

Article

Mediated Representation of Sharia in Aceh: A Hybrid Approach to Media Frames

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Abstract: Aceh is the only province in Indonesia with an exceptional degree of autonomy to implement Sharia. This paper explores how *Serambi Indonesia*—the leading Acehnese local newspaper—framed the implementation of Sharia in the region. This study employed content analysis of the Sharia coverage in Aceh from 2012 to 2020 using a hybrid approach, combining issue-specific and generic frames. The results revealed the four identified frames: Sharia codification, deviance from Sharia, desirable Sharia enforcement, and Islamic morality. among those frames, the deviance from Sharia was much preferred. The frame prominence was more prevalent after *Qanun Jinayat* (Islamic Criminal Bylaw) took into effect in Aceh. It was also given more prominence on the front page than on other pages. However, other frames made up 60% of the articles, implying that the Acehnese local newspaper positively represented the implementation of Sharia in Aceh while highlighting Sharia problems surrounding its enforcement. These findings exemplify the use of a hybrid approach to better examine the media frames, support the effect of critical events on changes in the media frames, and confirm the different prominence of the frame based on the page placement.

Keywords: Aceh; content analysis; local newspaper; media frame; Sharia



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1. Introduction

As negative sentiment toward Islam continues after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the issue of Sharia has also been raised as a critical concern by non-Muslim societies. However, the ubiquitous recognition of Sharia in public discourse is not followed by a proper understanding of what Sharia means. The definition of Sharia is often equated with Islamic law. This definition is problematic as it contributes to narrowing down the meaning of Sharia to legal rules. In reality, the term has a broad meaning. Sharia appears once in the Qur'an, literally meaning a "path to a watering place". By referring to water as the essential element in human life, the term Sharia connotes itself as the path to follow for salvation in life and the Hereafter (Possamai et al. 2013). Sharia is a code of conduct for Muslims, guiding every aspect of their life. In contemporary Muslim societies, Sharia is fully or partly implemented in some countries or regions including the province of Aceh in Indonesia.

Aceh is the only province in Indonesia with an exceptional degree of autonomy to implement Sharia. Sharia plays no official part in Indonesia's legal framework and Aceh is a special case permitted to incorporate it in its bylaws (Salim 2004). Although there have been 443 Sharia-based regulations issued by the local government since the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998 (Sarahtika 2018), the other provinces do not have the constitutional positions or legislative supports to implement Sharia in the way that Aceh has. The 2005 peace agreement between the Government of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) has opened broader opportunities for Aceh to authorize Sharia, supported through enacting the Law of the Governing of Aceh No. 11/2006 (Berutu 2016). Under Sharia, Aceh has ratified a series of Sharia-based bylaws since 2002 including the requirement to follow an Islamic dress code and the prohibition of liquor, gambling, and seclusion

between unmarried couples. The penalties imposed on offenders also varied such as gold fines ranging from 100–1500 g, prison sentences of 10–150 months, and even the most controversial penalties of 10–200 lashes.

Since the formal implementation, Sharia in Aceh has attracted significant media attention, locally, nationally, and internationally. The keywords “shari’a OR shariah OR sharia Aceh” in Factiva (the largest online database of global news produced by Dow Jones and Reuters) generated 2077 entries in the last five years (Factiva 2019). However, previous studies have consistently shown that the coverage of Sharia in Aceh was surrounded by negativity that implied intolerance and prejudices against certain groups such as women and non-Muslims (Fitri 2015; Juanda et al. 2017; Maulina 2017a; Nisa 2017a; Nuryadi 2016).

Using framing analysis as a theoretical foundation and analysis, this study explored mediated representations of Sharia in Aceh from the perspective of *Serambi Indonesia*—the main local newspaper in Aceh Province. While international and local media tend to influence public discourse outside Aceh, *Serambi Indonesia*, as a local newspaper, is more likely to influence local public discourse (Richardson et al. 2008). It also has a high degree of social and cultural attachment to the Acehnese community. Therefore, it offers alternative media content on how Sharia is practiced in Aceh compared to the Indonesian national and international media.

This study also measured the media frames by combining issue-specific and generic framing measurement tools by drawing on Matthes and Kohring’s (2008) method of framing analysis and Semetko and Valkenburg’s (2000) generic frames. In the current framing literature, issue-specific and generic frames were viewed as two alternative conceptualizations (de Vreese 2005). According to Borah (2011), only a few framing studies have attempted to integrate the analysis of both types of frames. However, both frames are not mutually exclusive; thus, combining them would provide a comprehensive understanding of how the media frame the issue at hand (Brüggemann and D’Angelo 2018; Kozman 2017).

Even though an extensive body of research has observed the international media coverage of Islam, far less attention has been devoted to the media coverage of Sharia. Current studies on media and Sharia have been undertaken in Western media settings (Bowe and Hoewe 2016; Hoewe et al. 2014; Korteweg 2008; Mora 2013; Possamai et al. 2013, 2017). While in the context of Aceh, most previous studies on media and Sharia were also constrained to specific events or aspects of Sharia, for example, caning (Amri 2019), the inclusion of non-Muslims in *Qanun Jinayat* (Fitri 2015), and tight clothes raids by Sharia police (Maulina 2019), which could potentially limit a broader picture of Sharia in the media. Earlier studies examined Sharia from the perspective of the national media (Bentara 2015; Juanda et al. 2017; Nisa 2017b; Nuryadi 2016), and only a few studies have focused on the viewpoint of the local media in Aceh (Fitri 2015; Maulina 2017b, 2019) or cross-media platforms (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen Banda Aceh 2012; Maulina 2017a). This article expands on the media studies literature by providing how Sharia issues are represented in the local media in an area where Sharia is practiced.

This article will proceed as follows. The following section elaborates on the concept of issue-specific and generic frames, highlighting the complementary relationship between the two. The article then presents the study’s methodology and findings. It ends with a discussion of the research findings as well as the theoretical and practical implications of this study.

Framing Theory

Framing studies have grown from sociological and psychological foundations (Borah 2011; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Goffman (1974) was among the first scholars to develop the general concept of framing, underpinning the sociological foundations of framing. Goffman (1974, pp. 21–24) asserts that individuals apply interpretive schemas or “primary frameworks” to make sense of the world around them. Such a definition of the frame has been further advocated in the communication field as the conceptual basis for the study of media frames (Kozman 2017). In general, frames in communication or media

frames (Entman 1993; Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gitlin 1980) investigate how a message can be constructed with different sets of information to convey different perspectives on the same issue (Scheufele and Iyengar 2014). Using a constructionist approach, Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p. 143) described frames as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them”.

Despite the popularity of framing studies in the field of communication, framing studies do not have a standardized definition, leading to various distinctions in framing concepts and different results. One of the main conceptual issues in media frames is the distinction between issue-specific and generic frames. Issue-specific frames apply to certain topics, while generic frames are applicable across different issues (Matthes 2009). For instance, Matthes and Kohring’s (2008) study on biotechnology focused on issue-specific frames, while Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) proposed five generic frames that have been dominant in news stories: conflict, attribution of responsibility, economic, human interest, and morality. Even though each group of scholars has highlighted the importance of issue-specific and generic frames, both approaches have different functions. Issue-specific frames provide the details of a particular issue (Matthes and Kohring 2008), whereas generic frames reveal general journalistic values that are applicable across different news topics (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000).

Moreover, both frames serve different purposes. Issue-specific frames are inevitably significant as they are “preferably linked to another, more abstract “master” frame” (Van Gorp 2007, p. 67). There are some unique frames embedded in certain issues that are impossible to explain using generic frames (Borah 2011). However, the heavy use of issue-specific frames might have insignificant contributions to advance a theory of framing due to the missing connection to a broader framing theoretical framework (Borah 2011; Matthes 2009). On the other hand, the use of generic frames itself is not sufficient to reveal details about the issue at hand. Thus, combining issue-specific and generic frames would provide a comprehensive account of how the media package a particular topic.

With regard to a hybrid approach to media framing, few studies have attempted to combine both frames (e.g., Kozman 2017). This study distinguishes itself by following Matthes and Kohring’s (2008) method by using hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward method) by conducting cluster by cases. A frame is a unique pattern existing in a text in which the patterns that characterize a frame need to feature across several articles to be interpreted as frames (Matthes and Kohring 2008). However, Kozman (2017) performed a principal component analysis with varimax rotation that proceeded with clustering by variables, following Semetko and Valkenburg’s (2000) method to extract generic frames.

This study proposed a hybrid approach by combining the issue-specific frames of Matthes and Kohring (2008) and Semetko and Valkenburg’s (2000) generic frames. This study was based on the idea of a frame as a cluster of framing elements (Matthes and Kohring 2008), but included generic frames as frame elements. The first research question examines the media frames of Sharia in Aceh using a combined approach:

RQ1: How does *Serambi Indonesia* represent Sharia in Aceh?

Previous studies have indicated that media frames have changed across time periods (Baysa and Hallahan 2004; Matthes and Kohring 2008). Further research has analyzed how critical events have shifted media frames (Speer 2017). In the context of this study, the current legal system in Aceh has begun a new chapter since the enactment of *Qanun Jinayat* (Islamic Criminal Code) No. 6/2014, forbidding *maisir* (gambling), *khamar* (consumption of alcohol), *khalwat* (seclusion between unmarried couples), *ikhtilath* (intimacy between unmarried couples), *zina* (adultery and pre-marital sex), sexual harassment, rape, *liwath* (sodomy between two men), *musahaqah* (physical intimacy between two women), and *qadzaf* (falsely accusing other people of adultery). This bylaw was ratified on 23 October 2014 and was formally applied a year later on 23 October 2015. This qanun (code) was preceded by *Qanun Acara Jinayat* (the Criminal Law Procedures Code) No. 7/2013, stipulating the procedure to punish the perpetrators or violators of the aforementioned serious

offences. The second research question explores whether the formal application of *Qanun Jinayat* changed the framing of Sharia in Aceh.

RQ2: Are there any significant differences between the use of frames by time period?

Moreover, newspapers tend to advocate more prominent issues on the front page (Boukes et al. 2020a). Urbániková and Tkaczyk (2020) suggested considering the prominence of the frames, in addition to the frequency of the frames. The third research question attempts to investigate the frame prominence by the placement of the articles in the newspaper.

RQ3: Are there any significant differences between the use of frames by page placement?

2. Results

The hierarchical cluster analysis of 41 variables resulted in the coefficients for the different cluster solutions as follows: 2436 (six clusters), 2549 (five clusters), 2666 (four clusters), 2828 (three clusters), and 3014 (two clusters). It was evident from the coefficients that the highest coefficient margin was between the second and third cluster solutions ($3014 - 2828 = 186$). From a statistical point of view, three clusters were identified. However, beyond the three clusters, the coefficient margin between clusters was relatively similar. The interpretability of three, four, five, and six cluster solutions was tested to check competing solutions. The interpretability is essential to define meaningful cluster solutions (Matthes and Kohring 2008). As a result, the four-cluster solution was determined to be the most suitable in terms of the interpretability and clarity of the data. The mean values of all variables for the four clusters are depicted in Table 1. Following Matthes and Kohring (2008), the interpretation of the frames was based on the highest means, the lowest means, and significantly different means compared to all of the other clusters.

Table 1. The mean values and standard deviations for the four identified frames.

Variables	Sharia Codification (<i>n</i> = 220), M(SD)	Deviance from Sharia (<i>n</i> = 258), M(SD)	Desirable Sharia Enforcement (<i>n</i> = 75), M(SD)	Islamic Morality (<i>n</i> = 98), M(SD)
Topic: Islamic bylaws	0.22 (0.42)	0.16 (0.37)	0.01 (0.12)	0.03 (0.18)
Topic: Controversy and conflict	0.05 (0.21)	0.07 (0.26)	0.00 (0.00)	0.04 (0.20)
Topic: Sharia enforcement	0.29 (0.45)	0.34 (0.48)	0.92 (0.27)	0.02 (0.14)
Topic: Sharia economy	0.11 (0.32)	0.07 (0.26)	0.00 (0.00)	0.03 (0.18)
Topic: Resistance to Sharia	0.01 (0.12)	0.05 (0.22)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Topic: Regional regulations	0.16 (0.37)	0.08 (0.27)	0.05 (0.23)	0.00 (0.00)
Topic: Rituals and worships	0.06 (0.24)	0.01 (0.09)	0.00 (0.00)	0.21 (0.41)
Topic: The role of <i>ulama</i>	0.05 (0.22)	0.02 (0.12)	0.00 (0.00)	0.67 (0.47)
Topic: Proselytism/Deviant sects	0.05 (0.21)	0.20 (0.40)	0.01 (0.12)	0.00 (0.00)
Argument: Morality	0.80 (0.40)	0.77 (0.42)	0.76 (0.43)	0.99 (0.10)
Argument: Legal norms	0.67 (0.47)	0.71 (0.45)	0.89 (0.31)	0.15 (0.36)
Argument: Economics	0.13 (0.33)	0.21 (0.41)	0.01 (0.12)	0.19 (0.39)
Argument: Health	0.04 (0.19)	0.05 (0.21)	0.00 (0.00)	0.32 (0.47)
Argument: Social	0.05 (0.21)	0.08 (0.27)	0.07 (0.25)	0.11 (0.32)
Argument: The people's voice	0.10 (0.31)	0.11 (0.31)	0.23 (0.42)	0.05 (0.22)
Argument: Culture	0.23 (0.42)	0.24 (0.43)	0.20 (0.40)	0.14 (0.34)
Source: Anonymous	0.07 (0.26)	0.16 (0.37)	0.05 (0.23)	0.05 (0.22)
Source: Law enforcement personnel	0.22 (0.41)	0.25 (0.43)	0.69 (0.46)	0.04 (0.20)
Source: Officials	0.70 (0.46)	0.56 (0.50)	0.43 (0.50)	0.42 (0.50)
Source: <i>Ulama</i>	0.16 (0.37)	0.24 (0.43)	0.12 (0.33)	0.79 (0.41)
Source: Activists	0.12 (0.32)	0.24 (0.43)	0.05 (0.23)	0.03 (0.18)
Source: Public	0.03 (0.18)	0.05 (0.22)	0.05 (0.23)	0.08 (0.28)
Source: Experts	0.06 (0.25)	0.15 (0.36)	0.00 (0.00)	0.10 (0.31)
Source: Perpetrators	0.00 (0.00)	0.05 (0.23)	0.08 (0.27)	0.00 (0.00)
Actor: Law enforcement personnel	0.19 (0.39)	0.12 (0.32)	0.01 (0.12)	0.01 (0.10)
Actor: Officials	0.66 (0.48)	0.46 (0.50)	0.00 (0.00)	0.19 (0.39)

Table 1. Cont.

Variables	Sharia Codification (<i>n</i> = 220), M(SD)	Deviance from Sharia (<i>n</i> = 258), M(SD)	Desirable Sharia Enforcement (<i>n</i> = 75), M(SD)	Islamic Morality (<i>n</i> = 98), M(SD)
Actor: <i>Ulama</i>	0.01 (0.12)	0.02 (0.15)	0.00 (0.00)	0.32 (0.47)
Actor: Activists	0.04 (0.19)	0.03 (0.18)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Actor: Public	0.07 (0.25)	0.02 (0.15)	0.01 (0.12)	0.25 (0.44)
Actor: Perpetrators	0.03 (0.18)	0.34 (0.47)	0.97 (0.16)	0.21 (0.41)
Tone of the Main Actor: Positive	0.66 (0.48)	0.02 (0.15)	0.01 (0.12)	0.52 (0.50)
Tone of the Main Actor: Neutral	0.33 (0.47)	0.06 (0.24)	0.01 (0.12)	0.01 (0.10)
Tone of the Main Actor: Negative	0.01 (0.12)	0.91 (0.28)	0.97 (0.16)	0.47 (0.50)
News Tone: Positive	0.77 (0.42)	0.08 (0.27)	0.97 (0.16)	1.00 (0.00)
News Tone: Neutral	0.21 (0.41)	0.07 (0.26)	0.03 (0.16)	0.00 (0.00)
News Tone: Negative	0.02 (0.13)	0.85 (0.36)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Generic Frames: Conflict	0.08 (0.28)	0.39 (0.49)	0.09 (0.29)	0.07 (0.26)
Generic Frames: Responsibility	0.87 (0.33)	0.79 (0.41)	0.45 (0.50)	0.63 (0.49)
Generic Frames: Morality	0.79 (0.41)	0.87 (0.34)	1.00 (0.00)	0.99 (0.10)
Generic Frames: Economic Consequences	0.06 (0.24)	0.07 (0.26)	0.00 (0.00)	0.10 (0.31)
Generic Frames: Human interest	0.04 (0.19)	0.14 (0.35)	0.27 (0.45)	0.06 (0.24)

The first and second most represented frame, consisting of 34% of Sharia stories in *Serambi Indonesia*, dealt with Sharia enforcement and Islamic bylaws (Table 2). Typically, morality and legal norms were the most employed arguments to support or oppose the issue. Officials were the primary sources cited or paraphrased in the news stories. The central player in this frame was the officials. Both leading actors were frequently depicted in positive tones and sometimes neutral tones. Correspondingly, the overall judgment in this frame was favorable, and to a much smaller extent, neutral. The news articles mostly supported the highlighted issues. The responsibility and the morality frames were the most dominant frames. Officials were described as responsible parties that provided the right solutions to Sharia problems.

Table 2. The Sharia codification frames.

Frame Elements	Variables
Topic	Sharia enforcement Islamic bylaws
Arguments	Morality Legal norms
Source	Officials
Actor	Officials Positive
Tone of the Main Actor	Neutral Positive
News Tone	Neutral Responsibility frames
Generic frames	Morality frames

The second and the most represented frame—identified in 40% of the articles—described Sharia enforcement and proselytism/deviant sects (Table 3). The proportion of Sharia enforcement in this frame is smaller than in the third frame, but larger than the first frame. Arguments used to justify the news position on this issue were mainly centered on morality, accompanied by arguments about the legal norms and cultural arguments. Typically, officials, along with *ulama* and activists, were the primary sources invited to comment on the issues. Officials and the offenders of Sharia were the crucial actors. In this frame, officials and offenders (including deviant sect/teaching actors, missionaries, and

officials) were depicted negatively. The overall judgment in this frame was also negative. Finally, the morality frame was still the primary generic frame used in the articles, followed by the responsibility and conflict frames. Within this frame, missionaries and deviant sect actors were depicted negatively as the offender of Sharia against Aceh's Islamic tenets, legal norms, and culture as a Muslim society. Likewise, officials were depicted negatively as "problem makers".

Table 3. The deviance from Sharia frames.

Frame Elements	Variables
Topic	Sharia enforcement Proselytism/deviant sects
Arguments	Morality Legal norms Culture Officials
Source	Ulama Activists
Actor	Officials Perpetrators
Tone of the Main Actor	Negative
News Tone	Negative Morality frames
Generic frames	Responsibility frames Conflict frames

The third and the least represented frame (11% of the articles) discussed Sharia enforcement (Table 4). Unlike the first frame, the arguments of legal norms were the most significant justification that newspapers presented in their articles. Most articles with legal arguments also used morality arguments. In a much smaller number of articles, the people's voice was used to justify Sharia police raids, the closure of alleged immoral places, and the punishment of Sharia offenders. Sharia police, police, and prosecutors were often present as primary sources, followed by officials. In this frame, perpetrators were the center of the news articles presented with negative tones. Although the main actors were framed negatively, the overall judgment in this frame was favorable. The most significant generic frame used in this frame is morality. Less frequent generic frames centered on responsibility and human interest. Interestingly, human interest only recorded within this frame. In this sense, Sharia offenders were described in a negative way using moral phrasing.

Table 4. The desirable Sharia enforcement frames.

Frame Elements	Variables
Topic	Sharia enforcement Legal norms
Arguments	Morality The people's voice
Source	Law enforcement personnel Officials
Actor	Perpetrators
Tone of the Main Actor	Negative
News Tone	Positive Morality frames
Generic frames	Responsibility frames Human interest frames

The last frame (identified in 15% of the articles) discussed the role of *ulama* and rituals and worships (Table 5). The topics of resistance to Sharia, regional regulations, and proselytism/deviant sects were not discussed at all. Further, morality is still the most used legitimizing argument in the coverage. Most articles used only the morality argument. Several articles about MPU decrees also devised health arguments in addition to morality arguments to support the issuance of the decree. Regarding the sources, *ulama* were frequently used, followed by a less frequently used source of officials. The main actors in this frame were the *ulama* and public (at almost the same proportions). Within this cluster, the tones of the main actors were both positive and negative. *Ulama* were depicted positively, while other actors were portrayed in negative tones. Members of the public who became Muslim converts were also presented positively. The overall news tone was positive; neutral and negative tones were not found at all. This frame employed the morality frame, followed by the responsibility frame. In this frame, *ulama* were deemed responsible for providing the right solutions to local problems by issuing Sharia based decrees.

Table 5. The Islamic morality frames.

Frame Elements	Variables
Topic	The role of <i>ulama</i> Rituals and worships
Arguments	Morality Health
Source	<i>Ulama</i> Officials
Actor	<i>Ulama</i> Public
Tone of the Main Actor	Positive Negative
News Tone	Positive
Generic frames	Morality frames Responsibility frames

It should be noted that the fourth identified frames partially overlap. The topic of Sharia enforcement was also presented in the Sharia codification, deviance from Sharia, and desirable Sharia enforcement frames. However, it differed in some frame elements. First, the Sharia codification and the desirable Sharia enforcement frames differed in terms of the main actor and tone of the main actor. The Sharia codification frame presented officials in positive tones, while the desirable Sharia enforcement frame portrayed offenders of Sharia negatively. Second, the deviance from Sharia and the desirable Sharia enforcement frames were different in the news tone. Both frames placed offenders of Sharia at the center of news stories in a negative manner. However, the overall news tone in both frames was different concerning the topic of Sharia enforcement. The deviance from Sharia frame explained Sharia enforcement in a negative context, while the desirable Sharia enforcement frame described Sharia enforcement in a positive context. Third, the Sharia codification and the deviance from Sharia frames differed in the tone of the main actor and news tone. The Sharia codification frame represented the officials positively, and the deviance from Sharia frames described them negatively. The former frame described the officials as the problem solvers, while the latter depicted them as the problem makers.

To further explore the relationship between the use of frames, the time period, and the page placement, a chi-square test was undertaken. Initially, the test revealed a significant relationship between the use of frames and the time period, $\chi^2(3) = 458.27, p < 0.001$ (Table 6). The association between the use of frames and the time period was high (Cramer's $V = 0.84$). The results suggested that the majority of Sharia stories after the implementation of *Qanun Jinayat* used the deviance from Sharia frame, which was the least frequently used frame before the bylaw came into effect in Aceh. The news stories before the application of *Qanun*

Jinayat were dominated by the Sharia codification frame, followed by the Islamic morality and the desirable Sharia enforcement frames to a smaller extent.

Table 6. The use of frames by time period.

Frames	Before <i>Qanun Jinayat</i> (2012–2015)	After <i>Qanun Jinayat</i> (2016–2020)	Total
Sharia Codification	216 (98.2%)	4 (1.8%)	220
Deviance from Sharia	38 (14.7%)	220 (85.3%)	258
Desirable Sharia Enforcement	69 (92%)	6 (8%)	75
Islamic Morality	94 (97.9%)	2 (2.1%)	96

Subsequently, the test revealed a significant relationship between the use of frames and the page placement, $\chi^2(3) = 78.74$, $p < 0.001$ (Table 7). The association between the use of frames and the placement was moderate (Cramer's $V = 0.35$). The results suggested that articles using deviance from Sharia were more likely to appear in the front page, while most articles using the Sharia codification, the desirable Sharia enforcement, and the Islamic morality frame appeared in other sections. A highlighted finding was that the Islamic morality frame was mostly found in other sections. This was different to the Sharia codification and the desirable Sharia enforcement frames, which were found to be slightly higher in the other pages than on the front page.

Table 7. The use of frames by the page placement.

Frames	Front Page	Other	Total
Sharia Codification	102 (46.4%)	118 (53.6%)	220
Deviance from Sharia	191 (74%)	67 (26%)	258
Desirable Sharia Enforcement	35 (46.7%)	40 (53.3%)	75
Islamic Morality	25 (26%)	71 (74%)	96

3. Discussion

This study indicated two dominant generic frames. The identification of generic frames in the context of stories of Sharia in Aceh found the morality frame to be dominant, highlighting the religious aspects of Sharia. This comes as no surprise given the context of Sharia as the core religious concept in Islam. In addition to morality, the media gave paramount attention to responsibility. Most stories with the responsibility frame urged government officials (including the governor, members of the parliament, the head of Sharia Agency, law enforcement personnel, and *ulama*) to alleviate societal problems. This frame also positioned officials as responsible for the problems and solutions.

However, the occurrence of both frames (the morality and responsibility frames) did not explain much about what is the issue. Such generic frames did not capture the critical framing contests in Sharia debates and ended up simplifying how the media framed Sharia issues in Aceh. It is also not adequate to indicate that both generic frames might be used in a positive and negative context (Brüggemann and D'Angelo 2018). Therefore, the results of a hybrid method from this study demonstrated a more comprehensive approach to news framing.

By integrating issue-specific and generic frames, this study identified four frames on the coverage of Sharia in Aceh by the local newspaper such as Sharia codification, deviance from Sharia, desirable Sharia enforcement, and Islamic morality. A closer analysis showed the various combinations of the generic frames in the identified four frames. Although the combination of morality and responsibility frames was documented across the four frames, the variation in the distinct generic frame was prevalent. The deviance from Sharia frame used the combination of the morality and the responsibility frames followed by the conflict frames. Unlike other frames, the Sharia codification frames were dominated by responsibility frames rather than morality frames. The Islamic morality frame used

the morality and responsibility frames. Meanwhile, the desirable Sharia enforcement frame used the human-interest frames in addition to the morality and the responsibility frames. Only the economic consequences frame was not found in the extracted four frames. Therefore, issue-specific frames could add valuable insights into the analysis of generic frames through the use of hybrid frames. The results of this study support the idea that both frames should be viewed as complementary, rather than as two separate conceptualizations (Brüggemann and D'Angelo 2018; Kozman 2017).

Among the four frames, this study discovered deviance of Sharia as the most preferred frame. This frame was given more prominence after the implementation of *Qanun Jinayat* and was more likely to feature on the front page. The superiority of this frame among other frames suggests that conflict also yielded significant media coverage in Sharia issues like in other news events. In this study, the conflict components embedded in the deviance from Sharia frame contained the disagreements and violent conflict between the different sides in any undesirable forms of Sharia enforcement and deviant sects/teaching that might be perceived as a threat or attack to the implementation of Sharia. Thus, the negative elements in the deviance frame were not intended to challenge the implementation of Sharia in Aceh, but urged officials and other interested parties to tackle the current problems during its enforcement.

From a methodological perspective, this study proposed a unified measurement that combines issue-specific and generic frames. Using a hybrid approach to media framing in the context of Sharia in Aceh allowed for a clearer understanding of two layers of framing: details about Sharia issues (issue-specific frames) and the way the media packaged the issues (generic frames). Following Kozman (2017), who proposed a hybrid approach to measuring media frames in the field of sport, this study also offers a hybrid framing typology that is applicable to Sharia-related stories.

Turning now to differences in the frame used in the two time periods, the results showed that the relative prominence of the frames changed. Before the formal application of *Qanun Jinayat*, the Sharia codification was the most common, but after the bylaw took effect, the deviance from Sharia frame became the most prominent. In this context, the implementation of *Qanun Jinayat* was considered as a turning point in the implementation of Sharia in Aceh, since it imposed a stricter penal code for more severe Sharia offences.

To a certain extent, the changes in the media frame of Sharia in Aceh can be linked to the controversy surrounding *Qanun Jinayat* in the contemporary Aceh legal system. The bill was first introduced in 2008 before finally being passed at the legislative level, although it was rejected at the executive level (Fuad et al. 2022). Since then, the bill continued to be discussed until it was ratified at the end of October 2014. This bylaw was also equipped with *Qanun Acara Jinayat* (the Criminal Law Procedures Code) and ratified at the end of 2013. The long debate about this bylaw might encourage the prominence of the Sharia Codification frame, which shifted after the bylaw had been formally applied in Aceh. Furthermore, *Qanun Jinayat* applied to more severe Sharia offences that had not been regulated by the previous qanun. Therefore, the application of *Qanun Jinayat* might have spurred the media to increasingly use the deviance of Sharia frame, a change in coverage that began after *Qanun Jinayat* took effect in Aceh. This finding is in line with the findings of Speer (2017), showing the influence of critical events on the changes in media frames.

Furthermore, this study also discovered that articles with the Deviance from Sharia frame appeared to be put on the front page more frequently than articles using other frames. This finding suggests that these stories were more newsworthy and important to feature on the front page. The newspaper covered Sharia stories using the deviance from Sharia frame prominently as front page news and encouraged its readers to pay attention to these stories. This finding is consistent with the existing evidence of issue prominence (Boukes et al. 2020a; Urbániková and Tkaczyk 2020) by taking into account the significance of front page news within the newspaper.

Finally, this study had two limitations. First is the use of the chi-square analysis to examine the relationship between the use of frames and time period. By using the chi-

square analysis on the identified frames based on the cluster analysis, this study ignored the possibility of new frames in either period. [Matthes and Kohring \(2008\)](#) found three identified frames of biotechnology from 1992 to 1996, while they discovered six frames between 1997 and 2001. Future studies can address this limitation by conducting a cluster analysis for each time period. Finally, while this study found a relationship between the frame changes and a key event, this study could not identify whether the frame shift was motivated by the views of the sources or journalist. Future studies could disaggregate statements by the type of source to examine whether the media frame on Sharia simply mirrors the sources' viewpoints, as conducted by [Speer \(2017\)](#).

4. Methods

This study was a content analysis of news stories published in *Serambi Indonesia* from 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2020. As the data collection was reliant on digital news, it was subject to the limitation of online data availability; online data became available on 29 July 2011. A preliminary investigation to see the news coverage trends by this news outlet found an insignificant number of news articles related to Sharia from July 2011 to December 2011, since coverage was dominated by issues of Aceh's gubernatorial elections. The unit of analysis was the news articles, and not the paragraph.

4.1. Profile of *Serambi Indonesia*

Serambi Indonesia has positioned itself as the leading media outlet within Acehnese society. This local media outlet is partly owned by one of the largest national media groups in Indonesia, the Kompas Gramedia Group. The newspaper is distributed throughout the Aceh Province and in the city of Medan and its surrounding areas such as Binjai. The newspaper continues to be read by various parts of Acehnese society. The newspaper has been published every day except for public holidays in broadsheet format. It has an average daily circulation of 30,000, although before the COVID-19 pandemic, it had a circulation of 35,000 per day ([Patria 2021](#)). Eighty-five percent of the daily copies of the newspaper are bought by institutional and individual subscribers ([Bahfen and Nurrahmi 2018](#)). This news organization has recorded the highest circulation compared to other local print newspapers under the Tribun Network (a group of regional newspapers owned by Kompas Gramedia Group ([Nur 2020](#))). The strength of this media organization, despite the digital revolution, may lie in Acehnese culture. Reading the newspaper has become an integral part of coffee and cafe culture in Aceh ([Bahari 2005](#)). *Serambi Indonesia* has successfully managed to survive during the digital revolution, adapting to the rise in digital media by launching online news sites and an e-paper on 9 January 2012 ([Editorial 2012](#)), while not abandoning print. Its digital version has approximately 700,000 visitors per day ([Nur 2020](#)). This figure has positioned *Serambi Indonesia* online in the five most visited news sites among the Tribun Network online ([Nur 2020](#)).

4.2. Data Retrieval

The articles examined in this study were news articles. Because it was a study of how Sharia is reported in Aceh, non-reporting content such as editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor were excluded. This study focused on stories covering belief, devotion, Islamic jurisprudence, and Sharia-based bylaws or regulations in Aceh. Such criteria were developed from the conceptual framework of Sharia and the definition of Sharia in Article 125 Law 11/2006 on the Governing of Aceh. The sample was not constrained to specific events or themes that could potentially limit a broader picture of Sharia in the local media.

The sample for news articles relied on online articles and physical archives of *Serambi Indonesia* to compensate for incomplete availability online. The online format of *Serambi Indonesia* also acts as the electronic archives of the print format because the articles published in print format are also released online. Therefore, most stories are expected to be similar across both platforms since online newspapers are built on the print version ([Kozman 2017](#)).

Online articles of *Serambi Indonesia* were retrieved electronically from <https://aceh.tribunnews.com/> (accessed on 9 March 2021) using the following keywords:

Wilayatul Hisbah, WH, Cambuk, Algojo, MPU, Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama, Dinas Syariat Islam, DSI, Kristenisasi, Akidah, Aqidah, Murtad, Muallaf, Ajaran Sesat, Qanun, Qanun Jinayat, Syariat Islam.

Moreover, the print articles were obtained directly from the physical archive of the newspaper at the headquarters of *Serambi Indonesia*. After combining online and print samples, all articles were checked manually to ensure whether they fit the study criteria. The final sample consisted of 649 hard news articles.

4.3. Coding Categories

This study followed the content analysis procedures of Matthes and Kohring (2008) by coding frame elements of the text, instead of directly coding the whole frame. This approach assumes that a frame is a unique pattern in a text consisting of several frame elements; thus, a frame would be revealed from the cluster analysis of the frame elements (Matthes and Kohring 2008). Unlike Matthes and Kohring (2008), who used Entman's framing, this study developed its own frame definition by modifying the existing frame elements to fit the context of this study.

The final codebook included a hybrid coding category that combines issue-specific frames and generic frames. All coding categories were computed using binary measurements with 1 for yes and 0 for no; the codebook contained seven frame elements and 43 variables. The codebook also included two additional variables: time period (before and after *Qanun Jinayat* comes into effect) and the placement of the article within the newspaper (front page or other).

4.3.1. Issue-Specific Frames

Since this study had no established codebook to use for issue-specific frames on Sharia, the articles were coded using a codebook established via an inductive approach. It began with an in-depth analysis of some relevant news articles to generate coding categories that were further defined in a codebook, and a manual quantitative analysis was subsequently conducted using the codebook (Matthes and Kohring 2008). The literature review and the established coding categories were also considered in establishing the codebook. The coding was undertaken using manual coding because it was warranted as a superior method over automated content analysis, especially to measure the tone of news coverage (Boukes et al. 2020b).

The issue-specific framing elements consist of topic, arguments, sources, main actor, tone of the main actor, and news tone. First, a topic is defined as the central issue under investigation. The topics are Islamic bylaws, controversy and conflict, Sharia enforcement, Sharia economy, resistance to Sharia, regional regulations, rituals and worships, the role of *ulama*, and proselytism/deviant sects. Second, arguments were operationalized to measure the reason for and against the issue present in the news stories. Arguments were morality, legal norms, economics, health, social, the people's voice, and culture. Third, a source was defined as any individual or organization quoted or paraphrased in the news articles. The nine source variables were anonymous, law enforcement personnel, officials, *ulama*, activists, public, experts, perpetrators, and media. Fourth, this study defined an actor as the most important person, group, or institution that becomes the focus of news stories. Seven variables for actor were law enforcement personnel, officials, *ulama*, activists, public, experts, and perpetrators. Fifth, a tone of the main actor was coded based on the evaluations regarding the main actor in the news story. Three variables for tone were positive, neutral, and negative. Each variable was dichotomous, and only one tone variable was determined. Finally, a news tone was defined as the overall attitude regarding the story. A news tone also encompassed three variables: positive, neutral, and negative.

4.3.2. Generic Frames

Generic frames were based on the five most dominant frames in news stories proposed by [Semetko and Valkenburg \(2000\)](#): conflict, responsibility, morality, economic consequences, and human interest. The conflict frame highlights conflict or disagreements between individuals or groups. The responsibility frame presents that some level of government, individual, or group is responsible for causing or solving a particular problem. This frame also suggests that a specific problem requires urgent action. The morality frame depicts an issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. The economic consequences frame mentions the economic impact and benefits for an individual, group, or institution. Finally, the human-interest frame brings a human face or an emotional angle to present an issue. However, unlike [Semetko and Valkenburg \(2000\)](#), who coded either yes or no for 20 questions to extract the five dominant frames, this study used those questions by [Semetko and Valkenburg \(2000\)](#) as descriptions to code the five generic frames. One positive answer to one of the questions in each frame indicated the presence of the frame ([Evers 2016](#)). In this regard, the generic frames acted as the frame elements, while the five frames became variables of the generic frame.

4.4. Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability was calculated using 91 news articles or 14% of the sample of news stories. A set of 91 news stories were coded by the researcher and one independent coder. Both researchers were asked to assign codes to the news, following the codebook that was developed for coding. Each of the researchers conducted the coding individually and their codes were compared afterward.

The coder was trained to use the c"ding'Instrument before performing the intercoder reliability test. After three online training sessions and pilot coding, the researcher and the coder proceeded with the coding independently. Disagreements were resolved by recoding the variables disagreed by the coders.

Moreover, the results of the intercoder reliability test were high. Krippendorff's alpha range was from 0.81 to 1.0. In the case where the reliability index could not be defined due to no variation, the percent agreement was accepted as one actor variable (experts) at 100%. Alpha coefficients for all variables were computed at the nominal level. After establishing intercoder reliability, the researcher coded the rest of the news articles independently.

4.5. Statistical Analysis

A hierarchical cluster analysis was used to determine the main frames. Of the clustering methods, hierarchical cluster analysis (Ward method) is considered as a good technique for binary variables, as used in this study. However, this method does not provide the number of clusters and has no clear procedure to determine the number of clusters ([Hair 2010](#)). Therefore, the number of clusters was determined using the elbow criterion by considering the margin between the agglomeration coefficients of the two cluster solutions and the interpretability of the possible cluster solutions ([Matthes and Kohring 2008](#)).

Two variables with very low frequencies such as source: media (1.85%) and actor: expert (0.46%), were excluded from the cluster analysis. Both variables would not contribute to the forming of clusters since they are likely to have very low frequencies in each single cluster solution ([Matthes and Kohring 2008](#)). As a result, 41 variables were included in the cluster analysis.

After defining the number of clusters, the chi-square analysis was conducted to find significant variations in the distribution of frames by page placement and time period. The chi-square test aimed to test the hypotheses when the original data were measured at the nominal or ordinal level by examining the differences between categorical variables by comparing the observed and expected data ([McHugh 2013](#)). In this study, all data were measured at the nominal level and were analyzed using SPSS ver 22.

5. Conclusions

From 2012 to 2020, *Serambi Indonesia* employed four media frames on the coverage of Sharia in Aceh: Sharia codification, deviance from Sharia, desirable Sharia enforcement, and Islamic morality. Throughout these years, deviance from Sharia was the most prominent frame, frequently covered on the front page, especially after *Qanun Jinayat* took effect in Aceh. By using this frame, *Serambi Indonesia* painted a picture of Sharia implementation in Aceh, stressing any form of deviance from Sharia including undesirable Sharia enforcement, proselytism, deviant sects, and attacks against Sharia state institutions (Sharia police and Sharia Agency). However, the negative elements in the deviance from Sharia frame focused on issues that might be perceived as threats or attacks to the implementation of Sharia. Thus, the use of the deviance from Sharia frame might not intend to challenge the implementation of Sharia in Aceh, but urged officials, law enforcement personnel, and *ulama* to tackle current problems during Sharia enforcement. Moreover, it is also important to note that the Sharia codification frame, the second most represented frame, brought more attention to the positive aspects of Sharia application including the proposed Sharia legislation and policy. Finally, although deviance from Sharia became the most frequent frame, other frames made up 60% of the article, implying that *Serambi Indonesia* represented the implementation of Sharia in Aceh in a positive manner while highlighting problems surrounding the enforcement of Sharia.

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