Framing economic crisis: Newspaper coverage during COVID-19 in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study examines how Bangladeshi media frame the economic uncertainty of coronavirus (COVID-19) to understand the absolute scenario of an economic crisis or a disaster through the dominant frames. When keeping people constantly informed through the message of the media, the most important matter is not what is portrayed, but how it is portrayed. Using the content analysis approach, the author intends to analyze a total of 296 editorials and op-ed items in *The Prothom Alo, The Daily Star,* and *The Financial Express* from March 26 to August 3, 2020. Using the 'Media framing theory', six major frames are used to analyze the data. This article finds out that 'crisis' and 'fear' frames dominated the media coverage of the pandemic. Based on the linguistic analysis, this paper also finds that the economic issues of COVID-19 have been over-focused, in some cases the newspapers sidelined the focus from 'health crisis' to 'national economic crisis'. The language of the coverage of economic contents combines hope, human issues, frustration, and social responsibility at varied proportions. The article suggests that the media could mitigate the crisis by not politicizing the economic issues; rather the journalists should focus on highlighting the solution to surpass the economic crisis and help the authority to implement proper policies for keeping the country's economic conditions safe.

Keywords

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Introduction

The global coronavirus pandemic has challenged the entire world to face one of the most critical periods in its economic history. After the detection of the new virus in Wuhan, China, the coronavirus has been transmitted in 213 countries and territories (Worldometer, 2021) causing a serious economic crisis to the global economy. Besides, the worldwide lockdown has resulted in a serious downturn in the low-income countries and threatened to jeopardize the continuous economic advancement as the pandemic caused 4.9% downfall to the GDP in 2020 and the IMF has counted the economic 'crisis like no other' before ('COVID-19 sparks global', 2020). The emergency situation caused business shutdown and staying at home made the financial activity stop. A recent study has found the public to identify the coronavirus as a huge threat to the economy than that of their health (Oliver, 2020). As a least developed country (LDC), Bangladesh started to face a worldwide economic downturn, and very soon, the country's economic aspiration went on hold. After the enforcement of the countrywide lockdown from 26 March 2020, working people, as well as business industries across the country, seemed to go under economic threat. Understanding the upcoming economic crisis, the government announced on 26 March a total of $600 million stimulus package for supporting the export-oriented industries (Mahmood, 2020). And from that media tries to highlight the overall economic effects more importantly through continuous writings, as it always does the same to construct the view of mass people through its writings about any pandemic situation (Hoque & Siddique, 2020). Therefore, print media continue to play a crucial role by presenting the information to the mass people (Kuppuswamy, 2017). In Bangladesh, after the detection of the first COVID cases, the newspapers began to cover the latest news and thoughts of experts on economic issues. For example, a *Business Standard* story (2020) under the title 'COVID-19 and its impact on Bangladesh economy' gave an evidence of how difficult the country's situation would have been if the lockdown had enforced for a longer period. The story said that Bangladesh could have to face an economic downturn as the pandemic had been going to hit all the sectors of the country. *DW* (2020) also delivered a story under the title 'Coronavirus: Economy down, poverty up in Bangladesh'. In the story, the media admitted that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more people were going down the extreme poverty line. Moreover, the export industries, particularly the garments and textile sectors shut down and as result, the production reduced. The downturn of remittance value has also created a serious challenge to the economic growth of Bangladesh. Despite the impact of COVID-19 on the country's economic activities, studies on the

impact of COVID-19 on the economy, particularly in Bangladesh, are still to be conducted. Thence, this study aims to investigate how Bangladeshi newspapers have framed the economic issues with their concerns and shifted their focus on crisis, during the lockdown enforcement.

Literature review

It is presently notable that COVID-19 has affected each part of human life. Specialists' contemplations and observations distributed in papers are featuring, and building up these parts of human lives is pivotal to comprehend. This comprehension and examination can suggest a direction to other national news media to assume dynamic functions in this health emergency.

Mutz (1992) suggests that through the news coverage and the individual encounters, the understanding of the public of the economy is being bloomed. In this way, it turns out to be especially significant to know what sorts of economic data are presented by the media to the people. Haller & Norpoth (1997) show that the media staff tend to highlight the economic news negatively as bad monetary occasions are seen to be published with great attention than great financial occasions. Contamination fear can bring about social distancing or shutdowns of schools, ventures, business firms, transportation, and the public sector, which creates problems to financial and other socially important movements. Worries over the spread of even a moderately contained episode can prompt a diminished exchange. In any event, when the health effect of an epidemic is generally restricted, its financial results can immediately become amplified (Fan et al., 2018).

Kane (2010) writes that common media generalizations about the occupation changes in the economy are being reflected by the policymakers or, in other words, they pay attention to the huge total picture or to updates of extremely huge cutbacks by individual organizations. A report of the World Bank predicted that the Ebola epidemic would have dropped a considerable lot of the monetary additions of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone years before the epidemic, which was classified as the quickest developing financial term of these countries (Cheng, 1995). Qiu et. al. (2018) stated that due to the SARS outbreak in 2013, China faced a large impact on their society. The spread of rumors caused panic at that time and people were unable to find the relevant information.

The COVID outbreak has also caused panic in all sectors of the world. Pauline (2021), in his study, 'Health is wealth: Newspaper coverage of the economic impact of COVID-19 in Nigeria' describes how newspapers in Nigeria report the impact of COVID-19 on Nigerian economy. Four selected newspapers have

been analyzed with the quantitative research method. The study reveals that the Nigerian newspapers did not make any suggestions on how to tackle the economic issues and paid limited attention on how the country's economy can survive during the pandemic or post pandemic periods.

The COVID-19 flare-up has just begun to influence various parts of the economy. Among these, agriculture, industry and service – the three significant sectors of the economy of Bangladesh – contribute 18%, 29%, and 53% to the GDP of the country respectively, that were seriously influenced by the COVID pandemic (Begum et al., 2020). A study by Norouzi et al. (2020) describes how the coronavirus pandemic influenced the petroleum and electricity demand, both legitimately and by implication in China. The study finds that the shutdown enterprises as well as the service and business areas were also affected.

Another article, 'Discourse of fear and economic crisis: A multimodal analysis of Pakistani newspaper's political cartoons of COVID-19' examines how COVID-19 language of fear and phobia has been presented by a Pakistani newspaper's political cartoons. By using qualitative research method, the researchers found that the newspaper had been trying to criticize the official authorities for the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic by highlighting the economical uncertainty of the mass people (Aazam et al., 2020).

'Media framing of COVID-19 pandemic: A study of daily trust and vanguard newspapers in Nigeria' was another study to analyze how media narratives were used in the Nigerian newspapers on the COVID-19 pandemic. By analyzing the news under the economic and political frames of COVID-19 of two major national dailies during February to May 2020, the researchers found that the selected newspapers framed the pandemic more economic and political rather than paying attention to health, safety and quality of life frames. The study also found that the tones of the frames were more negative than positive or even neutral (Msughter & Phillips, 2020).

A joint report of The World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Bank assessed that the effects of the pandemic caused generally 2.2 to 4.8% of global GDP downturn, which is equivalent to 3 trillion USD and thus caused a more significant effect (Bakirtas et al., 2000). After the detection of coronavirus cases in the USA, the unemployment rate went down to 3.5% in February 2020, which was the lowest in number within the past 67 years. After 45 days afterward, nearly ten million Americans appealed for joblessness benefits within two weeks (Chaney & Morath, 2020). According to a report of the International Labor Organization (ILO), on May 2020, the economic impact of the pandemic was conveying a 'triple stun' to young people by decimating their jobs, disturbing

their education and training, and making snags to look for or move between occupations.

After the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic as worse by the World Health Organisation (WHO) on May, the World Bank (WB) in its latest Global Economic Prospects Report prolonged that the global economy may have gone at a downturn pace and in 2020, it would have contracted 5.2%. It would have caused the most profound downturn since a 13.8% worldwide financial withdrawal in 1945-1946 after World War II. Cookson (2020) stated that the unemployment level was lower than in the post-COVID situation as the small entrepreneurs found them in difficulty and thus, a large number of low-income workers lost their jobs. Hawdon et al. (2014) stated that after any pandemic, media coverage may affect negatively on the mental health of its audience.

The economic giants like G-7, who share a total of 65% of the manufacturing, 41% of world exports, and 60% of the world's GDP, have been facing serious damage due to the COVID pandemic and the downturn will follow to the other countries as well (Baldwin & Mauro, 2020). Barua (2020) examined that global connections could be affected by the pandemic by influencing the recent and upcoming economic projects under government to government (G2G) engagement particularly among China and diverse financial systems.

When the COVID-19 emerged in Bangladesh, the economic conditions started to downturn. After that, the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) estimated a 4% decline in GDP growth in Bangladesh, which seemed even more desperate, and to overcome the situation individuals' needed to be given the fundamental necessities of life during the lockdown enforcement, which seemed not to be doable in Bangladesh (Mahmood, 2020).

In a study, Kumar (2020) stated that as the Bangladeshi economy has greater independence from China, the outcome of the coronavirus pandemic would likely be more noteworthy for Bangladesh. The export-oriented sectors and the supply chain may be destroyed due to the lockdown barriers to import from China and this would affect the overall trade. Bhuiyan (2020) wrote that if the lockdown had existed longer in Bangladesh, the country would have faced a severe economic crisis. Because of that for a bigger scope, we may need to confront a monetary log jam temporarily while there may be a downturn in the long term.

According to *ADB* (2020), Bangladesh is likely to lose 3 billion dollars in its GDP due to the job cut of 9 million people. A decrease of more than 2 percent during the current financial year was anticipated by the WB and the IMF. This presage seems, by all accounts, to be genuinely sensible given the rising numbers

of COVID-19 contaminations and fatalities the nation is presently encountering and the re-imposition of lockdowns (Mahmood, 2020).

Most of the literature on economic impact of COVID-19 discusses the overall effects rather than conduct the research on print media framing of economic aspects during the pandemic. Some studies discuss the overall effects, some discuss health disasters but very few studies in Bangladesh have been conducted to understand the absolute scenario of economic crisis or disaster after the COVID-19 pandemic through the content of the daily newspapers. This paper can make a bridge to connect that gap analyzing the media's (newspapers) portrayal on the overall economic conditions of the country during the coronavirus pandemic and aims to fill that gap by giving more information about how the national dailies talk about the overall economic situation.

Research background

Bangladeshi newspapers have grown in popularity and influence during the last two decades. These publications have gained popularity among the country's elite, middle class, and decision-makers. With higher purchasing power and improved literacy, newspaper reading in Bangladesh is increasing. With this, the country's newspaper industry flourished fast, as evidenced by the fact that virtually all newspapers are funded by the country's huge commercial conglomerates. According to a recent research titled 'Who owns the media in Bangladesh?' (2021), 32 of Bangladesh's 48 major news outlets are controlled by businesses with a variety of financial interests. As a result, the proprietors use their influence in the press to promote their businesses. As a result, it is a general observation that business stories are frequently covered in newspapers. Furthermore, newspapers publish both commercial and economic news to appeal to a broad audience.

English language newspapers have also been pioneers in reporting business matters, with *The Daily Star* being the first to develop a dedicated business section (initially with four pages and later with eight pages). *The Financial Express* is a business daily in Bangladesh that focuses on publishing economic and business news. Business articles and stories are also included in their weekly and fortnightly sections. Other newspapers are known to publish business news on their business pages. Important economic news is also posted on other pages based on the importance of the news. *Literature, book reviews, health, science, law and order, wide angle, environment, travel*, and other topics are seen to appear alongside the hard news in newspapers.

After the detection of COVID-19 worldwide, the media seemed to have shifted its focus to covering all the issues tagging with the novel virus. Moreover, the

overall lockdown has resulted serious economic crisis in the affected countries, harming the financial system of low-income countries and the emergency has become so serious that Bangladesh is presently confronting a critical period in its economic history and the lockdown brought devastating consequences for the existence of working people, business enterprises and in this way undermining a large number of livelihood across the nation. According to the recent study of Hoque & Siddique (2020), when the newspapers give more importance to deliver the news about the impact of COVID-19, the fear of livelihood increases. Their study on Bangladeshi newspapers proved that the newspapers of Bangladesh frame the coronavirus as a national crisis.

The scenario is proved when the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) says, 85.1% of working people (50 million) are employed in the informal sector and they are assessed to be jobless because of the lockdown enforcement in Bangladesh. According to a local newspaper report, merchandise exports dropped by 61.57% in May this year compared with the last year, which also featured a serious economic threat to the least developed country, where around 20% of the total population live under the destitution line (Mahmood, 2020). After the lockdown enforcement, the newspapers of Bangladesh have tended to analyze the socio-economic effects of all sectors by its writing and the readers found themselves curious, looking for the actual economic scenario of the country from the media presentation. From the media's concerns, national and international policy planners, implementers, and decision-makers would get the outline through the thoughts of newspapers. Therefore, it is obvious to find out how the leading newspapers of Bangladesh saw the economic issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they were shaping the crisis, and analyzing the situation over the global economic downturn. From 26 March to 3 August, 2020 within the lockdown time, how the national newspapers highlighted the national health crisis to the economic crisis can be understood from this study.

The research will attempt to find the following answers:

1. How did Bangladeshi mainstream newspapers frame the coronavirus pandemic as a threat to the national financial emergency?
2. What types of tones were used on economic issues during COVID-19 by the leading national dailies?
3. What kind of economic condition was Bangladesh going to face in the near future?

Recent research has looked at how the coronavirus crisis is portrayed in Bangladeshi media. None of known research focuses on comprehending the economic framing depicted in Bangladeshi publications. The goal of this research

is to figure out what economic frame the Bangladeshi media used to report on COVID-19. The main objective of this research is to assess the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through the tone of the leading national dailies in Bangladesh and to find the answers if the newspapers have the motive to unfold the actual scenario by highlighting the limitations.

Theoretical framework

'Media framing theory' is used to portrait the national economic crisis during COVID-19 in Bangladeshi newspapers. Media can connect the mass audience through framing by portraying the crisis story (de Vries, 2004). Goffman (1974) defined 'framing' as a form of communication and 'schemata of interpretation' which possess the audience to 'establish, ignore, recognize and entitle' incidences. According to McQuail (1994), social reality has been constructed by 'framing images of reality in a predictable and patterned way'. By combing media framing with agenda setting, Entman (1993) believes that readers can increasingly likely understand how and why framing occurs in the media. Agenda setting treats as the primary function of framing as it characterizes the issues meriting of government thought (Entman, 1993). Gamson & Modigliani (1989) stated that individuals can construct meaning by the process of media discourse, and journalists create and crystallize meaning in public discourse through the process of public opinion. Analyzing the previous research, Semetko & Valkenburg (2006) recognized economic consequences, human interest, morality, conflict, and responsibility frames that occur in news reports. Ogbodo (2018) advanced these frames in a follow up research and added ethnicisation and politicization to the list of frames.

Framing recognizes the capacity of the media message to characterize a circumstance and set the issue moving for a discussion (Entman, 2003). Regarding the economic crisis due to COVID-19, framing permits us to recognize how the media approach the coverage of the pandemic (Liu & Kim, 2011).

Entman (1993) defines a paradigm as 'a general idea that guides a body of scholarship on the results and operation of any given system of thought or action,' which he uses to argue that framing is a 'fractured paradigm'. Scholars assert that three paradigms shape communication: constructionist, critical, and cognitive. Academics can use these paradigms to visualize the links between textual frames and framing effects. According to critical scholars, news media purposely select some material while excluding other information so that various frames of an issue either do not exist or continue to encourage a single

viewpoint that supports the status quo. On the other hand, Journalists generally develop meaningfully distinct frames about an issue or occurrence inside a single news item or across multiple items, according to cognitive studies. According to constructionists, journalists are information processors that generate 'interpretive packages' of politically involved sources in order to both reflect and contribute to the topic's 'issue culture'. This paradigm holds that a frame can have long-term dominance over coverage (D'Angelo, 2002). Taking the cognitive paradigms into consideration, this research has been conducted to understand how the economic issues framed by Bangladeshi newspapers reported COVID-19.

In addition, this research aims to examine the language of covering financial issues in the mainstream newspapers of Bangladesh. This study modifies the frames by Semetko & Valkenburg (2006) and Ogbodo (2018) by adding two emerging frames (fear and hope) while ethnicisation, politicization, and mortality frames have been modified to discuss through other frames. Like the frame politicization and ethnicization have been focused to discuss under the frames of hope and fear. Moreover, the morality frame is discussed with the responsibility actors as when moral aspects go under question then responsibility starts from there. To analyze, the researcher attempts to discuss measuring economic consequences, human interest, fear, conflict, responsibility, and hope frames with a special focus on language analysis. Thus, it will be easy to find the actual scenario on how the mainstream newspapers of Bangladesh reported the economic issues during the lockdown.

Methodology

On March 26, the government of Bangladesh decided to enforce the lockdown to the whole nation, which was then extended until August 3, 2020, in different phases. During that time, the print media started to emphasize the coronavirus-related news of which they tended to highlight the upcoming crisis more. Utilizing a content analysis approach, this research intends to analyze and examine the thoughts and concerns of leading newspapers in Bangladesh related to the economic issues during March 26 to August 3, 2020. The researcher considers that this timeframe is enough to reveal absolute information to lead the understanding of the ways Bangladeshi newspapers frame the economic uncertainty of the pandemic.

Random sampling is used to conduct this study. According to the Information Minister at the national Parliament (2018), there are a total of 1,191 national dailies in Bangladesh. Considering the highest circulations and readership,

the researcher selected the three newspapers for conducting this study. The *Prothom Alo* is Bangladesh's most prominent, widely circulated, and widely read newspaper, with about 6.6 million readers every day ('6.6m readership makes', 2018). *The Daily Star* is also included as a sample because it is the most widely read English daily in Bangladesh, with almost 45 thousands circulation ('Bangladesh Newspapers Circulation', 2020), while *The Financial Express* is considered as it is the first financial daily of Bangladesh and ranks second, in English language, with 39 thousands circulation (Media Landscapes, 2021). This study focuses on analysis of the editorial and op-ed sections on three leading dailies in Bangladesh: *Prothom Alo*, *The Daily Star*, and *The Financial Express*. The editorial and op-ed sections reflect the thoughts of the particular newspapers and can frame issues and events that the community may be involved in. 'It encourages public discourse in an open forum of ideas which fosters the involvement of the community so importantly to the effective activities of government and democracy at all levels' (Coifalo, 1998). Hynds (1976) wrote that the newspapers identify issues and advocate causes in their editorials, and serve to the public for the discussion of issues of public concern in their letters to the editor and columns.

A total of 296 editorial and opinion writings have been identified to analyze. All the contents have been taken from the online version of the selected dailies, where the printed versions have been archived. The data were collected by observation method and note taking technique. This study found that 63 editorials and op-ed have been published by the *Prothom Alo*, whereas 141 and 92 items have been published by *The Daily Star* and *The Financial Express* respectively.

This study looked at the business and financial news in Bangladesh and determined how prominent it was in comparison with other news during the pandemic. This research devided the editorials and the thoughts of the experts into six major frames. To analyze, researcher has recognized the economic aspects that cover the frame of economic consequences, human interest, hope, conflict, fear or crisis, and the frame of responsibility as well throughout the qualitative analysis. The author attempted to get some answers from the story summaries to determine the extent to which certain frames exist in stories. The following questions have been set: is there any mention of financial losses or gains now or in the near future? (Economic), does the story highlight on how individuals or groups are affected? (Human interest), are there any reflection of disagreement with political or other parties? (Conflict), does the story present some rays of hope? (Hope), does the article suggest some sought of

government responsibilities or the responsibilities of others? (Responsibility), or does the story create panic among the mass? (Fear). This paper investigates these questions if they appear in the stories and try to find the specific articles by determining the particular answer. The researcher utilized a combination of observation and note-taking procedures to acquire the data. However, this paper aims to analyze the sampling contents by using these frames and shaping them to the language analysis.

Analysis

This research found that from 26 March to 3 August, there were a total of 117 editorials and 179 opinions published in the selected newspapers. Economy, employment, industry, production, supply, budget, and institutional issues were focused on the editorials, where the newspapers tended to highlight the economic aspects with positive and negative impacts. Immediately after the lockdown enforcement, newspapers highlighted the struggle of different industries, struggle of the working people first, then after a while they shifted their focus on economic shortage and started to discuss the budgetary impacts and tried to examine the effectiveness of stimulus packages offered by the government of Bangladesh. Through the framing, the researcher finds the newspapers highlighted the 'economic consequences' (a total of 98 issues) most, and the frame on 'fear' (a total of 57 issues) and 'human story' (a total of 55) found almost the same in number. The study also finds a total of 38 issues under the 'conflict' and 'hope' frame and 19 issues have been found on the frame of 'responsibility'.

Table 1

Number of frames \ Newspaper	Prothom Alo	Financial Express	The Daily Star
Economic consequences	16	39	43
Human Interest	17	17	21
Conflict- local corruption	6	9	23
Hope	3	13	13
Fear	12	12	33
Responsibility	9	2	8

Economic consequences

In this frame, issues have been reported by the newspapers that focused the economic frame into positive (gain) and negative (loss) categories (sub-frames). The positive consequences focus on the issues related to economic benefits (stimulus packages or other facilities by individuals, organizations, or by the government) to reduce the loss of the pandemic on the country's economy.

From this study, the researcher has found the newspapers giving the highest priority in economic impacts. Among the newspapers, *The Financial Express* has published more items (39 items among 92), whereas *The Daily Star* has focused 43 items on economic consequences among 141 issues and the *Prothom Alo* has 16 items, which is the lowest in number. All of the newspapers addressed the economic matters as a matter of worry and in some time presented the economic downturn, which may create panic among the public. On the early days of the lockdown, *The Daily Star* tried to focus the government's initiatives to save the country's economy through its writings. For example, on April 9, 2020, the daily published an op-ed praising the government's initiative of announcing the second stimulus package for the affected sectors and urged to utilize the packages properly. Almost two weeks before, on March 27, a day after the lockdown enforcement, the daily published an editorial asking for essential assistance for the urban poor and the people of the informal sector. The national economic downturn has also been analyzed against the global economy. Economic priorities, production, vital issues were also discussed; the issues on migrant workers, the role of micro-enterprises, and the overall economic fallouts were presented in this newspaper.

On the other hand, *The Financial Express* highlighted the economic pressure during the pandemic and tried to publish various opinions and editorials on its overall impacts. The opinion from May 6 concerned that the lockdown has put the economic conditions of people who lived under the poverty line at risk. The daily had set the tone like,

'…What is required now is a new deal that guarantees social protection against negative economic consequences of the pandemic, and that builds a stronger social safety net framework for the future.'

The daily had also set a budgetary analysis on different sectors during the pandemic as the government of Bangladesh has allocated the fund for 2020–2021 on June 2020. The daily identified different sectors like SMEs, textile industries, and macro industries as those would be the sectors to overcome the situation. Overall, in the editorial, the daily implied the fears over possible damage during the pandemic. *Prothom Alo* at the same time highlighted the possible damage

to the agricultural sector and asked the government to take proper initiatives to save the agro-economy of the country. On May 20, the highest circulated vernacular daily wished to save the downturn economy by providing the proper stimulus package to the farmer and urged the concerns to confirm the fair price of the agricultural goods. The daily had also raised its voice to ensure proper budget to the proper industry to tackle the economic downturn of the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fear frame

Fear sometimes can create panic among the public, and sometimes spreads quicker than a pandemic. And the media acts as the front liner to disperse fear among its audience through its reports and writings.

After the detection of COVID-19 in Bangladesh, almost all the media started focusing their attention to cover corona issues as their first priority; whereas most of them have indicated it as a 'threat' for the country. Analyzing the content, *The Daily Star* found more concern to highlight the threat and crisis, which may cause 'fear' among the readers and the public. The researchers found *The Daily Star* had published 33 items indicating fear that shows the newspaper to put second-highest attention after economic issues. On the other hand, the vernacular daily *Prothom Alo* (12 items among 63) and *The Financial Express* (12 items among 92) put almost equal attention on setting the fear frame.

Indicating the crisis, on March 27, an op-ed was placed on *The Daily Star*, and the tone was the following:

'…Supply chains will be disrupted and higher prices will be demanded. Most fundamentally, people will have less money to spend and consumer demand will contract.'

Here we see the element 'crisis' which may cause panic. A month later the daily described the situation with another opinion: *'How hard will the poor be hit?'*

In its op-ed section, the daily considered 'crisis' as 'fear' which has a catastrophic impact on the people who are basically considered as 'non-poor but may face a negative income shock. Mentioning Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) data of BBS the daily incorporated that this crisis may create more poverty, estimated into 40.9% in the country. Though the media may unintentionally create fear, the important fact is that the overall situation has made the newspapers set the tone to report on the crisis. In the opinion and editorial section, the highest circulated English daily (*The Daily Star*) has portrayed that the RMG industry, the aviation and tourism sector,

migrant workers, and the financial industry were also going to face a huge crisis, that could spell danger for Bangladesh.

The Financial Express also portrayed the danger of economic conditions during the lockdown and their tone did shape the fear as well. In the second week of the lockdown enforcement, the paper wrote that the small business had started to struggle hard to somehow survive. This puts the readers (as well as the public) into fear of economic conditions. Framing the term 'fear', this daily also published another op-ed titled, *'Fearing shrinking remittance inflow'* on April 6, that also described the scare situation of economic conditions of the country. The paper claimed the government had not taken proper steps in that 'desperate' situation. The migrant workers' return, illegal capital overflow during the pandemic, and lack of ensuring food security were also the concerned issues focused on by *The Financial Express*. These have further increased the people's fear. On the other hand, the largest circulated daily *Prothom Alo* has framed the fear by highlighting the upcoming threats on the agricultural sector and the threat on the lower-income people. On April 9, the daily set its tone the way that Bangladesh was on the verge of danger due to the pandemic and the country was going to face a great threat in near future. In this case, media reports are not the only reason to share the fear with the public, but the public faced the situation in real. Nevertheless, overhyping the situation by the media is a reason to take the public to the stressful conditions.

Human interest frame

The media outlets in Bangladesh have presented a large number of COVID-related human stories with a soft standpoint showing the crisis in another outlook where the stories have been presented through the emotional angle, which makes the stories more human to the readers. While the number of COVID-19 cases started to rise in a large number, the sufferings of low-income people shown an increase as well. The jobless situation has made people hopeless, the heartening situation increased and in some cases, the lower-income people had to starve due to the lockdown enforcement. The selected newspapers presented human stories with great attention. The researchers found *The Daily Star* to have published 21 items related to the human story, whereas *The Financial Express* and the *Prothom Alo* published 17 items both on this issue. The newspapers put their interest to show the hardship of lower-income people like farmers, day laborers, slum dwellers, small entrepreneurs, migrant workers, and so on. Salary complexity of working people, the inexpressible condition of migrant workers, as well as the shortage of foods affects the people and thus the newspapers displayed these with a pity.

Still, within the human interest frame, the unbearable condition of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh was given a great attention by the newspapers. The lockdown put the low-payed people in a critical situation, which was repeatedly sought out by *The Daily Star*. For Example, on April 6, 2020, the English daily published an editorial highlighting that food and financial assistance needed to be distributed among marginalized people.

Conflict frame

By analyzing the content, the researcher finds that in some cases the economic conflicts on COVID issues were blasted, where the media outlets tried to explain the challenge. Corruption, confusion, or wrong economic initiatives of both government and industries were identified to discuss the conflict frame here.

The pandemic was not just a health crisis, it also created much confusion among the countries. The media from the very first tried to pay attention to its devastating role, whereas in some cases the media set many contradictory conflicting questions. From this study, the researcher got *The Daily Star* using more conflict terms than the other two (*Prothom Alo* and *The Financial Express*). Depressions, anger, helplessness, inertness, false statements reflect the range of emotions that seem to be highlighted by the newspapers. The lockdown model was imported from the developed countries with strong economic bases. On April 17, *The Daily Star* questioned in an op-ed, whether the lockdown enforcement was the only way forward for us or how long it should have been hold down. 'Hopelessness' increased as a result, which in a sense made a conflict presentation by the newspapers whereas they were also asking the government to shut down everything repeatedly at the primary period of the detection of coronavirus patients within the country. In a sense, COVID-19 created political, economic as well as ideological conflicts in the country. The government had to face questions on enforcement of lockdown; where the health concerns urge to continue the tight lockdown, but in some cases to reduce the economic losses, the country had to carry on the lockdown on a 'limited basis'. On May 12, 2020, the researcher found *The Daily Star* to have adopted the concept of enforcing lockdown on a 'limited basis' highlighting the suffering of the people. The *Prothom Alo*, on the other hand, seemed to have shown a dilemma on the duration of lockdown enforcement. 'Less quarantine', 'public sufferings', 'budgetary analysis' took place on different aspects; where the newspaper seemed to have supported the government's initiative in some cases if it is in some cases be like to unacceptable. The conflict terms have also been found in the reporting of *The Financial Express*. The daily has thrown confusion if the

Ready-Made Garment (RMG) factories need to be opened or not. The daily, opposing the government's steps reports on April 29, *'....things do not look all right as they seemed only a couple of days ago.'* 'Anxieties' and 'uncertainties' are the common issues, in which no one knows where the country's economies were moving to and these created confusion on the government, the think-tankers, the public. Thus, the media gripped the situation and was unable to put a clear stand on some issues that were being described within the conflict frame.

Hope frame

Sometimes, positive news gives the public hope even in the situation of such a crisis. Among the issues, there are several items where the newspapers shift their focus to highlight the solution of overcoming the economic crisis, which in some cases may create hope among the public. The media coverage accentuating hope in such kind of demolishing period can minimize the fear of the pandemic. The figure of frame demonstrates that the highest circulated vernacular daily *Prothom Alo* put less intention to report on positive aspects that may raise hope among the public. Among the selected items, the researcher sees that the *Prothom Alo* published only three related materials on its editorial and op-ed whereas *The Daily Star* and *The Financial* Express are seen to have published more editorials that portray trust among the public in managing the outcome of the pandemic. *The Daily Star*, in one of its editorials, writes that *'Strengthening digital economy is the way to go.'* Tanjir Hossain, in an op-ed in *The Daily Star* on May 4, writes that *'despite lockdown, the country is on the way to ensure food security, which raises hope.' The Financial Express* also reports positively and this shows a ray of hope during the pandemic. On June 7, the daily publishes that, *'hopes still abound for an economic turnaround.'* The formula of overcoming health and economic crisis, the immediate measures are taken by the government; as the special stimulus packages, helping the businessmen to reopen their business, gear up efforts, and creating more economic opportunities to the damaged sectors are described as a welcome move by the newspapers. In this sense, the words like, 'opportunities', 'recovery', 'security', 'economic sustainability', 'strengthen' are seen to be used repeatedly to address the hope for the best against the pandemic. Similarly, the *Prothom Alo* is seen to show optimism in its editorial and it also puts some way to recover the economic loss that creates hope to win against the virus. On May 12, the daily writes that, *'…the Coronavirus pandemic has been showing some positive aspects making people more concern on putting positive human qualities.'* Despite showing the distress

and crisis, all the dailies have tried to frame hope by avoiding the worst things and portraying the positive views through its writings.

Responsibility frame

In this situation, every sector of the country including the government, groups, or even an individual have to take a particular responsibility to overcome the crisis. And media, as the fourth power, have also some responsibility to find out the proper solution. Considering this frame, the researcher found the newspapers to have written less number (a total number of 19 among 296 items) of this frame among all the frames discussed in this paper.

Usually fear and panic increase a lot among the mass public during such kind of pandemic. The responsible authorities like the politicians as well as some key opinion leaders used to say to the public that hard immunity is the only solution to win the battle against this invisible enemy. Fraud business related to COVID protective elements (tissues, hand sanitizers, face masks, medicines, etc.) started growing fast. Due to lack of confidence and proper knowledge, panic increased among the mass people as they started buying groceries and sanitizers. The newspapers in that situation started raising their voice. The *Prothom Alo* repeatedly asked the authorities to take necessary steps and responsibility to minimize the harm. For example, on March 29, the daily wrote that the government has to take six or 12 months plan to tackle the worst situation. Resisting corruption, protecting the poor, solving the unemployment problem, and distribution of relief should be well maintained the vernacular daily urges. On the other hand, *The Financial Express* showed less attention (2 items among 19) than the other two. This daily in its two items wrote that saving lives and protecting livelihoods should have been the major concern whereas joint efforts are needed to overcome this critical situation. Similarly, *The Daily Star* put its thoughts by some (8 items among 19) editorial and op-ed placement. For example, on April 14, the daily in one of its op-ed sections reported that *no one should die without care*. The writing blames the authoritative initiatives and suggests protecting the public through proper planning.

Findings

This research explains how the mainstream national dailies describe the economic impact of global coronavirus in the country. However, the selected national dailies seem to highlight the national economic crisis in such a manner, where fear is caused and the panic may increase among the concerns. The contents presented by the newspapers were more focused on long-term economic

crisis as all the three newspapers are found to focus the news frame on economic consequences most followed by the fear frame. To minimize the fear and panic, the newspapers are also seen to have written editorials and published op-eds on some issues related to economic prospects which are identified as a hope frame. Though the other two frames are used in few cases, the writings also proved the responsibility of the news media. By the editorials, the news media presented the coronavirus as the national economic threat, and transparency about the news facts for increasing awareness to the public, government, and policymakers are found. During the lockdown, some economic-related issues like employment, production, remittance, investment, industries, food security, and GDP growth have been placed in the newspapers from March to the whole lockdown period. Thoughts of the experts and consciousness identified with awareness and institutional issues were presented within the entire selected period in all three newspapers. Social issues, positive messages, and humanity were reflected with great concern in these newspapers.

The initiatives taken by the government during the lockdown were also criticized by the newspapers and they asked the government as well as the policymakers to improve financial facilities for maximizing the economic value of the country. This research has also tried to find out how the national print media descanted on the economic aspects of the country in the near future. Most of the editorials blamed the governments' initiative, in some cases throw questions on the initiatives taken by the authorities, and repeatedly urges to monitor supply chain facilities properly. Analyzing the newspapers content the study finds that the global economic uncertainties may also affect the country's economy. As a result, export demands will decrease and local investment may be cut down. Unemployment problems, negative remittance flow, disrupted supply chain, shortage of food are about to be limited and may put the country's economy under pressure.

Conclusion

This research investigates the domination of six news frames identified in early reviews on framing effects by analyzing a total number of 296 editorials and op-ed items in three selected dailies. It disclosed that all the items are more focused on economic content and the newspapers portray those frames as economic crisis. Based on the literature review, this study is aimed to understand the dominant frames accepted by the national dailies to report on the financial aspects of COVID-19. Moreover, this article tends to know the overall language of the national newspapers of covering the impact of this dreadful virus. Proper

knowledge on basic health care and safety issues were seen to have been discussed as the most rated issues from the detection of COVID-19 in the country. Later, the pandemic has thrown challenges to keep the economic growth steady. In this sense, the media has to focus its attention on many diverse aspects including public health awareness as well as economical matters regarding COVID-19. Analyzing the content, the author finds out that *The Daily Star* newspaper discussed the economic aspects more than the other two. On the other hand, as a most read vernacular daily, *Prothom Alo* tends to show less attention to the economic consequences but it paid attention to the frame of human stories and urged the authorities to stand by the people of low-income, as they were the major sufferers during this pandemic.

This research provides pragmatic evidence for understanding how Bangladeshi newspapers report on the economic impact of COVID-19. The author comes to conclusion that in reporting on the economic impact of COVID-19, the newspapers make fewer suggestions on how the economy can overcome against the threat. This research suggests that media itself can play a strong role to minimize the harm and it should work closely with the government by maintaining its watchdog role properly. Furthermore, it will be difficult to find out a conclusion over this issue that the pictures of the media on economic issues are the only scenario and it is the only responsible for the media and the journalist to find out the solution to overcome the crisis. Strong and effective economic policies should be implemented properly to save the economic loss and keep the country's economic momentum going. The result of the study could be used to design and implement policies relating to the role of the media in economic development. Additional research is also needed to interview the journalists and communication experts for understanding the communication strategies of post-COVID-19 economies. Furthermore, this study suggests conducting other studies to examine how the business enterprises have been tackling the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Limitation of the study

This study focuses on newspaper stories rather than the public's reaction to the topic. To fill the void, more research on public response is required. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews can be used to find the study's extended output. Nonetheless, this article analyses the economic situation during the lockdown and should help clarify the prominent frames of the COVID-19 economic crisis.

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