



**MEDIA COVERAGE OF HEALTH CRISIS IN MALAYSIA: A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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CHAN HOI LUN

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Media Coverage of Health Crisis in Malaysia: a Framing Analysis of Covid-19 Pandemic” prepared and submitted by “Chan Hoi Lun” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (hons) Journalism is hereby accepted.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	1
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Origin of Covid-19	2 - 4
1.2 Mitigation Strategy – Movement Control Order (MCO)	4 - 6
1.3 The news media coverage of health crisis	6 - 7
1.4 Research Problem	
1.4.1 Concerns on news coverage for Covid-19	7 - 9
1.5 Research objectives	9
1.6 Research questions	9 - 10
1.7 Research Significance	
1.7.1 Theoretical significance	10 - 11
1.7.2 Practical significance	11
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Media coverage of Covid-19 in Malaysia	12 - 17
2.2 Online news media	17 - 18
2.3 Online mainstream and alternative media in Malaysia	19 - 21
2.3.1 New Straits Times	21 - 22
2.3.2 Malaysiakini	22
2.4 Framing theory	22 - 25
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY (QUANTITATIVE + QUALITATIVE)	
3.1 Summative content analysis	26 - 28
3.2 Data collection	28 - 29

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Number of articles published	30
4.1 Type of frames	30 - 31
4.2 Source of the information	31 - 32
4.3 Slant of the news	32 – 33

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Number of articles published	34 - 35
5.2 Type of frames	35 - 37
5.3 Source of the information	37 - 39
5.4 Slant of the news	39 - 41
5.5 Conclusion	41 - 43
5.6 Limitation	43
5.7 Recommendation	43 - 44

REFERENCES

Appendix A FYP Proposal Form	59
Appendix B Supervisor Meeting Form	60
Appendix C Turnitin Report	61
Appendix D Student Declaration Form	62

LIST OF TABLES

Tables		Page
1	Top 10 countries with the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases as of 4 November 2022	3 - 4
2	Phases of movement restrictions and dates	5
3	Major Coding Differences Among Three Approaches to Content Analysis	26
4	Covid-19 related article published by New Straits Times (NST) from January 25 to March 25, 2020	30
5	Type of frames used to report Covid-19 related article by New Straits Times (NST) and Malaysiakini from January 25 to March 25, 2020	31
6	Source of information selected to report Covid-19 related article by New Straits Times (NST) and Malaysiakini from January 25 to March 25, 2020	32
7	Slant of news in reporting Covid-19 related article by New Straits Times (NST) and Malaysiakini from January 25 to March 25, 2020	33

Media Coverage of Health Crisis in Malaysia: a Framing Analysis of Covid-19 Pandemic

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a global threat to human life since its outbreak in December 2019, originating from China. Malaysia reported its first case in January 2020. Given the global reach of the pandemic, increased media coverage was expected. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how mainstream and alternative media in Malaysia frame Covid-19 in terms of the type of frames used, sources of information, and slant of news. The study aims to achieve three objectives: (1) to investigate the type of frames used by selected newspapers in their coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic, (2) to determine the sources of information used by the selected newspapers during the pandemic, and (3) to examine the slant of news reported by the selected newspapers during the pandemic. The methodology involves using summative content analysis, including quantitative content analysis to investigate the framing of Covid-19 coverage on online news portals and qualitative content analysis to identify themes or patterns. The results showed that both mainstream and alternative news portals predominantly used the human-interest frame to report on Covid-19. In terms of sources of information, NST and Malaysiakini used all sources of information for their Covid-19 related articles, with no significant gap between the usage of these sources by either news portals. In terms of the slant of news, NST and Malaysiakini predominantly employed a neutral tone, followed by an alarming tone, with alarming news articles focusing on the high number of infections, death tolls, and potential for catastrophic outbreaks.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Origin of Covid-19

A lethal viral epidemic known as coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is reportedly threatening global health. Since December 12, 2019, Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, reported the first outbreak of the unidentified acute respiratory tract infection pandemic, it may be correlated to the Hunan South China Seafood Market (Guo et al., 2020). On January 11–12, 2020, the National Health Commission China provided World Health Organization (WHO) with more specific evidence indicating that the epidemic was linked to exposures at the Hunan South China Seafood Market (Hashim et al., 2021). A number of patients had been exposed to the virus at the seafood market, according to early results. Shah et al. (2020) indicated that a variety of exotic foods other than seafood are conveniently available in this market, including bats, snakes, marmots, and birds. Most people know that exotic animals are more likely to get sick from and spread different viruses and bacteria, because of what they eat and where they live.

This severe form of pneumonia was traced back to a new coronavirus (nCoV), which was determined to be the cause by the Chinese government on January 7, 2020 (Neilson & Woodward, 2020). WHO verified the finding of nCoV on January 12, 2020, and it was given the name Covid-19 on February 11, 2020. Covid-19, which was found in the animals at the market, had given people a serious respiratory infection. Several studies have found that the

nucleotide sequences of the Covid-19 were 96% the same as those of the bat coronavirus, which is the main host of this virus (Shah et al., 2020).

Covid-19 expanded globally to more nations, including South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Italy, Iran, Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Malaysia. Thailand reported the first COVID-19 case outside of China on January 13, 2020 (WHO, 2020), two days after China confirmed its first death. As of 3 November 2022, there were 628,346,704 confirmed cases of COVID-19 nationwide, including 6,573,968 deaths. A total of 12,861,382,558 doses of vaccine have been given as of 1 November 2022 (WHO, 2022a).

Table 1.1: Top 10 countries with the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases as of 4 November 2022 (WHO, 2022b)

No.	Countries	Cases – cumulative total	Deaths – cumulative total
1	United States of America	96,206,427	1,060,430
2	India	44,657,149	530,461
3	France	35,800,998	153,555
4	Germany	35,728,277	154,095
5	Brazil	34,837,035	688,219
6	Republic of Korea	25,717,277	29,280
7	The United Kingdom	23,898,489	193,673
8	Italy	23,531,023	179,101
9	Japan	22,432,840	46,781
10	Russian Federation	21,447,518	390,388
27	Malaysia	4,909,846	36,480

	Total	628,346,704	6,573,968
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* Three nations - Turkmenistan, Tokelau, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

have no confirmed cases of Covid-19

The first Covid-19 case was reported in Malaysia on January 25, 2020, and it was traced to 3 Chinese nationals who had previously had intimate contact with an infected individual in Singapore. According to Elengoe (2020), the first Malaysian had Covid-19 on February 4, 2020, a 41-year-old man who started to experience fever and a cough after he returned from Singapore. On the same day, a 4-year-old Chinese girl was in isolation at Sultanah Maliha Hospital in Langkawi since January 29, 2020. She recovered, released, and was able to go back to China, making her the first person in Malaysia to recover after getting COVID-19 since the outbreak on February 15th. For 11 days following the 22nd case, no more cases were recorded (Guo et al., 2020).

Ng et al. (2020) mentioned that the Malaysian recorded cases may be broadly categorized into three waves as of March 31, 2020. By February 27, 2020, the first wave had been effectively treated, and all 22 previously reported cases had been discharged from the hospital. The second wave began to appear on February 27 after an absence of 11 days. A big religious gathering in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was the source of the first outbreak in a neighboring nation, Brunei, on March 11. There were 14,368 confirmed cases on October 8 in the third wave. By December 3, there were 69,095 cases, up 381% in just 2 months.

1.2 Mitigation Strategy – Movement Control Order (MCO)

Malaysia implemented a mitigation approach to control the pandemic starting on March 18 and extending until May 12 in 4 phases. When there were over 553 positive cases on March 16, 2020, Malaysia's Prime Minister made an MCO announcement. Social distancing was to be enforced for 14 days (18 March 2020 to 31 March 2020) in order to slow the COVID-19 virus's quick spread (Elengoe, 2020). On March 25, 2020, the MCO was extended to 14th of April 2020 because of the continued high number of positive cases. The government extended the MCO a further 14 days until April 28, 2020, based on WHO predictions that the number of COVID-19 cases in Malaysia will increase exponentially and peak in mid-April.

Several non-pharmaceutical measures were put into place by the government, including varying degrees and phases of movement restrictions such as the Movement Control Order (MCO), Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO), and Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) (Zamri et al., 2021)

Table 1.2: Phases of movement restrictions and dates (Guo et al., 2020)

Phase of movement restriction	Date
Phase 1 MCO	March 18 to 31, 2020
Phase 2 MCO	April 1 to 14, 2020
Phase 3 MCO	April 15 to 28, 2020
Phase 4 MCO	April 29 to May 12, 2020
CMCO	May 4 to June 9, 2020
RMCO	June 10 to December 31, 2020

* As of current moment, the "Transition to Endemic" phase is scheduled to begin on April 1, 2022, allowing Malaysians to return nearly normal living

The MCO was implemented on March 18, 2020, and the stringency level was changed depending on COVID-19 instances and urgency. No interstate travel or meetings were allowed during the MCO. Under the CMCO and RMCO, many economic sectors operated with tight standard operating procedures, and interstate travel was only permitted during the RMCO (Zamri et al., 2021)

1.3 The news media coverage of health crisis

The fact that we are dealing with a pandemic that has spread to every corner of the globe means that an increase in media coverage was expected. People turn to the news media to keep them informed about the world around them in general, particularly during times of crisis. Althaus (2002) found that the television network audience increased by a factor of two in the week following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Wiggins (2001) also shows the evidence that digital news sources and search platforms like Google received a sudden increase in visitors in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. This spike in use is generally driven by a "need for information." The news media serve a variety of purposes and are able to meet a variety of demands, but there is typically an increased need for additional information that is accurate when there is a crisis (Van Aelst et al., 2021). People were worried and wanted to know more about this "external threat" and its impact on society. When there is risk or a crisis, which is characterized by uncertainty, people will actively be seeking more information (Lachlan et al., 2016).

Fekih-Romdhane et al. (2020) conducted research from a Tunisian community and found out that the majority of the participants spent more than two hours each day perusing the media for

news and events relating to COVID-19 because they were staying at home for MCO. They had more time to use the internet and the media to discover more about the pandemic situation. Moreover, in early April 2020, Reuters Institute data from six nations revealed increased consumption of traditional news sources, mainly television, but also certain internet news sources (Denecke & Atique, 2016). According to Watson (2022), at least fifty percent of respondents in most nations throughout the world, based on a study that was carried out globally in March of 2020, stated that they were viewing more news coverage.

Since health crisis may be seen by people all around the world through news coverage, the news media are significant. The main purpose of news media is to inform the public about the measures undertaken by institutions in terms of social or economic considerations and how they are managing and resolving existing situation (Pan & Meng, 2016), also to ensure accountability (MacKay et al., 2021). The contribution that the media play in delivering reassurance, fostering calm, and encouraging people to take action to enhance their situation is also fundamental (Prieto-Ramos et al., 2020). People's preferences have become increasingly significant determinants of the news sources and content they expose themselves to in our present world of high media choice (Vermeer et al., 2022). Traditional mass media platform (e.g., The Star, Harian Metro), and alternative media platforms (e.g., Malaysiakini, Free Malaysia Today), are two examples of the types of news media that people could use for a variety of reasons.

1.4 Research Problem

1.4.1 Concerns on news coverage for Covid-19

When an issue has an impact on society as a whole or on a particular group within it, or when it evokes issues of public concern, it is said to be of "public interest." This pandemic must be taken into consideration as a matter of public interest since it impacts the life of every Malaysian in particular and the global population in general (Yusof et al., 2020). The vaccine and the media are the most crucial factors in fighting the disease. For example, the Singaporean government relies primarily on the news media to disseminate health information, raise public awareness of health issues and chronic diseases, and communicate health policies (Lee & Basnyat, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand the different frames in which the Malaysian mainstream and alternative newspapers used in reporting the disease.

Also, a crucial part of the pandemic response is the dissemination of information from governments and health organizations like the Minister of Health (MOH) to the public. It aids in guiding the populace towards taking the right activities to control an epidemic, restrict exposure, and lower morbidity and death (Lee & Basnyat, 2013). Moreover, both health authorities and scientific experts also play important roles as sources of the news during a pandemic. According to Morissan et al. (2020), experts have access to scientific knowledge while the authorities are in charge of public health policy. As sources they are deemed trustworthy, reliable and responsible. Pui and Balaraman (2022) asserted that this heavy dependence of Malaysian online news portals on the news sources from the government empowers government officials to take on the role of opinion leaders in problem definition. So, the source of information in this research needs to be explored to determine the source that featured prominently.

When public health crisis like Covid-19 strike, people must be prepared to use the media to engage the public in a way that educates and informs without frightening (SAMSHA, 2009). The prominence of fear as a theme in reports of the coronavirus suggests that much of the coverage of the outbreak is more a reflection of public fear than informative of what is actually happening in terms of the spread of the virus (Morissan et al., 2020). A study by Wahl-Jorgensen (2020) reported that some tabloid newspapers were more likely to use fear-inducing language, for example, “deadly disease” while many stories offered local angles by reporting on fears in local areas affected by the outbreak (Morissan et al., 2020). For example, the Sun’s coronavirus liveblog routinely refers to the virus as a “deadly disease” (Jorgensen, 2020). In crisis situations, the news media reports in such a slant that suits the situation, taking into consideration what the particular news organization stands for. While some reports in a supportive slant, others may choose to be negative or neutral. In this wise, it is crucial to explore the slant of coverage of the virus by the media in Malaysia.

1.5 Research objectives

RO1: To investigate the type of frames used by the selected newspapers in their coverage of Covid-19 pandemic.

RO2: To determine the sources of the information by the selected newspaper during Covid-19 pandemic.

RO3: To examine the slant of the news by the selected newspaper during Covid-19 pandemic.

1.6 Research questions

The following is the research questions in this study:

RQ1: What is the type of frame used by the selected newspaper in their coverage of Covid-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What are the sources of the information used by the selected newspaper during Covid-19 pandemic?

RQ3: What is the slant of the news adopted by the selected newspaper during Covid-19 pandemic?

1.7 Research Significance

1.7.1 Theoretical significance

By examining the type of frames used, sources of information, and the slant of the news in media coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia, the study can contribute to the understanding of how the media construct public perceptions and attitudes towards health crisis. This study could potentially add new knowledge to the framing theory and contribute to the understanding of its application in the context of media coverage of health crisis, specifically the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia. By conducting a framing analysis, the dominant frames can be identified from mainstream and alternative news portals and compare how different sources of information are framed, which can shed light on how the media construct public understanding and perception of health crisis.

Specifically, the study can provide insights into the ways in which the media use frames to influence public opinion and how different sources of information are framed. This can

contribute to the development of the framing theory by shedding light on the factors that shape the media's framing of health crisis and the impact of framing on public attitudes and behavior.

This study can also examine the slant of the news, which refers to the bias or perspective presented in news coverage. Understanding the slant can help identify any potential biases or agendas that may influence how the information is presented, and whether certain groups or perspectives are over or underrepresented in the news coverage.

1.7.2 Practical significance

Media practitioners: This study can help media practitioners understand how they frame health crisis in their reporting and the potential impact on public opinion and behavior. The findings can guide media professionals in their reporting and help them develop communication strategies that are more effective in shaping public perceptions and responses.

Policymakers and public health officials: The results of the study can inform policymakers and public health officials in developing communication strategies that address gaps in public knowledge and understanding of health crisis. By identifying the dominant frames used in media coverage, policymakers and public health officials can tailor their messaging and interventions to better align with public perceptions.

General public: The findings of the study can help the general public become more aware of how media framing can influence their perceptions of health crisis and encourage them to seek out more diverse sources of information. This can lead to a more informed and engaged public, who are better able to understand and respond to health crisis.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Media coverage of Covid-19 in Malaysia

The Covid-19 outbreak has received significantly more attention from the media compared to reports of other previous outbreaks. The media will frequently use the frames in their coverage of the news and their interactions with sources. Other studies have been undertaken by other researchers on how the media is reporting Covid-19 in Malaysia.

Morissan et al. (2020) compared Malaysian and Indonesian newspaper's media framing on Covid-19 pandemic. The purpose of the study is to identify the dominating frames used in Indonesian and Malaysian newspapers' Covid-19 pandemic coverage from January 25 to June 10, 2020. Since our study is focused on Malaysia, only Malaysian newspapers will be covered, and Berita Harian is the representative of reporting in this study. In order to determine the frequency with which particular frames occur in the news and which metaphors are utilised by Berita Harian, this study predefines specific frames (alarming, reassuring, or neutral) as content analytic units. The findings of this study reveal that Berita Harian covered the Covid-19 epidemic in all three frames, with neutral being the most prevalent (39.3%) and alarming (32.10%) and reassuring frames (28.60%) coming in second and third, respectively. This study discovered that Berita Harian was largely absent in military rhetoric, such as the judgmental discourse of plague. "Dangerous disease" is a metaphor that is occasionally used to characterize the Covid-19 epidemic, but it is used seldom. Instead of being overly preoccupied with providing updates on the case number, Morissan et al. (2020) proposed messaging on

preventative action of boosting immunity and antibodies are crucial and urgently needed to prevent anxiety.

Hassim et al. (2022) examines the main reporting methodologies used by Malaysiakini and Astro Awani, two online news portals, for COVID-19 by headline. The Astro Awani portal has 1,542 articles with the headline COVID-19 from January 2020 to December 2020, compared to the Malaysiakini portal's 643 articles. Four primary categories for the study - economic consequences, human interest and impact, attribution of responsibility, and health severity- were read and coded by the researcher using Entman's model. According to the analysis, both portals for Malaysiakini and Astro Awani included all four frames. According to the research, neither the Astro Awani nor the Malaysiakini websites favor any particular interests in the headlines' tone. The outcomes of this study also showed that these two online news portals have four main reporting frames for the COVID-19 pandemic. The first frame, economic consequences, refers to news that is frequently presented in terms of actual economic impacts that might have an impact on readers. The second frame is human interest, which describes news that is presented in terms of how it will affect the impacted people's lives. The third frame is attribution of responsibility, which refers to news that is presented in terms of the issues and dangers associated with a person's choices and how someone is ultimately accountable for finding a solution. The fourth frame, health severity, includes news that is presented to be about how health hazards affect people's lives. Additionally, the main news frames do focus on crucial COVID-19 facts that the public has to be aware of.

Mohamed and Idid (2022) looked at the coverage of the COVID-19 health crisis in Malaysia that was published in The Star and Malaysiakini during the time that Malaysia was under a Minimal Control Order (MCO). They discussed the main issues reported by the newspapers

during the early MCO periods and how did the newspapers frame COVID-19 issues during the early MCO periods. Based on the findings, because these were the main issues that surfaced in Malaysia during the early stages of the epidemic, The Star and Malaysiakini covered relevant issues. Both newspapers made much of the MCO's enforcement. The problem of the "Mask/Sanitizer/Medical Supply" is the third most frequently mentioned item in The Star's extensive coverage of MCO violation news. Malaysiakini, on the other hand, seems to place more of an emphasis on economic concerns than The Star. The topics that attracted the greatest attention were the Stimulus Package, Economic Implications, and State Action/Aid. The negative effects of the epidemic and the ensuing MCO also seem to affect Malaysiakini more than The Star. It included extensive information on the impacted people and groups. In addition, it gave a significant value to dying and the impacted industries. While Malaysiakini was more critical and usually included debates and discussions, The Star was more optimistic, reassuring, and accommodating. Additionally, Malaysiakini was offering readers different interpretations of the unfolding situation by framing news in morality/religion and human-interest frameworks. Both publications employed framing that reflected the pandemic's primarily unfavorable reality. The newspapers also made frequent use of warning/uncertainty and fear framing. Such frames, however, are not always negative; rather, they serve to convey a feeling of seriousness about the nature of the problem and how important it is for readers to be aware of and ready to confront the uncertainties ahead. The research came to two key conclusions. First, throughout the crisis, both newspapers did a great job of covering the news and emphasizing problems that may assist the general people better comprehend the situation and support any moves, legislation, or initiatives that could help lessen the crisis's effects. Second, the study found that local newspapers couldn't stray too far from their political and

ideological viewpoints despite the closeness in the topics they covered. The way the news is presented demonstrates how differently the media see the problems.

On MCO-related standard operating procedure (SOP) messages provided by the Malaysian National Security Council (NSC), Ghazali et al., (2022) looks at Instagram postings and the news website Berita Harian. 206 online news articles and 196 Instagram posts were chosen for this study from the start of the MCO to the end of 2020. The study found that Berita Harian continuously maintained its presence on Instagram in order to cover Covid-19 SOPs, but that the news portal exposed the problem more frequently than Instagram did. Only 7.7% of news stories reported employing narrative in news portals, while 92.3% of stories utilized non-narrative presentation. Similar to this, in Instagram, the non-narrative style (95.9%) predominated over the narrative approach (12.9%). Berita Harian nevertheless runs its news portals cautiously by relying mostly on images for interactive elements. The reporters' email addresses, video, and, in some cases, employed links to external sources. Infographics and feedback questions were the least used features. The findings revealed that videos were used in more over half of the Covid-19 SOPs posts, with infographics coming in second on Instagram. In conclusion, Berita Harian maintains an equitable presentation on social media by examining both its news portal and Instagram account. The findings suggest that while videos predominated in the Covid-19 SOPs coverage on Instagram, text predominated on Berita Harian's news portal.

According to Wan Mohd Ghazali et al. (2020), a total of 131 vaccine-related news stories from Harian Metro (HM) and Berita Harian (BH) were gathered for this study's framing analysis over the course of nine months, from January 2019 to September 2019. By reviewing four objectives, it allows individuals to understand how online mainstream newspapers cover

vaccination concerns for various reasons, from teaching to eradicating misunderstandings: (1) How much do Malay newspapers cover about vaccination, (2) What news sources do newspapers consult when they report regarding vaccination, (3) What kinds of reporting do newspapers employ when they discuss vaccinations and (4) How are news on vaccination framed in Malaysian newspapers.

(1) The research revealed that just 131 news stories on vaccinations were published over the 9-month sample period. 63 from HM and a further 68 from BH. (2) In their coverage of vaccination, both newspapers primarily cited official government agencies. Journalists from both media also contributed as news sources, who were followed by sources from organizations that carry out vaccination research and private businesses that might sponsor news or host events related to vaccination-related topics. (3) 76% of the coverage of vaccination in HM utilized the news category, a small proportion used the category of external events, and special coverage on vaccination was used in the editorial category. The sponsored news category was often utilized by BH to cover vaccination-related topics and low numbers as an external events category. (4) By mentioning specific occurrences and crisis and exploring the following ramifications of vaccination, both publications adopted the issue-focused framing. Additionally, they used factual information to frame their stories and structured their coverage to support, emphasize, and promote governmental requests and activities on vaccination. Campaign and product promotion frames were the least often observed.

Pui and Balaraman (2022) looked at news articles from March 1, 2021, to November 30, 2021, that were published by New Straits Times Online, The Star Online, Malaysiakini, and Free Malaysia Today. The bulk of COVID-19 vaccine news has been framed by the four online

news portals using the attribution of responsibility frame, according to the findings. A large amount of news items was covered using the human interest frame, which came in second place behind the attribution of responsibility frame. Of the four Malaysian online news portals, New Straits Times Online published the most human-interest articles. Among the chosen online news portals, Malaysiakini was found to be reporting the most news items utilizing conflict framing. Only a few news articles were covered with a moral context, with New Straits Times Online leading the pack in this category. Fewer new stories were framed under the frame of economic implications than under the frame of morality.

2.2 Online news media

Back a few decades ago, the primary channels for the spread of information and the transmission of mass-mediated messages were the mainstream news media, which included newspapers, magazines, radio, and television (Salaudeen & Onyechi, 2020). They were limited in the selections and thus relied on traditional media as their primary source of information. Nevertheless, the emergence of the internet resulted in a change in this scenario. The Internet is swiftly becoming a universal conduit, which is challenging the established order in the media industry. The traditional media needs to reevaluate their position when it comes to the Internet (Ariffin & Jaafar, 2009), particularly with regard to online news. Traditional media were no longer the only source of news for the public. They now have access to a different source of information, which is the mainstream and alternative media that can be found online.

Alivi et al. (2018) stated that people read online news in order to discover information that they would not find through traditional media. This form of media is quick, engaging, and captivating. News is information that is aired or printed in the media to provide the most recent updates on events across the globe. The general audience can decide which channel they prefer to use to get news. People prefer to obtain information through limitless access to online news sources. New media products are physically lighter and more portable. People frequently use the most recent technologies nowadays to communicate or obtain information from new media. With only one click, anyone can get information from any location at any time. The proliferation of online media has made communication easier and more efficient (Rogers, 2019); if someone wants to comment on an issue online, they may do so as soon as news is released. Online media allows the public to criticize and debate whatever they disagree with (Alivi et al., 2018). This permits diverse viewpoints. It also enabled us to maintain connections with people regardless of time or location by means of the Internet.

According to Rajendran and Thesinghraj (2014), in examining the differences between the mainstream media and alternative media, it is found that the former is typically highly centralized, require significant resources and investment, and can be significantly influenced by governments through a variety of mechanisms and forms of control, whereas the latter are decentralized, demand very little investment, offer greater interactivity and public participation, and are much harder to control. By obtaining news through the Internet, which is perceived as being free from control, people are now free and have the option to both generate their own news and to see the other side of a story. People who had previously only been on the receiving end of one-way mass communication are now more likely to become producers and transmitters due to the emergence of alternative media.

2.3 Online mainstream and alternative media in Malaysia

Nearly everywhere in the world, the main media companies are controlled either by the government or by private families, which including Malaysia (Djankov et al., 2003). The government therefore maintained complete control over the flow of news and information. Government influence in Malaysia extends a large number of publications, TV networks, and radio stations. TV1, TV2, TV3, NTV7, 8TV, TV9, The Star, New Straits Times, Berita Harian, Harian Metro, FlyFM, HotFM, and OneFM are a few examples (Anwar, 2016).

In the past, Barisan Nasional employed media bias, ownership, censorship, and many other tactics to dominate the media for their own purpose, which included preventing any unfavourable news about the government. There was no opposing party in the media, particularly in the print, radio, and television mainstream media (Azamli et al., 2022). It implies that during a health crisis, the government will similarly manipulate information from the mainstream media. For instance, the Sabah state elections and a flagrant contempt for the law by those in authority both started to contribute to the increase in cases. A huge can of worms was opened by the politicians who returned from Sabah but didn't isolate themselves and the conflicting information concerning quarantine for others who were returning from Sabah (Zainul, 2021). When held responsible for another outbreak, the government solely blames the people for not following the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that they established and makes a big issue about it in the media. Due to the distrust of the mainstream media, the highly educated group was shown to be more likely to refuse vaccinations. This is consistent with a study in Jafar et al. (2022) which found that those with high literacy levels

are not easily influenced by mainstream media. This is due to the belief that the mainstream media is a propaganda weapon that is both biased and opaque.

The process of communication is simplified when one uses equipment or gadgets such as mobile phones, smartphones (like the iPhone), iPods, and personal digital assistants (PDA). The presence of new media, in particular the Internet, has presented a challenge to traditional forms of media, most notably the printed newspaper. Online news portals are attracting an increasing number of readers in Malaysia, with 80.1% of individuals using the internet as of 2017 (Nor & Gale, 2021). At the same time, the advent of alternative media occurred. It refers to news websites such as Malaysiakini (<https://www.malaysiakini.com/my>) and the Malaysian Insight (<https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/>) that are not considered to be affiliated with the ruling party and that offer "alternative news" in comparison to media outlets that are owned or sanctioned by the government (Rahman, 2022).

Meanwhile mainstream media are also slowly making their way into the online market. It is possible to view the news on smartphone from Malaysian television networks such as RTM. If have access to the internet, anyone from all corners of the globe are able to watch the same RTM news online (Alivi et al., 2018). In this this circumstance, the internet also assists mainstream media in disseminating messages. Additionally, newspapers are shifting to online news sources including The Star (<https://www.thestar.com.my/>), New Straits Times (<https://www.nst.com.my/>), Sin Chew Daily (<https://www.sinchew.com.my/>) and Berita Harian (<https://www.bharian.com.my/>). Nevertheless, the government still directly or indirectly prescribes the boundaries of freedom and space that are found in the mainstream media (Rajendran & Thesinghraj, 2014). They just convert information that was formerly

generated in traditional media channels into online posts and messages, which is a more technical term for the practice known as appropriation (Yang & Stohl, 2019).

The ability to consume news in an immediate manner is made possible by interactive support and breaking news services offered by online news outlets, as well as multimedia content. Citizens are given the option of obtaining information from a source that provides a wider range of options. Numerous studies that were conducted in the past have shown that people look to alternative media for additional information because they believe that mainstream media does not provide adequate information on certain topics. This is due of the regulations that control mainstream media, specifically the Printing Presses and Publications Act for the press and the Communications and Multimedia Act for the broadcasting sector and the Internet (Salman et al., 2011). The government either directly or indirectly sets the boundaries of freedom and space that are found in the mainstream media. It is not surprising that many Malaysians are using alternative media as information, news, and viewpoint sources. Alivi et al. (2018) indicated that in comparison to mainstream media, alternative media provides a sharper image and more thorough coverage, particularly for controversial topics. Additionally, it takes a fresh method to conveying news through a different writing style, which is readily able to grab the interest of readers, particularly the younger generation.

2.3.1 New Straits Times

New Straits Times (NST) is an English-language newspaper published in Malaysia, it is offered in both printed and online formats. NST is one of the newspapers that is published by The New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad (NSTP). NSTP is a Malaysian conglomerate

of publishing firms that is owned by Media Prima. Their online newspaper has a circulation of 85,469 copies in July to December 2018. In research of 14 Malaysian media outlets conducted by the Reuters Institute in the year 2020, the newspaper was ranked as the fifth most trustworthy (Newman et al., n.d.).

2.3.2 Malaysiakini

Malaysiakini was the first newspaper in Malaysia to be published online. It was established on November 20, 1999 by Steven Gan and Premesh Chandran, both of whom had previously worked as reporters for the Sun (Bhullar, 2021). It provides content in four distinct languages for its users: English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. Each month, it reaches over 2.5 million readers with its independent coverage of politics and current affairs (Malaysiakini, n.d.). According to the Digital News Report 2019, 44 percent of their survey respondents had accessed Malaysiakini as a source of their news during the course of the previous week, and 23 percent had done so over the course of the previous three days or more. In addition, Malaysiakini came in at number five on the list of most trusted media organizations in Malaysia, following behind four television stations: RTM, Astro Awani, NTV7, and TV3 News (Nain, 2019). It achieves the recognition of being the No. 1 in terms of popularity in Malaysia ranking by Digital News Report in 2020 due to the fact that it receives more than 37 million views on a yearly basis (Hassim et al., 2022).

2.4 Framing theory

The core principle of framing theory is that a problem may be seen from several angles and understood to have consequences for numerous values or factors. The process through which people create a certain conception of an issue or change the way they view an issue is known as framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Agenda-setting and priming have frequently been bundled together with framing. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), framing may be included in agenda setting studies and is a second dimension of that field of study. Scholars have since refuted his assertion and clarified the distinctions between the two processes. Agenda-setting happens as a result of how frequently a topic is covered in the media. It has nothing to do with how the problem is handled in the media and has no connection with framing (Borah, 2011).

A problem is presented and defined by a communication source as part of framing (Cissel, 2012). Robert Entman modernized this definition by adding the clarification that "to frame a communicating text or message is to promote certain facets of a 'perceived reality' and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993). Vreese (2005) stated that the framing process has been studied in-depth most frequently with the aim of examining how much and when audiences reflect and mirror frames that are made available to them in, for example, the news. Tankard (2001) proposes a list of 11 framing mechanisms or focus points for detecting and assessing news frames, which is the most thorough empirical technique:

1. headlines
2. subsections

3. images
4. captions for images
5. leads
6. source choice
7. quotes choice
8. pull quotes
9. logos
10. data and graphs, and
11. sentences and paragraphs that conclude

Recognizing the relationship between how current topics are portrayed in the media and their impact on public opinion is the mission of framing (Clark & Nyaupane, 2020). It is possible that learning, interpretation, and appraisal of topics and events can be influenced by frames in the news (Vreese, 2005). This is because even little shifts in the way the media reports events and uses language can have significant effects on public opinion.

The first scholars to show how different ways of presenting identical problems and events might alter people's decisions were Kahneman and Tversky (D'Angelo, 2017). According to their findings, people are more likely to take risks when "losses" are highlighted in the news but less likely to do so when "gains" are highlighted. While topics and events can be brought to our attention by the media, there is a wide range in how media frames affect people's decisions and attitudes. Public opinion can be successfully influenced despite the varying potency of frames provided media messages uphold particular values or ideological concepts

(Clark & Nyaupane, 2020). Bolsen et al. (2020) indicated that in a health crisis, for instance, information concerning the "scientific" or "conspiratorial" origin of COVID-19's origins is transmitted through framing. People may learn about the origins of COVID-19 by receiving reports that convey either what the majority of scientists think (i.e., zoonotic transmission) or by encountering conspiracy claims (e.g., the virus was created in a research laboratory in China). Moreover, messages emphasizing the advantages to one's own or the general public's health by adopting COVID-19 preventative practices can enhance respondents' intentions to do so. In the broadest sense, news frames offer an "interpretive tale that sets(s) a certain train of thought in motion, articulating why an issue may be a problem, who or what might be accountable for it, and what should be done about it."

Chapter 3

Methodology (quantitative + qualitative)

3.1 Summative content analysis

Table 3.1: Major Coding Differences Among Three Approaches to Content Analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)

<i>Type of Content Analysis</i>	<i>Study Starts With</i>	<i>Timing of Defining Codes or Keywords</i>	<i>Source of Codes or Keywords</i>
Conventional content analysis	Observation	Codes are defined during data analysis	Codes are derived from data
Directed content analysis	Theory	Codes are defined before and during data analysis	Codes are derived from theory or relevant research findings
Summative content analysis	Keywords	Keywords are identified before and during data analysis	Keywords are derived from interest of researchers or review of literature

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stated that a summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context. A summative approach to qualitative content analysis goes beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis. Latent content analysis refers to the process of interpretation of content. Which also refers to qualitative content analysis. This is the opposite of deductive content analysis. Elo and Kyngäs (2007) pointed out that deductive content analysis is used when the structure of analysis is operationalized on the basis of previous knowledge. A deductive approach is useful if the general aim was to test a previous theory in a different situation or to compare categories at different time periods. Since this study contains quantitative (counting) and qualitative (comparison), and it did not involve testing a previous

theory in a different situation or comparing categories at different time periods. Therefore, summative content analysis will be used.

Content analysis makes reproducible and reliable inferences from texts (or other relevant material) to the contexts of their use is the goal of the research approach known as content analysis. It offers fresh perspectives, deepens a researcher's comprehension of certain phenomena, or guides useful action (Krippendorff, 2004). Content analysis is a scientific technique, which systematic assignment of communication material to category in accordance with criteria and the statistical examination of relationships between those categories. The technique is used to investigate a wide variety of texts, from transcripts of interviews and debates in clinical and sociological research to the narrative and form of films, TV shows, and the editorial and advertising content of newspapers and magazines (Ghazali et al., 2022). In order to produce results, it applies a wide range of analytical methodologies in qualitative, quantitative, and occasionally combined forms of research frameworks. Specialized techniques used in content analysis enable replication in quantitative content analysis. Therefore, the validity of a study's quantitative content analysis conclusions is not exclusively dependent on the credibility of the academics who conducted the analysis. They may be evaluated for their validity and reliability using independent testing and methods. In assessing a study technique, the degree to which validity and reliability can be assessed are crucial considerations (White & Marsh, 2006).

The following are the steps for research utilizing quantitative content analysis from White and Marsh (2006):

1. Form a hypothesis or hypotheses

2. Choose pertinent data (text or other communicative material)
3. Select the sample unit and technique
4. Make a sample
5. Create a data collecting and analysis unit
6. Create a coding system that enables hypothesis testing
7. Data code
8. Verify the accuracy of the coding and modify it if required.
9. Examine coded data and run the necessary statistical tests (s)
10. Report findings

This study will begin by employing quantitative content analysis on the online news portals of the New Straits Times and Malaysiakini in order to investigate the coverage of Covid-19 through framing. More specifically, this study will investigate the types of frames being used, the information sources and the slant of the news. I will divide the three elements in different tables, but to view and contrast, two media will be grouped.

Next, qualitative content analysis will be applied for comparison and interpretation. It is one of numerous research methods used to analyze text data. Also, qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The keywords for each element will be identified while categorizing each article from NST and Malaysiakini.

3.2 Data collection

Data from January 25 to March 25, 2020, will be examined because this is when Covid-19 in Malaysia reaches its peak. The first COVID-19 case was found in the nation on January 25, and Malaysia introduced MCO on March 18 to combat the pandemic. The Covid-19 news coverage, particularly during the MCO period, should be examined over the eight days from March 18 to March 25.

The New Straits Times and Malaysiakini news portals were chosen. New Straits Times is still a trusted source of information and a major player in the business and governmental worlds today. Young professionals and students make up a sizable portion of its readership, which is expanding (LIMKOKWING University, n.d.). I will obtain the news from Bernama Library & Infolink Service's archived news (<http://blis.bernama.com/index.php?mod=articles&opt=la&cid=2&scid=13>), look at the news from the selected time period, and filter out each piece of news that relates to Covid-19 individually. While Malaysiakini ranked top in Malaysia according to the 2018 Reuters Digital News Report, which is an annual assessment of news consumption in various markets, with local people using it 44 percent of the time on a weekly basis (Malaysiakini, 2018). Over 24 million people have accessed it, with a 40.36% bounce rate (Similarweb, n.d.). I will obtain the news from Malaysiakini's official website (<https://www.malaysiakini.com/>), and the sample's keyword is Covid.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

4.1 Number of articles published

Table 4.1: Covid-19 related article published by New Straits Times (NST) from January 25 to March 25, 2020

Month	NST (no. of articles)	%	Malaysiakini (no. of articles)	%
January	28	8	1	0
February	116	32	156	27
March	216	60	412	72
Total	360	100	569	100

4.2 Type of frames

This research expands on the collection of five basic frames developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) (i.e., attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality). According to An and Gower (2009):

Attribution of responsibility frame: as "a means of assigning blame for [a] cause or [a] remedy to either the government or to a particular person or group,"

Conflict frame: used to express conflict and disagreement between people, groups, or organizations.

Human interest frame: "gives an event, situation, or emotional standpoint a human face or emotional perspective".

Economic frame: Reports an occurrence, issue, or problem in terms of the effects it will have on people, groups, organizations, or nations economically.

Morality frame: frames the incident, issue, or problem in relation to ethical standards, societal norms, and religious principles.

Table 4.2: Type of frames used to report Covid-19 related article by New Straits Times (NST) and Malaysiakini from January 25 to March 25, 2020

Type of frames	NST (no. of articles)	%	Malaysiakini (no. of articles)	%
Attribution of responsibility frame	6	2	40	7
Conflict frame	7	2	22	4
Human interest frame	238	66	381	67
Economic frame	73	20	69	12
Morality frame	36	10	57	10
Total	360	100	569	100

4.3 Source of the information

Health professionals were frequently mentioned as news sources to heighten public awareness of the seriousness of the situation, and government officials appeared to function strategically toward the attainment of public-institution efficacy during the health crisis on several

occasions (Pan & Meng, 2016). In a time of public health crisis, collecting sources from the relevant authorities is essential, but it is also essential to get the people's perspective. It is essential to gather the people's perspective on issues pertaining to public health in order to guarantee that services, policies, and research will be in line with the goals and views of the general population (Howse et al., 2022). In addition, each and every news website features a section titled "opinion," which is comprised of the viewpoint that reflects the opinions of the editorial team of the news organization. We can examine the manner in which the editor presents their viewpoint concerning the issue. In light of this, the sources of the information have been categorized as follows: health professionals, government officials, public opinion, and opinion from news portal.

Table 4.3: Source of information selected to report Covid-19 related article by New Straits Times (NST) and Malaysiakini from January 25 to March 25, 2020

Source of the information	NST (no. of articles)	%	Malaysiakini (no. of articles)	%
Health professionals	49	14	83	15
Government officials	140	39	262	46
Public opinion	157	44	189	33
Opinion from news portal	14	4	35	6
Total	360	100	569	100

4.4 Slant of the news

The slant of the news can fall into one of three categories: alarming, neutral, or reassuring. A report is alarming, in Morissan et al. (2020) opinion, when the situation is described in terms of risk and hazard. As a result, updates on the number of positive cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities are disturbing, as are warnings for catastrophic outbreaks. This also applies to claims that the virus is "highly contagious" or "deadly." A report is reassuring when it places more attention on the number of patients who made a full recovery than it does on the patients who passed away or the number of those who are positively infected. A report is also comforting when concerns associated with Covid-19 are seen in a larger context that reduces the danger (also because of effective preparations by health authorities). When both sides are represented in a statement and the slant is ambiguous, the statement is neutral.

Table 4.4: Slant of news in reporting Covid-19 related article by New Straits Times (NST) and Malaysiakini from January 25 to March 25, 2020

Slant of the news	NST (no. of articles)	%	Malaysiakini (no. of articles)	%
Alarming	65	18	153	27
Neutral	271	75	362	64
Reassuring	24	7	52	9
Total	360	100	569	100

Chapter 5

Findings and Discussion

5.1 Number of articles published

From Table 3, we can see that total Covid-19 related articles published by NST from January 25 to March 25, 2020 were 360 while there were 569 by Malaysiakini. NST will be relatively few because the article is obtained from archival news and not the official website of NST.

Within these three months, the highest articles per day published by NST is up to 19, the date is March 17 and March 21; the highest articles per day published by Malaysiakini is up to 36, the date is March 17 and March 28.

First Covid-19 case was discovered in Malaysia on January 25, 2020. NST published 28 (8%) articles about Covid-19 in January after the first covid case was discovered while Malaysiakini only published 1 article about Covid-19 in January. There are several reasons to explain why the news portals reported least Covid-19 related articles in January among these three months. Firstly, Covid-19 was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China and it was initially reported to the WHO on December 31, 2019 (Cennimo, 2023). The severity and extent of the virus was little understood at that time, it was not yet deemed a national threat and therefore, fewer articles were written in January 2020. Secondly, news portals may have been focused on other news events at the time, such as the US presidential primaries or the Australian bushfires, and therefore, had less coverage of Covid-19. Lastly, it is also possible that the news portals were waiting for more information about the virus and its potential impact before publishing more articles on the topic.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Covid-19 outbreak a global health emergency on January 30, 2020 (Cennimo, 2023), also the first Malaysian had Covid-19 on February 4, 2020. Both news portals have seen a clear upward trend on publishing Covid-19 related article in February, which make up 116 (32%) in NST and 156 (27%) in Malaysiakini. Both NST and Malaysiakini published more Covid-19 related articles in March than they did in January and February. NST reported 216 (60%) whereas Malaysiakini reported 413 (72%). Moreover, Malaysia implemented a mitigation approach to control the pandemic starting on March 18. There was a significant increase on March 13 by NST whereas Malaysiakini had an increase in Covid-19 related articles on March 11.

5.2 Type of frames

The results from Table 4 align with RQ1 (What is the type of frame used by the selected newspaper during Covid-19?) and RO1 (To investigate the type of frames used by the selected newspaper during Covid-19). Research conducted by Pui and Balaraman (2022) indicated that either mainstream media (NST and The Star) or alternative media (Malaysiakini and Free Malaysia Today) used large amount of human-interest frame to report Covid-19 vaccine news. According to research conducted by Tanner (2004), the great majority of broadcast journalists believe that the capacity to convey a human-interest aspect is one of the most crucial factors to consider while reporting the news. According to Hinnant and Len-Rios (2009), health and medical journalists have a tendency to believe that a human-interest element is more effective in enhancing audiences' understanding of complex medical information than other journalistic tools such as visual supplements (such as photos and illustrations), the conversational tone,

and linguistic devices (such as metaphors and analogies). The Covid-19 epidemic has been a complicated subject that has been fast evolving; utilizing human-interest frames can assist to simplify and clarify some of the most important aspects. This is in line with the results in Table 4, it shows more than half of the Covid-19 related articles focused on the human-interest frame by both news portals (NST 66%, Malaysiakini 67%). Most human-interest articles are presented in terms of how it will affect the impacted people's lives by telling the situation of the Covid-19 all around the world whether it is bad or good. Also including the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) before entering and while in Movement Control Order (MCO) period.

In addition, NST covered Covid-19 related articles in economic frame with 73 (20%), it is the second most frame that the news portal used. The World Bank stated that a global pandemic that lasted a year could trigger a “major global recession” (Begley, 2013). Historical pandemic had a significant impact on the global economy. 1918 Influenza Epidemic reduced real per capita GDP by 6 percent and private consumption by 8 percent (Maas, 2020). The annual socioeconomic costs of the 2009 pandemic H1N1 influenza were US\$1.09 billion (0.14% of the national GDP) (Kim et al., 2012). Malaysian government well aware of the economic impact, so the government controlled NST must be required to report on the economic impact of the pandemic to keep the public informed and aware of the situation. Moving on, the morality frame is NST's third most used frame 36 (10%) and followed by attribution of responsibility frame and conflict frame, both are 2%.

Except for the human-interest frame, the second most frame that emphasized by Malaysiakini emphasized economic frame which accounted for 69 (12%) of the total.

Economic frame may have provided practical information and advice for readers. Both Malaysiakini and NST may have used the economic frame to provide information about government aid and financial support programs for businesses and individuals affected by the pandemic. As previously known, Malaysia's economy has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 epidemic. It is an important issue that needs to be covered by both mainstream and alternative media outlets. Economic frames provide readers useful information and guidance, such as government assistance and financial support programs for firms and individuals impacted by the epidemic, as well as suggestions on how to manage the pandemic's economic effects. Followed by morality frame, attribution of responsibility frame and conflict frame, that is 57 (10%), 40 (7%) and 22 (4%), respectively.

Malaysiakini seems to place more of an emphasis on economic consequence than The Star in a study conducted by Mohamed and Idid (2022), which deviates from results shown in Table 4. The Star and NST are categorized as mainstream media that is controlled by the government. Although results above show that NST is emphasizing economic frame than Malaysiakini, there is no way to know the reason why, it can only find out the reason by interviewing with those news portals. It is a limitation for this research and future researcher may conduct an interview session to look deep why NST and The Star, which are also mainstream media but the comparison in type of frames used to report Covid-19 related article with Malaysiakini is different.

5.3 Source of the information

The results that are shown in Table 5 align with RQ2 (What are the sources of the information by the selected newspaper during Covid-19?) and RO2 (To determine the sources of the information by the selected newspaper during Covid-19). It contains four sources of information which are health professionals, government officials, public opinion and opinion from news portal. All sources of information have been used by both news portals and there is no significant gap between every source of information. Also, none of them dominated the table in both news portals.

The main source of information used by NST is public opinion, quoted 157 times among 360, accounting for 44%. This includes many various bodies for instance inspector-general of police, Malaysian Tenpin Bowling Congress (MTBC), Asian Hockey Federation, economist and more. It is potential that the findings have shown that during the early Covid-19 epidemic months, public opinion was an important source of information for NST. It's necessary to bear in mind that not all Covid-19-related articles published by NST might be comparable to this one. The public looked to the media for guidance and information during the early phases of the epidemic since many queries were left unanswered or got inconsistent, insufficient, erroneous, or misleading responds (Loretto et al., 2021). Therefore, NST may have considered information from public opinion to be helpful in determining how people were responding to the pandemic and what their worries were. Followed by government officials which is 140 (39%), the most quoted are health director-general, health ministry and a few government officials from other countries mixed in. Next, health professionals 49 (14%) includes World Health Organization (WHO), Malaysian Medical Association (MMA), doctor or specialist in various health fields. The least of these sources of information is opinion from news portal 14 (4%).

On the other hand, government officials used most by Malaysiakini, it has been used for 46%, that is 262 out of 569 articles. In addition to local government officials, there are also a large number of government officials from other countries. Government officials were likely the primary source of information for media outlets as they were responsible for making policy decisions and providing updates on the situation. It is worth mentioning that most of the Covid-19 related articles that reported by Malaysiakini are taken from Bernama, which is a news agency of the government. An alternative media obtained news from Bernama mainly because Covid-19 is a health crisis that requires accurate and reliable reporting as it affected the whole world. According to (World Health Organization, 2020) misinformation costs lives. Without the appropriate trust and correct information, diagnostic tests go unused, immunization campaigns (or campaigns to promote effective vaccines) will not meet their targets, and the virus will continue to thrive. Furthermore, the government's response to the pandemic has been closely scrutinized. It is important for news organizations to report on the pandemic accurately and responsibly to avoid spreading misinformation and panic among the public. By relying on Bernama's reporting, Malaysiakini could provide its readers with the latest updates on the pandemic while minimizing the risk of making mistakes or spreading inaccurate information. Malaysiakini used second most source of information is public opinion with 189 (33%). Like NST, Malaysiakini also includes various bodies in public opinion for instance National Security Council (NSC), Mufti etc. It was found that only 83 (15%) used health professionals, followed by the opinion from news portal 35 (6%). The most quoted health professional by Malaysiakini is World Health Organization (WHO).

5.4 Slant of the news

Results from Table 6 align with RQ3 (What is the slant of the news by the selected newspaper during Covid-19?) and RO3 (To know the slant of the news by the selected newspaper during Covid-19). As shown in Table 6, neutral is the main slant of news in both news portals. 271 (75%) and 362 (64%) news articles were found to employ this slant in NST and Malaysiakini respectively. Both Malaysiakini and NST, as news organizations, play an important role in society as a watchdog for the populace. They must hold those in authority responsible and offer fair information (Jenkins, 2022). In other words, they would make an effort to convey facts in a impartial manner, without taking sides or expressing any specific opinion.

Additionally, it is crucial for news organizations to give the audience reliable and accurate data. This might imply that they would concentrate on providing accurate information and steer clear of speculative or sensational content that can cause fear and commotion.

Alarming is the second most slant in NST and Malaysiakini, that is 65 (18%) and 153 (27%), respectively. The least slant of news is reassuring as a result, 24 (7%) for NST and 52 (9%) for Malaysiakini. Alarming used by both news portals in reporting the Covid19 pandemic is mainly focusing on the number of people infected with the virus (“close to 120,000 people being infected worldwide” in NST and “411 new confirmed cases of coronavirus infections” in Malaysiakini), death toll (“deadly pneumonia-like respiratory disease left 774 people dead” in NST and “Malaysia has recorded its first two deaths due to the Covid-19 virus outbreak” in Malaysiakini), and warnings for catastrophic outbreaks (“It’s lethal and has the potential to be a weapon of mass destruction” in NST and “Covid-19 outbreak significantly worsened with a few governments around the world starting to lose control” in Malaysiakini).

The slant of news in reporting COVID-19 related articles by NST and Malaysiakini being more alarming than reassuring could be due to the pandemic has led to high infection rates,

hospitalizations, and fatalities, which have prompted governments to implement strict measures to curb the spread of the virus. Therefore, news portals like NST and Malaysiakini may have reported on the crisis in an alarming tone to highlight the severity of the situation and urge the public to take appropriate actions to stay safe. Moreover, reassuring slant of news articles may have been more challenging to achieve during the early stages of the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic, little was known about the virus and its impact on society, which made it challenging to report positively on the situation.

Regardless of mainstream and alternative media, neutral is the dominant slant in news articles on both NST and Malaysiakini, with alarming being the second most common slant. It suits the study by Morissan et al. (2020) reveal that Berita Harian covered the Covid-19 epidemic with neutral being the most prevalent (39.3%) and alarming (32.10%) and reassuring frames (28.60%) coming in second and third.

5.5 Conclusion

Both NST and Malaysiakini increased their coverage of Covid-19 related articles as the pandemic unfolded from January 25 to March 25, 2020. While there were relatively few articles in January, there was a clear upward trend in February and even more articles were published in March. This likely reflects the growing concern about the pandemic both in Malaysia and globally, as well as the need for accurate and timely information about the virus and its impact. It is also interesting to note the differences in the number of articles published by the two news portals, with Malaysiakini publishing more overall.

Both mainstream and alternative news portals in Malaysia have predominantly used the human-interest frame to report on Covid-19 related news. Additionally, NST, which is a government-controlled news portal, has placed more emphasis on the economic consequences of the pandemic compared to Malaysiakini. The study also identified limitations in terms of understanding the reasons behind the differences in framing by different news portals, which could be addressed in future research through interviews with the respective news outlets.

NST and Malaysiakini used all sources of information for their Covid-19 related articles.

There is no significant gap between the usage of these sources by both news portals, and none of them dominated the table. It is worth noting that Malaysiakini obtained most of its Covid-19 related articles from Bernama, the government news agency. This reliance on government sources is likely due to the need for accurate and reliable reporting during a health crisis like Covid-19. By using Bernama's reporting, Malaysiakini could provide its readers with the latest updates on the pandemic while minimizing the risk of spreading misinformation or making mistakes.

The slant of news articles related to COVID-19 by both news portals, as evidenced by the NST and Malaysiakini, predominantly employ a neutral tone, followed by an alarming tone.

The focus of alarming news articles is on the high number of infections, death tolls, and the potential for catastrophic outbreaks. It is reasonable to assume that the alarming tone is used to highlight the severity of the situation and encourage the public to take appropriate measures to stay safe. Additionally, it is worth noting that reassuring slant news articles were less prevalent, which could be due to the challenges of reporting positively on the situation during the early stages of the pandemic, when little was known about the virus and its impact.

Framing plays an important role in shaping public perceptions and understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic, and further research is needed to fully explore the impact of different types of framing on public opinion and behavior.

5.6 Limitation

The capacity to generalize the findings of this investigation is the first limitation. Due to the small number of news portals that were chosen for this study, the findings may not be typical of the overall coverage and framing of the Covid-19 epidemic in the media. One of the selected news portals represented mainstream media, while the other represented alternative media. It is possible that these news sites do not represent the Malaysian media landscape as a whole. It is probable that other news portal will have contrasting viewpoints on how the Covid-19 epidemic was portrayed in Malaysia. The second limitation is that this research only includes news articles written in English. This means that the findings may not be representative of coverage in other languages. Also, time duration also a constraint. This research only examines news stories that were published between January 25 and March 25, 2020; therefore, it is possible that the findings may not give a comprehensive picture of how the pandemic was portrayed over a longer period of time.

5.7 Recommendation

The recommendation will be to expand the sample size. Consider using a bigger sample size of news portals or media sources in the study to increase the conclusions to have a higher level of credibility. This may include websites that provide alternative or mainstream news, as well

as social media and other online platforms. On the other hand, it is essential to examine news articles written in other languages, such as Malay or Mandarin, in order to give a more diversified portrayal of how the media frames issues in Malaysia. Consider extending the time period of the research beyond January 25 all the way to March 25 of the following year to have more comprehensive understanding of how the Covid-19 outbreak was seen in Malaysia. This may provide light on how the framing of stories in the media has changed throughout the years in reaction to new events or shifts in public opinion.

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APPENDIX A: FYP PROPOSAL FORM

FYP Student Name	ID: 19AAB00558	HP Number: 016-9640345
1. Chan Hoi Lun		

FYP TITLE

The issues and challenges faced by citizen journalist during Covid-19 in Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Citizen journalism has grown in popularity as a result of the emergence of new media. As a citizen journalist in Malaysia, upcoming issues and challenges include coping with government pressure and credibility issues. It is critical to understand the issues and challenges that citizen journalists encounter, particularly during Covid-19 in Malaysia. For this study, a qualitative method will be adopted, with purposive sampling used to recruit participants. An in-depth interview with fifteen citizen journalists from Twitter will take place. This study provides future researchers a clear overview of Malaysian citizen journalists, and the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) will be able to look for strong evidence to counter the Malaysian government's unreasonable actions against citizen journalists.

I want to find out what is the main issues or challenges faced by citizen journalist during Covid-19 in Malaysia and how does news credibility affect citizen journalism throughout the research.

(If there is not enough space for your answers, please use a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this form).

Potential FYP Supervisor (Refer to Annex 111)

1. Dr Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu
2. Mr Edwin Michael N.Muniandy@ Raziq Michael
3. Mr Teh Boon Teck






Received by:

FYP Coordinator : _____

Date : _____

Appendix B: Supervisor Meeting Form

APPENDIX II: FYP MEETINGS WITH SUPERVISOR

FYP Student Name: Chan Hoi Lun	ID: 19AAB00558	HP Number : 016-9640345	
1.			
Date	Attended by	Progress	Signature
1.	Dr Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu	1. We discussed the amendment for research problem. 2. Dr Sam helped me to verify the information that I searched for my methodology part. 3. Dr Sam told me the right way to do the content analysis for my chapter 4 and 5	15/2/2023 
2.	Dr Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu	1. We discussed the discussion and conclusion part (chapter 5) 2. Dr Sam guide me to write something interesting in discussion part 3. Checking my content analysis (data)	19/4/2023 
3.	Dr Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu	Discussion on chapter four	25/04/2023 
4.	Dr Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu	The entire FYP was discussed including chapters 1-3	26/04/2023 
5.	Dr Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu	Supervisor read through the entire fyp and made comments for improvements	27/04/2023 
6.			

Appendix C: Turnitin Report

ORIGINALITY REPORT

8%	9%	2%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	3%
2	msocialsciences.com Internet Source	1%
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Appendix D: Student Declaration Form

Department of Journalism Academic Honesty Regarding Final Year Projects

The following are examples of academic dishonesty extracted from “Student Handbook”

that are more applicable to final year projects.

- plagiarism, i.e., the failure to properly acknowledge the use of another person’s work;
- submission for assessment of material that is not the student’s own work;
- collusion, i.e., obtaining assistance in doing work which is meant to be solely the student’s own work;
- use of fabricated data claimed to be obtained by experimental work, or data copied or obtained by unfair means;

It is important that the student reads the Student Handbook and understands the seriousness of academic dishonesty. The student should pay particular attention on how to avoid plagiarism.

Student Final Year Project Declaration

I have read the student handbook and I understand the meaning of academic dishonesty, in particular plagiarism and collusion. I declare that the work submitted for the final year project does not involve academic dishonesty. I give permission for my final year project work to be electronically scanned and if found to involve academic dishonesty, I am aware of the consequences as stated in the Student Handbook.

FYP Title:

Media Coverage of Health Crisis in Malaysia: a Framing Analysis of Covid-19 Pandemic

Student Name: Chan Hoi Lun

Student ID: 1900558

Signature:



Date: 11/5/2023