

Framing the News Sources in Covid-19 News by Sin Chew Daily: Comparison between the Early Stages of the Pandemic and Endemic

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia was affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the government had to enforce Movement Control Orders throughout the country starting on 18th March 2020 to combat this pandemic. This study aims to investigate the way and type of framing used by the media in Malaysia. The Chinese language newspaper Sin Chew Daily is not exempted from playing this role. This study is about the analysis of news reporting patterns and news framing regarding the issue of Covid-19. A total of 485 news reports related to the Covid-19 issue have been collected to be used as the sample of this study. The results showed that the pattern of news reporting and framing is dependent on the media. The community needs to choose information wisely from the right channels and not misuse the media for their benefit.

Keywords: covid-19; framing; Malaysia; news

INTRODUCTION

The media plays an important role in a health crisis. The roles of the media comprise providing information that is accurate and reliable to the public, preventing panic and fostering public understanding and cooperation with necessary restrictions. According to Smith and Tittle (2017), health experts rely on the media for conveying preventive health messages to the public. Mu'azu and Moses (2022) also stated that the media plays an important role in connecting the community with health experts who use the media as deliver reliable sources of health information and enlightening messages. Therefore, accurate information delivery by the media is essential. Only with the delivery of accurate and reliable information, then the spread of fake news, rumours and information epidemics (infodemics) about the crisis of health can be prevented because fake news is a major threat in the fight against disease outbreaks. Fake news and rumours will confuse the community to the detriment of public understanding of a health crisis. Framing can have negative implications, such as stereotyping certain groups. For example, Cable News Network (CNN), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Al Jazeera portrayed the COVID-19 outbreak as a virus in China, resulting in stigma and stereotypes of Chinese people around the world.

Pan and Meng (2016) stated that media coverage of health issues will affect public compliance with security measures. Boyd et al. (2009) also stated that the mass media in the form of radio, television and newspapers is an effective ally in persuading the target audience to accept the implementation of new behaviours. Due to the importance of news coverage of the issue of health related to infectious diseases, analysis of how framed news is important. For example, Wang and Mao's (2021) study about the framing of COVID-19 by the Chinese media found that the use of frames responsibilities and frames as a result of playing a major role in transforming COVID-19 from a common disease to a catastrophe. The journalists initially framed the COVID-19 outbreak as a common disease whose consequences can be calculated. After the government's participation, journalists framed the COVID-19 outbreak as an

uncontrolled disease and turned it into a national disaster that require control measures. This proves that the use of various frames by the media can either prevent the transformation of a disease infection from being catastrophic or facilitate this transformation process. An outbreak of COVID-19 in Malaysia in a pandemic state or situation endemic depends greatly on the way and type of framing used by the media.

AGENDA SETTING THEORY

Agenda Setting Theory has a close relationship with the theory of framing. In newspapers, any kind of issue can be featured, but only news or issues prioritized by the media will be placed on the front page of the newspaper. Thus, the existence of the Agenda Setting theory was established by McCombs and Reynolds in 2002. According to this theory, the media is more focused and prioritized issues that have more value due to limited space in the newspaper. The Role of Agenda Setting in media news is not only focused on public opinion only on certain issues, but can also affect thinking and influencing public opinion about topics in the news. The items that can be used in theory as an agenda are objects. In various studies that use this theory of Agenda Determination, the object is a political issue and a group of organizations, a country or anything only that can be used as a focus and attention among the community. Objects have various characteristics and properties that can explain the object. When an issue or object is prioritized and magnified, other objects will be minimized and less focus will be provided to them. News framing is a substitute for agenda setting because agenda setting only delivers news and information to readers and does not involve a thought process or having one's own opinion than an individual. Normah Mustaffa and Faridah Ibrahim (2018) reported that the determination agenda is unable to tell what the community needs to think through 19 a more systematic and in-depth reporting scheme especially when touching on the process of selection and highlighting in the publication of news. Framing involves a necessary thought process and society thinks rationally and has its own opinions that may be contradictory or not the same as other individuals.

NEWS COVERAGE OF COVID-19 IN MALAYSIA

The media uses the faces of politicians to convey information regarding the issue of COVID-19. Politicians and individuals who have a great influence on society. They too have their scope during the delivery of information or news. For example, The Prime Minister in Malaysia presented important issues and information such as issues with regard to the period of the Movement Control Order (MCO), which was implemented in this country. The head of the Malaysian Ministry of Health (KKM), as well as delegates to convey information regarding the COVID-19 case in Malaysia. In this issue of COVID-19, the way information is related to the endemic is framed as increasingly important to convey information and SOPs new implemented by the government to the community. By the presence of framing in the news and the issue, the audience receives information, which is provided through the mass media and thinks for themselves until the result is their own opinion on the COVID-19 endemic that is occurring in the country of Malaysia. In this endemic phase, the SOP implemented over the past two years will be relaxed again such as it is not mandatory to wear a face mask and it is unnecessary to create social distancing. With the existence of framing theory, media works are for gathering information and framing it then conveys to society. The community has a role to accept and then think for themselves before acting. The community will think about whether they will use the new SOP or continue to adhere to the old SOP, Therefore, this theory is used to know the difference in the perspective used by a journalist or translator while selecting issues

and writing and translating related news headlines between the beginning of the pandemic phase and the endemic phase in Malaysia.

THE LEVEL OF REPORT PROMINENCE NEWS RELATED TO THE BEGINNING OF THE PANDEMIC AND ENDEMIC PHASE OF COVID-19 BY SIN CHEW DAILY NEWSPAPER

Prominence in this study was tested with Budd's Attention Score. Measurements Budd's Attention Score in this study includes five attributes which are title length, the news page located in the newspaper, the news section located as well as the size of the coverage news in the newspaper. The study shows that the prominence in the reporting of COVID-19 news by the Sin Chew Daily newspaper at the beginning of the phase endemic COVID has a higher level compared with reporting COVID-19 news at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic phase. Sin Chew Daily uses more attributes when reporting news at the beginning of the endemic phase of COVID-19 rather than reporting the news at the beginning of the pandemic phase of COVID-19. This study also found that Sin Chew Daily newspaper reporters are inclined toward using long headlines that are longer than two lines. Some headlines are even more than half the page of a newspaper. The result in this is consistent with the study of Jocelyn et al. (2012) that the headline of the newspaper Sin Chew Daily became longer, in a simple form and a large size since 1977 and this is one of the typographic elements to produce page patterns that attract the reader's attention.

Results also show that the Prime Minister has the highest level of prominence in relevant news reporting with the issue of COVID-19 in the Sin Chew Daily newspaper at the beginning of the pandemic phase, while the Minister of Health has the lowest level of prominence in news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 in the Sin Chew Daily newspaper at the beginning of the pandemic phase of COVID-19, such that at the beginning of the phase pandemic, the government is trying to control the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic among the community. Thus, the government has implemented Order Movement Control (MCO) to control community movements. Prime Ministers often present at press conferences to provide the latest information related to the implementation of MCO in our country, such as important dates and stages in the implementation of MCO in this country. Therefore, the media is unsurprised that much focus on the information described by the Prime Minister and the level of prominence the Prime Minister is the highest in news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 in the Sin Chew Daily newspaper at the beginning of the phase pandemic. However, economists have the highest degree of prominence in news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 in the Sin Chew Daily newspaper at the beginning of the endemic phase of COVID-19, while the Ministry of Health has the lowest prominence in news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 in the Sin Chew Daily newspaper in this phase because many sectors are similar nightclubs and entertainment are allowed to operate as usual. Malaysian citizens are also given flexibility in conducting daily activities. Border opening and the opening of the tourism sector also have an extremely large impact on the development of our country's economic sector. Therefore, the media focuses a lot and use sources from economists in news reporting on the beginning of the endemic phase of COVID-19.

USE OF PICTURES REPORTING ON THE PANDEMIC AND ENDEMIC PHASE OF COVID-19 BY SIN CHEW DAILY NEWSPAPER

This study found that the media used plenty of pictures related to the news reports on COVID-19. For example, the media used pictures of ministers in the government in the Sin Chew newspaper Daily if the information is delivered by ministers in the government. The media also

uses pictures that are related to the situation or the situation to be conveyed in news reporting related to COVID-19. 87 This study found that the media use plenty of pictures related to the news of COVID-19 in the reported news. For example, the media uses pictures of ministers in the government Sin Chew Daily newspaper if the information is delivered by the ministers in the government. The media also uses pictures that is related to the situation or situation to be conveyed in news reporting related to COVID-19. The study of Jocelyn et al. (2012) also argued that the same pictures and graphics are identified as the main entry point, followed by the front page of the promotional box used to dance the reader to the letter page of certain news. Holmqvist and Wartenberg (2005) also stated that readers used to enter the newspaper page through the dominant picture then switch to the headline or another dominant image.

COMPARISONS SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN REPORTING PANDEMIC ISSUES AND ENDEMIC IN SIN CHEW DAILY NEWSPAPER

The highest percentage of representation of information sources in related news reporting with the issue of COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic phase is the Director General of Health, which reached 27.3%, followed by the Senior Minister of Defense at 22.7%, and non-governmental organizations, which is at 20.6%. The lowest percentage for representatives' sources of information in news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic phase is the Malaysian Ministry of Health (KKM) official who reached 0%. In the endemic phase of COVID-19, the highest percentage for resource representatives' information in news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 is the non-governmental organization reached 26.5%, followed by Ministry of Health Officials Malaysia (KKM), which is 23% and the Director General of Health is at 21%. The lowest percentage for the representation of information sources in related news reporting with the issue of COVID-19 in the endemic phase is the Senior Minister of Defense has a percentage of 0%.

The highest percentage for resource representation information in news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic phase is the Director General of Health which reached a total of 27.3%. Since the beginning of the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic in our country, the name of the Head Director of Health, Tan Sri Dato Dr Noor Hisham, is often heard in circles of society. The Director General of Health became one the most important source of news reporting related to the issue of COVID-19 in the Sin Chew Daily newspaper at the beginning of the pandemic phase. He always conveys information about rates of COVID-19 infection in the community, death rates, new clusters and ways to take care of your health to prevent this epidemic. The current implementation of the MCO also reminded the public to comply with the SOP which has been set by the government to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic. Thus, it is unsurprising that the media uses his picture and name frequently as the main source of information in reporting news related to the case of COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic phase. Even when presenting to the endemic phase of COVID-19, the percentage of the Director General of Health in news reporting with issues COVID-19 has reduced to 21%, but this percentage is also between the second highest percentage in news reporting. The Ministry of Health officials have a percentage of 0% in reporting related news with the issue of COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic phase of COVID-19 because most many health-related news reporting is presented by the Chief Director of Health Malaysia. When preventing the endemic phase of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health Malaysia (KKM) has established many positions and special groups to provide information related to the issue of COVID-19 to society. In this endemic phase of COVID-19, officials from the Ministry of Health play a role their role to convey and provide the latest information and statistics such as new infection rates, death rates, and Brought In Dead (BID) rates to the community through specific applications and websites. Thus, the percentage of reporting news

related to the issue of COVID-19 during the endemic phase of COVID-19 by KKM officials has increased to 23% from 0% at the starting phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the Minister of Health is Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba, while The Minister of Health in 2022 is Khairy Jamaluddin. When comparing the frequency of appearances of the Minister of Health in front of the media between 2020 (the beginning of the pandemic phase of COVID-19) and 2022 (the beginning of the endemic phase of COVID-19), the percentage of news reporting related to COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic phase of COVID-19 by the Minister of Health is only 5.2%, while this percentage has increased to 12% during the endemic phase of COVID-19. This is said to be so because reports and information related to this epidemic were presented by the Director General of Health, namely, Tan Sri Dato Dr Noor Hisham. Furthermore, a vaccine is not yet available for preventing this epidemic at that time. Therefore, the appearance of the Minister of Health in reporting information and news about COVID-19 is low because he only provides a report on the hospitalization rate due to COVID-19 infection among Malaysians. The Prime Minister in 2020 is Tan Sri Dato' HJ. Muhyiddin. When the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic in our country, the Prime Minister is responsibility for news reporting and information delivery related to COVID-19 to the public. This table shows that as much as 10.8% of it comprises the appearance of the Prime Minister in the media to provide the latest information to many people.

Throughout the implementation of the MCO in our country, the Prime Minister has played his part to make special broadcasts and announcements to Malaysians to remind the people to comply with the SOP that has been set. Not only that, Tan Sri Dato HJ. Muhyiddin also spoke about the situation in the hospital and the situation in our country during the implementation of the MCO, wherein the people get the latest and authentic information. Throughout the phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia, the government tries to assist the people, especially the B40 group that is affected by the spread of this epidemic. Thus, Premier Ministers often hold press conferences to provide information to the people about the help offered by the government. The representation of the main source of information used by the *Sin Chew Daily* newspaper in reporting related news with COVID-19 is the government. This result is consistent with Chang et al.'s study (2012), which is about the analysis of news from Malaysian daily newspapers in drafting education issues that policymakers and policy support groups, such as government and political party leaders in the *Sin Chew Daily*, contributed as a unit of analysis in the study.

CONCLUSION

The government plays an important role in the process of delivering news and information to Malaysians. Certain governments and ministers have their image and responsibilities in front of the audience. Society should use the media wisely especially when getting information from other parties. Society should be smart to distinguish between valid information and invalid information. Next, the community needs to stop spreading false information and news to others so as not to confuse others. Thus, there are benefits and negative effects that come from the use of media in society. The community itself needs to be wise in choosing what information is authentic and what is not misused in the media for personal gain. This can take care of the safety of an individual, as well as the safety of our country.

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