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Representations of Public Caning in *Serambi Indonesia*: A Linguistic Approach to News Framing Analysis

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Abstract

With its distinctive autonomy in implementing Sharia, Aceh allows public caning as a form of corporal punishment not seen in other parts of Indonesia. This article examines how a prominent local newspaper, Serambi Indonesia, portrayed the implementation of public caning in Aceh over the past decade. This study combined transitivity analysis and Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) four framing devices: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions. The analysis focused on 45 articles related to public caning in Aceh published between January 2012 and December 2020 in Serambi Indonesia. The findings reveal that caning is a key theme in these news stories, signalling its execution for Sharia violators in Aceh. The findings also found an ambivalent representation of public caning. Depictions of paramedics, audiences, and public support, along with the use of exemplars, highlight a positive portrayal of the current practice of public caning in Aceh. The punishment is depicted as a way of educating offenders and a means to deter similar offenses in the future, which overshadows the severity of the punishment. The media also conveys a message that Aceh's caning punishment differs from practices in the Middle East and suggests a "lighter" interpretation of Sharia. However, the coverage raises concerns about the effectiveness of caning as a deterrent and the fair implementation of the punishment. Therefore, the

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representations of public caning in Serambi Indonesia reflects ongoing controversy surrounding the event within Acehese society.

Keywords: Aceh, linguistic framing analysis, local newspapers, public caning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Media significantly contributes to the construction of meaning by informing the ways we make sense of the world. O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2012) argue that the media significantly influences how people perceive themselves and their surroundings. Although media is just one of the ways people learn about the world, it is arguably one of the most vital resources since people rely on media information to help them in everyday life. Media makes sense of the world for audiences through representation (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2012). Most people do not have the chance to gain knowledge about the world from actual experience; however, through representation, media allows people to see the world in a greater scope.

A representation is a process "by which signifying practices appear to stand for or depict another object or practice in the 'real' world," and it does not reflect objects in "a direct 'mirroring' mode" (Barker, 2012, p. 487). This supports the argument that representation is not reality but the construction of reality. It is a certain version of reality. However, there is no objective representation of the world, particularly through media representations (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2012). Representation is constituted by a particular person or group. As a result, culture, meaning, and knowledge of the person or the group are involved in the process of representation. Thus, in the end, representation depends on the recipient's individual situation and cognitive conditions that judge which set of representations are closer to a perceived 'reality.'

Although representation is not reality, representation is the only way to know reality. Hartley (2019) explains, "representation is the means by which signs 'stand for' something outside of the sign system itself, thus, it is through this 'stand for' function of the sign that we know and learn reality" (p. 228). Therefore, representation is a central concept for learning about the world.

One highly controversial issue that has captured widespread media coverage is the practice of public caning in Aceh. Aceh is the only province in Indonesia with exceptional autonomy to implement Sharia law. While Sharia does not hold an official position within the Indonesian legal framework, Aceh is granted special permission to incorporate it into its bylaws (Salim, 2004). In contrast, other provinces lack the constitutional positions or legislative support to enforce Sharia to the same extent as Aceh. Under Sharia, Aceh has enacted a series of *qanun* (bylaws) that impose Islamic dress codes on all Acehese Muslims and prohibit activities such as the consumption of alcohol, gambling, and seclusion. In 2014, Aceh further solidified its Sharia-based regulations by introducing the *Qanun Jinayat* (Islamic Criminal Code), which forbids acts such as seclusion between unmarried couples, intimacy between unmarried couples, pre and extramarital sexual intercourse, sexual harassment, rape, gay sex, lesbian sex, false accusations of *zina*, gambling, and alcohol consumption. The punishments for these offenses vary and can include caning, fines in gold, imprisonment, restitution, and social sanctions. Offenders may face gold fines ranging

from 100 to 1,500 grams, prison sentences ranging from 10 to 150 months, or the most controversial penalty of 10 to 200 lashes.

Of all the aspects of Sharia enforcement in Aceh, caning stands out as the most contentious. Caning is the sole permitted form of corporal punishment in Aceh, and while it is also legal in neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore, it is not practiced elsewhere in Indonesia (Feener, 2013). Nurrahmi's (2022) research reveals that news coverage of Sharia in Aceh overwhelmingly focuses on caning as a form of punishment. The controversy surrounding caning primarily revolves around its potential infringement on human rights. Human Rights Watch ("World Report," 2010), for instance, released a report asserting that public caning violates human rights protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The controversy surrounding the practice of public caning in Aceh has garnered significant media attention. Various perspectives on these events are presented through different media outlets, both locally and on a national and international scale. One of these media sources is *Serambi Indonesia*, a prominent local newspaper in Aceh (Bahfen & Nurrahmi, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the coverage provided by this influential publication to examine media representations of public caning in Aceh. Focusing on media sources within Aceh offers a more detailed and nuanced comprehension of public caning by providing insights into the cultural, social, and contextual intricacies surrounding public caning in Aceh, which may be overlooked in a broader examination of media from outside the region.

While previous research on Sharia in Aceh has delved into various aspects, only three specific studies (Amri, 2019; Fitri & Nurrahmi, 2021; Zuniadi, 2018) were documented to investigate public caning in Aceh's local media within a short period of time. However, these previous studies fail to capture the complexity of the ongoing controversy surrounding public caning within Acehnese society. Meanwhile, prior studies on media representation in the field of linguistics combined transitivity analysis and critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fitriani et al., 2021; Gunawan et al., 2023). Hence, this study stands out by focusing on news coverage of public caning in *Serambi Indonesia* from 2012 to 2020, employing transitivity and linguistic framing analysis. This unique approach aims to scrutinize the representation of such events with a specific linguistic lens. Consequently, the central question posed by this study is:

- How is public caning in Aceh represented in *Serambi Indonesia*?

This study offers a textual analysis of news articles using a combined framework to enhance knowledge in the realm of linguistics and demonstrates the practical significance of a linguistic approach to the representation of news texts. Moreover, an examination of previous studies of Sharia in Aceh comparing Aceh's coverage and Indonesian national or international media coverage (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen Banda Aceh, 2012; Maulina, 2017) also underscores variances in the way that local media frames Sharia in Aceh, compared to Indonesian national media and international media. The article, therefore, presents a compelling argument to highlight the importance of studying the representation of public caning in local media outlets operating in regions where Sharia is practiced. Moreover, the findings of this study can benefit the international research community, who may not have access to Acehnese media due to language barriers, in gaining a better understanding of this topic from the perspectives of the Acehnese media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Transitivity Analysis

Bartley and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2015) emphasized that the analysis of transitivity enables us to uncover how individuals articulate their experiences in discourse by employing syntactic and lexical tools. Transitivity analysis encompasses three key elements: process, participant, and circumstances (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Transitivity analysis helps to understand how language represents actions and events, how participants are involved, and the relationships between these participants and the central processes. It is a valuable tool for studying language and discourse, as it provides insights into how meaning is constructed and conveyed through linguistic structures (Butt et al., 2003).

Participant refers to the nominal group that is actively engaged in the given activity and circumstance pertains to an adverbial or prepositional phrase (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Circumstances provide supplementary information about the physical actions and the internal context in which human experiences are constructed (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The term process pertains to examining how an event is portrayed and how it serves as the vehicle for expressing our encounters and our perception of the world (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This process is actualized through the use of a verbal group within a clause.

As outlined by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), transitivity analysis identifies six primary process types:

1. **Material Process:** Depicts physical actions and events, revealing how our physical world is shaped. Participants include the actor, goal, scope, beneficiary-recipient, beneficiary-client, and initiator.
2. **Mental Process:** Explores the inner world of human experiences, encompassing thoughts, perceptions, desires, and emotions. Subtypes include mental perception, mental cognitive, mental emotive, and mental desiderative. Participants involve in the sener and phenomenon.
3. **Relational Process:** Establishes connections between entities, involving attributive and identifying subtypes.
4. **Verbal Process:** Relates to communication and includes participants like the carrier, attribute, attributor, token, and value.
5. **Behavioural Process:** Describes physiological and psychological behaviours like breathing and smiling.
6. **Existential Process:** Demonstrates the existence of entities or events, often employing terms like “there” and “to be.”

2.2 Linguistic Framing Analysis

In the field of linguistics, frames are identified by examining the specific words and sentences used in a text (Rafiee et al., 2018). This analysis looks at factors like word choice, placement, and structure (Esser & d’Angelo, 2003). The fundamental concept is that frames are constructed using specific words as the building blocks (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). This linguistic approach shares similarities with hermeneutic studies, but there is a crucial distinction: linguistic approach clearly defines the linguistic elements that indicate a frame, in contrast to the hermeneutic

approach, which lacks a clear depiction of how a frame is extracted (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). The significant advantage of this approach is the systematic and thorough analysis of news texts. Employing a linguistic perspective in framing analysis enables the thorough examination of the specific labels and structures attributed to these events (Rafiee et al., 2018). However, a notable challenge using this analysis method is conducting a standardized frame analysis on extensive text samples (Matthes & Kohring, 2008).

2.3 Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) Framing Analysis

In the context of framing analysis, the linguistic framing analysis employed in this article is rooted in the framework developed by Gamson and Modigliani (1989). A frame is defined by Gamson and Modigliani (1987) as “a central organising idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (p. 143). Their definition of frames also refers to frames as “a set of interpretative packages that give meaning to an issue” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). The choice of this particular framing analysis approach is driven by its emphasis on the utilization of symbolic language to attribute significance to an issue, aligning with the objective of this study to uncover the representation of public caning. The use of Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) four framing devices was conducted to expand previous findings on the representation of public caning in *Serambi Indonesia* due to its orientation to reveal the use of symbolic language (Nurrahmi, 2018).

According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), framing devices and reasoning devices are distinct concepts. Framing devices suggest “how to think about the issue,” while reasoning devices justify “what should be done about it” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 3). The framing devices include metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images, while the reasoning devices are roots (i.e., a causal analysis), consequences (i.e., a particular type of effect), and appeals to principle (i.e., a set of moral claims). The framing and reasoning devices are called a core frame and a core position, respectively (Foote, 2011).

Given the study's focus on identifying core frames, the framing analysis of this study only focuses on Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) four framing devices: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions that served as symbolic cues. Metaphors are defined as analogies and symbols that describe an object through a reference to something considered to have similar characteristics to the object (Gamson & Lasch, 1983). They consist of two parts: “the principal subject that the metaphor is intended to illuminate and the associated subject that the metaphor evokes to enhance our understanding” (Gamson & Lasch, 1983, p. 399).

1. Exemplars are current events or historical examples used to exemplify the frame (Gamson & Lasch, 1983).
2. Catchphrases are theme statements, titles, taglines, or slogans that capture the frame's central messages – in short, “attempted summary statement about the principal subject” (Gamson & Lasch, 1983, pp. 399-400).
3. Depictions are explained as characterisations of relevant subjects of the frame using “single-valued metaphors or exemplars or simply through some colourful string of modifiers” (Gamson & Lasch, 1983, p. 400). Although this framing device provides a comprehensive tool for unpacking news articles, it is essential

to admit that not all symbolic cues may be present in a text, and many framing elements could overlap and intersect with one another (Kwan & Graves, 2013).

3. METHODS

This research employed a combined textual analysis approach, which encompassed the scrutiny of linguistic elements such as transitivity, as well as the application of Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) framing analysis, as utilised by *Serambi Indonesia* in their portrayal of public caning in Aceh. In the transitivity analysis, the core components, including the processes, the participants, and the circumstances, were systemically examined. Subsequently, within the framework of Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) framing analysis, the four key symbolic cues (metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions) were identified.

This study used documentation as its data collection method, obtaining a sample of news articles electronically from <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/> using the keyword *cambuk* (cane). The articles examined in this study comprise hard news and editorials because both types of news articles convey news framing of public caning in *Serambi Indonesia*, reflecting the news organisation's stance on public caning in Aceh. Due to reliance on digital news, the data collection was subject to the limitations of online archiving; online data became available only on 29th July 2011. Therefore, the final sample included articles published in *Serambi Indonesia*, from 1st January 2012 to 31st December 2020. All news articles in the sample were examined to ensure that they discussed public caning in Aceh. The sample for framing analysis consisted of 45 articles, including 42 hard news and three editorials.

In conducting the data analysis, the organization and categorization of codes were facilitated by NVivo 12 software. For the transitivity analysis, the focus was exclusively on 24 news headlines randomly selected. The headline is the focus of transitivity analysis because it provides a quick summary, enabling the understanding of the central theme of the entire news article (Kuiken et al., 2017). Moreover, a total of 45 news articles were coded and classified into Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) four symbolic cues: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions. Particular attention was given to the number of occurrences in each code to be represented in the findings.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Transitivity in the Headlines

Table 1 shows the results of transitivity analysis of the headlines of public caning in *Serambi Indonesia* newspaper. The transitivity analysis of 24 headlines reveals the prevalence of passive voice clauses. The majority of headlines are constructed using passive voice clauses. In these headlines, the emphasis is placed on the goal, typically the affected participant undergoing caning punishment. This choice of passive voice puts the focus on the recipient of the action rather than the entity performing the action. In many of these headlines, the actor or entity responsible for carrying out the whipping (the actor) is not explicitly mentioned. The actor remains unspecified, leaving the

readers without information about who is performing the caning. This approach underscores the human element and the consequences of the actions described in the headlines.

Table 1. The transitivity analysis of the headlines.

Date	Headlines	Participant	Process	Circumstances
6/10/2012	Three Men Whipped for Gambling	Three men (goal)	Whipped (material)	
20/9/2014	Unable to Bear Shame, Convict Resists Before Caning	Convict (behavior)	Resists (behavioural)	Before caning
27/2/2015	Convict of Gambling Attacks the Executioner During Caning	Convict of gambling (actor) The executioner (goal)	Attacks (material)	During caning
16/1/2016	Proven to Commit <i>Khalwat</i> , Two Lovers Whipped	Two Lovers (goal)	Whipped (material)	Proven to commit <i>khalwat</i>
5/3/2016	15 Convicted of Gambling Whipped	15 convicted of gambling (goal)	Whipped (material)	
26/3/2016	Brothers-in-law Whipped 17 Times	Brothers-in-law (goal)	Whipped (material)	
1/10/2016	Whipped 15 Times, This Man Smiles	This man (behavior)	Smiles (behavioural)	
7/10/2016	Seven Gamblers Whipped in Sabang	Seven gamblers (goal)	Whipped (material)	In Sabang
21/3/2017	12 Sharia Violators Whipped	11 Sharia violators (goal)	Whipped (material)	
24/5/2017	5 Executioners Whip Homosexual Couple	5 executioners (actor) Homosexual couple (goal)	Whip (material)	
9/9/2017	Man Requests Pause, Woman Stays Strong	Man (sayer) Women (behavior)	Request (verbal) Stays strong (behavioural)	
12/9/2017	11 Sharia Violators Whipped	11 Sharia violators (goal)	Whipped (material)	
14/10/2017	10 Gamblers Whipped at Merdeka Square	10 gamblers (goal)	Whipped (material)	at Merdeka Square
26/10/2017	Two Stumble, Three Progress	Two Three (actor)	Stumble Progress (behavioural)	
14/7/2018	Homosexual Couple Whipped	Homosexual couple (goal)	Whipped (material)	
24/11/2018	Prosecutor Whips 10 Sharia Violators	Prosecutor (actor) 10 Sharia violators (goal)	Whips (material)	
21/3/2019	Five Couples Whipped	Five couples (goal)	Whipped (material)	
29/6/2019	Agara DPRK Figure Whipped	Agara DRPK figure (actor)	Whipped (material)	
13/9/2019	Arwin Grimaces in Pain, Whipping	Arwin (behavior) Whipping execution (goal)	Grimaces (behavioural) Halted (material)	In pain Twice

Table 1 continued...

	Execution Halted Twice			
17/1/2020	Former Chairman of Panwaslu Sentenced to Whipping, Along with Illicit Partner	Former Chairman of Panwaslu (goal)	Sentenced (material)	Along with illicit partner
3/3/2020	Principal and Vice Principal Whipped, Caught at TP Polem Street Hotel	Principal and Vice Principal (goal)	Whipped (material)	Caught at TP Polem Street Hotel
17/6/2020	Two Women Whipped After Giving Birth	Two women (goal)	Whipped (material)	After giving birth
8/12/2020	Reflection Worker Whipped 37 Times	Reflection worker (goal)	Whipped (material)	
17/12/2020	Two Adultery Convicts Whipped 200 Times	Two adultery convicts (goal)	Whipped (material)	

Further analysis shows that 15 out of 24 headlines are crafted in passive sentences with ‘whipped’ as the material process. In these headlines, the action of ‘whipped’ is directed towards various Sharia offenders as a goal. The word ‘whipped’ puts the focus on the action itself rather than the subject carrying out the action. This suggests an editorial choice to highlight the act of caning and its consequences rather than the individuals performing the punishment.

However, two headlines employ active clauses, with the central process being ‘whips’. In these instances, there is a clear identification of the actor and the goal, which refers to those who are undergoing caning punishment. This choice provides specific information about who is responsible for administering the punishment. Overall, these headlines featuring the terms ‘whip(s)’ or ‘whipped’ often revolve around the punishment of Sharia offenders, with a clear emphasis on the caning process. This underscores the substantial importance of caning as a central theme in the news stories. It also indicates the implementation of caning punishment to various individuals who have violated Sharia law.

4.2 Framing Analysis in the News Articles

In this section, the theme of public caning in Aceh is analysed according to metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions.

4.2.1 Metaphors

Caning metaphors were found in two editorials and one news article. The editorial discussing the possibility of applying caning punishment to corruptors in Aceh explicitly devised the term “stand-up comedy contest” as a metaphor to describe public whipping. The offenders who were lashed in the past were viewed as “top celebrities who waved their hands to the spectators.” Moreover, the flogging was illustrated as “a *dangdut* singer’s dance” (*dangdut* being an Indonesian popular music form), which was “tingling” instead of painful. The editorial also represented the whipping as “tickled with a whip”. Such metaphors were intended to illustrate that the

public whipping was not harsh enough to make offenders feel regret, shame, or remorse about their wrongdoings.

Another editorial about the implementation of 100 lashes for people committing premarital sex portrayed the previous offenders as “rock singers who raised their hands after the punishment”. Such metaphors were meant to suggest that a stricter caning punishment would be needed to eliminate sexual crimes and save the morality of the people in Aceh.

Only one news story used metaphors to describe the punishment discovered in the hard news. The new story called the offender “awaited guests”, while the punishment was depicted as “an anticipated show” to describe public enthusiasm to witness the sentence. The following sentence further employed a metaphorical phrase, “lost to the earth”, to explain that the punishment was the first time carried out by the city administration of Banda Aceh in recent years.

4.2.2 Exemplars

Exemplars were employed in news stories and editorials. One news article titled “Caning in Aceh differs from Saudi Arabia” attempted to argue why Aceh should defend the caning punishment. The article discussed the controversy surrounding the elimination of caning in Saudi Arabia through a citation of the differences between the implementation of the punishment in Aceh and Saudi Arabia. By quoting the vice chairman of Aceh *Ulama* Council (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama*, MPU), Tgk H Faisal Ali, the article asserted that caning in Aceh was much different from the caning that was enforced in Saudi Arabia. This media attempted to demonstrate the humane aspects of caning in Aceh by comparing the caning administered in Saudi Arabia and Aceh. The source also referred to the past events when non-Muslim offenders chose to be punished with caning to indicate that caning in Aceh is not as harsh and controversial as that in Saudi Arabia.

The editorial following this article highlighted that Saudi Arabia is one of the countries, in addition to Sudan and Egypt, referred to by Aceh in 2003 for the implementation of caning in the first place. This editorial briefly gave details of the changes in caning punishment over the years. The combination of exemplars used in the editorial was meant to argue that Aceh should be ready to defend public whipping when Saudi Arabia, Aceh’s reference country, has abolished the punishment. In addition, other stories about the implementation of caning referred to past caning events to show that more or fewer spectators attended the punishment. *Serambi Indonesia* used these references to past caning events to illustrate how the event attracted public attention.

In another story about the governor’s regulations on caning in prison, *Serambi Indonesia* documented the use of exemplars in an interview with one of its sources. The source referred to Brunei Darussalam and the Middle East as examples of countries that implement Sharia but still receive investments (Bakri, 2018). The exemplar was used to argue that the implementation of caning would not have a negative impact on investment in Aceh.

4.2.3 Catchphrases

During the coverage of caning, *Serambi Indonesia* rarely employed catchphrases. The catchphrase “flog adulterers, save the morality of our people” was intended to show support for a proposed new punishment of 100 lashes for those found guilty of *zina*. The catchphrase captured a central message that enforcement of harsher flogging punishments for those who committed sexual offences would tackle the perceived moral decline in Acehese society. However, another catchphrase, “caning does not even increase corruption”, conveyed a different meaning. The catchphrase was meant to suggest that the discourse of caning should not reduce existing law enforcement efforts against corruption; caning alone was perceived as insufficient to act as a deterrent against corruption. *Serambi Indonesia* seemed to take a varied position towards caning punishment for different Sharia offences.

In another story, “Aceh is our house” served as a memorable catchphrase used by one of the sources in the news article about caning in prison. The catchphrase attempted to suggest the need to ignore any protest from outside Aceh regarding the current arrangement of public whipping, as only the Acehese have the right to define their province’s rules.

4.2.4 Depictions

1. Depictions of offenders

In depictions of public caning, the offenders were depicted negatively. They were described as offenders for violating Islamic bylaws in Aceh. The negative representations of the offenders were evident in the choice of words. Offenders of sexual offences, such as *khalwat*, *ikhtilath*, and *zina* were regularly depicted as *mesum*, a term associated with sexual indecency. Among the three offences, *khalwat* was mostly equated with sexual indecency, compared to *ikhtilath* and *zina*. However, the word sexual indecency could be misleading since *khalwat*, *ikhtilath*, and have distinct definitions. According to *Qanun Jinayat*, *khalwat* is defined as an offence involving a man and a woman who are not relatives or married being together in seclusion, which may lead to sexual intercourse. *Ikhtilath*, on the other hand, refers to an act of showing intimacy between unmarried people in open or closed spaces. A closer examination of the word *ikhtilath* documented that the media often explained *ikhtilath* as being alone in a closed space, which referred to the definition of *khalwat*. Moreover, according to Islamic jurisprudence and *Qanun Jinayat*, *zina* is consensual sexual intercourse between unmarried people, including fornication and adultery¹. *Khalwat* and *ikhtilath* are seen as behaviours that lead to *zina*. The three offences were given a unified negative meaning by using the term sexual indecency, yet they are different in definition. Such a choice of words left a negative impression on the offenders. The use of this term could have led readers to view offenders of *khalwat* and *ikhtilath* as like those who commit *zina*, even though they were not proven to have engaged in sexual intercourse. It also reinforced the focus on the immorality of the offences.

¹ *Zina* is often translated as adultery. However, according to Islamic jurisprudence and *Qanun Jinayat*, *zina* includes pre and extramarital sexual intercourse.

The use of language and terminology was also apparent in the reporting of public caning. The term caning *uqubat* was commonly used to describe the punishment of public caning, where *uqubat* means punishment. Moreover, criminal offences were sometimes referred to *jarimah*. The crimes committed by the offenders were described using Arabic terms such as *maisir*, *khamar*, *khalwat*, *ikhtilath*, *zina*, and *liwath*. The terms were introduced in parentheses at the beginning of the text before being used throughout the article. While some of these words, including *khalwat*, *zina*, *maisir*, *khamar*, *jarimah* were already used in Indonesian, they were adopted from Arabic and are also used in *Qanun Jinayat*. By using these words, the news articles identified the crimes as Sharia crimes and depicted the offenders as Sharia offenders or sinners, creating a negative image of them.

2. Depictions of the harshness of caning

The media portrayed the public caning of offenders as a harsh punishment administered with a rattan cane. The sessions were depicted as emotionally charged, with the media highlighting the offender's pain. The suffering angle was detailed in news titles, such as "Arwin groaned in pain, the caning was stopped twice", "The lashed offender almost collapsed", "The offender had bruised backs", and "18 perpetrators of *maisir* case undergo caning". The portrayal of caning as a severe penalty was evident in phrases such as "unable to hold back tears", "cried", "groaned in pain", "grimaced in pain", "bruised backs", "(almost) collapsed", "had to be carried off stage to receive available medical treatment", "raised her hands several times due to unbearable pain", "appears to withstand the pain by covering face with hands", and "attacked the official due to unbearable pain". Journalists present at public whippings obtained the description of the pain suffered by the offenders.

This media outlet represented the whipping as much more severe for female than male offenders. The female offenders were depicted as being unable to withstand the pain and asking for the punishment to stop several times. The media would even emphasise that the female offender was still in agony, even though the caning official was also female. In one example, an article stated, "She was punished by the female caning official. Even though her lashes were not as strong as those given by male officials, during the 18 lashes, El raised her hand to ask for the punishment to stop temporarily" (Bakri, 2020b).

The representations of female offenders were also illustrated by emphasising the gender of the offenders in the news titles. Gendered headlines were evident in articles such as "Men were tough, women were in pain", "In pain when whipped 100 times, a young woman asked the punishment to stop four times", and "Two women were lashed after giving birth", which included the word 'woman' in the news titles. Moreover, this news outlet was more likely to illustrate the pains endured by female offenders. Words or phrases describing the pain suffered due to lashes were often employed when describing female offenders' experiences during caning punishment. The depiction of female offenders was mainly the focus of the reporting of Sharia offences such as *khalwat*, *ikhtilath*, and *zina*, regardless of the punishment involving both genders.

On the other hand, in some caning incidents involving male offenders, the stories portrayed the whipping session as not being that harsh. The male offenders were often described as being able to endure the punishment. They were illustrated as smiling, clapping their hands, shaking hands with the caning official, and laughing while raising

their hands after the caning. Two editorials explicitly depicted the caning as entertainment for the offender in many cases. Both editorials portrayed offenders grinning when whipped, raising their hands after being lashed, and waving their hands to the spectators. Both editorials mentioned that only a few offenders collapsed on the stage while being flogged. However, some male offenders were described as showing aggressive behaviours, such as glaring at the caning official or attacking the caning official due to unbearable pain or excessive strokes.

3. *Depictions of humane aspect of caning*

The coverage consistently showed that great attention was given to the welfare of the perpetrator during the flogging. *Serambi Indonesia* regularly showed the presence of paramedics during the public whipping session. The news outlet highlighted that the flogging was carried out after the medics confirmed that the offenders were in good health and fit to serve a sentence. It further depicted how the offenders regularly had their health examined by paramedics during the punishment, and paramedics approached the offenders to give them a bottle of mineral water. The stories also described that whenever the offender collapsed or pleaded for the punishment to stop, the paramedics would examine or treat them before the flogging resumed. After the punishment was concluded, the offenders would be examined for their health, and once the paramedics certified that they were healthy, they would be released back to their families immediately. In addition, a few stories depicted that the punishments were postponed when offenders were deemed unfit to continue according to the medic's recommendation. In stories titled "Two women were lashed after giving birth" and "Two offenders of *zina* were lashed 200 times," the offenders were pregnant. Therefore, the flogging was delayed until they gave birth. The depictions of medical consideration and the presence of medical officers were intended to illustrate the humane aspects of the caning in Aceh.

4. *Depictions of spectators and public support*

The punishments were commonly held in open places, such as mosques and other public places, and were represented as being attended by crowds. *Serambi Indonesia* specifically described the size of the audience, using phrases such as "hundreds", "a thousand more", "thousands", "many people attended it", "people crowded the courtyard", and "those who came to the location soared, filling the side of the road". Several articles used "as usual" to describe the public whipping, which was usually witnessed by a large crowd. In contrast, only two articles depicted that a few audience members attended the caning punishments by employing the word "dozen" or "a number of people". The media sometimes described the spectators as looking enthusiastic, cheering, screaming, and cursing at the offenders or the caning official. Such depictions give the impression that the whipping sessions attracted public attention and enthusiasm.

Serambi Indonesia regularly depicted public support for the implementation of caning in Aceh. In one story, the caning was depicted as "not getting much opposition from many groups". Another story reported, "The caning punishment applied in Aceh became an integral part of Acehnese life. The people of Aceh have accepted it and do not view the punishment as weird" (Bakri, 2020a).

In addition, *Serambi Indonesia* quoted parties against the rules who argued that the current caning procedures held in front of mosques or public places were enforced without complaints from Acehnese. One article further highlighted that the opposition to the caning was from outside the community. Both articles set up the dichotomy of community support versus outsider rejection of the current caning procedures. Throughout different news articles, *Serambi Indonesia* conveyed the meaning that the current procedures of caning punishment have wide support in Aceh.

5. *Depictions of the functions of caning*

At the end of caning-related news articles, *Serambi Indonesia* would frequently underline that caning punishment was meant to make offenders repent, serving as a deterrent and lesson for others. Caning was seen as a connection between shame and a deterrent effect. In general, flogging was described as a way to prevent acts of crime. The objective was explained by quoting sources such as the regent, mayor, head of the Sharia Agency, Sharia police officers, prosecutor, and *ulama*. Through interview quotes, it was also depicted that caning was not meant to encourage people to laugh at the perpetrators or to hurt the offenders but to serve as a lesson to all.

In addition, the word *iktibar* was used several times to explain the function of caning punishment. The word *Iktibar* was adopted into Indonesian from Arabic, which means taking lessons. It was used to illustrate how the caning serves as a lesson for the offender and others who witness the punishment to discourage them from committing similar offenses. The word *iktibar* conveyed a solid connection to Sharia.

Furthermore, two news articles documented the function of caning as purifying sinners. Using quotes from *ulama*, experts, and officials, caning was depicted as a means of purifying wrongdoers of their sins. Those who underwent the caning sentence were depicted as purified since Allah forgave their wrongdoing.

Regarding the punishment's effectiveness, one editorial titled "Saudi Arabia abolished caning, how about Aceh?" highlighted caning's role in preventing crimes: "applying caning punishment has been proven to be suitable and appropriate for Aceh because it has been effective in reducing crime rates, particularly for offenses such as *maisir*, *khamar*, *khalwat*, *ikhtilath*, and others" (Hasyim, 2020).

However, one story depicted the implementation of caning as not having a deterrent effect due to the increasing number of offenders of Sharia. Another editorial depicted caning in Aceh as "conducted for formality", as opposed to "Sharia caning" implemented in the Arab Peninsula: thus, suggesting it may not discourage offenders or others from committing Sharia offences.

6. *Depictions of problems of caning*

Furthermore, by quoting and paraphrasing officials, the news outlet displayed a verbal commitment to enforcing the punishment to everyone without exception. However, one news article about the caning punishment of a legislative council member of Southeast Aceh raised the critique that caning penalties were not fairly applied, using the voice of activists. The newspaper also included citations from anonymous sources, such as "one of *Serambi's* sources", and employed phrases like "based on information successfully gathered by *Serambi*", as well as references to laypeople without specifying their names—using terms like "(local) residents",

“community”, and “eyewitness”, highlighting that caning was not uniformly enforced in Sharia violations committed by elites. Another story quoted the voice of an offender who complained that bigger cases involving high-ranking officials were not proceeded. Using quotes from laypersons, activists, and offenders, this media attempted to portray punishments being imposed (only) on offenders from the lower classes.

5. DISCUSSION

The integrated approach of transitivity and framing analysis demonstrates the efficacy of linguistic-based analyses in unveiling how news media outlets represent social issues. Transitivity analysis plays a crucial role in understanding how linguistic structures construct and convey meaning by scrutinizing how actions, processes, or events are portrayed in language. In parallel, Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) framing analysis broadens the scope, offering a comprehensive examination of symbolic language, including the analysis of metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions. This combined framework equips researchers with the tools to delve into the linguistic strategies used by the media in constructing these representations.

In general, findings show that from 2012 to 2020, *Serambi Indonesia* delivered positive representations towards the implementation of public caning in Aceh. This is contrary to previous studies on international media (Fakhri & Juanda, 2020) and Indonesian national media (Bentara, 2015; Juanda et al., 2017; Maulina, 2017; Nisa, 2017; Nuryadi, 2016), which suggest that media coverage from outside Aceh was dominated by negative representations. Both international and national media constructed Sharia in Aceh as discriminatory against women, violent, and against human rights. In addition to such representations, Indonesian national media also raised the issue of Sharia in Aceh, contradicting the Indonesian national constitution. Such portrayals were relatively absent in the coverage of public caning in *Serambi Indonesia*, although the issue of discrimination was found across the sample. The conflict between Aceh's application of Sharia law and the national constitution is a matter of national importance. As a result, it is prominently covered in the Indonesian national media, but receives less attention in international and local media. Meanwhile, the issue of discrimination consistently presents across media outlets, holding significance at the international, national, and local levels.

Moreover, comparing findings with other studies confirms several similarities. First, in the case of caning, for example, *Serambi Indonesia* showed an ambivalent portrayal of public caning in which the topic was categorised into the desirable Sharia enforcement and the deviance from Sharia frames. Both frames indicate that *Serambi Indonesia* represented the arrangement of caning punishment in positive and negative judgments, highlighting some problems in the current arrangement and discussions on the deterrent effect of caning. This study also accords with an earlier study (Amri, 2019), which showed eight frames, both positive and negative, used by *Serambinews.com* to depict caning punishment in Aceh. Despite the ambivalent attitudes found in the news stories, similar to Amri (2019), this study found that *Serambi Indonesia* appeared to support caning punishment in Aceh, which showed caning as a light punishment form. Additionally, this study found that the offenders were framed negatively for violating Islamic bylaws, which is consistent with the

findings of. In addition, this study also discovered that *Serambi Indonesia* tends to focus on female rather than male offenders in *khalwat*, *ikhtilath*, and *zina* cases. A similar finding was also found by Fitri and Nurrahmi (2021) that the representations of female offenders were filled with sensational narratives. In places like Aceh, which hold strong conservative values concerning women's behaviour, the inclusion of women in cases involving *khalwat*, *ikhtilath*, and *zina* naturally stirs controversy. The emphasis on women in these narratives inherently sparks greater interest and intrigue among the audience, resulting in increased readership and engagement with the news.

The findings corroborate a study by Nurrahmi (2022) using content analysis of 649 news articles about Sharia in Aceh published by *Serambi Indonesia*. Similar to this study, the earlier research found *Serambi Indonesia* represented the implementation of Sharia in Aceh while highlighting Sharia problems surrounding its enforcement. Comparing the findings from this study with previous studies using different approaches supports the validity of Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) four framing devices. The findings of this study demonstrated the benefits of using linguistic framing analysis in studying media representations.

In addition, this study documented a broader range of caning representations than previous studies of caning in Aceh (Amri, 2019; Fitri & Nurrahmi, 2021; Zuniadi, 2018). The more nuisance picture of caning found in this study might be explained by the adoption of a combined framework, incorporating transitivity analysis and Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) four framing devices. This comprehensive approach facilitates a deeper exploration of linguistic structures and symbolic language, including the analysis of metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Serambi Indonesia* generally reinforced positive representations of caning punishment. Transitivity analysis revealed that the central focus predominantly centres on the punishment of Sharia offenders, with a distinct emphasis on the process of caning. This highlights the significant role that caning plays as a central theme in these news stories. Furthermore, it signals the execution of caning punishment for individuals who have violated Sharia in Aceh. Moreover, framing analysis through the depiction of paramedics, caning officials, audiences, and public support, together with exemplars, indicated the positive representation of the current arrangement of public caning in Aceh. The media portrayed the offenders as the ones to blame and represented them as sinners. The negative depiction of the offenders was formed and reinforced using Arabic terms. The caning punishment was depicted positively as a way to teach offenders and other community members to avoid similar convictions in the future. Such depictions outweighed the severity of the punishment. Additionally, several depictions, the use of metaphors, and the exemplar of caning in Saudi Arabia also showed caning as light punishment seen as entertainment for many offenders.

The news media also delivered meanings that caning punishment in Aceh was different from what has been practiced in the Middle East. It further gave the impression that Aceh followed "lighter" interpretations of Sharia. Finally, based on the analysis encompassing transitivity and the examination of four symbolic cues (depictions, metaphors, exemplars, and catchphrases), it becomes evident that *Serambi*

Indonesia tends to offer supportive media representations regarding the implementation of public caning in Aceh.

This study also documented some limitations. First, the use of the combined framework, while effective in capturing both manifest and latent meaning, can pose challenges when dealing with extensive volumes of text. This complexity can make it difficult to employ a standardized frame analysis. Second, this study did not examine changes in representations of public caning before and after the *Qanun Jinayat* was implemented. Such an examination could offer valuable insights into the evolution of media representations regarding public caning in Aceh over time. This comparative approach provides a nuanced understanding of how these representations have evolved.

To expand on these findings, future research could conduct comparative analyses of the portrayal of Sharia in Aceh across media outlets, including Acehnese, Indonesian, and international news sources. A comparison across media on coverage of Sharia in Aceh would increase a sense of judgment through differences in similar issues across media outlets. By comparing the coverage of Sharia in Aceh across multiple media outlets, researchers can deepen the understanding of how the media shapes public perceptions of Sharia both inside and outside of Aceh.

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