

BUSINESS ETHICS ON PRESS FREEDOM: A CULTURE OF OMITTING THE TRUTH?

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ABSTRACT – Press freedom in Malaysia is bound under several regulations and restrictions since 1957 when Malaysia was granted independence. A few media and press laws were also inadvertently inherited from the draconian colonial law or introduced in controlling any extremist actions during emergency periods. They were also used to silence any political rivals. Based on the report compiled by Reporters without Borders (RSF), Malaysia jumped 22 places from 123 to 101 in the World Press Freedom Index in 2020, higher than all of our South East Asian neighbouring countries. The success of Malaysia's freedom of movement was triggered by the reformation of a few media institutions, laws and practices throughout the year. The enhancement of Malaysian press freedom assisted in the development of the country and led the nation to become more progressive and transparent alongside other developing nations worldwide. This qualitative case study analysed ethical issues concerning business ethics through semi-structured interviews with staffs of the media organization as well as from newspaper articles analysis. The case recorded was then categorized into four different setups. The cases were looked at through different facets discussing in detail pertaining to ethical principles and motivation behind the reasonings and actions.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the reasoning behind actions and principles are blurred between what is right and wrong, and between what is needed and desired. The neglect of ethical principles and core values happens within a lot of companies which includes the media industry, and if this keeps building up, more confusion and problems could arise (Guilmot, 2008). Calabrese (2007) mentioned in his research that the current media business has transitioned from the information field to an unethical scandal field. This situation happens as a result of zero implementation of ethical code in which irrelevant information are shared to the public. From the business practical view, Prvulović (2006) mentioned that business ethics is moral standard behavior for business environment, social culture, business relationship, and decision-making in all aspects of operation. Hitt and Collins (2007) emphasized the importance of business boundaries especially in relations and communication because business ethics can be a borderline for any personal and moral practices that any businesses are currently involved in. Hitt et al. (2007) also mentioned that business boundaries will help to remove negative attitudes in the organization environment and preventing unnecessary costs and damage to the organization.

Problem Statement

According to Repucci from Freedom House (2019), there is a deterioration of press freedom all over the world in the past decade. The impact of this situation could be dangerous as it concerns democratic countries. A big portion of the news is no longer delivering unbiased information. A lot of the countries have fallen prey to financial pressure, government ownership, and also denounced honest journalists. The New York Times newspaper wrote about the prime minister of Israel being indicated of multiple charges of fraud, bribery, and breach of trust. The case against him allegedly involved lucrative deals made with media tycoons involving hundreds of thousands of dollars (Halbfinger, 2019). Prvulović, Štrbac, and Vuković (2009) highlighted the significance of ethical journalism in which there should be freedom of speech in the press, provided that journalists practice ethics, professionalism, and are self-aware of the regulations in journalism. Journalists should also be aware of the consequences that can occur when rules are abused or violated. However, despite the studies and literature reviews on ethics, values, responsibility, and roles of journalism, more research is needed in the involvement of moral values and ethics for the media (Musa & Darmatob, 2007).

In most private and commercial media organizations/companies, the media acts as a business tool where profit is made (Underwood, 1993; Thus, 2000) and ultimately threatens freedom of speech at the corporate level (McChesney, 2004). Most media organizations and companies claim that the journalism code of ethics is practiced in their business, however, various problems have arisen such as inconsistent compliance rates, a code of ethics that is too burdensome for media practitioners, and abuse of the code of ethics for public relations media use (Dennis & Merrill, 1991; Brennan, 1996; Limor & Gebel, 2002). Not complying with the ethical rules and guidelines of press freedom could lead to dangerous misinformation that could affect the public. Not having a proper channel to retrieve information could create serious repercussions, such as relying more on social media where the information is unreliable. The media has turned

news stories and dramatized them significantly to sell more newspapers. This trend started when John Pulitzer in 1883 brought drama into the sleepy New York World and transformed it into the largest newspaper company by dramatizing all the news. News has then become theatrics and exciting. Money-making has taken a front seat when it comes to manipulating the public’s perception to sell news (Vanderwicken, 1995).

To better understand the different ethical perspectives of business ethics on press freedom, a framework of business ethics needs to be addressed. Press freedom at the national level should be implemented for many reasons. It may be that media organizations commit to practicing press freedom and the commitment is translated into organizational objectives, vision, and mission. Besides that, it may be that they identify a market segmentation that is pro-press freedom and will pursue these media organizations, or feasibly grow apprehension amongst the civilians for press freedom practice evidence.

Finally, it may be that legislation has been gazette requiring media organizations to be freer in their business practices. So, in order to acknowledge press freedom better, this paper discusses a framework of ethical practice and moral positions. Throughout this model, it suggested a few case studies in one of the prominent media organizations in Malaysia and adapting Fisher and Lovell's (2012) ethics and morality grid. This paper briefly evaluated some actions done by a media organization in practicing press freedom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business Ethics

Fisher and Lovell (2012) through the book entitled Business Ethics and Values, provided a guideline grid formulated from the two continua. The first dimension focused on the difference between ethics and morality. Typical business conduct concerns organizations that do not harm clients which is an example of morality, while ethics concerns good behaviour (Conrad, 2016). Morality is a judgemental term in comparison to ethics which is developmental (Fisher et al. 2012).

The other dimension introduced by Fisher et al. (2012) refers to the coverage of the "right and wrong" which is also related to the action taken. The perspective covers the state of legal or illegal activity and the right or wrong of action. As mentioned on the second dimension, Fisher et al. (2012) recognized the positions of four actions on this continuum namely: the actions made are right/good and legal (even not the legal commitment), the actions made are morally wrong/bad and also illegal, the actions made are morally legal but is wrong/bad and the actions made are morally right/good but is illegal.

Referring to the second-dimension grid developed by Fisher et al. (2012), the cases will be examined through the legalizations and rules views, and also highlighting the ethical, moral, and value dimension. Figure 1 shows the adaptation of Fisher et al. (2012) ethics and morality grid, which can be better understood for this dimension relating to the ethics and morality continuum. The position of these ethics and morality identified several different options for media organizations, and the options displayed vary in commitment degree from doing good to avoiding harm.

Ethics Prescribing the good life		←————→				Morality Proscribing bad actions	
Good Positive action for good or to prevent harm being done.		Benign Avoiding doing harm, supports the doing of good but takes no positive action to do good.		Indifferent Ignoring harm done by or to others and disregarding the rights of others.		Bad Taking action to do harm. Taking no action to prevent harm being done.	
Social development and Caring	Social responsibility and Supporting	Reciprocity	Fairness	Lying and Dishonesty	Cheating and Selfishness	Bullying and Social irresponsibility	Harming and Social & Environmental disengagement

Figure 1: Fisher and Lovell (2012) ethics and morality grid in business practice map.

Based on Figure 1, Fisher et al. (2012) mentioned that the organizations should provide cooperation and commitment to improving the economic, cultural, social, and even environmental aspects of a society that ultimately assist in social development. Besides that, Fisher et al. (2012) stated that practicing social responsibility involves organizational actions with methods to minimize environmental damage and social impact. Throughout the reciprocity, human characteristics are mostly self-centered. However, some argue that human beings have high altruism and also act for the common good causes to ensure reciprocity. Moreover, humans start practicing fair play and punish anyone who cheats. In principle, lying is an act that turns out to be unethical (Grover, 1993) and can destroy relationships for business (Becker, 1998) when a business practices honest transaction. For an oath made with a deceptive statement, severe punishment can be

imposed. For long-term business relationships, all parties need to practice sincerity, trust, and openness. Any scam can damage a business relationship (Fisher et al., 2012). According to the legal procedure, some actions can be taken when there is a breach of contract which will make the contract void or invalid. The affected party can claim damages through the legal process. Most people think that bending the rules can help in speeding up the solution of problems (Hudson & Verschuur, 1998) and avoiding greater injustice (Linda, 2019). When the process of bending the rules occurs, we need to evaluate to whom it benefits, whether between individuals or organizations, to determine if the action is right or wrong (Linda, 2019). The main codes of industry thrust key are focusing on overcoming cheatings and unscrupulous practices (Fisher et al., 2012). Bullying can occur when there is a relationship between people of different positions (Zapf, Escartin, Einarsen, Hoel & Vartia, 2011) Bullying can take place when there is an abuse of power by those who have bigger power and use it to abuse, curse, or insult the less powerful people (Vartia, 2010, Yamada, 2011). Firmness is not defined as aggressiveness and individual perceptions may differ. The definition of bullying may be different to some people, but people who are bullied are aware if they are being bullied. In certain circumstances, harmful and destructive impacts may result from actions by individuals, organizations, institutions, or the environment. Organization can be a safe or dangerous place based on business operations, employment practices, business procedures, as well as employee safety (Fisher et al., 2012).

Media Freedom Ethic

McQuail (2005) concluded the doctrines of the media freedom ethics by identifying the recognition of media to accomplish the social responsibility, benchmarking for the higher standard of professionalism in requiring or accessing information, and transparency, factual, accountability, and fair shall be objective. He also identified that media supposedly stands as an independent organization and regulates based on the legal codes or framework, as well as prevents giving any invasive content that causes bad influence on the public. Lastly, McQuail (2005) mentioned that media have to be the medium in respecting other views and ideologies which in return will give the society diversification. This situation will make the media organization accessible to the public that has different views and opinions, leading to the exchange of ideas and maturing the society.

Ethical Principles In Business

Business ethics, as defined by Crane and Matten (2016), is the study of business activities, decisions, and situations in several issues of right and wrong. They also stated that the understanding of bad and good is different between organizations even in the government or private sector. Sivadas, Kellaris, Kleiser, and Dahlstrom (2003) found that there are a few factors related to determining business ethics which are the situation of the individual, culture, age, marital status, gender, etc. In the view of the company, Juscius and Snieska (2008) stated that a company that aims to save all globally received ethical standards may expect a positive attitude in return including support from society.

Utilitarian Principles

The utilitarian principle basis was introduced by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mills. The concept of utilitarianism is considered as the policy that concerns and evaluates the benefits and costs that will be inflicted on the people. Ethics, as viewed by Bentham (1996), places humans into two aspects, pleasure and pain. The idea of pleasure and pain distinguishes the aspect of good and bad. The view of good shall give pleasure, or supposedly contribute to pain prevention. Equally, the view of bad shall give pain or contribute to pleasure prevention. From the perspective of Bentham (1996), the ethics or the sight of right and wrong will be significant if the application of the utilitarian principle is adapted to any idea of ethics. In other term, any action that will improve others' pleasure is a right act and anything that contributes to the decreasing of pleasure will be considered wrong (Solomon, 1993). There are several critics regarding utilitarian principles. Sen (1970) mentioned that the "welfarism" doctrine only relies on the utilities and does not consider other values related to social welfare. Moreover, the utilities can be the basis of social welfare, which can be regarded as misleading information.

Kantian Principles

The theories of Kant's principles introduced by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) mentioned about actions related to needs or requirements are considered as restricted acts and should not be treated as free acts. The lucid action can only be treated as a free action if it is based on the law (Legge, 1997). Other than that, the appropriateness of any actions can only be based and depend on benefits with any regulation regardless of any outcomes and consequences. Kant (1804) also emphasized the principles of respecting other people with dignity and treat others equally to achieve their interest, while the moral rights of the human being will specify and identify the benefit of individual specifically because human is entitled to meet their interest.

Egalitarianism

Brennan and Lo (2016) mentioned that egalitarianism should treat all living creatures equally based on their functions and benefits, among others. The concept is an adaption from the idea of Naes (1973) which emphasized the importance of the living creatures or even organisms due to the dependency between each other. Naes (1973) also mentioned that the social functions work to create the concept of dependency between each other in ensuring a better relationship. Based on the idea of equality, Velasques (2014) justified that there are two equality practices which are political equality and economic equality. It was also mentioned that any equality should be given where it is due even it is good or bad.

Valesquez (2014) and Feinberg (1998) also found the critics on the idea of equalitarianism which stated that equality should be defined by merits and efforts, not by giving equality to everyone.

Libertarianism

Nozick (1974) and Velasques (2014) defined libertarianism as the appropriate or relevant decision made by the individuals to achieve fair treatment deliberately based on their free choice. In the context of media, Christian, John, and Mark (1993) stated that the press should cherish the concept of libertarianism and individualism that have been implemented previously by the liberalist in history such as Kant, John Stuart Mill, etc. Christian and Clifford (2010) also mentioned that the function of media in any social responsibility primarily related to the broadcasting policy for the public. From other libertarian views, the press should become the ombudsman for the public (Curran, 2000). In terms of the sustainability of media freedom and the organization, the media shall maintain themselves as the medium for a healthy democracy and political liberty (Craft, 2010).

Justice As Fairness

Rawls (1971) in Theory of Justice listed several items of human need as a necessity, including many useful political freedoms. Moreover, Rawls (1971) also stated that people need more space for speech to ensure that they can get the necessity needed. This is similar to the approach and concept of utilitarianism but there is more space provided in allowing the human need into the arguments and speech. Furthermore, Rawls (1971) is also based on the principles that every human should have an equal right for necessity and liberty, and the inequalities for any distribution is to give benefits for all. In the media aspects, Rawls (1993) mentioned that as the media, the biggest challenge is to be fair to the editorial write-up or called as "reflective equilibrium" in journalism due to the ideology and perception.

Virtue Theory

Gomez (2002) mentioned that Aristotle found the moral action done by people to be inclusively related to coherent choice and consideration. Moreover, Gomez (2002) also found the critical virtue stated by Aristotle which aims to create a human relationship to cooperate smoothly and the right way of cooperating by practicing bravery, liberality, impressiveness, serenity, etc. Any involuntary act should not be liable to the people responsible for it due to several factors such as ignorance, outside coercion, or avoidance of the more significant harm (Swift, 2012). The excellence of human beings is based on the principles and what they stand for (Rest, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This qualitative research used a case study approach where cases were looked at, individually. This is because there are four areas within the "right and wrong" dimension introduced by Fisher et al. (2012) that researchers would like to analyze which are: the actions made are right/good and legal (even not the legal commitment), the actions made are morally wrong/bad and also illegal, the actions made are morally legal but is wrong/bad and the actions made are morally right/good but is illegal. This approach is useful because the researcher can understand the phenomena in depth by looking at the content, and not just based on numerical data. Looking at it as a case by case also helps strengthening the understanding of what is happening within each case and how they compare to each other. Having an insider's perspectives on the happenings of these articles also helps to strengthen the trustworthiness of the research, where data could reach saturation.

Sampling

Two types of samples were used in this research which are newspaper articles and workers from a media organization. Newspaper can be used as a source of process-generated data and it can be transferred to a database using quantitative and/or qualitative analysis (Müller, 1996). Newspapers are more persistently used by researchers to look for archives of empirical data and/or analyze public discourse (Franzosi, 1987). Purposive sampling was used to sample the workers from a media company due to their ability to yield the answer we are looking for, and random sampling was used in selecting the newspaper articles concerning the topic.

Data Collection Method

A semi-structured interview was conducted on workers from a media organization. The participants were asked 10 open-ended semi-structured interview questions, where the researcher probed for more information. Newspaper articles were also selected where newspaper articles from all newspaper organizations that have content related to the studied media organizations from 2013 until 2019 and cases related to public concern were selected for the study. The articles were then analyzed and broken up into four dimensions of "right and wrong" on action made introduced by Fisher et al. (2012). The "right and wrong" dimensions on action constructed the cases by positioning four actions on this continuum and specified are: The actions made are right/good and legal (even not the legal commitment), the actions made are morally wrong/bad, and also illegal, the actions made are morally legal but is wrong/bad and the actions made are morally right/good but is illegal.

Studied Organization: Organization Background

The media organization chosen for the research is a public listed media organization located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The media organization owns television stations, newspapers, out-home advertising, radio stations, content creation, content provider, and digital media companies. For the year 2019 revenue target, the media organization targeted to achieve 40% of market share from all television's products, reflected the 9.6 million viewers across the country. As the leading media provider in the country, the media organization relies on circulation, advertisement, and sponsorship to survive in the challenging media business. From the view of competition, this media company always needs to be reliable, transparent, and accountable with their report, publishing, broadcasting, etc. as appraising the press freedom practice in the country. Moreover, the media organization also needs to become an influential organization to complement and compete with the new media such as social media in supplying competence and accurate news to the public. The media organization is also committed to delivering quality products through digital platform and was awarded for the mobile content choice in the previous year. Moving forward, the media organization will strengthen the digital platform and commerce strategies as the income generator and contribute to the group up to 20% from the previous year by multiple digital platforms relating to the media group.

Case Constructed

The first case discussed is based on the good and legal action but not a legal obligation. The first explanation of the first case is about the biggest financial scandal report in Malaysia which has links between senior government officials around the year 2016. The issue of the financial scandal was also mentioned by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) and the United States Department of Justice (DoJ) in an official report and press conference conducted by DoJ related to one foreign fund transferred into one senior official personal account. To ensure the validity of the news reports before publication, most news reports in Malaysia (including the chosen media company) are only allowed to use reports from reliable sources provided by the Malaysian government. To avoid any speculation and fake news involving the prominent officer leadership, most reports in Malaysia will report the facts provided by government agencies such as judicial decisions, police reports, media statements of authorities, and also other reports received legally and authentically before publishing to the public. In ethics, morality, and value, the media also needs to be fair and treat the accuser equally in their reporting to the public.

The second case discussed refers to the wrong act but legally right. Few media publicly shared the information based on the facts and legally get the documents from authorities or reliable sources for publication. However, for the issues relates to ethics, morality, and value, few presses started to play a role in headlining the problems with few articles titles that lead to misconception or pre-judgment from the public. For example, the merger and acquisition (M & A) of the two most essential telecommunication company's news was excellent publicity to the companies for public coverage of their merger discussion and the merging issues were also publicized at all major media in the country. However, few presses were also highlighting the potential doom or downfall of their competitors if the merger becomes a reality.

The third case is about actions made are right/good but is illegal. This case was explained by the exposure of other independent media organizations in the leaking of the secret document related to the graft and abuse of public funds to the public. However, the basis and genuine facts of the materials were not recognized by the Malaysian authority at that time. Moreover, the authority of the prosecutor's office also dropped all the accusations made by the media organizations about the involvement of a higher-ranking officer through a press conference ex. The media organization chosen was reluctant to publish the report as stated in the other media organization but condemning the efforts by informing on leaking will lead to the national security issues.

The fourth case discussed the actions made are wrong/bad and also illegal. The fourth case studies are from a business view, in which the situation is based on the advertising sides. To sustain itself as a free-based media group, the company was relying on advertising as the primary income for the company. The media was promoting an uncertified product through their media tools. For example, there were a few companies selling health products or cosmetics, which were not certified and not legally recognized by an authority such as the Ministry of Health (MoH) and publicly promote in several media channels. Worse, several products were claimed as the alternatives and replacements of the medical medication certified by the authorities. The exaggerated marketing of these products as remedies for specific health diseases and issues without clinical proof can give adverse effects on the public.

FINDINGS

Based on Case One (1) scenario, the findings mostly focused on credibility and transparency. Malaysia has jumped 22 places to 123rd place in the Press Freedom Index in 2020. The press freedom indicators show how credible the media is and whether it can report freely to satisfy the public. Civilians are more drawn to controversy-related cases such as money abuse. As a media practitioner, the media shall report facts from the official court statement, police report, evidence, etc. which are legally received from reliable sources before publication. In Malaysia, media practitioners need to obey a few regulations, especially when reporting public interest issues, such as Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA Act 1998), Penal Code, Evidence Act 1950, and Defamation Act 1957. Any documents published need to be reviewed and endorsed by several parties before public release. Those parties include bank institutions that use Bank and Financial Institution Act (BAFIA) 1989 which concerns people's bank

account. This act needs the media to ask for people's consent or seek for several legal advice. The government will revoke any organization that breaches this law, including the operating license of the media company. The media organization should concern the matter related to the regulations or legal issues before making any publication. In ethics, morality, and value, the media also need to be fair in their reporting and not being influenced by the surrounding people. There were several situations where the trial got disturbed because the evidence or truth prevailed during the process. An excellent report will create a good perception along the process, and the media report that brings no emotion or sympathy value will help the trial process to go smoothly without any judgment and discussion created from the public that can cause sub judice of trial. Referring to the presumption by the canonical jurist and cardinal, C. Jean Lemoine in the phrase "*item quilbet presumitur innocens nisi probetur nocens*" defined that a person is recognized innocent until they are proven guilty.

Referring to Case 2, the public listed companies involved in the merger informed Bursa Malaysia in detail about the merger. The details of the merger already got approval from Bursa Malaysia to be announced at one of the press conferences. The data obtained by media was factually based on the report from the companies and in the right consequence order of authority to avoid any manipulation or the market speculation of the company shares. The press conference could inform the discussion or company's future planning to the shareholder as well. However, based on the news of the merger, the media became a manipulative instrument in playing the issues to raise or reduce the company share price values. From the business perspective, the press also may create a bad or good review from the shareholders or potential shareholders to the specific business or interest that they already have intention into it. The media that also wrote the article related to the competitors may lead to an increase of shares between merger companies, which lead to the rise of the stock value. In these circumstances, a few media organizations can gain benefits by increasing the advertisement from the related company upon the story being published. The monopoly of the issues was played around by consumer association and was raised to the authority such as Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and Malaysia Competition Commission (MyCC). The anti-monopoly sentiments in telecommunication were raised after the 2018 General Election through the implementation of Mandatory Standard on Access Pricing that requires the service providers to follow regulated price from the government which indicated broadband price to be reduced by 49 percent by the end of 2018. The authorities influenced the merger as customers will avoid both companies from the issues of monopoly in the future. In the mid-year of 2019, both parties decided to call off the discussion due to the complexity of the proposed transaction.

Referring to Case 3, two media companies aggressively published a report based on a confidential document leaked by a whistle-blower. In the year 2015, the said whistle-blower was arrested for blackmailing charges after finding billion of money involved in a scandal between the year 2009 to 2011. Upon the leak of the documents, the media companies that were involved in publishing stories of the scandal were blocked by the government through the implementation of the MCMC Act 1998. Besides that, a media organization that owns two newspaper publications was unlawfully suspended for three months over their report on the scandal based on Printing and Publication Act 1984. However, both media companies that leaked the documents in their reports shown the credibility and transparency of the media organization in public-interest reporting. As an established organization in reporting fair and transparent stories, one of the media organizations that deals with the business, market, and share stories found their credibility in reporting to the public and business leader too. By practicing transparent and fair publication, the private-owned group company can be considered sustainable and reliable for their independent reporting in the future too. The media organization that was not reporting and condemning the effort from other media shown a loss of the revenue the next year and the credibility was also questioned by the public. For the previous year, the media organization has also been influenced and owned or shared by the political parties and individual interest which led to the reporting decision style of the company. However, in early 2019, the media was freed from any form of political party money into the media organization due to the shared selling from the political party to the media organization shareholders.

Lastly, in Case 4, the media organization practicing advertisement related to health and beauty products should abide by Medicines (Advertisement & Sale) Act 1956, which is governed by the Ministry of Health (MoH). In 2017, one of the founders of the health product claimed that her product can cure diseases or any health problems without any consultation or approval by MoH. The founder was found guilty after she was charged in court. The media organization was also warned by several authorities such as the Malaysia Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) to not repeating the same mistake in publishing advertisements related to public health. Based on the MoH report, they are also witnessing an increase in the health problem associated with the use of an unregistered and unqualified product such as diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, heart attack, etc. These local health products were mostly not tested or clinically proven by the authority and sold to the public by appointed agents or stockists who were not under the authorization of MoH. The founders of these products target television viewers as their customers as they are much likely to come from the older generation or do not have much medical, health, or scientific knowledge.

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Case 1

Our finding shows that the studied media was also related to the government and showed social responsibility to get the information from reliable sources resulting in minimizing any bad impact to the country, especially when dealing with the perception of the public. This is in line with the statement by Fisher and Lovell (2012) that claimed practicing social responsibility involves organizational actions with methods to minimize environmental damage and social impact. This is also in line with McQuail (2005) which concluded the doctrines of the media freedom ethics by identifying the recognition of media to accomplish the social responsibility, benchmarking for the higher standard of professionalism in requiring or accessing information, and transparency, factual, accountability, and fair shall be objective. The media is practicing the doctrine of McQuail (2015) to ensure that the company accomplishes media freedom. In the view of business ethics, Juscius and Snieska (2008) stated that the company that aims to save all globally received ethical standards may expect a positive attitude including the support from the society which was applied to the company that builds the credibility and trust from the public as their reports are sourced from reliable sources. The media organization in this case gladly follows regulations, and as mentioned by Prvulović, Štrbac, and Vuković (2009), ethical journalism should be self-aware of regulations. No action was taken against this media organization as they followed the regulations. The utilitarianism principles by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) can be found through the case study where the press practised fair, truth, and factual reporting based on the trial report that followed the principal rule of law. In long term, the readers, the public, and the accuser found that the media organization was credible and accountable for the reporting without getting the evidence from hearsay or the public's opinion. This situation supports Juscius and Snieska's (2008) findings on the ethical standards that contributed to positive support from society. The report at the other level will become intuitive to the needs of the readers and not breach any law related to the facts. Moreover, based on Kant's (1804) moral principles, it was found that the press was writing a fair and factual report by treating individuals equally and without pressure as any internal and external pressure can cause harm or damage to the reporting. The Kant's moral principles can also be related to Kant's categorical imperative (Second Version) on the ideas that humans have a dignity that could change in the way media treated the affected figures. Since the accuser was not found guilty by the judgment of the court, the accuser should be treated fairly by media that implemented the theory of Brennan and Lo (2016) which mentioned egalitarianism emphasizing treating all the living creature equally and freely based on their functions and benefits among other creatures.

Case 2

Selfishness to get more business and praise sponsorship in reporting by speculating current business might affect other competitors and this is aligned with Underwood (1993) and Thus (2000) which claimed the media as a business tool where profit is made. The freedom of speech was threatened by business factors especially in relation to sponsorship and it was highlighted by McChesney (2004) on threats of freedom of speech at the corporate levels. The reciprocity in the good terms existed in the company (Fisher et al., 2012) and it was shown by the company that secured the advertisement or sponsorship due to low circulation or advertisement airtime. The media in this study played the role in speculation reporting for their survival and it is related to Vanderwicken's (1995) claim that mentioned money-making is involved to manipulate the public's perception in selling news. Journalists should meet the expectations of society with roles of committed truth and economic booster, and Case 2 contradicts Musa and Damatob's (2007) claims due to journalist action on speculation. The utilitarianism principles as mentioned by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) when the press practised fair, truth, and factual reporting based on the trial report that followed the principal rule of law were shown in this case study when the press practiced fair, truth, and factual reporting based on the trial report retrieved officially from the Bursa Malaysia. In the long term, the readers, the public, and the accuser found that the media in this study is credible and accountable for the reporting without getting the evidence from hearsay or the public's opinion. This situation supports Juscius and Snieska's (2008) findings on the ethical standards that contributed to positive support from society. The theories by Kant principles emphasize the principles of respecting other people with dignity and treating others equally to achieve their interest while the moral rights at the human being will specify and find the interest of individual specifically because human is entitled freely to achieve their interest which should be implemented in the media write-up to the company that will be affected by the merger.

Case 3

Based on Case 3, the media studied constantly condemned other media that had differences with the agenda due to relationship with government, and this is related to Wang's (2001) findings that stated most of the private media was owned by the ruling party. As for the relationship with the government, the media organization was found bullying others and this action showed the abuse of power on the less powerful people as stated by Fisher et al. (2012). According to McQuail (2005), media becomes an independent organization and regulates based on the legal codes or framework and prevents from giving any invasive content that causes bad influence or action on the public. The two media organizations that involved in the document leaking were not related to any political party and move freely in their reporting to make a better Malaysia, which is in contrast to the company that condemns the other companies' efforts as they have a political relationship with the authorities. McQuail (2005) reminded media to become the medium in respecting other views and ideologies, which in return give the society diversification and make the media organization accessible to the public even if they have different views and opinions as this can lead to the exchange of idea and building of the civilized society.

The two media that were involved in the leaking of the controversial scandal were aggressively discussing these issues in their publication. Both of these media organizations showed credibility and integrity and were respected by the public. The utilitarian principle was not applied to these cases because, during the leaking, the companies were facing bad receptions and were criticized by the government-linked media until a few actions were taken to both of the media organizations. Moreover, from other libertarian views, the media should become the ombudsman for the public (Curran, 2000), which was done successfully by both companies to inform the public. In term of the sustainability of the media freedom and the organization, media shall maintain themselves as the medium for a healthy democracy and political liberty (Craft, 2010) and the media organization that is related to any political party focuses more on protecting their stakeholder (Wang, 2001) rather than protecting the public. This was proven in the media organization that was studied. Lastly, the media company implemented the virtue theory to ensure the public is protected and not abused by the government which found that the moral action done by people is inclusively relating to the coherent choice and consideration (Gomez, 2002). Both organizations were also found on the first virtue stated by Aristotle which aims to create a human relationship to cooperate smoothly and the right way of cooperating by practicing bravery, liberality, impressiveness, serenity, etc. (Gomez, 2002). The excellence of the human being is based on the principles and what they stand for (Rest, 2002) and was practiced by both organizations in this case.

Case 4

Media organizations studied were involved in harming and creating social disengagement that affected the organizational and social aspects with their irresponsible action to make money. This is aligned with Underwood's (1993) and Thus's (2000) studies on media acting as a business tool where profit is made. In principle, lying is an act that turns out to be unethical (Grover, 1993) in which this media organization practiced and caused harm to the company by allowing the promotion of unregulated and overclaimed products. The said company should also be aware of consequences that can occur when rules are abused or violated (Prvulović, Štrbac, and Vuković, 2009). This was proven when the company was warned by the authority on the promotion of the unregulated and overclaimed products which was against the law and considered unethical journalism. Moreover, the media organization did not consider the theory by McQuail (2005). McQuail (2015) also identified that media supposedly regulates based on the legal codes or framework and prevents giving any invasive content that causes bad influence or action on the public which was ignored by this media. The action of this media in advertising illegal and morally wrong content is aligned with Juscius and Snieska's (2008) claim about the company that aims to save all the globally received ethical standards may expect a positive attitude including support from the society. The utilitarian principle that was implemented in the advertisement or marketing of the products evaluates the benefits and costs that will be inflicted to the media organization without considering other values related to social welfare. Advertising harmful products are considered misleading information. By implementing the wrongful and illegal act, the media organization was denying Kant's principles of respecting other people with dignity and treat others equally to achieve their interests. On the libertarian view, it was mentioned by Christian and Clifford (2010) that media holds the responsibility to not harm the public.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Business ethics and press freedom are best implied by comparing cases against the model of ethical and moral business practice. In media sectors, the business practices bind with varying degrees of ethical consideration and regulations. In most cases, the legislation will create obligations covering the media organization operation and each of it is related to moral codes to establish legal barriers. Business ethics and press freedom would actively define the public.

In general, the media organization shall practice transparency and fair reporting to sustain itself in the business without any influence from the political interest. The media shall be free to make any decision on the write-up and the organization's direction without neglecting the rules and regulations of the country. Media organizations should give people the right to express their views, ideologies, and critics on a legal basis. The media conduct council act that will be drafted and tabled in parliament soon will help the media organization to remain free even after any new government or political party is appointed. The media should remain free without any influence of the government that wins the election. Despite getting the revenue by write-up or reporting, the company should play the role as the medium to help the practices of monopoly or condemning other products. The media organization should give fair treatment on the need to express concerns or ideas to the public. The harm inflicted on the company will create suffering to the organization in the future such as loss and reduction. The media organization is also responsible in educating people and being credible since alternative media such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) lose the sense of credibility. The integration of moral values, code of ethics, and legalization should be synchronized to create good media freedom in this country.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Limitation of the research.

1. The research should be based on the perspective of the media organization and the management to provide a better understanding.
2. There is a need for proper use of newspaper data in the study for sampling process-generated data.
3. There is no implication of the particular legal statute influence to practice the media freedom in the country and effect on the reporting.

Further research

1. There is a need for a proper and in-depth study regarding media organization, press freedom, and ethics with a research design and appropriate statistical analysis.
2. Combination of process-generated data of quantitative and/or qualitative for content analysis should be considered for next research.
3. Proper use of newspaper data in the study for sampling process-generated data is needed to explore this issue deeper.
4. The implication of the legislation imposed on to press in the practice of media freedom needs to be address further.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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