

Journalism during Global Crisis: Analyzing Hazardous Experiences of Bangladeshi Journalists during COVID-19

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Abstract

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional journalism has undergone a profound transformation. Journalists had to battle not only the spread of false information but also a slew of new obstacles they had never encountered before. This study demonstrates what sort of challenges Bangladeshi mainstream journalists had to endure and how they continued journalism amid the global crisis. The study adopted a mixed-method approach. A survey was conducted among 60 working journalists, with 20 each from print, electronic, and online media. Also, in-depth interviews with three journalist leaders were conducted to investigate this matter deeply. The findings suggested that four types of challenges were the most dominant: health, professional, financial, and technological. Most of the respondents echoed that economic challenges hit them the hardest. Alongside this, the unpreparedness of both the journalists and news organizations to face such a sudden global crisis led to severe physical and mental health distress.

Key Words: Covid-19, Bangladesh, Journalists, Global Crisis, Mainstream Media

Introduction

Media worldwide faced an extraordinary scenario amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Perreault & Perreault (2021) argued that journalists and news organizations worked as a part of the communication ecology during COVID-19, while the journalists played the role of being a resource for others within the ecology. However, this has not been a facile struggle, as journalists not only had to fight against the flow of misinformation but also against such cumbersome challenges that they had not faced before. Years of the practice of traditional journalism saw a radical shift from the onset of this pandemic. Hannah Storm, Director of the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN), pointed out these as she believes news organizations never had to cope with so many changes before the pandemic (Storm, 2020). Reporters had to limit their travels to find sources and information; had to stay in isolation or self-quarantine for a long time; were forced to use new technological tools to which they were not accustomed and went through enormous mental pressure of surviving in this challenging time. Moreover, due to the drastic downfall of circulation worldwide, journalists faced economic challenges as well (Radcliffe, 2021).

The situation in Bangladesh was no exception. Journalism as a profession in Bangladesh faces challenges like political censorship and the decline of circulation. However, tackling a global crisis for a longer period and continuing to work despite severe threats was something new to experience for the Bangladeshi journalists. The COVID-19 pandemic was unique in that case, as none of the media organizations had prior experience working under such a fatal health emergency. As a result of the pandemic, several newspapers in Bangladesh had been forced to halt publishing. This exacerbated professional insecurity, and local journalists' livelihoods had been in more jeopardy than ever before. With layoffs, irregular salaries, salary arrears, journalist fatalities, and torture, the industry was in trouble (Mondol & Paul, 2021). And many journalists were obligated to report directly from hospitals, which posed a direct threat to their health and lives. This study deeply assesses the overall scenario of journalists' working conditions during a global crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. As COVID-19 generated such multidimensional adversities, journalists went through several types of challenges that impacted their traditional style of work. This study intends to explore the diverse challenges faced by Bangladeshi

mainstream journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and how they adapted to those challenges.

Literature Review

Misinformation, Restrictions, and Political Constraints on Journalists

Bridgman et. al. (2020) showed that individuals who self-report being exposed to a misinformation-rich social media environment have greater false beliefs about COVID-19. Another study analyzed 2,311 stories of rumors, stigma, and conspiracy theories from 87 countries, of which 82% were found to be incorrect (Islam et. al, 2021). Evaluating the YouTube content on the effectiveness and precision of the materials regarding COVID-19, less than 4% of English YouTube videos were found featuring high-quality content while 25% featured misleading information (Li et. al. 2020). However, battling 'infodemic' with accurate information, especially in the time of a global pandemic, is only possible when journalists can obtain information safely, contact their sources frequently, use human and artificial intelligence to double-check facts (Jamil, 2020), keep themselves free from health dangers, government monitoring, online threats, and legal repercussions (Jamil, 2017).

Papadopoulou and Maniou (2021) demonstrated that political and legal threats muted journalists during the pandemic. Autocrats and authoritarian governments used COVID-19 as a pretext to control the dissemination of news, applying censorship and monitoring coverage (Johnson, 2020). Many of Europe's 'free' and 'partially free' nations demanded the deletion of social media comments that denounced the government's response to the coronavirus. Some even commanded all media outlets to refrain from publishing or airing any 'personal opinions' about COVID-19 (European Media Freedom, 2020). Another impact of such direct political threats was 'self-censorship' by the journalists even when they weren't specifically instructed to do so (Papadopoulou & Maniou, 2021).

Political risks were further divided into a subcategory of information access restrictions. These restrictions ranged from preventing journalists from attending daily news conferences, restricting them from speaking with official sources, requiring them to request government approval before reporting from hospitals, and even submitting their inquiries in writing and in advance (Keller-Alant, 2020). In developing countries, particularly in South Asia, governments-imposed regulations on journalists

requiring them to report only the information provided by government officials (Goel & Gettleman, 2020). These issues impeded the free flow of information, contributed to the dis-infodemic threat, and affected freedom of the press and journalists' right to freedom of expression. Through its COVID-19 press freedom tracker, the International Press Institute (IPI) showed that more than 600 media freedom violation incidents have happened in the first 14 months of the pandemic. Nearly 34% of these reports were about physical and verbal assaults on journalists, while 33.5% were about arrests of journalists or cases filed against them or their media houses. Some 14% of these reports were related to restraints on access to information (IPI, 2021).

Organizational support, economic threats, and professional insecurity

In the early phase of the pandemic, many journalists from South Asian countries often had to refrain from going to the spot and collecting news directly due to the shortage of personal safety equipment, which created a serious challenge for the journalists (Mahoney, 2020). In their efforts to deliver accurate and timely health news concerning COVID-19, journalists were put in danger since media companies lacked the financial resources to provide technological resources (Jamil & Appiah-Adjei, 2020). Journalists have also expressed grave concern about a serious breakdown in the pandemic support system for media organizations. A survey by ICFJ and the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism revealed some grim realities, as 85% of respondents stated they did not have adequate downtime between shifts, and 96% said their workplace did not support them in their efforts to combat online abuse and harassment. Additionally, reporters were unhappy that the office did not give them enough safety precautions, as 95% of respondents claimed that they were not given PPE at the beginning of the pandemic, 75% were not given gloves, and 45-49% were not given face masks and hand sanitizer (Posetti, Bell & Brown, 2020).

Hoak (2021) investigated the association between organizational support and stress levels. It was found that when journalists are provided with greater support from their organizations, such as training, technology, and supplies, they show greater commitment to work compared to those with less support. Also, their work stress was reduced drastically due to the support. However, one-fourth of the participants did not receive any support. And the female, young, and less experienced journalists faced a significant level of stress during the coverage of COVID-19 (Hoak, 2021).

Being exposed to sickness while covering the news, unable to enter their workplaces or homes for fear of carrying contagion, affected their capacity to carry out their daily tasks (Jamil & Appiah-Adjei, 2020). A scientific study (Osmann et al., 2021) found that over 80% of the journalist respondents had evidence of clinically significant emotional distress, and the reasons were multifactorial. According to most journalists, their jobs became more stressful, as they cited longer hours (58%) and a higher demand for stories (59%) as major reasons behind this (Osmann et al., 2021).

Apart from political and legal perspectives, editors and journalists had to suffer immensely because of economic threats as well. The editorial independence of media is affected by media ownership, advertising revenue, and the general economic state of a country's media industry, acquired by large conglomerates because of these difficulties (Graber 2017; Leandros and Papadopoulou, 2020). During the pandemic, according to a survey by The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), two-thirds of staff and freelance journalists suffered pay cuts, lost revenue, and job or worsening working conditions. The financial crisis has hit freelance journalists the most, as the survey demonstrated nearly every freelance journalist had lost revenue or work opportunities. Respondents also expressed the toll on journalists, with many referencing job losses, longer hours, and fewer resources as obstacles to proper coverage of the pandemic (IFJ, 2020). They even feel an existential crisis due to the massive economic backlash during the pandemic (Rick & Hanitzsch, 2022).

Impact on Bangladeshi Journalists

Due to the economic impact of the pandemic, certain news media outlets in Bangladesh were forced to cease operations during the outbreak (Anwar et al. 2020). A qualitative analysis revealed that the Digital Security ACT (2018) was used as a repressive tool, severely restricting the publications of Bangladeshi journalists. They had to adapt to new technologies and platforms to collect and share information. Even though all these problems had a significant negative impact on their physical and mental health, they were constantly afraid of losing their employment because many journalists lost their livelihoods during the epidemic without warning. Paycheck cutoffs, compensation reductions, incentives, and late payments had also become prevalent (Razu et al. 2024). Khan (2023) interviewed Bangladeshi media owners, editors, and journalists and found that the

circulation of the local media outlets fell 70%, and advertising revenue fell 50%. As a result, the media outlets were forced to fire journalists and withhold their salaries for months to cope with the budget cuts. Aside from the cost-cutting, the media outlets were pressurized by the government bodies, which brought adverse effects to the newsrooms (Khan, 2023).

There have been various studies conducted on the multi-dimensional challenges faced by journalists during the pandemic period. For the sake of survival, journalists had to go through plenty of changes, both self and organizational. However, most of the studies have been conducted at a global level. The problems journalists faced in Bangladesh and what sort of defense mechanisms they used to adapt to the new situation have not been discussed yet, which this study aims to address.

Research Objective and Research Questions:

The main objective of this research is to explore the problems Bangladeshi journalists had to face in their professional field during the COVID-19 pandemic along with shading light on how journalists have adapted themselves to the challenges.

In accordance with the objective, the study addresses the following research question:

RQ 1: What challenges have Bangladeshi journalists faced during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ 2: How do journalists adapt to challenges?

Theoretical Framework

Media Convergence Theory

Media convergence theory refers to the merging of different media, platforms, and technologies through digitization, as it explains the interconnection between information and new technologies used for communication purposes (Jenkins, 2008). According to this theory, changes in communication and information technology can reshape and redefine the pattern of interpersonal interaction. COVID-19 has changed the process of collecting and delivering news in several ways. During the pandemic, journalists no longer had access to huge gatherings, crowds, and face-to-face interviews. As a result, they had to come up with innovative ideas to cover news during COVID-19 with

the help of new technologies and make themselves accustomed to this new practice, which resembles the basic notion of media convergence theory.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The workplace hazards journalists are facing during the pandemic can be analyzed using this theory. W. Timothy Coombs introduced the theory, which suggests that crisis managers should address and respond to the threat posed by a crisis in an organization. Coombs has given the idea of three types of situational crisis clusters, i.e., the victim cluster, the accidental cluster, and the intentional cluster. In the victim cluster, the organization itself becomes a victim of a crisis that is beyond its control, i.e., natural disasters, pandemics, rumors, etc. The accidental cluster refers to the situation where the organization is responsible for the crisis, but the crisis is generated unintentionally or accidentally. Intentional clusters occur when the organization initiates a critical situation deliberately. Whatever the reason is, organizations can respond to a crisis with four different types of communication strategies: bolster, deny, diminish, and rebuild. To bolster communication, the organization motivates employees by reminding them of their loyalty and how it brings positive outcomes. This type of communication is believed to generate a positive vibe in the workplace during a crisis. In a denial strategy, the company denies the existence of any crisis and does not take any responsibility. In a diminish strategy, the organization comes up with a reasonable excuse to justify its decision in a crisis. While applying rebuild communication, the organization takes responsibility for the crisis and offers compensation to those who are affected (Amareesan, 2021).

In this study, the Media Convergence Theory is relevant as it illustrates how journalists adapted to new technologies and platforms during the pandemic, reshaping their newsgathering and dissemination practices. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is applied to analyze how journalists and media organizations managed the crisis, highlighting their strategic responses to the challenges posed by the pandemic and the varied nature of this crisis. Together, these theories provide a framework for understanding the adaptation and crisis management strategies of journalists during this period.

Methodology

Using a mixed-method research design, this study thoroughly analyzes the types of risks faced by professional journalists in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 epidemic by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The rationale for using a mixed-method approach lies in its ability to not only measure the extent and frequency of challenges through numerical data but also to gain deeper contextual insights through personal narratives and reflections.

Target Population & Scope

Professional journalists employed by Bangladesh's mainstream media outlets, including print, television, and online platforms, make up the study's target population. Participants include people who work as reporters, photojournalists, subeditors, and senior journalist leaders, among other journalistic positions. The scope of the study is national, encompassing journalists based in both Dhaka and regional areas, ensuring representation across geographical locations and media formats.

Sampling Technique & Size

For both study phases, a purposive sampling strategy was implemented. Participants with personal experiences of pandemic-related disruptions to journalistic work were carefully chosen as the sample.

In the first phase, a quantitative survey was conducted with a total of 60 professional journalists, distributed evenly across three categories: 20 from print media, 20 from broadcast media, and 20 from online platforms.

Survey Instrument and Data Collection

A standardized questionnaire was used as the survey tool to look into the financial, technological, psychological, and professional difficulties faced by journalists during the epidemic. To facilitate clarification, the questionnaire featured a few open-ended prompts in addition to closed-ended questions (multiple choice, Likert scales).

All participants' native Bengali was used as the survey's language to foster genuine interaction and improve understanding. During a period when physical mobility was restricted, the online platform (Google Form) used to distribute the questionnaire guaranteed accessibility, safety, and ease.

In-Depth Interviews

In the second phase, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with three senior journalists from different media backgrounds (one each from print, television, and online). These individuals were chosen because they actively participated in journalism during the COVID-19 crisis and had a wealth of professional experience (10+ years). Finding personal coping mechanisms and adaptation techniques was the goal of the interviews.

Because of persistent health and safety concerns, the interviews were conducted via online video conferencing software. With prior consent, each 45–60-minute interview was taped, and the transcripts were then transcribed for analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Prior to their involvement, participants were made aware of the goal and extent of the study. Respondents received guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality, and no personal information was revealed when the results were published. Participants' rights to privacy, withdrawal, and data protection are protected, and the study complies with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Findings

A total of four types of challenges were reflected in the survey response, which seemed to be the most predominant during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health Challenges

While answering whether they faced any direct health risk while roaming outside for news, 42% of the respondents replied affirmatively. However, most of them did not blame their respective offices, as most of them thought their office has done the best could have been done at that moment, like limiting physical present at office to reduce the risk of spreading virus, ensuring social distancing at workplace, checking body temperature & providing necessary hand sanitizing option etc. (Figure 1). Only 12.3% of the respondents said they were somewhat dissatisfied with their respective organizations' efforts (Figure 02).

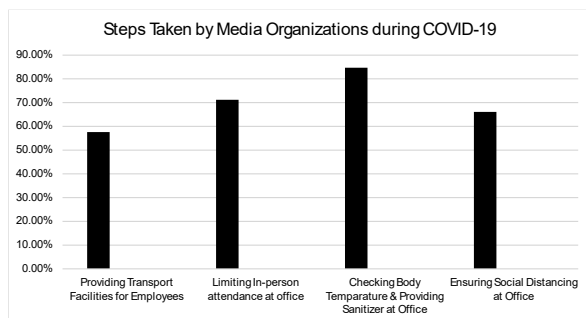


Figure 01: indicates the steps taken by the offices to ensure the safety of the employees.

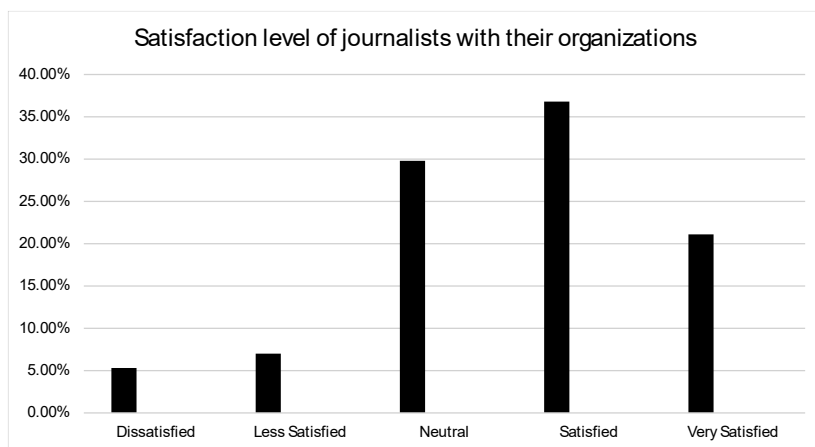


Figure 02: indicates the satisfaction level of employees with the steps taken by the office during Corona.

However, when it comes to the mental health of journalists, the situation is not satisfactory. When asked whether they suffered from mental stress during the lockdown, 75% of the respondents replied affirmatively. The survey result shows that media houses did not pay much attention to this. 41% said the office took the initiative to take care of their mental health, but the exact number of respondents said the office did not take any initiatives regarding this.

Professional Challenges

Journalists inevitably had to face several occupational challenges during this pandemic, which were visible from the results of the survey. 37% of the respondents said they had to work for a longer period compared to the pre-COVID time during this pandemic, and 29% said they had to work in other beats besides their beat because of the constant pressure of the office (Figure 03). Working from home was a completely new idea for journalists experienced at this time. The survey results indicate that the media industry may experience a shift in the future, as 37% of the respondents said the home office had a positive impact on their productivity.

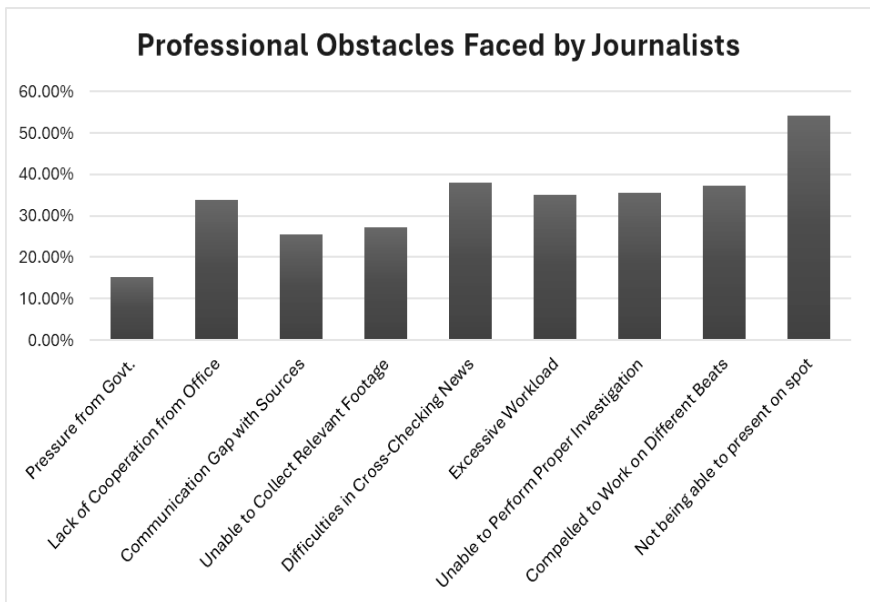


Figure 03: exhibits the obstacles journalists had to encounter while working in lockdown

Though the journalists faced plenty of new professional challenges, media houses were reluctant to address this issue, as many of them did not arrange any special training sessions for the journalists to adapt to this new situation. 63% of the respondents said their office

did not arrange any training sessions. Rather, journalists themselves took various steps to adapt to the changing situation, like developing various communication skills with the help of the internet, preparing mentally for the heavy workload, etc. Almost half of the respondents said the coronavirus pandemic harmed their overall quality of journalism.

Financial Challenges

Among the various types of challenges, journalists said the financial challenge was the one that hit hard on them. The salary was not the main problem; rather, the response says they were deprived of other financial benefits. More than half of the journalists did not receive a full festival allowance; however, the most concerning issue was that almost 44% of them did not receive a single penny of their entitled bonus, which is far from the ideal scenario. The same scenario was experienced in getting an annual increment, as more than half of the respondents didn't get it during the pandemic.

Technological Challenges

COVID-19 posed many new challenges in terms of the usage of technology. As it was not feasible to visit the sources physically all the time, journalists had to apply new techniques to collect SOT/Bite, mostly by using different digital tools. Interviews were conducted using various mediums, like Zoom, Viber, WhatsApp, Google Meet, MS Teams, etc. The usage of technology minimized the complexity of gathering information, as Google and other internet facilities made the work much easier for the journalists. Not being accustomed to many technological tools and platforms caused great difficulty at the beginning; however, with time, they managed to cope with the changing scenario. Most of the respondents said though the office did not take that many official steps to minimize technological challenges, they were motivated to face the challenge, and that's why equipped with the required technological knowledge and took the help of the content hub available in the digital world.

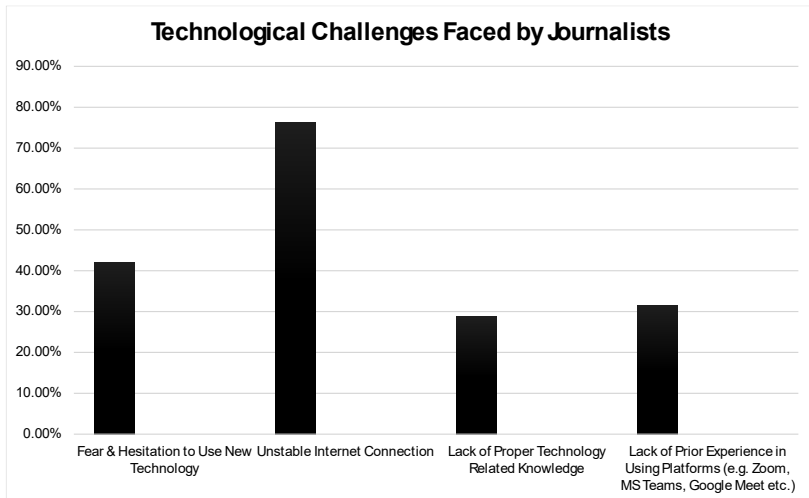


Figure 04: indicates the technological challenges faced by journalists during the pandemic.

Figure 04 indicates the types of challenges journalists mostly faced while using technology as a tool of journalism. 76.3% said internet instability was the major challenge. 31.6% of the respondents identified inexperience in using technology as another big challenge. Almost 29% said a lack of technological knowledge created challenges, and 42.1% said apprehension and hesitation in adapting to the new technology were tough for them to adjust to.

Findings from In-depth Interviews:

In the in-depth interview session, all three journalists were asked to focus on the specific challenges they faced during that time. The first respondent basically focused on the sudden professional adjustments they had to make, despite having no prior experience or knowledge of that particular issue. It caused professional uncertainty among them, as they were unsure about whether they would be able to adapt to the new demands of the media industry. He stated-

Journalism has always been tough, but things became even harder in the Covid period. Professionally, we were suddenly expected to become multimedia reporters overnight. One day

we were writing for print media; the next we were doing video, podcasts, social media — all without any formal training. The workload doubled, but recognition didn't.

The second respondent also shared concerns about technological shifts, how they affected their work style, and how financial uncertainties added more pressure to them.

Technologically, I had to start from scratch. I didn't even know how to use Google Meet when remote reporting became the norm. I had to teach myself video editing, social media analytics, and SEO just to stay relevant. Our office gave us some tools, but no real training. Honestly, it was my son who taught me how to use many of these apps. That's the level of support we received.

Financially, it's been tough. During COVID-19, my office implemented a hefty salary cut. Initially, we were told it would be temporary. But things did not change that much. I have two children and aging parents — this creates immense pressure. A few colleagues left journalism altogether and went into other sectors. I stayed because this is the only profession where I felt confident to work, but sometimes I wonder at what cost.

When asked to talk about the mental obstacles journalists had to endure during that challenging time, the third respondent became a bit emotional, as the COVID-19 outbreak took a heavy toll on them. For journalists working in the field, the constant risk of infection created constant mental distress. Many were compelled to cover hospitals, quarantine centers, and other spots without adequate protection. He stated,

I used to come home after covering COVID wards and lock myself in a separate room. I did not touch my daughter for weeks. The fear of infecting my own family haunted me constantly.

They also faced salary reductions, layoffs, and unpaid leave. This financial insecurity contributed directly to heightened anxiety and chronic stress.

Every month, I wondered if it would be my last. Rumors of layoffs kept us all on edge. I wasn't just scared of the virus — I was terrified of losing my job.

Discussion

Despite not being of the same frequency in terms of respondent size and geographical area, the findings of this study are quite closely related to the study conducted by ICFJ & Tow Center for Digital Journalism. These studies share some similar findings, which show that journalists across the globe experienced some common challenges while covering events during the pandemic.

The study findings indicate that insecurity over unemployment and other financial issues remained one of the most concerning issues for journalists across the world. The findings of the other two studies are the same. Other studies on journalists on the global level (IFJ, 2020; Rick & Hanitzsch, 2022) found similar results in terms of losing jobs and financial instabilities, and another study on Bangladeshi Journalists (Razu et al., 2024) concluded the same. The ICFJ study found that 67% of respondents were suffering from financial hardship during the pandemic, while this study found the ratio at 85%. Almost 58% of the respondents said that for almost two years during the pandemic, they were concerned about their financial stability, which is unfortunate, provided the effort they gave to spread the flow of misinformation/disinformation. The intense workload is another point that both studies, by ICFJ & Tow Center for Digital Journalism, found in similarity with this study. ICFJ study found it as the 3rd most challenging, whereas the current study found it as the 2nd most challenging. As journalists are working as front-liners in this critical time, they must be ensured financial security and provided with enough rest time between shifts.

A study conducted by Osmann et al. (2021) found that over 80% of the journalist respondents suffered from severe mental health issues during the pandemic, which is close to the findings of this study. Both the research, ICFJ & Tow Center for Digital Journalism, suggested that media houses should focus more on their employees' mental health and provide psychological counseling if needed. The respondents of this study also echoed the same suggestion. ICFJ study showed that 85% of respondents did not get any psychological counseling from their office during the pandemic, whereas this study shows that 75% suffered from mental health issues, but 41% did not get any attention from their office. As journalists must endure the continuous pressure of providing updated and accurate information as early as possible, concern about their mental health should be one of the main priorities. In the ICFJ study, 82% of the respondents

said employers did not provide adequate guidelines or resources to deal with the changing scenario, whereas this study showed that 63% of journalists did not get any official training or workshop sessions from their employers to deal with the challenges created in the Coronavirus scenario. As journalists play a pivotal role in disseminating accurate information to the audience, employers should arrange proper training for them so that they can adapt to the changing situation more comfortably.

When it comes to the point of using technology as a new tool for doing journalism, both studies represent an almost similar scenario. Not only journalists in Bangladesh, but also all over the world, are using modern technology to its fullest during this pandemic. They had to explore internet resources more than ever; had to conduct the interview via video calling or e-mails; had to rely more on institutional press notes, social media content, and user-generated content, which made reporting easier and tougher at the same time. Many journalists said they had to remain more active than usual on social media to map new information. For cross-checking this information, they had to toil hard as well, which is also aligned with the global phenomenon (Osman et al. 2021).

The findings from the interviews reflect many challenges that have been seen in previous studies. Consistent with Jamil (2020) and Papadopoulou & Maniou (2021), the journalists in this study faced political and technological challenges that created challenges in their job roles and lives. Journalists faced fear of legal threats, which led them to complete professional burnout.

Interview participants mentioned that the abrupt shift to digital platforms reflects the theoretical arguments of Media Convergence Theory (Jenkins, 2008). Journalists were not properly trained in digital journalism practices. The journalists in this study stated that media houses expected them to switch gears overnight from writing for print to managing videos, social media, and analytics. Reflecting Jenkins (2008), this study revealed the line between different forms of media blurs, as does the practice of constant adaptation to stay relevant.

From a crisis management standpoint, the findings of this study align with what Coombs explained in his Situational Crisis Communication Theory. The media houses from Bangladesh were found unprepared while combating the COVID-19 crisis. The houses offered little help to journalists, cut salaries, and increased workloads without prior announcement. Similar emotional and professional struggles with financial insecurities among

journalists were revealed in the studies by Posetti et al. (2020) and Osmann et al. (2021).

Although the previous studies focused on similar contexts, this study's findings help fill a noticeable gap in the literature by showing how journalists in Bangladesh experienced and adapted to the COVID-19 crisis that was as much personal as it was professional.

Conclusion

COVID-19's enormous scope and extent disrupted numerous industry conventions virtually instantly. As a result, journalists had to quickly adapt to new working methods while also grappling with the impact of the crisis on their personal as well as professional lives. They have faced several challenges in doing so, ranging from access to personal protective equipment (PPE), adapted equipment, and safety training, to the hardships and tribulations of working from home, to frequent difficulty gaining access to data, officials, and other sources. Despite this, there have been numerous instances of tenacity and useful reporting. By fusion between conventional journalistic standards and new chances for participation and creativity, journalists continue to meet the information demands of fatigued, weary, and fearful audiences.

This study adds to the investigation of the several degrees of effects on journalists' coverage of the COVID-19 epidemic and shows how these variables affect their capacity to handle various professional problems. On a regular basis, journalists' anxiety about health risks and mobility issues has an impact on how they report on the epidemic and their capacity to handle the influx of true and false information. This study identifies some key organizational factors, including threats to job security, a lack of financial, technological, and logistical resources, and a lack of journalistic training during the pandemic crisis, that have a significant impact on journalists' ability to deal with the 'infodemic'. In addition, this study identifies censorship by the authority and journalists' access to information restrictions as major factors influencing journalists' coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic and feeding the 'infodemic'.

The study aimed to identify and categorize the many risks that reporters from around the world encountered while covering the COVID-19 issue, as well as to catalog and examine fresh manifestations of these threats in the context of the pandemic crisis. One of the major findings is that journalists remained highly stressed regarding financial issues, like

loss of jobs, pay cuts, or festive bonus deductions. Another important finding is that many of the journalists said media organizations should be more diligent regarding the mental health issue of their employees, especially during the crisis period.

The COVID-19 communication ecology offers a space for analyzing the methods by which journalists carry out their work in a crisis. However, journalists must maintain consistency and adjust to the public's shifting expectations in the disaster communication ecosystem. Not only journalists but also editors and media house policymakers should be prepared to proactively handle any crisis, learning from the pandemic days. Unlike the pandemic situation, reporters, journalists, and editors' unions should play a better role in protecting their rights in times of crisis.

Limitations

While this study provides important insights into Bangladeshi journalists and their struggle during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study has certain limitations. The findings do not claim generalizability, as the sample size was relatively small and chosen based on accessibility. The study does not fully reflect the experiences of the broader journalists' community across different regions. The study finds key areas of challenges like health, financial, professional, and technological. It does not explore whether these effects vary by factors like gender, age, or job title. The participants of this study were mostly journalists; as a result, the perspectives of media owners and policymakers were not included. This leaves some gaps in understanding the institutional side of the crisis response. Also, this study only focused on the immediate effects of the crisis rather than the long-term consequences. Future studies should put emphasis on long-term consequences by following journalists over time to understand how they adapt and cope with challenges. Comparative studies can be done involving journalists from different regions, different genders, and different job roles.

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