Constructing Media Narratives of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh: Insights from Newspaper Coverage

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to identify how Bangladeshi newspapers disseminate the information, data, message and also exams what types of contents are used in conjunction with news coverage for framing recent pandemic crisis. A total of 4292 (The daily Star-1597, The Asian Age-1382, The Sun-1313) news stories are analyzed to examine which have been published by media house on the topic of recent COVID-19 pandemic crisis during 30 January to 8 April 2020 (70 days) in Bangladesh. This study identifies 24 contents are used by the newspapers for covering pandemic situation. In addition; this study shows comparison among the three daily newspapers on every 10-day basis. This exploratory finding would be a crucial pathway for media house, journalist, administrators, civil society, and policymakers.

INTRODUCTION

Currently the world is affected by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This Virus was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei, China, in December 2019, and was recognized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020 (WHO 2020). As of 22 April, more than 2573143 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in over 191 countries and territories, resulting in more than 177602 deaths and 688129 recoveries (GFSC 2022). The virus seems to mostly spread between people via respiratory droplets. It may also be spread from touching contaminated surfaces and then touching one's face. On the other hand, Prof Stephen Turner, head of the department of microbiology at Melbourne's Monash University, says that most likely is that virus emanated in bats. He has given a hypothesis that the virus aroused at the Wuhan live animal market from an interaction between an animal and a human (Boseley et al. 2020). The world has experienced global public health crises in the last 20 years triggered by novel virus infections, such as HIV, Influenza A virus subtype H1N1, In-affluenza a virus subtype H5N1, SARS-CoV1, MERS-CoV, and Ebola. However, the epidemiological novelty of COVID-19, which caused by astrain of coronavirus (the SARS-CoV2), revealed our lack of preparedness given its sudden and rapid spread that caught many governments around the world unprepared (Djalante et al. 2020).

The earth has come to standstill and the economy has under stagnant. Most of the affected country is maintaining shutdown. The Educational institution is closed. There is no crowd in temple. The roads are empty. In this circumstance; we need unite activities to fight. Actually, the covid-19 has deep impact on society. Therefore, social research can play vital role to assess and mitigate harm. Every sector needs research as

like laboratories research. It is well acknowledged that the mass media plays strong and dominant role in public health issues. Furthermore, Media has inconceivable network and communication mechanism with society (Gunther 1998). Thus, framings are high-powered mechanisms that can help to demarcate and provide solution and for shaping public views (Wang et al., 2013). Most of the research on framing investigation has centered on media structure in relation to public policy issues, although framing research is also potentially effective to mark out the strategic messages produced by public relations practitioners (Brodie et al., 2004). In crisis communication, framing interpretation can supply crisis managers with beneficial wisdom into the appropriate crisis response approach to reduce the loses to an organization and company image (Boyd, 2000; Coombs, 2006; Hallahan, 1999). The crisis of typology response tactics have been promoted and tested through framing research (Coombs, 2010; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Elsbach & Benoit, 1997; Hearit, 1994). The notion of framing analysis has been imposed by different research field such as journalism, politics, Public policy, relation and health issues etc. (Pan & Kosicki, 1993) define news media frames as " a cognitive used in information encoding interpreting and retrieving".

Wang. Y Cao et al tried to find out the impact of media coverage on epidemic spreading in complex networks (Li & Cui, 2009). Mollyann Brodie et al also concentrated on the media coverage of the HIV Epidemic 1981-2002 through their vigorous study (Guo et al., 2018). (Guo et al., 2018; Li & Cui, 2009) tried to work on SIS epidemic model with media coverage. Holmes, Bev J illustrate about Media coverage of Canada's obesity epidemic in his article (Holmes, 2009). but due to being new, scientists and researchers are surviving with difficulties to face Covid-19 .We noticed that few researches have been done regarding media coverage of Covid-19 in international arena. But there is no single work about this issue in a particular Bangladesh. Therefore, to fill up this gap, we tried to open the door for researching and creating knowledge so that we become able to succeed to fight against corona virus promptly.

CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19) AND BANGLADESH

The 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic was first three cases confirmed to Bangladesh on 8 March 2020. Infections stayed low till the end of March but sharply rise in April. In the week ending 11 April, new cases in Bangladesh grew 1,155 percent, the highest in Asia, ahead of Indonesia with 186 percent. According to last report of 27 April, there are a total of 5913 confirmed cases, 131 recoveries and 152 deaths, institutionally people put in quarantine 69,810 in the country.
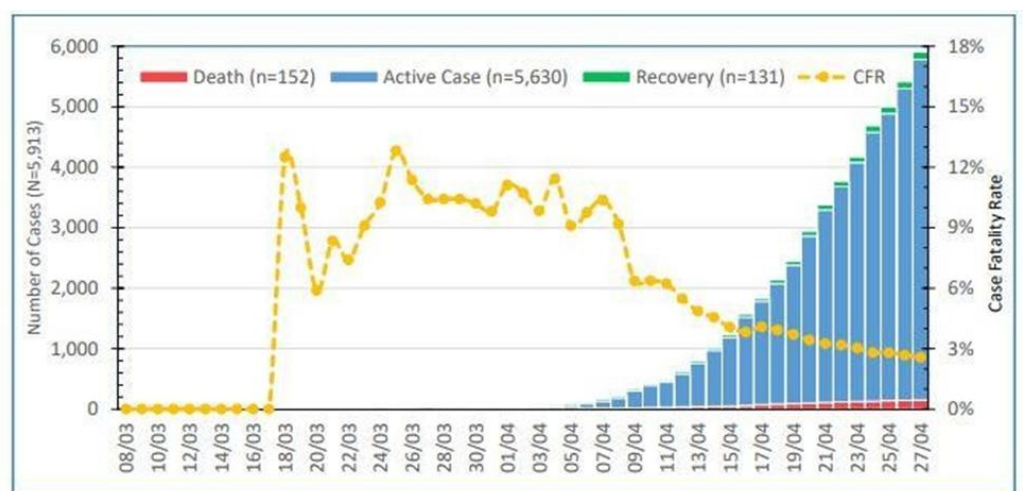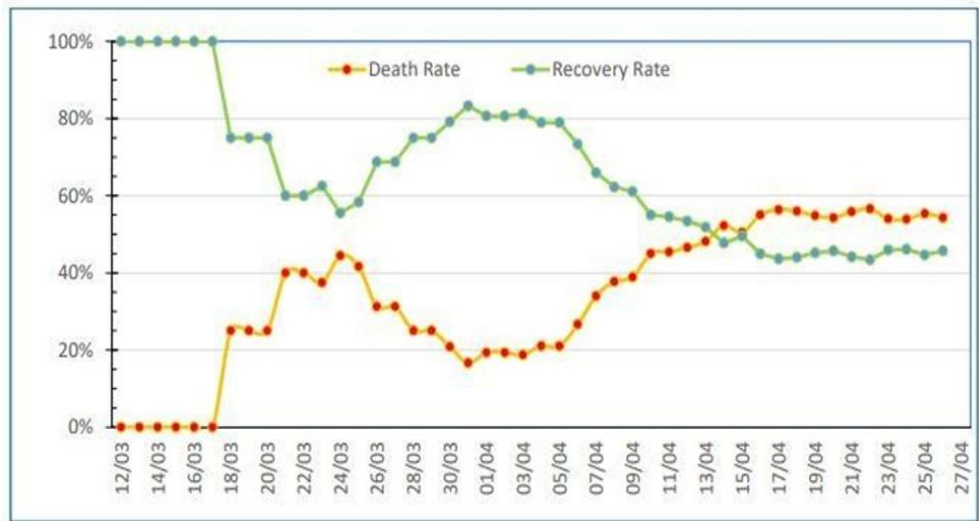
Fig 2: The death and recovery rates on closed reported confirmed COVID-19 cases, 8 March -27 April, 2020
Source: WHO, Situation Report No. 9

The Covid-19 infection has been now spread all over the country with the highest number of patients in Dhaka and Narayanganj. The new corona virus has forced countries around the world to adopt measures such as flight bans, mandatory lockdowns and social distancing to prevent the pandemic from spreading. South Asian nation of Bangladesh has also followed suit, banning flights and shutting down schools and colleges but offices still remain open in one of the poorest countries in the world (Hearit, 1994). Bangladesh is now surviving at community transmission stage.
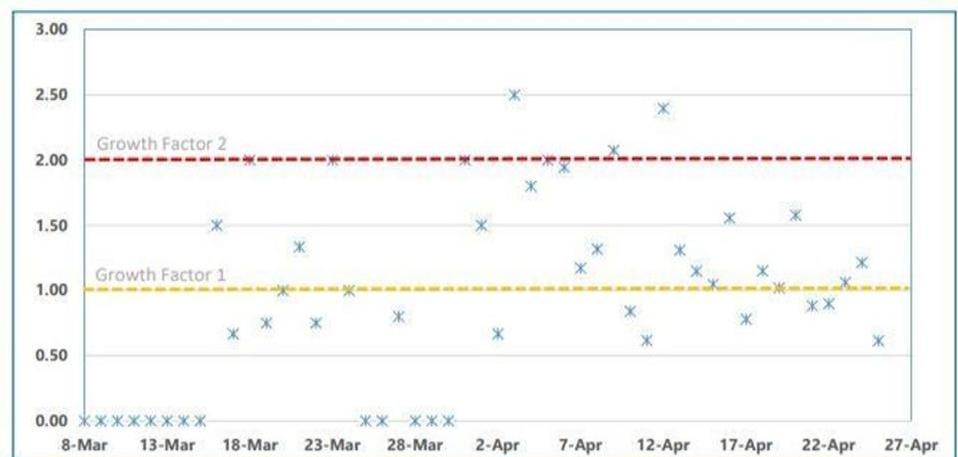

Fig 3: Growth factor of reported confirmed COVID-19 cases, 8 March -27 April, 2020
Sources: WHO, Situation Report No. 9

Experts criticized that for inadequate testing were conducted in the country but population has over 160 million. For long period, testing was centralized to only Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) in the capital Dhaka although patients with symptoms were found in all around the country. On 22 March, Bangladesh government decreed a 10-day lockdown effective from 26 March to 4 April. This decreed was later extended to 05 may. Now millions of livelihoods in the country strictly are outliving economic threat due to COVID-19. She has over 50

million labor force engage in the informal and semi-formal sector and only 15% of Bangladeshi wage-earner get paid more than $6 a day (Elsbach & Benoit 1997).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study has been paid attention to know the Newspaper's paper response to COVID- 19. Concerning this, we collected 4292 newspaper articles by 70 days data from 30 January (when the World Health Organization (WHO) has first declared epidemic) to 8 April. We selected three newspapers, The Daily Star, The Asian Age, The sun. Because the Daily Star is widely read by policy makers and it is very influential on domestic politics. As popular national newspaper, The Asian age and The Sun was chosen because of broader readership. We entered direct newspapers website and collected each and every day Covid-19 or related report data from 30 January to 8 April. The researcher employed two skilled media news coders for coding each report and analyzing content. However, this is the first version dataset of media coverage of Covid-19 and we are still collecting data. Therefore, we expect to compose further versions available in the coming days.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Due to COVID-19 the world now faces one of the most critical periods which has already fragmented all kinds of way of life associated accomplishment for human beings. As a result of this, people cannot conduct their daily life as prior normal time, and all types of activities have been switched off which is great obstacles for modern civilization. In response to this COVID- 19, all markers are working to prevent the epidemic fruitfully. The print media like Newspaper is one of them to respond to this situation. It contributes hugely to spread the essential information and data regarding awareness of the mass people and researchers. Likewise, the newspaper of Bangladesh is contributing enormously, and take a lot of step to aware all classes of people in Bangladesh through printing the significant news in timely.
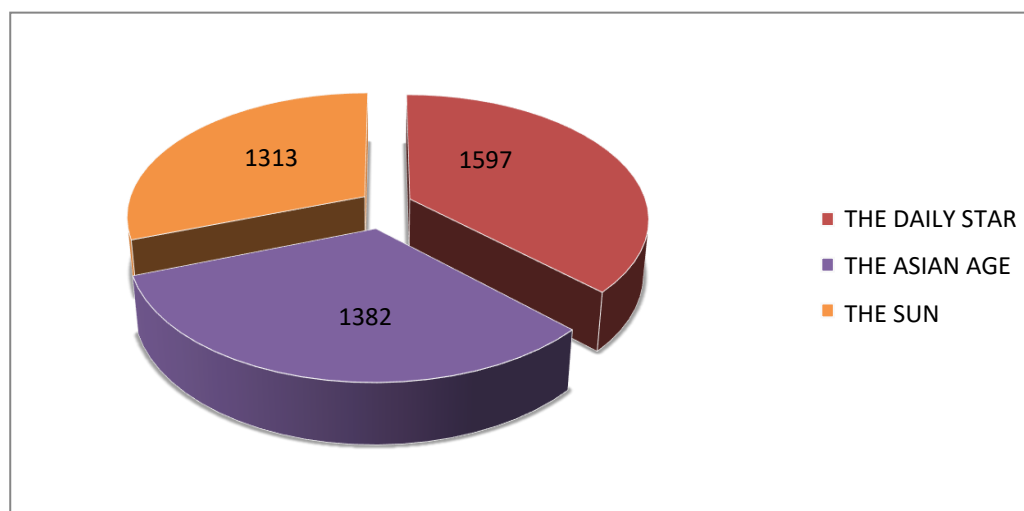

Fig 4: Comparable published news quantity of Three Daily English Newspaper in Bangladesh
Source: Survey from 30 January to 8 April, 2020

Figure 4, shows that the most renowned newspaper of Bangladesh as such The Daily Star, The Asian Age, The Sun has shown the published news about COVID-19 from 30 January to 8 April (70 days). According to the fig-4, it is figured out that the highest number (1597) of news has been published from The Daily Star while the lowest (1313) number of news covered by the Daily Sun. On the contrary, The Asian Age nearly 1382 news has been printed by 70 days. Therefore, it has been transparent that The Daily Star has contributed a significant role to aware the all sector of people by print out huge news.
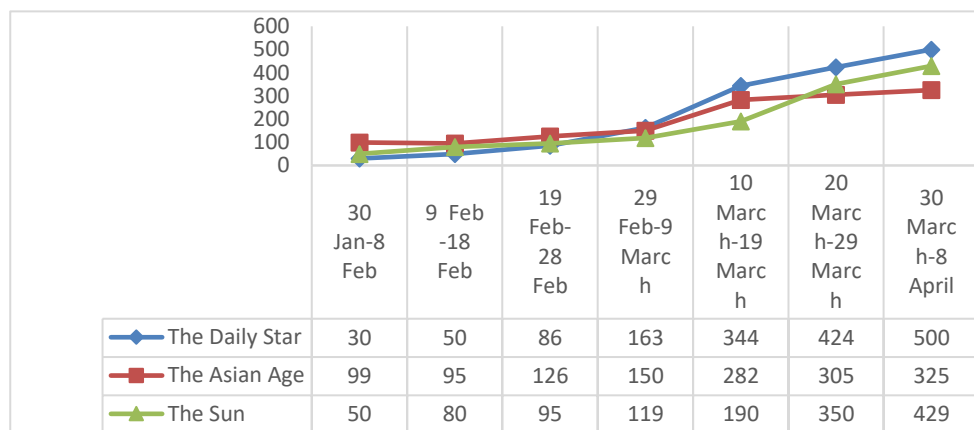

	30 Jan-8 Feb	9 Feb-18 Feb	19 Feb-28 Feb	29 Feb-9 March	10 March-19 March	20 March-29 March	30 March-8 April
The Daily Star	30	50	86	163	344	424	500
The Asian Age	99	95	126	150	282	305	325
The Sun	50	80	95	119	190	350	429

Fig 5: Comparison of COVID-19 news dissemination in three English newspapers

Figure-5 displays a comparison of news that has disseminated in every 10 days in three English newspapers. In the beginning, reports in The Daily Star, The Asian Age, The Sun followed a fairly similar pattern over the period. Though the overall trend was upward some fluctuations are noticeable. The figure-5 also shows that initially The Daily Star were covered comparatively lower news (30) than the others. But this newspaper has shown an uplifting trend throughout the period and finally reached at the highest pick (500). On the other hand, The Asian Age has produced 99 news initially but its number has declined after 10 days later and become 95 then its newscast number increased consequently, and finally, it has disclosed approximately 325 news. The Sun has started to circulate the news at the beginning very little. This newspaper has increased a new dimension from 29 February to 9 March where published 119 news which is very low among the two other newspapers but ending the period sharply higher (429) than where it began (50). Therefore, in comparison among these newspapers, The Daily Star and The Sun consequently contributed an important role to publish news concerning COVID-19, and their news providing quantity has increased significantly day by day.

Newspaper	General News	Feature	Opinion	Editorial
The Daily Star	1455	58	54	30
The Asian Age	1307	46	15	14
The Sun	1210	37	10	56
Total	3972(92.54%)	141(3.2%)	79(1.8%)	100(2.3%)

Table 1: Category of main content Published in Newspaper regarding COVID-19 (*N=4292*); Source: Survey from 30 January to 8 April, 2020.

Most of the newspaper in Bangladesh has covered huge types of news concerning COVID-19 issue. Among the newspaper in Bangladesh, the case newspaper of this study also has issued many types of news between 30 January and 8 April (70 days), and these are categorized by general news, feature, opinion, and editorial. The table-1 figure out that the highest number of 3972 (92.54%) news has issued in the general news side, in which respectively 1455, 1307, and 1210 news published by The Daily Star, The Asian Age, and The Sun. On the other hand, 141 (3.2%) and editorial 100 (2.3%) news covered in the feature and editorial side by the three newspapers. Only 79 (1.8) news has been printed on the opinion side. Therefore, it has cleared that those newspapers have particularly focused on general types of news. During the survey, there are some journalists and editors reported that every newspaper tries to cover awareness types of news to disseminate the actual situation and information to the mass people.

Name of Contents	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Infected rate (Number and rate of infected from the current Covid-19 pandemic)	739	17.2
Death rates (Number and rate of death from the current Covid-19 pandemic)	266	6.2
Precautions being taken (Precautions or measures put into place at varied institutions to prevent further spread of the current Covid-19 pandemic)	371	8.7
Preparedness (Primarily focused on the preparation)	145	3.4
Panic, fear, anxiety (Emotional responses that Covid-19 is causing across populations)	53	1.2
Politics (How politics has affected current political campaigning and the politics of combating Covid-19)	51	1.1
Economic Issues (How the economy has affected and from Covid-19)	585	13.6
Sports Issues (How the sports sector has affected from Covid-19))	302	7.1
Education Issues (How the sports sector has affected from Covid-19)	86	2.0
Entertainment Issues (How the sports sector has affected from Covid-19)	164	3.8
Relief (providing both government and Non-government)	199	4.7
Discrimination (Those who are facing discrimination related to the possibility of having Covid-19)	36	0.8
Voluntary works (Need for additional help, particularly volunteers in Bangladesh)	67	1.6
Funding/Cost for Fighting Covid-19 (Funding needed or provided and/or cost thus far to combat Covid-19)	22	0.5
Ethics, Norms & Values (Ethics of treating those with Covid-19, and measures to reduce Covid-19 e.g. communication with relatives, friends, neighbors etc.)	35	0.8
Religious issues (the impact of religious activities due to covid-19)	124	2.9
Delayed response (Response to Covid-19 has largely been delayed and the effect of this delayed response)	59	1.4
Poor handling of cases (How cases have been poorly handled or how miscommunication has contributed to disease transmission).	103	2.4
Travel issues (Travel and the risks involved, potential for a travel ban, and increase in screening at airports).	92	2.1
Rumor (Spreading of fake news)	56	1.3
Risk of treating patients (Risk to health care workers).	81	1.9
International response (How a global response to combat the Covid- 19 outbreak in Bangladesh is needed to prevent Covid-19 transmission)	169	3.9
Cases in other countries (Incidence or prevalence of Covid-19 in other countries)	363	8.5
Others (miscellaneous news related to Covid-19)	124	2.9
Total	4292	100.0

Table 2: Types of Content published in Daily Newspaper in Bangladesh
Source: Survey from 30 January to 8 April,2020

The table-2 demonstrates the types of content of the case newspaper in this study where the researchers pointed out twenty-four (24) types of news through the vigorous survey. In which, respectively 17.2% and 13.6% of news covered by the newspaper about the infected rate and Economic Issues due to COVID-19. Besides, those newspapers have also pay attention to the death rate (6.2%), Precautions being taken (8.7%), Preparedness (3.4%), and Cases in other countries (8.5%) seriously. On the other hand, Panic, fear, anxiety (1.2%), Politics (1.1%), Discrimination-Those who are facing discrimination related to the possibility of having Covid-19 (.8%), Voluntary works (1.6%), Religious issues (2.9%), Poor handling of cases (2.9%) and Travel issues (2.1%), etc. Besides, sports and entertainment are one of the main sources for the recreation of mass people, but these sources hampered owing to COVID-19. Therefore, from the overall perspective of table 2, it has cleared that the case newspaper especially did not give up the crucial news such as the intensity of COVID-19 pandemic, its preparedness, precaution, and consequences of this epidemic on society.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

How the media cover the epidemic crisis and what types of agenda or content they used for producing news stories? This study tried to answer this question. Our results suggest that Bangladesh print media have published different kinds of news stories to influence public perceptions, opinion and creating awareness. In response to face Covid-19, Media house should more concentrate strategic and quality full broadcasting in order to shape public view and response. However, this is the first version dataset of media coverage of Covid-19 and we are still collecting data. Therefore, we expect to compose further versions available in the coming days.

For this study, the researcher tried to coverage only three English newspapers, which cannot be reflective of entire Bangladeshi news framing of Covid-19 crisis. This study is limited to only newspaper did not count any others kind of news sources including Radio, Television, social media, magazine, internet and so on. This study also didn`t count audience perception and response but only focused on different forms of message regarding representation on Covid- 19. Due to lockdown situation, the researcher cannot go out for surveying to journalist and readers. The researcher has got inadequate time to collect and analyze data for producing idea quickly as there is no existing literature regarding this issue in Bangladesh, the researcher tried to create knowledge so that news media can be updated and policy makers can be picked up effective policy.

Future research should examine not only framing and analysis but also field survey to both journalist and readers. In addition; the international media coverage of Covid-19 should be analyzed in order to assess the role of foreign media for shaping Bangladeshi public view, opinion and awareness. Besides, as Bengali language is a mother tongue of Bangladesh, therefore, further research should be written on Bengali based newspaper.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author was solely responsible for the conceptualization, design, and execution of the research. All stages of the study, including data acquisition, analysis, and interpretation,

were carried out independently by the author. Additionally, the drafting, critical revision, and finalization of the manuscript were completed exclusively by the author. The author assumes full responsibility for the integrity of the research and the accuracy of its findings.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this article and are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author. The corresponding author has read and approved the final version of the manuscript, had full access to all the data in this study, and takes full responsibility for the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis.

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