

# THE REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM REFUGEES BY ALJAZEERA ONLINE NEWS

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## ABSTRACT

*This article highlights the undeniable role of the media in framing issues of human concern which helps in shaping public opinion worldwide. The emergence of the Muslim refugee crisis has attracted the attention of media especially the international media when tragic refugee stories were splashed in the headlines while crossing the Mediterranean to Europe. It is the intention of the researchers to understand the nature of coverage of this crisis by one of the influential international media that has opened a debate between pro-and anti-Muslim refugees in the host countries. Aljazeera media outlet is one of the most influential media globally and in the middle East as well. This study examines the representation of Muslim refugees in the online news coverage by Aljazeera from January 2015 to December 2016. Applying the deductive approach in media framing studies, this study collected a total of 169 online news articles were served as the unit of analysis to examine the media coverage on Muslim refugees by regional as well as one of influential international media. It was found that in most of Aljazeera coverage, attribution of the responsibility frame was the most salient and frequent frame while the morality and consequences frames were the least in in the coverage of Muslim refugees. This study also examines the thematic and episodic frame and found that the news coverage of the Muslim refugees was more into thematic frames as the crisis was reported from a broader context rather than reported in personal or individual experiences or episodic frames. The finding shows that most of the online articles by Aljazeera described Muslim refugees in humanitarian terms that frames them as victims and in need for humanitarian assistance. Most of the articles focused on bringing the voices and experiences of refugees which indicates that the Aljazeera wants to grab the attention of the international community, implant thought in people minds about how serious this issue is, and to show the world how refugees are treated which can be attributed to the culture and region proximity.*

**Keywords:** Media Framing, Muslims Refugees, News Frames, Aljazeera Online News

## INTRODUCTION

The refugee crisis is one of the most critical and controversial issues facing the international community throughout the second decade of the 21 Century. War, human rights violations and climate change are among the leading causes of refugees fleeing their home countries. In Middle East, the Arab spring and its aftermath prompted the biggest migrant wave since World War two. Millions of Syrians, Yemenis, Iraqis were forced to risking their lives to find shelter and protection in other countries. The Rohingya in Myanmar and Uighur in China are another human tragedy in Asia. These minority Muslim groups have faced communal violence of killing, raping, and burning of villages that lead thousands of them to flee their homes to find shelter in other countries (Myanmar Rohingya, 2018).

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2018, approximately 68 million people were homeless of which 25.4 million were refugees, 3.1 million were forcefully displaced, and 10 million stateless people. Of these, one million migrated to Europe in 2015 and 2016, bringing about a major European refugee crisis as countries struggle to accommodate the large influx of refugees. Some of the refugees arrived in

Europe overland mainly via Turkey and Albania and the vast majority arrived by sea. The ongoing wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen, poverty in countries like Kosovo and the abuses in Eritrea have greatly contributed to the migration of hundreds of people to Europe.

With the technological advancements, news travel faster and more widely from one part of the world to the rest like a small city. Accessing news on events and issues such as the refugee crisis has now become easier. As such, now more than ever, media plays an important role in creating or shaping opinions and judgments about different groups, races, cultures, or religions. Since the War on Terror after the September 11 attacks in 2001, Muslims and Islam have been the main topics that win the news headlines and discussed in the front pages of global media (Elsamni, 2016). The depiction of Muslims as "terrorists" and "enemies" in the global media after terrorist attacks across the world has fueled media-generated Islamophobia and incites a large scale of hate crimes against Arab and Muslims. Tolley (2016) situates media-generated Islamophobia as part of societal norms and culture to produce stories that resonate with the intended audience. With all the media coverage about the refugee's crisis, most of the studies focus on how the media of a host countries portray refugees but not how the global media set humanity in their news agenda about refugees particularly refugees of the Islamic faith and help the public's understand what is actually going on and then influence the government policies.

Media research has examined how certain groups for instance Arabs are portrayed by media regardless of their religions and ethnicities. Many studies found that media plays a role in framing Arab refugees as threats to national security as well as opportunists who take away jobs in any host country. Often, cultural differences such as language and religion have also been cited to explain the failed integration of Muslim and Arab immigrants (Elsamni, 2016). It is worth to mention that most of media studies that have been done regarding the issue of refugees present the viewpoints of the host countries which swings between "soft" and "hard" when news stories lead to an outpouring of sympathy such as the case of Canadian media, yet the hard edge returns to reporting on the danger of Muslim refugee (EJN,2019) as in the case of Hungary.

Searching the literature of media research, researchers found that there still no enough evidence on how the worst recent humanitarian crisis in the history is presented by the international media particularly by non-American media. Therefore, focusing on the international level gives a justification to this study as the researchers also would like to highlight how Muslim refugee is framed by examining the coverage of one of the most influential global media regardless of nationalities and ethnicities of the refugees. Aiming to investigate how global most influential media report on the refugee's crisis, the researchers assume that there is a largely positive coverage by the media and more sympathetic discourse and representation when it comes to refugees from the essence of international human rights. Therefore, this study investigates the discourse and the news frames used by Aljazeera in presenting Muslim refugees as well as assessed the use of thematic and episodic approaches in line with Iyengar's model (1990).

Analyzing the content of Aljazeera online news was done by the researchers to understand more how regional as well as international media portray refugees as majority of them are from Muslim countries particularly from the Middle East and how this coverage alerts the international community of the impact of this global humanitarian crisis. For the purpose of this study, the news frames (generic frames by Semtko & Valkenburg, 2000) used by Aljazeera also are examined to assess the predominant frame and the slant pf Muslim refugees.

## Media News of Refugees

It important to analyze media content to understand more about the media role in influencing the attitudes of the public and politicians, and government policies towards refugees and asylum seekers. Media repeatedly provides information that people use to make sense of the world around them thus, it can be a double-edged sword. For example, number of studies have

found that media coverage fuels hysteria or ring alarming bills regarding streams of refugees and affects the public opinions. The media bias on certain events and stereotypical and negative portrayals could not be discussed or draw a conclusion without investigating the media content to see the effects of media content on public. In most cases there have been a tendency to negatively frame refugees and asylum seekers as economic and security threats labeling them as enemies at the gate trying to invade the western nations (Threadgold, 2009; Law, 2010).

The lack of humanitarian tone in media reports can affect the government policies regarding admission of refugees for example, the case of Tamil refugees who sought refuge in Canada in 2009 (Bradimore & Bauder, 2011). This has led to shaping the national perception, and public attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. Public surveys show high level of opposing the presence of refugees in the EU demanding tighter legal restriction for entry. For instance, in a study conducted about the Italian media coverage of Albain.

The negative media portrayal can be said to dehumanize the refugees (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). Esses, Medianu & Lawson, (2013) studied media's role in inciting the dehumanization of immigrants and refugees by persons who feel their presence threatens their security and economic opportunities. In their study, it was found that those refugees and immigrants were labelled as 'bogus, illegal, disguised terrorists, rapists, or carriers of contagious diseases. As a result, communities that host refugees urged their governments to take serious actions. On the other hand, the media's portrayal of some refugees as vulnerable people deserving sympathy can win audiences' sympathy towards refugees raising the moral responsibility to help and integrate them into the societies.

Vlaicu (2017) examined the negative and positive image of the refugees in the social media. Her study found unfavorable representation of the refugees especially Muslims across Facebook and Twitter. On these social media platforms, refugees were labelled as 'terrorists, criminals, rapists, ill-intended people coming to Europe to cause disaster, a threat to national security, prosperity, and civilization.' Statistics showed that there were over 90,000 #refugeesNOTwelcome posts, #RAPErefugeesNOTWelcome (86,000 posts) and 88400 contain the #antimuslim hashtag. Others posted "Europe needs to defend its borders with lethal force to stop the migrant invasion" and "these refugees are criminal migrants" "smash them."

However, groups such as Welcome refugees were found to be portraying a positive image of the refugees on Facebook. These types of groups can be said to have to a certain extent, managed to raise awareness to embrace diversity and tolerance. For example, Gissun Simonarson Twitter hashtag #BuyPens alongside a photo of a Syrian refugee (Abdul al-Attar) selling pens on a Beirut Street with his 4-year-old daughter in his arms, managed to raise more than \$200,000 for him and his family (Vlaicu, 2017).

## **Refugees of Middle East and North Africa Region**

Media framing of the refugees from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) seeking refuge in different regions has become the center of attention when people talk about immigrants and refugees that survived civil wars and communal violence. In this study, the researchers focused on refugees from various Islamic states because the refugee crisis in these countries is considered man-made. It is important to understand media's role in shaping a positive or negative attitude towards Muslim refugees especially in Europe that is estimated to host of 78% of the refugees from different Muslim countries (Europe's Growing Muslim Population, 2017).

Unlike other refugees who escaped to neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Turkey as well as Europe, Syrians refugees have gained more attention by the global media. Turbay (2015) examined the frames that existed in the official discourses about Syrian refugees in the Lebanese media, the government official websites, and speeches by political figures in Lebanon. The study found that news coverage of Syrian refugees had a humanitarian trend and security terms presented. In Lebanon, the host community is concerned about the large numbers

of Syrian nationals who seek refuge in Lebanon especially the impact they may have on the local community but did not address their problems as individuals. In Turkish media, on the other hands, Syrian refugees were portrayed as either threatening or insignificant. Although Turkey is a majority Muslim country, refugees that share the same Islamic faith are seen as humans burdening their economy and people who do not deserve empathy (Yıldırım & Yurtdaş, 2016).

The viral photo of drowned Aylan Kurdi which captured the attention of the international community, created negative and positive attitudes. Van Schaik (2015) for instance, analysed the visual representation of the drowned Syrian child in European newspapers. He found over-representation of children, and the use of children's photos to attract attention to specific issues. Certain photos of Syrian refugees have been used that make people believe that they are not in need of any help. For instance, photographs of children holding phones have been used to indicate that they are coming from urban families that can support themselves without any help.

After the September 11 tragedy, the image of the Arabs and Muslims was the main subject of many studies that examined the news frames and the negative representation of them. In the U.S., Powell (2011) for example, found that thematic frame was salient by constructing Muslims, Arabs, and Islam as a great threat to the U.S. Ridouani (2011) argued that Americans and Europeans are similar in their views of Muslims and Arabs as threats to their economy and security. This portrayal has misled people and made Islamic terminologies and Arab costumes seem evil and wicked. Arabs and Muslims are displayed in Western media as uncivilized people and Arab women are seen as immoral women who belly dance and act as harem maidens. In addition, UA and UK media tend to distort the facts of the Arab-Israeli conflict and associating Arabs and Muslims with terrorism. The episodic frame highlighted domestic terrorism to regarded not as serious compared to the Muslim terrorists. Powell developed a model of terrorism, reflecting on how this news coverage enhanced Islamophobia among American citizens (Powell, 2011; Elsamni, 2016).

Media coverage on other Asian Muslims refugees are influenced by three factors that Wright (2004) believes are responsible for effective media coverage of refugee crisis. Magnitude and proximity of the crisis, its dramatic nature, and the interest the refugee crisis stimulates. For example, Hazara Afghan who escaped war and persecution in Afghanistan, positive portrayal of Afghan refugees in Australian television was key in reducing cultural disparity and promoting religious tolerance between Australians and Afghan refugees. (Traill, 2016); Rodan & Lange, (2008). However, the disadvantages to the media framing of the assimilation of refugees into Australian culture and society is that it can be interpreted as a requirement for refugees to receive permanent protection visas. This is because it emphasizes the ability of Australia to embrace the cultural and religious differences of the refugees as an essential aspect for equality to happen which is not necessarily true.

On the other hand, there have only been few studies focusing on media presentation Muslim women refugees. Alhyek (2014) examined "Refugee Not Captive" (RNC) an online campaign to tackle the issues of Syrian women refugees. It was found that the online depiction of Syrian refugee women was created through an intricate process of orientalist and self-Orientalizing representations. RNC was found to be showing disrespect for Syrian women, men, and families in Jordan camps. For example, it was commonly generalized that all refugee families marry off their daughters for money. This can play a key role in marginalizing the voices of the underprivileged refugee women including the complexity and diversity of refugee women's experiences in general. Therefore, the RNC online campaign was not adequate to tackle Syrian refugee women's issues.

Literature review shows that most studies focused on the media coverage of the host countries presenting the viewpoints of the country's leaders, officials, and public figures. In other words, most of the studies have focused on the political discourse on the refugees' issue reflecting who is against allowing refugees especially Muslims to settle in their countries. In this study, however, the researchers aim to examine the coverage of Muslim refugees by the Middle

Eastern- global news network (Aljazeera) which claims to addresses stories that other media neglect to help understanding the determinants of the media discourse, its objectives, the advocacy strategies, and the ideological dimensions of some media.

## Framing Theory

This study examines the news frames used by Aljazeera to report on the MRefs' crisis in light of the framing theory. This theory assumes that the way media frames a certain issue impacts the way the individual perceives, interprets, or understands it. Framing theory was connected to agenda-setting theory when McCombs & Shaw (1993) highlighted the evidence that public opinion can be impacted by the framing of certain issues/events on the agenda. It is in that sense that agenda-setting exceeds the basic effects of what issues people think about to how people think about issues through the selection of objects and frames (McCombs, 2005).

Although the framing theory is widely used in media researches, there is no one agreed definition of framing as a concept among scholars. However, there are main characteristics and aspects that are usually present in each definition including constructing framing as a process. De Vreese (2005) argued the framing process is a dynamic process of communication while Entman (1993) stated that selection and salience are two important components of this framing process. For Entman, certain aspects of the reality are chosen and made significant in the message so that it defines problems, suggests causes, recommends remedies, or judges in moral terms. Chong & Druckman, (2007) think that the method of framing comprises of psychological mechanisms and begins with individuals importing available opinions from memorized beliefs. For them, some beliefs are more accessible at a certain time and some of those beliefs are stronger than others due to relevance and applicability. Therefore, framing is the process where individuals change their view or accept a certain perception of an issue/event.

Through frames, the fundamental goal would be defining the public opinion and determining people's actions and views, specifically under certain conditions when the public highly depends on media sources (Weaver 2007; Galander 2008; Al-Majdhoub et al., 2013). Scholars of the framing concept agreed upon two main types of frames as they differentiated between news frames centered on the volume of information the content of each news story would bear. However, these two types are given distinctive terms that varied from one researcher to another. Iyengar (1990) differently defines two types of news frames, namely, episodic and thematic frames. Framing episodically is when the media focus on a singular case or exemplar reminding us of prototypes. For example, a person or an individual is made responsible for a problem or its solution. Thematic framing on the other hand focuses generally on the issue and trends over time and in more abstract terms. In this case, society or government is made responsible for a problem or its solution.

Vreese (2003, cited in Elsamni, 2016) distinguishes between issue-specific frames and generic frames. An issue-specific frame is associated to specific news events, enabling an in-depth and detailed analysis of certain events. However, this analysis is challenging to generalize in theory building. In contrast, a general frame could refer to distinctive topics in different cultural contexts and periods, thus, allowing the generalization of results. Similarly, Scheufele & Tewksbury, (2007) differentiated between formal abstract frames, and content-related or value frames whereas the first does not refer to content but only to a formal or abstract principle. The second refers to meaning. For example, a formal frame would present a terrorist attack in episodic terms, whereas a content-related frame would refer to the Middle East problem or religious conflicts, regardless of whether it is placed in an episodic mode or not.

To analyze the content of news frames, the inductive and deductive approaches are the most widely used to analyze qualitative data. The inductive approach is used as described by scholars to help make sense of complex data throughout the development of themes and categories from raw materials (data reduction) without any prior labels for these frames (Thomas, 2003). However, it is criticized that it is relying on small samples making it difficult

to replicate (Neuman et al., 1992; Matthes & Kohring, 2008). In contrast, the deductive approach investigates frames that are defined and operationalized prior to investigations. It is replicable and suitable for large samples and measures the number of occurrences in news articles with the aim of spotting differences between different mediums of mass media and forms of content (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

This study adopted the deductive approach in order to predefine a suitable set of news frames. For example, the thematic and episodic frames before evaluating the frequency by which each frame is present in distinctive news articles that cover the issue of refugees. Previous framing studies comparable to this study are used as a reference for predefining the news frames used in the coding sheet. Semetko & Valkenburg, (2000) in their study identified five news frames of conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. The conflict frame refers to a conflict between parties, while the human interests frame depends on emotions to attract interest, morality puts the issue in a religious and ethical context. The economic consequences frame relates to the economic effect the issue covered would have while the responsibility frame is about assigning its cause or resolution to particular groups.

Therefore, using the thematic and episodic approach, this study aims to analyze the content of Aljazeera to understand more how this regional- global media portrays this issue as well as to decide the most salient frame between conflict, human interest, economic effects, morality, and responsibility. The content of the articles was also examined to decide whether Aljazeera frames Muslim refugees in humanitarian terms portraying them as victims in need of help or security terms by presenting them as potential threats.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The data was collected from January 2015 to December 2016 a time in which the number of refugees and asylum seekers had increased especially from the Middle East. It is reported that in 2015 and 2016 more than 2.3 million illegal crossings were detected and thousands of refugees drowned in the Mediterranean Sea as per UNHCR reports. This period also witnessed several events that implicated Arab and Muslim refugees in such as, the New Year's Eve sexual attacks in Germany and Istanbul suicide bombing. Media response to these events was divided with some media outlets calling governments for more assistance while others were unsympathetic, inciting anti-Muslim refugees (Elsamni, 2016; Hewitt, 2016). The research examines news coverage on this crisis by Aljazeera as regional -global independent news organization.

Using the quantitative content analysis approach in this study, the online news stories were collected from Aljazeera as it is considered among the most influential international media which represent different viewpoints. Aljazeera is owned by the government of Qatar and was pitched as an impartial news source and platform for discussing issues relating to the Arab world but later it was extended to discuss worldwide issues and to counter the dominance of Western viewpoint (Zingarelli, 2010). To answer the research questions: how Muslim refugee crisis is framed by Aljazeera online news, online editions were searched by using the official website; [www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com) for news stories related to issue in hand. By searching the word "Muslim refugees" on the websites of the two online media outlets, the relevant news stories were selected to examine and analyse the news frames based in the coding categories in the coding book that consists of Yes, No questions to decide on the type of news frame.

In this study, Muslim is defined as a person or a follower of Islam religion either from a majority or minority Muslim country regardless of their native language or ethnicity (Azman Malik, n.d). A refugee according to the 1951 Refugee Convention is a person who has crossed national borders due to a 'well-founded' fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. The online articles published from January 2015 to December 2016 by Aljazeera on Muslim refugees were selected and the unit of analysis is the news story published on the official website. The coding

categories covered the textual items in each article. To provide the inter-coder reliability, a sample of 50 out of 169 collected articles were randomly selected, analysed and coded by two coders; one of them is the main author of this research and another coder is a senior lecturer in the field of mass communication at Sana'a University. Cohen's Kappa was used as the ideal binary reliability, the inter-coder reliability for the whole content analysis (news frames including the episodic and thematic and humanitarian and security frames) was 0.86, 0.82 and 0.83 respectively which indicates the high level of agreement on the coding decision.

## FINDINGS

### The Extend of Coverage

This study collected 169 articles from Aljazeera online websites which reported on the Muslim refugee crisis across two years 2015 -2016.

### News Frames

Table 1 shows that the most prominent news frame used by Aljazeera across the two years of coverage was the responsibility frame 31.11% followed by the conflict frame 28.88% and human interest 27.11%. Both morality and economic consequence frames were less existent across all articles 7.1% and 5.8% respectively.

Type of News Frame	Frequency
Responsibility Frame	30.8% (52)
Human Interest Frame	28.40% (48)
Conflict Frame	29% (49)
Morality Frame	7.7% (13)
Economic Consequences Frame	4.1%(7)
Total	100% (169)

### The Responsibility Frame

Based on Table 1, the most prominent frame in the coverage of Muslim refugees by Aljazeera throughout the two years was the reasonability frame (30.8%) followed by conflict frame 29 %. Majority of the news stories focused on attributing the waves of the Muslim refugees to their oppressed regimes and the responsibility of some host governments that could alleviate the problem of the refugees without discrimination against a certain race or religion. In its reports, Aljazeera praised the positive stands of some of the western countries towards refugees. A news story reported the Canadian PM Justin Trudeau stands as he said that Canada has opened its door for refugees regardless of their nationalities or religions, encouraging other governments to follow the same steps ("Canadians unite to sponsor Syrian refugees," 2015).

Within the attribution of responsibility frame, more than half of the articles portrayed the issue of Muslim refugees as an issue that requires urgent intervention by the international community and suggested some recommendations on how to solve the problem. Some articles highlighted the initiatives of some Asian countries including Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand to address the roots of the Rohingya crisis with Myanmar government and providing aid for people stranded at sea ("900 Rohingya migrants" land in Indonesia and Thailand," 2015).

It was reported that German's decision to open its borders to Syrian refugees and Poland's willingness to receive 2000 refugees and asylum seekers as part of EU efforts stem migrant crisis in Europe offered a remarkable case for humanitarian reasons ("Germany braces for thousands of more refugees," 2015); ("Poland's pledge to accept 2,000 migrants," 2016).

Moreover, although Malaysia is not signatory of the Refugee Convention, the majority Muslim country agreed to receive 3000 Syrian refugees in what the former Malaysian to help ease the refugee strain (" Malaysia accepts first of Syrian refugees, "2015). In Canada, "This is how to welcome refugees" was a capturing title of a news article that considered a note to the world leaders attached with an image of the Canadian PM greeting refugees fleeing from Syria during their arrival. According to the news stories, the Syrian refugees did not arrive like the tens of thousands of Vietnamese "boat people" did in the 1970s or any other group of terror-fleeing refugees at other times in Canadian history but they arrived on planes and were received by the PM as permanent residents of Canada, with social insurance numbers, with health cards, and with an opportunity to become full Canadians ("Note to the world leader," 2015).

### **Conflict Frame**

Many news stories by Aljazeera within the conflict frame highlight the division and disagreement among the European Union countries over receiving or opening the borders for refugees especially after the Paris in France and Cologne attacks in Germany which were linked by social media sites to the influx of Muslims entering Europe. In January 2015, the headquarters of the Charlie Hebdo magazine was attacked by two men claiming allegiance to Al-Qaeda. That attack was followed quickly by an assault on a Kosher supermarket, which left five dead, including the attacker who was suspected to be Syrian as he chanted during the attack "This is for Syria" ("Paris attacks unlikely to affect Syria," 2015). The events in Cologne and other cities over New Year have left a profound imprint in Germany. It is reported that more than 500 cases of violence have been recorded just in Cologne ("Cologne attacks impact on Europe," 2016).

### **Human Interest Frame**

As the third frame that scored high across the articles in Aljazeera is the human interests frame manifest in the news stories by bringing emotional angle into the presentation of the news. It was vividly underscored how individuals have been affected by the crisis and the hatred and discrimination generated by the notion of Islamophobia. Most of the news stories exhibiting personal adjectives reported how people were affected by the problem in effort to bring to light the clear example the problem with Muslim refugees. Media portrayal was important in bringing emotional feelings such as sympathy or anger towards refugees. For example, media coverage of hundreds of Syrian and Afghan refugees being stopped by Hungarian police trying to leave Hungary to continue their journey to either Austria or Germany showed refugees speaking out that they did not want to stay in Hungary by chanting "no food, no water, no camp, no Hungary, freedom train." Some of them also explained the appalling journey they had to take saying that if they had known what they would face in Hungary they wouldn't have left Syria" ("Refugees shout 'no camps in Hungary,' 2015).

Other news stories highlighted the rejection and anger of the thousands of refugees who had been sleeping outside the Budapest train station as police blocked them so they can return to the Hungarians refugee camp. the Hungarian PM commented by saying "We don't want more Muslims" and continued saying "those fleeing conflict in countries such as Syria should not try to cross into Hungary, as he defended the country's decision to erect a fence along its border. He warned Muslims not to come to his country as was quoted saying "please don't come...we Hungarians are full of fear, people in Europe are full of fear because they see that the European leaders, among them the prime ministers, are not able to control the situation" ("Hungarian PM: We don't want more Muslims," 2015).

Aljazeera's news articles reported an increase in hate crimes in Europe due to the influx of refugees in recent years. For example. it was reported that the Hungarian government was not properly investigating the growing number of hate crimes. Ruslan Trad, the president of the



Forum for Arab Culture, said he had to leave Bulgaria after receiving threats on social media and facing harassment on the streets. "There is a sense of anxiety...Even people of the older generation" ("Hate attacks," 2015). In another story, "we are the dogs of Calais" was an emotional statement told by 28-year-old Youssef, a Sudanese refugee who lived in Jules Ferry refugee camp located on the outskirts of Calais, France also known as the "the Jungle". He described a life of constant struggle and risk as some of his friends died while trying to cross the Eurotunnel and, in another attempt, he and another five got inside a Polish truck but there wasn't enough air. According to him, refugees sleep along the motorway closest to the train terminal, which has yet to be fenced off ("Calais: Life in 'the Jungle,'" 2015).

### **Morality Frame**

Under the morality frame, the news stories stressed on unity as a religious, moral message and human matter. Most of the articles reported that host governments and communities should hold soft stances and compassion for desperate refugees. Aljazeera news stories highlighted the stances of religious figures such as Dalai Lama who called the European courtiers to be compassionate not to reject refugees because they are Muslims and urged for more effort should be made to help bring peace to conflict-hit countries ("Dalai Lama, don't reject refugees Muslim refugee," 2015). Muslim communities in most of the European countries have also been called to provide aid and assistance to the refugees. The former president of Muslim Scholars and Preachers Association urged volunteers to help the newcomers in Germany as part of their religion and humanity duties towards refugees regardless of their nationalities or religion ("Calling Muslims to help refugees," 2016).

As a peacemaking mission, some of the Aljazeera's articles reported on statements made by religious global figures such as Pope Francis and Dalai Lama who repeatedly appealed regarding to the painful situation in the Middle East and North Africa countries to stop conflicts and hatred that have resulted in the death of humankind and streams of refugees seeking protection in other countries. An article also focused on Pope Francis as a peacemaker and his energy on trying to bring together Christians and Muslims in the Central African Republic at a time that reverberations from the battle within Islam (between Sunni and Shia, and between fundamentalists and moderates) are threatening both Muslims and Christians in Africa and elsewhere and resulted in waves of refugees seeking refuge in other countries ("Pope of the poor makes a big impact," 2015). Pope Francis also called on every European parish, religious community, monastery and sanctuary to take in one refugee family as thousands of people from war-torn countries continued to stream into Germany ("Pope calls to house a refugee family," 2015).

Another article reported on the stance of Germany government after Cologne and Paris attacks. The German chancellor spoke out against violence targeting refugees of the Islamic faith during her participation in Muslim community rally to promote tolerance. She stated according to the news story that "excluding population groups due to their faith or their origin is beneath the dignity of our liberal state...hatred of foreigners, racism, and extremism have no place in this country". Another stance was reported when President Joachim Gauck also addressed the vigil at the Brandenburg Gate, organized by the Central Council of Muslims in Germany under the banner "Let's be there for each other". He said "We are all Germany...We democrats with our different political, cultural, and religious backgrounds; we, who respect and need each other; we, who want to live life in unity, justice, and freedom...democracy, respect for the law, respect for each other, respect for human dignity...This is our way of life!" ("Merkel joins Muslim rally for tolerance," 2015).

### **Consequence Frame**

By applying the consequence frame, the articles by Aljazeera focused on the coverage of Muslim refugees concerning the consequences, losses, and gains, expenses, and costs. The year 2016 held the world economic forum where the debate about refugees' crisis and the affordability of Europe and other host countries was going on. In some articles, refugees were framed as a burden to Germany's economy as it takes a large number of refugees compared to other European countries. The Germans also fear that the new arrival will take their jobs and push down wages. However, on a different perspective according to the International Monetary Fund, refugees who seek asylum in Europe aged under 25 and well-educated could present an economic opportunity as Germany has the fastest aging population in Europe ("Europe's refugees-an economic opportunity?"2016).

### Thematic and Episodic Frames

Frame	Aljazeera N=169
Thematic	65 (38.46%)
Episodic	104 (61.54%)
Total	100%

Table 2 shows that the majority of news stories used episodic frames in most of the coverage on Muslim refugees. Majority of the news stories focused more on refugees' experiences as well as particular incidents rather than to report it in a broader context and utilized different information to frame the issue. The researcher assumed most news articles would shed more light on the individual tragedies that refugees have faced. Surprisingly, the majority of the news articles focused on the refugees as victims who escaped poverty, war and repression to seek protection where also some have lost their lives undertaking the perilous journey. Aljazeera reported that countries rejecting Syrian refugees because they are Muslims are fueling and supporting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and other armed groups to recruit more people. Further, UN Secretary Anthony Guterres at the launch of a record \$20.1bn UN humanitarian appeal for 2016 said "it would be an illusion to think that counterterrorism and military action alone would solve the refugees' problem ("Blocking Muslim Refugees", 2015).

### Humanitarian and Security Frames

Analyzing the selected news articles, researchers found that Aljazeera news stories portrayed Muslim refugees as victims of their own regimes, violence, prosecution and even the host countries. Aljazeera across all news articles tried to balance its coverage by interviewing those who work in humanitarian aid organizations, politicians, and refugees. In a news article, Aljazeera reported that in August, 2016, there was a leak revealed that refugee children were being sexually abused at Australia's Nauru prison camp (Safdar & Strickland, 2016). In a very interesting news article, Aljazeera, interviewed Karolin Schwarz who disproved the crimes allegation against refugees who arrived to Germany. Schwarz along with ICT developer launched Hoaxmap online platform that allow people to separate facts from fiction by exposing false rumors about allegedly crimes committed by refugees. This interactive system featured in one week 240 incidents from Germany that proved that these crimes were fake accusations created by far-right parties, police and organizations against refugees (Kermeliotis, 2016)

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A total 169 news articles were analyzed where attribution of responsibility frame was the most prominent frame across all news articles in the coverage of the Muslim refugee crisis. The most common aspect was highlighting the reasonability of some levels of different governments and individual groups to put an end to the crisis of the refugees and urging to take serious measures, actions and solutions. Articles pinpointed the ability of different government levels to alleviate the refugee crisis and imposing certain measures to reduce the influx of refugees to other countries especially to the EU. For example, a report focused on the call by German President Joachim Gauck to the European governments to take in their share of refugees, where another report tackled the strong language used by Canadian PM in response to a large number of arrivals and the way refugees should be welcomed (Zerbisias, 2015).

Attributing this refugee crisis to governments was another aspect highlighted by some reports, such as the violence against the Rohingya minority in Myanmar, Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan forcing them flee. Accusing certain governments open policies towards refugees that allowed outlaws to enter their countries was also mentioned in some reports which also reported to have caused division among EU countries ("EU split," 2015). The conflict frame was the second frequent frame in the coverage of Muslim refugees and the most common aspect in this frame was the disagreement between different entities or parties. This frame was very frequent after the incidents in Germany and Paris as European countries debated concerning allowing Muslim refugees to enter their countries.

The human interests frame was mostly to influence positive feelings towards refugees. That was supported by the number of articles portrayed refugees in a humanitarian term as victims of their own governments, human trafficking, hate crimes in the host countries, and failing to stick to Dublin's rules. The human interests frame is existed by the number of articles reported on the suffering of refugees risking their lives to find a safe place and a better life. The story of a 3 years old Aylan Kurdi a Syrian child who drowned and his body was found on the shore of Turkey stirred sympathy and positive feelings towards refugees after his image made the global headlines. Many other reports on thousands of Rohingya people stranded or lost their lives at sea escaping from anti-Muslim violence attached to images of human suffering (Regencia, 2015).

It is reported that Muslim refugees are also victims of mistreatment when they arrive in the host countries. They face severe economic and social insecurity; their freedom of movement is restricted; they cannot integrate with local populations; they are given inadequate or no assistance and they are refused permission to work. Due to the rise of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim discourse, a report by Aljazeera reported that around 260 Muslim refugees converted to Christianity in Austria just to increase their chances of resettlement and for better treatment (Muslim refugees convert to Christianity, 2018).

There were few news stories that framed Muslim refugees under the morality aspects by Aljazeera. The moral message and religious principles were existent in the coverage of Muslim communities in Germany receiving refugees regardless of their religion or nationalities. It was also in the coverage of religious figures such as the Dalai Lama and Pope Francis who urged for compassion and sympathy for refugees and called against the rejection of refugees from the Middles East because they are Muslim. That also included a call from the European foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg to stick to Dublin rules to set limits for the influx of refugees which raised social and security concerns (Aljazeera, 2015). The economic frame existed in a few news stories in the coverage of refugees in relation to the economic consequences. Refugees in general in the sample were portrayed as an economic power to the host countries if they are given the opportunity to be socially and economically integrated.

It is noticed that the majority of the news articles taken in this study tended to report on Muslim refugee employing the episodic frame in the sense of brining personal or individual experiences rather than in broad counts. Unlike what it was found in a study conducted by Abdulrahman Elsamni. He found that the American media CNN invested more in an episodic frame in the sense of reporting human incidents and tragedies and portrayed Arab refugees as

potential threats (Elsamni, 2016). However, in this study, refugees from different regions were portrayed as victims of several circumstances which include their own regimes, the host countries, western misperception of Muslims as well as human trafficking.

Overall, there was balance in the coverage of Muslim refugee by Aljazeera. The attribution of responsibility frame Muslim refugees was the most prominent and frequent among the five types of news frames, followed by conflict and human interests frame, where the morality and the economic frames were less frequent. The content analysis of news articles concluded that refugees were framed in episodic frames more than thematic ones. The crisis of Muslim refugees was presented in most of the samples concerning personal experiences and individual accounts through bringing refugees voices and those who work with humanitarian aid organization instead of focusing on a wide-angle of the issue. In the sample majority of the news articles framed the refugees in humanitarian terms than security frames. That is, refugees were most frequently portrayed as victims rather than a potential threat. The overall portrayal of Muslim refugees by Aljazeera in this study tended to be balanced by bringing different views. The coverage of Aljazeera exposed the bias of the western media that perpetuate and portray Muslim refugees as terrorists, rapists, thieves, and job takers. According to (Sakurai, 2017) the cultural proximity and affinity are component that influence the international news flow and coverage. That can be a good predictor that influence the amount of new coverage devoted, the positive stands and the sympathy towards Muslim refugees by Aljazeera.

It is without a doubt that media can only alter the level of awareness, priorities, importance of events which depends on the nature of an event, cultural and geographical proximity, political and economic interests, regionalization and freedom of press. These factors according to several studies influence the way in which news content is typically shaped and contextualized within the same frame of reference (Tian & Stewart, 2006; Sakurai, 2017)

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