

## Politics, Protest and Portrayal: An Analysis of BERSIH Demonstrations in Malaysian Mainstream Newspapers

<sup>1</sup>Lim Shiang Shiang and <sup>2</sup>Michelle Wong

<sup>1</sup>Department of Public Relations, UniversitiTunku Abdul Rahman, Kampar, Perak Campus, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Journalism, UniversitiTunku Abdul Rahman, Kampar, Perak Campus, Malaysia

---

**Abstract:** As Malaysia celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Day, it is worth noting how far the country has progressed in the sense of democracy. During the last ten years, Malaysian citizens had taken to the streets to protest against corruption, bad governance and unfair electoral process. Democratic procedures in Malaysia are allowed only when it does not present itself as a threat to the hegemonic power of the ruling elites. To maintain hegemonic power, various means are being used either by coercion or drawing consensus. This paper attempts to discuss the role of the media in portraying demonstration; to see how the media legitimize certain ideologies. Findings reveal that Malaysian mainstream newspapers tend to legitimize the authorities and de-legitimise Bersih demonstration by portraying it as a movement that will bring catastrophe to Malaysia.

**Key words:** Demonstration • Democracy • Legitimation • Media control • Ideology

---

### INTRODUCTION

In 2016, newspapers and news portals were filled with headlines regarding Bersih 5.0. Some of the news painted Bersih as a political agenda to topple the government. This was not the first time that Bersih rally has been linked with the opposition's agenda. It was also disagreed that the rally was championing for free and clean election as well as fighting for corruption and human rights. Stories alike related to Bersih rally included declaration that the rally was illegal, warning the people not to participate in the rally and threatening to have legal action against the organisers and the participants, particularly to those government servants and university students who may face disciplinary actions. This is in line with *Borneo Post Online*, 2009 that freedom of speech and assembly has always been a contentious issue since Malaysia gained its independence in 1957.

A typical example was when more than 1,000 people were arrested during Bersih 2.0 in 2011 as reported in *New Straits Times*, 2015 and 512 people were arrested in Bersih 3.0 rally [1]. Tear gas and water cannons were used against the participants during both rallies. Similarly, 27 police reports were lodged against Bersih 4.0 participants and organisers by Permatang Pauh UMNO Youth Division [2]. After that, Bersih 3.0 was launched on 28 April 2012 in

Kuala Lumpur with an estimated number of over 250,000 participants, calling for electoral reforms [3] while Bersih 4.0 on 29th and 30th August 2015 was attended by 500,000 people [4] to fight against corruption, particularly on the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) case.

A bigger concern here is that mass public protest had been used as a means of participation in political life which further threatens the powerful ruling. To maintain hegemonic power, various means are used by the authorities either through coercion or drawing consensus. This included suspending the printing license of the media, threatening to block websites, putting demonstrators behind bars and implementing new legal restrictions to maintain the public order and stability. One of the examples was the implementation of Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) which came into force just five days before the launching of Bersih 3.0. The act contains a number of provisions that limit the freedom of assembly [5]. Additionally, Internal Security Act (ISA) was also being replaced by Security Offences Act (SOSMA) on 17<sup>th</sup> of April 2012. *The Malaysian Insider*, 2012 quoted a political analyst, James Chin pointing out that SOSMA is unable to provide a clear cut line on the range of the issue coverage, so it is difficult to determine whether the people has go against the SOSMA. This act enables the authority to detain a person up to 28 days without trial.

[5] pointed out that it is vital to investigate whether both protesters and police are given equal rights to express “communication between police and protesters and of equal importance”. Mass media act as an important bridge between the authorities and protesters. However, mass media is often criticised for not being transparent by not giving equal spaces for both parties in news reporting.

As mentioned in [6] that most media nowadays are owned by corporations that aim to derive more and more profits like commercial enterprises; when they should have played their roles as the watchdog of our nation and fourth pillar of our democracy. He concedes that “in today’s media functioning, subtle and implicit form of corruption is creating greater mischief. The distortion, disinformation and paid news syndrome aimed to serve certain interests and suppression of news and concerns of other interests have become a usual feature in the media”.

While [6] sees the market eroding the role of the media as watchdog, [7] opines that the media structural forms of production, distribution and exchange of communication commodities are determined by the state. In short, this means that, these media corporations work together with the state to reap their benefits. A report in Aliran, 2012 puts it succinctly that “those in politics sought out business and businessmen sought out politicians who would work with them”. Thus, to maintain both benefits, the corporate sector will also support the centralisation of power within the state or government. This raises the issue about freedom of the media to express and to inform. For instance, a study on media coverage in Bersih 3.0 demonstration conducted by the Centre for Independence Journalism (CIJ) as reported in *Malaysiakini*, 2012 concluded that the media reports were restricted under political pressure, by the people or political parties that owned them.

The central question is whether the media could serve to promote or undermine the democratic practices. Changing a media system goes along part and parcel with the changing of wider economic system in providing a balanced society. Hence, this study attempts to examine how power is conferred and legitimised by both mainstream newspapers *The Star* and *Utusan Malaysia* in portraying protests and demonstration, with specific reference to Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 demonstrations. This is significant because the way media portrays demonstrations or protests reflects on the democratic process of a society. Apart from this, this study could provide a more detailed and critical distance concerning the Malaysian political context and ideological

underpinnings of crisis news. It also revisits the media coverage due to the changing of political landscapes, particularly the changing of laws and restrictions in the country and therefore it is important to re-examine the media roles in the new context.

#### **Political Economy: News Production, Distribution and Power:**

[8] defines political economy as the study of wealth (material goods) or the allocation of resources which are used towards satisfying certain needs and not the entire society. Furthermore, political economy also focused on the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of wealth by specifically concentrated on capitalism practice as a system of social production. This implies that the exploitation of the working class was produced through the formulation of “false consciousness” which is mental production and this further created inequalities between the social classes.

From Karl Marx perspective, capitalism practice has had a direct impact to the media operations. An important question is that cultural production is controlled and affected by large corporations as pointed out by [9] that the growth of media, the extension of corporate reach, commodification and the role exchange of state and government interventions should be inevitably considered and studied in the critical political economy of culture. While understanding that the production of media is not without certain ideological context, it is important to questions the roles media can perform, particularly during hegemonic crisis. Is it possible for the media to appear fair and objective? The restriction of media mentioned here is not merely an ideological exchange, but are conditioned by a complex interaction with nation states, legal institutions, international organizations and economic pressures. As written in [10], media units are part of the government where their mission have been shifted to support and advance the policies of the government in power. In other words, media function as tools for its owner to legitimise the ruling class. Thus, it provides a general picture on the relationship between the media, state and the market where the state manages and decides on policies while at the distribution process it is handled by the market [11]. This is similar to what [12] sees the role of the state as the patron, the censor, the actor, the masseur, the ideologue and conspirator.

**Methods and Research Design:** A content analysis and textual analysis were conducted on two Malaysian mainstream newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia* and *The Star* in covering the Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 demonstration. The sample materials of this study were drawn from 20<sup>th</sup>

April 2012 to 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2015 to 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2015, which represents the peak period of before and the aftermath of the Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 demonstration. In reporting Bersih 3.0 demonstration, 136 news stories were discovered from both newspapers with 50 news articles in *The Star* and 86 news articles in *Utusan Malaysia*. In comparison, there was an increase in the number of news articles in covering Bersih 4.0 demonstration by both newspapers (63 news articles in *The Star* and 99 news articles in *Utusan Malaysia*).

In the content analysis, a coding scheme was applied to obtain the quantitative aspects of data such as the frequency of articles covered in the newspapers. Few important themes were operationalised to ensure systematic collection of data to provide for the data's validity and reliability. The themes included "Actors Behaviour" which referred to the authorities and participants behaviour during the demonstration; "Laws and Regulations" discussed the compliance and the legality of Bersih 3.0 and 4.0 demonstration to Malaysia law and regulations especially the Peaceful Assembly Act; "Manipulation" was referred as the act of being wrongfully informed or being manipulated to achieve certain party's interest; "Blaming" highlighted on the people that should be blamed when the assembly turned ugly; "Public Interest and Properties" concerned on the general public welfare; "Economy" was referred to the local business, tourism attraction and investment in the country as well as "Polluted Politics" which was related to the dirty tactics used by a party to obtain self's interest.

To ensure the reliability of this study, two communication graduates were chosen as second coders. [13] suggested to have a random selection of 10-25% of the body content to be tested. Therefore, a ten percent which is 14 and 16 news articles on Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 coverage were tested. Using Holsti's formula [14], the intercoder reliability test with 0.7857 and 0.8125 in Bersih 3.0 and 4.0 coverage has proven that the data collection was valid and reliable.

However, merely studying the quantitative nature of text without deeper investigation in its context was not enough. Thus, a textual analysis was used to further analyse what gets reported in the newspaper articles and its ideological aspects rather than just counting the frequency of the news being presented.

## RESULT

The findings reveal that close to half of the news sources in both newspapers were found to cite the authorities in covering Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0

demonstration. Among them, 52% and 53% respectively in *Utusan Malaysia* and *The Star* often legitimise the authority's right by giving them the priority to voice out especially when Bersih 3.0 rally turned unruly. It was found that Bersih 4.0 was reported in the similar way (66% in *Utusan Malaysia* and 43% in *The Star*) by quoting the authority in most of the news reports instead of giving balance point of view to other actors such as the Bersih committee, participant and the opposition party.

In portraying the actor's behaviour, *Utusan Malaysia* highlighted at 84% that the participants acted aggressively during the Bersih 3.0 demonstration by attacking authorities and journalists. On the other hand, *The Star* reported both participants and police as aggressive with 45% and 52% respectively. In reporting the aggressive acts of the police, the news in *The Star* were mostly focusing on journalists being assaulted by the police. In comparison, both newspapers (73% in *The Star* and 97% in *Utusan Malaysia*) had parallel reports in covering the Bersih 4.0 demonstration that the participants have acted aggressively during the rally, particularly on the stomping of the picture of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and the Opposition Party President Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang which may have cause fear or alarm to the public. In general, the portrayal of Bersih 4.0 did not focus on the aggressive behaviour of the authority; rather police were praised for their professionalism in carried out their tasks.

With regards to blaming theme, it was found that both newspapers tend to put blame on the leaders of opposition parties (with 38% in *Utusan Malaysia* and 38% in *The Star*) when the Bersih 3.0 demonstration turned ugly. Although not much attention was given to the opposition parties in the coverage of Bersih 4.0 as they did not participate in the rally like they did in the past Bersih 3.0. Rather, both newspapers blamed Bersih committees (45% in *Utusan Malaysia*) and participants (39% in *The Star*) for involving in the Bersih 4.0 demonstrations that could smear the Malaysia's good name instead of commemorating the country's National Day which was a day after the demonstration.

A similar writing pattern was found in the newspapers in reporting the issue of laws and regulations. Regardless of the spirit to fight for fair and clean election as well as championing for a more transparent and good governance, Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 demonstration was classified as an unlawful assembly for violating the Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA). Among them, 31% news articles in *The Star* and 70% in *Utusan Malaysia* have reported Bersih 3.0 as an illegal rally and likewise 48% and

69% reported in *The Star* and *Utusan Malaysia* have declared that Bersih 4.0 was also an illegal gathering.

Apart from this, the study also discovered that in the theme of manipulation, both newspapers (95% in *Utusan Malaysia* and 58% in *The Star*) tend to portray the participants as selfish law breakers that were manipulated by certain party to obtain self's interest, specifically in the coverage of Bersih 3.0 demonstration. In comparison, *The Star* emphasised less on participants that were being manipulated to participate in the Bersih 4.0 rally, rather a high percentage of 64% news articles tend to address the Bersih 4.0 demonstration as were hijacked by certain parties such as opposition parties to obtain self's interest. On the other hand, *Utusan Malaysia* was found to have highlighted both the participants (with 63%) and Bersih 4.0 (with 36%) that were hijacked by certain parties, particularly referring to the former Prime Minister TunDato' Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad as being externally manipulated by the opposition parties by showing support to the rally.

In the theme of Public Interest and Public Properties, the result indicates that both newspapers portrayed the Bersih 3.0 demonstration (43% in *The Star*) and participants (46% in *Utusan Malaysia*) as to have brought damage to the public and private properties, besides causing traffic jam and inconvenience to the public. Likewise, in the reporting of Bersih 4.0 demonstration, 87% of the news articles in *Utusan Malaysia* portrayed the rally for causing a split in the country while 81% news articles in *The Star* projected the participants as ignoring the public order, for instance urinated in the flower pot behind the buildings as well as leave rubbishes in drains.

Apart from that, under the theme economy and public interest and properties, Bersih 3.0 demonstration wereoften described as affecting the local businesses, tourist attractions and foreign investments which brought harm to the Malaysian economy. None of the news reportshowed that Bersih 3.0 demonstration has not affected the economy in the country but rather it is a movement to improve the Malaysian electoral system. In contrast, *The Star* was able to portray the Bersih 4.0 demonstration as harmless to the economy in the country with the high percentage of 71% in comparison to *Utusan Malaysia* where all of the newspapers articles were found to have portrayed the Bersih 4.0 demonstration as harmful to the economy as well as tarnishing the country reputation internationally. In *The Star* report, most of the nearby businessman claimed that their business was not affected by the rally organization, rather some of their revenue increased compared to usual days.

However, in the reporting of the polluted politic theme, regrettably that both newspapers tend to depict those involved in the event as having political interest or intention to overthrow the government. For instance, Bersih 3.0 demonstration (36% in *The Star* and 16% in *Utusan Malaysia*) and the leaders of opposition parties (68% in *Utusan Malaysia* and 18% in *The Star*) were portrayed as aiming to topple the government. Likewise, 47% news articles in *The Star* and 66% in *Utusan Malaysia* also projected the Bersih 4.0 demonstration as having the hidden agenda to bring down the government. Generally, both newspapers only show little effort in reporting the objective of the Bersih movement in fighting for cleaner election and a better government without corruption.

**Reading the Text:** Findings reveal that the majority of the news stories in the sample tend to legitimize the authorities and de-legitimise both the Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 demonstration and its supporters of 1) talking about Bersih 3.0 and 4.0 demonstration as a movement that will bring catastrophe to Malaysia; and 2) failing to report from the perspective of the Bersih supporters in demanding for democratic process.

**Talking about Bersih 3.0 and 4.0 Demonstration as a Movement That Will Bring Catastrophe to Malaysia:**

Both newspapers often portrayed the demonstration as destructive and illegal gathering. The keywords use in their reporting included words such as unlawful, illegal, dirty and chaos. Although it was found that *The Star* was able to provide some essential reference in the coverage of Bersih 4.0, majority of the news articles in *Utusan Malaysia* tend to downplay the objective of the rally in fighting for corruption and a better Malaysia. Additionally, Bersih demonstration is often linked to the opposition political agenda. For instance, *Utusan Malaysia* headlines highlighted "Pembangangsengajaambilkesempatan" [Opposition Taking Opportunity] and "Bersih 4.0 pentaspromosipembangang" [Bersih 4.0, a stage to promote the opposition].

Meanwhile, Bersih 3.0 was said to cause a loss of business revenue. This is shown in the following *Utusan Malaysia* and *The Star* headlines: "Bersih 3.0: AgensiPelanconganTerjejas" [Bersih 3.0: Travel Agency Affected] and "Cancel Rally for Our Sake, Cabbies tell Bersih Organisers". On the other hand, Bersih 4.0 was reported in a way that it helped increasesome of the business sales such as Yellow T-shirt.Perhaps is was

because there was not many violent cases during Bersih 4.0 as compared to Bersih 3.0 that involved the usage of tear gas and water cannon. Nevertheless, *Utusan Malaysia* news was found to have a similar reporting pattern by highlighting that that Bersih 4.0 affected the economy and local businesses.

**Fail to Report from the Perspective of the Bersih Supporters in Demanding for Democratic Process:** Most stories in this sample did not provide a fair news reports in covering the Bersih supporters which including the participants, Bersih committee and leaders of opposition parties.

**Participant Portrayal:** In most of the news in *Utusan Malaysia* and *The Star*, participants in the Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 demonstration have been depicted as people who are rough and impolite by using words such as “keegoaan” [arrogant], “kurang ajar” [Impudent], “shallow knowledge” and “rowdy”. More often, Bersih 3.0 news negatively projecting the participant as endangered public and journalist’s safety as well as destroying the image of the country internationally. As reported in *Utusan Malaysia* that the participant of Bersih 3.0 demonstration who participated in the rally yesterday caused unrest and threatened public safety [original text from Bahasa Malaysia, “Para peserta Bersih 3.0 padaperhimpunan di ibu Negara kelmarintelah mengakibatkan keadaan menjaditidakteraman dan mengancam keselamatan orang awam”].

In the coverage of Bersih 4.0, it was found that some of the newspaper articles in *The Star* and *Utusan Malaysia* reported participants as being exploited by the Bersih organiser to act ridiculously. Besides, the newspapers also highlighted the participants’ barbaric acts.

**Organiser Portrayal:** The Bersih committee was treated negatively in the newspapers. Several keywords such as unlawful, irresponsible, degil [stubborn] and tidak matang [not matured] were used to describe the Bersih organisers. One of the issues appeared in both Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 is with the permit to organise the demonstration. The application to hold Bersih demonstration were often rejected by the high court with reasons such as too late for submission, not fulfil the Peaceful Assembly Act and may have affected the celebration of the independence days. This is particularly obvious in Bersih 4.0 where half of the news reports focused on the illegality of the rally, specifically a week before the rally was launched.

Apart from this, majority of the news focused on the Bersih organiser as the cause of violence, thus having to bear the responsibility of the violence case and damages during the demonstration. For instance, Bersih organiser Ambiga was portrayed as someone who “failed to keep promises” when Bersih 3.0 demonstration turned ugly. Additionally, Ambiga was portrayed as the one to bear responsibilities for the properties damage and the loss of revenue for all of the affected businesses. The sentences used to portray Bersih co-chairman in the aftermath of the demonstration were “kerosakkan hartabenda” [damage to property] and “loss of revenue and damages”. Similarly, Bersih 4.0 news was highlighted on the bill to be imposed to the committee’s members for rubbish and damage caused by the participants during the rally. Furthermore, both Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 organiser were often portrayed as resorting to trickery and purposely provoking and creating chaos.

**Opposition Leader Portrayal:** Similarly, many news stories portrayed the opposition parties in negatively by depicting their participation as irresponsible. The words used in opposition portrayal proved that they were not sincere in fighting for fair and clean election, but they resorted to trickery, for example: “mengambil kesempatan” [Taking Opportunity], “sengajamelakukan provokasi” [purposefully making provocation] and “hijacked the movement”.

These statements were further used in both mainstream newspapers when Anwar and Azmin were suspected of instigating the participants into breaking through the police barricade at Dataran Merdeka during Bersih 3.0. Although Anwar and Azmin denied it by explaining that the hand gesture pointing to Azmin was to ask him to negotiate with the police nearby in dispersing the crowd, however, more news reported that there was a hidden ideology claiming that they had planned early in creating the riot. As it was reported in *The Star* that “it is believed that the crowd became unruly after a speech by PKR deputy president Azmin Ali”. On the other hand, Bersih 4.0 did not emphasise the opposition party as much as Bersih 3.0 as the opposition did not participate in the Bersih 4.0 rally. Therefore, the portrayal of Bersih 4.0 is still often linked to the opposition political agenda to topple the Barisan Nasional especially in *Utusan Malaysia*.

**Authority Portrayal:** On the contrary, both *Utusan Malaysia* and *The Star* tend to legitimise the authorities by writing stories from their perspectives. This included

portraying them as helpful as well as willing to assist the rally, yet was rejected by the organiser. Also, both newspapers attempted to defend the authorities by blaming the participants for violating the laws which resulted to the arrest, for instance, Bersih 3.0 participants were the first ones to enter DataranMerdeka despite being prohibited by the Court Magistrate, hence prompting the authorities to take stern action against them. As reported in *The Star* that the “the Prime Minister said the demonstrators had intended to occupy DataranMerdeka to create a scenario similar to the one at Tahrir Square in Cairo”.

Both newspapers did not emphasise much on the violent acts of the participants against the authority in the coverage of Bersih 4.0 demonstration. More often, the newspapers paint the authority in a positive light when the rally proceeds smoothly.

## **DISCUSSION**

In general, it shows that more than half of the news spaces were given to the authorities, while little space was only given to the likes of Bersih committee, participants and opposition parties which is problematic as written in [15] that “the neutral, informative role is most preferred by journalists and it goes with the importance attached to objectivity as a core professional value”. In other words, a professional and standard journalist code is to provide a neutral report that covers all side of news stories. It is crucial to prioritise the interest of public before the organization or personal interest.

Communication scholars have identified biases that have decidedly political and ideological implication over media. These biases are evident in the portrayal of Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 rally. Official sources such as government officials and prominent public figures are sought after by journalists and their views are inadvertently the legitimate views. This is supported by [16] that the ruling class has special means of media control. This media control ensures that media representation will generally favour to the side of elite or at least gives respectful representation to the ruling party. In other words, the elite can always use media to reinforce their dominant views and reduce the opposition who tend to challenge their power. When it was found the inconsistent with the view of those in power, media that mostly stated owned such as *The Star* and *Utusan Malaysia* will ensure that the elite ideology is dominant and prominent, while the challenging group will have their interest de-legitimised or downplayed.

Aside from that, most of the news articles were producing false consciousness, for instance, it is logical to say that the police are there to carry out their tasks, it is reasonable to say that the authorities need to protect the peace in the country; it is rational to see Bersih 3.0 as destructive when it turned into chaos as well as it is neutral to say that Bersih 4.0 has tarnished the reputation internationally as it was held a day after the Malaysian Independence Day. However, news can always be seen in various and different perspectives based on different position and perspectives. For this, it raises a question whether Bersih activist can be seen in different perspective that is their aspiration and fight for clean and fair election and greater democracy in Malaysia? [17] pointed that it is important that journalist could write a fair, accurate and unbiased story and the most important thing is to have coverage of the unfavourable context in order to provide a full picture of the issue or event. Regrettably, powerful elite will never surrender power. Fair representation appear to be an illusion where the news are inclined to promote the aspirations and objectives of the ruling interest by neutralising the pertinent and naturalising the common sense.

In short, the entire media system was made based on monopoly privileges by the government as well as extraordinary subsidies that are both direct and indirect. This has resulted in biased media representation that is closely linked to the power relation and ruling ideology whereas it should be function as people watchdog in ensuring transparency and good governance. The concept of free market of media is significant; yet it could be hardly achieved if media is trapped in these power relations.

## **CONCLUSION**

[18] stated that the media have double relation to democracy. It is important to know that media have been used as a tool to maintain giant media corporations and the business tycoons so that they can hold enormous power. This can be shown in the findings of this study which succinctly show both quantitatively and qualitatively biasness towards the authority. Although *The Star* was able to provide some balanced reports in the coverage of Bersih 3.0 and Bersih 4.0 compared to *Utusan Malaysia* which most of the time is one sided, yet it is not enough as mentioned by The 2017 World Press Freedom Index that Malaysia has placed 144<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries in the latest Reporters Without Borders.

In summary, media are a central part of the capitalist political economy, the bridge between government and public and the source of information for all. Media may not explain everything, but understanding the mechanics of the media industry and its distribution of information is necessary to get an apprehension of how power is exercised here. This can be supported by [19] claim that capitalist was always an ideological argument in justifying the shifting power to the wealthy and away from poor and it was never an accurate description on how it plays its role in the economy. In the media, the entire system was made based on monopoly privileges by the government as well as extraordinary subsidies that are both direct and indirect. In other word, the free market of media hardly exists through the existence of official policies and structure. It is better understood that capitalist and more specifically, media organisation in general and media system is governed by the state. So who is actually watching the watchdog? In this situation, it is clear that within the controls and restrictions, media can no longer be free in carrying their watchdog's role. News media inadvertently is politically and ideologically biased.

Rucker [20] stated that free and responsible media is vital in shaping a democratic country. A democratic country involves the participation of people in monitoring and ensuring a transparent and accountable government. All of this means that democracy do depends on the free flow of accurate, responsible and trustworthy information where the citizens have access to information and appraise it and engage in public discussion about the important issues. Therefore, it is fundamental to have free press. While changing the media structure and operation did not simply entail focusing on the changing of the way journalists operate, but is to change the current state and economic context. Without changing the wider state and economic context, there is no way that the media can be objective and fair.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We offer our sincerest gratitude to our mentor, Madam Wang Lay Kim for her guidance and encouragement throughout this paper.

#### **REFERENCES**

1. Malaysian Bar, Final report of the Malaysian Bar on Bersih 3.0 rally held on 28 April 2012 in Kuala Lumpur, 2012, May 10.
2. K. Balvin, PermatangPauhUmno youth lodges 27 police reports against Bersih chairman. *New Straits Times*, 2016, September 25.
3. Ambiga, S., 2012. Is clean government essential for the advancement of democracy?. In Ang, M. C., Teo, S. A., ASEAN perspectives on cleangovernance: Proceedings of the inaugural conference of the ASEANcoalition for clean governance. Penang: Penang Institute, 2012.
4. Syed Jaymal, Z., 2015. Bersih declares fourth rally a success, claims half a million turnout. *The Malay Mail Online*, 2015, August 31.
5. Freedom House, 2015. Voices in the streets: Mass social protests and the right to peaceful assembly. A 12-country special report by Freedom House, 2015.
6. Bhattacharyya, A., 2011. Is Nation's Watchdog really peeping into the Nation? *Global Media Journal – Indian Edition*. 2011.
7. Mosco, V., 1997. *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*. London: Sage Publication, 1997.
8. Smith, A., 1776. *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*. New York: Random House, 1776.
9. Golding, P. and G. Murdock, 2000. Culture, communications and political economy," in *Mass Media and Society* (3<sup>rd</sup>ed), London: Hodder Headline Group, 2000.
10. Hearn-Branaman, J.O., 2009. A political economy of news media in the People's Republic of China. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 6(2): 119-143.
11. Lane, J.E. and S. Ersson, 1990. *Comparative Political Economy*. Great Britain: Pinter Publisher Limited, 1990.
12. Sparks, C., 1986. The media and the state," in *Bending reality: The state of the media*. London: Pluto Press, 1986.
13. Riffe, D., S. Lacy and F. Fico, 2005. *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005.
14. Wimmer, R.D. and J.R. Dominick, 2006. *Mass media research: An introduction*. Belmont: Wadsworth, 2006.
15. McQuail, D., 1994. *Mass communication theory: An introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup>ed). London: Sage Publication, 1994.
16. Van Dijk, T.A., 1998. *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. London: Sage Publication, 1998.

17. Martyn, D., 2010. "Media language: Serving the common good," in *Media and the common good, perspectives on media, democracy and responsibility*. Nairobi, Kenya: LawAfrica Publishing (K) Ltd, 2010.
18. Meier, W.A., 2002. *Media Ownership – Does it matter?*, in *Networking Knowledge for Information Societies: Institutions & Intervention*. The Netherlands: *Delft University Press*, 2002.
19. McChesney, R.W., 2008. *The Political Economy of media: Enduring issues, emerging dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008.
20. Rucker, M.L., 2012. *The media, politics and ideology: A critical-analytical perspective*. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(1): 51-58.