AN ANALYSIS OF CONTRAVENING RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL CONTENT IN THE NETFLIX ORIGINAL FIRST SEASON ‘BEHIND HER EYES’ IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to assess Malaysian audiences’ perceptions of non-linear broadcasting streaming media and its relationship with religion and culture, which is then linked to the content regulations in Malaysia with a particular focus on the movie, Behind Her Eyes, aired via Netflix platform. In Malaysia, the mainstream media is tightly controlled for public broadcasting. However, content broadcast through the over-the-top media such as Netflix platform has not yet been subject to censorship by the authorities. Prior to this a Film Censorship Board was formed to filter or ban films meant for public screening via theatres and TV, that violated any religious, cultural, or moral norms of Malaysian society. Now, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission governs and promotes the communications and multimedia sector, which includes telecommunications, broadcasting, and Internet services. To understand audiences’ sentiments towards Behind Her Eyes, the authors used the face-to-face in-depth interview method as the main data collection instrument to obtain information on facts, feelings, beliefs and aspects that are contrary to Malaysian religion and culture, which is then linked to the non-linear broadcasting content regulation in Malaysia. The results show that Behind Her Eyes contains many elements that are contrary to religion and culture in Malaysia. In conclusion, the authors make some recommendations for further consideration, that might lead to for future research.

Keywords: Religion, cultural, moral values, content regulation, Netflix

I. INTRODUCTION

Netflix entered the Malaysian market in 2016. Subsequently Malaysia is one of the 130 countries added to Netflix’s commercial list, as part of its go-to-market strategies to curb stiff competition in the U.S. market and global footprint expansion in South East Asia. Although Netflix is available in most countries, the catalogue of shows and movies vary greatly depending on the subscriber's location and/or region, due to geo blocking policy imposed by Netflix (Earle 2016). In a geo-blocking mechanism, certain techniques are used to identify the user's location not limited to the IP address against a blacklist or whitelist, accounts, and measure the round trip delay (RTD) of a network connection to the physical location of the end user (AbdelRahman Abdou et al. 2017). Furthermore, access to Netflix isn’t just a pure offered a very limited global content in its service menu because it will always depend on the specific rights Netflix holds in each territory. This means, content that can be accessible via Netflix
platform in Malaysia is not the same as content broadcast to viewers in Europe or any other part of other countries. In preparing this article, Netflix has yet to enter into any commercial agreements with local broadcasters and/or Internet Service Provider (ISP) in Malaysia. Most likely Netflix will enter into a partnership with in the near future based on commercial basis. In a clearer context, foreign contents are dominant for Malaysian viewing as compared to local content. With its advent, Netflix seems to be targeting a niche audience of subscribers with an always “on” digital lifestyle, and tech savvy elite who personalize life with mobility and opt for foreign flicks as preferred content. *Behind Her Eyes* is a supernatural psychological thriller series directed by Erik Richter Strand that premiered on the Netflix platform under the banner of Netflix Original adopted from the novel of the same name by British writer Sarah Pinborough and released in 2017. *Behind Her Eyes* has six episodes for the first season and all of them aired on the same date which is on 17 February 2021 worldwide. It was shot in Scotland and London with four names as the main stars namely Simona Brown as Louise Barnsley, Eve Hewson as Adele Ferguson, Tom Bateman as Dr. David Ferguson and Robert Aramayo as Rob Hoyle.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

In Malaysia, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and Film Censorship Board of Malaysia (LPF) are entrusted government agencies to regulate and ensure that nothing is included in any broadcasting service which is against public interest or order, national harmony or which offends against good taste or decency. The scope of responsibilities of MCMC is to monitor and regulate the communication industry according to the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA 1998). It is under the purview of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia whilst LPF is a government agency that vets films, trailer, posters and it is under the control of the Ministry of Home Affairs. In addition to considering the criteria laid out in the CMA 1998 and Censorship Act 2002, the government of Malaysia may deem that a censorship is essential in order to bring wider benefits to the public. Therefore, MCMC and LPF with the powers vested in them consistently monitor and censor contents to ensure prevention of the exhibition of any type of contents which insult any religion, promote false teaching and deviations, disturb racial harmony and are liable to destroy the reputation of individuals or organisations, have sexual content, promote LGBTQ, violence, political dissent, and drugs related or social culture that harm society and cause public nuisance.

The following is a list of international contents that have been banned from being screened for public viewing via mainstream media in Malaysia for the past 10 years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name of content</th>
<th>Reason for being banned for public view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Black Swan</td>
<td>Sexual themes and depiction of homosexuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Sex Tape</td>
<td>Explicit sexual content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>Religious material and images of prophets which forbidden in Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>The Interview</td>
<td>Political information that is provocative in relation to North Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Fifty Shades of Grey</td>
<td>A lot of sexual material and explicit nudity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>The Danish Girl</td>
<td>Sexual and nude content as well as on grounds of moral depravity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Sausage Party</td>
<td>Overtly-sexual and vulgar themes and promotion of immoral behaviour and drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Beauty and the Beast</td>
<td>Promotes same sex relationship (homosexual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Jigsaw</td>
<td>Horror themes abound, as does gruesome brutality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Super Deluxe</td>
<td>Sensitive and adult content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>90 ML</td>
<td>Sensitive and adult content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Babi</td>
<td>Sowing racist feelings and provoking in nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main purpose of the censorship law is two pronged, namely:
to preserve the safety and harmony of society and
(ii) to protect the public interests of the people from elements that can cause harm.

In Malaysia, there is still no regulatory framework for content that can be accessed through Internet links in particular over-the-top media platforms such as Netflix. In general, content broadcasted through over-the-top media is offering a service to a mass market using the Internet connection, which platform operation is beyond the control of MCMC and LPF. In addition to the above, both CMA 1998 and Censorship Act 2002 clearly state that the Acts shall not be construed as permitting the censorship of any film or film-publicity material published, displayed, circulated, exhibited, distributed or transmitted over the internet or over intranets (Malaysia 2006a)(Malaysia 2006b).

Although the digital content is actually intended to provide entertainment and while acknowledging that all Malaysian citizens have a right to full and equal footing recognition to relish certain fundamental rights and freedoms as contained in the Federal Constitution and other relevant statutes, there are also some contents that feature scenes that are less pleasant, not favourable and/or offensive to the audience, including inappropriate language, culture, sexist remarks, explicit content, comments on sensitive matters involving political issues, 3Rs (religion, race, royal institution), promotion of LGBTQ lifestyle, and same sex marriage and insulting the physical or mental ability of others.

In the abovementioned context, the issue of uncensored Netflix content where it causes public unrest has been discussed in Parliament in 2019 (Malaysia 2019), but so far no positive approach has been taken by the government in regulating media content broadcast through Netflix. Thus, the principles and definitions of ‘the public interest’ that once appeared to be clear and immutable, seem in recent times to have become fragile with the advent of digital streaming media and need to be reviewed and reconceptualised. Based on the current practice, this study aims to trace the experiences, thoughts and feelings of viewers who watch Netflix content that has not yet been censored, especially the drama series Behind Her Eyes in terms of Islam and culture in Malaysia. As such, in the course of preparing this article, we designed the key themes to address the purpose of the current study as below:

a) Does the absence of content regulation on Netflix cause concern among Malaysian audiences in terms of contravening Islamic teaching and culture in Malaysia?

b) Do the audiences think that content censorship is relevant in Malaysia?

Islam is a Way of Life

In modern living, media has a huge impact on audiences across a broad range of contexts. The media has the ability to manipulate, influence, convince, promote, pressurise government and/or society, as well as govern the world in both constructive and depraved manners (Perse 2001) socially, culturally, psychologically, intellectually, spiritually and in many ways. Without proper guidance, there is no doubt that the influence of the media is likely to have a bad social impact such as encouraging immorality and rampant wickedness such as gambling, prostitution and adultery. Thus, in the assessment process of films, the rulings of LPF's principles often hinge on preventing content from offending the sensibilities of the state’s various interest groups. In practice, the censorship committee has been particularly focused on the issues are depicting of erroneous religious teachings, drugs, sexuality, racism, hatred, heresy, superstition or any content that may be seditious and considered detrimental to society.

In 2014 for instance, the LPF banned the whole American epic historical film Noah that is based on the life narrative of the Prophet Noah, directed by Darren Aronofsky. Noah received excessive criticism from Muslim countries in the world including Malaysia for not being
sensitive enough (Syafique Shuib 2014) by displaying illustrations or faces of the Prophet Noah (Russell Crowe) which is contrary to the Home Ministry's Film Censorship Guidelines and against the Islamic Content Censorship Guidelines for Broadcasting released by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). Depiction of faces the any prophet are forbidden in Islam. In a separate statement, Al-Azhar in Egypt, one of Islam's most revered religious institutions, said it objects to the film because it violates Islamic law and could "provoke the feelings of believers" (Anon 2014).

In relation to the adult content, extreme obscenity scenes are also prohibited in Islam. Islam as a religion revealed to its people to improve morals, naturally regulates it in such a way. Subsequently in 2015, LPF prohibited the popular erotica trilogy Fifty Shades of Grey from being released for public viewing due to moral concerns and too explicit sexual scenes (Anon 2015). The authors are of the view that most of the scenes in *Behind Her Eyes* are also not much different compared to the films that have been banned by the LPF. Taking drugs and drinking alcohol is strictly forbidden in Islam because taking drugs and drinking intoxicating alcohol can affect the sanity of the human mind. We are required by Islam to stay away from any misconduct and vice that potentially poses a threat to the well-being of society and the country. Word of Allah in Qur’an in verse 90 of Surah Al-Maidah:

“O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, and Al-Ansâb, and Al¬Azlâm (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Syaitan’s handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful”.

(Al-Maidah - 90)

What is different is only the type of broadcasting platform. Most of the banned films are for premiere media screenings. Despite the fact that *Behind Her Eyes* is based on over-the-top platform, it is targeted to the same viewers in Malaysia as those who watch non internet movies. In clearer context, it has the same negative impact even though the content is broadcasted through different platforms (Asma Md. Isa et al. 2020).

**Culture Dilemma on Screen**

Malaysia is a plural society with main ethnic groups comprising Malays and Bumiputeras, Chinese and Indians. Each of the ethnic groups have their own respective and unique cultures and practices namely, languages, dialects, values, beliefs, norms, religions and traditions. Culture is a system of meaning and behaviour which defines the way of life for a group of people in the societal system. Culture comprises of knowledge, beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, artefacts and worldview that are acquired, shared and used by the members in daily life. Hofstede (2011) defined culture as a collective programming of the mind which characterises the members of one group of people from another. By applying Hofstede’s taxonomies of cultural pattern, Malaysian society is known to be collectivist nation which emphasises on a-group’s goal and harmony among people and nature. In the context of the attitude towards uncertainty, since most Malaysians still hold strong to their cultural, therefore they lean more to uncertainty avoidance when the culture feels threatened or are anxious about ambiguity. Respect for power distance is still high in the society in which people accept authority and hierarchical organization as a natural part of their culture. Malaysians are also concerned about ‘face saving’ which involves pride of a person or group of people. Thus, the sensitivity for each other’s’ cultures is high among Malaysian society.

As a former British colony Malaysia experienced westernization and a modernization ideology. The colonials cultivated values of upholding and respecting the values of the West as part of the modern concept. These included developing secular education in English schools as bringing knowledge
and technology to the country, thus making a significant impact on the locals to look up to the western position. Although the colonials succeeded in imposing a modern system, they did not succeed in diminishing Islamic values during the pre-independence of Tanah Melayu especially among the Malays. However, this is study acknowledges that there are marginal Malays who embraced the western lifestyle with moderate views towards Islamic teaching. This phenomenon is often a concern to mainstream society who are actively trying to curb the excessive influence of western culture which is considered able to affect the position of the Malay (Wan Abdul Kadir 2005) culture that is associate with Islamic identity.

In discussing culture, it is also important to relate it to the concept of globalization. In the current context, globalization has affected certain values which are entrenched in the culture and religions of the world. Globalization refers to the strengthening of worldwide relations which views the importance of interaction between the local and the globe (Giddens 1991). In other words, the term which hailed from the West caused the world to shrink and interconnect; it allows goods, services, technology, information, money, ideas, people and culture to move across geographical, political and cultural boundaries. In the modern context, due to globalization and Internet foot-print, Netflix has encroached into the streaming media in Malaysia bringing foreign culture not limited to communication and lifestyle the through digital screen. The above phenomena are able to benefit society by broadening knowledge and worldview horizons through digital media and expand cross-cultural contacts and learning from each other, thus bridging the gaps between nations.

Subsequently, the world changes consistent with the development of the mass media and communication technology. Communication technology adoption among Malaysians has swayed and impacted the way the local societies think and practice their culture. In fact, western values penetrate into the local culture through entertainment (which is one of the branches in modern culture) and become popular culture. In the media context, some of the content displayed is incompatible with the values and practices of Malaysian society who still hold strong to the system of cultural and religious values. Thus, the western values and beliefs are viewed as a threat to and the cause of loss of cultural identity. Malaysian audiences might encounter with culture shock that which is featured in the media such as promiscuity between men and women and the fashion world that is contrary to Islamic teaching. Moreover, the media content also portray entertainment in modern life such as going to nightclubs and western lifestyle like exchanging partners and drinking alcohol, thus penetrating the young minds to adopt and accept that those values are accepted in society and reflect a modern lifestyle (Wan Abdul Kadir 1988).

The modern westernized way of life is opposed by the mainstream society due to the view of western culture influence as being materialistic, individualistic, secular, liberal, and containing hedonism ideologies. The marginal Malay liberal group feel very proud and highly regarded when adopting the western value system and are willing to discard the traditional value system practiced because it allegedly hinders progress and development. This globalization of culture is a form of cultural imperialism and psychological warfare whereby western values are spread to the developing and less developed countries to accept and assimilate into their society. Further, the portrayal of fictional ideas in the media, the Internet and online streaming content that segregates the reality of religious values, is also threatening the minds of young audiences especially Muslim audiences. Besides that, some of the content lack cultural sensitivity. What is more, through the streaming media, audiences are attracted to choose the western content especially American content which is popular and attractive (Mohamad 2020). Other issues that raise concern are on the portrayal of homosexual elements which promote LGBTQ, and anti-religion and sexual elements in the content that contradict especially Malay culture and Islamic values.

III. METHODOLOGY
through in-depth interviews. In order to determine the unpleasant feeling and experiences among the audiences in Malaysia, two in-depth interviews were carried out on the first season of *Behind Her Eyes* viewers. The authors employed the qualitative method and in depth interview as main techniques in collecting the data as these approaches are able to provide clear descriptions and explanations especially when dealing with data that are considered not amenable to counting or measuring in the quantitative method (Hammarberg et al. 2016) in order to answer the questions in particular about experience, meaning and perspective most often from the standpoint of the informant. The informants are labelled IA-1 to IA-2 for confidentiality purposes. Each interview was recorded, transcribed and subject to open coding and aligned with the themes. The transcribed text data was analysed using NVivo according to the themes needed to answer the purpose of the study. The distribution of the informants that volunteered to participate in the interview were categorized accordingly in terms of gender, race, academic level and occupation and are presented as tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-A1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Executive Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-A2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers divided study results into two central themes, specifically aspects of Islam and culture. This study describes how the informants interviewed in this research assessed the content in the first season of the drama series *Behind Her Eyes* from Malaysia’s religious and cultural perspective. Before further discussion, the researchers sought information from both informants about why they watched *Behind Her Eyes*. In an attempt to answer the authors’ question, I-A1 responded that he watched it solely for entertainment and to fill his free time during the weekend, particularly during the lockdown. I-A1 also admitted that he binge-watched the movie series back-to-back because curiosity triggered him as the story plot developed in each episode. Furthermore, the introduction of Rob’s character drove him, as Rob is the most villainous character. As for I-A2, she did not have a particular genre preference to watch a movie or drama. The I-A2 motive of watching *Behind Her Eyes* was the recommendations suggested by friends. The data of the interviews revealed thoughts about *Behind Her Eyes* from the audience’s lens concerning this drama series. A description of these two aspects is presented as follows:

#### Theme Aspects of Religion

According to I-A1, almost all the scenes aired in *Behind Her Eyes* were controversial and could harm the local community’s social fabric in terms of discipline and civilisation. This storyline contained too many supernatural components and illogical plot twists. It is acknowledged that this story is an adaptation of a novel. However, from the aspect of Islam, one is taught to use a rational mind in all aspects of life. I-A1 mentioned:

> “By only counting from one to ten, both the spirits of Adele and Rob could swap, just like that... It is ridiculous and illogical... This act fools the audience and pretty clearly proposes an idea against the teachings of Islam”.

Nevertheless, from another perspective, I-A1 explained that *Behind Her Eyes* is one of the Western texts that is not based on religious principles. It is recognised, especially in the United Kingdom, that secular practices are segregated from religion in daily life. In general, the West emphasizes on ethical aspects and moral principles. Nonetheless, Malaysians prioritise religion
as a way of life in which ethics and morals are embedded. It is known that Islam forbids the acts of suicide and murder. Islam teaches its followers to appreciate themselves by taking care of their own safety, family and society in general.

The issue of drug abuse is one of the notable matters in Malaysia. Its effects can be detrimental to the addict’s physical, mental, emotional health and to the people around them. For drug abuse offences, if a person is convicted as guilty, he can be punished under Section 6 (1) (a) of the Drug Addicts (Treatment and Rehabilitation) Act 1983. It allows the drug addict to undergo treatment and rehabilitation in a rehabilitation centre for two years and exercises supervision for two years. In the context of the drama *Behind Her Eyes*, according to I-A1, scenes that explicitly showed Adele taking drugs, especially the scene of injecting drugs in her toe, should be censored. It is essential, as Islam forbids its followers to injure themselves by consuming prohibited substances that can cause harm.

Since most content broadcasted on Netflix is uncensored, parents are encouraged to closely monitor what kind of dramas or movies the family members should watch in order not to be influenced by inappropriate content displayed on the screen. This is part of parental control to curb any potential harm to their children such as from abuse of drugs. Hence, it is highly recommended that the MCMC recognise the uncensored content issues that can bring harm to audiences, the reason being that the self-monitoring through parental control is not adequate, as the contents that can be accessible via Internet connection are beyond parents’ capability to control. Thus, the regulator intervention needed is critical to minimize any controversial issues shown on screen in *Behind Her Eyes* that may raise concerns among the audiences. On the same note, even though crimes in Malaysia are not entirely caused by the influence of Netflix’s content, an urge to the authorities is imminent because *Behind Her Eyes* content can trigger unpleasant phenomena in the community.

As for I-A2, from the Islamic point of view, there were two most prominent aspects in the drama *Behind Her Eyes* that made her feel uncomfortable watching with the family. For instance, there were too many scenes that were anti-social and indecent. Some of them were kissing scenes between men and women that were too explicit to be shown. It included same-sex acts and uncensored drinking alcohol scenes. I-A2 mentioned:

“We do not want such practices that are not in line with Islam to be presented to the community in Malaysia. If this circumstance is left unsupervised by authorities such as the Film Censorship Board or MCMC, society, the younger generation especially will assume that kissing and drinking alcohol in public is normal. This normalisation is perilous because it can influence the thinking and behaviour of young people”.

I-A2 added that the public may be confused with the regulator’s approach for not taking any action to regulate the new streaming media. I-A2 strongly believe that the regulators should play an active role to block, filter, edit or even ban the contents that are inappropriate for public viewing. As such, the authors are of the view that the respective government agencies need to further strengthen their jurisdiction to protect public interest. Currently, the regulator in Malaysia bifurcates the role of a media into two, namely linear and non-linear broadcasters. In reality it’s a fact that these two type of broadcasters have the same objectives in providing the entertainment to the viewers. Taking into account the audiences’ sentiments, it is a time for the regulator to review the existing laws in order to ensure the long benefit the general public.

Theme, Aspects of Culture
The culture of the community in Malaysia highlights dignity, politeness, shyness and conservativeness. Therefore, communicating about matters that contain elements of sex and obscenity are regarded as taboo and shameful in society. In general, the community in Malaysia does not discuss topics related to sex in public. The main reason is because an individual’s self-appearance and personality is closely linked to spirituality, mental and physical health, behaviour and lifestyle in daily life. In a collectivist cultural context, intergenerational relationships and support such as family, husband and wife, parents, children, siblings, peers, friends, neighbourhood, and general society are key to the dynamics of self-well-being, which is the pillar in shaping one’s personality.

In relation to the cross-cultural context, I-A1 explained that the explicit sex scenes in *Behind Her Eyes* contradicted with Malaysian culture. The story is adapted from a novel whose background is in the United Kingdom. Malaysian culture is contradictory to Western culture. According to I-A2, sexual scenes in *Behind Her Eyes* may be acceptable in the West, but it is deemed not suitable to Malaysians who hold strong to cultural values. I-A1 declared that:

“Usually, I watch Netflix on the light rail transit (LRT) on the way to my workplace. However, when there is a sex scene, I will skip to another content or switch it off immediately…. I am afraid people will regard me as a sex maniac… because I do not know what other people will think about me.”

From the I-A1 statement above, it is evident that society’s general perception of oneself is crucial in portraying the individual’s personality to the public. It is confirmed that avoiding acts that are not in line with local cultural norms is one of elements to be accepted in the society. Meanwhile, in the aspect of communication, all verbal and non-verbal communication is guided by the foundation of cultural values, particularly politeness that is instilled in oneself since childhood. In addition, courtesy and morality are part of Malaysia’s Rukun Negara. In the West, showing the middle finger signals may be acceptable. Nevertheless, according to I-A1, if a person shows a middle finger signal, it is offensive and humiliating in Malaysian culture. Thus, it also needs to be censored as it does not fit into the cultural context. The authors are of the view that the above-said behavior is impolite and may influence the audiences in a negative way to follow the bad deeds through uncensored new media such as Netflix.

The debate over the absence of content censorship, in particular on the Netflix video streaming platform is provocative and the lack stirs various deviations from culture aspects in the society. According to I-A2, the scenes in *Behind Her Eyes* contained too many elements which could affect the local society’s social fabric, morals and mannerism. IA-2 explained that *Behind Her Eyes* offered more bad influence than good in our cultural context. I-A2 revealed that one of the scenes that upset her was:

“In our culture, the act of having sex with someone else’s husband is completely intolerable to our society. It is forbidden by religion, and the act is detrimental in the context of our culture.”

I-A2 also explained that although the act did occur in society, it should be censored because the media has a powerful influence on the audience. Therefore, the authorities need to consider developing a new media content regulation framework, especially for Netflix, which now dominates almost 60% of the streaming media in Malaysia’s market. Furthermore, filtering harmful elements should not be viewed as a form of restriction on media freedom. It is essential to note that media freedom is not absolute. What matters is the responsibility of the media specially to channel information and entertainment as long as it does not bring harm to the audience. I-A2 stated that:
“In the West, Behind Her Eyes is a manifestation of the right to freedom of speech. It foregrounds the dark side of what exactly happens in the community. However, freedom of speech does not imply that bad elements should be broadcast on the screen without conveying any consequential message. It must deliver a message that can bring awareness and penitence to the audience. The Behind Her Eyes narrative, defies the ethics and guidelines of broadcasting”.

In the Malaysian context, the moral of the story is one of the important elements to gauge audience response towards the media usage and functionality of media in society. The narrative in films and dramas should contain a message that can be easily captured and understood by the audiences subsequently embroidered with solid plot as many exemplary and lessons can be learned by the audiences.

V. CONCLUSION

It is clear that Behind Her Eyes contains elements contravening values highlighted in this study, namely of Islamic teachings and culture in Malaysia. Among the scenes that are disturbing to the audiences in Malaysia because they are not consistent with two major themes of Islamic teaching and Malaysian culture are, adultery, extreme supernatural scenes, explicit drug usage, drinking alcohol in public, inappropriate communication not limited to verbal and non-verbal gestures, violence and many more. Although Malaysia has shifted into the digital platform in various aspect of life, this study confirms that Malaysians are still conservative in terms of culture and religion towards Behind Her Eyes’ plots with low acceptance due to contradictions with the two themes discussed in this study. Thus, censorship is still relevant for audiences in Malaysia. However, this finding is based on the mainstream point of view. Taking note that this study only takes into account informants from Islam and the Malays only, the authors would like to suggest that future studies may consider further extension to the study related to the topic by incorporating the perspectives of other races and religions in Malaysia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank the Centre for Research in Media and Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for giving an excellent window of opportunity for us to conduct this research as well as all the informants who took part in the in-depth interview in this study.

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