

News Coverage on Environmental Issues: A Study on Print Media of Bangladesh

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Abstract: This research seeks to explore the news coverage of environmental issues in the print media of Bangladesh. Four newspapers in two languages; The Daily Star, The Daily New age in English. The Daily ProthomAlo and The Daily Bangladesh Pratidin in Bengali language were selected as sample. In order to carry out the objectives of the research, qualitative and quantitative methodology were employed. The researcher tries to find the answers to the problem whether Bangladeshi newspapers cover sufficiently environmental issues. Primary data were collected through content analysis. Major content analysis findings were that the selected newspapers do cover environmental issues, though the subject matter did not receive much coverage. Although environmental issues are not covered sufficiently in these four newspapers, it has been investigated that The Daily Star newspaper covered the highest environmental articles by contract to other three newspapers in 2019. In ProthomAlo, New Age and Bangladesh Pratidin, environmental issues were not only ignored, but also they were given very small portions of the newspaper and marginalized in relation to their presentation.

Keywords: Environmental Issues, Print Media, News Coverage

Date of Submission: 16-04-2020

Date of Acceptance: 01-05-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

Environment, in the broad sense, means the circumstances, objects or conditions by which someone is surrounded. It includes all the physical and biological surroundings and their interactions. The environment is one of the most crucial decisive factors exerting influence on development's possibilities in Bangladesh. The major environmental problems such as deforestation, environment pollution, natural disaster, climate change etc. are related to human activities and development. Significantly, there is an inseparable relationship between environment and development.

Now a day's tremendous environmental problems and issues are gradually increasing around the world with higher frequency from strong typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones and other extreme events including pollution, floods, landslides, droughts etc. Therefore, there is a growing demand from the public for more and more information on environmental issues and a great link between awareness and action. It is shown that environment and environmental news and information have become prominent topic of the public and elites discussion. Hence, mass media plays a significant role in covering news and information on environmental incidences, issues and problems. (Pompper, 2004)

Print media is one of the most popular and efficient forms of mass communication. It plays an important role in transforming and educating the society. With more in depth news and analysis, print media influences and shapes the perception of readers. It has the benefit of creating a longer influence on the minds of the reader, with more in-depth coverage and investigation (Roba, 2012).

The Newspapers of Bangladesh play a significant role in providing information to people about the environmental issues. They inform people in the far-flung areas where the reach of electronic media is not possible.

This paper investigates the role of news media in representing environmental reports. It also analyzes the issues responsible for shaping the agendas of reporting on environmental issues in general and local environmental issues in particular.

I A. Objectives of the Study

Finding the practice of news coverage on environmental issues in the print media of Bangladesh is the main aim and object of the research work. Besides, some secondary objects has also been fulfilled while conducting this research. The objects are given below:

- To figure out the types of content that usually receive more media attention or coverage on environmental issues.
- To analyze the coverage patterns and treatment of environmental issues in the print media.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bacon, Das and Zaman (2009) developed the concept that environmental reporting in Bangladesh is a strong and growing sub-field of journalism which constructs its own veracity in ways that reflect the social, economic and political contexts.

In 2010, Haque has provided a similar assumption on environmental reporting in Bangladesh. He found that newspapers gave a special attention to global climate change issues, impacts and debates, which were particularly relevant to Bangladesh. It is clearly evident that they set specific agendas on combating changes, conferences and seminars, impact of changes, issues of compensation and local and regional environmental issues.

Sampei and Usui(2009) found a dramatic augmentation in the newspaper coverage of global warming and public concern relatively. Thus, the researchers revealed the importance of effective communication maintaining mass media coverage. The results showed that the augmentation in media coverage of global warming had an immediate influence on public awareness of global warming issues.

Okoro and Nnaji (2012) find that environmental pollution in the region by the print media received low coverage. Further, they revealed that environmental issues are largely confined to the inside pages of the newspapers. They concluded that environmental education will add impetus to the struggle for having a healthy environment, as well as sustainable environment.

In their research on the effect of education, age, newspapers and television on environmental awareness, issues and behaviors, Ostman and Parker (1987) found that the use of newspapers for environmental issue was favorably linked to the attention given to environmental content in mass media and environmental concerns.

Although the coverage on environmental issues has augmented over the last few years, the media's supply of information on the environment is still quite low and one-sided: the variety of environmental topics tackled should increase, the reporting should not only highlight the environmental issues that are at the top of the political agenda, but the coverage should be a more continual one. (Hoerisch, 2002)

In the year 2007, Norma and Hasan found that environmental news is underrepresented in Malaysia and New Zealand and the news patterns in the two countries are quite similar. The researchers questioned the quality of the news, with much of the coverage being conflict-framed, one-source event stories, with high dependency on government officials. Through interviews, it is revealed some differences between New Zealand and Malaysian newspapers.

Agwu and Amu (2013) have drawn their attention in different way compared to above mentioned research studies. The theoretical approach was the framing theory. They found that great proportion (125 out of 332) of the news articles used negative tone in headlines. The majority of articles on climatic change framed in terms of "blame" and "action".

Aiyesimoju&Awoniyi's (2012) advocated that press should give more attention to various issues on environment, as well as its developmental programs in its reportage and to intensify efforts on setting environmental agenda so as to facilitate sustainable development in agriculture and environment.

Lucas (2013) argued that environmental issues attract widespread attention in mass media and then decline from public view, though the issues remain largely unresolved. The results also indicated that high levels of media coverage did not last for a long time. Moreover, the research revealed that coverage of global warming on the front pages of the newspapers influenced the environmental concerns of a large proportion of people. This paper assesses the recent institutional responses by the Bangladesh government to promote sustainable adaptation in the climate-vulnerable wetland systems of the north- eastern floodplains through different adaptation-related planning processes(Parveen, 2016).

MacNaghten and Urry (1998), Giving a story context allows the reader to better understand its implications. Context is important so that audience members can view the event or story as it applies to a larger scheme. Stories are given meaning by reference to some particular 'news value' that connects one event with similar ones. Without frames, news stories would be incomprehensible and unrecognizable, meaningless talk when void of context (Cox, 2006). Without context it would be difficult for the reader to understand the significance of a particular news story or event.

In addition to providing context, framing also provides an analysis of events. Friedman (2004) stated that "people are interested in more than simple facts—they seek out analysis of events". Most people do not have time to read, analyze and interpret all of the available information; they depend on the media to guide them. A study by Wilkins and Patterson (1990) found that most audiences allow the media to show them what is important.

Dutt, Garg and Bhatta (2013) have noted that people use mass media to learn about environmental issues that are outside of their direct experience. People seek out facts and interpretation because they possess little information about current issues and events, especially those that are outside of a person's daily experience and the media are the main source of information.

These constraints can be so limiting that they create inconsistencies in reporting. In 2011, Jalarajan Raj and Sreekumarnoted that the nature of environmental news production does not permit even the issues that are covered to be done with the same standard. Media outlets are simply unable to present every aspect of a story, and the resulting frames and nonverbal cues convey further importance and meaning to the reader. An unintended consequence of these constraints is that importance can be placed on stories that are longer in length or, as discussed above, include a picture. The volume of media coverage is the first indicator of the relative salience awarded to an issue over time.

Prior to 1988, the term "greenhouse effect" was referenced almost exclusively in discourse on climate change (Roba, 2012). However, "global warming" gained popularity and by 1990 was the most commonly used term for climate change in the news media (Roba, 2012). Nitz and West (2004) pointed out the Republican Party began to coin the term climate change as part of a political move to dominate debates on environmental issues. Liebler and Bendix (1996) investigated since then, climate change has become the preferred scientific term because it is more encompassing. Environmental news coverage is typically devoid of scientific explanations.

The research studies that the environmental issues of different countries are documented in existing literature. It is found that the current literature rarely examines the coverage of environmental issues, pattern and treatment in Bangladeshi newspapers. Therefore, this research explored the news coverage and treatment of four newspapers in two languages; Bengalis and English. This study sought to fill this gap and contributed to extensive knowledge in the area

III. METHODOLOGY

Content analysis method is used to carry out the research. Moreover both quantitative and qualitative methodologies have been used. Quantitative data with interpretation has been presented in the table. To answer research questions this study consists of a content analysis of news in print media. Hence, data were collected through content analysis from four newspapers of Bangladesh. Two newspapers from Bengali language including The Daily ProthomAlo and The Daily Bangladesh Pratidin and two English newspapers including The Daily Star and The New age, were selected in purposive sample selection method on the basis of their circulation. Newspaper of the last two weeks of August 2019 (18th August-31st August) has been analyzed in the research. To select the sample that which month will be taken, simple random sampling procedure is used.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis has been conducted to analyze the coverage of environmental issues in the selected newspapers. The entire data has been fed into tables. From the findings of the study, it became evident that all the newspapers focused on environment issues as less important issue, rather than the actual science of the issue or impact on the country, world, geography and human beings.

IV A. Total Coverage of Environmental Issues

Table no1: From the findings of the study, it became evident that Bangladesh newspapers do cover environmental issues in a certain way. The table below shows that the number of coverage environmental issues by the four selected dailies. The English newspaper The Daily Star covers the highest environmental news. It published a total of 26 environmental news during two weeks. Bangladesh Pratidin published 11 news which is low in amount among the four dailies.

Table no 1: Number of News in Each of the Newspaper

Newspaper	Total news	Environmental News	Percentage
The Daily Star	1724	26	1.5%
ProthomAlo	1468	18	1.2%
New Age	1204	17	1.4%
Bangladesh Pratidin	1114	11	1%

IV B. Category of Environmental Issue News

Table no2: Seminars and conference news got maximum space in the three newspapers. But the New Age published most of the stories regarding natural disaster. The Daily Star covered more climate change news than other newspapers. The ProthomAlo and Bangladesh Protidin focused on environmental pollution issues after the seminars and conference news.

Table no 2: Category of Environmental Issue News in Each of the Newspaper

Newspaper	Climate Change	Natural Disaster	Compensation and International Funding	Environmental Pollution	Seminars and Conference
The Daily Star	4 (15%)	6(23%)	2(7%)	6(23%)	8(30%)
ProthomAlo	2(11%)	4(22%)	1(5%)	4(22%)	7(38%)
New Age	2(11%)	5(29%)	3(17%)	4(23%)	3(17%)
Bangladesh Pratidin	1(9%)	2(18%)	1(9%)	3(27%)	4(36%)

IV C. Pattern of the News

Table no3: The study is shown that all the newspapers used interpretative news mostly to cover the environmental issue while hard news is the second most used. The practice of investigative reporting is not satisfactory. The amount of follow up and feature story is very low in all of the newspapers.

Table no 3: Pattern of News in Each of the Newspaper

Newspaper	Hard news	Investigative	Interpretative	Feature	Follow-up
The Daily Star	9 (34%)	3 (11%)	12 (46%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
ProthomAlo	7 (38%)	2 (11%)	8 (44%)	1 (5%)	
New Age	6 (35%)	2 (11%)	8 (47%)		1 (5%)
Bangladesh Pratidin	4 (36%)	-	6 (54%)	1 (9%)	-

IV D. Treatment of the News

Table no4: All the selected newspapers used one-six column with some box treatments to cover the environmental issues.

Table no 4: Treatment of News in Each of the Newspaper

Newspaper	One Column	Two Column	Three Column	Four Column	Five Column	Six Column	Box
The Daily Star	8 (30%)	7 (26%)	5 (19%)	3 (11%)	1 (3%)		2 (7%)
ProthomAlo	5 (27%)	3 (16%)	5 (27)	3 (16%)	-	-	2 (11%)
New Age	4 (23%)	3 (17%)	4 (23%)	3 (17%)	-	3 (17%)	-
Bangladesh Pratidin	3 (27%)	3 (27%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	-	1 (9%)	1 (9%)

IV E. Sources of the News

Table no5: The selected newspapers used their staff reporters more often to cover the environmental issues. The number of by line reports are same in the three newspapers. Bangladesh Pratidin published 3 byline news regarding environmental issues during two weeks.

Table no 5: Source of News in Each of the Newspaper

Newspaper	News Agency	Byline Report	Desk Report	Staff Reporter
The Daily Star	7 (26%)	5 (19%)	5 (19%)	9 (34%)
ProthomAlo	5 (27%)	5 (27%)	1 (5%)	7 (38%)
New Age	7 (41%)	3 (17%)		7 (41%)
Bangladesh Pratidin	1 (9%)	5 (45%)	1 (9%)	4 (36%)

IV F. Location of the News

Table no6: The study has found that most of the newspaper focused on international issues mostly to cover the environmental news with the news of Dhaka division getting the most priority. Rajshahi division has been gotten low priority in all of the newspapers.

Table no 6: Location of News in Each of the Newspaper

Newspaper	Dhaka	Khulna	Chittagong	Rajshahi	Barisal	Sylhet	Mymensingh	International
The Daily Star	7 (26%)	3(11%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)	8 (30%)
Prothom Alo	5 (27%)	4 (22%)	2 (11%)		2(11%)			5 (27%)
New Age	4 (23%)	2 (11%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	1(5%)			8 (47%)
Bangladesh Pratidin	4 (36%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)			1 (9%)		3 (27%)

IV G. Presentation of Environmental News: Qualitative Discussion

In this section the patterns of news presentation on environment issues of the sampled newspapers have been interpreted in qualitative method. The objective of this study was to determine the coverage to portray environment issues in the daily ProthomAlo, The daily Bangladesh Pratidin, The Daily Star, and The daily New Age in the last two weeks of August 2019. The study examined a number of techniques, including the number of coverage of the article, the source of news, how much column the articles got as treatment, the pattern of report (Hard news, investigative news, interpretative news, feature story and follow-up stories), location of those news which was categorized based on eight divisions of Bangladesh and the categories of the environment issues which was based on Climate Change, Natural disaster, Compensations and International Funding, Conferences and Seminars on Environmental Issues, Environment pollution. In total, 72 articles were coded, including 26 from Daily Star, 17 from New Age, 18 from ProthomAlo and 11 from Bangladesh Pratidin. By examining the coverage used to portray environment issues in these four newspapers over the given time period, it becomes clear how the issue of environment issues is presented to the general public.

The qualitative analysis is given below through three specific parameters:

Event –oriented issues get more priority: It has been found that the news culture of the four selected dailies in terms of news-values and news gathering sources, environment issue news gets the attention of the media only when it is event oriented. There are a lot of conference and seminars news while the number of investigation news and follow-up story is very poor.

Setting agenda by international issues: The dailies mostly published international based environmental news which were mostly covered by different international agencies. It seems that the selected dailies put more importance on international issue and tried to set an agenda by frequently covering them.

Getting advertisement is first priority: The media covers enormously those news which can hook the more advertiser to obtain more advertisements which undoubtedly increase profit. As there are lack of advertisement syndicates for environmental news, the number and the treatment of environmental news in the four selected dailies are unsatisfying.

V. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the Bangladeshi newspapers do cover environmental issues, but the number of coverage environmental issues is no satisfactory. The Daily Star published the highest environmental issues related articles. In ProthomAlo, New Age and Bangladesh Pratidin, environmental issues were ignored, and given very small portions of the newspaper and also marginalized in relation to their presentation.

Therefore, it shows a significant difference in numbers of printed articles by four newspapers. It is concluded that the most emphasized environmental issues of four newspapers are absolutely different. It seemed that some important environmental issues like, Compensation and international funding, and climatic change related issues need to be more exposed and covered in order to educate and inform the public.

The study found the Daily Star has given the significant representation or considerable coverage for environmental related issues than other three newspapers. But it is found that most of stories have just reported without any in-depth analysis in these all four newspapers. It revealed that the level of importance given to environmental issues were low in the newspapers.

It is concluded that Most of these four newspapers have covered environmental issues to report aftermath of the incidents. They have ignored important environmental events and issues. It shows that these newspapers have not understood their social responsibility, as well as environmental journalism itself. The number of news regarding environment issues should be increased. The environment news should get more priority in the newspapers. The size of news according to column inches should also be improved and there should be remain more in-depth analysis.

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