

(Mis)representation of the LGBT Community through Nomination and Categorisation: The Case of Nur Sajat in *The Star*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore how the Malaysian newspaper The Star represents the LGBT community, specifically Nur Sajat, a local transgender woman, in their published news articles. This study employs van Leeuwen's theory of representation of social actors to investigate how nomination and categorisation strategies are employed in portraying Nur Sajat. Previous studies related to the representation of the LGBT community have only focused on coverage and content released as opposed to looking at them as social actors per se. The study first gathered 29 news articles published by The Star from February 2021 to February 2022 as a corpus. Secondly, through Critical Discourse Analysis, the corpus then underwent nomination and categorisation analyses to identify how Nur Sajat is represented in terms of her unique and shared identities. The findings indicate that The Star misrepresents Nur Sajat through deadnaming and misgendering, which undermines her transgender identity. Despite portraying her as a successful businesswoman, negative depictions resembling criminal profiling are also highlighted. Media might better engage language associated with sensitivity and accuracy in line with legal and societal norms. Recognising diverse gender identities and sexual orientation converges ethical journalism; thus, media coverage might better comply with legal mandates and evolving societal attitudes. Finally, future research could expand on this study by comparing representation strategies of the LGBT community across various Malaysian media outlets.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; LGBT; news discourse; transgender; representation of social actors

INTRODUCTION

As a minority, the LGBT community may be subjected to negative portrayals in the media, especially in conservative countries like Malaysia (see Alagappan & Kaur, 2009; Subir, 2019; Ting et al., 2021). Positive and negative representations of the LGBT community have been investigated by linguists who usually turn to corpus-based discourse analysis as it is believed to be an effective method to “analyse discourses and uncover patterns of use in language” (Zottola, 2019, p. 469). Subir (2019) argued that homosexuality coverage in Malaysia often revolves around a mix of social, cultural, and political issues, which is supported by official government and religious sources and is dominantly elaborated in widespread Islamic tones. Ting et al. (2022) conducted a study on the aspects that were spotlighted in news articles on the LGBT community across four Malaysian online newspapers and discovered that the highlighted aspects mainly comprised negative attitudes and intolerance towards the LGBT community, as well as the belief that being LGBT is linked to being Malay and Muslim. Additionally, there was a strong focus on quotes from government officials and ministers who have made remarks about the LGBT community.

In order to gain insights into how media constructs and perpetuates certain LGBT community narratives, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is employed. Specifically, CDA is used to analyse the representation of the LGBT community by examining language use, discourse structures, and underlying power dynamics. CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily investigates the ways in which social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by texts and talks in social and political contexts (van Dijk, 2001). CDA is used as a critical approach to address how the representations of social majorities and minorities might differ from each other in discourse. van Leeuwen (2008) proposed a theory on how social actors are represented in the English discourse. The theory incorporates distinct linguistic systems involving deletion, rearrangement, and substitution that are utilised in representing relevant social actors in various types of discourse. These principal ways of representation can be divided into two types, namely exclusion and inclusion. In discourse, not all social actors are included; some are represented, while some are excluded to accommodate specific interests and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended. According to Gong et al. (2023), the government's perspectives appear to be very dominant in media discourse when the matter concerns government authorities; thus, social actors such as the government and the elites are always included and nominated with their complete identity, including their ranks and positions.

Scholars have extensively discussed the types of coverage and content released by the media concerning the LGBT community (see Osborn, 2022; Wood et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022), but research utilising van Leeuwen's Representation of Social Actors theory on the community is relatively scarce, especially in the Malaysian context. Zottola (2019) conducted corpus-assisted research utilising the theory to investigate the representation of transgender people in the British press. Ninpanit (2020) conducted a comparative study based on the same theory to investigate how Thai and international news websites represent the Thai transgender community. This research is trying to fill the gap in the literature by focusing on how the Malaysian press depicts the representation of a Malaysian transgender woman, Nur Sajat, as a social actor through the analysis of news articles published by the local newspaper, *The Star*, using categorisation and nomination strategies proposed by van Leeuwen. It aims to answer the following questions: 1) What expressions are used by the newspaper to employ these linguistic strategies? Moreover, 2) how do they contribute to the misrepresentation of Nur Sajat and the perpetuation of stereotypes towards the LGBT community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

NEWS DISCOURSE

Fairclough (1995) argued that media influences “knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations [and] social identities” (p.2). News discourse is an example of media texts, and it might better be studied primarily as a form of public discourse (van Dijk, 1988). The relationship between public opinion and media is reciprocal, where news media inform cultural views and vice versa (Seely, 2021). However, scholars have argued that the newspaper is considered one of the persuasive media forms that impart news to the public; its ability to influence public perception through manipulation by some people has since motivated varied critical discourse studies (Asad et al., 2019; Bonyadi, 2010; Pekkarinen, 2016; van Dijk, 2001).

Zottola (2019) suggested that news construction through language is never neutral as it reflects the political and ideological stance of the newspaper. Ismail et al. (2020) argued that minority groups such as Indigenous people face some level of biases in the media, where they are constantly depicted with harmful stereotypical news and narratives, which can tarnish the reputation of the groups. Power and ideology struggles have influenced the role of globalised mass media, where language use, images, and implicit meanings are examined to discover the ideology behind the news (Asad et al., 2019; Gong et al., 2023). The choice of words in news provides cues for interpreting events and, at the same time, expresses values that imply the writer's evaluation of events (Klaisingto & Aroonmanakun, 2010). In general, authors of news discourse always utilise language in a highly constructed way to represent their ideology.

According to Fongkaew et al. (2019), media reports depict the mindsets and attitudes of news reporters and particular [powerful] groups in society. In politically conservative countries, the media tends to report what is politically correct and issues that conform to public norms (Alagappan & Kaur, 2009). News media also plays a role in strengthening or challenging existing social ideologies. For instance, media has the potential to legitimise or delegitimise sex and gender identities due to its significant influence on the public understanding of others and gender as a set of power relations (Capuzza, 2016). News is said to be the social construction of reality as the events that are chosen to be reported involve a delicate news production process: selection, interpretation, and use of language (Klaisingto & Aroonmanakun, 2010). Through the emphasis on a set of interrelated objects (e.g., issues, events, or actors) to different degrees, media reports can increase or decrease the salience of real-world issues that might be important to the public (Eberl et al., 2018). Therefore, news discourse produces meanings that establish an ideological representation of the world.

LGBT AND DISCRIMINATION

LGBT is an established initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. According to Gold (2018), the terms *lesbians* and *gays* are used to refer to women and men, respectively, who are attracted to people of the same sex. Bisexuals are individuals who are attracted to people of their own gender and of other gender identities, while transgender is a wide-ranging term for people whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the biological sex they are assigned at birth. Since the 1990s, LGBT has been used as an umbrella term for various sexual minority populations as well as a complex and contradictory set of identities, political agendas, and collective actors (Amaya & González, 2019; Baker, 2014; Parent et al., 2013).

Despite considerable progress in legal protection for the LGBT community, 69 member states of the United Nations (UN) continue to criminalise same-sex activities (Mendos et al., 2020), suggesting that total acceptance of the LGBT lifestyle holds little possibility at the international level. Salami and Ghajarieh (2016) argued that LGBT individuals in Iran are regarded as outcasts with a form of abnormal sexuality because of the country's heteronormative society where men and women are supposed to marry each other. Meanwhile, in China, even though public attitudes towards homosexuality have become more favourable, especially among youth, total acceptance remains a significant challenge (Lin et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2022).

The transgender community faces similar treatment to the rest of the LGBT community. Malik et al. (2022) claimed that most Pakistanis refused to reveal their transgender identity due to the discrimination faced at all levels of society. In Sweden, transvestism is no longer considered a mental illness, but transsexualism is still classified as one, leading to complex medical

evaluations (Åkerlund, 2019). According to Montiel-McCann (2022), the marginalisation of transgender people has developed into a modern dire issue where they have been subordinated brutally alongside women of colour, working-class women, and queer women. In Thailand, despite the marginalisation, transgender communities flourish as they find solace in openly expressing themselves to their peers only (Ninpanit, 2020). Specifically, while the LGBT community wants to be accepted and recognised as part of the whole society (Kasemcharoenwong, 2014), the daily discrimination that the members of the community face might hinder the ongoing process. This will bring long-term negative consequences on their health and professional and personal lives (Mara et al., 2021).

LGBT IN THE MEDIA

Media representation of sexual and gender identities has been considered a topic of scholarly analysis only at the beginning of the 21st century (Zottola, 2019). In terms of the coverage of the LGBT community in the newspaper, it falls broadly into positive and negative types of coverage. As argued by Ting et al. (2022), positive coverage revolves around the rights of the community, while negative coverage focuses on the condemnation of the lifestyle. News framing is the process of choosing what information to include, how to present it, and the overall tone or emphasis of the news story. This process is often influenced by the ideological positions of the media and the journalists' personal perspectives, and the framing of the LGBT community may often reflect dominant societal views (Ting et al., 2021).

Zhang et al. (2022) studied the representation of *tongzhi* (an umbrella label for the LGBT community in China) in Chinese media between 2009 and 2019 and reported that the community is portrayed negatively as virus spreaders, victims, criminals, fraudsters, patients, and promiscuous throughout the years. The issues of health problems such as HIV/AIDS and syphilis are foregrounded to give the public a negative impression of the community, which leads to dangerous stigmatisation and moral panics. The study identified three main sociocultural factors contributing to these negative representations: homophobia, heteronormativity, and filial piety.

Alagappar and Kaur (2009) studied the representation of homosexuality in the Malaysian newspaper *New Straits Times* and discovered that homosexuality is primarily reported in a negative manner where it is deemed as deviant, outrageous, against the norms, and totally unacceptable by religion. The editorials are found to be in support of what is politically correct in the country and portray homosexuality as a threat that needs to be dealt with. In a similar study on the news coverage of homosexuality in two Malay language newspapers, Subir (2019) argued that the Malaysian media is a "cultural resource that [is] inherently homophobic" as it constructs homosexuality in a manner that interests the dominant Malay political hegemony (p. 83). Most of the coverage focused on the harmful effects of homosexual sex behaviours and disparaged them for their imminent disruption of the traditional family institution.

According to Capuzza (2016), the number of news stories about transgender lives has been increasing more recently, but the quality of those stories is just as important as the quantity. Early news coverage of transgender lives in the United States was portrayed negatively, where the community was depicted as either social deviants or medical oddities. Capuzza's study on transgender reporting in the US from August 2009 to August 2013 discovered that transgender individuals are more likely to be featured in soft news related to the arts and entertainment than hard news related to legal challenges, which potentially invites readers to take the community and their issues less seriously. Besides that, journalists tend to practice deadnaming, which is the

harmful practice of referring to a transgender person by their birth name that they no longer associate with. Twenty-two per cent of the sample included this violation where journalists did not use a chosen name, included the birth name, or alternated back and forth between names. Seely (2021) argued that misgendering and misnaming of transgender individuals in the media are still occurring in mainstream news outlets, especially in articles quoting law enforcement, due to reasons such as the department's policy to use the government ID, early stage of investigation, unapparent gender identity, and conflicting information about gender identity.

The media plays a vital role in creating possibilities and limitations of the rights and identities of the LGBT community (Åkerlund, 2019). Existing media studies indicate that the media collectively views the LGBT community potentially as a unified force to be reckoned with (Baker, 2014). Thus, it is essential to investigate how the everchanging society views the community as part of their lives (Mara et al., 2021).

LGBT RIGHTS IN MALAYSIA

LGBT is a complex and controversial issue in Malaysia as Malays form the majority of the conservative nation's population, with Islam as their professed religion (Subir, 2019; S. H. Ting et al., 2022). The 126th Conference of Rulers that took place on 13th December 1989 prohibited the LGBT lifestyle from being practised, which essentially made it impossible for any Malaysian citizens to legally change their gender in their National Registration Identity Card, which serves as the compulsory identity document in the country (Haridi & Salleh, 2016). Malaysia does not recognise same-sex unions, nor does it have anti-discrimination laws that protect its LGBT community, which has always been a significant part of the larger Malaysian society (Jerome et al., 2021).

The LGBT lifestyle is not only illegal in the country but is also subject to societal disapproval. The LGBT community is often depicted as immoral and treated as deviants and criminals who are violating the law (Alagappan & Kaur, 2009; Tan, 2022). As mentioned in Nora'eni et al. (2020), Islam forbids any unnatural relationships among human beings, including homosexual relationships, which are viewed as one of the great sins based on the verses from the Holy Quran. Numerous statements were made by the local ministers and prominent figures pertaining to the adverse effects of homosexuality on society, including the former Prime Minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who openly refused to acknowledge the LGBT culture and same-sex marriage despite facing pressures on human rights from the Western world (Nora'eni et al., 2020).

Societal attitudes towards the LGBT community may range from affirmation and acceptance (homopositivity) to disapproval and denigration (homonegativity). In a comparative study of attitudes towards the LGBT community in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, Malaysians were found to have the second highest homonegative attitudes after Indonesians (Manalastas et al., 2017). Traditional predictors of homonegativity, such as age and religiosity, were found to contribute to the results, where people of older age and those who place more value on religion were most likely to be homophobic. Nora'eni et al. (2020) investigated the acceptance and attitude towards the LGBT community among students at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), a public university located in Johor Bahru. The study revealed that most students rejected the practice of same-sex marriage, and they felt uncomfortable being around the LGBT community. Both studies have shown that religious and cultural norms about gender and sexuality continue to become the main factors that affect Malaysians' acceptance of the LGBT community.

As discussed by Jerome et al. (2021), Malaysian authorities have increasingly taken a public and stern stance against the local LGBT community over the past several decades through various civil and Sharia laws and specific legislation. The LGBT community has been subjected to criminalisation, police harassment, and public prosecutions under these strict laws, making them more prone to abuse, stigmatisation, and discrimination. For instance, Nisha Ayub, a local transgender woman, was arrested by the authorities at the age of 21 for dressing as a woman and was placed in a male prison, where she allegedly faced sexual abuse by a warden and fellow inmates (McCrum, 2016). Eventually, she became a transgender rights activist and founded two non-governmental organisations (NGOs), namely the SEED Foundation and Justice for Sisters, which aim to champion LGBT rights.

Despite being a taboo subject, the public has started to discuss and demonstrate their tolerance and acceptance of LGBT, with several NGOs receiving support either locally or internationally in their efforts to protect the LGBT community in Malaysia (Sa'dan et al., 2018). The conservative government may continue to instil homophobia into the citizens of the country, but generational differences in the acceptance of the LGBT community are inevitable due to increased exposure to information and proper education (Tan, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to analyse how Nur Sajat binti Kamaruzzaman (also known as Nur Sajat), a member of the LGBT community, is represented as a social actor by examining 29 different news articles published by *The Star* from 23rd February 2021 to 23rd February 2022. The researchers opted to examine news articles published within a one-year timeframe spanning between these two dates due to the significant coverage and frequent features of Nur Sajat in the newspaper throughout that period.

The data was located by typing the keyword *Sajat* in the search section of *The Star* webpage (<https://www.thestar.com.my/>). A total of 36 news articles concerning Nur Sajat were gathered; seven news articles were eventually discarded as they appeared to be very similar to at least one other article. The remaining 29 news articles became the final corpus of the study. The articles exhibit a wide range in length, spanning from 142 to 878 words, with an average word count of 232.21. The following table shows the headlines of the articles, along with their respective date of publication and number of words.

TABLE 1. News articles obtained from *The Star*

No.	Headline of the Article	Date Published	No. of Words
1	An arrest warrant was issued against Nur Sajat for a court no-show	23 Feb 2021	243
2	Cosmetics entrepreneur missing during raid	02 Mar 2021	184
3	Cops want to help JAIS track down Nur Sajat	03 Mar 2021	142
4	Despite an arrest warrant, Nur Sajat is back on social media	15 Mar 2021	159
5	Nur Sajat may have fled the country, say cops	31 Mar 2021	205
6	GOF distributes photos of Sajat at control posts	01 Apr 2021	212
7	IGP to Nur Sajat: Come out of hiding	04 Apr 2021	340
8	Cops: Nur Sajat sought as both witness and victim in fraud case	15 Jun 2021	187
9	Nur Sajat nabbed in Bangkok by Thai immigration authorities but out on bail	20 Sep 2021	395
10	Bukit Aman confirms Nur Sajat's arrest in Thailand	20 Sep 2021	191

11	Bukit Aman seeks Nur Sajat's extradition from Thai authorities	20 Sep 2021	270
12	Cops working to bring Nur Sajat back from Thailand	21 Sep 2021	307
13	Come back to Malaysia willingly, cops tell Nur Sajat	21 Sep 2021	249
14	'Wan Besi' denies helping Nur Sajat escape to Thailand	22 Sep 2021	259
15	Thailand has yet to decide on Nur Sajat	22 Sep 2021	353
16	M'sian cops to launch extradition request to arrest Nur Sajat	23 Sep 2021	157
17	G25 expresses concern over govt's 'paranoia' over Nur Sajat	23 Sep 2021	322
18	Family urged to tell Nur Sajat to come home	24 Sep 2021	195
19	Nur Sajat, residing in the Sydney suburb, seeks to start afresh	18 Oct 2021	247
20	Nur Sajat granted asylum	19 Oct 2021	878
21	My beautiful home: Nur Sajat shares photos of new house in Sydney on social media	20 Oct 2021	231
22	No report lodged about sexual assault on Nur Sajat, say police	21 Oct 2021	283
23	We will keep trying to bring Nur Sajat back to Malaysia, say police	03 Nov 2021	236
24	Nur Sajat says she's appearing on Ellen DeGeneres talk show in January	24 Nov 2021	166
25	Nur Sajat's assets are up for public auction on Tuesday (Dec 14)	13 Dec 2021	195
26	The auction for Sajat's assets may be held again after the bidder goes missing	14 Dec 2021	321
27	Nur Sajat intends to set up shop in Sydney	06 Jan 2022	214
28	Police looking for Nur Sajat to assist in fraud probe	08 Feb 2022	154
29	Minister: Sajat is still a man in Malaysia	23 Feb 2022	215

The study adopts van Leeuwen's Representation of Social Actors theory to investigate how the categorisation and nomination strategies are used to represent Nur Sajat in these news articles. CDA generally analyses discourse such as news text with the purpose of revealing underlying ideas, implicit messages, and assumptions in the text (Machin & Mayr, 2012), and this purpose may be accomplished through an analysis of how social actors are represented in news articles.

News media is considered one of the most robust media that carries the responsibility to spread out news that influences public perception (Pekkarinen, 2016). Asad et al. (2019) argue that newspaper text has a significant influence and depicts different ideologies, although one reads the same news story in different newspapers. According to a survey conducted by market research company Vase, *The Star* is the most frequently read Malaysian online news portal (Chu, 2019). Online news and social media remain the primary sources of news in Malaysia, with *The Star* being the nation's most trusted English news portal, according to Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022. These recognitions serve as the rationale for selecting this newspaper as the focal point of the study.

Each one of the articles in the corpus went through two different analyses: the nomination analysis and the categorisation analysis. Both nomination and categorisation are two types of strategies used in determination, which explains the situation where the identity of social actors is specified in a discourse in one way or another. Social actors can either be represented in terms of their unique identity (nomination) or identities and functions they share with others (categorisation). The following figure presents part of the system network that will be applied as the framework of the study:

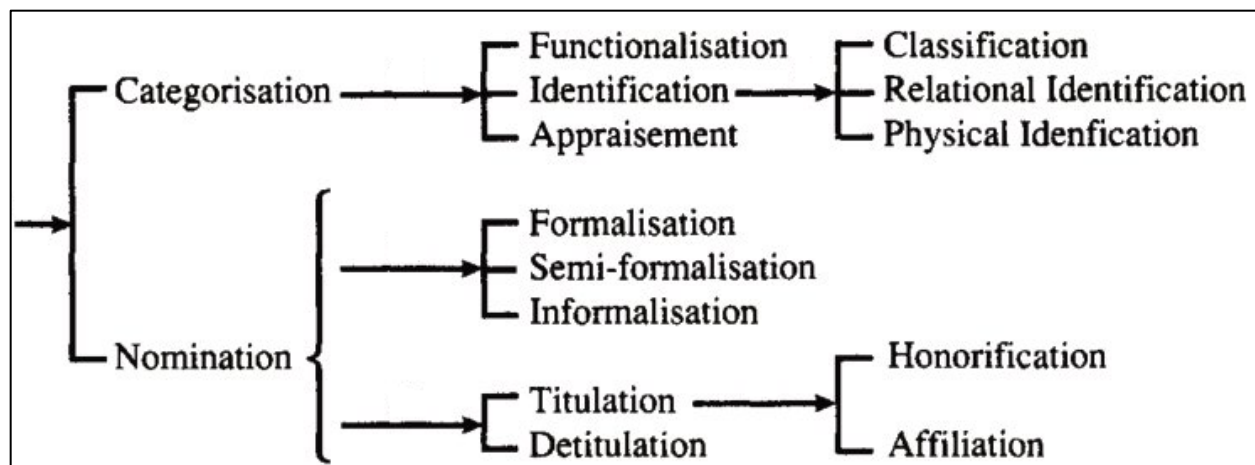


FIGURE 1. Social actor network of categorisation and nomination (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 66)

Nomination is typically realised by proper nouns, which can be formal, semi-formal, or informal. In the Western world, formal nomination occurs when a social actor is referred to with surname only, with or without honorifics, while semi-formal nomination uses a given name and surname. Informal nomination occurs when a social actor is referred to by their given name only. For example, American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift would be referred to as *Swift* or *Ms. Swift* in formal contexts where it is crucial to maintain a certain level of respect and decorum. Her name, *Taylor Swift*, would be used as a semi-formal nomination to provide a level of recognition while still maintaining a degree of respect; meanwhile, she would likely be referred to simply by her given name, *Taylor*, informally in more casual settings, such as conversations among fans to suggest a high level of comfort and intimacy.

However, the naming conventions in Malaysia are different where surnames are not used, especially in Malay names, where a given name is almost always followed by a patronym. The patronym consists of the title *bin/binti* followed by the father's given name. In exploring the application of the Representation of Social Actors theory, a significant gap emerged regarding how Malay names should be categorised. To address this deficiency, this research undertook the task of categorising Malay names into three categories, similar to Western names. Formal nomination occurs when a social actor is referred to with their full given name along with their father's name, optionally including the title *bin/binti*. Semi-formal nomination comprises the full given name without the inclusion of the father's name. Finally, informal nomination encompasses an incomplete portion of the full given name along with any associated nicknames.

Nominations may be titulated, either in the form of honourification, which is the addition of standard titles and ranks, or in the form of affiliations, as with *Prof* to refer to a professor, or affiliations, which is the addition of a personal or kinship relation term, as with *Uncle Wong* to refer to someone's uncle. When a nomination is detitulated, no titles or honorifics are used to refer to the social actor. The titulation and detitulation of nominations serves to navigate social hierarchies, show respect, convey affiliation, and adapt to the level of formality or informality appropriate for a given context.

A social actor in a discourse can also be categorised in terms of functionalisation, identification, and appraisal. Functionalisation occurs when a social actor is referred to in terms of an activity or something the person does, such as occupation or role. Identification occurs when a social actor is defined in terms of what they, more or less permanently or inevitably, are.

Three types of identification include classification, where social actors are referred to in terms of the significant categories given by society; relational identification, which represents social actors in terms of their personal, kinship, or work relation to each other; and physical identification, where physical characteristics of social actors are highlighted. Meanwhile, appraisal occurs when a social actor is appraised with reference to terms that can be evaluated as good or bad, which can be realised by the set of nouns, adjectives, and idioms that denote such appraisal.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In the selected corpus, Nur Sajat was represented using eight different names consisting of three formal names, two semi-formal names, and three informal names, and none of the names were titulated. The following table presents all the names used, their types, frequency, and number of articles that feature them.

TABLE 2. Nominations of Nur Sajat in *The Star* newspaper

Name	Type	Frequency	No of Articles
Muhammad Sajjad Kamaruz Zaman	Formal	8	8
Muhammad Sajjad Kamaruzzaman	Formal	7	7
Muhammad Sajjad Kamarul Zaman	Formal	4	4
Nur Sajat	Semi-formal	163	29
Muhammad Sajjad	Semi-formal	4	2
Sajat	Informal	8	4
Sajjad	Informal	4	1
Bella	Informal	1	1

The most common name used to represent Nur Sajat is her semi-formal name *Nur Sajat*, which can be found in every article. As a transgender woman, Nur Sajat has chosen this feminine name as her preferred name, thus *The Star* has utilised this name and the informal name *Sajat* in their published articles. By using this name, the newspaper acknowledges her gender identity to a certain extent.

The second most used name in the corpus is *Muhammad Sajjad Kamaruz Zaman*, which can be found in eight articles. This name is known as her deadname, which is the name that a trans individual is given at birth and no longer uses (Sinclair-Palm & Chokly, 2023). Other variants of this name available include *Muhammad Sajjad Kamaruzzaman*, *Muhammad Sajjad Kamarul Zaman*, *Muhammad Sajjad*, and the informal *Sajjad*. These variants of her deadname can be found in 19 articles. The act of deadnaming by *The Star* is done through phrases such as *whose name is*, *whose real name is*, and *better known as*, which is a common technique used by journalists when reporting on transgender individuals who go by a different name from their deadname (Seely, 2021). Another way her deadname is used is by quoting law enforcement or high-ranking personnel, such as in the example below:

Genderwise, 'Sajat', or **Muhammad Sajjad Kamaruz Zaman**, is still a male, as stated on his identity card (IC), says Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Ahmad Marzuk Shaary.

When referring to a transgender individual as their deadname, including when quoting other parties, journalists sometimes add valuable context to justify the usage (Sinclair-Palm & Chokly, 2023), which *The Star* has never practised before. By intentionally including Nur Sajat's dead name in news articles, *The Star* not only misrepresents her but also delegitimises her identity as a transgender woman. Even though she no longer identifies with her masculine deadname, the newspaper insists on including this name in their articles to enforce the idea that she will never be entirely feminine. Systems of power in Malaysian society insist that people have a consistent and legible gender, and transgender is not considered a recognised gender in society (Asia Pacific Transgender Network, 2017). As a conservative news outlet, *The Star* journalists might hesitate to lean towards political correctness when writing news in order to not offend those in power. This stance aligns with the observations made by Alagappan and Kaur (2009), who noted that in Malaysia, the media often prioritises reporting on topics aligned with the political stance of the ruling party and the prevailing societal norms.

Besides using her deadname, *The Star* also uses masculine pronouns to refer to Nur Sajat in six articles in the corpus. These pronouns were found most frequently in the earlier published articles when Nur Sajat's name first began to appear in the media. It is important to note that in the Malay language, personal pronouns are not associated with one's gender. For example, while the English language uses the pronouns *he* to refer to a masculine entity and *she* to refer to a feminine entity, the Malay language uses the pronoun *dia* to refer to both entities. When a journalist relies on a source available in Malay, the journalist is entirely responsible for choosing the pronoun to use when translating it into English. According to Barker-Plummer (2013), a journalist is making a political as well as a linguistic choice when reporting on a transgender individual because English only has gendered pronouns.

When *The Star* misrepresents Nur Sajat by deadnaming and using non-preferred pronouns to refer to her, the newspaper becomes a vital agency in deciding how she should be recognised by the public. It denotes a manifestation of the newspaper's gender misrepresentation to specific segments of readership, notably individuals within the transgender community. The use of wrong pronouns is a vital part of negative media portrayal used to dismiss the identities of transgender individuals, and it might implicitly elicit a negative attitude toward the transgender community through the reiteration of the idea that they are the outcasts who challenge the binary gender notion (Gupta, 2019; Li, 2019). This act of misrepresentation undermines the identities of transgender individuals through misrecognition or erasure and cuts them off from the worlds they exist at ease (Sinclair-Palm & Chokly, 2023). McLemore (2015) reported that the experience of not having one's social identity recognised by others is not only psychologically disruptive but is also negatively associated with social identity, such as strength, importance and congruence, and state self-esteem. The harsh discrimination Nur Sajat has to endure in Malaysia is one of the reasons she decided to apply for asylum in Australia, where her social identity is recognised by the country's law. Her decision to flee was precipitated by an assault perpetrated by officers from JAIS, the religious affairs department that filed charges against her. She was allegedly being subjected to physical violence, such as hitting, pushing, and being handcuffed, despite her compliance with authorities during the incident (Head, 2021).

Based on the corpus, the expression that *The Star* used most frequently when categorising Nur Sajat as a *cosmetics entrepreneur* can be found in 21 articles, followed by the expression with the alternative spelling *cosmetic entrepreneur* in eight articles. The following table presents all the expressions used, their types, frequency, and number of articles that feature them.

TABLE 3. Categorisations of Nur Sajat in *The Star* newspaper

Expression	Type	Frequency	No of Articles
cosmetics entrepreneur	Functionalisation	22	21
cosmetic entrepreneur	Functionalisation	12	8
entrepreneur	Functionalisation	11	9
suspect	Functionalisation	6	2
witness	Functionalisation	4	3
businesswoman	Functionalisation	3	3
fugitive	Functionalisation	1	1
prosecution witness	Functionalisation	1	1
36	Identification (Classified)	8	8
36-year-old	Identification (Classified)	4	4
transgender	Identification (Classified)	2	2
cosmetics millionaire	Identification (Classified)	1	1
Malaysian	Identification (Classified)	1	1
Malaysian citizen	Identification (Classified)	1	1
controversial	Appraisalment	6	6
well-known	Appraisalment	1	1
famous	Appraisalment	1	1

The newspaper has chosen expressions associated with her career as a cosmetics entrepreneur to represent her, as it is her main occupation, in addition to being a social media influencer and an LGBT activist. She founded her own cosmetics company in Malaysia, which sells her own skincare products, health supplements, and corsets. On the one hand, these expressions are utilised in the media to reinforce the positive image of transgender individuals working in the fields of fashion and beauty, which was also reported by Kasemcharoenwong (2014), where well-known and famous transgender individuals such as TV producers, models, and public figures are positively portrayed as a vital component of society in the newspaper. On the other hand, crime-related expressions such as *suspect*, *witness*, and *fugitive* can be found in some articles reporting on Nur Sajat's involvement in several Malaysian criminal cases, which build the negative depiction of Nur Sajat as a lawbreaker. According to Osborn (2022), the ways in which media portrays marginalised groups generally shape the perceptions that the public has of these groups, and this often reinforces negative stereotypes. Therefore, the representation of Nur Sajat as a criminal might also impact the public's feelings towards her.

The expression, *businesswoman*, was only used three times in three different articles, which suggests a degree of recognition and acceptance of her gender identity, as she was consistently being referred to using the feminine designation rather than being labelled as a businessman. However, two of the three times were accompanied by the expression *transgender*. By including her transgender identity while simultaneously using a gender-specific job title, *The Star* might imply that Nur Sajat will constantly be associated with her sexual identity despite having a successful career in business as a woman. The lack of expressions that validate her identity as a woman also indicates that the newspaper generally struggles to legitimise her preferred gender identity. According to Montiel-McCann (2022), the notion that trans women are not real women is crucial to the justification of anti-trans ideology, and apart from employing deadnaming and misgendering, *The Star* also utilises the lack of feminine expressions to support this ideology.

Nur Sajat's age was mentioned in 12 different articles, and 11 articles were found to describe her as a lawbreaker. According to The Associated Press (2016), ages should be used in news articles when deemed relevant to the situation, generally for profiles, obituaries, significant career milestones, and achievements unusual for the age. Instead of these common reasons, most articles mentioned her age to profile her as a criminal, such as the example:

Nur Sajat, 36, was said to be on the run for the last few months after a blasphemy charge was levelled against him for dressing as a woman.

Tan (2022) concluded that LGBT issues commonly receive negative coverage in Malaysian media by portraying the LGBT community as sexual or gender deviants who ought to be criminalised in the name of law. By profiling Nur Sajat as a criminal, *The Star* focuses on her negative traits by representing her as an individual who deserves to be punished. Her age is almost exclusively mentioned in articles where she is depicted as a criminal, which indicates that this detail is only relevant because *The Star* attempts to depict her as such. The newspaper added fuel to the fire by using the expression *controversial* when describing Nur Sajat, foregrounding the idea that not only is she a criminal, but she is also a figure who is central in heated discussions, stirring prolonged public disagreement. Transgender-related expressions, therefore, are often employed to build sensationalism in tabloid depictions and misrepresentations of the transgender community (Åkerlund, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Through CDA, this paper has identified the nomination and categorisation strategies used to represent Nur Sajat in *The Star*. The study highlights instances of misrepresentation, particularly concerning her gender identity, which may perpetuate negative stereotypes not only towards her but also towards the broader LGBT community. While the name *Nur Sajat* consistently appears in all articles, the presence of multiple instances of her deadname and occasional use of masculine pronouns suggests a lack of full acknowledgement of her chosen identity. Additionally, the paucity of feminine expressions to describe her may indicate a reluctance by the conservative newspaper to fully recognise her as female. These actions, while potentially disrespectful, serve to maintain outdated perceptions of her gender identity, possibly hindering her ability to fully embrace her true self. Alongside her positive portrayal as a successful cosmetics entrepreneur, she is also represented as a figure embroiled in criminality, contributing to a multifaceted portrayal that shapes public perceptions.

Overall, the media representation of Nur Sajat reflects broader societal attitudes and prejudices against the Malaysian LGBT community. The dismissal of queer gender identities might be the main factor that contributes to the marginalisation and discrimination faced by transgender individuals, compelling some of them, including Nur Sajat, to flee the country and seek refuge in countries with more protective rights. To promote more inclusive and respectful media coverage, it might be essential for journalists and news outlets to adopt more sensitive and accurate language when reporting on the LGBT community in adherence to legal standards and societal expectations. Fostering a greater understanding of diverse gender identities within society is crucial to combatting the negative portrayals of transgender individuals in the media and beyond.

The research findings provide insights into the application and implications of the Representation of Social Actors theory and CDA within the context of news discourse concerning marginalised communities, especially the LGBT community. The examination of the nomination and categorisation strategies used by *The Star* to represent Nur Sajat sheds light on the intricate dynamics of power and identity construction in the media, thus advancing our understanding of how language operates as a tool of power and oppression in shaping media narratives. Moving forward, future research could build upon these findings by comparing representation strategies utilised by various Malaysian media outlets, including the ones that are available in the Malay language.

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