



## NEWSPAPER COVERAGE ON METHADONE MAINTENANCE THERAPY (MMT) IN *BERITA HARIAN* AND *HARIAN METRO*

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### ABSTRACT

*Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT) is a programme launched by government in year 2005 to target heroin addicts, but scepticism still prevails on this unorthodox treatment method. The public misconceived the treatment as just another alternative to meet the addiction habits. Question arose whether the media has given enough coverage to the programme and whether the newspapers have been supportive in term of writing style and the information offered in the news. Therefore, the paper will examine the contents of news on methadone as reported by Berita Harian and Harian Metro in year 2008 and 2009 to determine their level of support on the MMT programme. The study found out that there is still a lacking in coverage on the MMT programme by these newspapers whereby only 35 news articles on methadone were published by both newspapers throughout the two years. Although small in number, Berita Harian has focused their news to create awareness on the therapy drug, using the ministry representatives and health practitioners as the official sources. Harian Metro, however, preferred to represent methadone in the form of crime news, and using enforcement bodies as their sources. Therefore methadone programme did suffer from this stereotype of news values practised by most tabloid newspapers. It is feared that associating*

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*methadone with crime and harmful drugs would create a perception that methadone is just another type of harmful drugs and not a therapy drug or substitution for the addicts.*

## ABSTRAK

Program Terapi Gantian Methadone (MMT) yang dilaksanakan oleh kerajaan sejak tahun 2005 dalam usaha untuk membantu penagih dadah jenis heroin masih belum dapat diterima sepenuhnya oleh masyarakat yang menganggap terapi ini hanyalah satu alternatif kepada penagihan. Kajian ini ingin melihat sokongan akhbar terhadap MMT dengan mengenalpasti sama ada akhbar telah memberikan liputan yang mencukupi terhadap program dengan meneliti gaya penulisan dan maklumat yang diberikan di dalam akhbar. Kandungan berita yang mengandungi kata kunci methadone di dalam akhbar *Berita Harian* dan *Harian Metro* sepanjang tahun 2008 dan 2009 dianalisa untuk melihat sokongan akhbar-akhbar ini terhadap program MMT. Kajian mendapati liputan akhbar terhadap MMT adalah rendah kerana disepanjang tempoh yang dikaji, cuma terdapat 35 berita yang merujuk kepada methadone di dalam kedua-dua akhbar. Walaupun kekerapan berita mengenai methadone adalah sangat sedikit di dalam *Berita Harian*, akhbar tersebut telah memfokuskan pemberitaannya dengan tujuan memberi kesedaran program terapi tersebut kepada khayalak pembaca dengan menggunakan sumber rasmi dari kalangan wakil kementerian dan pengamal perubatan. *Harian Metro* bagaimanapun, cenderung melaporkan berkenaan methadone di dalam berita jenayah dengan menggunakan pihak berkuasa sebagai sumber rasminya. Dapatlah disimpulkan bahawa methadone sendiri turut terjejas di dalam stereotaip nilai berita yang diamalkan oleh kebanyakan akhbar tabloid. Adalah dikhuatiri liputan yang mengaitkan methadone dengan unsur jenayah boleh menyebabkan salah faham di kalangan khalayak pembaca bahawa methadone ialah salah satu dari dadah berbahaya yang sering disalahgunakan dan bukannya sebahagian daripada program rawatan penagihan dadah.



## **INTRODUCTION**

Methadone Maintenance Therapy (MMT) is a programme launched by the government in year 2005 to target heroin addict. The programme provides drug addicts with legal access to synthetic opioid (a safe substitute drugs) that stops craving for drugs and the withdrawal symptoms allowing addicts to carry on with life. The MMT programme run by the government did received some coverage from the media. However, due to the stigma of drug addicts, the public's perception on methadone and its users has not improved much. The public still misconceived the treatment as just another alternative to meet the addiction habits. Question arose whether the media has been doing their best in supporting the MMT programme in their news based on the style of news writing and the information offered in the news articles. Therefore, the paper will examine the contents of the news on methadone therapy as reported by *Berita Harian* and *Harian Metro* in year 2008 and 2009 to determine their level of support on the programme. This will be done by examining the trend of news writing style by focusing to any news mentioning methadone in the newspapers under study by looking at the component of news such as the use of official sources, the newspaper inclination, whether positive, negative or neutral and its style of writing, whether direct reporting or observation.

### **Methadone And The News**

Malaysia media began their coverage on methadone as early as 2001 as the programme has been used worldwide to help drug addicts kick the habit. Malaysian media began covering this issue more seriously in year 2005 when the government decided to give free syringes, condom and methadone as part of a "harm-reduction" programme for the drug addicts.

The media which is consistently giving its best to report MMT in the name of social responsibility was probably the Malaysian National News Agency (BERNAMA). D.J Paul (2009) of BERNAMA tried his best to give an accurate and positive coverage on MMT. He quoted Professor Dr Mohamad Hussain Habil, Addiction Specialist and Consultant Psychiatrist with University Malaya Medical Centre's Department of



Psychological Medicine by saying that said the MMT is “probably the only long term pragmatic approach in helping the addicts get on with life and at the same time help alleviate many of the problems associated with drug addiction - HIV infection, criminal behaviour and social decadence” in his news article. The news article too said the programme which initially covers about covers 5,000 addicts will be extended to some 75,000 addicts 2015 due to the success of the programme.

DJ Paul (2009) in another news articles explained in great details on how methadone is consumed by the addicts. He explain that MMT was an office based treatment with addicts voluntarily coming in to receive their oral dosage of methadone (in liquid form) during the induction period and taking the substitute drug at home during the maintenance period. The personnel who attend to these addicts will also monitor the treatment progress.

In another BERNAMA news article, also by D.J Paul (2009), quoted Dr Mohd Khafidz Hj Mohd Ishak, the president of Persatuan Insaf Murni (an NGO affiliated with Malaysian Aids Council and the one that conducts MMT) by saying that addicts taking methadone daily in liquid form to manage their addiction as similar to “how we manage other diseases of the body for example, diabetes”.

An earlier BERNAMA report (2002) was about how methadone would help to reduce the spread of HIV among addicts and their family. The news quoted the Malaysian Association For Reformed Addicts (Pengasih) president Yunus Pathi Mohd as saying that there were about 42,000 chronic drug addicts who were infected with HIV (at the time of the report); the use of methadone was felt crucial in efforts to reduce the number of addicts.

Not all is beautiful about methadone in the news. As compared to the Malaysian media, there were a considerably amount of ‘bad press’ on MMT in the Western media. During the early days of the introduction of the MMT dated back to 1970s, there was a report claiming that the Western media were in a constant search to put an end to the



programme. Brecher (1972) said editors and politicians preyed on ‘unfortunate methadone incidents’ to fill newspapers headlines at their attempt to ‘sabotage’ the programme and diminished their usefulness.

Belluck (2003) found out that articles appearing in prominent newspapers in 2002 and 2003, including those in the *New York Times*, have described methadone as a “killer drug” that is “widely abused and dangerous”. The reports said diversion, abuse, and deaths associated with many opioid medications, including methadone, have been the subject of front-page news. These alarming reports arose from an apparent increase in deaths among persons using the medication.

An article published by the *International Journal of Drug Policy* (1998) explained how ‘media misrepresentation’ was widely accepted amongst workers in the drug and alcohol field as one of harm reduction’s ‘greatest barriers’. The article said workers face the dilemma of whether to be proactive and actively discuss harm reduction messages or quietly continue with their work hoping that valuable messages will be disseminated effectively, with little controversy. According to the article, although MMT had been a major success in Australia, it received much resistance from the tabloid press as a “waste of public money” due to a number of methadone-related death reported by the media.

A recent study on metaphors in relations to methadone in New York newspapers by Suzanne (2006) shown that the image of methadone has not improved much. After examining three newspapers, the study found out that that ‘methadone’ itself is a metaphor for ‘heroin’.

Blogger [Maryna Reshetnyak](#) (2009) reproduced a comment by a methadone user who expressed his concern about the representation of methadone in the newspaper of his country, Ukraine, in a weblog. Pavel Kutsev said that situation with substitution therapy was getting worse due to the upcoming elections in Ukraine and all MMT programmes were under threat.



In the Rising Voices blog, Kutsev was quoted raising a question:

*“How would you like this newspaper headline: “Methadone Monsters Ruled by the Hand of Evil?” This is from one of the newspapers from the Sumy region. So we are quite concerned about all this.”*

### **Media Representation Of Drug Use**

Media play an important role in disseminating news and information for the Malaysian public. Apart from popular medium such as electronic media, and the World Wide Web, Malaysian public still seeks news from the newspapers, both mainstreams newspapers such as *Berita Harian*, *Utusan Malaysia*, *The Star*, and *The New Straits Times* and tabloid newspapers such as *Harian Metro* and *Kosmo*. *Harian Metro*, for example, is a Bahasa Malaysia tabloid newspaper with the highest daily circulation of 338,552 copies followed by *Berita Harian* at 183,187 copies per day (*Harian Metro*, 2009). These newspapers contribute towards forming some of the public opinion and encourage social change. Thus, to understand the media representation of methadone, it is necessary to understand how the drugs and substance abuse were presented in the media.

Many people are well aware of media influence in shaping public’s opinion. This is because according to George Gerbner’s analysis, media was “agenda setter” of our culture (cited by Barcus & Jankowski, 1975). Realizing this fact in Britain, British Government utilized media in their campaign to fight illegal use of drugs (Davies, 1988). These campaigns have been based on an indirect model of behaviour change. In this case media was used to create awareness, increase and maintain the knowledge on specific health issues as well as indirectly trying to change public’s attitudes and behaviour on health care. Therefore, the British government had set the agenda and used the media to execute their plan. In most of the country in the world, the media roles and function would usually align with the ruling government (Faridah Ibrahim, 2007). According to Faridah Ibrahim (2007), in Malaysia, the government considered the newspapers and other media as the medium for distributing information to the public on behalf of the



government. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily true when it comes to the drugs related issues.

According to Taylor (2008), the media around the world have the common theme when it comes to reporting news on drugs. Most of the time theme would include something negative about the drug, the drug's users, and also the suppliers. The media tends to exaggerate, distort, sensationalize, and sometimes the news can also be inaccurate (Coomber, Morri, & Dunn, 2000). The newspapers would usually associate drug related news with criminal activities (Elliott & Chapman, 2000). These portrayals serve to add to public's belief that drugs are a menace to the society. Even though media around the world had 'unspoken' understanding when it comes to drugs issues, it could pose to be a disadvantage to the government when they need to introduce harm reduction methods in countering drug misuse. This is because the public for a long period of time had been educated to see only negative things about drug related news.

Furthermore, journalists have their stereotypes when dealing with drug issues. Journalists would try to organize the social reality that would suit the image of drug related issues. Schudson (1991) believed that we should examine the 'cultural given within which everyday interaction happens in the first place' for these were sources of the 'generalized images and stereotypes' employed by the journalist in their routine work. Again, these issues are usually negative in nature.

The media also would choose to carry on with news that has more values than the other. As far as journalists, chief reporters, sub editors, news editors, feature writers, columnists and the likes concern, the news that has more values would be commercial news (Faridah Ibrahim, 2003). This means that the reporters change their style of writing to suit it with the current commercial needs.

Newspapers had been the source for news for many since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Newspapers had braved the years of yellow journalism and sensationalism, but public still have much trust on the news articles. Even though the style of writing news



articles had changed over the years, but the newspaper's main concern had forever been whether they could have bigger and wider circulation. Therefore in order to sell these news, it raises concerns regarding the inaccurate, partial and over dramatized manner in which issues are often presented to the public (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2006). Thus, those readers who only have the newspapers as their source of information may be misinform.

However there was also research that relates media to the problem of drug use (Barcus & Jankowski, 1975). It was said that the contents of media in advertisement, television entertainment, and songs' lyrics suggest the use of drugs. This was because media are part of an environment, which is composed of many factors that led to social change. Barcus & Jankowski (1975) realized that the existence of media perform certain functions in the society for the individual, for sub-groups of the society, and for the culture as a whole. Therefore, we should realize that these functions have the tendency to influence society and could become the contributing factors in social change.

The selection of news in the newspaper would also depend on news value, for example Manning (2006) had done a research to comparative analysis between volatile substance abuse (VSA) and ecstasy. The research analyzed the reporting of ecstasy- related death and those associated with VSA. What was interesting about the findings of the research was that ecstasy got more news coverage than VSA, even though VSA death- related story were prove to be higher than ecstasy. The reason ecstasy got more news coverage was because there were more people championing ecstasy causes than VSA.

Ecstasy was portrayed as dangerous and as threat to everyone. Furthermore because Manning (2006), suggested looking at politics of the news source to understand why ecstasy had more coverage than VSA. This was because the political marginal group was championing the ecstasy course were able to secure access to news media agenda in particular situations, and yet the usual routines of news production frequently privilege the news definitions offered by the powerful (Schlesinger & Tumber, 1994; Manning,



2001). This could also prove apart from the news value, in dealing with drug issues, the driving force behind the issues should be powerful enough to command media attention.

Manning (2006), identifies four symbolic frameworks in organizing the news coverage. He believed that to understand the substance misuse in terms of how dimensions such as location, behaviours and identities, substance images, and cause and consequences are constructed. Based on this framework he concluded that home is where the drug abuse would usually happen, and it was also associated with crime and violence, the image of the abuser would be painted to be negative, and it will lead to social disorder.

### **Methadone And The Society**

How does the Malaysian society react towards MMT? DJ. Paul (2009) highlighted a concern by Professor Dr. Mohamad Hussain Habil on public's perception of the MMT programmed. Dr. Mohamad was quoted as saying that the society were worried that MMT programme is just "substituting one addiction with another", or to some extent, regards it as "euthanasia for eradicating a social menace". There is also a presence of cultural belief that treating drugs abuser with more drugs will not solve any problem (BERNAMA, 2006)

DJ Paul (2009) quoted Vice-president of Addiction Medicine Association of Malaysia (AMAM) Datuk Dr. Lim Boon Sho who said "there is a serious miscommunication on the substitute drug". Lim was commenting on a number of his patients who was nabbed by the police even though they were under MMT. The same report quoted AMAM's president Dr. Steven Chow as saying that addiction was a "stubborn disease" and often involves "stubborn patients" and thus was not going to be easy to confide the addicts to come forward and seek treatment voluntarily. Another problem highlighted by the report was the lack of financial support or resources from the government for the private practitioners to be part of the MMT programme.

Gomez (2009) highlighted challenges faced by the doctors involved in the MMT programme. The report said many doctors had stopped helping heroin addicts get rid of



their habit by giving them milder replacement drugs because they were getting a bad name as they were perceived as “supporting the problem rather than helping the addicts”. Gomez (2009) quoted Professor Dr. Mohamad Hussain Habil University Malaya Medical Centre psychological medicine department addiction specialist as saying that due to the “bad perception of the society”, only two from the first batch of 52 doctors trained in using methadone in 2003, are still employing the therapy.

DJ. Paul (2009) too had highlighted the same issue in his report. He quoted Dr. Musa Jantan from Melaka on the problem of doctors treating drug addicts as being “disturbed” not only by the society, but the authority and the politicians. Dr. Musa said his patients have been the victim of “anger from the society” and have been blamed for every petty crimes happening in the neighbourhood, when in reality, crimes can be done by anyone, not only the drug addicts.

Haliza Hassan (2009) quoted the National AntiDrug Agency (AADK) Deputy Director-General (Operation) Prof. Dr. Mahmood Nazar Mohamed that there was a need to educate the society to change the stigma towards those who are who has “fallen into the social problems’ black hole” so they would find the courage to came out from it. Prof. Dr. Mahmood too made a call to the media to play a more positive role in social issue, including drugs issues, avoid the coverage meant to punish.

### **Agenda Setting Theory**

The agenda setting theory predicts that the amount of attention given to an issue in the media affects the level of importance assigned to it by the public (Roadman, 2008). According to agenda setting theory, the media tell the public what issues to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In other words, the media dictate the key issues that circulate in the public agendas by discussing these issues repeatedly and by drawing attention to them. Although the theory was more popular in the examination on political agenda, it can also be study in relation of media presentation on substance use. It can be argues that if the media repeatedly communicate messages about the risks related to substance use



(drugs), the public will consider this issue as more and more important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 177).

### **Moral Panic Concept**

Moral panic is always associated with public, as it will talk about society and how society reacts toward certain issues that would put society at risks. According to Cohen (cited by Garland, 2008) moral panic can be defined as excessive feeling of the alarm or fear, usually affecting a body of persons, and leading to extravagant or injudicious effort to secure safety. Cohen (2004) also mentions that the term moral panic emerges in 1960s from the social reaction theory. This was part of media's role in stereotyping and misinterpreting deviance and the perception that might contribute to a deviancy amplification spiral. This means that excessive exaggeration in news could lead to public thinking too seriously about deviance and deviancy. In relation to journalism, moral panic could be triggered by for instance; the journalists' sensationalize style of writing on certain issues. After being exposed in the news, if the public realizes the possible threat they might be facing they would start to have unnecessarily panic.

According to Goode and Ben Yehuda (1994), media report can trigger panic immediately, but the panic would disappear as quickly. This most probably because, if it is really bad the public would most probably follow-up on the story with other sources and the anxiety would be clear once the truth is revealed. Moral panic can affect those whose deviant conduct appals onlookers so powerfully precisely because it relates to personal fears and unconscious wishes (Garland, 2008).

Garland (2008), also believed that mass media are typically the prime mover and the prime beneficiaries that contribute to the public's moral panic. Referring to the commercial news that was discussed earlier, Jock Young (1971) noted that the commercial media have an institutionalized need to create moral panics. In another word, the media would intentionally create moral panic by generating news to ensure the news would appeal to the public.



## **METHODOLOGY**

The research was based on the analysis of two Bahasa Malaysia newspapers, *Berita Harian* and *Harian Metro* and whether these newspapers were supportive toward the government-endorsed MMT programme. These newspapers were chosen as both are the most read Bahasa Malaysia newspapers by the Malays.

The researcher analysed two years worth of news considering the words mention in both newspapers. Based on the two years data collection there were 35 news news articles mentioned the word methadone in the news articles, 18 for *Berita Harian*, and 17 for *Harian Metro*. *Berita Harian* had 12 news articles in 2008, and six news articles in 2009 while *Harian Metro* had 10 news articles in 2008, and seven news articles in 2009.

As mention earlier the researchers only focus on the mentioning of the word methadone in the newspapers to qualify the news articles to be analysed. In analysing the news articles, the researchers focus on categories that includes the date the news articles were published, the source for the news article, the style of writing, type of news, the news inclination, types of information and whether the newspaper was deemed supporting the MMT program.

The date is useful in comparing both newspapers in term of identifying the coverage of news on methadone. The source category was divided between the “Ministry”, the “Health practitioner”, the “Enforcer” such as the Police and the AADK, the non-governmental organisation labelled as “NGO”, the “Audit department”, the “Academician”, the “Religious department” and the “Journalist”. This is important to determine the usage of sources of methadone news, as it would also determine whether the news articles was written based on an official sources or based on journalist’s own observation and investigation. Apart from that the researchers also analyse the style of writing the news articles. The style of writing would prove whether the news article was written based on direct reporting or the journalist’s observation. In this case direct reporting means that the journalist wrote the story based on information they got from the



government (or other official sources) and literally transcribe it back to the general public.

The researchers also were looking at the report inclination of the articles whether it was positive, negative or neutral. The researchers conceptualize positive in term of whether the articles are supporting the government's effort in MMT program for example words used to describe methadone just as it was, meaning methadone as treatment drug for addiction (Valentine, 2007). Negative was conceptualize according to the words used to mislead the readers into believing that methadone was just another harmful drug introduced by the government to encourage more drug abuse. The third inclination identified as neutral was based on if the articles just mention about methadone but does not incline towards positive or negative.

The researchers were also looking at whether the information from the news articles is factual information or misleading. In some of the news articles for example, methadone were incorrectly inform, in which methadone were categorized as 'a harmful substance' to the society and were labelled as harmful as 'cocaine'.

The news were also analysed and categories under "Main story", "Sub-story", or "Mere mentioning" to see whether methadone was the main focus of the news articles or just it was mentioned as an additional information in the news articles. These news articles were later categorised as "Support" or "Lack of support" based on whether methadone has been positively portrayed and the amount of information offered on methadone treatment.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Frequency of news articles according to months**

The researchers group the dates into three parts, each containing number of news published in four months, namely, January to April, May to August, and finally, September to December. The study found out that for the duration of the study, *Berita*



*Harian* have most news articles on the final fourth months of each years, while *Harian Metro* have their news articles on the second fourth months of the years.

**Table 1: Frequency Of News According To Months**

	<i>Berita Harian</i> f	%	<i>Harian Metro</i> f	%
January to April	3	16.66	6	35.29
May to August	4	22.22	7	41.17
September to December	11	61.11	4	23.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Types Of News articles**

The study revealed that “Awareness” was the main type of news on methadone in *Berita Harian* with (8 items or 44.44 per cent) followed by other types of news (6 items or 33.33 per cent) while news on methadone in *Harian Metro* focused both on “Crime” and “Awareness” (6 items or 35.29 per cent respectively). News on methadone which fall under the “Treatment” category were almost equal for both newspapers. The study too revealed that *Berita Harian* has not angled any news on methadone in the form of “Crime” news for the duration of two years, but has constantly wrote to create awareness among the readers on the therapy drug.



**Table 2: Types Of News On Methadone Reported By Both Newspapers**

	<i>Berita Harian</i> f	%	<i>Harian Metro</i> f	%
Crime	-	-	6	35.29
Treatment	4	22.22	4	23.52
Awareness	8	44.44	6	35.29
Others	6	33.33	1	5.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### Sources of News

The study found that *Berita Harian* has dutifully reported news on methadone from “Ministry” sources, showing how *Berita Harian* has remained objective in its reporting on the substitute drug therapy by reporting from the authority point of view. There were equal uses of sources from the “Health practitioner”, “NGO” and the “Journalist” for *Berita Harian* at 16.66 percent (three news articles). *Harian Metro*, on the contrary, focused more on the “Enforcer” as their sources (6 news articles or 35.29 percent). This is consistent with the previous findings which categorised “Crime” as one of the main news type on methadone. It was also revealed that *Harian Metro* has a high number of news articles written based on the “Journalist” investigation and observation (5 news articles or 29.41 per cent).



**Table 3: Sources Of News On Methadone**

	<i>Berita Harian</i> f	%	<i>Harian Metro</i> f	%
Ministry	5	27.77	1	5.88
Health practitioner	3	16.66	4	23.52
Enforcer (Police, AADK, etc)	1	5.55	6	35.29
NGO	3	16.66	-	-
Audit	2	11.11	-	-
Academician	-	-	1	5.88
Religious department	1	5.55	-	-
Journalist	3	16.66	5	29.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### Style of Writing

*Berita Harian* and *Harian Metro* have been trying hard to be objective in their reporting, and this is reflected in their style of news writing whereby both newspapers are practising direct reporting when it comes to news articles on methadone. However, both newspapers do use some observation and investigation without acknowledging official sources when writing news articles which have an association with the methadone.

**Table 4: The News Articles' Style Of Writing**

	<i>Berita Harian</i> f	%	<i>Harian Metro</i> f	%
Direct reporting	14	77.77	12	70.58
Observation	4	22.22	5	29.42
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>



### Types of News Articles

News articles on methadone by both newspapers are written using factual information. However, there were a number of news articles written based on assumption of the journalist. Although the number of these news articles are relatively small, but it is a concern to the researcher that the journalists stay being objective by using official sources in their news articles to avoid news being written out of assumption which can lead the public dangerously misinformed. For example, methadone was mentioned in news articles on “psychotropic drugs” called Domicum. The report by *Harian Metro* dated January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 which failed to quote any official source, has inconsistently labelled Domicum as “*pil khayal*” (euphoric pills) and “*pil penenang jiwa*” (relaxing pills).

**Table 5: Types Of News Articles On Methadone**

	<i>Berita Harian</i>	%	<i>Harian Metro</i>	%
	<b>f</b>		<b>f</b>	
Fact	17	94.44	15	88.23
Assumption	1	5.55	2	11.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### Inclination Of The News Articles

In studying the inclination of the news articles, the study found out that most news are written in a positive way about methadone, and some news on methadone were neutral. Only one news article on methadone in each newspaper (five percent) were written negatively. For example, *Harian Metro* on January 26th, 2009 reported “the police have arrested a man which urine test was found positive for methadone”.



**Table 6: Inclination Of The News Articles**

	<i>Berita Harian</i>	%	<i>Harian Metro</i>	%
	<b>f</b>		<b>f</b>	
Positive	10	55.55	13	76.47
Negative	1	5.55	1	5.88
Neutral	7	38.88	3	17.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### Types Of Information

This finding too was consistent with the findings in Table 6. Almost all news in both newspapers were using factual information and only one news article on methadone in each newspapers (five percent) had misleading information.

**Table 7: Types Of Information In News On Methadone**

	<i>Berita Harian</i>	%	<i>Harian Metro</i>	%
	<b>f</b>		<b>f</b>	
Factual Information	17	94.44	16	94.11
Misleading Information	1	5.55	1	5.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### Positioning Of The Methadone In The News Articles

In the positioning of methadone in the news articles, it was found out that *Harian Metro* has more news on methadone positioned as the main story (9 news articles of 52.94 per cent), while *Berita Harian* have an equal number of news on methadone positioned as main-story and sub-story (7 news, 38.88 per cent respectively). *Berita Harian*, however have slightly more news which mere mentioning methadone (4 news articles or 22 per cent) compared to *Harian Metro* (3 news articles or 17.64 per cent).



**Table 8: Positioning Of The Methadone**

	<i>Berita Harian</i>	%	<i>Harian Metro</i>	%
	<b>f</b>		<b>f</b>	
Main story	7	38.88	9	52.94
Sub-story	7	38.88	5	29.41
Mere mentioning	4	22.22	3	17.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### Newspapers' Support

In determining whether the newspapers understudy have been supportive towards the MMT programme by the government, it was found out that both newspapers were supportive towards the programme, with *Berita Harian* has a slightly higher percentage compared to *Harian Metro*. Although the differences were not significant enough, but *Harian Metro* did have a slightly higher percentage of “Lack of support” (17.64 per cent) on the MMT programme.

**Table 9: Newspapers' Support On Methadone Treatment**

	<i>Berita Harian</i>	%	<i>Harian Metro</i>	%
	<b>f</b>		<b>f</b>	
Support	15	83.33	14	82.35
Lack of support	3	16.66	3	17.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

### CONCLUSION

*Berita Harian* and *Harian Metro*, although the former was a mainstream newspaper, and latter, a tabloid, are both the most read Bahasa Malaysia newspapers in the country, therefore their power in creating public opinion is undeniable. The coverage on MMT by these newspapers approved the agenda setting theory, where the media play a role in



channelling the government's agenda – to communicate to the public on the importance of the methadone as therapy drug for heroin addicts. The frequency, however, is still small when only 35 news articles on 'methadone' were published by both newspapers throughout the two years. Nevertheless, *Berita Harian* did focus their news to create awareness on the drug therapy, and to achieve this, the newspaper has most of its news articles written from the perspective of the related Ministry. The result is a report of factual information, written objectively, and to create awareness about how drug addicts can be helped. Being a tabloid newspaper, it is common for *Harian Metro* to write news on drugs by relating it to crime, and using enforcement as their sources. This, on the other hand, approved the moral panic concept. The study has shown that the methadone too had suffered from this stereotype of news values practised by the tabloid newspapers.

It is feared that *Harian Metro*'s methadone association with crime and harmful drugs would create a perception that methadone is just another type of harmful drugs, especially when the newspaper is the most read Bahasa Malaysia newspaper. *Harian Metro* has shown effort in writing about methadone to create awareness to the public, but the effort is still lacking. There were still a number of news articles neglecting official sources, and putting in journalist assumptions. Although the number of these news articles are relatively small, but it is a concern to the researcher that the journalists stay being objective by using official sources in their news articles. This is to avoid news being written out of assumption, leading the public dangerously misinformed. The researchers suggest that these newspapers give a more and frequent coverage on MMT to create more awareness about the government efforts in drugs treatment and rehabilitation. Other than reporting from the perspective of the authority, newspapers should also look at the 'human interest' perspective, such as highlighting the plight of the drug addicts who are battling with their addictions, or the success stories of those combating drug addictions under the MMT programme.



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