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SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST: A STUDY ON HONG KONG PROTEST 2019

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Abstract

Hong Kong protest 2019 is among many major events held to protest for amendment of Extradition Law in Hong Kong. Many media platforms covered this issue as it gained popularity, and one of them was South China Morning Post (SCMP). SCMP is a press owned by Alibaba group, which is said to have close ties with the Chinese Central Government. However, the credibility of this press has declined since 2013 based on a public survey done by the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Therefore, this study aims to look at the news reporting on 2019 Hong Kong protest in SCMP and the stance of the press on this issue by using qualitative content analysis methodology. In order to achieve the study's objectives, Framing Theory proposed by Tankard is used to gain an in depth understanding on this matter. Evidently, the findings of this study found that the stance of SCMP in Hong Kong Protest 2019 is to bring negative perspective towards their readers. In other words, it is more likely to report violent scenes or conflict between the people involved rather than posting stories with positive or neutral point of views. This could immensely navigate the readers to certain perspectives in understanding the Hong Kong Protest 2019.

INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom has ruled Hong Kong since the First Opium War in 1841. The war broke out after Qing-dynasty of China attempted to crack down an illegal opium trade which led to a wide spread of addiction in China. In 1842, as a cost of defeat in the First Opium War, China agreed to cede Hong Kong to British forever through the Treaty of Nanking (Blakemore, 2019). The 1898 Convention for the Extension of Hong Kong Territory leased Hong Kong to Britain for 99 years while China would regain its control of Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. In 1984, both Britain and China signed the Sino British Joint Declaration, where Hong Kong is granted autonomy in political

and social autonomy through "one country, two systems" policy between Hong Kong and China for 50 years, until 2047.

With "One country, two systems" policy, Hong Kong is recognized as a Special Administrative Region in China with a certain level of autonomy in their governance. According to Hong Kong Basic Law Article 2:

The National People's Congress authorizes the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to exercise a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, in accordance with the provisions of this Law.

Other than that, Hong Kong has its own Chief Executive, which is different from mainland China that is led by a president. Hong Kong has democratic right such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly as granted by Basic Law after surrender of Hong Kong to China in 1997. The economic and social system as well as the way of life in Hong Kong remains unchanged for 50 years (Little, 2019). In other words, Hong Kong still maintains its capitalist economy rather than socialist economy as in mainland China.

With different political system between Hong Kong and mainland China, the demand for universal suffrage by the Hong Kong community has long existed. However, the Chinese government refused to respond to it, as they want to ensure no subversive politician would be elected as the Hong Kong Chief Executive (Lee, 2014; Chan, 2017). In 2014, the Chinese government formed a nomination committee consisting of 1200 members to nominate 2 to 3 chief executive candidates.

This enables the Chinese government to indirectly use their power to screen the chief executive candidates, which in turn limits the liberty on Hong Kong citizens in choosing their chief executive. Hong Kong citizens did not agree with this decision and thus triggered the Umbrella Movement to express their demands. The protests erupted in the past have shown the conflict between two different systems of government with their respective ideologies.

In 2019, a murder incident involving Hong Kong residents happened in Taiwan. This incidence has caused Hong Kong government to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance (FOO), which in turn triggered dissatisfaction among Hong Kong citizens. Despite the dissatisfaction of citizens, the ignorance of Hong Kong government in response to the public's demands has led to public protests.

The amendment of the law is said to be controversial from two aspects: First, the public is given a short period of time (less than 3 weeks) to give their opinion on the amendment of the bill. The consultation period is shorter compared to other legislative amendments. For example, the consultation period for animal welfare consideration takes up to 3 months (Publick, 2019). Second, under the current FOO, Hong Kong Legislative Council (Legco) is empowered to grant permission on extradition requests from the Hong Kong government. With the amendment of the law, it will create a new "special surrender arrangement" that would abolish the need to obtain approval from the Legco, including China's request (Martin, 2019). The happening of 2019 Hong Kong Protest is summarized in Figure 1.

Murder case of a Hong Kong girl, Poon Hiu Wing in Taiwan

- No contemporary law has the jurisdiction to handover criminals to Taiwan for trial

Amendment of the Extradition Law

- Allowed the extradition of alleged criminals from Hong Kong to mainland China, the Macau Special Administrative Region and Taiwan.

Protest from the Hong Kong residents

- The fear of such extradition to China would give China a chance to arrest dissidents, journalists and human right activists in Hong Kong ("Hong Kong's new extradition," 2019).

The 5 demands in 2019 Hong Kong Protest

1. The complete withdrawal of the proposed extradition bill

2. The government to withdraw the use of the word "riot" in relation to protests

3. The unconditional release of arrested protesters and charges against them dropped

4. An independent inquiry into police behaviour

5. Implementation of genuine universal suffrage (Rourke, 2019)

Triggering serious protest

- 12 June 2019, millions of Hong Kong residents have surrounded the Legco Complex (Yu et al., 2019)

Chief Executive did not respond to the resident's demand and fear
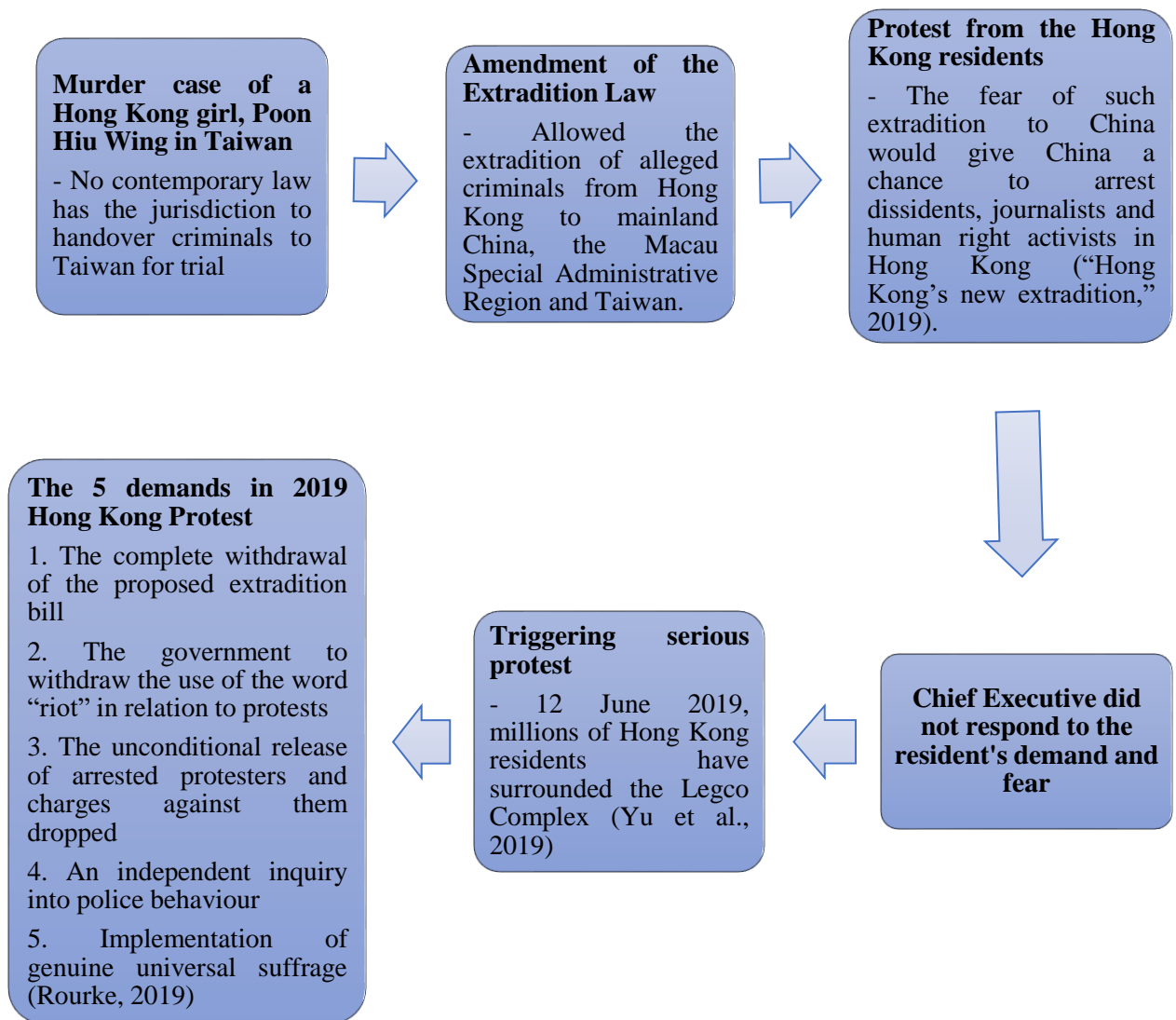
Figure 1: How 2019 Hong Kong Protest is triggered

As a result, the reading of the bill on 12 June 2019 has been postponed to another date. However, protests from Hong Kong residents have not stopped as their demand is to call for a complete withdrawal of the proposed bill, not just a "postponement" as announced by their Chief Executive, Carrie Lam.

The amendment of the bill was later called for a stop, and was completely withdrawn on September 4, after the protests lasted for nearly three months. Within the three months, the tension between protesters and police escalated with the use of petrol bombs by protesters and tear gas, pepper spray and water cannons deployed by the police. The police force also fired warning shots during the protests. On the other hand, protesters began occupying the MTR station and airport, causing over 1000 flights cancelled as protesters descend on the world travel hub (Robles, 2019).

According to BBC, demonstrations continued for months with demands for full democracy and an independent investigation of police actions (Cheung & Hughes, 2020). However, Hong Kong's police watchdog found no significant wrongdoing committed by the police side during the 2019 protests. This decision has been criticized by many rights groups and external experts (Cheung & Hughes, 2020).

Public universities have, however turned into a war zone between protesters and police. Among them, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology facilities have been vandalised, the Chinese University of Hong Kong has turned into fortress and was raided for bow and arrows (Kuo et al., 2019), while Hong Kong Polytechnic University has become a battleground between protesters and police officers, followed by a siege by police, with dozens of protesters remained in the campus, using it as a fortress (Hayes, 2019).

Literature Review

Previous research on the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement reporting with a comparison between two newspapers, namely *The Guardian* and *China Daily*, found that newspapers with different geopolitical interests will influence how a media report (Veneti et al., 2016). With different political stances, these two newspapers also have different reporting characteristics. The study used qualitative content analysis with coding and framing to look at the reporting methods of these two newspapers. There are eight framing devices: conflict frame, violent confrontations, the illegal character of protest, social and economic disruption, devaluation of the purpose of demonstration, marginalization, appearance and performance, and official source was used to see the reporting characteristics of these two newspapers on 2014 Hong Kong protest. Using the protest paradigm, these two newspapers extensively used official sources in their reporting. However, *The Guardian* used a variety of sources, such as academics and representatives from various political fields. The reporter's narrative from *The Guardian* was reinforced by the testimony of the protesters. Meanwhile, *China Daily* used narratives that considered the movement illegal and lacking in moral credibility while covering extensive comments from Chinese and Hong Kong political sources that are mostly negative about the protests.

Another study that used the protest paradigm in the Hong Kong context is "Triggering the Protest Paradigm" by Lee (2014) from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He used the protest paradigm to study the factors that affect news reporting on protests. This study used two approaches, namely content analysis, and multiple regression analysis, by considering general and contextual theoretical considerations. There are four newspapers with different political orientations, namely *Apple Daily* (Apple), *Oriental Daily* (Oriental), *Ming Pao* (MP), and *Sing Tao Daily* (STD). According to this study, the protest paradigm is used as a variable to identify the situation in which the social control function of media is used.

Framing is also one of the methods for looking at how a report on protests is done. There are four main frameworks in protest reporting (McLeod & Hertog, 1999): riots that show violence, confrontations that lead conflict with authorities, spectacles that involve sensational and dramatic narratives and debates which discusses protest demands (Kilgo & Harlow, 2019). Studies on protest reporting can also refer to the sources used by newspaper reporters. The sources used in protest reporting depend on whether they are framed from the perspective of those in power who are usually being challenged or aligned with the view of protesters of the movement's agenda (Mourão 2019). However, Bray (2012) argues that corporate media is less likely to use the source of expertise as an alternative voice that can validate reporting. While Kilgo & Harlow (2019) in their study examined protest reporting on different demands (such as immigration, anti-racism for black people and gender equality) from other types of media (metropolitan and local newspapers) in Texas, have provided a new perspective. This study found that different framing was used for different protest demands.

Another approach used to study protest reporting is through corpus analysis and in-depth analysis. Chan (2017) used such an approach to study the 2014 Umbrella Movement reporting from three English-language newspapers in Hong Kong and China, namely *SCMP*, *China Daily* and *Standard*. The corpus was collected from the three newspapers reporting of Umbrella Movement. An analysis of keywords and the frequency of a word used (lexical frequency) was made. The study found that pro-democracy *SCMP* tended to display the protest as gaining support from the public and portrayed protesters had a high desire to demand democracy. Meanwhile, the pro-

Beijing *Standard* and *China Daily* usually showed the protest negatively by associating it with the Anti-China Revolution and portraying protesters as illegal and having radical behaviour (Chan, 2017). According to Lee (2018), there are two media ownership controls; one is known as operation control which refers to the control over day-to-day operations and the front lines of a media organisation. Another control is known as allocative control, which controls the actions for allocating staff members and resources that perform operations in the newsroom. Media owners, in this case, may not intervene directly, but allocation control in terms of staff can lead to self-censorship and constitutive censorship (Lee, 2018). Media organisations can produce pro-government content with actions such as informal norms and implicit rules in newsroom operations.

Protest paradigm and framing are also widely used to study the reporting of protest issues in the press. Many factors will influence the way protests are reported, which in turn affects public opinion on protest issues. SCMP, as the subject of this study, had controversy in its stance and way of reporting after being owned by Alibaba. Some argue it remains a pro-democracy newspaper despite undergoing editorial changes. Still, SCMP's credibility dropped steadily from 2013 to 2019, according to a study conducted by the Center for Communication and Public Opinion Survey of the Chinese University of Hong Kong on the public appraisal of Media Credibility in 2019. In addition to the SCMP's declining credibility, reports in *Hong Kong Free Press* also raised concerns about the "Mainlandization", which refers to the Chinese communist party's attempt for greater use of Hong Kong's political, economic, social and cultural to unify it into mainland China under the doctrine of "one country, two systems", before it ends 50 years later in 2047 (Kong, 2017).

After reviewing the past studies on the protests and SCMP, it is found that the survey of previous protests in Hong Kong has been done, and there was also a study made targeting SCMP's reporting method as selected in this study. However, the 2019 protests are considered a more recent issue, and no study has been done (carried out) on the reporting of these protests, particularly in the SCMP's reporting. In addition, there is controversy over the SCMP's way of reporting, whether it still maintains a pro-democratic way of reporting, or increasingly favours the Chinese government looking at its ownership by the Alibaba group which has close ties with the Chinese government.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is qualitative content analysis. Framing theory adapted by Tankard (2001) is used as a guide and approach to understanding the problem statements of this study, which is to understand the reporting pattern and stance of SCMP in the 2019 Hong Kong protests. Tankard proposes 11 framing mechanisms in his Framing theory, such as headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads (the beginnings of news stories), selection of sources or affiliations, selection of quotes, pull quotes (quotes that are blown up in size for emphasis), logos (visual identification of the series an article belongs to), statistics/charts and graphs and concluding statements or paragraphs of papers. This study, however used only 8 of the mechanisms above except for pull quotes, logos, and statistic mechanisms. These features were not found in the SCMP reporting on the 2019 Hong Kong protests.

This study also used the content analysis method on news reporting of the 2019 Hong Kong protests by the South China Morning Post online news portal. Samples of this study were collected through SCMP official website in the "Hong Kong Protest" column from 17 November 2019 to 31 December 2019. The start date was set to be 17 November because it was the day said to be an uprising and the most violent day since the 2019 Hong Kong Protests began (Wong et al., 2019), in which the protesters entered the campus of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and at the same time attacked with firebombs and set fire to the barricades as police officers surrounded the university. The protests started in June 2019 and continued for months, while the media often used "2019 Hong Kong Protests" when referring to the demonstrations that took place in Hong Kong this year. Thus, the data collection ended on

the last day of 2019, 31 December 2019. The relevant news reports collected during this period were 282 news.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings of the study by using the framing theory by Tankard (2001) on SCMP reporting. Mechanisms that are being used are headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, news sources, selection of quotes and conclusion statement. All these mechanisms are studied from 3 angles: positive, negative and neutral. The positive angle refers to the use of positive words such as "peaceful" and "gain", while the negative angle uses negative words such as "arrest" and "unrest". Lastly, neutral angles referring to phrases used in the reporting were neither positive nor negative, such as "claimed" or "report", which usually reports something without a stand in favour of any party.

Headlines

Headlines were analysed by looking at the direction of the headline, whether it is positive, neutral, or negative. The headlines featured in the SCMP 2019 Hong Kong protest were negative, at 56%. Many negative words were used in the headlines, such as "protest crisis", "arrested", and "pressure". Some negative headlines were "Hong Kong police station damaged by a suspected petrol bomb attack on Sunday morning" and "Chaotic scenes at busy Hong Kong mall as pepper spray used after protesters and plain-clothes police scuffle".

There were, 14% of headlines positive in nature. Positive headlines can be seen in terms of the use of positive words such as "peaceful assembly", "stable situation", and "praised". Positive headlines describe the protests from a relatively positive perspective, such as the reporting on the welfare of police officers on duty to keep the community safe: "Hong Kong protests: police officers receive HK$235 million in meal and other allowances", "Hong Kong protests: 1,000 people join the peaceful rally in Central organised by the elderly and students to keep pressure on the government after pro-democracy camp election win "and" Cross-Harbour Tunnel in Hong Kong reopens with long queues for buses after a rampage by radical protesters closed link for two weeks". These are examples of positive headlines that focus on the relatively positive side of the whole protest. Neutral headlines have a percentage of 29%. Such headlines usually describe the development of protests, such as responses from relevant parties: "Hong Kong mask law: government lodges appeal against a court ruling that face-covering ban is unconstitutional" and " Police investigate the alleged attack on Hong Kong pro-democracy politician Albert Ho". SCMP tends to report the protests from a negative perspective as they regard protests as acts that district social structures, and thus highlight their negative impacts such as vandalism, arrests of protesters and clashes between police and protesters.

Subheads

Subheadings refer to a heading or caption subordinate to a main headline or title. Subheads are also analysed from the direction of writing, whether it is positive, neutral or negative in nature. Subheads analysed in SCMP regarding the 2019 Hong Kong protests also tended to be negative, with 53% or 148 news items listed as harmful category. Examples of negative sub-headlines on the news portals include:

> *Protesters have escalated their actions, blocking thoroughfares across the city, disrupting train services and engaging in intense clashes with police.*
>
> *Trouble also flares at Telford Plaza in Kowloon Bay as dozens of protesters march through mall, with at least five people arrested.*

Negative phrases such as "clashes" and "arrested" were found in the subheads of the reporting, highlighting the adverse effects of the protests. Such sub-headings direct a negative impact on the economy, social regulation and developments in Hong Kong. Furthermore, reports on arrests of protesters or condemnation from various stakeholders were also featured in sub-headlines, bringing negative nature to the subheads. There were only 6.4% of positive subheadings. For example:

Young and old say they will fight until their demands are met.

Hong Kong keeps crown as the world's largest initial public offering market

Positive sub-headlines were rarely highlighted, perhaps because their reporting is more focused on the negative impact brought by the protests rather than the perspective of the protesters' struggle. While sub-headlines that are neutral in nature had a percentage of 41% with the use of relatively neutral words, they usually only describe what is happening without favouring any party. For example:

Police are investigating the arson case, but no arrests had been made as of Sunday evening.

In addition, neutral sub headlines also include source citation statements such as:

Leaders ask protesters not to argue with police, leaving communication with a military force of 200 commanders.

Photos

This section focuses on the main photos used in the 2019 Hong Kong protests reported in the SCMP portal. The images are categorized into positive, neutral, and hostile. We found that most news display pictures with negative elements, with 41% or 117 pieces of news. These photos show clashes between protesters and police. Apart from that, the photos also show the chaotic situation, or the destroyed protest sites and protesters being arrested. These negative pictures are intended to show the disadvantages of conducting protests and how the government and the people will suffer due to the destruction of public property.

On the other hand, 39% of the main photos are neutral in nature. Neutral pictures usually use photographs of sources cited in the news, such as photographs of Hong Kong leaders. Other than that, photographs of buildings related to the reporting, such as photographs of courts and shopping malls. Mugshots are usually used for human-related photographs, while full shots are used for building photographs. Only 20% of the main images used were positive in nature, such as images showing peaceful gatherings or peaceful demonstrations.

Photo Captions

Photo captions were also analysed according to their properties and categorized as positive, neutral or negative. Most of the nature of photo captions in this study fall under the neutral category, with 55.7%. These captions usually describe what is in the picture, such as who or what building is in the image. For example: "Social workers march from Central to Wan Chai on Thursday." Negative picture captions, on the other hand, had a percentage of 49%, describing the picture with negative words or statements. For example: "Plain-clothes police officers grapple with a protester in the Landmark North shopping centre." The percentage for positive photo captions has only 6.4%, showing relatively positive aspects such as: "MTR staff appreciated for their dedication in a difficult year for the railway giant".

Leads

Leads, as the first paragraph in a news story, were also analysed in terms of their nature, whether they are positive, negative or neutral. The first paragraph of the news usually describes 5W1H (who, what, when, where, why and how). Negative leads have the highest percentage with 52.5% or 148 pieces of news, while positive leads only have a percentage of 11.4%. Among the examples of negative leads are as referred to below, with the use of negative words such as "felt pressured":

> One of Hong Kong's most prominent school heads' associations said on Monday that
> principals **felt pressured** by the education chief's remarks that they would be
> disqualified if they were deemed unsuitable for their job when handling
> protest-related misconduct complaints against teachers.

Positive leads use positive words such as "received allowance", which highlights the welfare is taken care of:

> Hong Kong's police officers **received** HK$235 million (US$30 million)
> in meal and other **allowances** as the force was mobilised during the
> past six months of social unrest, on top of the almost HK$1 billion
> in overtime claims previously announced.

The percentage of neutral leads was 36.2%. The neutral leads are characterized by describing the development of a matter, usually by quoting from a source, for example:

> The Hong Kong government will not have the political energy to legislate the
> controversial national security law in the next few years despite renewed calls from
> Beijing, according to two pro-establishment heavyweights.

The higher percentage of negative leads reflects the way SCMP reports using a more negative direction when reporting the 2019 Hong Kong protest event.

News Sources

There are seven categories in the news sources mechanism, namely "the government", "experts/professors", "citizens", "activists/protesters", "non-governmental organizations/associations", 'law enforcement unit" and "others". Among the seven categories, law enforcement sources are the most widely used source in SCMP reporting with 25%. Law enforcement unit here includes the police and lawmakers. Government resources and "others" sources are used at the same percentage, which is 17%. Government sources are widely used with regard to official announcements from the government or explanations on a matter. An example of a government source used is Finance Minister Paul Chan. "Others" sources include video sources quoted online, official letters issued by the university, studies and other sources that are not included in the other six sources categories.

News sources ranked the third highest in activists or protesters category with 16%. Activists include pro-democracy supporters who support the protests, often used as a source from their point of view. Sources from protesters used to show their opinions and feelings or their dissatisfaction with the government. Next, 10% of citizen sources are used in reporting the 2019 Hong Kong protests. Citizens are ordinary people being interviewed to hear their opinions on whether they support or disagree with these protests. This group includes employees at the mall, bank employees, and parents. At the same time, 8% of the sources are experts or professors with professional knowledge in a particular field, such as law, research, academia, or economics. NGO sources are the

least used sources, with only 7%. Organizations or establishments are only used as a source when the news is related to them.

Selection of Quotes

There are eight categories for the selection of quotes, namely "the government", "experts/professors", "citizens", "activists/protesters", non-governmental organizations/associations, "law enforcement unit", "others", and "no quotes". Quotations refer to statements quoted from the sources entirely without changing the sentence structure in the news. The authority with highest percentage was law enforcement sources, with 21%, whereas only 4% of the information collected did not use any quotation. With law enforcement sources, most of the quotes used are related to the views of police or lawmakers on these protests. Quotations from activist/protester sources recorded the second highest with a percentage of 18%. Protesters usually express their opinions during protests, either blaming the government or determined with their protests.

The third highest percentage fell under the government category with 15%; statements from government officials such as Chief Executive Carrie Lam and Finance Minister Paul Chan were widely quoted. Quotations from the "Others" sources recorded 14% while quotations from the citizens had a percentage of 12%. "Others" source quotations include information cited from LIHKG's social media platform. The opinion of the citizens during the interview was also quoted to reflect the views of the people, for example, some of them were worried about the protest situation that threatened their safety. Sources from experts/professors and NGOs/associations were less cited compared to others, with 9% and 7%, respectively. Expert sources are usually cited to give a more professional view or to analyze something in the respective field. Quotations from NGOs, such as law associations, was cited when they gave their views on a certain issue.

Concluding Paragraphs

This section looks at the nature of the concluding paragraph, whether it is categorized as positive, neutral or negative. Overall, the concluding paragraphs in Hong Kong's 2019 protest reporting were neutral with 62%. For example, the concluding section described the subsequent development or further reports what has happened before a subject. The description or explanation in the concluding section reports something without a positive or negative nature. For example, news ended with Chief Executive Carrie Lam's reporting to the Legislative Council:

> In a letter to the Legislative Council, the government's administrative wing revealed that they were reviewing whether the city's embattled leader Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor would continue to address Legco once a month to answer lawmakers' questions, as opposition legislators had stopped Lam from delivering her annual policy address in October.

In this study, 16% of the concluding paragraph was recorded to be positive in nature. Positive concluding paragraphs usually touch on hopes, a relatively positive impact or a good development as the government respects the freedom of speech of the people, for example:

> In a commentary, the Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily said the letter of no objection for Sunday's march showed the city government's sincerity and respect for the people's freedom of expression.

News that ended with a negative concluding paragraph recorded 22%. Most of these concluding paragraphs have negative elements, such as the destruction and economic development in Hong Kong. One example recorded a source of protesters stating they suffered considerable losses in terms of the arrest of friends as well as their spirits

were shattered:

> "But we also sustained heavy losses in terms of comrades arrested ad morale crushed," he said.

The study has two objectives: to analyze the reporting of the 2019 Hong Kong protests in SCMP and to find out SCMP's stance on the protests' reporting and whether it plays the role of the media well without favouring any party involved. The first objective was achieved through content analysis of SCMP reporting on the 2019 Hong Kong protests from various aspects, namely headlines, subheadings, photo captions, leads, news sources, selection of quotes and concluding paragraphs. The results of this study showed that SCMP reporting on the 2019 Hong Kong protests adopts a negative nature. The findings of this study are in contrast to previous studies conducted by Chan (2000) and Cheng and Lam (2010), who argued that the SCMP reporting style was maintained and quite similar to that of Western agencies that support democracy. This is because one of the protest demands called for the implementation of universal suffrage (Rourke, 2019). Furthermore, the findings of this study also contradict Chan's (2017) study, which found SCMP as a pro-democracy newspaper that tends to display such protests having support from the public and protesters have a high desire to demand democracy. On contrary, SCMP reported the protests from a negative perspective more frequently, including highlighting the chaotic situation during the protests as well as clashes between police and protesters.

In terms of sources and quotations used in the reporting of the 2019 Hong Kong protests, the law enforcement unit, includes the police who carry out their duties to keep the community safe, are mostly cited. However, the police, in this case, are the authorities to arrest protesters. In contrast, the role of the police is somewhat controversial, considering one of the protest's demands is to conduct an independent investigation into police outrage (Rourke, 2019). Most of the SCMP reporting used at least two or more sources to provide a more comprehensive reporting angle. This can be seen when the frequency of activist/protester sources recorded a percentage of 16%, only 1% less than government sources. This is contrary to Bray (2012) who argued that corporate media rarely use alternative voices as a source of expertise to validate reporting.

SCMPs will typically use quotes from activists/protesters when they have been used as sources in reporting. In terms of news sources, the government is cited more than activists/protesters, but they are quoted less in writing. Government sources were cited with a percentage of 15%, while activist/protester sources were cited more, at 18%. The findings of this study also contradict with the previous study conducted by Wiebrecht (2018), who found that more reporting involved quotes from Mainland and Hong Kong officials while giving less opportunity to activists/protesters to voice out their opinions.

Out of the eight mechanisms used in this study, there are six mechanisms that can be analyzed through their nature in positive, neutral, and negative categories. 4 out of 6 mechanisms recorded the highest percentage for the negative category. SCMP's stance in reporting the 2019 Hong Kong protests is considered negative and passive as their reporting focuses more on the negative nature. Regarding source selection and citations, this study found that SCMP used many alternative sources in the 2019 Hong Kong protests reporting. With this, the second question of this study is also answered. SCMP's stance in reporting the 2019 Hong Kong protests is said to be negative. This is because SCMP is more likely to report the issue of the 2019 Hong Kong protests from a negative angle.

CONCLUSION

SCMP's stance on the 2019 Hong Kong protests is more in a negative direction, although these newspapers make extensive use of diverse sources in their news reporting. This is because the SCMP tends to report conflicts between the parties involved and community unrest, while protest requests by protesters are less focused. The SCMP should

provide fair news reporting to both parties, in this case, the Hong Kong government and the protester side, to produce comprehensive reporting.

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