriction of congregational worship activities. This restriction of worship activities occurred throughout the Islamic world, including in Indonesia and Malaysia, and received special coverage in Arabic-language online news from both countries. This paper aims to analyse the framing of Arabic news media, namely Indonesia Al Youm and Aswaq Malaysia, regarding restrictions on religious activities during the pandemic. This qualitative research uses primary data on religious practices during COVID-19 in Indonesia Al-Youm and Aswaq Malaysia. In analysing framing media from Arabic newspapers, the researchers implemented Pan and Kosicki's theoretical concept of framing media. The paper found limited data from Indonesia al-Youm related to the news on religious restrictions during COVID-19. Therefore, Indonesia al-Youm did not display any specific perspective or ideology behind the news regarding restrictions on religious activities. Most of the news from Indonesia al-Youm was adopted and translated directly from several Indonesian newspapers such as Detik.com. On the contrary, Aswaq Malaysia can provide detailed media framing regarding restrictions on religious activities during the pandemic. This is because the Malaysian government has gradually issued regulations on religious activity restrictions for each state in the Malaysian region. However, Aswaq's news framing regarding restrictions on religious activities sounds neutral and does not contain any expressive elements to attack certain parties.

Keywords: *Media Framing, Indonesia Al-Youm, Aswaq Malaysia, Religious Restrictions, Covid-19, Arabic in media.*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed people's lives in various fields, such as the economy, education, and religious worship¹. During the pandemic that hit in March 2020, almost all places of worship in Indonesia and abroad were forced to close or remain in use temporarily, but with a limited number of congregations.² Various fatwas by MUI and Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU have been issued to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Even so, almost all places of worship, such as mosques, began to use them as usual while still observing health protocols.³

As a neighbouring country, Malaysia is also experiencing the same thing: restrictions on various activities, including religious activities, during the pandemic.⁴ Fatwas and recommendations from the government and officials related to restricting worship practice have also been issued. In Ramadhan 2020, for example, both the Indonesian and Malaysian governments recommended performing Eid prayers in their respective homes.⁵ The two countries also prohibited going home or *mudik*, which has become a tradition for the two

¹Akhsani Sholihati Yasri dan Yoyo Yoyo, "Kesulitan Pembelajaran Nahwu dengan Model Blended Learning Pasca Pandemi Covid-19," *An Nabighob* 24, no. 2 (2022): 199–214.

²Viswanath Venkatesh, "Impacts of COVID-19: A Research Agenda to Support People in Their Fight," *International Journal of Information Management* 55 (2020): 102197.

³A Khawarizmi Siregar and Hasse Jubba, "Dampak Wabah Corona Virus Desease terhadap Budaya Ibadah Umat Muslim dan Kebijakan Pemerintah," *Poros Onim: Journal of Social Religious* 1, no. 2 (2020): 151–163.

⁴Min Min Tan, Ahmad Farouk Musa, and Tin Tin Su, "The Role of Religion in Mitigating the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Malaysian Multi-Faith Perspectives," *Health Promotion International*, April 30, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daab041>.

⁵Choirul Amin et al., "Exploring the Prevalence of Protective Measure Adoption in Mosques during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia," *Sustainability* 13, no. 24 (2021): 13927; Muhammad Fuad Zain, "Dispensation and Adaptation of Islamic Religious Practices Based on Fatwas of the Indonesian Ulama Council During Covid-19 Pandemic," *Manchester Journal of International Economic Law*, no. 1 (2024), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=17423945&AN=177301248&h=Cl9gjSPWgzZZTXk9kU5Yn3%2B1GsVtcfxu9m8QYVLqn%2FUm4IAtaLGDM0Hc44k4wQXcjmYiBeLtOvMpRRvhAUP%2Brw%3D%3D&crl=c>.

countries.⁶ All these efforts are being made to control the spread of COVID-19 across the regions.⁷

The issue of restricting worship practice has become news and public knowledge, both in Indonesia and Malaysia. National newspapers in Indonesia, such as Kompas, Republika, and others, have reported several issues related to religious practices during the pandemic. One of the national newspapers with a particular segment is Indonesia al-Youm, an Arabic daily newspaper with a segment of readers who can speak or understand written Arabic. As one of the national newspapers, Indonesia Al-Youm is assumed to have covered various national news related to religious practices during the pandemic. Meanwhile, Malaysia has Aswaq media newspaper, which has the same segment as Al-Youm.

Both al-Youm and Aswaq, as Arabic media news, certainly have narratives and news orientations to present specific ideas behind the news to influence public perceptions. This narrative depends on the vision of the two daily newspapers. The method of packaging certain news is known as framing. News framing influences people's attitudes and behaviours through the news they report.⁸ Therefore, when a daily newspaper reports news coverage, an opinion orientation tends to affect readers, such as sympathy, empathy, and other psychological impacts.⁹

⁶Dimas Budi Prasetyo and Lury Sofyan, "Altering Intention to Mudik during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Salient Cue and Simple Reminder Nudge," *Psychology and Developing Societies* 33, no. 1 (2021): 121–145, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971333621990459>.

⁷Ain Umaira Md Shah et al., "COVID-19 Outbreak in Malaysia: Actions Taken by the Malaysian Government," *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* 97 (2020): 108–116.

⁸Sophie Lecheler and Claes H De Vreese, *News Framing Effects: Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315208077>.

⁹Rinaldo Kühne and Christian Schemer, "The Emotional Effects of News Frames on Information Processing and Opinion Formation," *Communication Research* 42, no. 3 (December 9, 2013): 387–407, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650213514599>.

This study seeks to analyse the news from the two daily newspapers related to religious practices in both countries with framing analysis and linguistic approaches. This research will compare religious practices in Indonesia and Malaysia based on news texts from Indonesia al-Youm and Aswaq Malaysia.

Other scholars have already conducted previous studies on framing media during the pandemic. Ajeng D. Kartika¹ and Tri E. Lestari¹ in the Framing of COVID-19 in German and Indonesian News, for example, analysed the news in the Kompas daily and Der Spiegel's daily newspaper in Germany. The article compares how COVID-19 was covered in the two newspapers by emphasizing the main topics, namely the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, the government's readiness to handle COVID-19, and the issue of online learning. These issues were analysed using media framing analysis with a linguistic approach, especially the selection of diction in news headlines.¹⁰

Furthermore, Toby Bolsen, in Framing the Origins of COVID-19, analysed the media, which helped a lot in spreading misinformation regarding the origin of COVID-19 by spreading conspiracy theories. In this case, some media contributed to creating COVID-19 as a product of world conspiracy theories.¹¹ Meanwhile, Mutua and Ong'ong'a in Online News Media Framing of COVID-19 Pandemic: Probing the Initial Phases of the Disease Outbreak in International Media analysed four international media news: BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, and People's Daily. The study concluded that these four media framed COVID-19 as

¹⁰Ajeng D Kartika, "Framing of COVID-19 in German and Indonesian News," in *International Joint Conference on Arts and Humanities (IJCAH 2020)* (Atlantis Press, 2020), 797–804.

¹¹Toby Bolsen, Risa Palm, and Justin T Kingsland, "Framing the Origins of COVID-19," *Science Communication* 42, no. 5 (2020): 562–85.

a Chinese problem. Besides, the media also pegged the Wuhan Seafood market as the origin of the disease.¹²

In addition to Mutua and Ong'ong'a's findings, similar research conducted by Adiprasetyo and Larasati examined how detik.com has narratives and influences public behaviour through its pragmatic approach. Through the entire analysis, the study concluded that during the formative period of COVID-19, detik.com tends to have a positive tone toward the government but gradually becomes more negative.¹³

In the Malaysian context, some relevant studies on framing media of COVID-19 are found in the following papers. First, Media Framing on the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysian and Indonesian Newspapers, the paper compared framing media on COVID-19 by analysing two leading newspapers as the selected sample: Berita Harian in Malaysia and Kompas in Indonesia. The study reported that a neutral frame tone is more dominant in Berita Harian, followed by an alarming and reassuring tone. Meanwhile, Kompas' report on COVID-19 was dominated by a disturbing tone, followed by a neutral tone, while a reassuring tone was absent.¹⁴ Second, 'A Long Battle Ahead': Malaysian and Singaporean Prime Ministers Employ War Metaphors for COVID-19 paper studied the frame on COVID-19 of Malaysian and Singaporean Prime Ministers through metaphor analysis. The study concluded that both prime ministers used

¹²Sylvia Ndanu Mutua and Daniel Oloo Ong'ong'a, "Online News Media Framing of COVID-19 Pandemic: Probing the Initial Phases of the Disease Outbreak in International Media," *European Journal of Interactive Multimedia and Education* 1, no. 2 (2020): 2–8, <https://doi.org/10.30935/ejimed/8402>.

¹³Justito Adiprasetyo and Annissa Winda Larasati, "Pandemic Crisis in Online Media: Quantitative Framing Analysis on Detik. Com's Coverage of Covid-19," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik* 24, no. 2 (n.d.): 153–70.

¹⁴Morissan Morissan et al., "Media Framing on Covid-19 Pandemic in Malaysian and Indonesian Newspapers," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 10, no. 10 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v10-i10/8016>.

several metaphors to influence public opinion on combating the virus. Several metaphors, such as ‘enemy’ or ‘invisible enemy’, to describe the virus are frequently used by both ministers.¹⁵

In a specific study, Essam, in *How Do Arab Tweeters Perceive the COVID-19 Pandemic?* analysed Arab society's perceptions of COVID-19 on Twitter through attribution theory and corpus analysis. His study found several dominant topics on COVID-19 in media Twitter, namely the outbreak of COVID-19, the symptoms of the disease, and religious discourse concerning COVID-19. From perception theory, Arab societies, in general, have affective psychological on COVID-19, indicated by sadness and negative emotions.¹⁶

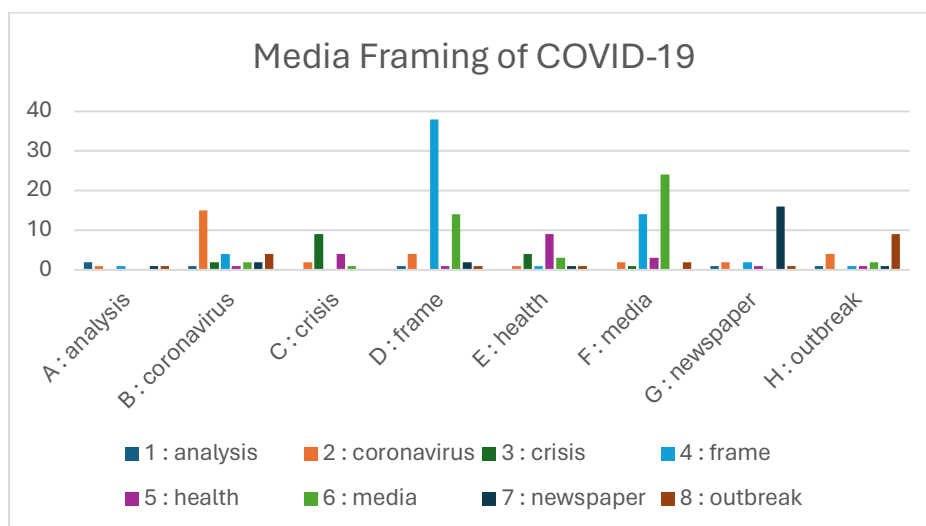


Figure 1. Previous studies on media framing of COVID-19

Based on the chart, most of the previous research focused on how framing media of COVID-19 explained the case of COVID-19 from its health

¹⁵Kumaran Rajandran, “‘A Long Battle Ahead’: Malaysian and Singaporean Prime Ministers Employ War Metaphors for COVID-19,” *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies* 20, no. 3 (2020): 261–67, <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2020-2003-15>.

¹⁶Bacem A Essam and Muhammad S Abdo, “How Do Arab Tweeters Perceive the COVID-19 Pandemic?,” *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 2020, 1–15.

perspective.¹⁷ This means the studies are more aware of how the country or government overcame the pandemic. Meanwhile, the survey on Arabic news media is limited. Therefore, this paper has novelty and a contribution to the journal by presenting the analysis of how Arabic media in Indonesia and Malaysia framed news on religious activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method

This qualitative research is conducted using data from primary and secondary resources. The primary resources are original materials for providing research evidence. By contrast, secondary sources are close to the primary data or resources.¹⁸ In this research, primary data on religious practices during COVID-19 in Indonesia and Malaysia are obtained from two daily Arabic newspapers, Indonesia Al-Youm and Aswaq Malaysia, dated from 2020 to 2021. The two newspapers were chosen because they are the most representative Arabic-language newspapers in presenting national news in their respective countries. Meanwhile, other data were also obtained from other Arabic newspapers, namely Al-Jazeera Arabic, to see and compare the extent to which news related to religious practices was packaged in Arabic newspapers.

¹⁷Mastewal Misganaw Alemayehu, "Communicating Health: Media Framing of COVID-19 Pandemic in Sub-Saharan African Countries," *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy* 5, no. 2 (2020): 110–22, <https://doi.org/10.13187/IJMIL.2020.2.110>; Lili Gui, "Media Framing of Fighting COVID-19 in China," *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.13271>; Ekwutosi Sanita Nwakpu, Valentine Okwudilichukwu Ezema, and Jude Nwakpoke Ogbodo, "Nigeria Media Framing of Coronavirus Pandemic and Audience Response," *Health Promotion Perspectives* 10, no. 3 (July 12, 2020): 192–99, <https://doi.org/10.34172/hpp.2020.32>; Wonkwang Jo and Dukjin Chang, "Political Consequences of COVID-19 and Media Framing in South Korea," *Frontiers in Public Health* 8 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.00425>; Jude Nwakpoke Ogbodo et al., "Communicating Health Crisis: A Content Analysis of Global Media Framing of COVID-19," *Health Promotion Perspectives* 10, no. 3 (2020): 257–69, <https://doi.org/10.34172/hpp.2020.40>.

¹⁸W. David Kelton, *Input Data Collection and Analysis*, *Winter Simulation Conference Proceedings* (London: Sage, 1984), <https://doi.org/10.1201/9780203496466-8>; Donald E Polkinghorne, "Language and Meaning: Data Collection in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52, no. 2 (2005): 137, <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137>.

The research data were analysed based on analytical techniques in the media framing discipline or news framing combined with a linguistic approach. The research adopts a framing analysis of Pan and Kosicki in a practical study. In his theory, there are four major categories of structural dimensions of news discourse: syntactical structure, script structure, thematic structure, and rhetorical structure. The four categories are summarised in the following table. The syntactical structure will focus on how the journalist arranges the news, which can be reflected in the headline, lead, background information, quotes, sources, and conclusion. Meanwhile, in the script structure, attention will be paid to how the journalist narrates the news, which can be found in the completeness of the news. The thematic structure refers to how the journalist presents the news or fact, which can be reflected in the details of the news, the meaning of the sentence, coherence, and sentence form. In the rhetorical structure, the analysis will focus on how the journalist emphasised the fact by choosing a specific lexicon, graphics, metaphors, and others.¹⁹

¹⁹Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse," *Political Communication* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 1993): 55–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963>.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of Indonesia al-Youm

A. Title of the News: **في زمن كورونا... الاجتماعات الدينية في إندونيسيا بين مؤجل ومواصل**

1. Syntactic Structure

It is very interesting to note that the title of the news in Indonesia al-Youm is also available in other Arabic newspapers: <https://sudan.sahafahn.net> and <https://www.aljazeera.net> without any modification or additional information. It means that the writer of the news is the same person. It could also be identified that the three newspapers have a common opinion regarding the published news. If it is traced carefully, the news was originally published by Aljazeera. Therefore, publication dates of the news are different: Indonesia al-Youm published the news on March 21, 2020, while sudan.sahafahn.net and [Aljazeera.net](https://www.aljazeera.net) published the news on March 20, 2020.

The lead news of **في زمن كورونا... الاجتماعات الدينية في إندونيسيا بين مؤجل ومواصل** stated that Anies Baswedan was the first governor among other who issued the regulation to restrict any religious sermon including Friday Prayer and other religious minority sermon in mosques or churches:

استيق حاكم جاكرتا أنيس باسويدان غيره من مسؤولي الأقاليم والمحافظات الإندونيسية بقرار أصدره يوم الجمعة بوقف صلوات الجمع للمسلمين ابتداء من اليوم الجمعة، وكذلك صلوات الكنائس وغيرها من الطقوس للأقليات الدينية الأخرى، وما يشبه ذلك من مجالس تعليم وذكر تكثر في المجتمع الإندونيسي (Indonesia al-Youm, 20/03/2020)

The regulation on religious restriction issued by Anies narrated by the news as the foremost regulation among other Indonesian governors during pro and contra to the fatwa of MUI (Indonesian Council of Ulama).

2. Script Structure

Script Structure	What	Governor of Jakarta (حاكم جاكرتا), Anies Baswedan, issued the first regulation on religious restriction among other Indonesian governors in response to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Jakarta.
	Who	Governor of Jakarta, Anies Baswedan
	When	March 20 2020
	Where	The regulations issued in Jakarta
	Why	The regulation issued to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Jakarta, in particular
	How	The regulation on religious restriction with special reference to the restriction of Friday Prayer will be evaluated within two weeks

3. Thematic Structure

The news not only reported the regulation of religious restriction issued by Anies Baswedan but also covered important religious sermons currently happening in other parts of Indonesia. The first sermon was the World Ijtima' Tablighi congressional in Goa province, with its ten thousand members attending the event. The last event was the religious and traditional ceremonies for the inauguration of one of its bishops in Ruteng, the capital of Manggarai Province in East Nusa Tenggara Province, attended by the Cardinal of the Indonesian Catholic Church, its leaders and representatives. Others, estimated at seven thousand.

4. Rhetoric Structure

The news used the word “استبق” (trans: to precede) to describe the regulation issued by Anies. It means that the news represents Anies as the bravest

and the foremost governor in issuing religious restrictions. However, this brave decision was also supported by the fatwa from MUI. In the other part, the news shows the ambiguity of the Indonesian government in regulating other sectors, such as the economy.

لكن جوکوي، كما يشتهر إعلاميا، لم يقرر حتى الآن إغلاقا كاملا للنشاط الاقتصادي والرسمي، وفق محللين اقتصاديين، بسبب اعتماد ملايين الإندونيسيين من ذوي الدخل المحدود على المورد اليومي كالباعة المتجولين والذين يعملون في قطاعات نقل وخدمات وصناعات أخرى، فإغلاق أعمالهم سيولد مشكلة غذائية وربما أمنية إن لم يتوفر البديل لهم بشكل منظم (Indonesia al-Youm, 20/03/2020).

The ambiguity is indicated by using the word “لكن” (trans: in contrast or on the contrary) to show that the government only restricted religious sermon sectors, but not economic activities. However, the rhetorical style of the news seems to be neutral.

B. Title of the News: العاصمة الإندونيسية تبدأ تخفيف قيود احتواء كورونا

1. Syntactic Structure

The news title means, “The Indonesian capital begins easing restrictions to contain coronavirus.” The news title does not explicitly mention easing restrictions for religious practices. However, the news discusses the possibility of starting Friday prayers and employees returning to their workplaces while observing health protocols.

2. Script Structure

Script Structure	What	Jakarta capital eases Corona restrictions
	Who	Governor of Jakarta, Anies Baswedan
	When	June 4 2020
	Where	The regulations issued in Jakarta

Why	The infection continues to decline
How	Easing restrictions only applied to religious activities (Jum'at) and reopening shopping centres.

3. Thematic Structure

The news informs that there may be congregational prayers, especially Friday prayers for Jakarta residents. In addition, easing also occurs in economic activities, namely the reopening of workplaces while still wearing masks. This can be seen in the following news excerpt:

ومن جانبه قال حاكم جاكرتا، أنيس باسويدان، إنه من الممكن أن يبدأ المواطنون في التجمع للصلاة ابتداء من غد الجمعة، كما يمكن للعمال العودة إلى أماكن عملهم بدءاً من يوم الاثنين المقبل، بشرط أن يمارسوا التباعد الاجتماعي وأن يستخدموا الأقنعة في جميع الأوقات.

4. Rhetoric Structure

In terms of rhetoric, one of the elements of words that can be the main clue is the use of the word "ممکن" (trans: possibility). This means that the discourse on easing worship activities is still in a wait-and-see manner, considering the development of the COVID-19 cases. So, it is possible that the easing will not be implemented if unexpected things are found. Therefore, the rhetoric used in the news quote above is neutral and not firm.

C. Title of the News: مليون إندونيسي يسافرون لقضاء العيد مع أسرهم رغم حظر كورونا

1. Syntactic Structure

This news title shows the existence of religious activities, namely the celebration of Eid al-Fitr amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The news title states that millions of Indonesians travel to celebrate Eid al-Fitr in their hometowns with their families amid the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Script Structure

<i>Script Structure</i>	What	Millions of Indonesians return home to celebrate Eid al-Fitr
	Who	Indonesian Muslims
	When	May 7 2021
	Where	Indonesia in general
	Why	To celebrate Eid al-Fitri
	How	Ignoring the awareness of COVID-19 and prioritizing going home

2. Thematic Structure

The news title above shows that the government cannot stem the number of travellers who travel to their hometowns. However, the news tries to show that there are still efforts from the government to convey information about the ban on going home so that the number of travellers decreases. This can be seen in the following text:

السلطات ستواصل نشر المعلومات حول الحظر المفروض؛ حتى ينخفض عدد المسافرين

3. Rhetoric Structure

Rhetorically, the news quoted above uses the word "*badʒr*", showing that the government can only issue prohibition instructions without being able to firmly prevent travellers from returning to their hometowns. To prevent the spread of the virus during homecoming, the government continues to prepare 15,500 security forces. The following is an excerpt from the text:

ومن المقرر أن يتم نشر حوالي 155 ألف فرد من الشرطة والقوات المسلحة للعمل على تطبيق الحظر المفروض حالياً والحفاظ على الأمن ومراقبة تنفيذ البروتوكولات الصحية.

In the news excerpt above, the word *al-badʒr* gets an additional word after it, namely *al-mafrudh*, so it becomes one phrase *al-badʒr al-mafrudh*, which means mandatory prohibition. This phrase shows rhetorically that the government has

carried out its obligation, namely issuing a ban on homecoming by preparing security forces to oversee the policy.

D.Title of the news: لقاح الكورونا يتسبب في إعلان إندونيسيا إلغاء رحلات الحج لهذا العام 1442 هـ

1. Syntactic structure

The news title above states that the coronavirus vaccine is the main reason Indonesia is not allowed to perform the Hajj pilgrimage in 1442 H, and there is no other reason.

2. Script Structure

<i>Script Structure</i>	What	The cancellation of Hajj trips for the year 1442 AH
	Who	Ministry of Religious Affairs
	When	June 4 2021
	Where	Official channel online of religious affairs IG
	Why	Due to coronavirus vaccine
	How	The Ministry of Religious Affairs released the announcement after the formal release of Saudi Arabia on listed countries permitted to come to Saudi Arabia for Hajj.

3. Thematic Structure

The Indonesian government announced its position on Hajj this year, 2021. The Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs, Yaqut Khalil, confirmed that his country has cancelled Hajj trips for 2021. Indonesia did not send the hajj pilgrims because, on May 31, 2021, the Saudi government released news containing permission for hajj pilgrims from 11 countries to enter Saudi Arabia, such as America, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. Based on the news

release, Indonesia is not included in the 11 countries allowed to perform the Hajj.

This can be seen in the following news text excerpt:

يذكر أنه في يوم الإثنين الموافق 2021/5/31 أعلنت وزارة الداخلية السعودية، عبر حسابها الرسمي على تويتر، عن السماح لحجاج أحد عشر دولة بدخول المملكة. من بين الدول التي سُمح لحجاجها بالوفود على بيت الله الحرام الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، واليابان، و الإمارات العربية المتحدة. ولم ترد إندونيسيا ضمن الدول المذكورة في بيان الوزارة السعودية.

The underlined sentence emphasizes that Indonesia is not included among the countries permitted to perform the Hajj pilgrimage.

4. Rhetoric Structure

The keyword that is the rhetorical point in the news above is the phrase "*liqob kuruna*". The phrase is placed at the beginning of the news title and is repeatedly mentioned in the news text. This is why Indonesia did not get permission to perform the hajj. A quote that confirms the use of the rhetorical word "*liqob kuruna*" can be seen in the following news text:

ويعد لقاح فيروس كورونا المستخدم في إندونيسيا أحد العوامل المؤثرة في عدم حصول إندونيسيا على حصة في موسم الحج لهذا العام.

Analysis of Aswaq Malaysia

A. Title of the news: ولاية برليس الماليزية تقرر استبدال صلاة الجمعة بالظهر في المنازل

1. Syntactic Structure

The news title above shows how Aswaq Media reported on implementing Friday prayer during the pandemic by replacing it with Dzuhur prayers at home. This policy follows the decision of the Minister of Religious Affairs, Malaysia, Dr.

Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri. Antaranews.com, Indonesia, also reported similar news.²⁰

2. Script Structure

<i>Script Structure</i>	What	The Malaysian state of Perlis has decided to replace Friday prayers with Dzuhur prayers at home
	Who	The Malaysian state of Perlis
	When	March 13 2020
	Where	State of Perlis
	Why	Replacing Friday prayers with the Dzuhur prayer due to Covid-19.
	How	Replacing Friday prayer with Dzuhur prayer at home.

3. Thematic Structure

Based on the news title, the state of Perlis issued a decree regarding replacing Friday prayers with Dzuhur prayers at their respective homes. The decision was made after consultation and direction from the Minister of Health and the Perlis Fatwa Committee. Based on the Royal Decree, Friday prayers can be replaced with Dzuhur prayers, which are explicitly carried out at their respective homes. This means that eliminating Friday prayers should also impact the absence of obligatory prayers in the mosque congregation.

أصدرت ولاية برليس شمال غرب ماليزيا مرسوماً يقضي باستبدال صلاة الجمعة في جميع أنحاء الدولة اليوم (13 مارس) ليحل محلها صلاة الظهر في المنازل. وأكدت إدارة ولاية برليس ان إصدار المرسوم جاء بعد الحصول على آراء ومشورة من وزارة الصحة بشأن Covid 19 وكذلك الإرشاد الديني من لجنة فتوى برليس.

²⁰antaranews.com, "Sholat Jumat di Perlis diganti sholat dhuhur di rumah masing-masing," Antara News, March 13, 2020, <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1353398/sholat-jumat-di-perlis-diganti-sholat-dhuhur-di-rumah-masing-masing>.

4. Rhetoric Structure

Regarding rhetoric, the news quote above is very cautious and formal. The rhetoric of caution can be reflected in the use of the diction "*istibdal*" which is "replacing," instead of using other words such as "prohibit" or "eliminate" the implementation of Friday prayers. This means that the Aswaq news is careful not to say that Friday prayers are not carried out first due to the increasing spread of the Coronavirus. Regarding formal rhetoric, Aswaq uses the diction "*asdhdarat*" [issued] at the beginning of the sentence. Based on the dictionary, "*ashdara*" has various meanings, such as to issue, release, and produce. In the context of the news, formally, the Aswaq newspaper correctly chooses the word "*ashdara*" to show that the decision issued is related to replacing Friday prayers with Dzuhur prayers at home.

B. Title of the News: تمديد تعليق صلاة الجمعة في مساجد سيلانجور حتى 17 أبريل

1. Syntactic Structure

The news title states that the Jum'ah prayer has been extended until April 2020 due to the spread of Coronavirus in Malaysia. There is no other issue with extending prayer Jum'ah at home except due to the Coronavirus.

2. Script Structure

<i>Script Structure</i>	What	Suspension of Friday prayers in Selangor mosques extended until April 17
	Who	The Sultan of Selangor
	When	March 18 2020
	Where	The office of the Sultan
	Why	Suspension of Jum'ah prayer due to Covid-19.
	How	The announcement, released by the Sultan of Selangor in

particular, was about suspending Friday prayer until April 17, 2020, to prevent the virus outbreak.

3. Thematic Structure

Since every region in Malaysia has its own Sultanate, the Sultan of Selangor also followed other Sultan in releasing the decree to suspend the Friday prayer during the pandemic and replacing it with the Dzuhur prayer at home. Other religious activities in the Mosques or other religious places were suspended until April 17.

أعلن مكتب سلطان ولاية سيلانجور أنه تقرر تمديد تعليق صلاة الجمعة في جميع المساجد في الولاية حتى 17 أبريل. كما طالب جميع المسلمين باستبدال صلوات الجمعة بصلاة الظهر في منازلهم خلال فترة التعليق. وقال البيان إن التجمعات والفعاليات والأنشطة في جميع المساجد والمصليات وأماكن العبادة علقت حتى 17 أبريل.

4. Rhetoric Structure

Still using formal rhetoric, the news portrays the suspension of Friday prayer in the Selangor region. Therefore, the word “*a’land*” means “to announce,” and “*maktab*” means “office” reflected that the news was released formally by the government.

C. Title of the news: سلطان سيلانجور يعلن عن إغلاق المساجد في الولاية حتى 31 مايو

1. Syntactic structure

Unlike previous news, the title clearly stated that the mosques were closed for religious activities until May 31, 2020.

2. Script Structure

<i>Script Structure</i>	What	The Sultan of Selangor announces the closure of Mosques in the state until May 31
	Who	The Sultan of Selangor

When	April 13 2020
Where	Selangor
Why	The closure of the Mosques in Selangor to avoid the outbreak of the virus
How	The closure of Mosques that the Sultan of Selangor released was to prevent the increased number of infections in Malaysia.

3. Thematic Structure

Chronologically, the news of Aswaq informed the process of restricting religious practices in several regions in Malaysia and other areas of Malaysia in general. Former news reported that the suspension of Friday prayer and other religious activities in mosques was until April 17, but then it was extended until May 31 due to the increased number of infections. The following news shows it:

أعلن سلطان سيلانجور شرف الدين إدريس شاه عن تمديد تأجيل صلاة الجمعة وكل الصلوات الجماعية في مساجد الولاية حتى تاريخ 31 مايو القادم، وذلك للمساعدة في مكافحة انتشار فيروس كورونا المستجد كوفيد-19، حيث تصدر الولاية قائمة الإصابات في ماليزيا بـ 1,236 إصابة من أصل 4,683 حتى يوم البارحة 12 أبريل.

4. Rhetoric Structure

The news title used the word “*ighlaq*” to mean “close.” It indicates that the government is committed to stopping any religious activities in the mosques in Malaysia. If, in the previous news, the government only suggested replacing the Jum’ah prayer with the Dzuhur prayer at home—which could probably be daily prayer at the mosque with a small number of Muslims allowed—now with this news, the government has confirmed strictly not to perform any prayer at the mosques.

D. Title of the news: رفع جزئي للحظر عن صلاة الجمعة والجماعة في بعض مساجد ماليزيا

1. Syntactic Structure

The title of the news captures the decision of the government of Malaysia to lift a partial ban on Friday prayers and other congregational prayers in some mosques in Malaysia.

2. Script Structure

<i>Script Structure</i>	What	The partial lifting of the ban on Friday and congregational prayers in some Malaysian mosques.
	Who	Malaysian religious affairs
	When	May 15 2020
	Where	Malaysia
	Why	Some areas are free from virus infection.
	How	The partial lifting of the ban on Friday prayer and other congregational prayers is applicable only to several mosques.

3. Thematic Structure

Through the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Malaysian government has implemented a policy to ease the implementation of Friday prayers in several mosques in Malaysia. This policy is specifically for green areas, namely areas that are free from Coronavirus infection. This can be seen in the following news excerpt:

قررت الشؤون الدينية الماليزية رفع الحظر على صلاة الجمعة والجماعة في بعض المساجد الرئيسية في ثلاث مقاطعاتها الاتحادية بما فيها العاصمة كوالالمبور بشكل تدريجي، اعتباراً من اليوم الجمعة. وقال الوزير برئاسة مجلس الوزراء للشؤون الإسلامية الدكتور ذوالكفل محمد البكري، إن هذا القرار سيطبق في المناطق الخضراء الخالية من الإصابة بفيروس كورونا المستجد (كوفيد-19).

4. Rhetoric Structure

Initially, the news title used “*raf*” which means “lift.” It indicated that the news used formal expressions without any tendencies. Besides, the news title added “*juʿziy*,” which means “partial.” Therefore, *raf*’ *juʿziy*, which means “partial lifting” of the mosques’ re-opening in Malaysia, is only implemented in several areas.

E. Title of the News: السماح بالصلاة في المساجد بأعداد محدودة في بينانج وبيراك

1. Syntactic Structure

The news title above narrates that prayers in mosques are permitted in limited numbers for the Penang and Perak regions.

2. Script Structure

<i>Script Structure</i>	What	Allowing prayers in mosques in limited numbers in Penang and Perak.
	Who	The Sultan of Perak
	When	January 21, 2021
	Where	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
	Why	Coronavirus is still the cause of the limitation of the number of Muslims praying in mosques.
	How	It is allowed to perform Friday and five prayers at the mosques but with a limited number of Muslims.

3. Thematic Structure

The news title above explains chronologically the Malaysian government's attitude in dealing with the issue of Muslim worship during the pandemic. This

decision was officially issued by the state of Penang and Perak, as seen in the following news excerpt:

أصدر سلطان بيراك السلطان نزرين شاه قراراً يسمح بتنظيم صلاة الجمعة والصلوات الخمس في المساجد والمصليات إضافة إلى صلاة الجنازة في جميع المساجد ضمن حدود الولاية، بعدد محدود لا يتجاوز 40 شخصاً وذلك بدءاً من يوم الغد وحتى نهاية أمر تقييد الحركة (MCO)

The 5th news item broadcasts about the reopening of several mosques in Malaysia for prayers with a limited number of worshipers. This shows that the Aswaq daily newspaper can present news about worship activities during the pandemic in a coherent manner.

4. Rhetoric Structure

Like previous news, the tone of the news's title seems neutral. The title and the lead news use the word “*simah*”, which means “to allow or to permit.” Performing Friday and daily prayers at the mosques depends on certain circumstances, such as the number of *jema'ah* and the number of infections in an area. Therefore, the use of “*samaha*” only applies to those who have such situations. It is reflected in the following news:

كما أشار زيني إلى أن الولاية ستسمح بعقد المحاضرات الدينية في المساجد والمصليات بشكل حصري بين صلاة المغرب والعشاء، لكنها لن تسمح بعقد أي فعاليات أو احتفالات في المساجد والمصليات.

“Zaini also indicated that the state would allow religious lectures to be held in mosques and chapels exclusively between the Maghrib and Isha prayers. Still, it would not allow any events or celebrations to be held in mosques and chapels.”

Framing Comparison on Religious Restrictions During the Pandemic

1. Syntactic structure

The syntactic structure is the simplest because it is most visible at the beginning of the news, consisting of the title, news lead, background, and

closure.²¹ In general, Indonesia al-Youm opens its news with a news title that tends to be short and non-polemic. However, in the news title of the 1st data, the title tends to show the government's ambiguous attitude in restricting religious activities. Furthermore, both the title and the lead of the al-Youm news tend to give the impression of short information and do not give the reader the impression of reading further. This is because no perspective is highlighted in framing the news, especially regarding restrictions on religious activities during the pandemic. Unlike al-Youm, the daily newspaper Aswaq is more detailed and emphasizes the framing perspective when reporting religious activities during the pandemic. Gradually, Aswaq presents news titles that systematically report the stages of restrictions on religious practices in several central areas in Malaysia. Therefore, the title and lead of Aswaq news tend to be more interesting for readers to read in full.

2. Script Structure

In Pan and Kosicki's theory,²² the news script aspect consists of the elements of topic (What), actor (Who), time (When), location (Where), why the event occurred (Why), and how the news is presented (How). In the news of Indonesia al-Youm, the topic element revolves a lot around news related to Indonesia's attitude towards the activities of the Indonesian people during the pandemic. Al-Youm's news on what aspect, namely the news issue, especially about restrictions on religious activities, is still very rare. This impacts the next script structure elements: Who, When, Where, and Why. The actor or "Who" is

²¹Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki. "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse." *Political Communication* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 1993): 55–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963>. and Kosicki, "Framing Analysis: An Approach to News Discourse," 59.

²²*Ibid.*

more focused on the Indonesian government in Jakarta, including the Governor of Jakarta at that time. Meanwhile, the explanation regarding the time aspect of the event does not have a practice of religious restrictions that are determined by the time span. The locus or place of the news event revolves around a national scale and does not explain certain areas that experience religious restrictions, except for the capital city of Jakarta.

In contrast to Indonesia al-Youm, the daily newspaper Aswaq perfectly fulfils the script structure elements. In the What aspect, Aswaq can sequentially and in detail report the stages of restricting religious practices in Malaysia, especially regarding the implementation of Friday prayers and the five daily prayers. The actors involved in the issue of restricting religious practices include the Minister of Religious Affairs and the regional governments of Selangor, Penang, Perak, and Malaysia in general. The reporting of restrictions on religious practices in the Aswaq daily newspaper also pays close attention to the reporting time based on fatwas or decisions issued by the local government. Therefore, chronologically, Aswaq has a concrete time series of religious restrictions during the COVID pandemic, starting from March 13, 2020, March 18, 2020, April 13, 2020, May 15, 2020, and January 21, 2021.

3. Thematic Structure

The thematic structure consists of a summary and the main body of a news story. The elements analysed at this stage consist of paragraphs, propositions, sentences, and relationships between sentences. Therefore, the thematic structure is the core that connects all news elements.²³ In the daily newspaper Indonesia al-Youm, the news theme about restrictions on religious practices tends to be

²³*Ibid.*

unsystematic and jumps around. The news in Indonesia al-Youm starts from 1) the tug-of-war over restrictions on religious activities in mosques, 2) Indonesia's capital city relaxing social restrictions, 3) millions of Indonesians celebrate Eid in their hometowns, and 4) the coronavirus vaccine is the reason Indonesia is not on the list for the 2020 hajj. Thus, there are only two news titles specifically related to restrictions on religious activities during the pandemic, namely news no. 1 and no. 4. Other themes are more about restrictions on social activities in general.

In contrast to Indonesia al-Youm, the daily newspaper Aswaq can present a detailed theme of restrictions on religious activities during the pandemic, which includes the following five central themes: 1) The decision to replace Friday prayers with Dzuhur prayers at home; 2) extension of Friday prayers at home in Selangor; 3) total closure of mosques by the Sultan of Selangor; 4) partial lifting of restrictions on Friday prayers and five daily prayers in some mosques in Malaysia, and 5) permission to hold Friday prayers and five daily prayers with a limited number of worshipers. The five news themes above show that Aswaq can present a complete news framing because each news element has a good correlation in terms of the news title and the central theme raised, namely that there have been restrictions on religious activities, especially Friday prayers, with stages and gradations that are adjusted to the development of COVID-19 infection cases in Malaysia.

4. Rhetoric Structure

Rhetorical structure describes the choice of language style used by journalists to emphasize the message conveyed.²⁴ In the Indonesian daily newspaper al-Youm, the language style used tends to be simple and not too

²⁴*Ibid.*

rhetorical except in headline no. 1. The headline implies that the Indonesian government is not firm in providing rules regarding restrictions on worship during the pandemic. Therefore, the restrictions were only initiated by several regional heads, such as the governor of Jakarta, the first governor in Indonesia to issue a regulation prohibiting congregational prayers in mosques. Furthermore, the headlines and editorials of the news in the Indonesian daily newspaper al-Youm use a neutral language style and reflect the government's perspective concerning restrictions on social and religious activities during the pandemic. Neutral and formal language styles are more common in the daily newspaper Aswaq in Malaysia. This is because Aswaq is more vocal about the policies of the Malaysian government, which has gradually issued fatwas regarding restrictions on religious activities during the pandemic. Malaysia, through regional governments such as Selangor and others, has gradually issued issues and taken a firm stance by the government in providing direction on restrictions on religious activities, starting from replacing Friday prayers with Dzuhur prayers, extending the implementation of Friday prayers at home, and other themes presented by the Aswaq newspaper in a formal and neutral language style.

Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Muslim religious activities have been challenged and restricted to prevent the spread of the virus. Each Muslim country, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, has different rules and implementations of restrictions on religious activities based on religious fatwas and their respective regulations. These religious restriction regulations are one of the topics reported by Arabic-language media such as Indonesia al-Youm and Aswaq in Malaysia. Based on the analysis of the Pan and Kosicki media framing model of the two

daily Arabic newspapers, the researcher came to the following conclusions. First, Indonesia al-Youm news is generally a translation of various national news sources, then translated into Arabic. This can be seen from the excerpts from Indonesia al-Youm news, which generally include the translated news sources. Therefore, media framing is very limited and tends to follow the style of the journalists of the original source. Meanwhile, Aswaq can provide detailed media framing regarding religious activity restrictions during the Malaysia pandemic. This is because the Malaysian government has gradually issued regulations restricting religious activities in each region of Malaysia. However, the framing of news related to restrictions on religious activities tends to be neutral and does not contain elements that attack certain parties.

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