



Preferring Reactivity over Proactivity: Exploring the Nature of Bangladeshi Print Media in Covering Environmental News

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Abstract. Despite the continuous efforts made in recent years to improve the environmental qualities, pollution still poses a serious threat to human health and harms the planet. Emphasizing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Bangladesh is highly determined to achieve all its goals in due time. In this context, given Bangladesh's current environmental situation, traditional media have a crucial role to play, especially to develop environmental awareness. This study focuses on investigating how Bangladeshi print media cover environmental issues and whether they practice proactive or reactive reporting to raise public awareness. There are two phases in this study combining qualitative and quantitative methods. An analysis of the coverage and treatment of environmental news for one year, January to December 2022, in four major Bangladeshi newspapers, two each in Bengali and English, was accomplished in the first phase using content analysis. The second phase involved in-depth interviews with six senior environment-beat reporters. The study found that Bangladeshi mainstream newspapers are still far away from practicing proactive environmental reporting, as only one-fourth of the news reports are found to be proactive. The study also suggested some recommendations for the editorial body & policymakers.

Keywords: Bangladesh; environmental reporting; environmental sustainability; environmental awareness; Sustainable Development Goals.

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1. Introduction

Environmental contamination is an enormous issue that impacts the entire globe and has become a greater concern for the international community (Ajibade et al., 2020). Environmental pollution problems may have begun many decades or centuries ago and are the consequence of accumulative, interrelated events that have materialized as a more complicated problem today, which demands new scientific approaches for solution (Burke et al., 2017). Despite the significant efforts made in recent years to clean up the environment, pollution continues to be a serious concern that causes ongoing health hazards and affects

the earth severely. Modern sources of pollution such as industrial emissions, poor sanitation, inadequate waste management, polluted water supplies, and exposure to indoor air pollution from biomass fuels harm huge numbers of people. Microbial contaminants and several chemicals that are regarded as toxic are increasingly creating environmental hazards, which is risky for both natural and human health (Gunjyal et al., 2023). As the worldwide effect of human activities and environmental health concerns increases in scale and scope, so does the need to recognize and manage the health hazards connected with environmental pollution.

Bangladesh is often considered one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change due to its geographic location and flat, low-lying topography. Statistics also solidify the risk factor, as the country stood 7th out of 180 countries in the Global Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2021. The index, based on an analysis of data from 20 years, validated the fact that Bangladesh lost more than 11 thousand people in this timeframe and experienced 185 extreme weather hazards, while the net economic loss stood at \$3.72 billion (Al Amin, 2021). Sea-level rise due to continuous global warming is one of the major challenges Bangladesh faces. Experts reckon that by 2050, with a projected 50 cm rise in sea level, the country may lose 11% of its total land, and nearly 18 million people may turn into climate refugees (Rojas, 2021).

To create mass awareness over any specific issues, specifically for the environment, mass media is regarded as one of the most effective tools, due to its characteristics and capacity of reaching out to large audiences (Manzoor & Akram, 2019; Dudeja, 2016). Since news is the primary source for information, analysis, and discussion on public matters (Lester, 2010), news media are essential for informing the public about environmental problems. People's perception, attitudes, and behavior are influenced by the type of environmental coverage and how environmental concerns are portrayed in the media (Cox, 2013). The public may access and exchange information via a variety of media formats. For this reason, media plays a crucial role in conveying important messages to conserve the environment, through which individuals actively and easily access environmental information. Other studies also indicate that ignorance about environmental issues is one of the factors contributing to a country's ongoing environmental problems (Uddin, 2023; Ajaps & McLellan, 2015).

Considering Bangladesh's current state in terms of environmental problems, traditional media holds the accountability of focusing on environmental issues more intriguingly. To create awareness among mass people, the media should publish specific reports dedicated to environmental issues. As agenda setting is one of the media's major strengths, the media holds the responsibility of being proactive and making people conscious of various matters related to climate change and environmental pollution, so that people stay concerned about the gruesomeness of the issue and act accordingly to ensure environmental sustainability.

As Bangladesh makes every attempt to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals on schedule and as the environment, climate change, and natural disasters are some major areas of focus, environmental sustainability demands scholarly attention. It is significant to investigate how Bangladeshi media is contributing to this issue, also to determine whether the media is aiding the government in achieving the environmental development goals. Therefore, this study aims to look at the actual and prospective roles played by the Bangladeshi print media in bringing attention to environmental concerns and influencing public opinion. To achieve this aim, this study investigates how Bangladeshi print media

cover environmental issues and what kind of reporting they practice to raise public awareness.

The prime objectives of this study are determining the frequency of environmental reports published in Bangladeshi mainstream newspapers, and exploring whether Bangladeshi print media prioritize proactive or reactive environmental reports. To address the objectives of the study, this work intends to focus on the following research questions: 1. Do Bangladeshi mainstream newspapers concentrate on proactive environmental reporting, or just publish event-based, conventional reports? 2. Do Bangladeshi print media publish stories which could create environmental awareness among mass people?

From the Bangladeshi standpoint, there has been a dearth of studies undertaken thus far on environmental reporting. Most of the previous studies examined the size of media coverage provided by newspapers. Nevertheless, this study stands out by focusing on the identification of the characteristics of environmental reporting in Bangladesh and determining whether Bangladeshi print media engages in proactive environmental reporting. The study's results and recommendations aim to provide valuable insights for newspaper policymakers, prompting them to reconsider and reformulate their approach to environmental journalism in the country.

Framing theory, first put forth by Erving Goffman (1974), is used as the theoretical concept for this study. Framing describes how media organizes and communicates information to the general audience. The idea contends that to promote or counteract interpretations, media promotes occurrences and then positions them in specific contexts. In this approach, the media shapes how individuals selectively perceive reality. Fundamentally, framing theory holds that decisions people make on how to absorb information are influenced by the way something is presented to audience (referred to as 'the frame'). Abstractions called frames are used to shape or arrange the meaning of messages. The most frequent application of frames is the context of the news that media provide to the content they present. They are believed to have an impact on how the audience interprets the news since they may change the way a larger audience thinks and believes. This theory is particularly relevant to this study, as the researchers intend to explore whether Bangladeshi mainstream media applies any framings while publishing or broadcasting environment-related news.

2. Methods

This study follows a mixed research approach. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in this study. The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, content analysis of 4 Bangladeshi mainstream newspapers (2 Bengali and English newspapers each) has been conducted to analyze how environment-related news being covered. Newspapers have been selected following a convenient sampling method. Due to the easy access to digital versions (e-paper) of these newspapers, they have been carefully chosen as samples. The researchers had free and unlimited access to the digital versions of these newspapers. All these four newspapers are reputed and well-circulated in Bangladesh, as per the official circulation rate provided by the Department of Films and Publications Bangladesh. As per the circulation rate of English newspapers, the Daily Star ranks 1st and the Business Standard ranks 5th. Among the Bangla newspapers, daily Prothom Alo ranks 2nd in overall circulation ranking, whereas daily Samakal stands at 7th position (Department

of Film and Publication Bangladesh, 2023). For the analysis purpose, digital archives of newspapers have been used rather than hard copies.

The timeframe for the content analysis was 12 months, stretching from January to December 2022. Splitting the whole year into 4 clusters, the 3rd, 6th, 9th & 12th months of the year (March, June, September, and December) have been thoroughly analyzed, to make the data more representative. For better and more accurate analysis, the environmental articles were categorized into nine themes, i.e. natural disaster; climate change; air, water and river pollution; renewable energy; food security; displacement of people in vulnerable areas; wildlife and biodiversity; plastic pollution; and public health concern. Any articles that fell into any of these categories were identified as environment-related articles, and then analyzed to better comprehend the nature of reporting.

After the completion of the first phase and drawing an initial conclusion from this, the second phase has been conducted, which was in-depth interviews with environment-beat reporters. These in-depth interviews helped the researchers to focus more deeply on the strategy and mindset of popular media regarding environmental journalism. A semi-structured interview model with environmental journalists, as applied by Robbins and Wheatley (2021), was undertaken for this study. Purposive sampling was used to reach out to environmental reporters from various news media outlets. Though the study mainly focuses on print media, while taking interviews, both the print and broadcast journalists were considered, to gather more diversified perceptions about environmental reporting practices in Bangladesh. A total of 6 interviews have been conducted, and all of the informants were environment-beat reporters with a minimum of 5 years of experience in this arena of reporting. The six informants were selected following snowball technique, including journalists from 3 newspapers (Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, and The Business Standard) and 3 television channels (BTV, Channel I, and Ekattor TV). All these media outlets are renowned and considered mainstream outlets in the Bangladeshi media industry.

The informants were approached through e-mail and phone calls for the interview purpose, and they also responded positively. Before every interview, a brief overview of the objective of the study and sample questions were sent to the interviewees. All the interviews were conducted on online platforms (Zoom and Google Meet). The average duration for each interview was 1 hour 10 minutes. The questions were mainly about the potential reasons of absence of proactive environmental reports in Bangladesh, what are the main challenges for proactive reporting, state of environmental literacy among the reporters, etc. All the interviews were conducted in Bengali, as their native language is Bangla, and latter translated into English by the authors.

As the two key points of the study, the terms 'reactive' and 'proactive' need some clarification. Often it is observed that newspapers publish day-to-day reports, based on scheduled events, seminars, or any other programs. When a natural calamity occurs, newspapers tend to publish plenty of reports. Similarly, when any research-based findings come out related to environment or climate change, reporters make reports of that. Alongside these, special stories are prepared to mark some special days, for example, World Environment Day, World Wildlife Day; International Day of Action for Rivers; and World Water Day. In this study, these reports have been identified as reactive reports, as most of the time these reports are prepared after the occurrence of any events. On the contrary, any in-depth, investigative, or awareness-creating reports are classified as proactive reports. The researchers believe that covering only day events, or giving attention only when any environmental events happen, is far away from being sufficient. Instead, regular, devoted

and year-long environment reporting is a must, which will help to increase public awareness of environmental issues.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Relationship between media and environment: a historical assessment

Media serves as a conduit for diverse environmental knowledge and frequently influences public attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of environmental issues (Luedecke & Boykoff, 2017). The mass media in the United States are credited with pioneering environmental reporting worldwide (Marukatat, 1991). Even though ecological issues were widely discussed, there was minimal coverage of environmental issues in the early 1960s, in part because environmental reporting was a relatively new field for journalists. The environment did not start to rank among the most frequently covered topics in the American and Canadian press until 1969 (Schoenfeld, 1975; Parlour & Schatzow, 1978).

Environmental reporting increased in the USA press from the decade of 1970s. Between 1971 and 1980, there were 291 environmental-related stories overall, up from 158 in the 1960s in eight of the top general interest newspapers (Marukatat, 1991). More attention was paid to environmental additives and water contamination (Bowman & Fuchs, 1981). In contrast to other topics like environmental movements, energy resource management remained a top priority in the United States news during the 1980s (McGeachy, 1989).

In the 1990s, a lot of American newspapers started to regularly provide space for environmental news. The Dallas Morning News printed environmental items regularly, while The New York Times gave permanent space in its Tuesday science section to environmental topics (Stocking & Leonard, 1990). The rising coverage of the environment since the 1980s at least puts it on pace with news beats covering education and health, even though environmental reporting may not be as popular as news beats like politics and economics (Porritt, 1991).

However, in Asia, the significance of environmental reporting was acknowledged quite later compared to the American press. Similar to their counterparts in Africa and Latin America, environmental journalists in Asia have worked for more than a century to bring their scant resources to the complex problems of public health and natural resources, frequently when foreign forces impose their will on their own nations. The Asian Forum of Environmental Journalists, the first ever forum of reporters for this beat in this continent, was established in 1988 to improve journalists' environmental and scientific understanding and serve as a hub for the flow of environmental information across the continent (Shrestha, 1990). Recognizing the importance of environmental journalism, organizations like UNESCO are providing environment related journalism training in Asia. Still, the current situation is not safe enough for the journalists to report sensitive environmental issues (Hicks, 2023). According to several reports by United Nations, although local media sources report on natural disasters and climate change, they frequently concentrate on emergency situations, resulting in a dearth of diversity in sources and editorial capacity (UNESCO, 2023). In this sense, environmental journalism in South Asian nations is one of the least researched subjects in journalism studies and needs to be given the importance that it deserves.

3.2. Environmental journalism in South Asia

From Bangladesh's point of view, several studies have been conducted regarding the nature of environmental reporting in the country. However, most of them centered around measuring what kind of reports are usually published in newspapers. After analyzing 1119 news reports, a recent study showed that issues like climate change, pollutions, power plant, and environmental management get published in Bangladeshi newspapers (Al-Zaman & Khan, 2021). Ferdous and Khatun (2020) ended up with conclusion that environmental issues are mostly ignored in mainstream Bangladeshi print media, as they receive minimal coverage. Similar findings were also observed in another study, which explored that environmental issues are not covered sufficiently in local newspapers of Chittagong, Bangladesh (Hasan & Dutta, 2019). Rahmatullah et al. (2021) showed that nearly all (89.27%) of the environmental stories published in two local newspapers in Rangpur, Bangladesh, lacked in-depth research or analysis. However, none of these studies measured whether the reports were proactive or merely event based.

Similar situation was observed in other South Asian countries in terms of environmental news coverage. Babu and Sidiq (2017) demonstrated a decline in environmental news in Kashmir's local newspapers in India and declared that most of that reporting was just event-driven, rather than proactive. Several Pakistani scholars also displayed similar findings in their study, as they stated that print media coverage of environmental issues in Pakistan is mostly confined to event-based reporting like press briefings, weather forecasts, and people's protest against water crisis (Chhachhar et al., 2020). Even Pakistani environmental journalists themselves confessed that coverage of environmental issues is very low and poor, as they face several challenges while working (Ahmed et al., 2020). A study comparing the environmental news coverage of global north and south exhibited that the sociological dimension of climate change is the subject of a greater attention in countries from the Global South than in the Global North, which tends to concentrate more on the problems and effects of the phenomenon on society as a whole (Hase et al., 2021).

However, Boycoff et al. (2018) claimed contrasting findings, as they showed that reporting related to climate change and global warming has accelerated in India after 2007. Keller et al. (2020) also came up with similar results, as they showed that India has seen a significant growth in climate change coverage between 1997-2016. Alongside journalistic elements, numerous cultural, social, political, and economic elements influence how the media cover environmental stories and portray nature in India (Mishra, 2020). Mahapatra (2010) notes that since India's economic liberalization in 1991, the role of the environmental journalist has become more complex, and the environment as a public benefit is becoming less important as public acceptance of the new growing economic model.

3.3. Environmental journalism and the global press

The extent of media coverage and portrayal of climate change has displayed substantial variation among different nations (Anderson, 2009; Boykoff & Smith, 2010). Comparative research indicates that media coverage in the United States is distinguished by a greater emphasis on specific events and follows a cyclical pattern, whereas media in countries such as New Zealand, Finland, and France more frequently align with the scientific consensus on climate change (Dispensa & Brulle, 2003; Brossard et al., 2004). There has been a rise in the incorporation of celebrities in climate change narratives in the United States, United

Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (Boykoff & Goodman, 2009). Although this strategy effectively captures the audience's attention, it also strengthens the notion that responsibility for climate change and its remedies should be viewed on an individual basis (Brockington, 2009).

Environmental journalism has illuminated numerous critical issues in the Global South. A study analyzing 20 years of Indian newspaper's coverage of environmental reporting claimed that media coverage of climate change in India has increased substantially during the previous two decades. However, the authors also addressed the fact that India's media attention to climate change-related stories goes far below the average observed in other countries, which was roughly twice as high (Keller et al., 2020). The media coverage in India has shown an upward trend in frequency since the mid-2000s. Between September 2009 and March 2010, a total of 1938 climate stories were published, indicating a significant increase in media coverage during the COP-15 (Jogesh, 2012). However, prior research has indicated that the level of media coverage of global warming in India has been quite minimal when compared to other countries (Boykoff et al., 2018). In a study conducted by Schmidt et al. (2013), it emerged that the issue of climate change was mentioned in 0.28% of Indian newspaper stories from 1997 to 2009, whereas in comparison, the percentages were 0.55% in China, 0.67% in the US, 0.99% in the UK, and 1.42% in Australia.

Nevertheless, certain literature has pinpointed problems regarding the media's role in advocating environmental reporting. Okoro and Nnaji (2012) found that the print media tend to provide limited coverage of environmental pollution. Furthermore, they highlighted that items associated with environmental issues are commonly featured on the inside sections of newspapers, and despite a recent increase in coverage of environmental issues, the media still provide a limited and biased quantity of information on the subject. Hoerisch (2002) suggested that the range of environmental subjects should expand, and reporting should be beyond the mere emphasis on environmental issues that are prominent in the political sphere. After analyzing 358 news reports for over 5 years related to water and waste management in Columbia, McCombs et al. (2023) came up with the notion that the reports mostly emphasized the presence of environmental problems and the positive emotions associated with effective management approaches, rather than focusing on the impacts and solutions, which clearly show the lack of intention of reporters for proactive and solution-orientated reporting. However, opposite findings came up from the Canadian perspective, as the findings demonstrated that the number of news articles focused on ecological events or scientific discoveries has decreased over time in national newspapers in Canada, whereas articles centered around policy debate and potential solutions are on the rise (Young & Dugas, 2011; Stoddart et al., 2016)

Some authors argue that environmental reports need to be easy to read for general readers to comprehend, as they often comprise scientific data and explanations. As Friedman (2004) says, environmental news reports must include facts and a detailed explanation to be understandable. He also posits that many individuals rely on the media to stay informed due to their limited ability to read, evaluate, and analyze all the available information. Media help people learn about environmental issues beyond their direct exposure. Due to their poor comprehension of current events, especially those beyond their daily experiences, people seek information and interpretations from the media (Dutt et al., 2013). Environmental journalism necessitates the clear and comprehensible communication of usually sophisticated scientific information and technical advancements to the public. Science and environmental journalists need to possess both keen journalistic skills and a strong scientific

background to effectively report on and critically evaluate the findings of scientific research. Journalists can face adverse working conditions and frequently lack the requisite knowledge to address complex scientific issues (Fahy & Nisbet, 2011).

The coverage of the environment is influenced by both institutional and professional considerations. Amend and Secko (2012) highlighted that the commercialization of the media industry, unreliable sources, time constraints, and limited space for these stories are significant factors that impact environmental journalism. Editors exhibit apathy towards scientific issues, while newsroom colleagues fail to ignite inspiration or motivation in environmental and science writers. Furthermore, there is a scarcity of financial resources allocated to in-depth journalism and limited coverage in the media dedicated to scientific and environmental subjects (Lublinski et al., 2014).

4. Findings of the content analysis

Figure 1 depicts a total of 627 environment-related news was published in four sample newspapers. Out of those, 473 reports, which accounts for 75% of the reports, were reactive, while the rest 25% of stories, 154 to be specific, were identified as proactive reports.

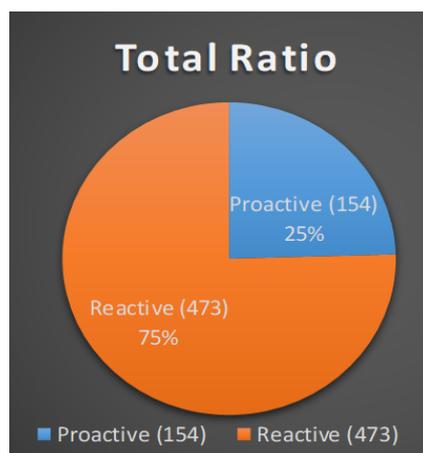


Figure 1. The entire proportion of environmental news within the data set

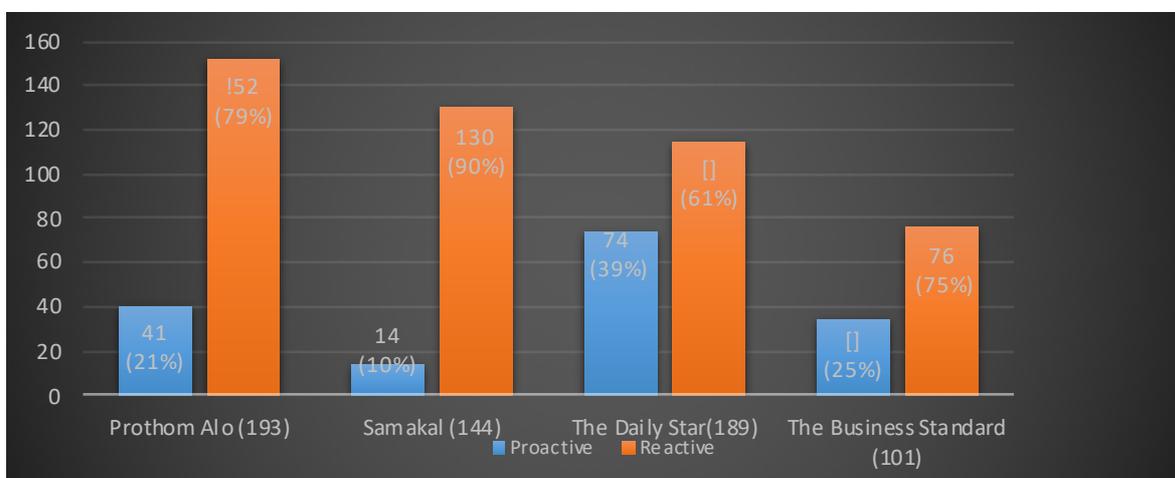


Figure 2. The identification of proactive and reactive news in the four newspapers

According to Figure 2, Prothom Alo published 41 proactive reports at a rate of 21%, whereas Samakal published only 14 at a rate of 10%. The Daily Star published the highest number of proactive reports, 74 to be specific, at a rate of 39%, and The Business Standard published 35 reports at a rate of 25%. Both the English dailies were active in publishing proactive reports compared to the Bengali dailies.

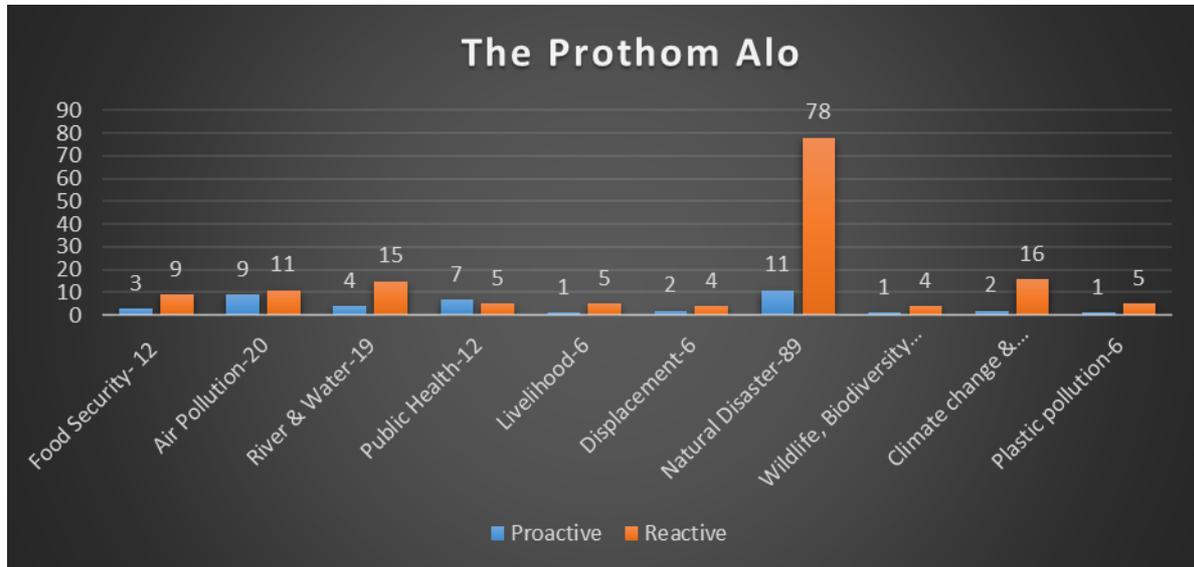


Figure 3. The news themes of The Prothom Alo

According to Figure 3, in terms of spreading proactive news, Prothom Alo has a very low impact. Rather, reactive news like natural disasters alone made headlines a total of seventy-eighth times. A total of fourteen proactive news was found among one hundred thirty news regarding the environment.

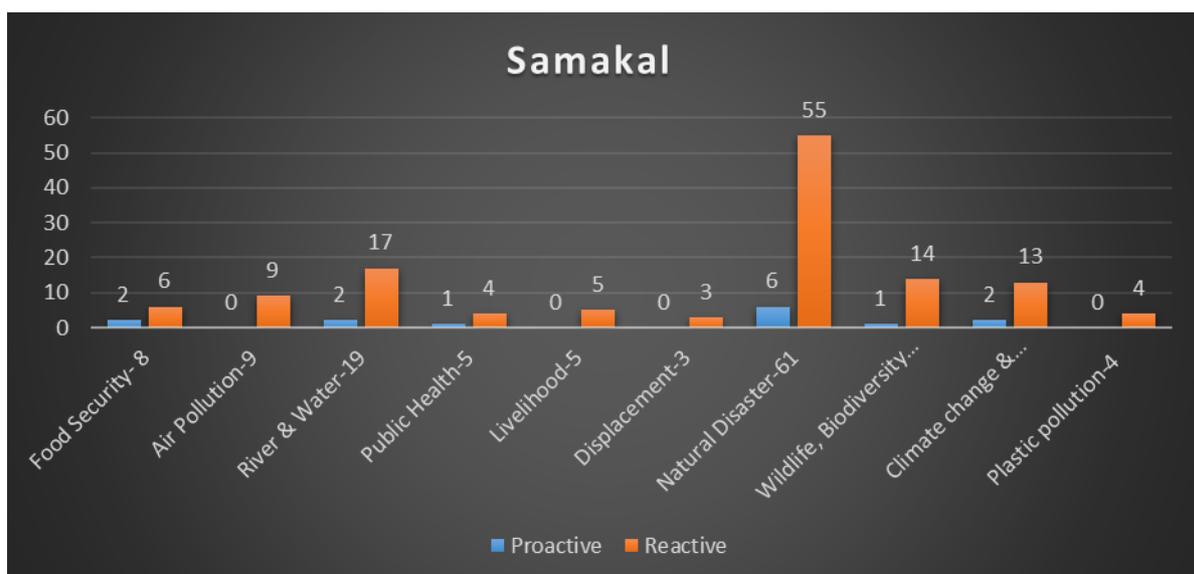


Figure 4. The news themes of The Samakal

Figure 4 shows that Samakal has the lowest number of published proactive news related to the environment, which totals fourteen news out of one hundred thirty news. It also has the lowest ratio of ten percent. Among reactive news, natural disasters hit the highest record.

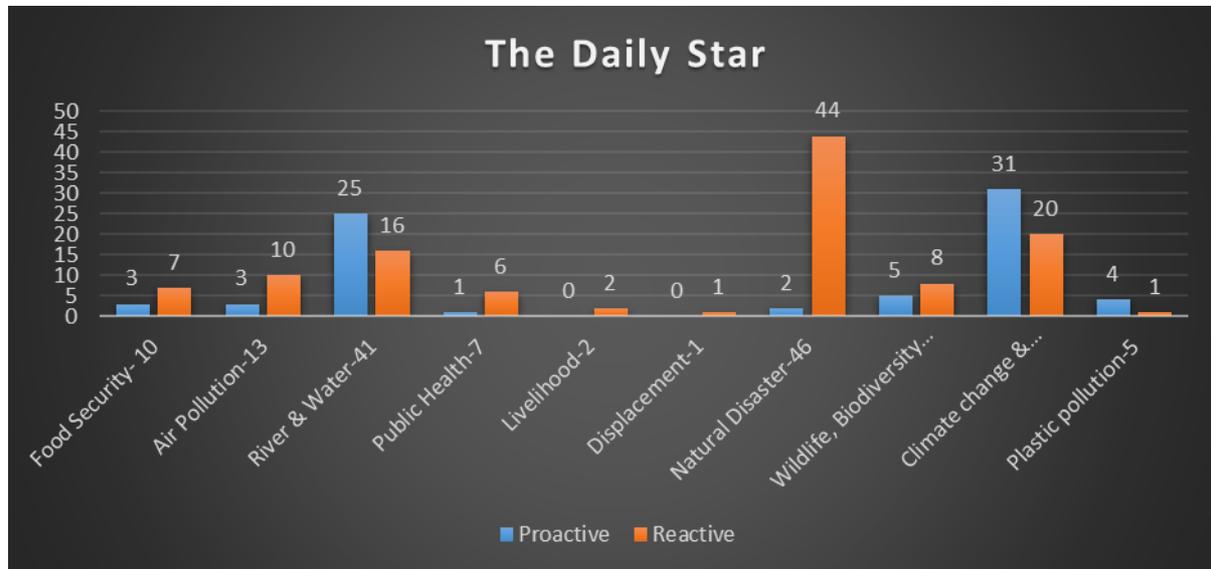


Figure 5. The news themes of The Daily Star

Figure 5 shows, of a total of 193 news related to the environment that the Daily Star has published, only 74 of them were proactive news. They showed specific interest in climate change and pollution of rivers and other water sources, as they published 31 and 25 proactive news in this category respectively.

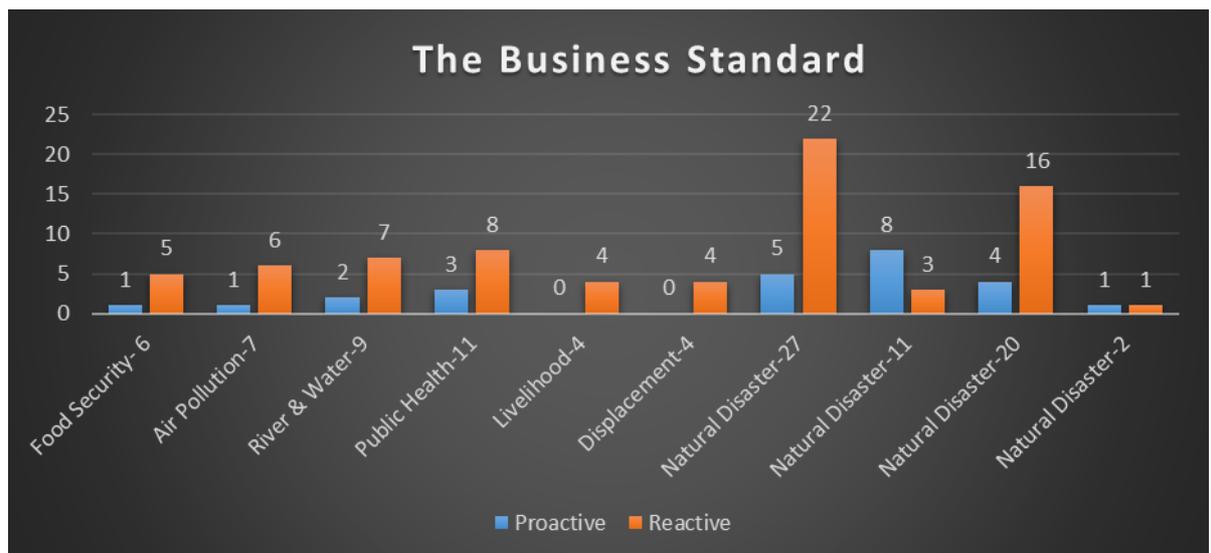


Figure 6. The news themes of The Business Standard

According to Figure 6, being a relatively new newspaper, the Business Standard published 35 proactive news. They put special emphasis on wildlife and biodiversity, as they published the highest 8 proactive news regarding this topic.

5. Substantial barriers to proactive environmental reporting

Bangladeshi print media dedicate separate pages or space for beats like sports, fashion, lifestyle, business and economy, and even religion. However, not a single newspaper has reserved space for regular environmental reporting, indicating that this environmental issue is perceived as a less important beat of reporting than others. As the findings show, Bangladeshi newspapers are still lagging in practicing proactive environmental reporting. At this point, in-depth interviews of six reporters who cover environment beat were conducted, to comprehend the trend more intensely. Interviews with journalists can be used to better understand how the routines of the media and organizational structures, as well as economic and political factors, affect the creation of news on the environment and climate change (Volkmer & Sharif, 2018).

When asked whether print media in Bangladesh give enough concentration towards environment beat, all of them gave negative responses. They also admitted that despite having plenty of scope and new ideas, reporters often do not go for proactive reporting. However, they directed to some points, which according to them, are substantial barriers to proactive environmental reporting in Bangladesh.

5.1. Lack of intention to promote quality environmental reporting

Every interviewee agreed on one thing, which indicated the value newsrooms place on the environment beat: neither the editorial board of newspapers nor newspaper policymakers have any plans to encourage proactive environmental reporting. The interviewees claim that while journalists are ready to write about more recent concerns that can raise public awareness, their superiors do not provide them with enough supports. One reporter talked about this while sharing his own experience. He prepared several recommendations on ways to prevent further contamination of the Buriganga River, one of Dhaka's most famous rivers. He proposed a story concept, but the concerned official declined to give him the 'green light' since they believed this series might not be as popular as other stories.

Another respondent expressed his desire to produce a special series of in-depth reporting on how the Sundarbans' mangrove trees are being impacted by the increasing salinity of the water. He had to spend a significant amount of time in the Sundarbans region to accomplish this. However, his office forbade him and advised him to spend his attention on more 'serious' problems.

5.2. Over-attention towards profit making

The media's excessive focus on profit-making rather than upholding their obligations to foster a better society was another recurring theme during the conversation. Since there is less interest in news about the environment, all the interviewees indirectly blamed the audience for the decline in environmental reporting. Because of this, those reports typically receive a lot fewer hits and views than others, such as those about sports, entertainment, or crime. To stay afloat in the cutthroat industry, all established publications today have an

internet presence. Because fewer clicks result in lower revenue, just like in the online edition, the editorial board is not willing to designate a specific page or space for environmental reports. Instead, they are more concerned with creating reports that satisfy the preferences and needs of their viewers. Despite this, they acknowledged that newspapers cannot escape their obligations because they must shape the attitudes and understanding of the public. Before expecting readers to become accustomed to reading environmental reports, newspapers must devote greater coverage to them.

5.3. Conflict of interest of media owners and advertisers

An interviewee also brought forward another intriguing viewpoint regarding the political economy of mass media. Influential industrial companies with a variety of other industries in addition to the media sector own most of the media organizations in Bangladesh. It has been noted that newspaper owners frequently have a conflict of interest because their other companies may in some way contribute to environmental damages. As it promotes their interests, they typically do not advocate for more proactive environmental reporting. Additionally, several politicians are frequently accused of wrongdoings relating to the environment, such as deforestation, illegal river sand mining, and river grabbing. While some of these have been the subject of in-depth reporting, most newspapers choose self-censorship and prevent reporters from going further. According to one of the respondents, large business organizations are frequently the primary suppliers of advertisements for newspapers. Owners are hesitant to post any news that is in the interests of the advertisement. These reports will probably be blocked if it is discovered that any of those advertisement groups have any connection to environmental fraud.

5.4. Lack of environmental and climate literacy among reporters

In Bangladesh, there is a dearth of environmental and climate knowledge among journalists. There was not much training offered by specific media outlets or associations or representative entities for journalists. One respondent raised the issue of journalists' general lack of scientific understanding, without which environmental stories are difficult to cover. Journalists who lack a scientific education must first comprehend issues before they can write about them. Journalists are required to conduct their studies even before meeting scientists. Understanding scientific concepts might benefit from training and instruction. He suggested that all the newspapers and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change should arrange fellowship programs, training sessions, seminars, and workshops to boost reporters' understanding of environmental reporting. Bangladesh Press Council may also adopt some collaborative measures to enhance environmental reporting skills.

5.5. Scarcity of Op-Eds and Expert Write-Ups

When asked about the scarcity of Op-Eds by environment experts in newspapers, one of the interviewees said that sometimes it gets tough to manage write-ups from experts due to their enormous busy schedules and commitment. However, the researchers believe that it fully depends on the alacrity of the editorial panel to manage expert write-ups. The editorial policy of newspapers plays a significant role here. Daily Star managed to publish several editorials and Op-Eds regularly, which reflects their readiness to adopt environmental reporting gravely. Both Daily Star and Prothom Alo are owned by the same group, Transcom

group, and as per the findings of content analysis, these two published the highest number of environmental reports. Considering the risk Bangladesh faces in terms of environmental hazards, and the aptitude of media to generate mass awareness, the editorial body of every newspaper should invest more time, space, and attention in environmental reporting.

6. Recommendations for editorial body of newspapers and policymakers

Despite the flourishing digital media, people still have deep faith in traditional media for acquiring authentic news. Given that newspapers can shape public awareness of environmental issues, this study suggests some recommendations for the editorial body and policymakers of newspapers, especially for the Bangladeshi media industry.

- a. The editorial panel must acknowledge the significance of proactive environmental reporting. Rather than publishing only reactive, conventional, day-to-day reports, they need to publish more in-depth and investigative reports, which will hold concerned authorities accountable, and at the same time increase public awareness. Editors may provide extra incentives to reporters who dedicatedly cover various environmental issues.
- b. A clear policy must be fixed and implemented regarding environmental reporting in every media house. There must be a fixed space in every day's newspaper for environment-related reports. Alongside this, publishing a minimum of 4 special in-depth, proactive reports each month should be mandatory, which will establish a trend of proactive reporting in Bangladesh.
- c. Every newspaper has a separate team of reporters for beats like crime, sports, entertainment, business and economy; but sadly, most of the newspapers do not have any specific environmental reporters' team. To promote effective reporting, every newspaper should form a team of environmental reporters, who will work together to explore new story ideas.
- d. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bangladesh Press Council, and newspaper organizations can collaborate and arrange workshops, seminars, and training sessions, which will motivate reporters to dig out more proactive stories about the environment.
- e. Reporters of other beats like sports, crime, and business have their associations, like the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association, and Economic Reporters Forum. However, there is no such forum for environment journalists, where they can share their unique ideas of stories, or collaboratively work for the betterment of environment and climate-based reporting. Senior environment reporters may think of forming such forums.

7. Conclusion

Environmental consciousness in developing nations like Bangladesh is a serious concern. Reducing environmental pollution is a serious challenge for Bangladesh, as the Global Environmental Performance Index (EPI) 2022 report showed that the country ranked 177th among 180 countries. The country slipped 15 steps backward in just 2 years (from 162nd to 177th), which indicates the constant worsening of the environmental situation in Bangladesh (The Financial Express, 2022).

Environmental awareness aids societal organizations and people in acquiring knowledge and sensitivity to the global environment and its associated issues. As the people of Bangladesh gain a great deal of knowledge through television, newspapers, and online portals, mass media can play a crucial role in increasing their awareness of environmental challenges, problems, eco-friendly technologies, laws, and policies, as well as the development aspects of the environment.

Despite the rapid rise of social media and peoples' daily reliance on it, most of them still rely on traditional media for authentic information. Therefore, media cannot bypass its noble duty of setting the agenda on environmental issues. Media has a huge role to play in fighting environmental challenges and making mass people more concerned about critical issues, like air, water, plastic pollution and deforestation. Deforestation, destruction of wetlands and inland fisheries, surface and groundwater pollution, coastal salinity intrusion, and natural calamities such as floods, cyclones, tidal surges, and tornadoes have resulted in severe socio-economic and environmental damage in Bangladesh. The current scenario necessitates mass media engagement to increase the effectiveness of government environmental laws, policies, strategies, and institutional capacity toward sustainable environmental development.

This study found that Bangladeshi print media lack of proactive environmental reports. Within the time-frame of this study, 75% of the news were reactive and only the rest 25% reports were proactive. In general, the English dailies were active in publishing proactive reports compared to the Bengali dailies. This study also identified some substantial barriers to proactive environmental reporting in Bangladesh, i.e. lack of intention to promote quality environmental reporting, over-attention towards profit making, conflict of interest of media owners and advertisers, lack of environmental and climate literacy among reporters, and scarcity of Op-Eds and Expert Write-Ups.

Lack of knowledge, which is at the core of the incorrect management and usage of natural resources, is one of the reasons for the pervasive environmental issues in a nation. Therefore, there remains a need to evaluate the role of the media in bringing about a positive change in the public's attitude. Covering only day events, or giving attention only when any environmental events happen, is not sufficient. Instead, media should produce content throughout the year which will help to increase public awareness of environmental issues. Therefore, this study advocated for a growing number of proactive environmental reporting. The current state of proactive reporting is not that satisfactory. However, newspaper organizations may take active steps to promote problem-solving and constructive environmental journalism.

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