



UNDERSTANDING THE ACCEPTANCE OF MALAYSIAN SOCIETIES TOWARDS  
JOURNALISTS' NEWS GATHERING PRACTICES IN TRAGEDY NEWS  
REPORTING

ELWEEN LOKE WEI JIE

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATION (HONS) JOURNALISM  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITI TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN

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I also wish to acknowledge participants who responded to my request by sincerely answering the questionnaire, and also the selected interviewees and journalists who willingly availed themselves for interviews.

ELWEEN LOKE WEI JIE

## Approval Form

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Understanding the acceptance of Malaysian societies towards journalists’ news gathering practices in tragedy news reporting” prepared and submitted by Elween Loke Wei Jie in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Journalism is hereby accepted.

---

Supervisor

TAN JUE JUN

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

This study examined the acceptance of Malaysian societies towards crime or social beat journalists in their tragedy news gathering and reporting practices. A survey questionnaire was answered by 50 respondents who had interaction experience with crime or social beat journalists when tragedy happened, in which three were selected to undergo intensive interviews with the researcher. At the same time, three journalists from three newspapers of different languages who involve in tragedy news reporting were also being interviewed to obtain the conventional tragedy news reporting techniques in local context. A perceptual framework on sociological theories especially on attitude formation was constructed to pave a more comprehensive path that led to answering the various reasons behind perceptions such as professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness as well as attitude and level of tolerance that the public has on Malaysian tragedy news reporting journalists. The findings showed that despite the public has certain amount of respect towards the occupation of a journalist, they would not want to get involve with tragedy news reporting journalists as they see this as a disruption to their private lives when they are exposed in the media. The study also demonstrated that level of tolerance is not directly affected by education background of a person but it is implicitly cultivated based on other factors, in which privacy importance was one of the factors.

## DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources, be they printed, electronic or personal.

The word count of this project is 16, 296.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Journalism requires active involvement in the public lives of societies in order to produce news piece for the media. It is an ethical dilemma when journalists were forced to intrude personal lives of the public to gauge information for readers, such as car accidents, scandals, legal cases especially news related to death. The line between universal moral values and journalistic values within professionalism has been smudged.

When a tragedy occurs, for instance a car crash, suicide jump or attack of natural disaster, it is ordinary for human to feel despair when close-knitted family members or friends pass on. From the human psychological perspective, it is also understandable that they do not wish to be disturbed by the media when their emotions are still in great grief.

On the other hand, viewing from the readers' point of view, journalists are obliged to fulfill the responsibility to report the truth by informing the public on the tragedy. Through news, information of the deceased would be made known among news readers, where there could be acquaintances and relatives who were not informed by the direct family members as they are still in the mood of bereavement. Besides, readers would most likely engaged in reading tragic news as an emotional connection that bridges across barriers of differences to exercise sympathy and could also alert themselves of the possible occurrence of tragedies and to serve as a reminder of personal safety. Ethical consideration aside, there are also readers who enjoy from the sensational perspective on the causes of death and investigation procedures.

As such, journalists are expected to not only interview the involved victims or associated family members when the tragedy occurs to ensure the news written would not lose

its value of timeliness. Yet when professionalism is upheld by a journalist, his personal conscience has to be hurled aside, both knowing and unknowingly.

At a personal level from the journalist's perspective, he or she has to take into account of the impact on victims, the community at large and he himself when covering a tragedy to ensure a balance between the delivery of timely and sensational story and the requirement of possessing a sensitive characteristic towards all the parties involved.

For some, journalists might even go against the norm of the common practice in tragedy reporting that has infringed privacy of persons involved. It could be controversial techniques used to take pictures of the funeral procession when the immediate family disallows media from entering, or publishing of images like dead bodies that challenges decency and acceptability of people involved or even the public. This might create an annoyance or bad impression towards professionalism of journalists from the public's perception despite some images might carry interpretive meaning that would support a journalist's news writing.

Pressure exerted onto journalists that cover tragedy is derived from different societies, be it from aspects like social status, financial sustainability, culture and religion upbringing and level of education. Different social groups often react in different ways towards journalists depending on various environment factors, social position and emotional control during the tragedy.

With the many social aspects in consideration, the researcher would embark on the study of the level of acceptance of different societies when encountering journalists that cover tragic incidents based on the angles of education background, past interaction experience with journalists, public's perception towards journalists and their professionalism.

*Statement of problem*

This research aims to find out the degree of acceptance and responsiveness of the public has when confronting journalists during the news gathering process in tragedy reporting. The final outcome would be on identifying the level of toleration of different social groups that are of different educational background, past interaction experience with journalists, perceptions towards journalists and their news gathering practices in tragedy reporting.

*Objectives*

1. To find out the attitude of public from different education background towards tragedy reporting journalists.
2. To examine if possessing past experience interacting with journalists affects public's attitude towards tragedy reporting journalists.
3. To gauge public's perceptions towards professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness of Malaysian tragedy reporting journalists.
4. To learn the common and acceptable news gathering practices of tragedy news reporting among journalists.

*Research questions*

1. How education background makes a difference in public's attitude towards journalists who conduct tragedy news reporting?
2. How past interaction experience with media practitioners affects public's tendency to respond to journalists?

3. How Malaysian societies perceive tragedy reporting journalists?
4. What are the tragedy reporting news practices which are considered as common and acceptable among journalists?

*Significance of study*

Results from this research would be significant to identify public's sentiments towards tragedy news reporting and cooperativeness in facing journalists during news gathering process. For some, it would also define the notion of press intrusion when a journalist infringes privacy through stalking or tracking of an individual when he or she refused to be interviewed. This is to avoid legal complications and would as well serve a reminder to the news industry that they have to be sensitive to the degree of tolerance of different societies, and practise respect without crossing the line of overly-intruding lives of the public. Besides, the results would also be significant in justifying public perception on the professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness of Malaysian tragedy reporting journalists.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Interaction patterns between a journalist and his or her news sources*

The press system entails journalists to place tremendous emphasis on building relationship with sources. A close rapport with as many sources as possible would facilitate the gauging of deeper knowledge into a case. Most of the time, sources are referred to the people or any social, political and economy institutions whom the journalists turn to for sharing of information (Hanitzsch & Jorgensen, 2008). The relationship pattern referred as above demonstrates an information flow from the sources to journalists. For instance, organiser of an event would send an invitation to a news agency so that the editor would assign a journalist to cover on the event. The other examples would be complaint made by an individual towards the postponement of application for his or her international passport by the Department of Immigration officer, or exposing bribery in driving licence issue in the Road Transport Department.

In other words, these sources seek a platform to channel their thoughts or to utilise the press to attain certain objectives like public relations for and updates of an organisation. The relationship pattern is seemed to favour the side of journalist as sources would approach them willingly and of course, with a purpose to be achieved. Likewise, journalists would have the rights to take on or abandon the story, weighing important factors based on newsworthiness elements like proximity, severity of consequences and interest of the story to news readers.

However, the informer might not necessarily be the sole source a journalist would deal with when verification is needed. As such, journalists would need to look into many aspects



for further clarification. However, not all sources are willing to be interrupted by the sudden visit from the press.

Despite bringing displeasure to the direct sources, in this sense, the involving interviewees, journalists would attempt to gather the maximum information from their sources, leading the direction of the conversation even to where the sources might not want to go (Awad, 2006). In response to the unwelcomed navigation in the conversation, sources might resist further questioning and some might flare an annoyance of such pushiness. Thus, the prevailed position of journalists in a typical mutual relationship would be shifted depending, by and large, on the nature of the news, where tragedy reporting undeniably falls into this category.

*The contextual circles of public negative attitudes towards journalists*

Putting aside the positive mutual situation where a source approaches a journalist, tragedy reporting sees an interaction of a journalist approaching the sources. In public's eyes, journalists are not seem of an encouraging figure, as they would relate journalists to being overly intrusive in gauging for information and disrupt lives of people to gain news for publication.

Bernard A. Jenson contended in his article *How do we Form our Attitudes towards News Reporting?* published in 1958 that public has a negative attitude towards news reporting generally. The formation of negative attitude towards journalists is nurtured through three-layer contextual circles.

The first layer is the distrust of languages. Public is suspicion on the construction of the news and words used by journalists. As text is polysemic, words used in the article, though

not intentionally written in a subjective manner by journalists, could be interpreted the other way round by readers. This would result in a misunderstanding between audiences and actual meaning conveyed by interviewees.

The second intermediate ring is a fraction of the consequence of the prevailing the distrust of language through discipline reading. Audience is exposed to various form of news everyday as they read. News concerning public figures for blaming media for slander and malignance to damage their reputation would have an impact that the press might not absolute truthful and accurate in reporting.

Moreover in tragedy reporting, the fear of exaggeration by journalists to sensationalise the tragedy exists in the mindset of the society. This fear eventually leads on to the third contextual cycle, that is, the fear of mass media as it has often being misuse for the wrong reason that would bring harm to public themselves. Thus negative attitude is formed through the experience of the public with news reporting through these contextual cycles that led to them to be worried of inaccuracy, distortion, bias, imbalance and unfairness in news reporting.

#### *Educational psychology and social development*

Educational psychology is an area of application attempts to define, describe and explain changes in a person in various stages of development (Pasricha, 1963). It is a study of human mind by which principally a person's nature behaviour or attitude is being modified by the environment in the learning operation. Social development is a study field under education psychology. The maturing and growing of an individual develops not only physically, mentally, emotionally behaviours and also social development likewise.

Socialisation plays a crucial role in the process of presenting alternate channels for individual behaviour together with positive and negative sanctions which would lead to acceptance or rejection of others eventually encourage the formation of formal personality not born with (White, 1977). According to Prem Parischa, under socialisation, among things that must be learned is the power to inhibit or to moderate expression of unacceptable needs and intolerant action upon an individual.

*“In socialisation, changes pass from impatient, self-centred, pleasurable seeking infant, concerning only with his survival to defer his pleasures, considering others, becomes educated, self-control and develop eventually to assume some responsibility in society.”*

(Parischa, 1963, pp. 81)

The socialisation process in the educational psychology would progressively teach members of a society to respond to ways interacting within the society when they equipped themselves with experience learned through both formal and informal education. For instance, in dealing with journalists in tragedy reporting, the more educated persons would be perceived as more reserved in displaying irritation towards journalists’ frequent questionings. They realised the importance of keeping a good rapport with journalists as in future, they might in turn seek help from journalists in certain manners like acting as informers of event or complainers of issue stated in the interaction pattern earlier. This is also in coherence with the relative effects on influence of education in emphasizing ‘relative self-esteem’, opportunities and network position (Preston & Feistein, 2004).

Apart from the importance of education in the socialisation process from the aspect of social development, the learning process of interaction within the society in education

institutions would influence the way people think. Conducive environment like schools and campuses would train those with more advanced education to develop a greater awareness towards a broader and more sophisticated knowledge (Jackman, Mary & Muha 1984).

As a result of the awareness learned through lectures and also a relationship forged with people of different social background, it encourages more enlightened and tolerant views in a spectrum beyond the cognition level as opposed to those with little education background. This means the educated ones would go deeper into an issue and not just abusing their emotion simply towards anybody when an understanding on the particular issue is developed.

As such, it is assumed that to an individual who had received higher education, he or she would value interpersonal relationship with personnel from different fields. Facial expression presented in front of others would be much more controlled especially when interacting with another unknown person of the society. As such, a more formal but less personal characteristic would be formed in the process of socialisation as he or she learned the importance of maintaining a good relationship or network with people despite under a forlorn situation or emotional breakdown a person might experience.

However, Jackman and Muha (1984) stressed that the effect of education on the increase of tolerance would become minimal as the privileged groups develop sophisticated defenses of their advantaged social status. Applying such observation within the journalism context, despite tolerance of an educated individual possessed towards more sensitive issues in an overall view is higher than that of the less educated ones, but when it comes to issues relating to personal matters that would challenge his reputation or position within a society, both

would react in a minimal level of tolerance towards it as their statuses, either socially or economically, are at stake.

*Audience perception: Obtrusiveness*

Tragedy reporting can often be related to as an obtrusive issue, depending on the audience's reaction and opinion towards how the news is articulated. Obtrusiveness refers to the excessive penetration beyond the acceptance of the audience and could cause them to feel uncomfortable after reading an article or viewing a picture (Zucker, 1978). An issue is said to be obtrusive when people have direct and personal involvement with an issue, like the friends or family of the victim, who at the same are also readers of the news. They usually do not wish to see an extensive coverage of the tragedy in the media (ibid.).

Hence, news that made to the media's agenda is usually the perceived unobtrusive issues to the majority people in the society. For instance, a picture of nude dead body discovered by the riverside would most probably be on the consideration for publication when ethics and on the reason of respect towards the deceased is concerned. Majority readers would feel uncomfortable to see these pictures on print, what more friends and family members of the subject in the picture.

Nonetheless, it is up to the press to measure the level of obtrusiveness in an issue according to the publication's nature and newsroom policy. Journalists would face the dilemma of deciding whether the news should be considered as obtrusive and also ways to alter the news so that it would be presented with minimal obtrusive effect to the audiences as well as to those who are relevant to the news.

*Privacy invasion in tragedy reporting*

Privacy invasion was no longer a matter of just seeking confirmation on information accuracy but it is of the concern of broader ethical issue. Harm is usually considered the psychological distress that results from unrightfully exposing some information of the plaintiff's life to the public (Rich, 2000). For instance, intrusion into an individual's solitude by eavesdropping, harassing and trespassing on private property are considered forms of intrusion whereas public disclosure of private facts such as sex life and medical history would also be regarded as offensive towards both persons involved and some audiences (ibid.).

The newsworthiness of facts about a private person should be judged from the angle of its social value, how deeply the facts intrude into the person's private activities and the extent to which the person voluntarily assumed of public notice (Taylor, Rolnicki & Tate, 2007). Journalists' intention to invade privacy are not for own pleasure as it has a lot to do with an act of desperation since they could not find relevant information or evidence to support their news articles. In some cases, privacy invasion is done in the interest of gauging newsworthy story about a person's private life which seemed to have affected the public's lives and welfares. Despite ethical dilemma is at stake, journalists are expected to carry out certain degree of undercover investigation to get a newsworthy story.

On the other hand, journalists who have a definite role in fulfilling social responsibility argued that they cannot give individuals the privacy they want and still fulfil their obligation to the public (LaMay, 2003). In tragedy news reporting, journalists play the role as the informant on a tragedy to the public instead of entertainment purposes. Any unwished tragedy projected by newspaper is also aimed towards creating awareness among public to be extra

cautious so that similar accident would not repeat itself or try their best to prevent the same kind of tragedy happens on the readers.

However, not every member of the societies is aware of the role of a journalist. They see journalists negatively especially during the aftermath. The emotional distressed parties, having no experience dealing with the media would automatically refuse to cooperate with journalists until the point where journalists have no choice but to seek other alternatives to obtain information.

A tragedy news reporter should exercise greatest respect to the deceased even if the immediate family does not wish to be interviewed. They should seek other ways like the police station and witnesses of the incident to collect data instead of sneaking into an uninvited funeral session. Thus, the best guideline a journalist could offer himself, in terms of self-control and also respect for privacy is to prevent from sensationalising the issue during news writing (LaMay, 2003).

#### *Tragedy reporting techniques*

In Jack Lule's (2001) *Daily news, eternal stories: The mythological role of journalism*, he sees myths in the news tell great stories of humankind for humankind. Myth enters the picture when these stories represent important social issues or ideals in patterns, motifs and characters taken from and shaped by the shared experiences of human life that have help structure and shape stories across cultures and eras (pp. 15). In the ninth chapter of his book, he applied the metaphors of disasters, tragedies and catastrophes news under the biblical Flood myth to represent it as a staple of news (pp. 173).

Lule made use of the Christianity fundamentalist ideology on Noah's Ark to explain the Flood myth whereby humans must be warned to mend their ways or the cleansing waters will come to inundate an impure world. The few characteristics he listed was – the Flood myths are based on the premise that humankind has sinned or that particular person have strayed from the righteous path; the Flood (tragedies) comes and devastated the people; Humans became helpless against the power of the Flood and struggled futilely; and Humankind, once purified, is generated and renewed whereby fortunate individuals live on to rebuild the society.

The above metaphorical illustration serves one of the purposes of providing a series of chronological events of tragedy reporting, either directing to a personal tragedy or a natural disaster. The news story is constructed with a start by identifying the sinner (the murderer or the cause of death), followed by focusing on the devastated that the survived individuals or related person of the incident. These victims are then shown as having gone through emotional breakdown as they could not accept the sudden death. Last but not least, the anticlimax would illustrate those involving people to muster up courage to forget the painful past and face the day.

From the journalist's perspective, he or she must be on guard on the venue where the tragedy takes place and must be prepared with telephone numbers of police, fire and rescue agencies, hospitals, utilities and other institutions that are crucial to its news coverage (Rich, 2000). During news gathering process, more often than not information provided by sources or witnesses were unreliable reasoning that people tend to rumour the unreal especially during chaotic state. Thus, it is better to get the best information from official present then only go to eyewitnesses for a more comprehensive story.



A tragedy reporter must be sure of the cause, the before-and-after of the tragedy at the scene before reporting and writing the stories. He or she needs to record down in a simple graphic manner for understandings so that a proper graphic can be drawn to explain the occurrence of the tragedy.

Interviewing with grief-stricken people is inevitable for a tragedy reporter when victims of families of the victims are still in grief. Rich (2000) suggested that a journalist should begin by introducing his or her identity and expressing condolences. Firstly, he or she should divert the topic from death to focus on biological and behavioural questions to retrieve memories about the deceased. And if the interviewee is not showing a positive response, the journalist could place the notebook down and lay it at the side of the interviewee and carry out a simple friendly conversation without being overly pushy (ibid.).

On the other hand, follow-up stories which are more focused on the technical explanations such as total death toll, the cause of explosion and costs of rebuilding should be verified with the officials. If there are no any updates, a journalist can simply describe the cleanup attempts at the scene based on personal observation. Observation helps cultivate awareness of the sights and sounds around the journalist and develops natural curiosity when seeing inconsistency or contrasting happenings (Warhover & Gibbs, 2002, pp. 211). By translating whatever a journalist sees during the tragedy, it gives readers an insight of the real-time scenario but from the journalist's point of view.

### *Ethics in photojournalism*

Photography serves as witness to history that can influence judgements people make on the crucial issues of our time. Just like the way a reporter constructs his or her story by

representing the reality with closest description of words, a photojournalist has to be accurate with every picture selected and think of the consequences of each picture taken.

Photojournalists play the role to help awaken public sympathy from tragedy and calamities to mobilising international support for relief in natural disaster. It is influential and powerful as photojournalistic images would burn themselves into the consciousness of the viewer (Chapnick, 1994).

It is only normal that people would act in response to the feelings of betrayal and cynicism to the revelation of visual news media blatantly manoeuvre their views of reality (Newton, 2001). 'Seeing', has been an integral part of the human system that is inseparable from other physical senses but 'believing' grows from deeper cognitive and psychological approaches (ibid.). Hence, seeing is not necessary believing when a rational picture viewer identifies the framing process of a particular story carried out by the gatekeepers since reality could be altered within different interpretation according to respective news organisations. Photographs which are not well-represented that appear in the newspaper are also another obtrusive and intrusive issue to both readers and subjects whose pictures are taken respectively. Professional responsibility of a journalist would not escape from the ethical dilemmas in photojournalism.

Moreover, in visual depiction of catastrophe, even when bodies were excluded from the publication and signified by splatter of blood, some readers would still complaint that the pictures are obtrusive. It is not clear how pictures sometimes offend readers, though sometimes photographs shown were merely a sign to represent death without showing the body itself, but what is clear is that picture editors, duty editors and designers face real difficulties in judging what their diversified readers would find disturbing (Taylor, 1998).

Therefore, communication and content are photojournalism's foundation. A picture speaks a thousand words about people and emotions, how people deal with celebration and suffering and the understanding of nature and the physical environment (Chapnick, 1994).

*“Those who say that photographs cannot make a difference have not thought the matter through. More to the point are specific questions of whether photographs can change public perceptions on social issues, stimulate people to be active in support of their causes, affect the ways in which people live and governments conduct business.”*

(Chapnick, 1994, pp. 11)

Despite photojournalistic interaction cannot be comfortable because pictures are focused on people in distress and the least a photojournalist could do is to acknowledge and seek to understand the inherent significance of the feelings and responses of interviewees (Newton, 2001).

#### *Professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness in Journalism*

Researcher justified trustworthiness as the bigger picture that comprises professionalism and credibility under its umbrella reasoning that professionalism is directed particularly towards the working ethics of the journalists whereas credibility is referred to the good name of the newspaper organisation. Hence, trustworthiness bridged across two components of professionalism and credibility to define a general believability of information published in the newspaper as well as journalistic reporting according to facts and the actual scenario.

Trustworthiness serves as several external functions for professionals as it fulfils the implicit promise made upon entering the field, upholds reputations and promotes collaboration

so that they would gain benefit from the relationship and thus a journalist would need to maintain a balance between cognitive and moral legitimacy (Borden, 2007). When credibility of a newspaper is established among the community and they recognise its journalists' professionalism in performing his duty accurately, a reciprocal sense of trustworthiness would be generated between the two components: The journalists and the community. In other words, trusting information provided by the community and in turn, the community would believe journalists' professionalism in upholding accuracy in the news published.

However, putting the trust on newspaper organisation aside, there is evidently a distrust that has been sown in the public of the mainstream media's compliance to report accurately on what matters. Sense of professionalism derives from respect of a practitioner towards his or her profession. Thus, professionalism serves as a guide internalised by a practitioner to withstand corruptive institutional pressure and ethical dilemma (Borden, 2007). Corruptive institutional pressure referred here revolves around editorial pressure, like faking statistics of street interview when rushing for deadline; and relationship with advertisers, in which they might intervene in determining writing content; or even political pressure that such influence would directly conduct censorship, or plant fear in a newspaper organisation till it self-censor its news prior to publishing.

A journalist must be independent of these institutional influences by abiding the Code of Conduct by National Union of Journalism that constitutes various considerations a journalist must keep up with his professionalism. As such, professionalism is needed to have anti-market elements that would motivate journalists to separate their role as professional media practitioners from the role as employees of a news organisation (Borden, 2007).

In a libertarian press system, idealistically speaking, probability for a journalist who has deep respect journalistic integrity and is aware of his responsibility towards the nation would demonstrate a greater commitment towards his profession. However in Malaysian context, whereby press licence is subjected to the approval of Ministry of Home Affairs, restricted by various both transparent like the Printing Press and Publication Act 1984<sup>1</sup> and the not-so-transparent media laws like the Official Secrets Act 1972<sup>2</sup> and Internal Security Act 1960<sup>3</sup>, guidelines in code of conduct might be just over idealistic at times. In other words, a journalist operating in an environment with stricter media control cannot be judged for his ethical practices. Hence, he cannot be expected to forgo all including his life for upholding moral and ethical beliefs and principles of exposing the hidden ugly truth to the public (Ibrahim, 2010).

While the news media across developing nations look at media laws and regulations as significant leverage to hold them answerable, majority of Malaysian journalists prefer to work from within in the form of self-censorship to prevent from implicating into unnecessary turmoil (Ibrahim, 2010).

On the other hand, the Malaysian media have been continuously being criticised for their depiction of crimes in the country, not only high profile official in national news but also in community journalism. For instance, the former Malaysian Inspector General of Police Tan

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<sup>1</sup> Printing Press and Publication Act 1984: The Ministry of Home Affairs was given the authority to grant or suspend publication of newspaper, as well as circulation and distribution. The ministry would monitor presses in the country and presses would need to renew their publication licenses every year (Ramanathan & Faruqui, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Official Secrets Act 1972: A statute in Malaysia which prohibits the dissemination of information classified as official secrets. Should a journalist not know information obtained from a particular source is classified as official secrets safety upon his investigation for a news story, his must put his personal safety at risk (ibid.).

<sup>3</sup> Internal Security Act 1960: It is a preventive law that permits detention without trial under legally defined circumstances (ibid.).

Sri Musa Hassan reminded the media that they could highlight crime stories but should not sensationalise it as it could make a bad impression to tourists and potential investors (Wilson & Ibrahim, 2009). The often highlighted news of this nature when presented before readers would become a dose of communal reinforcement<sup>4</sup> till it became a strong belief of their perceptions towards professionalism that journalists possessed deeply enrooted in their minds.

Therefore, journalists position among the ethical dilemmas of whether to stay close to professionalism according solely to their code of conduct or to morality consideration or to the practice of developmental journalism, but the boundaries are vague more often than not, resulting in journalists attempt to explore the unethical side by accentuating something minor with the blown-out-of-proportion story.

*“The temptation is great, under the pressure of daily deadlines, for the journalists to leap to conclusions, to act as an advocate, to make assumptions based on previous experience and to approach a story with preconceived notions of what is likely to happen. When the journalist gives way to such tendencies, he invites error, slanted copy and libellous publications for which there is little or no defense.”*

(Hohenberg, 1969, pp. 330)

Professionalism of a journalist is being put to risk as he or she damages his and his newspaper organisation’s credibility by venturing into the temptation of sensationalising new stories in news reporting. When the presentation of that information is weakened by untruth, bias, intrusiveness or irresponsibility, the media may gain only a few advocates but acquire

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<sup>4</sup> Communal reinforcement: A social phenomenon by which testimonials reinforced by other testimonials within a community that is more powerful than scientific evidence or accurate gathering of data by disinterested parties (Carroll, 2003).

more enemies. In fact the case for baseless sensationalisation on news stories would further incur frustration of the public towards journalists, again through communal reinforcement.

Since trustworthiness is not a value in the interpersonal communication that could be formed in short period of time but this poses a difficulty for journalists whose beat is in tragedy reporting because the news is current. Time does not permit a journalist to form a relationship and mutual trust with the subject to prevent the news from being expired on the day after. Hence, it all comes back to the reputation, that is, the credibility of a news organisation to bridge a consistent trust across the community instead of relying on personal professionalism of a journalist after all.

Credibility comes with the perception of accurate news reporting supported by accredited sources especially in the perspective of a newspaper as a whole. Likewise, journalists feel that in order to be credible, what is needed is a set of principles based on the tenets of journalism that serve the public by seeking and reporting the closest possible truth about events of great concern and interest to the people. Responsible media practitioners would also strive to collect information honestly and fairly as well as treating the people involved with compassion.

Cheryl Gibbs and Tom Warhover in their book *Getting the whole story: Reporting and writing the news* published in 2002 mentioned that “a newspaper’s credibility is acquired by getting to know the community they are covering, reporting the news without errors, writing with an eye towards details that makes their stories reflects what is really going on and why it matters to people” (Warhover & Gibbs, 2002, pp. 349).

Forging a relationship is important by gaining their trust towards a journalist so that the community being reported would respect his or her professionalism as well as the credibility of the newspaper, and thus perceive one's publication as trustworthy to rely on.



### III. METHODOLOGY

Two methods had been identified and employed in finding answers for this study, which are survey and intensive interview. This chapter will discuss the methodology used in the research. The three main sections being discussed are: (i) sampling, (ii) data collection and (iii) data analysis.

#### *Sampling*

*Survey.* Researcher conducted a survey questionnaire using a purposive sampling of 50 respondents to examine Malaysian societies' tolerance towards the journalist practices in tragedy reporting under different circumstances.

From a mathematical perspective, the use of particular subset people that fulfills the criteria a researcher intended in its research methodology to obtain data with relevance to the subject of study is defined as purposive sampling (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005). Despite of getting random sample (combination of sample of whom might and might never have experience with media practitioners in tragedy reporting), purposive sampling is necessary in this study as to providing accurate insights of respondents who had directly involved in a particular tragedy and had been dealing directly with crime or social desk reporter, such as witnessed a particular tragedy and being interviewed by reporter. Setting such criteria is to ensure that the participants able to provide relevant personal opinion based on real experience.

The age range of sample chosen is between 18 and 60 year-old on the reason that 18 is the starting point of a teenager crossing into young adulthood. Based on the Federal Constitution, the judiciary of Malaysia defined a child as a person under the age of 18. As such, an individual aged 18 and above is expected to be accountable for his manner and

behaviour, for responsibility is to be practised. Mentally, they would have achieved a certain level of maturity, thus it was assumed that they would have developed matured individual perceptions towards journalists covering tragedy reporting and able to provide significant answer for the research. On the other hand, age increment widens memory ability and cognitive performance. An article in *New Scientist* (1984) stated the general trend is that there is a moderate decline in memory in people over 60, and it was reaffirmed by *ScienceDaily* on September 13, 2010. In view of importance in memory ability since respondents are required to recall experience with tragedy reporting journalist, the sampling thus had been decided to set 60 as the maximal age.

A collection of respondents from all walks of life across the states in Peninsular Malaysia was targeted as the mainstream newspapers are available to the readers in the region. This is to ensure data collected has higher geographical representativeness and lower biasness in general.

*Intensive interview.* From the 50 surveyed respondents, three respondents who had been identified as being able to contribute the most relevant information to this research had been chosen as the respondents of an intensive interview. Meanwhile, journalists from different presses and of different vernacular languages who have experiences in tragedy reporting had been selected as subjects of intensive interview, preferably *China Press*, *Malay Mail* and *Sinar Harian*.

Among the variety of Chinese newspapers, *China Press* was chosen as its news agenda primarily focuses on social issues. Whenever major tragedies like car accident and natural disasters involving deaths often make the headline of the day. Thus, its journalists whose beat

is of the relevant news desk are perceived to have possessed more tragedy reporting experiences. Researcher targeted the Malay Mail journalists for the English medium because of the nature of the newspaper. Compared to The Star and New Straits Time which emphasize more on politics and government news, Malay Mail highlights more on social issues, especially those are closer to the grassroots level. As for the Malay language newspaper, journalist from Sinar Harian was picked because of its Malay target audiences. As a growing and well-celebrated newspaper among the Malay community that focuses more on community news, researcher was able to identify tragedy newspaper reporting techniques practised by its journalist.

Journalists from the three newspapers in different languages were chosen because of the different communities they represent – the Chinese speaking, English speaking and Malay speaking. Each and every newspaper would have its editorial policies in conducting tragedy reporting and ways of interacting with victims or immediate of the victims from the various communities during tragedy reporting. The similarities and differences were identified to generate a set of acceptable tragedy reporting techniques which are suitable to be used in the Malaysian context.

*Data collection*

As this research attempts to study both quantitative and qualitative evidence, survey and intensive interviews had been carried out in order to collect data from both the public who had personal encounters with journalists in tragedy reporting and also journalists on the beat.

Survey makes an important connection between survey objectives and research questions though it takes time and effort to organise a wide range of data collection (Punch, 2003). Babbie (2001) defined surveys as a very old research technique which operates to generate a representative data from respondents and is still frequently used in studying courses in the social science field today. Barose and Straubhaar (2004) mentioned that survey enables researcher to have higher confidence in generalising the findings by extending research to a more realistic setting and diverse populations. Having advantages by conducting survey using standardised questionnaire, researcher viewed this method as able to bring useful data and information for short-term analysis in this study.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions relating to public perceptions that require direct inputs from the respondents whereas demographical data such as education background would be studied based on their personal reaction towards journalists in tragedy reporting during casual oral communication.

Segmentation of survey questions according to different categories was structured to assist the researcher as well as respondents to have a clearer picture of the survey direction. It also eased the transition of respondents to go through the questions without bearing the burden of viewing the entire survey as a lump of questions that would in turn affect the accuracy of the answers provided.

Prior to distributing the survey questionnaire to the respondents, the surveyor conducted a pilot test with 30 random respondents that fulfill the purposive sampling requirements (refer to Appendix A for pilot study survey questionnaire).

A copy of questionnaire in the Chinese language was prepared for respondents who are more proficient in the language. Using the Chinese language would help them understand better thus providing a more certain answer (refer to Appendix B for survey questionnaire in Mandarin).

On the other hand, intensive interviews are essentially a hybrid of the one-to-one interview approach. It is unique because it provides detailed background and a good rationale behind the answers given by the respondents whereby data concerning respondents' experiences, feelings and opinions are recorded in the process of the interview (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005).

“The procedures of an intensive interview are similar to that of a personal interview. It involves problem definition, respondent recruiting, data collection and analysis procedures (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005, pp. 136)”. Open-ended questions would be prepared at first hand to serve as the foundation of the entire interview but could be extended to different questions spontaneously either to lighten up the intensity of the interview or to acquire a better case or example to support data provided by the respondents.

From all the respondents who completed the survey, three among them whose answers the researcher believed to be able to contribute to his critical analysis, of which a Chinese, Malay and Indian would be selected respectively for a one-to-one interview. Choosing the three most representative candidates for interview would help to see a clearer picture of how

each race reacts towards and perceives tragedy reporting journalists (refer to Appendix D for intensive interview questions with survey respondents).

Meanwhile, the intensive interview with tragedy reporting journalists would help to maintain equilibrium and also help to provide triangulation to this study after considering information gathered from the survey respondents' perspective and from the previous relevant literature reviews, journalists were given a chance to have a say in the tragedy reporting techniques and how they think of public's reaction towards journalists every time they cover a tragedy. Journalists would tend to portray their professionalism in their job field but the researcher would be able to identify the characteristics of the persons of which they themselves might be using journalistic professionalism to create silhouette to veil their disrespect for humanity.

Both verbal and non-verbal responses were taken into consideration while evaluating the interview atmosphere (Wimmer & Dominick, 2005). The advantages include providing the research an alternative option in digesting data provided based on the language or paralanguage that could easily help reduce biasness of the respondents especially on sensitive issues such as tragedy reporting in this case.

Likewise, questions for intensive interview for journalists had been pre-tested for length and workability among course mates to identify the relevance and suitability of questions since the third year journalism students, especially those who have experienced tragedy reporting during their internship, would contribute helpful insights in developing a list of more insightful and relevant questions (refer to Appendix E for intensive interview questions with journalists).

## Data analysis

*Survey.* In this study, data collected had been used to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ 1: How education background makes a difference in public's attitude towards journalists who conduct in tragedy news reporting?

RQ 2: How past interaction experiences with media practitioners affects public's tendency to respond to journalists?

RQ 3: How Malaysian societies perceive tragedy reporting journalists?

RQ 4: What are the tragedy reporting news practices which are considered as common and acceptable among journalists?

Survey questions were being categorised into four parts as below (refer to Appendix C for survey questionnaire):

Section A: The following questions were to examine the relationship between past experiences of the public interacting with journalists and attitude towards journalists.

This section was specifically designed for respondents who have past interaction experiences with journalists before encountering the tragedy reporting journalists. It consisted of Question (1). If respondents check 'yes' for the question, then they shall proceed with a series of three questions in relations to the past interaction experiences with journalists prior to the tragedy reporting case.

Section B: The following questions were to gauge public's perceptions towards Malaysian journalists' professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness.

Section B consisted of eight questions to study respectively on professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness of Malaysian tragedy reporting journalists and their news gathering and reporting practices in the eyes of the public.

Section C: The following questions were to find out the attitude of public from different education background towards journalists news gathering practices in tragedy reporting.

Question (1) to Question (3) strived to link the degree of privacy respondents would value to their reactions towards tragedy reporting journalists if the latter cross over the boundary at the first part. This is to study the level of tolerance. Whereas Question (4) and Question (5) are questions directly related to the education level and their opinion of education towards the cultivation of one's tolerance.

Section D: Respondent's personal particulars.

This section comprised demographic data such as age, gender and ethnicity of the respondents. It is to facilitate the researcher's analysis to explain the observation based on the answered questionnaires.

*Intensive interview.* There were two intensive interviews conducted with two categories of selected respondents.

The first intensive interview targeted three out of the 50 surveyed respondents that fulfilled the criteria listed in the sampling section of the methodology. 12 questions were asked to gauge their personal encounters with tragedy reporting journalists from the beginning



to the end. Questions 1 to 5 attempted to answer the basic five Ws and one H regarding the incident whereas the rest of the questions were mostly opinion-based that served as observational evidence to the researcher's analysis (refer to Appendix D for intensive interview questions with survey respondents).

On the other hand, the intensive interview with crime or social desk reporters from presses of three languages consisted of 13 questions that would help in answering RQ4 to find out the common and acceptable tragedy news reporting techniques practised by tragedy reporting journalists in Malaysia. The interview covered a series of questions to get to know the journalists in the line personally and their affiliation with the news organization prior to seeking the common procedures a tragedy reporting journalist would need to follow through. Expressions and opinions of the tragedy reporting journalists towards public they encountered were taken into consideration weighing the challenges they face and pressures from parties involved (refer to Appendix E for intensive interview questions with journalists).

## IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

*Demographics of survey respondents*

The results for findings and analysis generated from the survey questionnaire answered by 50 respondents who fulfilled the sampling criteria involved 19 males (38%) and 31 females (62%) aged between 18 and 60 (see Table 1), comprising a majority of 33 Chinese (66%), followed by 13 Malays (26%) and four Indians (8%) and 49 of them (98%) are from West Coast of the Peninsular Malaysia (see Table 2).

*Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Age Range*

Age range (years)	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
18-27	32	64
28-37	9	18
38-47	2	4
48-57	7	14
58-60	0	0
Total	50	100

*Table 2: States of Origin of the Surveyed Respondents*

States	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Johor	19	38
Melaka	12	24
Negeri Sembilan	0	0
Selangor	4	8
Perak	11	22
Kedah	0	0
Pulau Pinang	3	6
Perlis	0	0
Kelantan	0	0
Terengganu	0	0
Pahang	1	2
Total	50	100

*Correlation between public's past interaction experience with media practitioners and the public's tendency to respond to journalists*

*Public's impression made upon interaction with journalists.* Six (labeled as A, B, C, D, E and F respectively) out of the 50 respondents surveyed have had interaction with other journalists in any formal occasion prior to experience with the tragedy reporting

journalists in which five of them were recorded to have interaction once while one had twice (see Table 3).

*Table 3: Cases of Six Respondents in their Interaction with Journalists Prior to the Tragedy Encounter*

Respondents	No of interaction	Date of Interaction	Interaction setting
A	1	More than 1 year	Street interview
B	1	1 year ago	Accident scene
C	1	1 year ago	Street interview
D	1	6 months ago	Accident scene
E	1	1 year ago	Accident scene
F	2	6 months ago; More than 1 year	Street interview; During funeral

By separating the six cases from the rest, researcher identified differences in the data related to the study of the public's impression between respondents that only interacted with tragedy reporting journalists and these cases.

Researcher looked at the rating of impression by respondents towards tragedy reporting journalists. Impression itself is a vague notion based on remembrances retained from the past experience or known as the 'primary memories'.

*"Each momentary experience comprises a momentary primal impression and a simultaneously apprehended sequence of representations, the retentional modifications of*

*preceding primal impressions. The primal impression is the ‘source-point’: it is here that all experience of temporally extend objects originates.”*

(Dainton, 2006, pp. 151)

Respondents were asked to rate their impression on tragedy reporting journalists.

This is how researcher defined the rating scale. ‘Excellent’, designated to refer to the most positive perception on the top of the scale, is defined as extremely good and is used when someone is very pleased or approved of something with a certain degree of accolades and honours, according to meaning retrieved from the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. ‘Good’ is coded with the definition of pleasantly high that meets more than what the acceptable standard is required of. ‘Okay’ on the other hand represents the expression of a satisfactory perception towards something. ‘Poor’, contradicted the meaning of ‘good’ literally, fits the definition of a quality that is lower than expected. ‘Terrible’ described failure to meet even the basic satisfactory requirements in addition to irking others with something of negative consequences.

For the 44 respondents who had no prior interaction with journalists before encountering tragedy reporting journalists, the results showed slightly less than half of the respondents rated them as ‘good’ (48%), 17 rated them ‘okay’ (34%) while nine (18%) said their impression on tragedy reporting journalists were ‘poor’ (see Table 4). None of them select the extreme impressions (‘excellence’ and ‘terrible’).

*Table 4: Impression Rating of 44 Respondents and the Six Independent Cases*

Rate of impression	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
<i>44 respondents</i>		
Excellence (1)	0	0
Good (2)	18	36
Okay (3)	17	34
Poor (4)	9	18
Terrible (5)	0	0
<i>6 respondents</i>		
Excellence (1)	0	0
Good (2)	6	12
Okay (3)	0	0
Poor (4)	0	0
Terrible (5)	0	0
Total	50	100

In mathematical measurement, assuming ‘excellence’ is given the value of 1, 2 for ‘good’, 3 for ‘okay’, 4 for ‘poor’, 5 for ‘terrible’ (the smaller the value, the better impression respondents have for tragedy reporting journalists they have interacted with), the median value for the statistics is 2.5.

Meanwhile, the six respondents rated in unison their impression as ‘good’, that is, with the median value of 2.

From replies received from interviewees in the intensive interview, two gave a very positive feedback on their first impression on journalists, while one expressed slight displeased with a disoriented interview manner but overall was fine with journalists.

The positive impression they have on tragedy reporting journalists encountered was mostly because of the non-chaotic atmosphere. There was less tension of crowd except the three to six journalists (excluding photojournalists whom every single interviewee for the research could not remember the exact number of their attendance) surrounding them throughout the interview. But those journalists were said to have not crossed the line to intrude interviewees’ personal space of comfort except the flashlight of cameras did cause uneasiness to them.

Despite replies were mostly skewed to positive responses (between ‘good’ and ‘okay’), almost all the interviewees said it was the writers that had made good impression on them but not the photojournalists. A stark contrast of manner is seen as journalists address them with ‘Mister’, ‘Encik’ and the link while photojournalists either kept snapping their pictures or gave instructive directions that is seen as lack of respect such as ‘turn to the side a bit’ or ‘look here’.

*Perception constructed based on past experience and keenness in assisting journalists.*

28 out of the 44 respondents then agreed that such past experience would determine their perception towards other journalists. In other words, they will let the ‘primary memories’ of the retained remembrance to be the ‘source-point’ to benchmark other

journalists as a whole. This is agreed, again in unison by all six respondents. The remaining 16 thought otherwise (see Table 5).

Asked on willingness of respondents to talk to or assist journalists in their news reporting process upon any other chances of meeting journalists again, 30 of them said they do not wish to be involved in interviews with journalist while 20 is positive, including viewpoints of the six of the respondents has a split that three have equally voted for the former and three for the latter.

*Table 5: Respondents' Certainty of Past Experience Determined Perception and Willingness to Assist Journalists in Future*

	Past experience determined perception	Percentage (%)	Willingness to assist journalists in future	Percentage (%)
Yes	28 (+6)	68	27 (+3)	60
No	16	32	17 (+3)	40
Total	50	100	50	100

Past experience of public interacting with journalists prior to the occurrence of the tragedy in which they were interviewed by tragedy reporting journalists itself has created an interaction pattern that would determine a general perception constructed towards journalists. Hence the impression of the past experience has extended to any other possible future encounters.



The general reason of past experience determining respondents' perception on journalists is because they have witnessed how journalists worked together in collecting information for the news. They understood their professionalism in the field. As this impression is made in their minds, the pattern of their perception was fixed for any other journalists elsewhere. On the other hand, those who do not see how past experience has any connection to help determine perception reasoned that the behaviour or manner of journalists depends very much on the situation, either it were in a peaceful atmosphere or chaotic state, while some believe such perception cannot be generalised through a common impression as a journalist's character varied from another. It is very much dependent on a person's character rather than seeing their specific actions as a requirement to get their job accomplished. They would not judge all the journalists collectively.

Regardless of the positivity of impression, results show a high tendency that the public would determine their perception upon journalists based on the first impression they have created. This was all the more so when all six respondents who had previous experience prior to encountering the tragedy reporting journalists further backed up the certainty on that point.

Based on data collected, impression plays a crucial role in developing a perception unique to the job nature of a journalist. Mathematically, the general impression shown a central tendency as the values lingered around 2,3 and 4, eliminated the extreme values of 1 and 5. A median of 2.59 is indicative (between 'good' and 'okay') of a more positive impression public has towards tragedy reporting journalists hence in turn helped develop public's attitude and generated a positive perception on journalists.

However, the positive impression constructed in the public's mentality does not gear towards a participatory mode. Despite that six respondents rated a 'good' impression on journalists they encountered, the vote has split equally between 'yes' and 'no' when asked on willingness to assist journalists in the future. Data show a slight lax in public willingness to assist journalists if their help are required to complete the news story. Some would cooperate with journalists by giving whatever information they know but some expressed that so long as the tragedy does not involve their own family, they would not want to be involved in the interview, especially as witnesses. In other words, the 'willingness' defined by the public is much related to the sense of obligation an individual holds. Thus, it is on two terms - either the responsibility (depending on an individual's interpretation of necessary) to the society or the obligation (a compulsory action that compelled them to offer cooperation with the journalists) to speak on behalf of the family -then would they be keen to be a part of the news providing process.

*Public's view on professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness of tragedy reporting journalists*

Corruptive institutional pressures that revolves around editorial pressure, like faking statistics of street interview when rushing for deadline; and relationship with advertisers, in which they might intervene in determining writing content; or even political pressure are the main concerns positioning an overall integrity of a journalist from the perspective of journalism field.

On the other hand, the public or audience, not knowing the powerful impact of such corruptive institutional pressures behind manipulating content of the media, might only justify

their perception towards journalists on professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness of journalists and news organisation they are affiliated to from what is visible on the media itself. With the chain effect caused by a communal reinforcement on a general view on a newspaper perceived by a community, many would have interpreted differently based on an acceptable comprehension thus benchmarking the level where a newspaper would stand according to the three values.

According to the surveyed respondents' understanding, a majority 37 (74%) regarded journalists as professionals in news reporting and writing, while the role of journalists as the watchdog for the society is understood by another eight (16%). Three (6%) perceived journalists as paparazzi whereas only two (4%) did not have much to perceive about the occupation of a journalist except just another profession to earn a living (see Table 6).

*Table 6: Public's Perception on Journalists' Job Nature*

Perception	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
<i>Positive understanding</i>		
Professionals in news writing and reporting	37	74
Watchdog for the society	8	16
<i>Negative or lack of understanding</i>		
Paparazzi	3	6
Just to earn a living like other professions	2	4
Total	50	100

Researcher coded the perception of viewing journalists as professional in news writing and reporting and watchdog for the society as a ‘positive understanding’ whereby the former carries the denotation understood by the mass while latter is a sort of journalistic jargon understood by individuals equipped with knowledge of media studies. The view of journalists as just another profession to make a living and associating journalists to paparazzi is coded as having ‘negative or lack of understanding’ on the subject.

‘Positive understanding’ is perceived by 45 respondents, equivalent to 90% compared to the five respondents (10%) who selected the code under the label of ‘negative or lack of understanding’. The understanding of the job scope of journalists by the public resonates to positive impression respondents have in the previous analysis.

Moving on from the subject referring to journalists, researcher looked at the quality of the substance produced by the subject, that is, on the quality of media coverage on tragedy news such as road accidents, natural disaster and crime cases, perceived by the public through a rating system.

This is how researcher defined the rating scale. ‘Excellent’, designated to refer to the most positive perception on the top of the scale, is defined as extremely good and is used when someone is very pleased or approved of something with a certain degree of accolades and honours, according to meaning retrieved from the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. ‘Good’ is coded with the definition of pleasantly high that meets more than what the acceptable standard is required of. ‘Okay’ on the other hand represents the expression of a satisfactory perception towards something. ‘Poor’, contradicted the meaning of ‘good’ literally, fits the definition of a quality that is lower than expected. ‘Terrible’ described failure

to meet even the basic satisfactory requirements in addition to irking others with something of negative consequences. Table 7 shows the results of the rating.

*Table 7: Rating of the Quality of Tragedy News Coverage*

Rate of tragedy news coverage	No of respondents	Percentage
Excellence (1)	2	4
Good (2)	23	46
Okay (3)	19	38
Poor (4)	5	10
Terrible (5)	1	2
Total	50	100

In mathematical measurement, assuming ‘excellence’ is given the value of 1, 2 for ‘good’, 3 for ‘okay’, 4 for ‘poor’, 5 for ‘terrible’ (the smaller the value, the better quality of tragedy news coverage respondents rated), the median value for the statistics is 2.46 (between ‘good’ and ‘okay’). The statistics with positive results corresponded to the data analysed earlier, paving a more steady foundation in analysing public’s perception of professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness of tragedy news coverage and finding out the rationale behind this optimistic score.

Based on their encounter with tragedy reporting journalists, respondents were required to choose one best word to describe the on-scene news reporting practices they witnessed. Out of the 28 options provided, researcher coded them into two categories of ‘positive description’

and ‘negative description’, of which the researcher defined the former as description of practice exhibiting the characteristics of professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness of a tragedy news reporting journalist they have observed while the latter is defined vice-versa (see Table 8).

*Table 8: One Best Word Respondents Used to Describe Tragedy Reporting Practices*

*Witnessed*

Positive Description	No of respondents	Percentage (%)	Negative Description	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Patient	4	8	Annoying	6	12
Professional	8	16	Intrusive	8	16
Specific	2	4	Loathsome	16	32
Detailed	6	12			
Total	20	40	Total	30	60

20 respondents (40%) picked positive description that includes words like ‘patient’ (8%), ‘professional’ (16%), ‘specific’ (4%) and ‘detailed’ (12%) whereas 30 (60%) responded the description negatively with 16 respondents (32%) thought the reporting practices they witnessed is ‘loathsome’, eight respondents (16%) for ‘intrusive’ and six (12%) for ‘annoying’ (see Table 9).

*Table 9: The Other Two Traits Respondents Used to Describe Tragedy Reporting Practices Witnessed*

Positive Description	No of respondents	Percentage (%)	Negative Description	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Specific	5	5	Annoying	18	18
Detailed	13	13	Intrusive	15	15
			Loathsome	31	31
			Biased	18	18
Total	18	18	Total	82	82

Compared to data produced from the previous question, the balance has been shifted where a majority of 82 (82%) selection of description has had negative description on tragedy reporting practices they witnessed. However, ‘loathsome’ still topped the board with 31 (31%), followed by ‘annoying’ and ‘biased’ each chosen by 18 (18%) and then 15 for ‘intrusive’ (15%). Positive description received 18 votes, calling the practices as ‘specific’ (5%) and ‘detailed’ (18%).

The feeling of loathsome is being expressed by respondents because they were not used to being perturbed by tragedy reporting journalists who asked loads of questions persistently. The general public is not trained to cope with the media like any big business corporations spokespersons and they definitely have no obligation to entertain journalists and their questions. Concurrently, they would feel such annoyed by the bombarding questions and photo-shooting. On the other hand, some who take it personally see those actions as intrusive

when the feeling of loathsome and annoyance is further developed when journalists did not know their limits.

Nonetheless, analysed from data from the positive description, despite on the side of the interviewees who felt disrupted, they regarded professionalism of journalists that would patiently or even persistently pursuing more details from them. This shows a clear sign that the public does not hold prejudices against the profession itself as actions of journalists are of the requirement to get their story. Thus it is on the public's part, they could not bear the frequent asking of questions which translated into loathsome and annoyance from their perspective. Besides, some would show displeasure on their faces when refused to be interviewed but they acknowledged the professionalism to ask more specific and detailed questions at the right time.

On explaining the effect of biasness in the news reporting practice, public relates it to ethnic issue and also language of the newspaper. For instant, tragedy cases occurred involving a Chinese mostly received greater attention from the Chinese newspaper due to the target audience are mostly Chinese-educated readers that made up of majority of the Chinese. And during the interview, journalists from Chinese newspaper mostly interview using Mandarin and reporters from English and Malay newspapers who do not understand in Chinese would tend to get information translated by the Chinese reporters later, which in turn, contribute to certain degree of biasness in interpretation. Due to such 'secondary resources', news that made the day sometimes carried a less objective connotation of the interviewees. Sometimes it is due to the relevance word chosen to represent the same meaning but in another language and sometimes it is due to miscommunication during the interview process of verifying details with other journalists.



*Public's perception of trustworthiness in tragedy reporting journalists.* Researcher defined professionalism and credibility contribute to trustworthiness in this study. Table 10 shows the perceived trustworthiness public has towards tragedy reporting journalists.

*Table 10: Perceived Trustworthiness of Tragedy Reporting Journalists by the Public*

Level of trustworthiness	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
“Very trustworthy”	2	4
“Fairly trustworthy”	34	68
“Trustworthiness depends on situation”	13	26
“Not trustworthy at all”	0	0
“Not sure, only another piece of news”	1	2
Total	50	100

Despite none of the respondents selected ‘trustworthy’ as the description to the tragedy reporting practice they witnessed in the previous analysis, A majority 34 respondents (68%) expressed the tragedy reporting journalists are fairly trustworthy while 13 (26%) expressed they trust tragedy reporting journalists depending on situation. The researcher analyses that the public has already viewed the issue of trust are of having fundamental importance in news reporting. In other words, trust should not even be considered as an adjective of mere description but a must as to exercising journalists’ social responsibility.

Public feels that the tendency of sensationalising news story is inevitable as newspaper is of business nature. Competition is stiff and journalists would find certain angles different

from the conventional direct reporting to boost readership on a case, especially involving high-profile victims like rich businessmen and women, politicians, or major tragedy cases such as natural disaster or cross-national news like stories on tourists found dead in Malaysia.

Besides, some expressed that tragedy involving interracial disputes are always being blown out of proportion. Public believed readers are especially interested in reading this kind of news as it would stir up interest during their daily discussion in the public sphere. Note that none of the respondent mentioned that the tragedy reporting journalists are not trustworthy at all. The trustworthiness public has is clearly directed to the reporting of tragedy news thus they see no reason to place any distrust on tragedy news mostly. However, the measurement of trustworthy is strictly not applicable for news in other desks.

*Public's perception of professionalism in tragedy reporting journalists.*

Professionalism is reflected through the presentation of tragedy reporting journalists as they carry out their duties. Researcher looked at such perception of professionalism from the public's point of view. Completing his or her duties within the shortest time effectively is seen as the most relevant definition of professionalism by 37 respondents (74%). six respondents (12%) viewed professionalism as a practical action of collecting relevant data by all means, four (8%) thought reporting the tragedy according to his or her newspaper editorial policy is a practice of professionalism while the remaining three (6%) saw professionalism in a tragedy reporting exists when journalists are able to sympathise with the victims and family while carrying out his or her duty (see Table 11).

*Table 11: Respondents' Definition of Professionalism in Tragedy Reporting*

Options of definition	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
“Complete his/her duties within the shortest time effectively”	37	74
“Able to sympathise with the victims and family while still carrying out his/her duty”	6	12
“Collect relevant data by all means”	4	8
“Report the tragedy according to his/her newspaper editorial policy”	3	6
Total	50	100

The perception on professionalism of majority members of the society, especially those who had personal encounter with tragedy reporting journalists, mirrored their thinking of relating professionalism to both capability and speed, or represented in the formal term of effective and efficient. Being effective means to execute a task assigned with at least a satisfactory result towards its accomplishment whereas efficient refers to the ability to achieve the completion of work utilizing as minimal time as possible.

‘Effectiveness and efficiency’ of tragedy reporting journalists hence fit in the definition of professionalism of members of societies. However, the public has mostly chosen ‘loathsome’ instead in describing the tragedy reporting practices they witnessed. Supposedly, that could be interpreted that the scenario of tragedy news reporting practices and journalists

of the desk in Malaysia achieved high level of professionalism is not very much agreed upon. Yet, a contradiction cropped up when asked on whether Malaysian tragedy reporting journalist practice professionalism in their duties. Up to 42 respondents (84%) responded positively while eight (16%) disagreed.

There could be two explanations to this phenomenon. The first is public's recognition of professionalism on Malaysian tragedy reporting journalists. Describing 'loathsome' in tragedy news reporting practice was based on their experience with tragedy reporting journalists due persistence questioning, which has no relevance in defining their point of view on professionalism. Moreover, they could have observed the capability and speed of tragedy reporting journalists in rushing for assignments and were impressed by the tragedy story appeared on the newspaper, thus fulfilling their criteria of professionalism characterised in a journalist.

The second explanation is the public's knowing of the idealistic professionalism in their expectation could not be actualised in reality. They understand the job nature of requiring cooperation of the public in getting the news covered. Completing a task within a shortest timeframe effectively is what they are looking for in approving an act of professionalism. Yet they realise professionalism of a journalist would definitely result with the latter being loathsome when they pursued deeper information of a tragedy. Therefore, feasibility wise, their ideal form of professionalism could never be realised in reality. Reflecting from the tragedy reporting news they read and experience encountered with journalists, they gave credit to tragedy reporting journalists for being professional.

*Public's perception of the criteria for credibility of a newspaper.* Researcher did not limit the study of credibility to merely on the news segment on tragedy reporting in order to gauge public's perception on the newspaper they read as a whole. This would help gauge a more general public's point of view on the criteria in obtaining their respect on the credibility of a newspaper in an overall perspective.

16 respondents (32%) measured credibility by looking at a newspaper that published reliable and relevant sources and 14 (28%) said extensive reporting on the tragedy is what defined a newspaper's credibility. six (12%) emphasised on balanced reporting from all parties involved while two (4%) judged it based on the degree of biasness on racial- or rights-related issues. Six (12%) saw the level of credibility in terms of a newspaper reputation whereas four (8%) entrusted their judgment of credibility based on mere hearsay (see Table 12).

*Table 12: Perceived Criteria of a Newspaper's Credibility*

Criteria	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
"Relevant and reliable sources"	8	16
"Extensive reporting on the tragedy"	14	28
"Balanced reporting from all the parties involved"	6	12
"The degree of biasness (e.g. racial- or rights-related issues in tragedy reporting)"	2	4
"Reputation of the newspaper"	16	32
"Based on hearsay of others"	4	8
Total	50	100

Majority perceived reputation of the newspaper, in addition to hearsay of others, is the main requirement justified as to define a newspaper's credibility, comprising a sum of 40%. From laymen's perspective, reputation of a newspaper is still substantial in fulfilling the credibility of a newspaper. Reputation is the value portrayed through a representation of image in a better-regarded institution (Frombrun, 2008). It is an asset the newspaper organization should handle with care otherwise it might lose its credibility when its good name is tarnished through inaccurate reporting. The image constructed is often related to the hearsay of others when discussed in public since reputation is built on a social recognition on the newspaper, thus based on hearsay of others, through opinion leaders, would also determine the reputation of a newspaper.

Meanwhile, other than proving the capability of journalists to cover more stories on an incident, public also believed extensive reporting guarantees credibility of a newspaper. Each pieces of news are interweaved thus facts cannot be simply made of as readers would interpret clearly and discover faults in the entire news thus giving rise to the public perception that this would be a suitable measure to judge credibility of a newspaper.

From the intensive interview conducted, researcher realised that the public deferred the accusation of journalists in sensationalising tragedy news of members from the grass root level. Nonetheless, in journalistic understanding, extensive reporting is often associated to sensationalising the story content, as public sees the wider the coverage of the news the more information journalists received from their interviews. The more interviews journalists conduct, the more opinions they received from various parties whereby some might even provide inaccurate information. Hence sometimes public is unaware of the difference between sensationalising a news story and covering an extensive story, which is perceived as a form of

professionalism. Such perception was further reinforced through communal reinforcement when they read tragedy news from newspaper. For instance, the impression of China Press being praised for its extensive tragedy news coverage by public has created an image that the newspaper has live up to the expectation of readers. Out of the interviewees participated in this study most of them remembered tragedy reporting from China Press well compared to the rest.

*Public's perception on education influence in attitude formation*

Researcher looked beyond the fundamental approach on educational psychology, which is the basic curriculum development and academic achievement, to focus on the socialisation process in institutions like schools and the effects of education in attitude formation. Table 13 shows basic demographic statistics of respondents' education level.

*Table 13: Education Level Achieved by Respondents*

Education level	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Primary school	1	2
Secondary school	20	40
undergraduate	12	24
Bachelor degree	14	28
Did not receive formal education	3	6
Total	50	100

On a statement, “education cultivates tolerance”, respondents were asked to pick a stance. A majority 41 respondents (82%) agreed with the statement but do not rule out other

possible factors in cultivating one's level of tolerance whereas the remaining nine disagreed with this statement and regarded it as stereotypical. No respondent directly agreed to the statement above.

It is clear that majority of the public perceived education plays a complementary role in developing tolerance of an individual but it is not the only channel of socialisation to inculcate value of tolerance towards others. Thus, on a cognitive level, the public emphasised education background is not the only contributing factor in forming an attitude towards members from other societies.

*Importance of individual's privacy.* In the attempt to study the level of respondents' tolerance towards tragedy reporting journalists in relations to privacy issue, researcher sought to find out how individual privacy matters (see Table 13). Respondents were asked to rate from 1-4 in the scale provided that defines the sequential level of importance, 1 is denoted as 'very important', 2 as 'important', 3 as 'not really important' and 4 as 'not at all'.

This is how researcher defined the rating scale. 'Very important' is defined as privacy receiving exceptionally more than ordinary consideration or notice and the consequence when it is infringed would result in emotional distress and counteracting action against privacy invasion, 'important' is plainly on privacy does receive more than ordinary that carries a high level of significance. 'Not really important' is characterised that privacy is not overly valued and it is alright to infringe to a certain degree whereas 'not at all' is regarded as privacy is of no total significance to an individual and would not feel the trauma of the consequence when his/her privacy is infringed upon.



*Table 14: Perceived Privacy Importance of Respondents*

Level of importance	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
Very important	25	50
Important	22	44
Not really important	3	6
Not at all	0	0
Total	50	100

In Table 14, half of the respondents (50%) valued individual privacy as something very important, 22 respondents (44%) thought it is averagely important. Three respondents (6%) saw it as not really important whereas none regarded privacy as something not important at all.

The data resonates to the previous finding where education only plays a complementary role in developing tolerance of an individual. In other words, one's level of privacy importance might also serve as another complementary role in tolerance formation.

*Interpersonal relationship between public and journalists.* Meanwhile, from intensive interviews with the selected respondents, when their private life, that is, the part of themselves that do not wished to be revealed to journalists or the media, they recognised this as a form of privacy invasion. The appearance of journalists at the doorstep of their house or during the funeral session without invitation and also calling of their interviewees on their phone during inappropriate time are among the examples provided by research interviewees. Therefore, many refused to share their addresses and cell phone numbers with journalists, and would only want to get the interview done as soon as possible, unless the interview was

dealing with the direct family members whose victim of the tragedy is involved in it that leaves them no choice but to provide their contact information if the news reporting is appearing on the national page.

The reaction of tragedy interviewees is defined not only based on their level of relationship with the victim (though neither measured in a scientific spectrum of intensity nor increase or decrease proportionately) but also types of questions asked by journalists which the above components are interrelated in one way or another.

Researcher observed two categories of reaction related to the different groups. First reaction is resulted out of incident-based questions, mostly directed to witnesses of tragedy that is unacquainted with the victims involved. They were mostly not emotionally attached thus they would give an account of what and how did it happened right in front of their eyes, thus they seldom have any issue with journalists even when it comes to private matters.

Second reaction is the consequences of reflection-based questions directed to direct family members and close relatives. Questions asked by journalists, often touchy rousing emotional sensitivity by seeking details through the reminiscence of the victim, would inevitably cause emotional breakdown of the tragedy interviewees thus they would be infuriated by journalists at the critical period and deemed it as they are invading privacy by asking excessively.

From another perspective, gender plays a crucial role in matters related to privacy. In a patriarchal society, Malaysian men would act as the guardian to the family towards the women and children. In the intensive interviews conducted, when journalists approached ladies in the family whether with incident-based or reflection-based questions, the men would usually step

up to take over the session by answering to journalists' questions when they feel uneasiness from the women's expression. The patriarchal system demands men to take up responsibility of responding rather than merely reacting (Johnson, 2005). It is also a proactive action, meaning taking the initiative to become more aware on what is going on. For dominant groups of men, they would even see the responsibility that comes with power, like bosses towards workers in providing protection for wives and children, as it would affirm their superior status and reinforce their privileged position (ibid.).

Respondents were then further directed to answer the view on having an interpersonal relationship with journalists. Not a single respondent would say an absolute no and warn them to keep a distance from them before they launch an "attack" on journalists but 25 respondents (50%) showed distrust towards journalists as they believe there must be definite motives behind them that they would want to forge an interpersonal relationship with respondents (see Table 15). 11 (22%) of them viewed it as an important move because they might need help from journalists someday in future while nine respondents (18%) believed true friendship would exist between the two parties. There were other expressions such as 'never thought of it' and 'who cares' specified by two respondents respectively.

*Table 15: Respondents' Views and Reactions on having an Interpersonal Relationship with Journalists*

Views and reactions	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
“Absolutely no. Journalists should stay away from me before I ‘attack’ them”	0	0
“There are definitely motives behind when journalists want to have an interpersonal relationship with me”	25	50
‘It is important because journalists could be helpful to me someday”	11	22
“There will be true friendship”	9	18
“Never thought of it”	1	2
“Who cares”	1	2
Total	50	100

From data above, researcher spotted trend of the escalation elements of suspicion in a circle of trust of the public. A feeling of distrust is built between journalists and the public, not referring to trustworthiness of the news in the newspaper but on a personal level, to prevent others from taking chances upon them. Members of the society are more socialised to develop a shield of protection than that of willingly let down their guards and befriend journalists, which this requires a greater level of trust and less suspicion.

When suspicion is gradually eliminated and trust is built in an interpersonal relationship to be forged between public and journalists, journalists are expected to move closer into the

circle of trust. In public's perception, the relationship is nonetheless built on motives. The suspicion surfaced again, but less of a force of rejection of the relationship. It is perceived that either journalists making use of the friendship or public seeking help from journalists in the relationship forged, as long as the relationship would bring mutual benefits to both parties.

Given a situation when dealing with a tragedy reporting journalist who persistently request for more details even when you refuse, the action of telling the journalist that they do not have the details of the tragedy was well-received by 24 respondents (48%), 15 respondents (30%) would gently shove the journalist aside and say nothing, five respondents (10%) chose to push them aside and walk away, four respondents (8%) would raise their voices to ask the journalist to get lost and the remaining two would lodge a police report to prevent the journalist from disturbing their lives again. None has the intention to show a sign of fist to warn the journalist to back off (see Table 16).

*Table 16: Respondents' Reactions When Dealing with Persistent Tragedy Reporting Journalists*

Reactions	No of respondents	Percentage (%)
“Showing a sign of fist to warn the journalist to back off”	0	0
“Raise my voice to ask him/her to get lost”	4	8
“Push him/her away from you and walk away”	5	10
“Gently shove him/her aside without saying anything”	15	30
“Tell the journalist that I do not have the details of the tragedy”	24	48
“Lodge a police report to prevent that journalist from further disturbing your life”	2	4
Total	50	100

Data showed respondents would only act moderately despite individual privacy is very much valued by general public. Most of the survey respondents and interviewees would express in words, some in gentler while some harsher tone, and try to escape away from the tensioned atmosphere. In relation to answering the factor of education background as a factor in attitude formation and cultivation of tolerance, researcher did not find justifications to support the hypothesis of higher education receiver would be more tolerant than those of lower education receiver as the disparity in education does not correspond to public's an overall moderate reaction even when they are unsatisfied with tragedy reporting journalists'

persistent approach. Using a more direct method to weigh the opinion of ‘education cultivates tolerance’, 41 respondents (82%) were found to carry the perception of education does cultivate tolerance but does not rule out other factor contributing to it, nine (18%) disagreed with the stereotypical statement and none agreed with the statement entirely.

Meanwhile during the intensive interview, when asked for the opinion of experienced tragedy reporting journalists on whether the educated ones are able to control its temper towards journalists when their emotions are disturbed by deaths of their beloved, journalists also do not feel the direct relation with education background. They have seen many bad-tempered educated businessmen acting rough and uneducated older generation for being calm enough to refuse journalists nicely. They also see other factors such as religion and the living environment do contribute to one’s character building. Journalists believed that stressful environment might be the cause that rouses anger of interviewees during the interviewing process as they could not focus on answering the many questions posted by journalists in a state of emotional distress.

Putting the education factor aside, the level of tolerance of Malaysian public is reasonably high. They would express displeasure only through gestures and manners but not actions. Moreover, it would only happen when journalists crossing the boundary that invaded privacy of members of the family by entering their homes or ‘disturbing’ their female spouses. Personal privacy of an individual was tolerable but when privacy of the beloved ones like children and parents would result in greater resentment of the public though they might still respond not harsher than the usual case.

*Tragedy reporting techniques practised by Malaysian journalists*

Researcher solely relied on data collected from intensive interviews conducted with 3 Malaysian journalists from one Malay (Sinar Harian), one English (Malay Mail) and one Chinese (China Press) newspaper. They mostly have between three to five years of working experience as journalists and had been working for two to three newspapers in general. Hence, this would define journalists interviewed were experienced in their profession especially in crime or social news reporting.

In summary, the three newspapers are focused mainly on human interest pieces instead of straight forward reporting due to their publication nature. The relevancy of the publication nature corresponds to the target readers thus resulted the editorial policy to put greater emphasis on human interest stories compared to the rest. Human interest pieces involves interviewing the victim's family members or neighbours, anything from small to big that catches journalists' attention and can be an interesting piece to tell the readers would be primary focus for the three of the presses in general.

Journalists are given freedom to decide on the angle of the story yet they do not command the final say. For instance, Malay Mail's crime desk reporters are very much subjected to the changes made by editors despite their supervisors would ask to share their personal opinions. Comparatively, China Press and Sinar Harian journalists are given more flexibility in writing news story. When it comes to extensive news on major tragedies, cooperation among journalists from the same newspaper organisation exists, each focusing on specific angles as discussed or assigned beforehand so that they would not clash with each other when covering the case.



To say a journalist whether he or she would incorporate personal judgment in a news article is much subjected but they strive to act fair and objective in presenting facts without being emotionally attached to the case. However, in reporting and writing cases to raise public awareness such as child abuse and child abduction issues, journalists would inject certain ideas into readers' mind with reminders such as lack of parents' attention on their children or ineffectiveness of authority in conducting investigation as well as alerting the community to be cautious on strangers. They would act in accordance to the role of media social responsibility through serious crafting of words used in the article to prevent touching on sensitive issues that might stir trouble after the stories being published. In specific case of China Press, there is sometimes a small column called 'The reporter's note (采访后记)' whereby journalists are given a chance to channel their personal views after covering the tragedy but only senior journalists who are experienced enough would be given the opportunity to write in that column, since senior journalists are familiar with the requirements of the newspaper and even when they inject personal opinions on these issues, they would practice discretion to write what is best for both readers and also the newspaper organisation.

Journalists interviewed do not see the avoidance of their interviewees to answer their questions as a hindrance to their story developing and writing process. Sinar Harian journalist explained that there are multiple channels to different sources for different stories. Even when one door closes, there are other doors open but a journalist has to know what facts he or she wanted for the story and recognise the relevant sources to interview. Hence, checking on facts and reliability of sources is always a precaution step for journalists so that the news they write would be accurate. Meanwhile, the Malay Mail journalist also expressed that even when their interviewees refuse to talk, it is still a story that would carry the headline like 'Victim's family

members refused to talk', and details to be elaborated with his observation, the ongoing happening and some background information on the story.

When their interviewees expressed displeased towards their frequent asking of questions, journalists feel this is part and parcel of their job. They have the duty and the right to ask but their interviewees also has the right not to answer. Discretion should to be exercised by observing the situation and ask suitable questions without going overboard.

Journalists also do not see attending funerals or visiting hospitals is anything wrong even when interviewees refuse to be interviewed as they are held in public places. According to them, even if the victim's family members or the victim refuse to talk or being interviewed, journalists still can report or write regarding the funeral procession or anything that comes in place right after that in other angles.

Deadline for tragedy news story varied according to the intensity of the case. If it is a big case but of a community level such as long distance bus accidents and fire burning down old shop houses, China Press would take up about two to three days to cover on it but bigger news on national level such as tsunami or earthquake, it would probably take not more than five days to do follow-ups in the general practice. Deadline in terms of time also varied but for Malay Mail, which is an evening newspaper, the deadline of the day is usually before 1.00pm since the newspaper would make it to the street at around 3.30pm.

Malaysian journalists mostly follow the standard procedure of news reporting. The common practices are interviewing the police or any authorities regarding the incident or accident first as they would have definite information such as detailed information of the victims and factual data on the case. After that, they will interview victim involved (if

survived) or victim's family members about the tragedy, followed by witnesses' account (if available) using the usual 5Ws 1H element under the inverted pyramid in the interview: -

- (1) Who are the involving parties?
- (2) What happened (what's the story)?
- (3) When did it take place?
- (4) Where did it take place?
- (5) Why did it happen?
- (6) How did it happen?

However, journalists do not deny the fact that many newspapers especially tabloid newspapers of these days have rarely used this concept in news reporting as they see restriction to the exercising of greater creativity in news writing with the mundane rigid format. Questions are expected to be carefully planned without going to ask about the emotion part at the beginning of the interview as this might trigger frustration of interviewees as they are still being in a state of confusion and despair. The best approach is to put journalists themselves in their interviewee's shoes. By consoling them and give them support needed before attempting asking questions.

## V. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Conclusion*

In an overall perspective, this study of public perception on Malaysian tragedy reporting journalists showed a consistent trend among data that varied from the mentality of public has and actions they would adopt when confronting tragedy reporting journalists. The public accolades tragedy reporting journalists by recognising their practice of professionalism, trustworthiness and newspaper organisations' credibility. They also trust the tragedy news published in newspaper. However, it is proven that even positive impression the public has towards tragedy reporting journalists does not result in voluntary assistance to them. In other words, the definition within the state of mind would not justify the positivity in practice.

The public refused to be involved with tragedy reporting journalists due to various factors that arouse fear. Factors include the imagined motives of tragedy reporting journalists towards the public which caused them to be more reserved when facing a tragedy reporting journalists, regardless of the kind of person the journalists are even when they do not carry the identity around during their free time. Besides, the significant high in the valuation of individual privacy acts as a dose to refrain tragedy reporting journalists from entering their circle of trust.

Meanwhile, education level is not the best mode to assess the degree of tolerance towards tragedy reporting journalists as they are many other factors contributing to the building of the virtue, but it is evident that the overall tolerance of Malaysian public towards tragedy reporting journalists is high enough to prevent violent outcome. However, when it comes to the concern of family members, especially in a patriarchal social system where male

is in dominance in the family, the male would take on the role as the protector to protect the rest of the family members from the press. In addition to that, tolerance that public has towards photojournalists is significantly lower compared to the news writer because they felt disrespect at times when the photojournalists could be little vocal and using of informal ways to address the interviewees.

On the other hand, tragedy reporting techniques are not specifically designed according to different newspapers but the style of reporting is according to the journalists themselves. As journalists are aware of the mindset that the public has, instead of expressing dissatisfaction for not able to interview the direct sources, journalists strive to look for more sources. Hence the basic idea of covering tragedy news is to look for as many as possible of the relevant source as many as possible because out of the many choices, not every single of them is willing to assist in providing details. In some ways, tragedy reporting journalists would fulfill their obligation towards the societies by emphasising certain perspectives to create greater awareness for future prevention.

### *Limitations*

This research is not spared from biasness of respondents. Questionnaire for the survey inevitably led respondents to answer based on their personal opinions on how education affects level of tolerance in contrast to their instinctual behaviours when encountering tragedy reporting journalists. There is a tendency for respondents to give an impressive result that eventually formed a perception to show they practised tolerance. In other words, they would exercise ‘intentional rationality’ rather than the practical action they would take.

In addition, questions sought to understand the perceived reaction respondents would take towards journalists based on the level they value privacy is also based on would-be but not on-scene actions. Hence they would be a certain degree of inaccuracy on the study of the level of tolerance translated into action when dealing with journalists that persistently request for more information from the respondents.

Likewise, the way researcher defines an action does not necessary reflect the actual expression of respondent as researcher could have failed to interpret the expression objectively. Some might misunderstand certain behaviour or manner of the respondents for carrying a negative connotation where in actual fact those expressions were merely of nature reflects such as loud-spoken as a way of communication but does not mean the respondent was frustrated. This is especially relevant to the intensive interview with the selected survey respondents.

Many respondents who took part in the survey of which their thoughts the researcher expects would be essential to the research had refused to undergo an intensive interview, particularly direct family members, that is, parents to the victim, as they were the main target and primary source of news of tragedy news reporting journalists. On another note, all four Indian respondents who took part in the survey also refused to be interviewed, resulting two intensive interviews with Chinese and one with the case related to the Malay community that would cause a lax balance of analysis considering the ethnicity factor which was taken out from the original research. The study on ethnicity's attitude towards tragedy reporting journalists was excluded due to the lack of representativeness as Indian respondents were insufficient in this study.

Most of the intensive interviews were conducted either through emails and instant messaging as the volunteered journalists could hardly find time to meet the researcher to have a thorough talk. Nonetheless, journalists were participative in answering frequent emails and instant messaging as to clarify information provided previously.

### *Recommendations*

In order to obtain data that is more representative, respondents from each age group should be equally distributed. Due to difficulties in finding respondents that could fulfill the criteria, most of the respondents fell into the category of age range from 18 to 27. Besides, if more time is permitted, the number of respondents should be increased to at least 100 so that the findings and analysis generated could achieve a better representation as a whole.

One way to prevent getting data based on ‘intentional rationality’ from survey respondents, researcher could take time to conduct a series of field observation when journalists interview their interviewees during tragedy reporting. This would provide a clearer picture of the happening instead of replying from the mere perception through survey.

### *Suggestions for further study.*

This research could be expanded to study on topic related to photojournalism in tragedy news reporting. Findings showed respondents viewed the news writer and photojournalists individually and these two entities were viewed separately with different impressions. The public’s perceptions on photojournalists could be a topic of studies by considering their experience with the photographers and also pictures they see in the newspaper. It should also include how far the impact the pictures appeared on the newspaper had affected their daily

lives since they were given such exposure in the media and also how true the story is as seen in the picture as it is happened.

Another aspect to be touched on is the sociological study of gender role when encountering tragedy reporting journalists. A thorough study should be focused on the family institution and its relationship between members and how the head of the family acts as a protector to its members other than relating their actions to the factor of privacy importance.

In regard to this, another study that could branch out is to obtain different point of views between family members of the victim or the victim personally and also witnesses that had no direct blood tie to the victims when they are interviewed by tragedy reporting journalists. Researcher observed a different attitude, even an extreme difference in their possible reaction when encountering tragedy reporting journalists. This would give a more extensive account of each role in understanding the acceptance of Malaysian societies towards journalists' news gathering practices in tragedy news reporting.



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Appendix A: Pilot study questionnaire



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Dear respondent,

I am currently an undergraduate of Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Journalism from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Kampar campus. In partial fulfillment of my course, I am conducting a survey titled **“Understanding the Acceptance of Malaysian Societies towards Journalists’ News Gathering Practices in Tragedy News Reporting”**. The survey questionnaire is regarding the degree of acceptance and responsiveness of the public has, when confronting with journalists during their news gathering process in tragedy reporting. **Please answer ALL the questions.**

I would truly appreciate your participation in this survey questionnaire which will help me in collecting useful information for my research. All the answers will be kept private and confidential for academic purpose only. Thank you for your time.

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**Section A: The following questions were to examine the relationship between past experiences of the public interacting with journalists and attitude towards journalists.**

(1) Have you interacted with any other journalists in any formal occasion prior to your experience with the tragedy reporting journalists?

A. Yes

B. No

***If yes for question 3, please proceed with questions below. If no, please proceed to section B.***

1. How many times of interaction?

- A. Once (1)
- B. Twice (2)
- C. Thrice (3)
- D. More than 4 times

2. Where did your interaction(s) with the journalist/s take place (multiple choices for interaction more than once)?

- A. In a newspaper organization (face-to-face)
- B. Over the phone
- C. On the street
- D. Accident scene
- E. Others: \_\_\_\_\_

3. When did it take place?

- A. One month ago
- B. One year ago
- C. Six months ago
- D. More than one year ago
- E. Others (for interaction more than once, please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. From a scale of 1 – 5, how do you rate your first impression on the journalist you interacted with (Scale: 1=excellent; 2=good; 3=okay; 4=poor; 5=terrible)?

- A. 1
- B. 3
- C. 2
- D. 4
- E. 5

5. Why? (Please specify your reasons)

---

---

---

6. Would such past experience determine your perception towards other journalists?

- A. Yes
- B. No

7. Are you still willing to talk to or assist journalist in their news reporting process?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**Section B: The following questions were to gauge public’s perceptions towards Malaysian journalists’ professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness.**

(1) How would you perceive the nature of jobs carried out by journalists?

- A. Professionals in news writing and reporting
- B. Paparazzi
- C. Watch dog of the society
- D. Just to earn a living as other professions
- E. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(2) From a scale of 1 – 5, how do you rate the coverage of tragedy news (accidents, natural disaster and murder etc) you read from the newspaper (Scale: 1=excellent; 2=good; 3=okay; 4=poor; 5=terrible)?

- A. 1
- B. 3
- C. 2
- D. 4
- E. 5

Why? (Please justify)

---

(3) Based on your experience with tragedy reporting journalists, what best describes the news reporting practices you witnessed (Circle/underline only **ONE**)?

aggressive	patient	professional	intrusive	sympathetic	biased
efficient and effective	determined	busybody	rude	accurate	detailed
polite	positive	annoying	precise	offensive	objective

Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(4) From the question above, choose another 5 traits you would use to describe tragedy reporting journalists.

- (5) How do you define professionalism possessed by a tragedy news reporting journalist?
- A. Complete his/her duties within the shortest time effectively
  - B. Able to sympathise with the victims and family while still carrying out his/her duty
  - C. Collect relevant data by all means
  - D. Report the tragedy according to his/her newspaper editorial policy
  - E. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

- (6) Do you think that Malaysian tragedy reporting journalists upholds professionalism in their duty?
- A. Yes
  - B. No

- (7) In your opinion, how far do you trust the tragedy news you read in the newspaper?
- A. Very trustworthy
  - B. Fairly trustworthy
  - C. Trustworthiness depends on situation
  - D. Not trustworthy at all
  - E. Not sure, only another piece of news
  - F. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(8) What affects your judgment on the credibility of a newspaper?

- A. Relevant and reliable sources
- B. Extensive reporting on the tragedy
- C. Balanced reporting from all the parties involved
- D. The degree of biasness (e.g. racial- or rights-related issues in tragedy reporting)
- E. Reputation of the newspaper
- F. Based on hearsay of others
- G. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(9) In your opinion, how credible are the tragedy news you read in the newspaper?

- A. Highly credible
- B. Fairly credible
- C. Credible depending on situation
- D. Lowly credible
- E. Not sure, never thought of this question
- F. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Section C: The following questions were to find out the attitude of public from different education background towards journalists news gathering practices in tragedy reporting.**

(1) From a scale of 1 – 5, how much do you value individual privacy? (Scale: 1=very much; 2=somehow; 3=neutral; 4=not so; 5=not at all)

- A. 1
- B. 3
- C. 2
- D. 4
- E. 5



(2) How do you view the establishment of an interpersonal relationship with journalists?

- A. Absolutely no. Journalists should stay away from me before I “attack” them
- B. There are definitely motives behind when journalists want to have an interpersonal relationship with me
- C. It is important because journalists could be helpful to me someday
- D. There will be true friendship
- E. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(3) How would you react to a tragedy reporting journalist when he/she persistently request for more details even when you refuse?

- A. Showing a sign of fist to warn journalists to back off
- B. Raise my voice to ask him/her to get lost
- C. Push him/her away from you and walk away
- D. Gently shove him/her aside without saying anything
- E. Tell the journalist that I do not have the details of the tragedy
- F. Lodge a police report to prevent journalists to further disturb your life
- G. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(4) What is the highest level of education you obtained?

- A. Primary
- B. Secondary
- C. Pre-University/matriculation
- D. Bachelor Degree
- E. Postgraduate Degree
- F. Professional/Vocational Degree
- G. Did not receive any formal education

(5) “*Education cultivates tolerance.*”

How far do you agree with the statement above?

A. I agree with the statement above

B. I somehow agree that education does cultivate tolerance of a person

C. I agree with the statement but still think there are other more effective factors than education

D. I disagree with such stereotypical statement

**Section D: Respondent’s personal particulars.**

Gender (circle or underline): Male / Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: Malay / Chinese / Indian / Others: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**Your inputs would be much appreciated. Thank you for your time once again.**

## Appendix B: Survey questionnaire in Mandarin



亲爱的受访者，

我是一名东姑阿都拉曼大学（拉曼大学）金宝校园大众传播（荣誉）新闻系学生。我目前正在为题为“了解马来西亚社会对社会新闻记者及其新闻采访作业的接受程度”的毕业论文进行调查。此调查将探讨曾经面对不幸事件的受访者，对社会新闻记者新闻报道方式及过程的反应和接受程度。请回答**全部**问题。

在此感谢您的参与。您所提供的信息将有助于我的研究。所有的答案只作学术用途，个人资料将获保密。感谢您的时间。

**A: 以下问题旨在探讨受访者与社会新闻记者的接触经验、态度与互动关系。**

(2) 在还未发生有关不幸事件之前，您是否曾受访或与记者有过任何交流？

A. 有

B. 没有

**如答有，请回答以下问题。如答没有，请直接回答第二题 (2)。**

1. 受访或与记者交流多少次？

B. 一次 (1)

B. 两次 (2)

C. 三次 (3)

D. 四次或以上 (≤ 4)

2. 在哪里接受访问或与记者交流？（可选超过一个）

B. 报社（面对面交流）

B. 电话联络

C. 街道上

D. 案发现场

E. 其他 (请注明): \_\_\_\_\_

3. 和记者的交流是在几时发生?

B. 一个月前	B. 一年前
C. 六个月前	D. 超过一年

E. 其他 (交流次数超过一次的请详细说明): \_\_\_\_\_

(3) 以 1-5 为测量标准, 评估您在是次交流后对该记者的印象。

(测量标准: 1=很好; 2=好; 3=还好; 4=不好; 5=糟糕)

- |      |      |
|------|------|
| B. 1 | B. 2 |
| C. 3 | D. 4 |
| E. 5 |      |

(3) 您是否会凭着过去与记者的交流经验, 而将所有记者一概而论?

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| B. 会 | B. 不会 |
|------|-------|

(4) 以您对记者的印象, 您还愿意和记者交流, 并提供资料帮助他们完成采访报道吗?

- |       |        |
|-------|--------|
| A. 愿意 | B. 不愿意 |
|-------|--------|

**B: 以下问题旨在探讨受访者对马来西亚新闻从业员的职业素养, 信誉和诚信的看法。**

(5) 您如何看待记者这分职业?

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| B. 专业新闻采访与写作人员   | B. 狗仔队                 |
| C. 维护社会真相和公平的看守员 | D. 只是社会中其中一门供人们养家糊口的职业 |

E. 其他 (请注明): \_\_\_\_\_

(6) 以 1-5 为测量标准，评估您对报章社会新闻报道的素质。

(测量标准：1=很好；2=好；3=还好；4=不好；5=糟糕)

- |    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|
| B. | 1 | B. | 2 |
| C. | 3 | D. | 4 |
| E. | 5 |    |   |

(7) 在以下的表里，选出一个您认为最贴切的形容词来形容您对社会新闻记者作业的看法。(只能圈一个)

激进	有耐心	专业	粗心	高侵入性	附有同情心	存有偏见
武断	不关切	懂得尊重他人	详尽明确	讨厌的	报道全面	可靠
高效率 and 效益	坚决	爱管闲事	选择性高	无礼	准确	详细
态度客气	态度正面	恼人	势利	精确明了	具冒犯性质	客观

(8) 从以上的表里，再选出两个 (2) 形容词来描述您对社会新闻记者的看法。  
(不可以重复之前的选择)

---

(5) 新闻专业对你而言是 \_\_\_\_\_

- F. 记者能够在最短时间内有效地完成他/她的采访和报道职责
- G. 记者能够在履行采访和报道职责的同时，对受害者及其家属表现同情和体谅精神
- H. 记者不惜用尽各种方式去收集所需的资料
- I. 记者根据该报编辑及采访指南完成意外新闻报导
- J. 其他（请注明）： \_\_\_\_\_

(6) 您认为马来西亚的社会新闻记者专业吗？

- H. 是
- B. 否

(7) 您相信报章所刊登的社会新闻吗？

- B. 非常信任
- B. 相当值得信任
- C. 看情况而定
- D. 完全不值得信任
- E. 不肯定，社会新闻也只不过是其中一种新闻报导
- F. 其他（请注明）： \_\_\_\_\_

(8) 您如何判断一家报社的公信力？

- A. 能够提供相关和可靠的新闻资料来源
- I. 能够提供全面性的报导
- J. 能够公平地报导受影响的每一方
- K. 新闻角度设置所存有的偏袒倾向（比如在种族或人权课题上的立场）
- L. 有关报纸的声誉
- M. 根据有关该报社的种种传闻
- N. 其他（请注明）： \_\_\_\_\_

**C: 以下问题旨在测试公众教育背景与对社会新闻记者态度和反应的关系。**

(1) 以 1-5 为测量标准, 您认为个人隐私重要吗?

(测量标准: 1=非常重要; 2=重要; 3=不是很重要; 4=一点也不重要)?

B. 1

B. 2

C. 3

D. 4

(2) 您如何看待自己与记者之间所建立的人际关系?

F. 我不会与记者有任何瓜葛。在我还没“攻退”他们之前, 他们应该马上远离我

G. 前来与我建立关系的记者, 一定藏有动机

H. 与记者建立关系很重要, 因为我将来或许会需要记者的帮助

I. 我相信这段人际关系存在着真正的友谊

J. 其他 (请注明): \_\_\_\_\_

(5) 当您已多番拒绝接受访问和不愿再提供更多资料, 而有关记者却死缠烂打, 您会做出什么反应?

H. 我会举起拳头, 以示警告

I. 我会提高嗓音, 叫记者滚蛋

J. 我会推开身边的记者, 离开现场

K. 我会温和地表示拒绝, 不再发言

L. 我会告诉有关记者“我不知道有关事件的详情”

M. 我会向警方报案, 以防止记者进一步打扰我的生活

N. 其他 (请注明): \_\_\_\_\_

(6) 请圈出您的最高教育程度。

B. 小学

B. 中学

C. 大学先修班/基础班

D. 在级大学生

E. 学士

F. 硕士

G. 专业/职业学位

H. 不曾接受正规教育

(7) “教育培养更高的包容程度。”

您同意以上的看法吗？

E. 我同意

F. 我同意，但不排除还有其他因素影响个人的包容程度

G. 我不同意

**D: 受访者个人资料**

性别（圈或划线）：男/女      年龄： \_\_\_\_\_

种族：华/巫/印/其他： \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

在此感谢您抽出时间来参与这项调查。



## Appendix C: Survey questionnaire




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Dear respondent,

I am currently an undergraduate of Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Journalism from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Kampar campus. In partial fulfillment of my course, I am conducting a survey titled **“Understanding the Acceptance of Malaysian Societies towards Journalists News Gathering Practices in Tragedy News Reporting”**. The survey questionnaire is regarding the degree of acceptance and responsiveness of the public has, when confronting with journalists during their news gathering process in tragedy reporting. **Please answer ALL the questions.**

I would truly appreciate your participation in this survey questionnaire which will help me in collecting useful information for my research. All the answers will be kept private and confidential for academic purpose only. Thank you for your time.

-----

**Section A: The following questions were to examine the relationship between past experience/s of the public interacting with journalists and attitude towards journalists.**

(8) Have you interacted with any other journalists in any formal occasion prior to your experience with the tragedy reporting journalists?

B. Yes

B. No

***If yes for question 1, please proceed with the boxed questions below. If no, please proceed to question 2.***

1. How many times of interaction?

C. Once (1)

B. Twice (2)

C. Thrice (3)

D. 4 times and more ( $\geq 4$ )

2. Where did your interaction(s) with the journalist/s take place? (Multiple choices for interaction more than once)

C. In a newspaper organization (face-to-face)      B. Over the phone

C. On the street      D. Accident scene

E. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3. When did it take place?

C. One month ago      B. Six months ago

C. One year ago      D. More than one year ago

E. Others (for interaction more than once, please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(9) From a scale of 1 – 5, how do you rate your impression on the journalist you interacted with? (Scale: 1=excellent; 2=good; 3=okay; 4=poor; 5=terrible)

- C. 1      B. 2
- C. 3      D. 4
- E. 5

- (3) Would such past experience determine your perception towards other journalists?
- A. Yes      B. No
- (4) Are you still willing to talk to or assist journalist in their news reporting process?
- C. Yes      B. No

**Section B: The following questions were to gauge public’s perceptions towards Malaysian journalists’ professionalism, credibility and trustworthiness.**

- (9) How would you perceive journalists?
- C. Professionals in news writing and reporting      B. Paparazzi
- C. Watch dog of the society      D. Just to earn a living as other professions
- G. Others(please specify):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (10) From a scale of 1 – 5, how do you rate the coverage of tragedy news (accidents, natural disaster and murder, etc) you read from the newspaper? (Scale: 1=excellent; 2=good; 3=okay; 4=poor; 5=terrible)

- C. 1
- C. 3
- E. 5

- B. 2
- D. 4

(11) Based on your experience with tragedy reporting journalists, what best describes the news reporting practices you witnessed (Circle/underline only **ONE**)?

aggressive	patient	professional	careless	intrusive	sympathetic	biased
assertive	irrelevant	respectful	specific	loathsome	holistic	trustworthy
efficient and effective	determined	busybody	selective	rude	accurate	detailed
polite	positive	annoying	snobbish	precise	offensive	objective

(12) From the question above, choose another **TWO (2)** traits you would use to describe tragedy reporting journalists from the box above **ONLY**. (No repeat choices)

---

- (13) How do you define professionalism of a tragedy news reporting journalist?
- K. Complete his/her duties within the shortest time effectively
  - L. Able to sympathise with the victims and family while still carrying out his/her duty
  - M. Collect relevant data by all means
  - N. Report the tragedy according to his/her newspaper editorial policy
  - O. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- (14) Do you think that Malaysian tragedy reporting journalists practise professionalism in their duty?
- O. Yes
  - B. No
- (15) In your opinion, how far do you trust the tragedy news you read in the newspaper?
- C. Very trustworthy
  - B. Fairly trustworthy
  - C. Trustworthiness depends on situation
  - D. Not trustworthy at all
  - E. Not sure, only another piece of news
  - F. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- (8) How do you judge the credibility of a newspaper?
- A. Relevant and reliable sources
  - P. Extensive reporting on the tragedy
  - Q. Balanced reporting from all the parties involved
  - R. The degree of biasness (e.g. racial- or rights-related issues in tragedy reporting)
  - S. Reputation of the newspaper
  - T. Based on hearsay of others
  - U. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Section C: The following questions were to find out the attitude of public from different education background towards journalists news gathering practices in tragedy reporting.**

(1) From a scale of 1– 4, how important is individual privacy to you? (Scale: 1=very important; 2=important; 3=not really important; 4=not at all)

C. 1

B. 2

C. 3

D. 4

(2) How do you view interpersonal relationship with journalists?

K. Absolutely no. Journalists should stay away from me before I “attack” them

L. There are definitely motives behind when journalists want to have an interpersonal relationship with me

M. It is important because journalists could be helpful to me someday

N. There will be true friendship

O. Others (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

(10) How would you react to a tragedy reporting journalist when he/she persistently request for more details even when you refuse?

O. Showing a sign of fist to warn the journalist to back off

P. Raise my voice to ask him/her to get lost

Q. Push him/her away from you and walk away

R. Gently shove him/her aside without saying anything

S. Tell the journalist that I do not have the details of the tragedy

T. Lodge a police report to prevent that journalist from further disturbing your life

U. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

(11) What is the highest level of education you obtained?

- |                                 |   |    |
|---------------------------------|---|----|
| C. Primary                      | B. Secondary                            |    |
| C. Pre-University/matriculation | D. Undergraduate                        |    |
| E. Bachelor Degree              | F. Postgraduate Degree                  | G. |
| Professional/Vocational Degree  | H. Did not receive any formal education |    |

(12) “*Education cultivates tolerance.*”

How far do you agree with the statement above?

- H. I agree with the statement above
- I. I agree with the statement but never rule out other possible factors in cultivating one’s level of tolerance
- J. I disagree with such stereotypical statement

**Section D: Respondent’s personal particulars.**

Gender (circle or underline): Male / Female                      Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: Malay / Chinese / Indian / Others: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

**Your inputs would be much appreciated. Thank you for your time once again.**

Appendix D: Questions for intensive interview with survey respondents

- 1) Please share with me the situation starting from how journalists approach you on the tragedy.
- 2) Based on your memory, how many journalists have you encountered?
- 3) Which were the presses that interviewed you?
- 4) When did the interview take place? (Immediately after the tragedy, during the funeral etc.)
- 5) Did you give your contact number to the journalists that time? Are you willing to give your number to journalists still? Why?
- 6) Did they leave a good or a bad impression on you?
- 7) Based on the ways journalists used to approach you, would you judge journalists behaviour collectively? Why?
- 8) Until what extent you could tolerate a journalist before he/she is considered to have invaded your privacy?
- 9) Do you mind if journalists appear at your door step without your knowledge? Why?
- 10) What would be your actions towards journalists if you refuse to be interviewed?
- 11) Please describe a tragedy reporting journalist.
- 12) Did the interaction with journalists you had before affect your perception towards tragedy reporting journalists?
- 13) Do you think that tragedy reporting journalists had sensationalised your story? Did they reporting what was said in the correct context?

Appendix E: Questions for intensive interview with journalists

- 1) How many years of experience you work as a tragedy news reporting journalist?
- 2) How many presses have you worked for since you entered the work field?
- 3) Do you see differences in tragedy reporting according to the house style of the presses you worked for? If yes, what are the differences?
- 4) Do you have the final say in the news focus your desire or it is up to the editor to decide the lead?
- 5) Would you incorporate your personal judgment in reporting tragedy news? Any examples?
- 6) What are the restrictions you face in carrying tragedy reporting?
- 7) What are the steps you will need to go through in order to get a complete story?
- 8) What would you do if interviewees refused to be interviewed?
- 9) How were you treated when expressed displeased towards journalists for asking too much?
- 10) How were you treated when expressed displeased towards journalists for asking too much?
- 11) In your opinion, do you think is it alright for journalists to show up in places like funerals and hospitals even victims of the tragedy refused to be interviewed?
- 12) Do you have deadline to cover a tragedy news story? How many days?
- 13) Please describe the common practice of tragedy news reporting sequence.
- 14) In the many cases of interviewing tragedy related individuals from different communities you encountered, do you agree that the educated ones are able to control its temper towards journalists when their emotions are disturbed by deaths of their beloved?



Appendix F: Questions for intensive interview with journalists

**Faculty of Creative Industries**

**Research Project Evaluation Form**

Supervisor / Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID : \_\_\_\_\_

Programme : \_\_\_\_\_

Research Project Title: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Instruction:**

**Please score each descriptor based on the scale provided below:**

**(1 = very poor, 2 = poor, 3 = average, 4 = good and 5 = very good)**

<b>Abstract (5%)</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Convert</b>
1. Adequately describes the entire project		
2. States clearly the research problem		
3. Describe briefly and clearly the approach/methodology of the study		
4. Highlights the outcomes/significance of the study		
<b>Sum</b>		
<b>Subtotal (sum / 4)</b>		
Remark:		
<b>Introduction (10%)</b>		
1. Fitting introduction to the subject of the study		
2. Concepts/definitions well explained		
3. Scope of study well described		
4. Statement of the research problem/ research questions		
<b>Sum</b>		
<b>Subtotal (sum / 2)</b>		
Remark:		

<p><b>Literature Review (20%)</b></p>		
<p>1. Early works published on the subject</p>		
<p>2. Latest research/ work done in the area of study</p>		
<p>3. Explication of theories used</p>		
<p>4. Constructive discussion on publications in relation to the topic of study</p>		
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Sum</b></p>		
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Subtotal (sum *1)</b></p>		
<p>Remark:</p>		
<p><b>Methodology (10%)</b></p>		
<p>1. Research method explained clearly(inclusive of clear explanation of sampling techniques used, where applicable only)</p>		
<p>2. Appropriate research design / framework/questionnaire</p>		
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Sum</b></p>		
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Subtotal (sum * 1)</b></p>		

Remark:		
<b>Findings &amp; Analysis (20%)</b>		
1. Data analysis is appropriate		
2. Data analysis is detailed		
3. Pertinent use of diagrams/tables/graphs, correlated with content/ Analysis supported by evidence		
4. Clear interpretation, well explained		
<b>Sum</b>		
<b>Subtotal (sum * 1)</b>		
Remark:		
<b>Discussion &amp; Conclusion (20%)</b>		
1. Appropriate; related to the objective of the study		
2. Findings related to broader issues & recommendations for further research		
3. Shortcomings of the study & recommendations for future study		
4. Conclusion is apt, clear		
<b>Sum</b>		

<b>Subtotal (sum * 1)</b>		
Remark:		
<b>Language &amp; Organization (15%)</b>		
1. Correct use of English and technical language		
2. APA format is followed		
3. Comprehensiveness of content and presentation		
<b>Sum</b>		
<b>Subtotal (sum * 1)</b>		
Remark:		
	<b>TOTAL</b>	/

		<b>100%</b>
<b>Penalty: maximum 10 marks for late submission or poor attendance for consultation with supervisor</b>		
	<b>FINAL MARK</b>	<b>100%</b>

**\*\*Overall Comments:**

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**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:**

- (1) Sum: The sum of scores for the chapter
- (2) Subtotal: Convert scores from the sum of scores for the chapter
- (3) Total: The summation of all subtotal score

\*\*It's compulsory for the supervisor/reviewer to give the overall comments for the research project with A & F grading.