Framing of 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) Financial Scandal by English and Chinese Newspapers Published in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The study compared how the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial scandal was framed in English and Chinese online newspapers published in Malaysia. Content analysis was conducted for 200 articles for two English newspapers (The Star, 50; Malaysiakini English, 50) and two Chinese newspapers (Sin Chew Daily, 50; Malaysiakini Chinese, 50). The four newspapers were similar in the reliance on episodic framing and government sources of information, and the valence of the articles. Government sources is the opinion leader in 1MDB events but space is given to the voices of the opposition, foreign entities and the public. The English newspapers and Malaysiakini Chinese have more articles with a positive valence (46%-56%) in favour of investigations to resolve the financial corruption case and about 31% of the articles had a negative valence. However, Sin Chew Daily is more critical of the investigations than the other three newspapers. There are significant differences among the newspapers in frame dimensions of news headlines. The responsibility frame is used in close to 80% of the 1MDB articles in the Chinese newspapers but only in 40%-50% of the 1MDB articles in the English newspapers. Instead the English newspapers highlight the economic consequences of 1MDB and the conflict between individuals and groups, as well as contradictions between rumour and fact. The findings suggest that framing of controversial high-profile financial corruption case may differ due to the readership of the English and Chinese newspapers.

Keywords: *1MDB, framing, financial scandal, mainstream newspapers, alternative newspapers.*

INTRODUCTION

Fraud, scandals, and financial corruptions attract media attention, particularly if they involve high profile figures in the political and financial spheres. These events are reported with different slants, which in turn shapes readers' reactions and views. News framing goes beyond a journalist's decision on selection and salience. Entman (1991, p. 7) states that, with the exception of breaking news, "news organizations shape their reports to elicit favorable reactions from readers and viewers, and the anticipated reactions of the public also affect the rhetoric and actions of political elites, who are the primary 'sponsors' of the news frames". The socio-economic and political context and editorial policies also influence framing.

Research shows that scandals may be portrayed as having a limited extent and scope of effect. For example, the baby milk scandal in China was framed negatively by international press but the causes and effects of the scandal are mitigated by newspapers in China (Borgen, 2011; Luo, 2010; Miao et al., 2012; Rodriguez & Yao, 2012). In the United States, Wennermark's (2013) analysis of three newspapers revealed that the Bernie Madoff's corruption case was often disguised as normal business practices and the attention is on the

perpetrator instead of the company, possibly to safeguard the economic interests of corporations. In Malaysia, Murudi and Ting (2019, p. 123) found that the economic dimension was downplayed in the 2016 The Star and Malaysiakini articles so that the "news remained favourable to the government and helped it maintain its integrity in the governance of the country's economy". In fact, it is not uncommon for the government to influence news management, like in the 2008 Sweden financial crisis, where the opposition's criticism only surfaced when the crisis was waning (Falasca, 2014).

When scandals involve high profile figures, news articles may attribute responsibility to less prominent persons. An example is the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) financial corruption case which involves a former Malaysian prime minister, Najib Razak. Ting, Murudi, and Chuah (2020) found that the mainstream newspaper The Star diverted attention to Jho Low, his associate, in the 2016 articles. However, the 2018 articles mention Najib Razak two times more frequently than Jho Low when Najib Razak was no longer the prime minister. The political context affected responsibility attribution.

News framing is responsive to context, including legislations on press freedom. The legislations applicable in Malaysia are the Publications and Printing Presses Act, Internal Security Act, Sedition Act, Official Secrets Act and Defamation Act (Yang & De Rycker, 2017). Journalists may exercise self-censorship because of past incidents such as the suspension of The Edge Weekly and The Edge Daily (Story, 2015), police questioning of journalists, and detention of editors and executives of news portals (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2015; The Straits Time, 2015). A bright spot in the press freedom scene is that the Anti-Fake News Act 2019 has since been repealed (The Star, 2020).

Thus far, the studies on 1MDB involved reader perceptions (Ismail & Shanmuganathan, 2019; Mohd Nor & Baharuddin, 2021) and financial and political implications (Case, 2017; Genser & Rasiah, 2020; Hutchinson, 2018; Jones, 2020; Lu, 2019). Possibly because of the controversy surrounding 1MDB, there are only two framing studies on 1MDB in Malaysia (Murudi & Ting, 2019; Ting et al., 2020), both involving English newspapers.

We posit that there may be a difference in the framing of 1MDB in Chinese language newspapers and English newspapers. Some researchers (Ooi, 2010; Rahim, 2018) have suggested that ethnic newspapers promote cultural maintenance rather than assimilation and acculturation. Chinese newspapers are inclined to cover ethnic issues and may racialise issues (Chang et al., 2012; Yang & DeRycker, 2017; Yang & Ishak, 2011, 2012, 2014; Yang & Leong, 2014). Chinese newspapers "do not really report or share information about the Others [other ethnic groups], unless in situations where what the Others say and do have implications upon the community concerned" (Ooi, 2010, p. 273). This influences readers to develop a Chinese-centric perspective of events. Rahim (2018) believes that the continued existence of ethnic media is a hindrance to achieving integration because they promote and condition the ethnic mindset. Overseas, ethnic newspapers also have the interest of their readership in mind. An example is the Chinese-American newspapers and periodicals published in 1995-1996, which serve to maintain the identity and cohesiveness of Chinese migrant communities in the United States, regardless of whether the language of the publications is English, Chinese, or bilingual (Ma, 1999). In Malaysia, the language of the newspaper signifies the targeted ethnic group.

As alternative media, ethnic newspapers may be populism-inclined (von Nordheim, Müller, & Scheppe, 2019). Mainstream newspapers are those rooted within the conventional ideological norms and values of a society and, therefore, enjoy widespread scale of influence (Kenix, 2011). Mainstream newspapers are more sensitive in reporting news (Oh & Zhou, 2012). Therefore, to better understand the framing of 1MDB, it is vital to include two axes in the selection: mainstream versus alternative, and language of the newspaper.

The study examined framing of 1MDB in online mainstream and alternative newspapers published in English and Chinese in Malaysia. The specific aspects studied were:
1.   The percentage of episodic and thematic frames in 1MDB articles;
2.   The news frame dimensions in 1MDB headlines;
3.   The sources of information quoted in 1MDB articles; and
4.   The valence of 1MDB articles.

BACKGROUND ON 1MDB

1MDB, as explained by Case (2017), is a corruption scandal involving prominent individuals, in particular the former Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak. 1MDB is a state-owned investment company established in 2009, under Malaysia's Ministry of Finance and the former Prime Minister's supervision (Hisyam, 2015). It aimed to push Malaysia to become a fully developed country by raising money through bond issues and borrowings. Playing the role of the Finance Minister and chairman of 1MDB's board of advisor, Najib Razak was the sole person in charge of signing for all the company's investments, granting him power over both management of the company and the board (Yatim & Idris, 2019). In late 2014, 1MDB came under scrutiny after missing payment to bondholders (The Wall Street Journal, 2016). It was alleged that approximately US$700 million of 1MDB's funds was transferred to Najib Razak's private bank accounts (Genser & Rasiah, 2020), although it was claimed to be a donation from the Saudi royal family. Soon, more transfers of 1MDB funds were exposed with four key transactions (see Case, 2017).

Investigations into 1MDB ramped up when the Pakatan Harapan government took over the rule of Malaysia after the 14th General Election on 9 May 2018, ending a 60-year rule by the Barisan Nasional coalition since the independence of Malaysia. The Pakatan Harapan government led by Dr Mahathir Mohamad appointed new key personnel such as the Attorney General and Chief Commissioner of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to handle the 1MDB investigation. Najib Razak faced four charges of abusing his position to obtain gratification from 1MDB funds and 21 counts of money laundering involving the same money (Anbalagan, 2020). Among the investigations were the repatriation of US$300 million by the United States Department of Justice to Malaysia (The Straits Times, 2020). A political upheaval took place on 24 February 2020 whereby the Pakatan Harapan government was replaced by the Perikatan Nasional government led by Muhyiddin Muhammad Yassin, who was from the same political party as Najib Razak (United Malays National Organisation, UMNO). The 1MDB investigation slowed down, and there was resignation of key personnel from the Special Taskforce in 1MDB Investigation. On 21 August 2021 when Muhyiddin Muhammad Yassin resigned due to pressure over the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ismail Sabri (also from UMNO) took over as prime minister.

As of September 2022, Najib is serving a 12-year jail term after the Federal Court affirmed his conviction and sentence in his SRC International case (Ho, 2022). "He has not been acquitted yet for the 1MDB abuse of power and money laundering trial, the 1MDB audit report trial, the RM6.6 billion International Petroleum Investment Co trial as well as the RM27 million money laundering SRC International trial," former attorney-general Alan Gomez was quoted as saying (Ho, 2022). On 1 September 2022, his wife Rosmah Mansor was sentenced to 10 years' jail for each of the three corruption charges involving the RM1.25 billion project to supply solar hybrid energy to rural schools in Sarawak and fined 970 million ringgit (Reuters, 2022).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

There are various theoretical and empirical perspectives on news framing analysis but in this study, reference is made to Entman's (1993) perspective to explain the foreshadowing of selected elements and representation of different perceived realities. Framing is thus about selection and salience. Salience is the marking of information as prominent through placement, repetition, or relations to culturally familiar symbols using texts (Entman, 1993). Salience can be analysed in terms of repetition or number of articles. For example, Murudi and Ting (2019) found that in 2016 Malaysiakini published 3.4 times more 1MDB news articles than The Star. The alternative newsletter kept the issue alive, mostly by soliciting opinions from various sources.

News framing can be studied in terms of episodic and thematic framing. Episodic frames highlight individual experiences and specific events (Iyengar, 1990) whereas thematic framing covers general trends such as poverty rate, or matters of public policy. Thematic articles are usually detailed reports which explain the occurrence, remedial actions, scope of influence, or background. Wennermark's (2013) analysis of corruption cases reported in The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times from 2007 to 2011 revealed that episodic framing dominates, and the criminal tends to get more attention than the victim. Park (2012) also found that episodic framing tends to be used for political corruption news in Chicago Tribune, and this influences readers to think that corruption issues will disappear once perpetrators are convicted, and they are unable to see corruption as a phenomenon in society. Episodic framing influences readers to attribute blame to individual perpetrators rather than the government or situations (Iyengar, 1990).

The present study employed Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) frame dimensions in the news content, covering responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality. On the coverage of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Oh and Zhou (2012) found that a Chinese language ethnic newspaper (World Journal) used the risk frame more frequently than the mainstream newspaper (Toronto Star) but used the human interest frame and conflict frame less frequently. The World Journal was more intent on raising awareness of the SARS risk spreading from China and Southeast Asia to Canada while Toronto Star was more sensitive in its coverage as it blamed the Canadian government officials more than China or Chinese Canadians. Unexpectedly, Luther and Zhou (2005) did not find any significant differences in frequency of human interest frames in SARS news published by Chinese newspapers in China (People's Daily and China Daily) and English newspapers (New York Times and Washington Post). Based on Murudi and Ting (2019), it is known that The Star and Malaysiakini news articles on 1MDB in 2016 highlighted the political frame because of

the involvement of the former prime minister. The morality frame was the least used, but it took on different dimensions. The Star portrayed Najib Razak as a responsible prime minister who claimed no wrongdoing in 1MDB but Malaysiakini used opposition and grassroot voices to urge him to be transparent and take responsibility for the money laundering.

Finally, the valence of news can shape readers' attitudes. Valence refers to the implicit moral evaluation inherent in the framing of positive or negative aspects, solutions, or treatments of an issue (Entman, 1993). De Vreese and Boomgaarden's (2003) analysis of the European Union (EU) 2000 summit news on television and in newspapers in Great Britain, Germany, and The Netherlands showed that 52% of the news carried negative valence. This influenced the audience to show lower levels of support for the EU enlargement than those exposed to advantageously framed news. As for the valence of 1MDB news articles, Ting et al. (2020) reported that the 2016 articles published in The Star had a balance of positive, negative and neutral valence but the 2018 articles were mostly written in a positive tone. Malaysiakini articles stayed supportive of investigations to resolve the financial scandal before and after the change of ruling government.

METHOD OF STUDY

The data were from two mainstream newspapers were The Star (English daily) and Sin Chew Daily (Chinese daily). The alternative newspaper was Malaysiakini (English and Chinese edition). In this paper, the newspapers are referred to as follows: TS stands for The Star, SC for Sin Chew Daily, ME for Malaysiakini/English, and MC for Malaysiakini/Chinese. The news in ME and MC are not translations although they may share some feature articles.

The two mainstream newspapers were selected because the circulation of their printed versions is among the highest in Malaysia (Yang & De Rycker, 2017). SC is owned by a business tycoon Tiong Hiew King (Yang & Ishak, 2012). The Star is partially owned by the Malaysian Chinese Association (Sin Chew Daily, 2013), which was a component party of Barisan Nasional (Abott, 2011). On the other hand, Malaysiakini is an alternative newspaper bearing the reputation of independent journalism (Steele, 2009).

A total of 2,677 1MDB news articles published from 1 July to 31 December 2018 were collected from the four newspapers (TS, 956; ME, 434; SC, 1000; MC, 300) but 200 articles were selected using systematic sampling. The sample size is larger than previous studies (95 in Chang et al., 2012; 111 in Lindstrom, 2016; 132 in Xu, 2013). The data were collected from July 2018, when the Malaysian cabinet headed by Pakatan Harapan (the ruling party then) was sworn in after winning the May 2018 general election.

The search words used in the online news portals was "1MDB" and "一马公司" (Chinese). Straight news articles with headline and/or content on 1MDB were collected for analysis. From the 2,677 articles, 50 were selected from each newspaper using a systematic sampling procedure of every n^{th} article.

Four features of the news articles were analysed. Firstly, for the analysis of episodic and thematic frames, the unit of analysis was the article, and Iyengar's (1990) definitions was employed (see Theoretical frameworks section). If an article had a sentence on background information but the rest of the sentences were about a single event and had a date stamp (e.g., Last Sunday), it was categorised as episodic frame.

Secondly, the frame dimensions in the news headlines were analysed using Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five generic frames (Table 1). Frames were coded as "1" if present or "0" if absent. For example, if the article was about the owner and sale of the Equanimity yacht, then it was coded as economic consequences because there are financial implications. Sometimes longer headlines had a few frames, which is why the total frame dimensions in this study exceeded 200.

Table 1: News frames based on Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)

Frames	Attributes
Responsibility	Does the news suggest that individual, group of people, or some level of government has the ability to ease or is responsible for the problem or issue?
	Does the news suggest solution(s) to the problem/issue?
Economic Consequences	Is there a mention of cost involved, financial losses or gains now or in the future?
	Is there a reference to economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?
Conflict	Does the news reflect disagreement between individuals, groups or countries?
	Does the news refer to two or more sides of the problem or issue?
	Does the news show contradiction between rumour and fact?*
Human Interest	Does the news provide a human example or "human face" on the issue?
	Does the news employ adjectives, personal vignettes or visuals that generate feelings of outrage, empathy-caring, sympathy, or compassion?
	Does the news emphasise how individuals and groups are affected by the issue?
	Does the news go into the private or personal lives of the actors?
Morality	Does the news contain any moral message?
	Does the news refer to morality, God, and other religious tenets?
	Does the news offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?

Note: *Our new addition

Thirdly, for sources of information in the articles, Table 2 shows following framework for coding.

Table 2: Analysis framework for sources of information

Source	Example
Government	Political figures from the ruling parties (e.g., Pakatan Harapan and its component parties), government departments (e.g., police, attorney general), government personnel
Opposition	Opposition party politicians (e.g., PAS, UMNO), 1MDB perpetrators (e.g., Jho Low, Najib), and individuals opposing the investigation (e.g., activists)
Foreign entities	Individuals and organisations from other countries, e.g., Xavier Justo, The Edge
The public	Reporters, news reports, civilians, and named/unnamed sources

Finally, the articles were read to identify the dominant valence based on De Vreese and Boomgaarden's (2003) framework (Table 3). If an article had both positive and negative tone, then it was categorised as having neutral valence.

Table 3: Analysis framework for valence

Source	Example
Positive	Shows positive information in favour of bringing the 1MDB investigation to a closure
Neutral	Does not show positive or negative perspectives, or the article contains both positive and negative elements that cancel each other out
Negative	Shows negative information criticising the 1MDB investigation and revealing perpetrators' questionable behaviour

The frequencies were computed and Chi-square tests of independence were performed to determine whether there are significant differences between the four newspapers in the framing, frame dimensions, sources of information, and valence of articles.

RESULTS

This section presents the results from the analysis 1MDB articles in mainstream and alternative online newspapers published in English and Chinese on episodic and thematic frames, news frame dimensions, sources of information, and valence. The vastly different patterns of ME and MC articles show that these two sister publications are not translations of each other.

Episodic and Thematic Frames in 1MDB Articles
Table 4 shows that episodic frame was dominant in the four newspapers (more than 98%). The Chi-square test of independence showed that there were no significant differences in the use of episodic and thematic frames of 1MDB articles in the four newspapers, X^2 (3, N=200) = 2.04, p=.75.

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of episodic and thematic frame in four newspapers (N=200)

Framing	TS	ME	SC	MC	Total
Episodic	49 (98%)	48 (96%)	50 (100%)	49 (98%)	197 (98.5%)
Thematic	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	0	1 (2%)	3 (1.5%)
Total	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	200 (100%)

The overwhelming episodic frame in 1MDB news articles is due to the ramping up of the investigation in the second half of 2018 during the Pakatan Harapan rule. There seemed to be "breaking news" on the investigation ever so often, encompassing the investigation process, presentation of opposing stance on 1MDB, defence by perpetrators of 1MDB case, and publication of 1MDB-related books.

In addition, the episodic frames reported opposing stance on the 1MDB issue. The conflict was mainly between the Pakatan Harapan government and the opposition political parties. For instance, Muhyiddin Muhammad Yassin (the then Minister of Home Affairs) claimed that the Pakatan Harapan government intentionally delayed arresting Jho Low until the coming general election, but Sivarraajh Chandran (Cameron Highland member of parliament) claimed that Jho Low's latest whereabout had been identified (MC_10.30.36). Through the episodic frames, readers were informed of the perspective of perpetrators of 1MDB case. The newspapers also attributed salience to release of books such as "1MDB: The scandal that brought down a government" by Gunasegaran (MC_08.29.12) and "The Sarawak

Report: The Inside Story of 1MDB Expose" by Clare Rewcastle-Brown, the editor of Sarawak Report (MC_09.07.15).

News Frame Dimensions in 1MDB Articles
Table 5 shows that the responsibility frame was the most frequently used frame, and morality was the least used frame in 1MDB news headlines in the four newspapers. A Chi-square test of independence showed that there were significant differences between the four newspapers on the frame dimensions in 1MDB news headlines, X^2 (12, N=200) = 261.00, p=.001.

Table 5: Frequency and percentage of the news frame in headlines of four newspapers (N=200)

Frame	TS	ME	SC	MC	Total
Responsibility	30 (50.9%)	22 (40.7%)	46 (79.3%)	47 (78.4%)	145 (62.8%)
Economic consequences	15 (25.4%)	14 (25.9%)	7 (12.1%)	2 (3.3%)	38 (16.4%)
Conflict	9 (15.2%)	10 (18.5%)	3 (5.2%)	6 (10%)	28 (12.1%)
Human interest	3 (5.1%)	5 (9.3%)	1 (1.7%)	5 (8.3%)	14 (6.1%)
Morality	2 (3.4%)	3 (5.6%)	1 (1.7%)	0	6 (2.6%)
Total	59 (100%)	54 (100%)	58 (100%)	60 (100%)	231 (100%)

Note: The total may exceed the number of articles because there may be more than one frame dimension in the headline

Responsibility frame. The Chi-Square test results showed that the biggest difference between the observed and expected values is the responsibility frame, indicating that this is the frame where the four newspapers are the most different from one another. The responsibility frame was the most frequently used frame dimension accounting for about 80% of two Chinese newspapers (SC and MC) and 40%-50% of two English newspapers (TS and ME). The strong responsibility frame suggests that certain individuals and government officials (e.g., MO1) should assume responsibility for the 1MDB scandal. The three sub-frames for the responsibility frame were: (1) the Pakatan Harapan government showed due diligence in the investigation; (2) individuals from the previous ruling government opposed the investigation; and (3) individuals involved in 1MDB made their defence.

Economic consequences frame. Because 1MDB involved fraudulent transfer of funds, the economic consequences ranked second for three of the newspapers analysed. MC was the exception, where the economic consequences ranked fourth after responsibility, conflict, and human interest. As a result, MC readers may be led to think that the corruption does not have much financial implications on Malaysia but are sensitised to the lack of transparency in the release of information on 1MDB.

Conflict frame. The conflict focus was different in the English and Chinese newspapers. In the English newspapers, the conflict frame was more on one party reproaching another. For example, the publication of Rewcastle-Brown's book on 1MDB met with expressed intentions of lawsuit by Jho Low ("Jho Low tries to scuttle Rewcastle-Brown's book on 1MDB", ME_08.31.169) and disapproval of the sultan's wife ("Sarawak Report apologises to Terengganu Sultanah, says passage in book misinterpreted", TS_09.27.479). In contrast, the conflict frame in the Chinese newspapers focussed on the contradiction between rumour and fact, suggestion that the public is not privy to a lot of information. For example, "Datuk Lee Chong Wei's personal account is suspended due to the 1MDB scandal? MACC and Syed Saddiq

deny the allegations" (MC_07.30.08). The conflict frame is so dominant that the 1MDB investigation has been constructed as a feud between the Pakatan Harapan government and the opposition.

Human interest frame. This puts a human face on the investigation. During his book launch, a KiniBiz journalist, P Gunasegaran was quoted as saying that he could not believe that the individuals who embezzled 1MDB funds could be so "daring" and "stupid" ("Book on 1MDB scandal: Why are they so daring and stupid", MC_08.29.12). The use of adjectives evokes readers' feelings. The minimal use of the human interest frame suggests that there is less emphasis on how individuals are affected by the 1MDB financial corruption, or the social responsibilities of individuals involved in an event (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Morality frame. The near absence confirms that 1MDB is portrayed as a financial scandal rather than a moral issue. A SC article was upfront in referring to religious tenets: "Mujahid: not only taking alcohol and involved in adultery, stealing is the biggest sin" (SC_11.01.37). The word "sin" was used to allude to the misconduct which violated Islamic teachings since Mujahid was a Muslim. The morality frame took the form of a quotation, which conforms to the journalistic norm of objectivity (Neuman et al., 1992). A TS article headlined "Najib refuses to be in the dock during case mention" (TS_11.16.759) induced readers to make moral judgements. 1MDB falls into the category of white-collar crimes, but the morality of the bribery and money laundering is deemphasised, suggesting that corruption may be treated as a part of life in Malaysia. "[Corruption] seems to happen mostly with the government's money, which is everybody's money, which of course means it's nobody's money" (Ibrahim, 2022). This is an example of a systemic problem highlighted by Park (2012) and in the case of 1MDB, it is aggravated by the lack of thematic framing to remind readers of the background and context of the fraud.

Sources of Information in 1MDB Articles

The Chi-square test of independence showed that there were no significant differences among the four newspapers on the sources of information in the 1MDB news articles, X^2 (9, N=200) = 9.60, p=.5.

Table 6 shows that the most oft-quoted source of information was the government, appearing in 44.2% to 56.8% of 1MDB news articles. While citing government sources can elevate the reliability of the news and create a sense of trust among readers, over-dependence would portray the newspaper as a government mouthpiece. This bias in reporting can cause the newspaper to lose its readership. This could explain why all the four newspapers gave voice to the opposition (TS, 22%; ME, 25%; SC, 25%, MC, 16.2%) and the public (TS, 8%; ME, 15.4%; SC, 12.5%, MC, 21.6%).

The analysis revealed that the public was selectively used as a convenient information source to avoid making an explicit editorial stand on matters that would step on the toes of the government. For instance, civilians were used as the main source of information in ME articles on a controversial religious conversion case in Malaysia (Yang & Ishak, 2011), in TS articles on a sudden announcement on the language for the primary school achievement test (Chang et al., 2012), and in ME and TS when covering a Hindu temple relocation protest (Yang & Leong, 2017). In Sweden, tabloid newspapers use citizens as sources while quality newspapers use experts (Falasca, 2014).

Table 6: Frequency and percentage of sources of information in four newspapers (N=200)

Sources	TS	ME	SC	MC	Total
Government	26 (52%)	23 (44.2%)	27 (56.3%)	21 (56.8%)	97 (51.9%)
Opposition	11 (22%)	13 (25.0%)	12 (25%)	6 (16.2%)	42 (22.4%)
Foreign entities	9 (18%)	8 (15.4%)	3 (6.2%)	2 (5.4%)	22 (11.8%)
The public	4 (8%)	8 (15.4%)	6 (12.5%)	8 (21.6%)	26 (13.9%)
Total	50 (100%)	52 (100%)	48 (100%)	37 (100%)	187 (100%)

Note: The total number of SC and MC sources are less than 50 because some articles did not quote sources

English newspapers also offered an external perspective through quotations of the foreign media (e.g., Bloomberg, Nikkei Asian Review), the Sarawak Report editor Clare Rewcastle-Brown who exposed hard-to-get details on 1MDB, and the U.S. Department of Justice which first broke news of the 1MDB fraud. TS even had an article which referred to an anonymous source as "a person with knowledge of the matter" to reveal information without declaring the source.

Valence of 1MDB Articles

Table 7 shows the valence frequencies. The Chi-square test of independence showed that there were no significant differences in the valence of articles in the four newspapers, X^2 (6, N=200) = 7.19, p=.5.

Table 7: Frequency and percentage of positive, neutral, and negative valence in four newspapers (N=200)

Valence	TS	ME	SC	MC	Total
Positive	23 (46%)	28 (56%)	19 (38%)	23 (46%)	93 (46.5%)
Negative	15 (30%)	16 (32%)	23 (46%)	15 (30%)	69 (34.5%)
Neutral	12 (24%)	6 (12%)	8 (16%)	12 (24%)	38 (19%)
Total	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	200

Interestingly, there were more articles with positive valence (46.5%) than negative valence (34.5%). The analysis showed that negative valence is derived from quoting opposition politicians and defendants. For a high-profile corruption case, the newspapers managed to keep 19% of their articles neutral. Neutral articles reduce biasness, provide a fair description of the issue, and influence a balanced interpretation of the issue (De Vreese & Lecheler, 2016). However, neutral headlines are less sensational, and are less newsworthy.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study on 1MDB news coverage showed that the framing differs along the language line (English/Chinese newspapers) rather than newspaper category (mainstream/alternative). The four newspapers were similar in their reliance on episodic framing, government sources, and positive valence but differ significantly in frame dimensions.

Firstly, the greater use of episodic framing over thematic framing is expected in straight news based on past framing studies on artificial intelligence (Chuan et al., 2019), crime (Johnston et al., 2015; Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2008; Seely & Riffe, 2020), and scandals (Aarøe, 2011; Chang, 2012; Park, 2012; Wennermark, 2013). However, the proportion of episodic frame (96%-100%) for the 1MDB news articles is exceptionally high because of the

ramping up of the 1MDB investigation in the second half of 2018 under the Pakatan Harapan government. Episodic framing relies on elite sources for information and does not allow much space for journalists to be creative (Van Dijck, 2013). This is just as well because reporters can stay clear of making a stance on a controversial issue. Episodic frames are "safer" than thematic frames in view of legislations that govern press freedom in Malaysia. Thematic articles require research skills and versatility to satisfy the public's hunger for quality news. However, excessive episodic framing may lead to perceptions of corruption as inconsequential if it goes undetected or when perpetrators are convicted (Park, 2012). In fact, financial corruption may be disguised as normal business practices (Wennermark, 2013). People may not react to white collar crimes as strongly as to street crimes because they do not cause obvious physical harm. In the case of 1MDB, individuals do not suffer bankruptcy and personal financial consequences but it is the country's coffers which are depleted.

Secondly, the study indicated a link between reliance on government sources and positive valence in 1MDB framing in the four newspapers. Over half of the sources in the newspapers are from the government (except ME, 44.2%), which is trying to bring the perpetrators to justice. The political context was different before July 2018 when Najib Razak was the prime minister and head of the ruling coalition, and it was uncomfortable for the investigators and the newspapers. The political context explains Ting et al.'s (2020) analysis of 2016 newspaper articles. TS (mainstream newspaper) had a balance of positive, negative and neutral valence in news articles while ME (alternative newspaper) had a strong negative valence framing as it sought to expose the money laundering. However, the main source is still the government whether in 2016 or 2018 (Ting et al., 2020). The post-election Pakatan Harapan government fully endorsed the investigation, leading to overwhelming positive valence in the 2018 news articles (Ting et al., 2020). TS had a section in its online website just for 1MDB articles. Our results confirm Ting et al.'s (2020) findings on TS and ME (English newspapers), but we add further information on the positive valence-framing of MC news articles and SC which had slightly more negative articles (46%) than positive articles (38%).

Finally, the frame dimensions of 1MDB news articles are significantly different in the four newspapers. Previous studies on 1MDB framing (Murudi & Ting, 2019; Ting et al., 2020) showed differences between mainstream and alternative newspapers, but they analysed only English newspapers. When we added another axis to the comparison (language), we found a stark difference in the frame dimensions between the English newspapers (TS and ME) and the Chinese newspapers (SC and MC). Other Malaysian researchers had noted that Chinese (ethnic) newspapers frame ethnicity from a Chinese-centric perspective (Ooi, 2010; Rahim, 2018). Our findings show that the different framing of Chinese newspapers extends beyond ethnic issues to financial corruption cases.

The responsibility frame appeared in close to 80% of the 1MDB articles in the Chinese newspapers but only in 40%-51% of the 1MDB articles in the English newspapers. The Chinese newspapers sent the message that a corruption scandal happened and key actors have to assume responsibility for it. The dominance of the responsibility frame suggests attribution of blame (Luther & Zhou, 2005). Our analysis was based on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) news frames. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) also found responsibility to be the major frame in European political news.

Using Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) news frames may reveal hidden dimensions of framing. Murudi and Ting (2019) analysed 2016 1MDB articles in TS and ME using Boydstun, Card, Gross, Resnik, and Smith's (2014) framework. Their findings are expected based on the surface characterisation of the financial (economic frame) fraud case (crime and justice frame) which involves politicians (political frame) and authority to release funds (constitution and jurisprudence). However, our study showed that Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) framework which is less specific can reveal hidden messages. For example, blame for the problem or ability to solve the problem (responsibility frame), nuances of the "facts of the case" (conflict frame) and whether a human face is attached to the issue for emotional appeal (human interest frame). Take for instance, the conflict frame which is used more frequently for framing 1MDB in the English newspapers than in the Chinese newspapers. The conflict framing turns the financial scandal into a political feud. The involvement of politicians would be coded as the political frame in Boydstun et al.'s (2014) framework, and would not show the disagreement of perspectives.

The news frames that are common to both frameworks are economic consequences and morality, and again a difference in framing is evident along the language line. In the 2016 1MDB news articles in TS and ME, 16%-18% of the headlines highlighted the economic dimension (Murudi & Ting, 2019) but the percentage rose to 25%-26% for the 2018 news articles in TS and ME (analysed in the present study). This is because earlier in 2016, the financial ramifications were not known but in 2018, the investigation triggered attention to the recovery of 1MDB funds, interest charged for the 1MDB debts and repayment of the debts. However, contrary to expectations, the two Chinese newspapers gave less salience to the financial losses (SC, 12.1%; MC, 3.3%), compared to responsibility attribution for the scandal. Readers of these Chinese newspapers may be led to think that 1MDB does not carry much financial implication whereas readers of the English newspapers may be more sensitised to the financial losses.

The morality frame is minimally used in 1MDB coverage. Murudi and Ting (2019) found morality frames in 9%-13% of the 2016 1MDB articles in TS and ME but we found 3%-6% in the 2018 articles in the two English newspapers and even less in the Chinese newspapers (0%-1%). According to An (2011), an immorality news frame heightens anger and blame. Based on this, the English newspapers were more inclined to trigger readers' reactions than the Chinese newspapers. In the Zimbabwe Manpower Development Fund (Zimdef) corruption scandal of 2016, Makombe (2018) found that the corruption was framed as a moral problem with economic consequences for the marginalised and the poor.

The study shows that framing of a controversial high-profile financial corruption case differs along the language line more than whether the newspaper is mainstream or alternative. However, the study was conducted at a particular point in time and future research should examine how 1MDB framing might differ with political regime. The study focused on framing in 1MDB news production but did not investigate media effects. Further studies should examine reader response to framing and readers' reasons for selecting certain newspapers as their news sources in view of the role of newspapers in community support and nation-building.

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