

Victim blaming and character assassination: Media framing of controversial issues of Bangladesh

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Abstract

News framing plays a significant role in creating and diverting perceptions on controversial issues in Bangladesh. The study examines three selected occurrences involving renowned personalities to discover the factors that contribute to the sensationalization of news information. The research posits theme-based criteria that influence news framing and investigates how controversy spreads via conventional and internet media. According to the study, online news portals participate in more news framing than conventional media. Victim blaming and character assassination are frequent framing strategies utilized in the online domain. The framing factors include misleading headlines, improper wording, and distortion of context. Thematic analysis of the study finds nine variables responsible for framing disagreement in the media, three of which constitute a basic pattern for framing disputes. The study emphasizes the possibility of news framing interfering with an individual's personal and professional life, as well as the importance of responsible journalism that promotes factual reporting while avoiding framing elements that can lead to victim blaming, character assassination, and sensationalism. Overall, the study adds to the current literature on news framing by offering insights into the thematic factors that can greatly influence framing debate. The study's findings might be useful for media practitioners and policymakers in Bangladesh and abroad since they give a better knowledge of the mechanics of framing disputes in the media. The report also recommends more research on news framing and its influence on public perceptions and attitudes toward contentious subjects.

Keywords: Exaggeration, Misleading, Perception, Sensational, Shape

INTRODUCTION

The media is the primary source of all types of news in daily life. Individuals obtain news from a variety of sources, including print media (newspapers), electronic media (radio, television), and the very recent, digital media (Jiang and Liu, 2022). Digital media, more especially online media, has gained much more popularity than traditional media (Lamot, 2021; Husain et al., 2022;). Online media is designed to reach and interact with a wide number of people, is quick, and is a much more reliable source (Mbegani et al., 2023). On the other hand, another form of digital media, social media, has become a necessity as well as a major source of news (Hossain &

Haque 2023; Soetekow and Angelopoulos, 2022). Whether it's breaking news or brand-new information, social media is the first place to learn about it (Pelletier et al., 2020). People use computers, laptops, mobile devices (especially smartphones), and other intermediaries to search for and obtain news, but they first encounter it on social media (Parker, 2019).

Media can play a critical role in forming and molding thinking and improving societies (Abdullah et al., 2023). As time goes on, digital media (both online and social media) takes the obligation (Saurwien and Smith, 2020). As McLuhan previously called media as "extensions of man," online and social media can now be similarly described (Farrell 2022). But, sometimes, digital media is accused of framing and sensationalizing news to their liking (Xu et al., 2020; Starkey et al., 2019). Social scientists have sought to define media framing in a variety of ways, with some focusing on the delivery of news and others on its comprehension (Banker and Park, 2023).

The media frame is the way journalists build a news article to make it as accessible as possible to the widest possible audience (Temmerman and Mast 2020). The study of media frames examines how certain issues are framed in the news (Jacobson et al., 2021). Framing is an extremely effective method for defining and solving problems, as well as shaping public opinion (Rakai et al 2022). Journalists deliberately shape or arrange their depictions of political and social events in order to make them accessible to a large audience (Zhang et al., 2021). With the increasing reliance on social media platforms such as Twitter for news consumption, the majority of traditional and new-age media outlets are marketing their news pieces via posts on social media (Yegen and Mondal, 2021). Due to the struggle for user attention on such platforms, several media outlets have resorted to using snappy sensational tweets to increase user engagement (Bhargavan and Velasquez, 2020). In relation to Bangladesh, this is also accurate (Nova et al., 2019). It is evident that news items impact reality, therefore avoiding framing is likewise impracticable for any news industry (Chu, 2020).

The study will examine three incidents involving controversial issues or individuals to determine how the Bangladeshi media frames controversial issues and assassinates the characters of victims. It will analyze the use of frames in traditional and online news in Bangladesh in order to determine whether there are major differences between these media types. For that, it employs 'Framing Theory' as a theoretical framework for the findings. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data, the study investigates the media framing strategy of Bangladeshi media houses using a mixed-method approach

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "media" refers to the various modes of communication used to disseminate information to a large audience (Lin, 2022). It covers both classic forms of media like newspapers, magazines, television, and radio and newer digital forms like social media, blogs, podcasts, and streaming services (Duke et. al., 2023). The goal of the media is to inform, educate, entertain, and influence public opinion on a wide range of issues, from politics and economics to sports and entertainment (Sanusi et al., 2022).

Media is more accessible and pervasive than ever before in today's digital world. It has altered how individuals consume information and engage with one another (Lottridge et al., 2022). The advent of social media platforms has enabled users to generate and share material on a global scale, democratizing information flow and providing previously disadvantaged populations a voice (Ahmed 2022). This fast development of media, however, has raised worries about false news, propaganda, and the weakening of established journalistic norms (Amadu; Mumuni and Chentiba 2023).

The way news stories are presented to the public, including the language, tone, and context used to deliver information, is referred to as news media framing (Card et al., 2022). By stressing certain parts of a narrative while downplaying or disregarding others, framing may influence how people understand and respond to news (Ricciardelliet al., 2023). A multitude of variables can impact news media framing, including the news outlet's political leanings, the preferences of the intended audience, and the prejudices of individual journalists (Curinial., 2023). Framing can take numerous forms, such as emphasizing certain lines or sound bites, employing

emotive language to elicit a specific response, or situating a narrative within a wider social or political framework (Zhu, 2023). Critics of news media framing claim that by stressing certain parts of a story while downplaying or disregarding others, it can lead to a misleading or incomplete understanding of events (Koehn, 2023). However, proponents of framing argue that by emphasizing the most important aspects of a story and placing them in a larger context, it can provide important context and help people make sense of complex events (Arowolo, 2023).

Victim blaming is a phenomenon in which the victim of a crime or a societal problem is blamed for the transgression rather than the offender (Hill et al.; 2023). According to the research on victim blaming, it is a widespread social and cultural practice, particularly in nations where gender inequality and discrimination are pervasive (Manzoor and Saleem, 2023). Victim blaming is a frequent practice in Bangladesh, particularly in situations of sexual harassment and assault (Nazneen and Huq, 2023). On the other hand, the deliberate attempt to ruin a person's reputation or credibility by distributing false or negative information about them is referred to as character assassination (House, 2023). According to the literature on character assassination, it is a prevalent tactic in politics, journalism, and social media, notably during smear campaigns and political mudslinging (Smart, 2019).

According to studies, news frames may impact or even transform the views of audiences/readers (Latham, 2000; Nisbet, 2009). Golinski and Wilhelm (2022) published systematic research about how news frames of print media impact mass audiences' perceptions. Within the study, 187 undergraduate students assessed their retention and judgments of the information provided within the stories and expressed if certain news frames might influence them highly.

While those who had recently finished reading a story defined in terms of conflict were generally more likely to express precise conflict-related sentiments, and those who had recently finished reading a piece of writing defined in terms of economic consequences placed a greater emphasis on emotional responses and individual implications through the feedback. Their study supports an earlier hypothesis that consumers get highly influenced by how the story is written. In a similar kind of study, Golinski and Wilhelm (2022) quote, "Frames are found to play a substantial influence in readers' thought-listing feedback, and they define how readers are being presented information pertaining to both specific issues."

Not only print media, but digital media also concentrates on the hyped specific incidents and then makes meaning for audiences through framing (Gul et al., 2020). Hutchins and Rowe (2012) conducted a study on how temporarily trending news coverage creates a short-time hype on digital media. This study was conducted on two popular social sites. One is an online news portal site (nytimes.com) and the other is a social networking site (twitter.com). They made a concerted effort to include both qualitative and quantitative analysis and demonstrated that online news sites emphasize recent news and top stories over important and relevant news. Different top news stories are shown at different times of the day, depending on when the majority of users interested in that topic browse the social media site the most. That is why the top news in the morning is so different from the top news in the other parts of the day and the consumers only pay attention to the most highlighted news of that time.

Although some research had been published in Bangladesh, it wasn't quite the stakeholder-focused narrative that was prevalent in the media. Sheikh Mohammad Shafiul Islam (2016) published a research paper about how the television media covers the news of power holders in a country in a biased way.

Many researchers have done studies on how contemporary online news media portrays online shaming, but hardly in the context of Bangladesh. S.R. Muir et al. (2023) published qualitative research on how online media perceives social policing and online shaming on the internet. After evaluating 69 online news articles concerning online shaming, the study concluded two overarching representations of online shaming. A dominant narrative framing suggests online shaming is a dangerous threat with severe consequences. A secondary counter frame represents online shaming as a constructive way of resulting in positive outcomes. Overall, the study did not put the construction of online shaming in a position of exclusively good or bad.

Instead of identifying the root causes of victim blaming and media framing of controversial issues, the majority of research studies emphasized more on the framings impact on the audience. The current study thus

aimed to comprehend the media framing tendency on controversial matters that have become the discussion of the country against the framework of traditional versus online media journalism in Bangladesh.

RESEARCH GAP

Significant research gap is evident in the case of pointing factors that make media framing lucrative for the consumers. This research will try to uncover the aspects that determine media framing. Moreover, there is a lack of literature that introduces how controversies are framed in the media. It is a matter of inspecting how a controversial issue generates a lot more controversial issues and what is the role of the media in this case. Again, intensive research is needed to figure out how media houses use these controversies to maximize their coverage as well as their analysis pattern to controversial issues. Lastly, no research paper is found to date focusing on the elements of spreading controversy via the media. This paper aims to find out the missing blocks of the research arena related to the framing of controversy via the media in a brief way.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the research is to examine three incidents involving controversial issues or individuals to determine how the Bangladeshi media frames controversial issues and assassinates the characters of victims. It will also explore to meet the following objectives:

- a. To analyze the use of frames in traditional and online news in Bangladesh in order to determine whether there are major differences between these media types
- b. To find out how Media make the content more sensational by adding sensational framing elements in the news

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are as follows:

1. How does the media (online and traditional) cover stories about controversial persons?
2. Which media (traditional and online) uses more variety of framing on controversial issues?
3. What are the key elements/ indicators used to frame a concerned person by the media?

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyze the research, framing theory has been taken as the theoretical framework of the study of how media frames controversial issues and the associated personals.

The term “framing theory” wasn’t coined until Erving Goffman first explained it. It is vital to discuss framing theory in order to have an understanding of the function that Bangla blogs serve in promoting religious pluralism. The field of cognitive psychology, which is now known as social science, was the one that first established the framing theory in the 1970s. Erving Goffman was the person responsible for reintroducing the concept of framing into the field of sociology (Williams, 1986).

The concept of defining an agenda and creating an agenda is tied to the concept of framing, which broadens the scope of the research by concentrating on the core of the issues at hand rather than on a particular topic (Arowolo, 2017). The idea that the media focuses attention on specific occurrences and then positions those events within a sphere of meaning provides the foundation for the framing theory. The primary idea behind the framing theory is that some events are brought to people’s notice by the media, which then represents those events by giving them a meaning-based context. Because it has the power to affect outcomes, framing is an important subject to understand. (Ashfaq et al., 2022)

One way of thinking of frames is as object attributions, while another way of thinking of framing is as a

choice of attributes (Yan, 2019). The media not only contributes to the formation of preconceptions by itself but also furthers the development of those that have already been established. According to David Tewksbury and Dietram A. Scheufele (2019), in order for writers to effectively communicate their ideas through news framing, they are required to arrange “arguments, facts, symbols, metaphors, and images” in a particular way. The way in which the information “s organized creates a flow of logic that enables”the reader to connect with the underlying meaning of the material.

The presentation of something to an audience and ho“ that presentation can affect the decisions that “the audience makes regarding how to digest particular information is the primary focus of framing theory. The presentation of something to an audience is the second fundamental emphasis of framing theory. According to Snow et al., (1986), the concepts that aid in organizing the meaning of a communication are referred to as frames, and they play a significant part in this process. It is important to use this concept in the context of a study of framed advertisements placed on the information that they represent. They can have an effect on how the audience perceives the advertisement, and in this context, it could be “interpreted as a form of second level agenda-setting, which is to say that it doesn’t just inform the audience what to think about; rather, it also instructs them on how they should think about that particular issue. In other words, it doesn’t just tell the audience what they should be thinking about; rather, it instructs them on how they should be thinking about that particular subject (Snow et al.,1986).

For this research, the study is following the Framing Theory. Media not only conceptualizes preconceptions by itself but also feeds into what is already being written on. According to David Tewksbury and Dietram A. Scheufele (2009), news framing requires reporters to arrange “arguments, facts, symbols, metaphors, and images” in a specific way to communicate their ideas (p. 19). They argue that a reporter should be able to add additional information or figures to reinforce their message. A strong frame, on the other hand, does not need as much reinforcement since it is based on pre-existing principles and values. A single word can often shift a reader’s viewpoint on a topic in an article (pp 19-20). The organization of information provides a logical flow that allows the reader to connect with the underlying meaning. This research assumes that journalists or media platforms unavoidably frame or structure their representations of controversial or sensational events to make them more controversial to a large audience.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

The study employs a mixed method approach, including qualitative and quantitative data, to investigate the media framing strategy of Bangladeshi media houses. To conduct the study a content analysis method is used with the systematic probability sampling technique. The study was divided into three sections. In the first phase, it examines ten different news frames in order to assess three distinct controversial incidents involving controversial issues and individuals in both traditional and online media. A total of 38 online news stories have been analyzed. In order to compare the online news articles with the traditional media, for each incident, two months of the time period has been taken for the traditional media. In the 2nd phase, a comparative analysis has been conducted between online and offline to determine the major framing difference between these media types. In the third phase, by the findings and comparative analysis, a thematic analysis has been conducted for understanding the way of framing and the use of framing elements.

CODING

Table-01

The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics of news frames used in the news story. Also, to analyze the news framing used to cover sensitive themes involving important individuals.

The study examines ten different news frames in order to assess three distinct controversial incidents involving concerned individuals in both traditional and online media. These frames include headlines, photos, language, and a focus on the facts and so on. These frames are utilized to code the news report for each incident.

No	Frame Name	Indicator / Description of the frame
1.	Headline	Title of the news that gives a general idea of the entire story (the study measures that whether the headline gives a glimpse of the entire story or not)
2.	Image	Photo according to the story (the study indicates whether the picture is relevant to the story or not)
3.	Language	Whether the story is written by following journalistic ethics
4.	Focus on the Fact	Highlight the main incidents
5.	Representation	The news presents the actual angle of the story or not
6.	Personal Life & Social Life	Whether the news includes personal & social information of the personals according to story need
7.	Biasness	Whether the news narrates the actual angle of the story or not
9.	Portrayal of Gender	Regardless of social norms and values, if the news has gender neutrality
9.	Cultural Norms	Whether the story upholds the societal behavior patterns

Table-02

The analysis has three separate incidents involving well-known people. These incidents involve people like Porimoni (actress) , Nasir Hussain (cricketer), Munia (alleged girlfriend of a wealthy and leading influential persona of Bangladesh) and so on. This study explores three contentious issues and how they are portrayed in the media.

Each story was categorized according to the defined frames, allowing this assessment to determine how traditional and online media outlets report news items and frame these incidents.

No	Incident Name	Description
01	Porimoni	<p>Porimoni has been investigated by the RAB for narcotics crimes. The study has been working on 14 online news stories and comparing them against two months (August-September) of traditional media (newspaper)</p> <p>Online Portal; Jugantor - 7 News, Kaler Kantha - 7 news (Total 14)</p> <p>Traditional Media (Kaler Kantha, Daily Ittefaq)-15 news (2 months)</p>
02	Nasir- Tamima	<p>Case against cricketer Nasir & his wife.</p> <p>The study has been working on 7 different online news articles and comparing them against two months (February - March) of traditional newspapers.</p> <p>Online Portal; Jugantor - 7 News, Kaler Kantha - 7 news (Total 14)</p> <p>Traditional Media (Kaler Kantha, Daily Ittefaq)-1 news (two months)</p>

No	Incident Name	Description
03	Munia's Death	<p>A wealthy influential persona of Bangladesh was alleged for Munia's murder case.</p> <p>The study has been working on 16 news stories and comparing them against two months (April-May) of traditional newspapers.</p> <p>Online Portal; Jugantor - 8 News, Rtv Online- 8 news (Total 16)</p> <p>Traditional Media (Kaler Kantha, Daily Ittefaq)- 02 (Two months)</p>

FINDINGS

The study of selected incidents involving the actress Porimoni, the cricketer Nasir, and Mosarat Jahan Munia reveals that both online and traditional media exploited information on personal life, social life, and language to frame news stories. In these stories, image and gender bias were also big factors, while the headlines primarily represented the character in question. In terms of the overall analysis, 79% of online news portals presented stories in a manner that led to victim blaming and character assassination. According to the thematic analysis of framing incidents in online media, misleading headlines are the most prevalent framing element used to stimulate curiosity and instill prejudice against renowned individuals. At the same time, the use of inappropriate language, misrepresentation of contexts, concentration on irrelevant information, gender bias and sexism against women, and the use of personal and social life information has been employed by online media in the absence of facts and analyses of the situation in order to frame news.

Incident 01: Pori Moni

The first incident demonstrates the media coverage of Bangladeshi film Actress Shamsunnahar Smrity (Pori Moni) who has been interrogated by the RAB for narcotics crimes. This analytical data was collected from various online news portals and traditional newspapers based on 09 different framing elements. The data is presented from 2 months (August-September) of 2021 comparing the two mediums' (online and offline) news articles. There was a total of 14 news articles from online news portals whereas the traditional media had published 15 new articles. The prevalent frames were headline, the portrayal of gender, representation, cultural norms, absence of focus on the fact, image, and personal & social life. Most news stories were framed based on personal life, social life, and language framing elements.

The framing elements that were found in Jugantor and Kaler Kantho online news portals, It gives a clear idea of which framing elements are found the most in this kind of news to make this controversial and sensational. In Jugantor's online news portal, 'Headline' as a framing element has been found in 6 news articles. In the Kaler Kantha, the number of framed Headlines is 4. Both of the news portals used 'Image' as a framing element to make the Pori Moni case eaten by the readers negatively and the number is two. In Jugantor, framing element language is used for one, and in the Kaler Kantha 'Language' is used for three. In Jugantor 'Focus point' is used for one, 'Representation' and 'personal and social life' is used for two. In the Kaler Kantho, 'focus fact' is used for three, 'personal and social life' is used for two, and 'Gender Portrayal' and 'Cultural norms' both are used for one. This is how Jugantar and Kaler Kantho made the case of Porimoni more controversial by using those elements and framing the news.

The analysis shows the framing elements that were found in The Daily Ittefaq and Kaler Kantho traditional news portals. In The Daily Ittefaq, they framed their news and created controversy by using 'Language' for three, 'Image' for two, 'Focus fact' for one, and 'Personal and Social life' for four. On the other hand, in The Kaler Kantho used elements as follows to create sensational news by using 'Headline', 'Representation', 'Personal and social life', and 'Gender portrayal' for one. It gives a clear idea of which framing elements are found the most in this kind of controversial news. In The Daily Ittefaq, 'Personal & Social Life' as a framing element has been found in 4 news articles.

Incident 02: Nasir Hossain and Tamima

Incident 2 reveals the media portrayal of the issue of the adultery case against Bangladeshi cricketer Nasir Hossain regarding his marriage to Tamima Sultana. Based on nine different framing elements, this analytical data was gathered from “Jugantor and Kaler Kantho” online news portals and “Kaler Kantha and The Daily Ittefaq” newspapers. This analysis compares the two mediums’ news pieces for two months (February- March) in 2021. There were 14 new articles published by online news portals, compared to 1 new story published by traditional media. On the other hand, in the traditional form of news media, The Daily Ittefaq newspaper did not publish any news. Kaler Kantho newspaper published 1 news story in two months. That 1 news article was framed using a personal life framing element.

According to the collected data, 14 online and 1 traditional news story about the second incident were discovered.

The analysis shows the framing elements that were found in Jugantor and Kaler Kantho online news portals. In Jugantor, they used elements as follows for the controversy by using ‘Headline’ for three, ‘Image’ for two, ‘Language’ for four, ‘Focus fact’, ‘Representation’, ‘Personal and social life’ and ‘Gender portrayal’ for one. On the other hand in Kaler Kantha, they used elements as follows to make their news framed controversial by using ‘Headline’, and ‘Image’ both for four. ‘Language’ for two and ‘Focus fact’ for five articles. It gives a clear idea of which framing elements are found the most in this kind of news. In Jugantor’s online news portal, ‘Language’ as a framing element has been found in 4 news articles. In Kaler Kantha, the absence of “focus on the fact” has been found as the highest framing element.

The analysis depicts the framing components seen in the conventional news portals The Daily Ittefaq and Kaler Kantho. It clearly shows which framing components are rarely encountered in this type of news. There was no framed news in The Daily Ittefaq. On the other hand, the only framing element used in Kaler Kantha is personal and social life for framing the news more dramatically and roasted.

Incident 3: Mosarat Jahan Munia

Incident 3 shows the media coverage of Mosarat Jahan Munia’s Murder case. In this issue, a case was filed against a influential wealthy personality of Bangladesh for instigating suicide. The data was collected from Jugantor and Rtv online news portals, and Kaler Kantha and The Daily Ittefaq newspapers based on 9 different framing elements. This analysis includes a data presentation of 2 months (April-May) of 2021 comparing the two mediums’ (online and offline) news articles. There were a total of 16 news articles from the online news portals whereas the traditional news media had published only 2 news articles. The analysis reveals that there were 16 online and 1 conventional news story about the third occurrence.

The analysis depicts the framing components discovered in the online news portals Jugantor and Kaler Kantho. In Jugantor, ‘Headline’, and ‘Language’ both are used in two articles. ‘Personal and social life’ is used in three and ‘Biasness’ is used in four articles to make their news sensational, controversial, and spicy for the readers. In RTV online, ‘Headline’ is used in four articles, ‘Language’ is used in two, and ‘Focus on the fact’ is used in six articles. ‘Representation’, and ‘Gender portrayal’ both are used in one article. ‘Personal and social life’ and ‘Biases’ were used for three articles for the same purpose as Jugantor. It shows which framing components are most common in this type of news. ‘Biasness’ as a framing element has been detected in four news pieces on the Jugantor online news portal. The absence of “emphasis on the fact” has been identified as the highest framing factor in Kaler Kantha, which is 06.

The analysis depicts the framing components seen in the conventional news portals The Daily Ittefaq and Kaler Kantho. It clearly shows which framing components are rarely encountered in this type of news. There was no framed news in The Daily Ittefaq. On the other hand, in Kaler Kontho, representation, and cultural norms have been used as the most important framing elements to frame this news as controversial and victim empathetic.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

According to the report, about 80% of framed news came from online news portals, while only 21% came from traditional news portals. As a result, the study only chose the news of online portals for thematic analysis, because the news of an online portal contained the most framing elements.

Most of the framing elements are present in online news articles. The following thematic analysis would help to understand the news by analyzing the elements like texts, language, and headlines more precisely.

Misleading Headlines

While there have been three occurrences involving Porimoni, Nasir-Tamima, and Mosarat Jahan Munia, false headlines have been the most prominent and most typical framing of the stories. There is a general pattern to all of the headlines. News items with deceptive headlines often contain entirely legitimate news bodies that convey accurate information. The headlines do not correspond to the content of the article in any way; rather, they provide the readers with an entirely different impression.

On February 23, 2021, the newspaper 'Jugantor' published a story with a headline claiming that Tamima (Cricketer Nasir's wife) had been living with another man for six months prior to her marriage to Nasir, who is a cricketer. The headline reads, "Tamima had been with another man for six months before she married Nasir!" However, the entire article is devoted to Tamima's introduction and offers no information about her ex-husband or other family members. The title that directs the reader's attention to a third unknown individual is completely absent from the news coverage. Another piece of news from 'Jugantor' about Porimoni, published on the 24th of June, 2021, had an odd heading. According to the translation into English, "Porimoni smacks macho men who make moaning sounds during recording" is what the sentence means. However, the report itself was about a Facebook status that Porimoni had posted.

Online newspapers tend to put headlines that are not related to the content. These headlines are accountable for stimulating curiosity and creating unwarranted judgments on renowned individuals

Use of Inappropriate Language

The vast majority of online news portals do not adhere to the fundamental rules of writing in a formal language. When it comes to newspaper headlines, the use of problematic terms is most prevalent. The media will spotlight and make a big deal out of any sexist remarks about a female that has been broadcast. For example, 'Shabana is a well-mannered lady, whereas Parimani is simply a woman' (Jugantor, 12 August 2021), "Her (Porimoni's) work is to go to the club after 12 o'clock at night" (Jugantor, 12 August 2021).

The 'Kaler Kantha' online news portal published a news story on February 20, 2021, with the headline, "Tamima marries Nasir, abandoning her husband and children at the instigation of an ambitious mother." The article, which contained no supporting evidence, portrayed Tamima's mother as a villain by employing problematic words such as 'highly ambitious,' 'greedy,' and so on.

On April 27, 2021, the RTV internet portal released news about Munia's suicide attempt. The headline read: 'The young lady's apartment rents for one lakh taka per month, according to the response of Facebook readers. The story includes reader reactions to the suicide as expressed through Facebook comments. They were published regardless of whether or not the comments were written in a professional manner. One or more of the hate comments contained derogatory language directed at the deceased; others were victim-blaming or even swearing in nature.

From headlines to body copy, the use of incorrect language in internet news items appears to be widespread.

Overall Misrepresentation

How each online news site represents the news's perspective is one of the first things that sticks out among all of the framed news on various websites. The news was contextualized with gender, facts, personal and societal life, and an image. Such framed pieces have appeared on prominent online news websites like The Daily Jugantar and Kaler Kantho. The majority of framed news involves extraneous details, visuals inflated personal or social

lives, and a biased representation of gender. Two online news sites were investigated in relation to three dramatic situations involving the most prominent and well-known individuals in Bangladesh.

a. *Not Concentrated on The Fact*

Focusing on the news-related facts is significantly more important in a news article. It becomes a news piece when the facts are transformed into irrelevant material. When the news of the three instances is reviewed, it is discovered that the majority of the news is inaccurate and has strayed far from the key facts. Porimoni, Nasir-Tamima, and Mosarat Jahan Munia, are not included in the majority of the news articles. In Porimoni's case, for instance, she was detained for carrying illicit narcotics and alcohol, but the majority of the articles overlooked these facts and instead concentrated on irrelevant information, such as whether she is married or not, whether she has a partner, and so on.

The quantitative study illustrates the extent to which news is derived from primary facts. These well-known online news portals should prioritize delivering vital facts above offering irrelevant information.

b. *Representation of Gender:*

Gender representation in Bangladesh has always been skewed, although gender plays a significant role in news stories, particularly online media aiming to reflect gender from a societal standpoint. Gender inequality was one of the most prominent topics in the news. Ironically, women appear to be the sole victims of sexism, as they are frequently portrayed adversely in internet media.

In these news items, web portals' gender bias has portrayed Porimoni, Nasir-Tamima, and Mosarat Jahan Munia in various ways. For instance, Munia was the victim but she was portrayed negatively by the web media. In the lack of concrete evidence, numerous online media outlets questioned why a girl of her age was living alone, her relationship with a married persona, and even her personality. According to statistical analysis, the majority of news has a gender bias because the instances involve Bangladeshi celebrities.

c. *Personal & Social life:*

The strategy for framing internet news pieces is to illustrate them with personal and societal events. The personal and social lives of the individuals involved in the incident have been exaggerated in all online news sources. They also employ absolutely irrelevant clickbait images. As evidenced by the three cases under inquiry, certain news articles incorrectly characterize the personal and social lives of individuals. Personal and social aspects of Porimoni's life have been brought into a clearer perspective as a result. Similar events occurred in the other two events.

d. *Image:*

Image representation is yet another essential part of news analysis. There are visuals in the news that have no relation to the matter at hand. Tamima's daughter's image was published in the press in the Nasir-Tamima case, with the child's face not obscured. Munia's alleged murderer's face was obscured in online media, however, Munia's face was not obscured. In Porimoni's case, they also used provocative photographs of Porimoni.

In the online news articles, each event could be described in a variety of ways. According to the study, facts, visuals, and personal and social life are overemphasized in the framed news.

DISCUSSION

The present study aims to investigate the role of news framing in the creation and diversion of perceptions on a specific event or topic. While existing literature highlights the potential for news framing to cultivate a culture of misinformation, it lacks a clear explanation of how news framing can directly interfere with an individual's personal and professional life. Therefore, this research endeavors to identify the components and patterns associated with news framing and explore the psychological dynamics behind framing news.

To achieve this objective, the study proposes specific theme-based factors that contribute to news framing and examines the ways in which controversy spreads through media. The first objective of the study is to compare

news framing in traditional and online news media in Bangladesh and determine if there are any significant differences between these two forms of media. The study finds that online news portals engage in news framing at a higher rate than traditional media and that victim blaming and character assassination are the common tools for news framing in the online sphere. Furthermore, misleading headlines are a framing element used in both traditional and online news media, with victim blaming and character assassination being more prevalent in the latter.

The second objective of the study is to identify the elements that make news content more sensational. Through analyzing selected incidents involving prominent individuals, such as Porimoni, Nasir Hossain, and Mosarat Jahan Munia, the study reveals that the portrayal of gender division and representation of politics are among the factors that make news content sensational. The study finds that both online and traditional media exploit information on personal life, social life, and language to frame news stories, with image and gender bias being significant factors. In terms of the overall analysis, the study finds that 79% of online news portals present stories in a manner that leads to victim blaming and character assassination.

The study's thematic analysis identifies nine elements responsible for framing controversy in the media, with three elements forming a basic pattern for framing controversy. The study finds that misleading headlines and the use of inappropriate language are impactful framing elements that can stimulate curiosity, instill prejudice against renowned individuals, and distract people while creating confusion. Misrepresentation of context is another powerful framing element that can fuel controversy by interpreting a subject or incident wrongly, leading to the creation of multidimensional controversial issues.

Finally, the study contributes to the existing literature on news framing by providing insights into the thematic aspects that can create a ground for framing a controversy strongly. The study highlights the potential for news framing to interfere with an individual's personal and professional life and identifies the elements that contribute to making news content sensational. The findings of the study can be valuable for media practitioners and policymakers in Bangladesh and beyond, as they provide a better understanding of the dynamics of framing controversy in the media.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research on "Victim Blaming and Character Assassination: Media Framing of Controversial Issues in Bangladesh" emphasizes the importance of news framing in shaping public perceptions of controversial issues in the country. According to the research, online news portals participate in more news framing than conventional media, and victim blaming and character assassination are frequent framing strategies utilized in the online domain. The research underlines the necessity of ethical journalism, which avoids framing aspects that might lead to victim blaming, character assassination, and sensationalism. The findings of this study add to the current knowledge on news framing, victim blaming, and character assassination, and they give useful insights for practitioners. It highlights the necessity of ethical journalism, which avoids framing factors that might lead to victim blaming, character assassination, and sensationalism. The study's findings emphasize the importance of media practitioners promoting truthful reporting and avoiding activities that damage media credibility and interfere with individuals' personal and professional life. Moreover, it gives a better understanding of the mechanics of media framing controversies and can assist guide attempts to adopt more responsible media practices that encourage openness and accuracy in reporting. Furthermore, the findings of the study call for additional research on news framing and its impact on public perceptions and attitudes toward controversial issues.

Overall, this research emphasizes the significance of responsible journalism in encouraging transparency and accuracy in media coverage. It stresses the need of avoiding framing aspects that might lead to victim blaming, character assassination, and sensationalism, as well as the study's results' potential relevance in guiding media practices and government efforts aimed at fostering more responsible journalism.

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