Proposal of the Research Paper on Comparing China’s Response to COVID-19 with SARS

This proposal illustrates the overall plan of the research paper, including the general topic and specific research questions, tentative thesis statement and sub-claims, and the utilization of sources.

Up to now, China has taken various actions to respond to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. Back in 2003, China was fighting against another similar epidemic, SARS. Due to the similarities between SARS and COVID-19, currently, a great number of academic journals are investigating the feature and potential of COVID-19 in light of the experience gained from SARS. For example, the academic journal, “The Deadly Coronaviruses: The 2003 SARS Pandemic and the 2020 Novel Coronavirus Epidemic in China”, directly compares the two pandemics in comprehensive levels, and in the end, it studies out a guideline for the future pandemics. Inspired by this article, I decide to evaluate China’s response to COVID-19 also by comparing it to SARS. More specifically, the questions that my paper seeks to answer are “In what aspects China is more effective in the response of COVID-19 than SARS?” and “Does the lesson learned in SARS affect China’s response to COVID-19?”

Based on my current research, the tentative thesis statement answers the questions above by arguing: Although China performs a more effective response to COVID-19 than SARS in the dimensions of monitoring technology and management policies, some mistake made in SARS recur in COVID-19, and some lessons learned in SARS even mislead the decisions to deal with COVID-19. This argument is supported mainly by four sub-claims. First, improved technology increases the effectiveness of the monitoring process. While in SARS, China only applies the traditional method in monitoring and much data was missed out, with the development of AI technology, Vaishya illustrates how AI technology helps proper screening, tracking, and predicting the current and future patients. Thereby, authorities can have a quicker and more thorough cognition of the situation and perform corresponding controls, and thus the effectiveness is improved. Second, stricter policies are established to limit the infection risk. According to Watts, the policies in SARS were already "drastic”, such as extending school holidays for several days and closing down stock exchange, cinemas, and theatres. However, in COVID-19, the Chinese government takes even more extreme actions, such as shutting down the whole Wuhan city, and the extending school holiday for months. Despite the freedom threat, the affected population is well limited. Third, China falls short in the early warning of COVID-19 just like that of SARS due to the lack of information transparency. Whereas Watts states Guangdong's first response to SARS was covering-up, the same tragedy happens when Dr. Li tried to warn the public about COVID-19 but ended up being punished by the local government, and his warning was blocked, according to Buckley. These scandals directly delay the government's systematic response to pandemics. Fourth, the "Xiaotangshan hospital mode” in SARS misleads China’s response to COVID-19. Xiaotangshan hospital was built within several days and was able to contain hundreds of patients, which worked well in SARS (Watts). With this successful experience, in COVID-19, China again builds such hospitals within a short time. However, it is not quick enough, because COVID-19 spreads much faster than SARS, and many more people are infected. Instead, the new strategy, Fangcang shelter hospitals, which was built later, turn out to be a better solution. Chen's article elaborated on how and why Fangcang is effective. Therefore, the time building Xiaotangshan mode hospitals are somehow wasted.

However, some people may challenge my arguments by asking “How can you tell whether a method is effective? What if the economic and human right cost of such methods overweighs limiting the infections population and mortality rate?” I admit that there is a balancing process among all kinds of benefits to reach the greater good while dealing with a pandemic. Therefore, in my later research, I will look for sources that can offer a more systematic framework to evaluate the effectiveness of the response to pandemics from a public health perspective.

Also, I only mention one or two examples above for each point in the thesis statement, but I can add more to make the paper more comprehensive and enriched.