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JOURNALISTS AND SOCIETY

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## ABSTRACT

Freedom of speech also known as press freedom is the principle that communication and expression through various media, including printed and electronic media, especially published materials, should be considered a right to be exercised freely. Malaysia is among the first few countries to introduce a law against it which Malaysia already has an arsenal of laws, including a colonial-era Sedition Act, that have been used to clamp down on unfavourable news and social media posts. Awareness is concern about and well-informed interest in a particular situation or development and journalist is a person who works in journalism to report the news. They may work on their own call as freelance or for a newspaper, a radio or television programme. Journalist sometimes expose themselves to danger, especially when reporting in areas of armed conflict or in places that do not respect the freedom of the press. They also done researches, writes, and reports information. Journalist should be aware enough and understand the press freedom in order to writes and share information without violate the law and legislation that have been set by the government. For the research, the researchers used qualitative method to gather all the information from five informants, male and female and aged 18 to 30 consists of students, citizen and journalists. Based on the findings, media practitioners are aware with press freedom in this country but Malaysia are not yet ready for this because people here can't say whatever they want without having to face the consequences. Malaysia needs press freedom so that society can say and criticize what they feel wrong. However, having too much freedom of speech might have an impact towards the democracy and development of this country. The result of this study is that Malaysia are not 100% ready for Press Freedom in this country even there is a development of this issue in this country but not everyone truly understands and accept press freedom. Journalists or other media practitioners do aware and understands enough regarding press freedom in Malaysia but the country is not ready yet.

Keyword: Freedom of speech, Press freedom, Journalist, Awareness

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

Freedom of expression is a universal human right. It is not the prerogative of the politician, nor is it the privilege of the journalist. In their day-to-day work, journalists are simply exercising every citizen's right to free speech. A free press is fundamental to a democratic society. It seeks out and circulates news, information, ideas, comment and opinion and holds those in authority to account. The press provides the platform for a multiplicity of voices to be heard. At national, regional and local level, it is the public's watchdog, activist and guardian as well as educator, entertainer and contemporary chronicler.

According to the World Press Freedom Index (2014), Malaysia ranks 147 among 180 countries. The World Press Freedom Index measures the degree of freedom of the journalists and news publication in each country, how much efforts that the public respect to the freedom and ensure it, and also the negative connection between information and conflicts. Based on Reporters without Borders (2014) said that there are some general criteria that the World Press Freedom Index used to score the country which are pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency and infrastructure.

The news media in Malaysia are mostly monopolized by laws and regulation. It covers a huge area in the media industry and restrict them in many ways. Alsogoff & Hamzah (2007) stated that the government may reinforce the industry by adopting and implementing a self-regulation code and even watch or guide them to impose those regulations. This results in the restriction of press freedom. Press freedom protects the privilege to obtain and publish materials without the government censorship or the law enforcement. It applies to all types of printed and broadcast material such as books, newspapers, journals, magazines, brochures, films and radio and even the television programs.

The press is not given too much power or credibility to perform on certain things. According to Alsagoff, Abdullah & Hassan (2011), they stated that there are three ways to restrict the press freedom in Malaysia which are through restrictive laws, ownership from political parties and connected business individuals and also the self-censorship which are exercised by the editors and journalists. Because of the laws and regulations towards the press freedom, the press and the public cannot express their feelings and thoughts freely. This has already restricted them to think creatively and critically.

According to Arumugam (2018), he stated that owing to the direct participation by only a small minority in the decision-making process in a democracy, a free press is pivotal in facilitating the majority's indirect participation (e.g. via voting, expressing their opinions, and making pressure groups). A free press contributes towards the right of freedom of expression, thought and conscience, strengthening the accountability and responsiveness of governments to its population and providing a pluralist platform for a multiplicity of groups and interests.

This research will be focusing on awareness of freedom of speech or media towards Malaysian. Does the journalist and citizen do aware with the press freedom in this country? Those who don't support such arrests because freedom of speech is a constitutional right, and those who support these arrests because people can't run around with their keyboards saying, anything that comes to mind. So where does the law lie in this regard?