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Development Compilation  
Vol. 17. Number 01. May 2022**A STUDY ON THE PRESENTATION OF HEALTH NEWS IN THE  
NEWSPAPERS OF BANGLADESH****Md. Satil Siraj\***  
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**Abstract:** The media as a primary source in the world for the development of the health sector and raising awareness among the people on various health issues, this paper highlights on the presentation of health news in the newspapers of Bangladesh. The content of total of 848 news items of the selected dailies has been analyzed. This study found that health related news is rarely published in newspapers. Although the first page and the last page are the most important parts of a newspaper this study has shown that health news is rarely published on the first and last pages. Despite investigative and interpretative reports enhance the quality of the newspaper as well as make the news more attractive to the reader; those types of reports were not published in the sampled issues. This study also finds that most of the headlines of the sampled news stories are limited to not more than two columns which indicate health as a less prioritized issue of the newspapers.

**Key words:** Health, Bangladesh, Newspapers, Media, News Coverage

**Introduction**

The concept of health is so interrelated with the concept of health as to the physical, mental, social, cultural and environmental aspects of human beings, without which it is not possible to define health. The concept of health is not just a matter of medicine. It also plays an important role in sociology, economics, politics, anthropology, communicative science and linguistics. Quality health helps a person's physical, emotional, mental and social abilities to adapt to their environment.

The constitution of Bangladesh recognizes access to health care as a fundamental right of all citizens of the state. The overall well-being of a person depends on health. A person without health cannot live a good life with anything in this world. Living unhealthily is useless and worthless.

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The greatest and most valuable asset in human life is health. A person who is physically or mentally weak is reluctant to do anything. Again, since healthcare is one of the five fundamental rights of the people of Bangladesh, the mass media (especially newspapers) of Bangladesh do not focus much on the issue.

The health sector is also one of the biggest sectors for Bangladesh. It involves a large ministry and affiliated organizations, including doctors, nurses, technologists, government-run hospitals and clinics and budgets, infectious and non-communicable diseases, medicines and insurance etc. There are also issues such as public health care, nutrition, anarchy and corruption in the sector, and in particular raising public awareness about certain rages through the dissemination of health information in the media as well it is possible to convey the idea of anger and health risks (Brown & Walsh - Childers, 2002; Dutta- Bergman, 2004.)

Health communication refers to the process of delivering messages, especially to prevent anger, problems or to raise awareness (Kreps, 2006.) This can be done very efficiently through mass media. In order to increase and create health awareness in a planned way, important information on specific health issues is distributed among the target population, especially among service providers and recipients (Kiger, 2006). Newspapers can play a huge role in creating public awareness on health issues and again, if they fail to present social trends objectively, they become suicidal for the society. In this case, the current research is an attempt to see how seriously or informatively the newspaper is presenting the issue of human health. To a large extent, health communication can be used to improve the overall health sector through individuals, groups, organizations, communities or the media. The media has so far been considered as a primary source in the world for the development of the health sector and raising awareness among the people on various health issues. It would be a mistake to say that the media only contributes to the creation of awareness, but its necessity and dominance is increasing day by day. Although multidisciplinary research has been conducted on health communication in other areas of media research, there is a shortage of research in this regard in the country. In particular, newspapers can play a huge role in creating public awareness about health. Again, if it fails to present the social trends objectively, this newspaper becomes suicidal for the society. In this case, this is an attempt to see how the newspaper is presenting or serving the issue of human health, how seriously or by enriching the information.

**Purpose of the Study**

The role of newspapers in creating public awareness about health is undeniable. Again, when social trends fail to present various news items

related to health objectively, this newspaper responds to the society itself. The main purpose of this study is to consider how health news is presented in Bangladeshi newspapers. Other objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To review the volume of health news published in newspapers.
2. To assess the health news outlets.
3. To evaluate the type of treatment of health-related news.
4. To check the health issues generally covered by the newspapers.

### Relevant Literature

Many studies on the role of radio, television and newspapers in health development have been conducted nationally and internationally. Some of those studies are summarized or discussed here. These studies as well as many other studies have helped the researchers to understand the present topic deeply.

Veena Algur MC Yadavannavar and Vijaya Sorganvi (Algur *et al*, 2012) conducted a study on the topic of 'Coverage of Health Issues in Newspapers: An Observational Study' for the purpose of coverage of health news in Indian national and local newspapers and its content. They selected the national periodicals *Times of India* and *Hindu* and the local magazines *Vijay Karnataka* and *Prajavina* for a period of 6 months (May 1, 2003 to October 2003), resulting in 66.15% of all health news reports on injuries and deaths due to various causes. Researchers recommend that journals should not be involved in publishing anti-rabies reports and adopting health policy.

The study entitled 'Health Reporting and Universal Health Coverage in Bangladesh' was conducted by Dr. Pradip Kumar Panday in Bangladesh in 2012. The health news published in the national daily newspapers was taken as sample here. The study found that the amount of public health coverage was very low, with maternal health, women's health, child health, arsenic, sanitation, diabetics, reproductive health, communicable, non-communicable, discipleship and care, and much more important news.

Achala Gupta and A. K. Sinha completed a study entitled 'Health Coverage in Mass Media: A Content Analysis.' In this study of content analysis method, time-based content of print and electronic media has been reviewed. The study looked at two Indian newspapers, one Hindi and one English, published 115 articles, 456 news items, 46 health news, 216 hospital and clinic advertisements and letters to 18 editors, which the researchers commented on as relatively insignificant. Gupta recommends that more health news be published (Gupta and Sinha, 2010.)

The present study is based on all these different topics, such as the recent study on Bangladeshi newspapers. The amount of health news published

has been highlighted. The level of health coverage has been scrutinized. In the newspapers of Bangladesh, the news is published with the predominance of which region it belongs to and it has also been determined what the health awareness news is like. The researcher has been instrumental in getting the information out of the pre-text review, which is related to the prescribed content.

### Research Methods

Content analysis has been used to conduct the current research work. Content analysis is an established and standard method within media studies for describing trends in communication content (Weber, 1990.) Content analysis method uses both quantitative and qualitative metrics (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987.) In this empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied. A good number of numerical data about the content of health news published in selected newspapers have been analyzed quantitatively. And the presentation of health news, its trends and other issues have been analysed qualitatively.

### Research-Equivalent Definition

In the present study of health-related news published in all daily newspapers from different parts of Bangladesh has been considered as research period.

### Sampling

Content analysis a multi-layered sampling method has been resorted to select the sample from which the content will be compiled. The current study has 4 levels. These include: a) scheduling b) sampling of specific newspapers c) determining the number of newspapers to be selected as sampled from the sampled dailies, and d) scheduling the final chapter.

### Scheduling

The current study newspapers in 2018 for a period of one year (12 months) from 1st January to 31st December have been selected as samples. This period has been fixed for the purpose of determining the contemporary trend of newspapers.

### Sampling of specific newspapers

However, due to time constraints and reality, it is not possible to include all dailies published from different parts of Bangladesh in the study. According to the circulation numbers, the two most widely circulated Bengali dailies among the national dailies published from Dhaka.

### Determining the number of newspapers to be selected as samples from the sampled dailies

All the issues published in one year of the sampled dailies have been selected as sample numbers in the present study.

### Scheduling the final chapter

In the present study, all the health articles published on each page of each issue of the daily *Prothom Alo* and the daily *Kaler Kantha* in 2018 as a sample have been taken as final samples.

### Presenting and Analyzing Health News

Data Presenting, analyzing and interpreting information is an important step in the social science research process. It depends on how successful or unsuccessful the study is in presenting and analyzing the data. This chapter presents and analyses the edge data of research. In the case of analysis, the data obtained from different number of sample soldiers have been numerically analyzed.

### Page-Based Coverage of Health News

Following the trend of publishing health news, here is a page-by-page trend, the usage trend of upper fold and lower fold and the issues on which health news are presented. Page-based coverage is the analysis of which page has the news. In this case the first page is considered as the most important page. The first page and then the last page are given more importance.

The health news page-based coverage is presented here. Page-based coverage is analyzed by dividing a page into three levels. Here, the pages of the newspaper are divided into three sections, for example- First page, inside page, and last page. Of the 848 news items published in the two dailies, 90 were on the first pages, 201 on the last pages and 557 on the inside pages. On the first pages, the daily *Prothom Alo* published 37 news items and the daily *Kaler Kantha* published 53 news items. On the other hand, most of the news is published on the inside pages. Of the 557 news items on the inside page, 295 were published in *Prothom Alo* and 262 in *Kaler Kantha*. The two newspapers published 557 news on the inside page. Total this page published is 201 news. Of these, 74 were published in *Prothom Alo* and 127 in *Kaler Kantha*.

**Table: Page-based coverage of health news**

| Newspaper name                | First page | Inside page | Last page | Total |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------|
| <i>The Daily Prothom Alo</i>  | 37         | 295         | 74        | 406   |
| <i>The Daily Kaler Kantha</i> | 53         | 262         | 127       | 442   |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 90         | 557         | 201       | 848   |

Important news is published on first page. And less important news than the first page is published on the last page. With that in mind, the top two newspapers in Bangladesh have shown reluctance to publish health news. In other words, the newspapers did not give much importance to the news related to this.

### Fold-Based Coverage of Health News

The upper part of newspaper fold is called the upper part and the lower part of the newspaper is called the lower fold. If there is a new position in the upper fold, it is clear that the news has been given much importance. Health news analysis shows that newspapers are less likely to publish news in the upper fold. Of the 848 news items published in the two dailies, 352 were published in the upper fold. This is 41.51% of the total news. Of these, 135 news items were published in the daily *Prothom Alo* and 217 news items were published in the *Daily Kaler Kantha* and 496 news items were published in 848 news items published in two dailies in the lower fold. This is 58.49% of total news. Of these, 271 news items were published in the daily *Prothom Alo* and 225 news were published in the daily *Kaler Kantha*. In view of this, it can be said that in the first case, the newspaper gives more importance to the publication of health related news in lower fold than in *Kaler kantha*.

**Table: Fold-based coverage of health news**

| Fold              | <i>The daily Prothom Alo</i> | <i>The daily Kaler Kantha</i> | Total news | Percentage |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| <i>Upper Fold</i> | 135                          | 217                           | 352        | 41.51      |
| <i>Lower Fold</i> | 271                          | 225                           | 496        | 58.49      |
| <b>Total</b>      | 406                          | 442                           | 848        | 100        |

The current study shows that newspapers publish more health news in the lower fold than in the upper fold.

### Coverage of Health News in the Newspaper Headline

How many columns coverage of newspaper headlines have been published signify the importance of the news. The size of the headline serves as a measure of the importance of the news. The length and number of headline columns depend on its importance.

**Table: Coverage of health news in the newspaper headline**

| Newspaper name                | Single column | Doyle columns | Three columns | Four columns | Five columns | Banner | Box story | Total |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------|-----------|-------|
| <i>The Daily Prothom Alo</i>  | 53            | 267           | 36            | 13           | 9            | 7      | 21        | 406   |
| <i>The Daily Kaler Kantha</i> | 42            | 271           | 67            | 29           | 3            | 13     | 17        | 442   |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 95            | 538           | 103           | 42           | 12           | 20     | 38        | 848   |

As can be seen here, most of the health-related issues have come up in the two columns. And the lowest number of news came in five columns news. There were 42 news in four columns, 12 in five columns and 20 in

banners. 95 news items were published in one column 538 news items in two columns. 103 news in three columns (Table 5.3.) It is clear from this that the newspapers did not give much importance to this issue.

#### Health News the Use of Color in Headlines

The importance of news can be seen in the use of color in headlines. The news that uses color in the headline is a little more important. As a result, the reader is curious to read such news. An analysis of the two newspapers conducted during the study showed that the use of color in the headlines is very rare. Of the 848 news items published in the two dailies, 59 used color headlines. This is 6.96% of total news. Of these, 23 have been published in the *Prothom Alo* and 36 have been published in the daily *Kaler Kantha*. Again, 93.04% of the news published by total did not use color in its headlines.

**Table: Health news the use of color in headlines**

| <b>Color in headlines</b> | <b>The daily Prothom Alo</b> | <b>The daily Kaler Kantha</b> | <b>Total news and Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Use of color</i>       | 23                           | 36                            | 59 (6.96)                        |
| <i>Not use of color</i>   | 383                          | 406                           | 789 (93.04)                      |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>406</b>                   | <b>442</b>                    | <b>848 (100)</b>                 |

#### Types of Health News

News is usually simple, investigative, interpretative, feature, descriptive, etc. In the case of some news outlets, investigative and interpretative reports enhance the quality of the newspaper as well as make the news more attractive to the reader. But it goes without saying that investigative and interpretative reports was not published in the sampled issues. In the case of health news, the country's top two newspapers could not play any exceptional role. Both the newspapers have published basically events based and simple news stories. It can be seen here that out of 848 news items related to the two newspapers, 462 were simple news. This is 54.48% of total news. Of these, *Prothom Alo* has published 243 and *Kaler Kantha* has published 219 news. On the other hand, 44 investigative news items were published in two newspapers. Revealed in the *Prothom Alo* has done 19 and *Kaler Kantha* has published 25 investigative news. *Prothom Alo* and *Kaler Kantha* have published 87 and 113 explanatory news respectively. *Kaler Kantha* is ahead of *Prothom Alo* in publishing feature type news outside the mainstream news. *Kaler Kantha* has published 18 features and 14 in the *Prothom Alo* issue. In addition, 110 descriptive news items have been published in two newspapers. Of these, 43 are in the first issue and 67 are *Kaler Kantha*. The following is a detailed description of the table.

**Table: Types of health news**

| <b>Types of News</b>  | <b>The daily Prothom Alo</b> | <b>The daily Kaler Kantha</b> | <b>Total news</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Simple</i>         | 243                          | 219                           | 462               | 54.48             |
| <i>Investigative</i>  | 19                           | 25                            | 44                | 5.19              |
| <i>Interpretative</i> | 87                           | 113                           | 200               | 23.58             |
| <i>Feature</i>        | 14                           | 18                            | 32                | 3.77              |
| <i>Descriptive</i>    | 43                           | 67                            | 110               | 12.97             |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>406</b>                   | <b>442</b>                    | <b>848</b>        | <b>100</b>        |

Investigative reporting in newspapers is especially important. As the reader's information satisfies the hunger, so does the quality of the newspaper. During covering news anywhere, the reporter repeatedly seeks an investigative report because it enhances the quality of the newspaper and the journalist is praised. But in the current study, only 44 (5.19%) investigative news has been published in the field of health news. On the other hand, 462 simple news (54.48%) have been published. This shows that newspapers are always reluctant to publish investigative reports. On the other hand, there was not much importance in publishing explanatory, fielder or descriptive reports. The *Prothom Alo* and the *Kaler Kantha* have published 44 investigative reports. Of these, no investigative news was published in the rural context. All reports city-centric has arrived. Since health is the root of all happiness. Therefore, the role of media in health development is undeniable. Therefore, the media should play a leading role in this regard.

#### Types of Health News Coverage

The opening part of the news is very important. The reader sees the beginning and decides whether he will read the news. For this reason, a journalist must be aware of his or her beginnings in creating health news. Analyzing the news of the *Prothom Alo* and the *Kaler Kantha* in 2018, it can be seen that the journalists are limited to listening to only a few types of news despite having different types of information. Most of the journalists summarized at the beginning of the news. Out of 848 news items published in the two dailies, 493 news items have been published in the summary news. That is, 58.14% of the published news is published as summary news. 333 descriptive news outlets have been published which is 39.27% of total news. Of these, 146 news items have been published in the *Prothom Alo* and 187 news items in the *Kaler Kantha*, while 251 news items have been published in the *Prothom Alo* and 242 in the *Kaler Kantha*. This is highlighted in the following table.

**Table: Types of health news coverage**

| <b>Types of Lead</b> | <b>The daily Prothom Alo</b> | <b>The daily Kaler Kantha</b> | <b>Total news</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Summary              | 251                          | 242                           | 493               | 58.14             |
| Descriptive          | 146                          | 187                           | 333               | 39.27             |
| Others               | 9                            | 13                            | 22                | 2.59              |
| Total                | 406                          | 442                           | 848               | 100               |

We know that the news contains a variety of news introductions that inspire the reader to read the news in a varied and irresistible way. There are three types of news triggers that can be used to give the reader a sense of urgency. Therefore, in order to make the news more acceptable and varied, journalists need to be more flexible in using news information like bullets or cartridges, quotes or statements.

#### **Issues-Centric Health News**

Health is a very essential issue of the individual or a society. A very important element of the news on health issues is that when the news is published, the public becomes aware and benefits by getting various information about health issues. The news also plays an important role in policy making. Considering that aspect, various issues related to health were published in the newspapers. These issues include child health, maternal health, public health/interest, physical illness treatment, expert advice, sanitation and health, health awareness, medicines, health system, diabetics, prevention of anger etc. This is illustrated by the following table.

**Table: Issue-centric health news**

| <b>Issues of health news</b> | <b>The daily Prothom Alo</b> | <b>The daily Kaler Kantha</b> | <b>Total news and Percentage</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Maternal health              | 22                           | 18                            | 40 (4.27)                        |
| Child health                 | 9                            | 7                             | 16 (1.89)                        |
| Women's health               | 27                           | 23                            | 50 (5.90)                        |
| Sanitation and health        | 5                            | 13                            | 18 (2.12)                        |
| Diabetics                    | 42                           | 17                            | 59 (6.96)                        |
| Reproduction health          | 7                            | 4                             | 11 (1.30)                        |
| Public interest/health       | 5                            | 4                             | 9 (1.06)                         |
| Health awareness             | 12                           | 26                            | 38 (4.48)                        |
| Cause of the disease         | 14                           | 27                            | 41 (4.83)                        |

| <b>Issues of health news</b> | <b>The daily Prothom Alo</b> | <b>The daily Kaler Kantha</b> | <b>Total news and Percentage</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Universal health             | 23                           | 5                             | 28 (3.30)                        |
| Expert advice                | 4                            | 29                            | 33 (3.89)                        |
| Medicines                    | 76                           | 62                            | 138 (16.27)                      |
| Birth/death rate             | 9                            | 24                            | 33 (3.89)                        |
| Medical health system        | 133                          | 147                           | 280 (33.02)                      |
| Disease prevention           | 11                           | 33                            | 44 (5.19)                        |
| Others                       | 7                            | 3                             | 10 (1.18)                        |
| Total                        | 406                          | 442                           | 100                              |

Table 5.7 shows that the newspapers publish news on several issues. But this table also shows that there is no news was published regarding very important issues in the context of Bangladesh like arsenic and health, men's health, aids and family planning etc. In addition, news on sanitation and health, diabetes, reproductive health, public health, birth/death rate, and women's health were not given much importance.

#### **Conclusion**

This study tries to focus on the presentation of health issues in the newspapers of Bangladesh. The constitution of Bangladesh recognizes access to health care as a fundamental right for all of the citizens of the state. On the other hand, health sector is also one of the biggest sectors in Bangladesh. There is a widespread dissatisfaction among people on getting proper service from the sector. But this study shows although health is a very much important issue in Bangladesh, the newspapers do not pay much attention to the issue. It has been found that very few news places on the front page, most of the news are placed in inside pages that indicate that newspapers do not treat the issue as much more important. Although investigative and interpretative reports help readers to perceive the issues deeply as well as make the news more attractive to the readers, but these types of reports have not been seen in the sampled issues. This trend also indicates that health is not treated as priority issue to the newspapers.

Newspapers are one of the major sources of factual information and opinion. So, if newspapers can play a positive role in awareness and education on health issues, more importantly if the stories are effectively presented, they can help to promote health sector of the country. And from this viewpoint, this study suggests some recommendations for the better positive role of newspapers.

## Recommendations

- During the study, it was seen that health related news was rarely published in newspapers. It is necessary to increase the amount of health news coverage in the newspapers.
- In order to establish health as an important issue in the society, it is necessary to place health related news in the important places of the newspapers and increase its quality.
- The first page and the last page are the most important parts of a newspaper. Research has shown that health news is rarely published on the first and last pages. It did not take health news seriously. But newspapers make important contributions to the development of stability. Therefore, the number of sexual intercourses on the first and last page of the newspapers should be increased.
- Newspapers should increase the reports on investigative reports on health issues.

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