

Bachelor Thesis

The COVID-19 Pandemic in South China Morning Post &

BBC:

**The Influence of Cultural Values on the Framing of South China Morning
Post and BBC of COVID-19 in a Hong Kong and British news media**



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Supervisor: Dr. Sandy Barasa & Noemi Mena Montes

Student: Haris Muhammad

Student number: s1037924

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Table of contents

Statement of own work	3
1. Abstract	4
2. Introduction	5
3. Theoretical Framework	6
<i>3.1 News framing</i>	6
3.1.1 Economic Consequences frame	7
3.1.2 Human Interest and Impact frame	7
3.1.3 Attribution of Responsibility frame	8
3.1.4 Morality Frame	8
3.1.5 Conflict Frame	8
<i>3.2 The role of culture in framing news</i>	8
<i>3.3 News framing of previous pandemics</i>	10
<i>3.4 News framing of COVID-19</i>	11
<i>3.5 The present study – Hong Kong – The United Kingdom</i>	13
4. Method	15
<i>4.1 Materials</i>	15
<i>4.2 Model of analysis</i>	15
<i>4.3 Procedure</i>	16
<i>4.4 Statistical treatment</i>	16
5. Results	17
<i>Table 1.</i>	17
<i>Table 2.</i>	18
6. Discussion and Conclusion	19
<i>6.1 Limitations and Implications</i>	21
7. Reference list	23
8. Appendices	26
<i>8.1 Appendix 1: Graphs</i>	26
<i>8.2 Appendix 2: Code Sheet</i>	29

Statement of own work

Student name: Haris Muhammad

Student number: s1037924

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Lecturer: Dr Sandy Barasa & Noemi Mena Montes

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Signature: Haris Muhammad

Date: 13.06.2022

1. Abstract

In this study, a cross-national analysis of news framing and understanding the application of Hofstede's theory in news media framings about the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong's local news outlet South China Morning Post and the United Kingdom's BBC from the 23rd of January 2020 until 23rd of March 2020 is presented. Hofstede's cultural dimensions provided a context for understanding the fundamentals behind the occurrences of the five news frames (Economic Consequences, Conflict, Morality, Human Interest and Impact, Attribution of responsibility) in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. A corpus of 62 articles from the South China Morning Post and BBC were analysed; it was found that Hong Kong produced a diverse range of news frames and had the most Economic Consequences news frame, followed by Human Interest and Impact. For the United Kingdom, it was found that BBC had the most number of Morality frame, followed by Human Interest and Impact frame. The findings contradicted Hofstede's theory, as Hong Kong (South China Morning Post) as a collectivistic culture generated more diversified news frames than the United Kingdom (BBC) when documenting COVID-19 (Hofstede, 2001). Nevertheless, the findings support Hofstede's (2001) theory that Hong Kong is a Collective and High Power Distance culture, whereas the UK is an Individualistic and Low Power Distance society, as the South China Morning Post had more number of news articles reflecting high Collectivism and Power Distance than the BBC.

2. Introduction

In December 2019, Chinese health workers in Wuhan city first discovered the COVID-19 virus in a seafood market. After that, the disease rapidly spread around China, and in early 2020, the media reported cases in Japan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, Italy, the United States and France. By 31st of January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized the disease as an international public health emergency, and later, in March 2020, it was labelled as a pandemic -"Novel coronavirus – China".

Since the beginning of COVID-19, there have been more than five different variants of the coronavirus. Currently, the world is tackling the Omicron wave of the virus. So far, there have been more than 430 000 000 cases of Covid-19, including 5 992 047 deaths globally (WHO, 2022). However, in 2021, the development of vaccines decreased deaths and hospitalization rates, and as of the 27th February 2022, a total of 10 585 766 316 vaccines doses have been administered (WHO, 2022).

Given that COVID-19 is a global pandemic and health crisis, local health authorities communicated preventative measures. For example, social distancing, mandatory masks in public, and certain private areas and travel restrictions to minimize the infection rates among the population. At the same time, news media organizations rushed to articulate the matter of the COVID-19 outbreak and to highlight various elements of the epidemic. As a result, each country and organization had their own relative framing strategies. Glason (2013) stated that the use of specific news framings at the time of a public health emergency has immense effects on societal understanding and reactions to a pandemic.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 News framing

Research has been conducted to gain insights into the types of frames employed to frame events in newspapers or other media types (e.g. De Vreese et al., 2001; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Chang et al., 2010). For example, Entman (1993, p. 52) described framing as followed: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, cause interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described".

In addition, Neuman et al., (1992) presented four types of news frames that are used in framing news stories: economic consequences, human impact, moral and conflict frames. Subsequently, two frames were added by Valkenburg et al. (1999), namely the Attribution of Responsibility news frame and Human Interest news frame. The latter frames are explained thoroughly on page five and six. These generic frames are also used to analyse politics, such as election coverages and political speeches (e.g. Vreese, 2005).

Gain-loss framing helps gain deeper insights into the positive and negative implications of adopting a certain behaviour and action (e.g. Basnyat and Lee, 2005). According to behavioural economics and recent research into COVID-19, utilizing gain-loss frames to transmit information influences decision making, risk perception, and behavioural intention (Kahneman, 2003; Gantiva et al., 2021). Gain-framed messaging in the area of health communication stresses the advantages or positive outcomes that accrue from adopting the activity. On the other hand, loss-framed communications aim to convince by emphasizing the negative repercussions or costs of failing to adopt the advised activity (Rothman and Salovey, 1997).

The Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) is a conceptual model that helps researchers find insights and explain how popular media framing of risk information such as COVID-19 could trigger socio-political impacts (Rooke, 2021). It is believed by Rooke (2021) that risk information could be amplified by media outlets to fit their agendas through two distinct mechanisms: information mechanisms and response mechanisms (Rooke, 2021). According to the information mechanism, information transfer systems can influence public perceptions of risk by elevating discourses about risk information, highlighting uncertainties about risk, and emphasizing the degree of disagreement over risk governance. According to the

response mechanism, media texts frequently have affective value in justifying risk perceptions by outlining the boundaries of trust in institutions, fear of catastrophe, and stigmatization of technology and people.

Neuman et al., (1992) explained four news frames that used for communicating and framing news articles, in this study, news articles related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These four news frames are the Economic Consequences frame, the Human Impact frame, Conflict frame and Morality Frame. Furthermore, the two added news frames by Valkenburg et al. (1999), namely the Attribution of Responsibility news frame and the Human Interest news frame, were combined with news frames from Neuman et al., (1992) in this study to enhance completeness. The chosen frames are relevant for understanding the usage of news frames during a major health crisis such as the COVID-19 and provides the main motives of the articles, news organization and maybe the government.

3.1.1 Economic Consequences frame

Major enterprises and investments are always economically impacted during a crisis. The consequences could be either beneficial or adverse, with some businesses generating income and others operating at a loss. The financial impact is known as the economic framing (Iyengar, 1990). As the virus spreads, the economic and political implications of the crisis gain traction. Government travel advisories have an impact on the economic realm of individual initiatives. Although the lifting or easing of the travel advice restrictions/bans allows for granular economic coverage, the attention is on the health issue. Stakeholders are focused on this phase to reassure as well as provide professional advice that is regarded critical in the given scenario.

3.1.2 Human Interest and Impact frame

In the event of health outbreaks, news media outlets has persisted in providing human interest narratives about the diseases (Iyengar, 1990). Whether directly or indirectly, people who are afflicted are included in these types of stories. The utilization of human interest frame enables the integration of the human face or emotional viewpoint into a news article (Beaudoin, 2007). Individuals who have been affected by a certain pandemic are about to recount their experiences, which are widely believed by news viewers (Beaudoin, 2007; Oh & Zhou, 2012;

Tian & Stewart, 2005). As a result, the addition of Human Interest and Impact frame adds value to the news and boosts the press's reputation.

3.1.3 Attribution of Responsibility frame

When an epidemic occurs, it is always possible that it will be associated with a specific event, individual, or anything that has gone wrong. Consequently, determining the origins of an epidemic is vital to critically study it before it is reported and communicated to the public. During a public epidemic, communication enhances knowledge of the problem by minimizing uncertainty and soothing sufferers (Iyengar, 1990). As an outcome, the amount of criticism directed towards an outbreak is reduced, and there is a shared understanding of how to address the problem.

3.1.4 Morality Frame

Morality frame contextualizes the event, problem, or issue within the framework of morals, social prescriptions, and religious beliefs. Neuman et al. (1992) discovered that journalists frequently utilized the Morality frame implicitly, either via quotations or inference, rather than directly, due to the journalistic status quo of objectivity.

3.1.5 Conflict Frame

The Conflict frame is often used to represent conflict and disagreement between individual people, groups, or institutions. Neuman et al. (1992) discovered that Conflict was regularly being used by news media in the United States. The Conflict frame was the second most frequent frame in the Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) research, and the more serious the newspaper, the more the Conflict frames were evident.

3.2 The role of culture in framing news

Culture is multifaceted, which involves behaviours, values and attitudes that are dominant and unique to a specific group of people (Chen, 2021; Ng & Tan, 2021). During a public health crisis such as COVID-19, risk communication backed by Geert Hofstede's cultural values plays

a vital part in calming, informing and building trust with the public (e.g. Chen, 2021; Ng & Tan, 2021). As each culture might respond differently to a crisis, it is vital to use framing strategies best suitable for a culture to achieve desired positive results.

The cultural dimension framework by Hofstede comprises of the following six cultural values at a national level: power distance, individualism vs collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs femininity, long-term orientation vs short-term orientation, and indulgence vs restraint. The current research focused on Hong Kong's and the United Kingdom's two specific cultural dimensions from Hofstede (2001), namely Individualism and Power Distance because the two culture highly differ in terms of the two dimensions even though they shared a history of more than 150 years. The Individualism-Collectivism cultural dimension is distinguished between self-interests and collective interests. The Power Distance dimension reflects the attitudes of individuals towards governmental authority and power (Chen et al., 2021). According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Hong Kong is a collective and a high power distance society (e.g. Bond et al., 1985), which was reflected through Hong Kong's COVID-19 strategy. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, United Kingdom is an individualistic and a lower power distance society (e.g. Harris et al., 2005), reflected through United Kingdom's COVID-19 strategy.

Hong Kong had controlled and contained COVID-19 by maintaining a zero-COVID strategy and shutting its international borders since the beginning of COVID-19 in 2020. However, the lack of public trust towards Hong Kong's government was developed due to the mismanagement of the 2019 Extradition Bill, the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law and the mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic in its very early stages (Chan, 2021).

On the other hand, United Kingdom controlled and contained COVID-19 by implementing nationwide lockdowns and restrictions in the initial stages of COVID-19. With the rollout of vaccines in mid-2021 led to the gradual and safe easing of restrictions on everyday life and the optimism to live with the virus now and in the future (United Kingdom Government, 2022).

Individualistic cultures and societies significantly value personal freedom and privacy (Hofstede, 2001). The proposal of maximizing collective benefits in return for personal freedom is frowned upon in individualistic societies and would face immense defiance in an individualistic society as compared to a collectivistic society. With the example of the COVID-

19 pandemic, governments around the globe introduced pandemic regulations and restrictions, such as the closure of schools, gyms, public transport, cancellation of public events and, if necessary, lockdowns. Ferguson et al., (2020) argued that the introduction of restrictions and regulations would undoubtedly erase or drastically reduce personal freedom and privacy.

Following Hofstede's description of Individualism-Collectivism, a Collectivistic culture might to a greater extent give up personal freedom and privacy for the betterment of public health and safety compared with an individualistic culture. Thus, maybe a collective society would have news frames promoting strict regulations and actions that could be taken collectively as a society to decrease the risks associated with a crisis, in this case, COVID-19 resulting in more news articles related to Morality and Human Interest and Impact. Most government responses were communicated through government official websites and local news media outlets (Chen, 2021). Strategic implementations and policymaking during a health crisis are vital for the successful execution of policies; thus, public trust is essential (Fukuyama, 1995). Chen (2021) explained that nations and societies with high trust levels are found to be more Collective and of higher Power Distance as governments expect low levels of retaliation towards public health crisis policy makings framed and communicated through local news media and government websites.

Recent COVID-19 anecdotal experience has shown that governments avoid proactive strict intervention measures in nations with high government trust and Individualism, such as Switzerland, United Kingdom and Sweden. However, in cultures with high Collectivism and Power Distance and trust, such as Taiwan, China, Hong Kong and Vietnam, stringent governmental measures are more acceptable by the public due to public health safety. The latter is in agreement with Chen's (2021) research into Institutional and cultural determinants of speed of government responses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3 News framing of previous pandemics

Health news accounts for a significant portion of news coverage, and news media are important sources of health information for the public (Chang, 2012). A study by Basnyat and Lee (2015) researched the Framing of Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic in Singapore to examine how governmental press releases regarding the H1N1 pandemic were framed by local news media. Content analysis was used to analyse press releases from the Singapore Ministry of Health (MOH) website. Researchers found that four framing themes, such as imported disease,

war/battle metaphors, social responsibility, and lockdown policies, were present in Singapore's governmental press releases and public news media outlets in Singapore (Basnyat and Lee, 2005). During the H1N1 pandemic, the frame analysis results indicated that public news medias in Singapore framed and mediated information flow. The latter amplified a positive tone for Singapore's pandemic response, emphasizing individual responsibility by utilizing gain frames to construct local messages about the global H1N1 pandemic (Basnyat and Lee, 2005).

Moreover, research by Tian and Stewart (2005) studied the framing of CNN and BBC during the SARS crisis. The researchers collected 322 CNN news reports and 408 BBC new articles from their respective websites, and the new articles were analysed using CatPac textual analysis. The results indicated that CNN and the BBC framed SARS in similar ways, focusing on the SARS outbreak and its consequences on public health and the medical system. Interestingly, Tian and Stewart (2005) stated that Hong Kong's framing of SARS seemed to be comparable with CNN and BBC and, more importantly, aligned with WHO overall pandemic concern. CNN's primary SARS framing was directed towards SARS economic impact and controlling the SARS pandemic; however, BBC did not prominently feature the economic impact of SARS in their framings (Tian and Stewart, 2005). The effect of SARS were not as significant compared to COVID-19 because of its length, spread of the virus and global impact. The present study tried to understand how COVID-19 is framed with the influence of cultural values, and thus extended research on framing of a pandemic in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

3.4 News framing of COVID-19

At different stages of the pandemic, news framing was utilized to form public opinion on the outbreak as well as communicate essential disease outbreak management interventions. Moreover, social, economic, political, and public safety variables provided additional context for framing the news, usually aligned with the country's interest.

Research by Ong'ong'a and Mutua (2020) studied Online News Media Framing of the Initial Phases of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The researchers used the method of content analysis to analyse a total of 59 news stories from BBC, 63 news stories from Al-Jazeera, 54 from CNN, and 67 from People's Daily. The researchers answered three different research questions. How did BBC, Al-Jazeera, CNN, and People's Daily tone the current COVID-19? What were the

major frames of these four media in their reporting regarding COVID-19? What themes emerged from BBC, Al-Jazeera, CNN, and People's Daily, respectively, in the reporting of COVID-19?

Firstly, BBC was found to frame their news stories the most pessimistically, People's Daily was neutral, optimistic, and CNN had the least pessimistic stories. Secondly, The researchers utilized Neuman et al. (1992) four types of news frames to find the major frames used in the four media when reporting COVID-19. Interestingly, most of the news stories regarding COVID-19 were presented with multiple news frames from the news companies. Under the economic consequences news frame, Al Jazeera had the most news stories. On the contrary, CNN was found to have the most number of stories with human interest and impact frames (Ong'ong'a & Mutua, 2020). People's Daily had attribution towards responsibility news frames. The final research question found out that Sinophobia, Crime related, Misinformation and fake news, and Geopolitics and International relations were the most prominent themes in the four media outlets (Ong'ong'a & Mutua, 2020). Sinophobia related news included racism towards certain cultures or type of individuals such as Asian minorities being labelled as the "Virus". Crime related news included news stories of people protesting the mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic. Misinformation and fake news related coverage included fakes news, conspiracy theories and misinformation surrounding the emergence of COVID-19 and the pandemic itself. Geopolitics and International relations related news included blame games between several countries such as the United States and China (Ong'ong'a & Mutua, 2020).

Furthermore, a study by Ng and Tan (2021) on Diversity of COVID-19 News Media studied coverage of news media across 17 countries and the influence of Cultural Values, Government Stringency and Pandemic Severity. The researchers used corpus analysis to analyse 7000 English news articles across the countries. Hofstede's Cultural dimensions assisted in understanding news frames across the corpus.

The results indicated that there was a negative relationship between individualism and media framing (target words related to COVID-19, e.g. "COVID", "nCoV") of COVID-19 related media coverage, which was contrary to what Hofstede's theory presented. News media from highly individualistic societies tend to produce a wider range of opinions and topics on societal issues. This should result in greater media diversity as journalists express themselves more freely. The findings of Ng and Tan (2021) contradicted these claims; perhaps societies that provide a wider range of news topics do not necessarily produce diversity within the

confines of the pandemic. Collectivist societies produced more diverse media coverage and framings when reporting pandemic related incidents to draw collective attention to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ng & Tan, 2021). For example, Hong Kong as a collective society, produced more than 200,000 COVID-19 related news articles. However, United Kingdom as a individualistic society, produced a little over 50,000 COVID-19 related news articles. The findings may simply reflect the nature of news media involvement during a crisis. During a public health crisis, news organizations are more ideologically aligned with governments, possibly presenting the public with a unified narrative resulting in diverse media coverage related to the pandemic (Ng & Tan, 2021).

3.5 The present study – Hong Kong – The United Kingdom

This study included a focus on understanding the application of Hofstede's theory in media diversity and framings about the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong's local news outlet South China Morning Post and the United Kingdom's BBC from the 23rd of January 2020 until 23rd of March 2020. Hofstede's cultural dimensions provided a context in understanding the fundamentals behind the usage of the five news frames in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. Moreover, as COVID-19 was still an ongoing health crisis, not much research has been carried out with regards to the influence of Hofstede's cultural values on COVID-19 news frames in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. Additionally, the comparison of two nations' cultural values, their influence on news media framing and analysis of the initial stages of a health crisis have yet to be extensively studied; thus, this study laid a foundation.

For this reason, the following research question was constructed: *“How is framing of COVID-19 in news media outlets influenced by countries' cultural values?”*.

A conceptual framework of this study can be found below as Figure 1. Moreover, three sub questions were created in order to structure the study:

Sub-question 1: What are the most prominent frames used in South China Morning Post and BBC regarding COVID-19?

Sub-question 2: How did the framing of South China Morning Post and BBC of COVID-19 reflect Hong Kong's and the United Kingdom's cultural values in terms of Individualism-Collectivism and Power Distance?

Sub-question 3: How did the framing of COVID-19 differ for South China Morning Post and BBC?

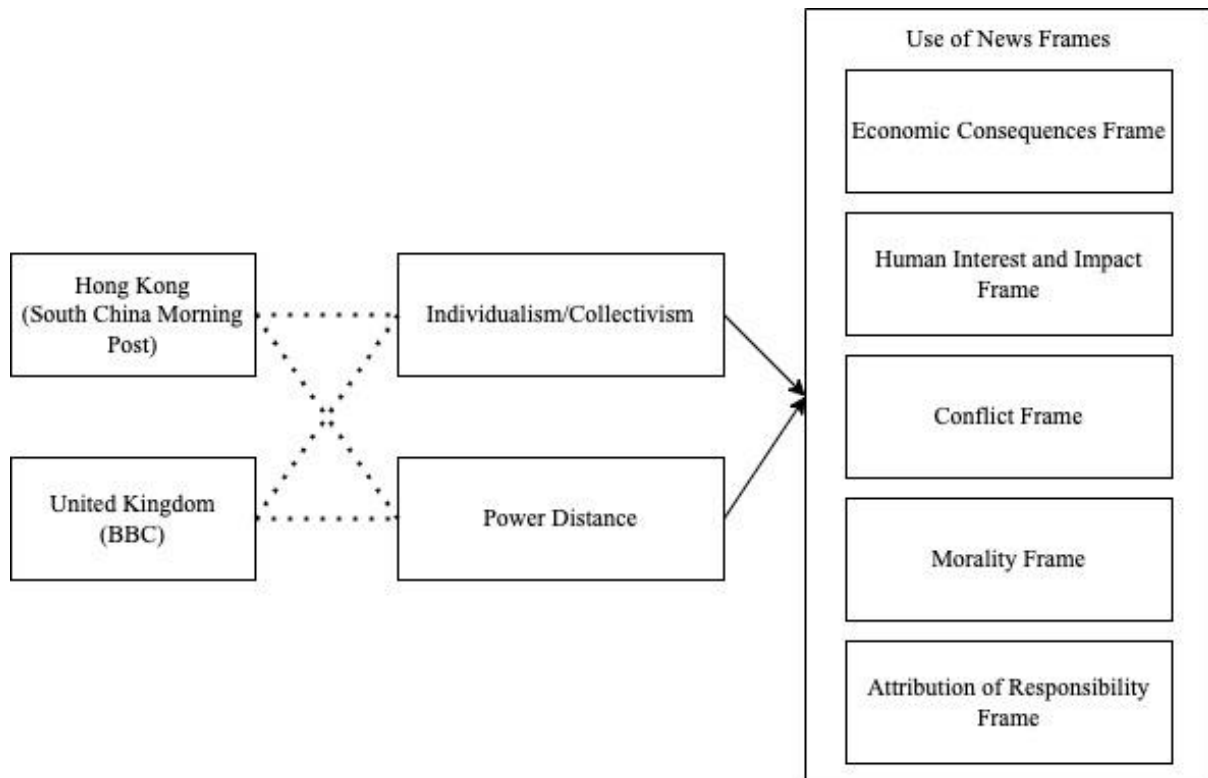


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

The conceptual model provides a visual of how the use of the five news frames from the 23rd of January 2020 until 23rd of March 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic in South China Morning Post and BBC, could be influenced by Hofstede's two cultural dimensions, namely Power distance and Individualism and Collectivism

4. Method

4.1 Materials

This study adopted a pragmatic approach and utilized comparative content analysis as a method. In order to answer the proposed research questions, a corpus of 62 news articles were collected and analysed. The corpus consisted of 31 news articles about COVID-19 from Hong Kong's local news outlet, South China Morning Post, and 31 news articles from the United Kingdom's BBC about COVID-19 from 23rd of January 2020 until 23rd of March 2020 because the United Kingdom did not have many articles before the 23rd January 2020 and thus was affecting the consecutive day sampling technique. Therefore, sampling began on the 23rd of January 2020, a week before the World Health Organization (WHO) categorized the disease as an international public health emergency. South China Morning Post is a Hong Kong-based English-language newspaper owned by Alibaba Group, founded in 1903. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is United Kingdom's public broadcaster. It is the world's oldest national broadcaster, with headquarters in Broadcasting House in London. South China Morning Post and BBC were chosen due to their long history of reporting and reputation in their respective regions.

This research used a consecutive day sampling technique, with South China Morning Post and BBC receiving an every other-day sample from 23rd of January 2020 until 23rd of March 2020 to accomplish a systematic variation in disease outbreak news content. Random sampling, which ensured that all news articles had an equal probability of being investigated, was utilized to select news stories for each of the consecutive dates for this research.

To obtain the news articles, the keywords "coronavirus", "COVID-19", "COVID-19 South China Morning Post", and "COVID-19 BBC" were searched for as keyword in the two international news organization websites and on Google from the 23rd of January 2020 until 23rd of March 2020. Moreover, the Nexis University webpage was utilized to obtain certain articles using advance search; advanced search allowed retrieval of articles efficiently by filtering specific dates, and news organisations. The entire text was analysed as well as for the title for all news articles.

4.2 Model of analysis

In order to identify frames in the corpus, Neuman et al., (1992) presented four types of news frames that are used in framing news stories: Economic Consequences, Human Impact, Moral

and Conflict frames. Additionally, this study utilized Attribution of Responsibility and Human Interest as components of news framing by Valkenburg et al. (1999).

4.3 Procedure

From all news texts, the entire article was analysed using a quantitative approach. The first and second coder, both native speakers of English in their final year of studying International Business Communication, analysed all the South China Morning Post and BBC articles, according to the codebook created. Each frame was represented using a numeric code of 1-5: 1 represented Economic Consequences Frame, 2 represented Human Interest and Impact Frame, 3 represented Attribution of Responsibility Frame, 4 represented Conflict Frame and 5 represented Morality Frame. If a news frame was present, 1 was allocated and if a news frame was absent, 0 was allocated. Individualism was represented using 1 and Power Distance was represented using 2. If a cultural value was reflected, 1 was allocated to represent present and if a cultural was not reflected, 0 was allocated to represent absent. A code sheet (Appendix 2) was created to capture all the relevant story information, including the news organization, the publication date, the country, the entire content of the article, the news article title, the five questions to dictate which frame was present, the two questions to dictate if an article reflected cultural values and the frame(s) that were present in the articles.

4.4 Statistical treatment

Following the method used by Semetko & Valkenburg (2020), the total counts and percentage was calculated with Chi-Square for each frame for the South China Morning and BBC using SPSS Statistics in the results section. Multiple more Chi-Squares were executed in the results section, for example the total counts and percentages was calculated for the reflection of cultural values in the news articles for South China Morning Post and BBC.

The interrater reliability of the variable “Coder_1_Frame” and “Coder_2_News_Frame” was good: $\kappa = .80$, $p < .001$. The interrater reliability of the variable “Coder_1_Power_Distance” and “Coder_2_Power_Distance” was adequate: $\kappa = .77$, $p < .001$. The interrater reliability of the variable “Coder_1_Individualism_Collectivism” and “Coder_2_Individualism_Collectivism” was adequate: $\kappa = .78$, $p < .001$.

5. Results

The purpose of this study was understanding the application of Hofstede's theory in media framings about the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong's local news outlet South China Morning Post and the United Kingdom's BBC from the 23rd of January 2020 until 23rd of March 2020. Hofstede's cultural dimensions provided a context in understanding the fundamentals behind the occurrences of the five news frames in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

To answer the first research question, What are the most prominent frames used in South China Morning Post and BBC regarding COVID-19? A chi-square test using cross-tabs was conducted with the variable news organisation and the variable containing the five news frames.

Table 1.

Percentages and counts of each news frame across the two news media organisations (Appendix 2)

News Organisation	Economic consequences		Conflict		Morality		Human Interest and Impact		Attribution of responsibility	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
South China Morning Post	9	90%	2	66.7%	6	27.3%	8	44.4%	4	66.7%
BBC	1	10%	1	33.3%	16	72.7%	10	55.6%	2	33.3%

A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between the variable news organisation and the use of the five news frames ($\chi^2(5) = 12.50, p = .029$). The coverage of the five news frames in South China Morning Post and BBC during the COVID-19 pandemic are depicted in Table 1. Economic Consequences frame (90%) occurred the most for South China Morning Post and (10%) for BBC. Human Interest and Impact frame (44.4%) occurred the second most for South

China Morning Post and BBC (55.6%). The most occurring frame for BBC was the Morality frame (72.7%). Vice Versa, Morality frame (27.3%) was the third most occurring for South China Morning Post.

To answer the second (sub-question 2) and third (sub-question 3) research question, six chi-square tests using cross-tabs were conducted.

A Chi-square test showed an insignificant relation between the variable news organisation and the variable power distance ($\chi^2 (1) = 1.89, p = .168$). A Chi-square test showed an insignificant relation between the variable news organisation and the variable Individualism and Collectivism ($\chi^2 (1) = 2.65, p = .103$). The third Chi-square test showed an insignificant relation between the variable final news frame and the variable Power Distance ($\chi^2 (5) = 4.35, p = .499$).

However, a Chi-square test in table 2 showed a significant relation between the variable final news frame and the variable Individualism and Collectivism ($\chi^2 (5) = 14.57, p = .012$).

Table 2.

Percentages and counts of Individualism and Collectivism and the five news frames

News Frame		Individualism and Collectivism	
		Absent	Present
No Frame	Count	2	1
	%	3.2%	1.6%
Economic Consequences	Count	3	7
	%	4.8%	11.3%
Conflict	Count	3	0
	%	4.8%	0.0%
Morality	Count	13	9
	%	21%	14.5%
Human Interest and Impact	Count	17	1
	%	27.4%	1.6%
Attribution of Responsibility	Count	4	2
	%	6.5%	3.2%

The reflection of Individualism and Collectivism through the five news frames across South China Morning Post and BBC are depicted in Table 2. The Morality Frame occurred nine times (14.5%) when Individualism and Collectivism was reflected in the news articles. The Economic Consequences frame appeared seven times (11.3%) when Individualism and Collectivism were reflected in the news articles. On the other spectrum, the Human Interest and Impact frame was absent 17 times (27.4%) when Individualism and Collectivism was reflected in the news articles. Surprisingly, the Morality frame was absent 13 times (21%) when Individualism and Collectivism was reflected in the news articles.

A Chi-square test showed an insignificant relation for Hong Kong between the variable final news frame and the variable Power Distance ($\chi^2 (5) = 10.39, p = .065$). A Chi-square test showed an insignificant relation for the United Kingdom between the variable final news frame and the variable Power Distance ($\chi^2 (5) = 4.68, p = .455$). A Chi-square test showed an insignificant relation for Hong Kong between the variable final news frame and the variable Individualism and Collectivism ($\chi^2 (5) = 6.87, p = .230$). A Chi-square test showed an insignificant relation for the United Kingdom between the variable final news frame and the variable Individualism and Collectivism ($\chi^2 (5) = 9.54, p = .089$).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to understand the application of Hofstede's theory in news media framings about the COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong's local news outlet South China Morning Post and the United Kingdom's BBC. Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions provided a context for understanding the fundamentals behind the occurrences of the five news frames in Hong Kong and the United Kingdom. The results were contrary to what Hofstede (2001) theorized, indicating that Individualistic and low Power Distance cultures do not necessarily produce diverse news frames and content in news articles when reporting the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the results do align with Hofstede's (2001) theory that Hong Kong is a Collective and High Power Distance culture and the United Kingdom is an Individualistic and low Power Distance society, as the results showed that South China Morning Post had more news articles reflecting high Collectivism and Power distance as opposed to the BBC.

Hofstede's (2001) theory provided that higher individuality in a country will result in diverse content and usage of various news frames in news articles (Hofstede, 2001). The latter is because individualistic societies treasure and value diverse opinions and thus the ability to

disseminate the various news framings and perspectives (Hofstede, 2001). Moreover, greater press freedom at times equates to diverse news frames and content in news articles, which is usually associated with individualistic societies.

The results were contrary to Hofstede's theory as Hong Kong (South China Morning Post) as a collectivistic culture produced more diverse news frames compared to the United Kingdom (BBC) when reporting COVID-19. Ng and Tan (2021) also found a negative relationship between individualism and news framing, indicating that perhaps individualistic societies that tend to produce a broader range of news topics and news frames do not necessarily produce diverse news frames within the confines of the pandemic.

Hong Kong (South China Morning Post) produced the highest number of Economic Consequences news frames, followed by Human Interest and Impact news frames. This could be due to Hong Kong being an important financial centre globally and due to being a highly collective culture (Hofstede, 2001; HKMA, 2021). Economic Consequences and Human Interest and Impact frame could harness conformist and collectivistic sentiments by placing group goals above individual interests and drawing attention to incidents related to the pandemic (Ng & Tan, 2021).

At the same time, the United Kingdom (BBC), as an Individualistic and low Power Distance culture, produced news frames mainly focused on the Morality frame and the Human Interest and Impact frame. However, Ong'ong'a & Mutua (2020) studied the framing of COVID-19 during its initial stages and found BBC had more articles reflecting the Health Severity frame and Attribution of Responsibility frame than Human Interest and Impact and Economic Consequences. Tian and Stewart (2005) also found that the BBC did not prominently frame news articles regarding SARS the economic impact of SARS, which was also the case in this study for the BBC. The latter could be because the United Kingdom was still in the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, that might have led to only one article framed as Economic Consequences in the BBC.

Furthermore, Ong'ong'a & Mutua (2020) found that BBC attributed COVID-19 as a Chinese problem. However, the present research indicated that South China Morning Post had two more articles framed as Attribution of Responsibility than the BBC. The latter might be due to certain small businesses being hit financially due to the early lockdown in early 2020 in

Hong Kong. The South China Morning Post news articles called for the Hong Kong governments and oligarchs to help small businesses.

Moreover, news organizations have often been described as the gateway to induce change, especially in societies with high Power Distance, indicating that the value of Power Distance might have an influence on the news framings and content (Ng & Tan, 2021). However, the results were contrary to the above statement, as only Individualism and Collectivism had a significant difference in terms of the five news frames. Therefore, it might be that only the dimension of Individualism within Hofstede's framework is vital with regards to news framing. Perhaps other cultural values, such as Power Distance, might be more salient towards other aspects of news framing and framing dissemination (Ng & Tan, 2021).

6.1 Limitations and Implications

There were multiple limitations to this study. Firstly, in terms of data collection, only two months' (23rd of January 2020 until the 23rd of March 2020) worth of articles were utilized for this study, which could have an effect on the study's generalisability. Thus, future studies should collect longitudinal data for a better understanding and representation of the five frames, for example, four to six months of data. Secondly, in terms of the news organization, only one news organization was analysed per country. Therefore, future studies should study and include two or more news organizations to better understand the variance among the news organizations with regard to the use of the five news frames. For example, Hong Kong Free Press from Hong Kong, The Guardian from the United Kingdom, Bloomberg and the The Daily Telegraph. Thirdly, in terms of Hofstede's cultural values, only Individualism and Collectivism and Power Distance were utilized in this study. An option for future studies could be to make use of and analyse the other cultural dimensions such as Long and short term orientation and Uncertainty Avoidance. During health crisis communication, governments might communicate goals, which could be either short term or long term pandemic related goals. In terms of uncertainty avoidance, during a pandemic, governments and authorities might or might not introduce rules and regulations, some cultures might prefer rules and regulations and some prefer ambiguity during a health crisis. Finally, in terms of gain and loss, current study did not incorporate gain-loss framing. However, future studies could include gain-loss framing to gain insights into the gains and losses of adopting or not adopting a particular action during a health crisis communication.

This paper contributes to the literature on the role and influence of cultural values in news framing during a health crisis in two ways. Firstly, the results of this study laid a foundation for understanding the application of Hofstede's theory in news media framings about the COVID-19 pandemic. It could inform news organizations and decision-makers, such as the government, about the importance of Hofstede's cultural values in the way COVID-19 is communicated to the general public. Utilizing cultural orientations when communicating about a pandemic could harness collective sentiments to build resilience among the public during harsh times such as in a pandemic. Secondly, individualism is important for the degree of diversity in the news frames about the pandemic. However, a more comprehensive set of cultural values, for example, Long-term orientation and Uncertainty avoidance, may play a more prominent role in the number of news frames during a health crisis.

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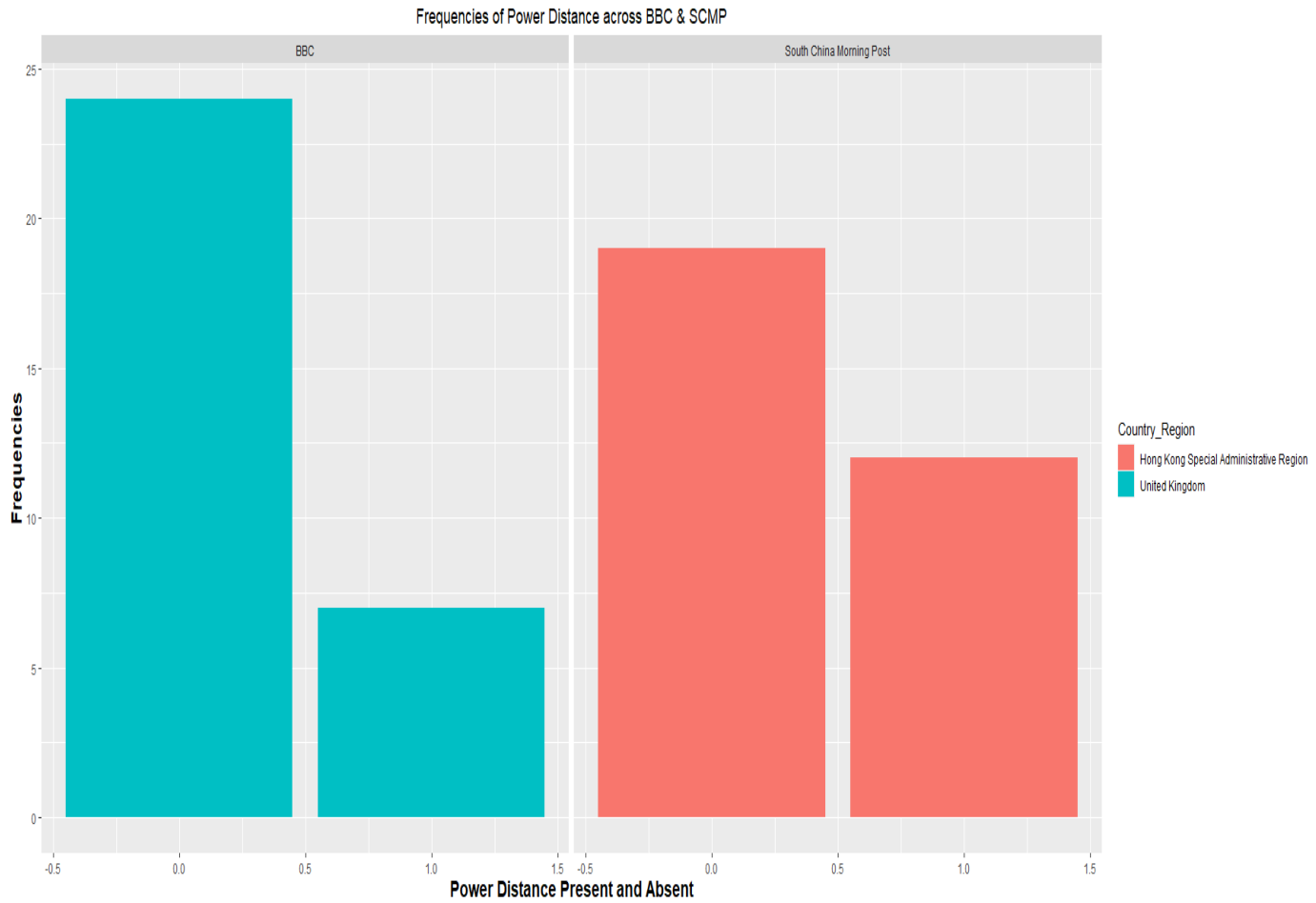
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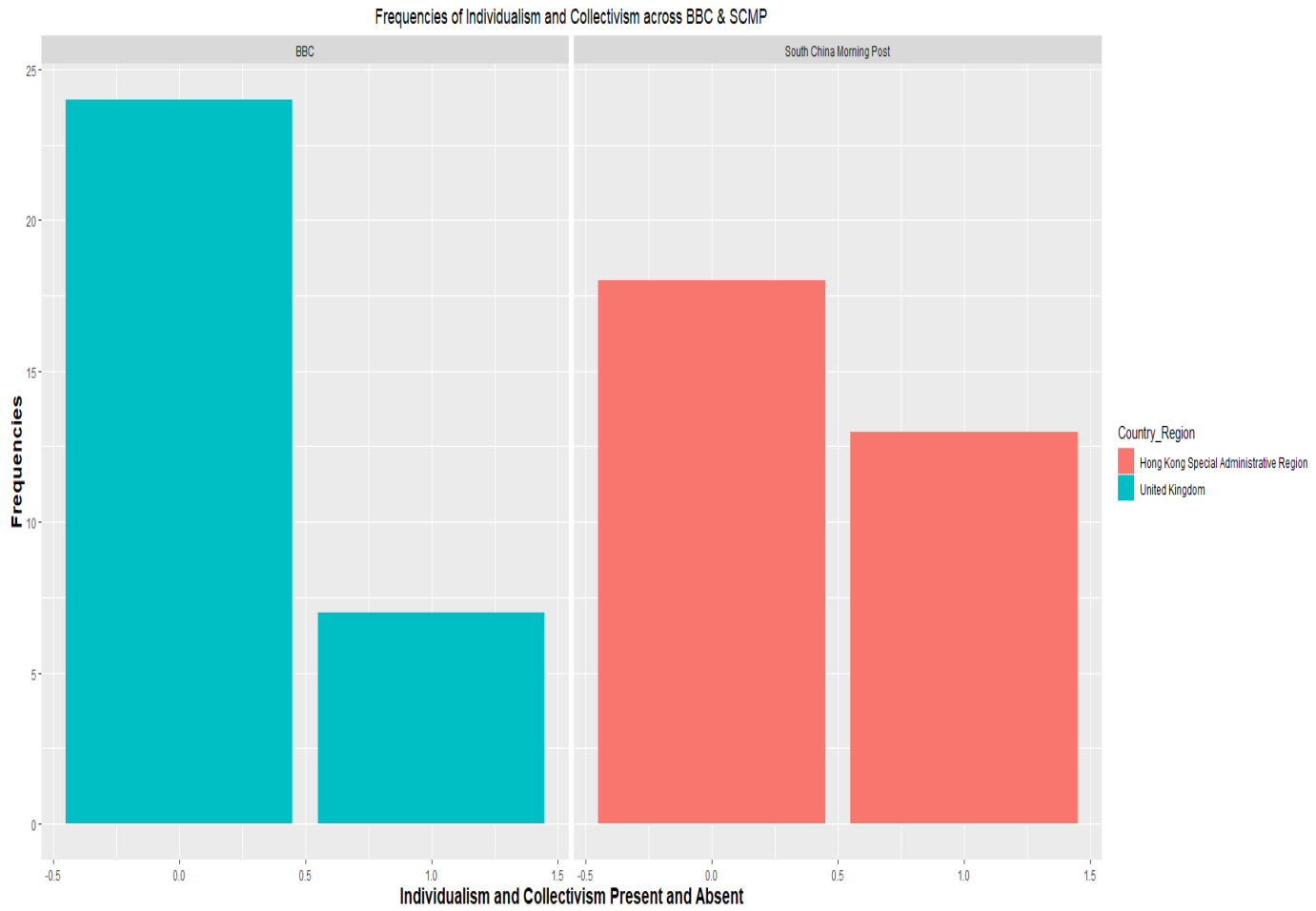
8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Graphs

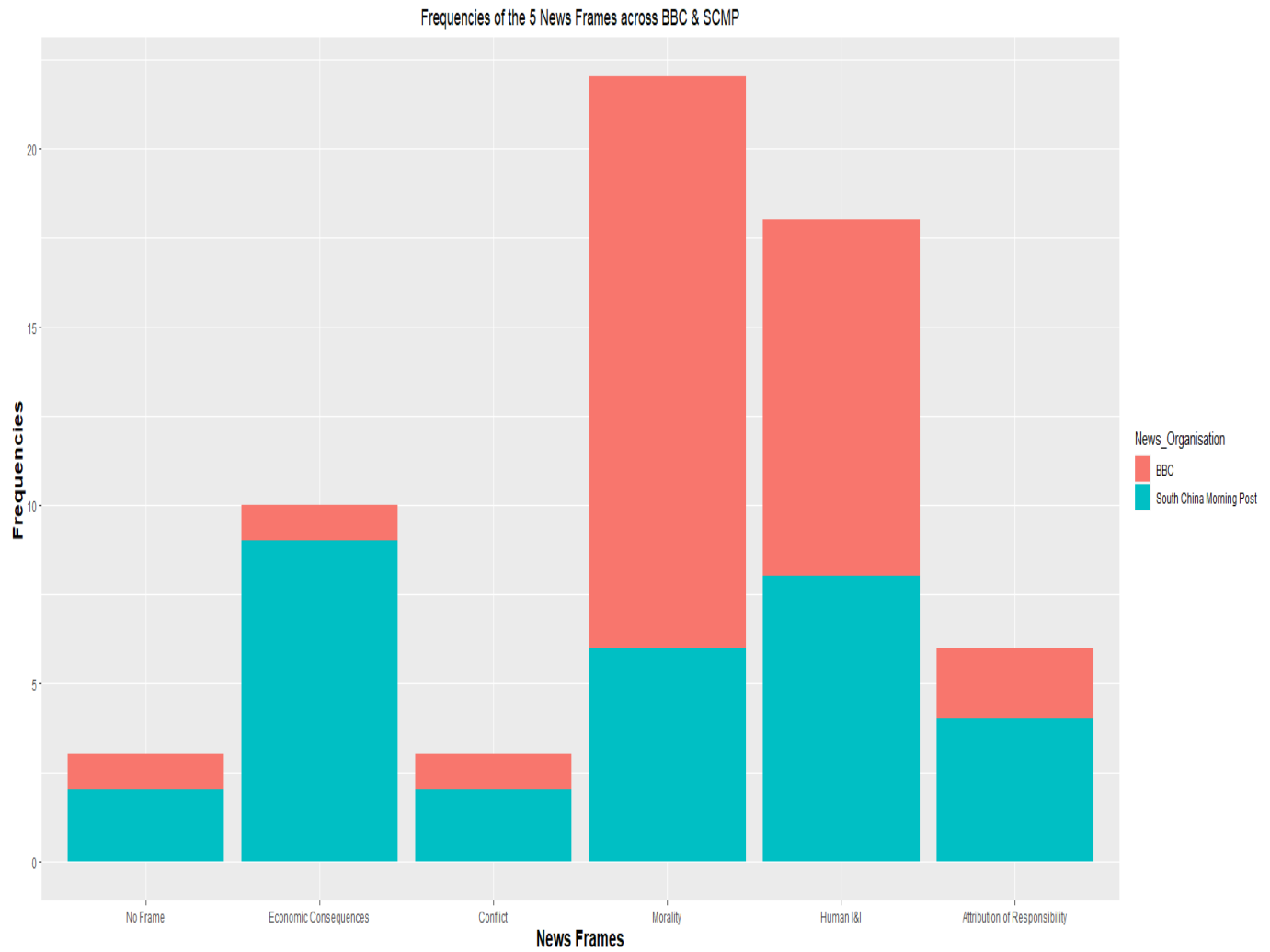
Graph 1. Frequencies of Power Distance in BBC and SCMP



Graph 2. Frequencies of Individualism in BBC and South China Morning Post



Graph 3. Frequencies of the 5 news frames in BBC and SCMP



8.2 Appendix 2: Code Sheet

Frames/Cultural Values	Questions
Economic Consequences Frame (1)	Is there a reference to the positive or negative economic consequences of pursuing action with regards to COVID-19?
Conflict Frame (2)	Does the article reflect disagreement between two (or more) sides?
Morality Frame(3)	Does the article contain any moral message/social prescriptions about how to behave?
Human Interest and Impact Frame (4)	Does the article provide a human example or “human face” on the issue that might generate feelings of outrage, empathy, caring, sympathy, or compassion?
Attribution of Responsibility Frame (5)	Does the article suggest that an individual/group of people/institution is responsible for the problem or solution?
Power Distance	Does the article show prominence given to the government/institutions vs. citizens in terms of social rules that are expected of the public?
Individualism-Collectivism	Does the article articulate the maximization of individual benefits over collective benefits or the other way around?

The questions used in the codebook for frames and cultural values