



National Media, Sports Rivalry, and Framing Practices: Indonesia–Malaysia Football Coverage

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse how the Indonesian and Malaysian state-owned national media frame the Indonesia–Malaysia football rivalry and how this framing contributes to the construction of competitive nationalism. The object of this study is the Indonesian–Malaysian football news published by Antara News (Indonesia) and Bernama (Malaysia) from 2019 to May 2025. This study uses a qualitative method with Robert M. Entman's framing model analysis approach, which includes four elements, namely defining problems, diagnosing causes, moral judgement, and treatment recommendations. The research data consists of a corpus of online news related to football matches and conflicts between supporters related to the Indonesia–Malaysia rivalry. Data analysis was conducted through systematic coding using NVivo 14 software to identify dominant framing patterns. The results show that both media outlets predominantly emphasised the elements of defining problems and diagnosing causes, framing football rivalry as a competitive dynamic fraught with conflict. Antara News tended to diagnose the causes of conflict by highlighting the actions of the opposing party, while Bernama placed more emphasis on technical factors of the match and the emotional responses of supporters. The element of moral judgement was used to legitimise the national position of each country, as well as to provide recommendations for dealing with reactive conflicts. This study contributes to media studies, particularly framing, by highlighting comparisons between the national media of Indonesia and Malaysia in their coverage of Indonesian–Malaysian football rivalry. This study emphasises the need for balanced journalistic practices oriented towards conflict management in cross-border sports coverage and the adoption of approaches to prevent conflict escalation.

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1. Introduction

Football rivalry is not merely a sporting competition but also a representative arena for nationalism, social emotions, and historical memory, which often become active national identity sentiments produced through the media. As the most popular sport in the world, football has great social appeal and is capable of evoking collective identities across social classes, cultures, and regions (Rodrigues & Pinto, 2022). Support for the national team is not merely interpreted as a form of entertainment, but as a representation of loyalty, pride, and national identity (Huddleston, 2022). Strong national identification in football is often accompanied by excessive fanaticism that has the potential to trigger conflict and violence between supporters. Extreme loyalty can



encourage aggressive behaviour, both directly and symbolically, which in some cases develops into hooliganism and collective violence (Bandura et al., 2024; Simsek & Ozturk, 2024). This phenomenon shows that football cannot be separated from the social, psychological, and political dynamics that accompany it.

In Southeast Asia, the football rivalry between Indonesia and Malaysia is one of the most prominent forms of regional rivalry. The high popularity of football in Indonesia and Malaysia not only makes matches a form of entertainment, but also a symbolic arena that gives rise to rivalry between the two countries to outdo each other (Akbar et al., 2024; Aman et al., 2024). This rivalry is reflected in various Indonesia-Malaysia football matches, which are often accompanied by tension between supporters, match controversies, and conflict-laden news coverage, such as the incidents at the 2010 AFF Cup, the 2011 SEA Games, the 2022 World Cup qualifiers, and the 2025 AFF U-23 Cup. Football matches can become interesting issues that trigger public emotional expressions, which are then quickly amplified through national media coverage in both countries. A similar point is made by Turhan & Gümüşay (2024), who state that the high dynamics of rivalry and the aggressive and fanatical attitudes of football fans have become an interesting subject for emphasis in the news media.

In this situation, the news media plays a strategic role in shaping public perception of the Indonesia-Malaysia football rivalry. The media not only functions as a conveyor of information, but also as a social actor that constructs reality through its selection of issues, perspectives, and emphasis on certain aspects in its reporting. In issues involving emotions and social identity, such as football rivalry between countries, the role of the media becomes even more crucial because reporting can influence how the audience assesses the actors, events, and meaning of the conflict. This is reinforced by the growth of the media's increasingly crucial role in changing public opinion as a collective reflection of the various views, attitudes, and assessments that the public has on various issues (Abbas et al., 2025; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

The strategic role of news media in shaping public perception is not always neutral, but rather constructs reality through the selection of certain aspects and the determination of perspectives in news reporting, which is influenced by institutional interests and media ownership structures. In practice, the mass media industry often prioritises profit, thereby compromising independence for the benefit of certain parties (Ibañez Sales, 2023; Lin et al., 2022; Susanto, 2021).

Media ownership authority refers to the owners in the management of mass media operations, interests, and influencing the public. This statement is also conveyed by Amos & Joseph (2023), who mention that media owners tend to use their platforms to shape society in a certain direction, especially for their own interests or political gain. Thus, media framing influences how society views an issue and constructs reality in shaping public perception (Marschlich & Ingenhoff, 2022).

The news media serves as a space that constructs the meaning of nationalism and determines how the Indonesia-Malaysia football rivalry is understood by the public through the process of framing. The media selects certain aspects to highlight, determines which actors are positioned as the cause, and frames the rivalry as a conflict that should be intensified or mitigated. Thus, news framing is the result of journalistic practices that are laden with certain values, interests, and orientations in representing reality (Jungblut, 2021). In addition, news media has a role in disseminating information, views, and interests within society. The ability of news media to reach audiences and construct reality can function as a mediator with the potential to act as an intermediary in conflict situations through the presentation of balanced information and the offering of solutions in the midst of conflict (Rice & Miller, 2023; Vaughan, 2023).

Previous research conducted by [Maulida\(2024\)](#) focused on the dynamics of fanaticism, conflict, and social relations between Indonesian and Malaysian football supporters. This research examined supporter behaviour and interactions between supporters in the context of football rivalry, without examining how news media framed and represented this rivalry in their reporting. In contrast, the research conducted by [Bharata et al. \(2021\)](#) analyses how cyber media frames the issue of Indonesian haze that affects Malaysia through the use of symbols and meaning construction in news texts. This research focuses on private and state-owned media in Indonesia, without comparing how framing of the same issue is applied by state-owned media in Malaysia. Furthermore, research conducted by [Ruslan Ramli & Peng Kee \(2021\)](#) analysed the framing of independent media in Indonesia and Malaysia, which was still limited to border conflicts. Based on this, these studies have not specifically examined how state-owned national media in Indonesia and Malaysia frame football rivalry as a symbolic arena of nationalism and competitive conflict.

Based on this research gap, this study focuses on analysing the framing of Indonesian-Malaysian football rivalry in the media, limited to the state-owned national media of Indonesia and Malaysia, namely Antara News and Bernama. Through a framing approach, this study aims to analyse how the media frames Indonesian-Malaysian football rivalry, which is often described as a matter of national pride and a symbol of nationalism. Using Robert M. Entman's framing model, this study analyses how national media define issues, determine the causes of conflict, construct moral judgements, and offer solutions to problems.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative method with Robert M. Entman's framing analysis approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on interpreting the meaning and representation contained in news texts, not just on measuring frequency, which allows researchers to explore in depth how the media frames the coverage of the Indonesia-Malaysia football rivalry ([Brennen, 2025](#)).

Framing is understood as a process involving the selection and highlighting of information in describing a particular reality of an event, so that the media not only reports on events but also shapes the way those events are understood by the audience ([Garba & Aondover, 2023](#)). The use of framing in this study is to reveal how the media constructs reality by emphasising certain aspects of an event.

Data Selection Criteria

The research data consists of online news articles published by the Indonesian state-owned media outlet Antara News and the Malaysian state-owned media outlet Bernama between 2019 and May 2025 in [Table 1](#). These two media outlets were selected based on their position as state media outlets with the authority to convey national narratives and public policy. Articles were selected based on several criteria, namely: (1) having a direct connection to football matches between Indonesia and Malaysia, (2) containing news about supporter interactions, conflicts, or official statements related to football rivalries, (3) being presented in the form of news texts on official news portals.

Table 1. News media and number of news

Media	Website	Number of News
Antara News	https://www.antaranews.com/	28
Bernama	https://www.bernama.com/	23

Coding Procedure and Analytical Framework

Data collection was carried out by identifying and archiving news articles that met the research criteria using the NCapture extension, then all data was imported into NVivo 14 software. NVivo was used as a technical tool to manage, code, and group text data systematically, while the analysis and interpretation processes were still carried out by the researcher. The data analysis process in this study included several stages, namely data collection, data import, data coding, and data presentation (Wachinger et al., 2025). At the coding stage, news texts were classified based on predetermined analysis categories, then analyzed and interpreted to explain the media framing construction of Indonesian-Malaysian football rivalry. As seen in Fig. 1, the data presentation stage is carried out in the form of graphs and tables as tools to support the analysis.



Fig 1 . Coding Procedure

This study applies Robert M. Entman's (1993) framing model as an analytical framework to examine how the national media frames the football rivalry between Indonesia and Malaysia (Ptaszek et al., 2024). Entman's framing analysis was used to reveal the role of the national media outlets Antara News and Bernama in interpreting this rivalry through four main elements, namely Define Problems, Diagnose Causes, Make Moral Judgement, and Treatment Recommendation. These four elements are used to classify and interpret news texts based on how the media defines problems, identifies causal actors, assigns moral judgements, and recommends forms of resolution (Mokry, 2022).

Validity & Limitations

To ensure data validity, this study uses the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba in (Sugiyono, 2023), namely: (1) Transferability, relating to the extent to which research findings can be applied to different studies if readers can clearly understand the content of the study, (2) Dependability, maintained through the application of consistent analysis procedures, ranging from time period restrictions, news criteria determination, to the systematic use of Entman's framing framework in the data coding and analysis process, (3) Confirmability, by presenting evidence that can be verified visually and narratively, such as news text quotations and categorisation results on the coding sheet.

In addition, the credibility of the media used is crucial to ensure data validity. From various cyber media, this study was conducted with the limitation of two cyber media, "Antara News" as a national media owned by the Indonesian state and "Bernama" as a national news media owned by the Malaysian state, so that news from these two sources is more reliable and valid in framing the issues under study, and has representative authority in voicing national policies and interests. However, the researcher also pays attention to the diversity of perspectives present in both media and examines the possibility of bias that could influence the framing of the news. Thus, the framing analysis is expected to provide an analytical picture of how the Indonesia-Malaysia football rivalry is framed in the news by the media owned by each country.

3. Result and Discussion

Robert Entman's theory was used to examine aspects of reality and how to interpret that reality into news content. This study mapped the news coverage into framing categories defined by

Entman into four analytical models, namely: Define problem provides a definition of the problem and issues through its coverage; Diagnose causes refers to the causes of the problems covered by the news media; Moral judgement refers to the values presented in explaining the problems provided to understand the context, problems and causes; Treatment Recommendation participates in offering solutions or policies to solve problems and issues (Teschendorf, 2024).

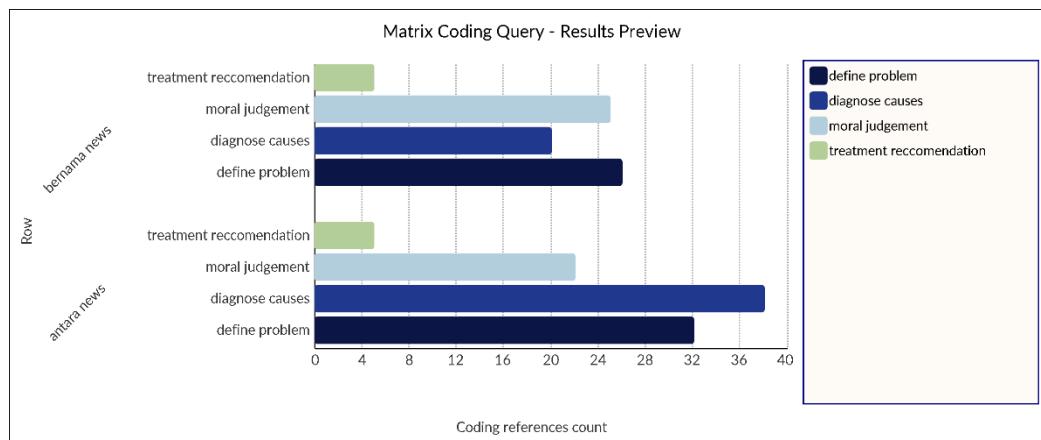


Fig. 2. Framing of National News Media "Antara News" and "Bernama" on Indonesia-Malaysia Football. Source: Data processed through NVIVO 14.

As seen in Fig. 2, based on the Matrix Coding Query graph conducted using Entman's framing theory, it shows how the media outlets "Antara" and "Bernama" frame the issue of Indonesia-Malaysia football rivalry. Overall, in the image above, the news media outlet "Antara News" tends to provide a framing of diagnosing causes and defining problems, while the news media outlet "Bernama" shows a framing of defining problems and moral judgements that are not much different. Meanwhile, the framing of treatment recommendations is a finding that is rarely found in these national media outlets.

Dynamics of Framing the Indonesia-Malaysia Football Rivalry

The dominance of the *define problem* element in Indonesian-Malaysian football reporting shows that the media actively determines the initial framework for understanding the rivalry between the two countries. At this stage, the media not only reports events, but also determines what is considered to be the "main issue" that needs to be addressed by the audience. This definition of the problem becomes the foundation for further interpretations regarding the causes of conflict, moral judgements, and the legitimacy of national attitudes.

Bernama media tends to define the Indonesia-Malaysia football match as an arena of sporting competition that emphasises performance excellence and national achievement. News headlines highlighting victories, game strategies, and key players show an effort to frame the rivalry as a legitimate battle of achievements in the context of international sports. This definition of the issue serves to reinforce Malaysia's national image as a technically superior and disciplined actor, while normalising the rivalry as part of professional competition. In contrast, Antara News more often defines the issue within the framework of social conflict involving supporters and football institutions. The emphasis on incidents of rioting, attacks between supporters, and exchanges of accusations between PSSI and FAM shows that the rivalry is not only understood as a match, but as a cross-border conflict that touches on issues of security, national dignity, and institutional responsibility. This definition of the issue expands the meaning of the match from the realm of sport to the social and political realm, thereby increasing the emotional intensity of the news coverage.

Table 2. Define Problem

News Media	Define Problem	News Headline
Bernama News	"Malaysia came from behind to clinch a memorable 3-2 victory against regional rivals Indonesia in the Group G of the second round of the 2022 World Cup/2023 Asian Cup qualifiers at the Gelora Bung Karno Stadium here tonight.."	AFF Cup~ Malaysia's struggle ends at the hands of Garuda
	"Two stunning goals scored by Muhammad Safawi Rasid helped Malaysia defeat its fierce rival Indonesia 2-0 in the 2022 World Cup/2023 Asian Cup qualifiers at Bukit Jalil National Stadium tonight".	Two-goal hero Safawi helps Malaysia defeat Indonesia
	"The Malaysian Football Association (FAM) has met with representatives from the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) as an initial step to bring the procurement issues at Gelora Bung Karno Stadium in Jakarta to the attention of the International Football Federation (FIFA). This follows incidents of stone-throwing and clipping by home supporters during the Group G match of the Second Round Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup/2023 Asian Cup between Indonesia and Malaysia, resulting in three Malaysian supporters sustaining injuries."	FAM met with the AFC to submit a report to FIFA
Antara News	"The Indonesian national team supporters group, La Grande Indonesia, claimed that Malaysian supporters attacked them at their hotel in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday (20/11)."	Malaysian supporters attack Indonesian supporters at their hotel
	The Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) officially wrote to the Malaysian Football Association (FAM) on Friday (22/11) regarding the fan unrest incident that occurred at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium, Kuala Lumpur, on Tuesday (19/11).	PSSI writes to FAM regarding the fan incident in Kuala Lumpur
	"The Malaysian Football Association (FAM) stated that the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) had reneged on its promise regarding the safety of Malaysian national team supporters while they were in Jakarta to watch their beloved team compete."	FAM: PSSI reneges on promise regarding Malaysian supporters' safety

As seen in [Table 2](#), the dominance of this element reflects the construction of nationalism as "imagined communities" [Anderson](#) in [Whigham \(2021\)](#) where media framing of matches in the context of sport serves to construct nationalist identity boundaries in reinforcing the cycle of structural conflict. These findings extend the application of nationalism theory to the arena of sport as a discursive space for symbolic conflict between nations.

Diagnosing Causes

The elements of *diagnose causes* in Indonesian-Malaysian football news coverage show how the media actively constructs cause-and-effect relationships to explain the occurrence of conflict. Not stopping at defining the problem, both media outlets go further by pointing to specific actors, actions, and moments as the main triggers of conflict. Thus, the framing of *diagnosing causes* functions as a mechanism for channeling responsibility as well as justifying the national position of each party.

Table 3. Diagnose causes

News Media	Diagnose Causes	News Headline
Bernama News	"This follows the throwing of stones and clippings by home supporters during the Group G match of the Second Round Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup/2023 Asian Cup between Indonesia and Malaysia, which resulted in three Malaysian supporters being injured".	FAM meets with AFC to submit a report to FIFA
	"first-ever naturalised player, Mohamadou Sumareh, who came on as a substitute, emerged as the Harimau Malaya squad's hero when he scored two goals, first in the 37th minute before slotting in the winning goal in the dying minutes of added time in the second half."	Malaysia remains calm with's 3-2 comeback victory over Indonesia
Antara News	"Malaysia finally broke the deadlock through Safawi's free kick in the 29th minute, which flew into the left corner of the goal past goalkeeper Muhammad Ridho, causing the home crowd to cheer with joy. However, the goal triggered a number of Indonesian supporters to set off flares and throw objects at opposing supporters."	Two-goal hero Safawi helped Malaysia defeat Indonesia
	Malaysian supporters began provocative actions by throwing objects at Indonesian supporters when the match began at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur. Some of the objects thrown at Indonesian supporters included bottles, glass, metal and flares.	Malaysian supporters attacked Indonesian supporters all the way to the hotel
	"There were incidents during the match, such as the throwing of firecrackers, fireworks, or smoke bombs by the home supporters. We have also reported this," said PSSI Chairman, Commissioner General of Police Mochamad Iriawan.	PSSI writes to FAM regarding the supporter incident in Kuala Lumpur
	"Indonesian supporters present at the stadium were accused of taunting the Malaysian U-16 national team with the phrase: 'Malaysia is a b*tch.' FAM Secretary-General Stuart Ramalingam felt this had crossed the line and disgraced his country. The alleged insult began with a post by one of the Malaysian U-16 national team players, whose initials are AAH, on his personal social media account, showing the Indonesian flag upside down when he wanted to show that he and his squad were about to fly to Indonesia. His actions had far-reaching consequences after internet users in Indonesia found out about it, which led to the insult case mentioned above.	PSSI considers FAM's protest by Indonesian supporters reasonable

As seen in **Table 3**, these findings reveal that both Bernama and Antara media outlets provided a diagnosis of the cause of the problem by presenting a fairly strong defensive narrative. From the above quote shows that Bernama actively explained the cause of the riots, such as the Malaysian national team scoring a goal, which sparked the Indonesian national team supporters into rioting. Meanwhile, the news media outlet "Antara" frames the cause of the problem by reporting that the riot was the fault of provocative actions by Malaysian supporters, with the media highlighting Malaysian supporters as the actors in the news who committed provocative acts.

The defensive narrative in this finding is a survival strategy as a form of mechanism to protect the national image or respond to sensitive issues. These findings show nationalistic bias, in which the media diagnoses the opponent as the main cause. Theoretically, these findings show how the elements of diagnosing causes in Entman's framing are used to defend the national interests of each country. By placing the opposing party as the actor causing the conflict, the media contributes to the normalisation of defensive framing that reinforces the narrative of conflict. This confirms that framing operates as an ideological practice that produces rivalry between countries.

Moral Judgement

As seen in [Table 4](#), the element of moral judgement in Indonesian-Malaysian football reporting shows how the media not only explains events but also acts as a symbolic authority that assesses the behaviour of the actors involved. At this stage, the media sets standards of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, and determines which parties deserve sympathy or condemnation. This moral assessment serves to reinforce the definition of the problem and the diagnosis of causes that have been constructed previously.

Table 4. Moral Judgement

News Media	Moral Judgement	Title
Bernama News	"However, the goal triggered a number of Indonesian supporters to set off flares and throw objects at opposing supporters."	Two-goal hero Safawi helped Malaysia defeat Indonesia
	"The atmosphere before the match was tense, but things heated up in the second half after a local supporter ran onto the pitch and threw objects at the Malaysian supporters' seats. This happened right after Muhammad Syafiq Ahmad scored the second goal with a header from a cross by Muhammad Safawi Rasid in the 65th minute. Malaysian fans had to be escorted through a guarded exit for safety reasons."	Malaysia remained calm after their 3-2 comeback victory over Indonesia
	"The Malayan Tigers, who had trailed twice but managed to defeat the Garuda 3-2 in the match, were forced to return to their hotel in armoured vehicles due to local supporters' dissatisfaction with the match result."	FAM meets AFC to submit a report to FIFA
Antara News	"The clash ended after the police arrived and dispersed the disturbance. However, strangely, the Malaysian police, who arrested a Malaysian national team supporter in the incident, also blamed the Indonesian supporters."	Malaysian supporters attacked Indonesian supporters all the way to the hotel
	"PSSI emphasised that they condemn all forms of violence in football and urge all parties to respect one another"	PSSI wrote to FAM regarding the supporter incident in Kuala Lumpur
	"FAM considers that PSSI, through local authorities, failed to anticipate the incident, thereby failing to fulfil the promise made publicly," said FAM Secretary General Stuart Ramalingam in a statement on its official website, quoted in Jakarta on Friday.	PSSI reneges on promise regarding Malaysian supporter safety

From the above findings, the chaos between Indonesian and Malaysian supporters in the Malaysian national news media portrayed the behaviour of Indonesian supporters as an emotional response when the Malaysian national team was superior to the Indonesian national team.

Indonesian news media emphasised the rejection of violent acts. In addition, Indonesian news media used the phrase "but strangely enough", which reflects the media's moral judgement of the Malaysian authorities' actions in continuing to blame Indonesian supporters and as a form of defence of Indonesian supporters in the incident.

This finding is theoretically important because it shows that moral judgements in state-owned national media serve to legitimise the national position of each country. From a framing theory perspective, moral judgement becomes a symbolic tool to justify one's own actions while delegitimising the opponent. This reinforces the argument that media framing in sports conflicts contributes to the formation of nationalistic conflict meanings with an emphasis on "us vs them", thereby hindering reconciliation and weakening peace. This is in line with Bairner in [Whigham \(2021\)](#) argues that sport constructs expressions of nationalism with its ability to bring imagined national communities to life, so that news framing also justifies the collective attitudes and emotions of supporters in the name of national identity.

Treatment Recommendation

As seen in [Table 5](#), the treatment recommendation element aims to offer solutions, such as which path to choose to resolve the issue ([Teschendorf, 2024](#)). In Indonesian-Malaysian football news coverage, this element appears with relatively limited intensity compared to other framing elements. This indicates that state-owned national media did not place solutions as the main focus from the outset, but rather emphasized them as a response to conflicts that had already occurred. In the context of Entman's framing, this limitation indicates that recommendations for conflict resolution function as a complement to the narrative, not as the dominant framework in the news coverage.

Malaysian national media presented recommendations focused on efforts to prevent the recurrence of incidents between supporters, such as increasing match security and supervision by authorities. Meanwhile, Indonesian national news media published reports conveying apologies and calls for supporters to uphold the principles of sportsmanship in football matches.

In terms of treatment recommendations, the national media of both countries presented a mediative framework by offering solutions to prevent the recurrence of attacks between supporters, while the Indonesian media acted as a conduit for reconciliation by publishing apologies from the Malaysian side and appeals to uphold the principles of sportsmanship. These findings indicate that the role of the media as a mediator emerged more as a response to conflicts that had already occurred, rather than as an effort to reduce rivalry from the outset.

Theoretically, these findings show that both national media outlets have applied the principles of peace journalism, but in a reactive rather than preventive manner. The media tends to emphasise presenting news that defuses conflict or builds peace after tensions have arisen, rather than preventing conflict from the outset. This is in line with the approach described by McGoldrick & Lynch that peace journalism is a journalistic practice that emphasises understanding the causes of conflict and encourages non-violent responses, by providing space for all parties involved so that reports do not escalate conflicts and encourage the offering of solutions ([Otieno & Ndonye, 2022](#)).

Furthermore, the reactive nature of treatment recommendations suggests that peace-oriented framing is activated only after conflict has already disrupted the sporting event or bilateral relations. This pattern highlights a missed opportunity for the media to act proactively by embedding preventive narratives prior to high-risk matches, such as promoting cross-border supporter solidarity, historical reconciliation, or shared regional identity within Southeast Asian football. From a framing perspective, the marginal placement of treatment recommendations

reinforces the dominance of conflict-centred narratives, where solutions are positioned as an afterthought rather than an integral part of the news structure. As a result, while national media demonstrate an awareness of their mediative responsibility, their framing practices still prioritise conflict management over conflict prevention, limiting the transformative potential of peace journalism in the context of sports rivalry.

Table 5. Treatment Recommendation

News Media	Treatment Recommendation	News Headline
Bernama News	"FAM was also advised by the AFC to provide a comprehensive security plan for the second leg match on 19 November at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil to avoid a repeat of the 5 September incident."	FAM meets with AFC to submit a report to FIFA
Bernama News	Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports Steven Sim Chee Keong asked the Malaysian public, especially national football fans, to stop speculating about bad things that might happen at the Gelora Bung Karno Main Stadium involving clashes between Indonesia and Malaysia in the second round of the 2022 World Cup/2023 Asian Cup qualifiers this Thursday.	Stop speculating about negative incidents at Gelora Bung Karno
Bernama News	We urge everyone to remain patient and respect foreign supporters in our country, including supporters from Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Thailand, and Vietnam, who will be competing at the National Stadium," he said.	Riots in Jakarta~ FAM files complaint with FIFA, AFC
Antara News	FAM also requested that the Malaysian public continue to welcome Indonesian supporters coming to Malaysia for the Group G 2022 World Cup Qualifiers in the Asian zone, including fans from other countries in the same group, namely Thailand, Vietnam, and the United Arab Emirates.	PSSI Breaks Promise on Malaysian Supporter Safety
Antara News	AAH and the Malaysian side had previously apologised for the incident involving the Indonesian flag being displayed upside down	PSSI considers FAM's protest over Indonesian supporters to be reasonable
Antara News	"We always oppose discriminatory behaviour. Let us uphold the principles of fair play and take part in football with a spirit of unity, respect and equality. Say yes to diversity, say no to all forms of discrimination."	PSSI writes to FAM regarding the supporter incident in Kuala Lumpur

Framing Patterns Between National Media

Bernama News Media

The word frequency output results in the table below are a visual representation of Malaysian news media to explain the narrative of the Indonesia-Malaysia football competition. The keywords "Indonesia" and "Malaysia" are the two most dominant words, reflecting the main focus of the media narrative which emphasises the match between the two countries, Indonesia and Malaysia. The use of words such as match, group, team, squad, player, and goal indicates that the news focuses on the competition and technical aspects of the match, from the team members to the implementation and results of the match. The context of words such as cup, national, and qualification reinforces the meaning that the news provides more information on official matches

such as the AFF Cup, SEA Games, or Asian Cup qualifiers, and depicts nationalism in framing the match.

Table 6. Word Percentage "Bernama"

WORD	LENGTH	COUNT	WEIGHT PERCENTAGE (%)
Indonesia	9	148	1.84
Malaysia	8	122	1.57
Match	12	80	1.03
Player	6	77	0.99
Group	4	61	0.78
Cup	5	59	0.76
Stadium	7	52	0.67
National	8	45	0.58
AFF	3	37	0.48
Against	7	33	0.42

Source: Result Word Percentage Nvivo

Antara News Media

The word frequency of the Antara news media in Figure 3 below shows results that are not much different from those of the Bernama news media. The two most prominent words are "Indonesia" and "Malaysia", indicating that the coverage focuses on the rivalry or interaction between the two countries, particularly in the context of football, followed by other dominant keywords that show that the media narrative is highly focused on the course of the match. Meanwhile, the use of the word "supporter" indicates the emotional and nationalistic dimensions that are often present in media coverage of Indonesia-Malaysia football matches. Word Frequency indicates that Antara News coverage over the past five years has addressed issues, competitions, and supporter enthusiasm in a fairly balanced manner.

Table 7. Word percentage "Antara. News"

WORD	LENGTH	COUNT	WEIGHT PERCENTAGE (%)
Indonesia	9	364	3.15
Malaysia	8	339	2.94
Supporter	8	94	0.81
National Team	6	89	0.77
Match	4	88	0.76
Cup	5	82	0.71
Goals	3	71	0.62
Player	6	69	0.60
Group	4	65	0.56
Match	12	65	0.56

Source: Result Word Percentage Nvivo

Preliminary Conclusions The framing styles of the national media outlets Bernama and Antara News appear to be quite similar, as explicitly illustrated through emotional dimensions, nationalism, and informative reporting. The rivalry between the two countries is also demonstrated by the use of phrases such as "traditional rivals" or "sworn enemies," which can reinforce the nationalist sentiments of the rivalry between the two countries.

From the findings of the analysed news, this study shows that national media framing plays an important role in producing Indonesia-Malaysia football rivalry. Differences in framing show that the media not only represent events but also position their countries as symbols of nationalism in sports rivalry. The findings of this study indicate that media framing of Indonesian-Malaysian football not only presents match information but also builds a sense of nationalism by emphasising

national identity, whereby the media forms the boundaries of each country so that readers who do not know each other still feel bound together in one emotional community. This is in line with Anderson's concept of *imagined communities* in [Whigham \(2021\)](#), which explains that nationalism is a value that considers individuals or groups as an imagined community even though they do not know each other. The Indonesia–Malaysia football match in the national news media serves as a national identity and nationalism that plays a role in the construction of national identity for individuals or groups.

Therefore, the rivalry between Indonesia and Malaysia in football is not solely produced by historical and emotional dynamics between the two countries, but is also actively produced through national media framing. Based on Entman's framing model analysis, the elements of *defining the problem* and *diagnosing the causes* are more dominant than other elements. The prominence of these two elements frames football rivalry primarily as a competitive dynamic fraught with conflict, so that the meaning of rivalry does not only emerge as a match event, but is also constructed through media reporting practices as national pride. This pattern indicates that the media tends to play a role in constructing the meaning of rivalry. Although solutions to the conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia were offered, the role of the media as a mediator emerged as a response to conflicts that had already occurred, rather than as an effort to reduce rivalry from the outset.

The differences in the framing of the news media "Bernama" and "Antara" show a tendency towards defensive framing with different focuses. The Indonesian national news media "Antara" more often highlights diagnoses of causes that point to the actions of the opposing party, while the Malaysian national news media "Bernama" tends to associate the conflict with technical factors of the competition. Both mass media outlets often maintain an informative competitive narrative that has the potential to prolong the rivalry between Indonesia and Malaysia. Thus, this study shows that media framing practices tend to be closer to the characteristics of journalism that reinforces national identity and competitiveness laden with conflict. The problem-solving orientation shows that although the Indonesian and Malaysian national media occasionally display mediative framing, this role emerges as a response to conflicts that have already occurred directly, rather than as an effort to prevent conflict. However, the problem-solving approach of both media outlets contains subjective and wise framing, whereby Indonesian national news media also conveyed Malaysia's apology as a form of reconciliation in maintaining and repairing relations between the two countries, as well as a call to uphold sportsmanship, mutual respect and appreciation for one another.

Based on the above findings and analysis, this study has important implications for journalism practice, particularly peace journalism, in inheriting the normative impulse to prioritise peace as a central value and starting point for analysis. Galtung's concept of peace journalism shows that journalists have a role in building peace, neutralising ethnic or religious differences, advocating for the prevention of future conflicts, reconciliation, and conflict resolution. However, the subjectivity of the mass media is often present in news reports to give a negative impression of an event by highlighting conflict for the sake of ratings or simply clickbait ([Bhowmik & Ferrucci, 2024](#)).

Meanwhile, news media can play an active role as mediators with socially constructed realities in their construction ([Kremez & Kõuts-Klemm, 2021](#)). [Zhomartkyzy \(2023\)](#) states that the role of a mediator in general can act as a facilitator, facilitating communication and dialogue between parties and helping them find compromises and solutions that best suit their interests. This statement can be adapted to the concept of news media acting as a mediator in the midst of conflict. However, the media cannot end conflicts on its own, so its contribution as a facilitator is to facilitate a third party ([Garba & Aondover, 2023](#)).

The media as a mediator plays a role as a communication link between parties involved in a conflict, going through a mediation process that can assist in conveying messages and providing solutions to the parties involved. In accordance with the issues being studied, the news media has the authority to present framing and plays a role as a mediator in the midst of conflicts. The role of the media as a mediator and the mediation approach that can be applied are as follows:

1. Public communicators, the media as mediators have a role that is not as profound as specialised institutions, where the media only acts as a tool for conveying messages between parties in conflict.
2. Treatment recommendation, in line with the elements proposed by Robert Entman in the media framing method, namely treatment recommendation. The media has the authority to determine what coverage will be presented in the news (Bruns, 2021). In this context, the media can offer solutions or act as a third-party facilitator in conflict mediation.
3. Dialogue facilitators and mediators enable open communication between the parties involved to find solutions or common ground, without imposing agreements (Zhomartkyzy, 2023). As a broad communication platform for the exchange of ideas, views, and information between various parties, the media can help ensure that dialogue is solution-oriented, open, and objective by providing facilities to third parties involved as mediators so that a common understanding can be reached, focusing on helping each party identify their interests and move towards a solution that meets their needs.
4. Transformative mediation involves mediators not only seeking solutions and resolving specific conflicts, but also changing the relationships between the parties causing the conflict by improving communication and understanding between them (Polityki et al., 2024). In the context of media in its transformative role, it is not only about disseminating information or neutralising conflicts, but also encouraging the public or parties involved to form healthier, more tolerant, and mutually understanding relationships through the framing of news.

The role as a mediator does not only rely on the ability to convey information, but also requires moral responsibility in filtering, compiling, and delivering news objectively while upholding journalistic ethics. Journalistic ethics in Oso et al. (2024) include neutrality, fairness, independence, respect for facts and diversity. The media needs to play an active role in creating a constructive, inclusive, and neutral space amid sensitive issues such as rivalry between countries, by prioritising the accuracy of information and avoiding narratives that are discriminatory and divisive.

4. Conclusion

Based on a comparative analysis of state-owned national media coverage by Antara News (Indonesia) and Bernama (Malaysia) from 2019 to 2025, this study finds that both outlets predominantly emphasize the framing elements of defining problems and diagnosing causes in reporting on the Indonesia–Malaysia football rivalry. Such framing practices consistently construct football matches not merely as sporting events but as symbolic arenas of national competition imbued with conflict. Antara News tends to frame the rivalry by foregrounding actions and provocations attributed to Malaysian actors, while Bernama adopts a defensive narrative that legitimizes Malaysia’s national team and problematizes the behavior of Indonesian supporters. These patterns indicate that diplomatic sensitivities and broader socio-economic relations between the two countries permeate sports reporting, demonstrating that state-affiliated media are not fully neutral actors. Instead, they actively participate in reinforcing nationalist boundaries and sustaining inter-country rivalries through sports discourse, thereby revealing ongoing challenges in maintaining journalistic objectivity in coverage of emotionally charged cross-border issues.

Theoretically, this study contributes to media framing scholarship by extending Robert M. Entman's framing model to the context of symbolic transnational sports conflict, an area previously dominated by analyses of political and security-related disputes. The dominance of problem definition and causal diagnosis frames sporting rivalry as a site of nationalism and contestation rather than reconciliation, reinforcing Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities through media-constructed collective identities. Practically, the findings highlight the need for state-owned national media to adopt a more preventive and balanced peace journalism approach, particularly in sports reporting with high emotional resonance. While mediative and solution-oriented framing occasionally appears, it remains largely reactive. Future research is therefore encouraged to incorporate audience-based methods, such as interviews and ethnographic observation, to assess how national media framing influences public perceptions and intergroup attitudes, thereby advancing a more comprehensive understanding of media's role in either perpetuating or mitigating cross-national rivalries.

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