Cyberbullying Against Women in the News Coverage of Bangladeshi News Media

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the news regarding cyberbullying against women on the Facebook pages of news media in Bangladesh. Content analysis was used as a method, while media framing was the theory of the study. A total of sixty news stories were selected from the Facebook pages of the *Daily Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Jamuna Television, Somoy Television, Bdnews24.com, and NewsBangla24*.com through purposive sampling techniques. The study revealed that most of the news stories (60 percent) were viewed as unfavorable to the victims of cyberbullying. Around 40 percent were treated as straight-jacket news with text-based and video programs. Approximately 25 percent were entertainment and 20 percent were criminal issues with celebrity actresses and police officials as sources of the news stories, respectively. The findings might play a precious role for the policymakers in identifying the victims of cyberbullying, particularly against women, and in making suitable policies for the news media of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh, cyberbullying, Facebook page, news, news media, women

Introduction

The growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), particularly Internet connectivity, has facilitated instant access to information through mobile devices. However, it has also accelerated the spread of rumors, which can lead to negative mental and physical health outcomes for social media users (Hazlyna, et.al, 2021). Cyberbullying is a significant societal problem affecting almost all social media users, especially women, who are frequently subjected to online harassment (Kabir, 2023).

Cyberbullying is defined as the act of "sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using digital communication devices, such as the Internet or social media" (Willard, 2004, p. 1). It can occur anonymously or involve groups using technology like smartphones, computers, or tablets (Abaido, 2019). In Bangladesh, this issue disproportionately affects women and girls. According to a report by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, 80% of women and girls aged between 14 to 22 have experienced cyberbullying, with teenagers making up a significant portion of cybercriminals. Additionally, 49% of school students were also affected by this harassment in Bangladesh (DMP, 2020).

Zaman et al. (2017) noted that approximately 73% of Bangladeshi women have been victims of online harassment, which negatively impacts both their personal and social lives. In similar contexts, Pohan et al. (2023) found that Indonesian news media frequently report on sexual harassment, with female students being the primary victims. Yang's study (2020) on media reporting of cyberbullying also emphasized that news coverage, like in *The Star*, helps increase public knowledge of preventative measures. Another study by Ringrose and Barajas (2011) explored how digital phenomena, including cyberbullying, impact women's identities. Muir et al. (2021) revealed that women are particularly vulnerable to online shaming, which can have long-term consequences. Similarly,

Felt (2017) and Mowly and Bahfen (2020) highlighted how media often oversimplifies cyberbullying cases, particularly those involving teen suicides. While existing research on cyberbullying is limited, especially in Bangladeshi news media, this study aims to address that gap by analyzing the news regarding cyberbullying against women on the Facebook pages of news media in Bangladesh.

Study Methods

This study was conducted on the Facebook pages of six news media in Bangladesh by following the content analysis method. The news media included two daily newspapers (*Daily Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Star*), two television channels (*Jamuna Television* and *Somoy Television*), and two online news portals (*bdnews24.com* and *NewsBangla24.com*). Television channels and online news portals were selected for their reliability, while newspapers were chosen for their highest circulation, as reported by the *Management Resource and Development Initiative* (MRDI, 2022). The study also used keyword searches such as 'cyber bullying', 'online bullying against women', cyberbullying against women on Facebook', 'women harassment on social media', and similar phrases to find relevant news stories on these Facebook pages. Ten recent news stories from each media outlet were chosen, resulting in a total of 60 news stories from January 2020 to December 2023, purposively. Descriptive statistics were used to design tables with frequency and percentage using Microsoft Excel.

Media Framing Theory

The theoretical framework bestowed by Media Framing Theory, introduced by Gregory Bateson in 1972, is a meta-communication method (Bateson, 1972, p. 197; Hallahan, 2008) that involves placing news items and story content within a known context (Arowolo, 2017). It involves choosing specific characteristics of a perceived reality and emphasizing them in a communication text, supporting issue diagnosis, logical analysis, ethical assessment, and treatment of specific items (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Framing is defined as "the process of drawing notice to some elements of truth while concealing others, which can contribute to various reactions" (Griffin, 2003) and "the selection of a limited number of thematically associated characteristics for presentation in the media narrative when a specific object is examined" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Several news elements frequently transmit frames. They include photo descriptions, an intro, subheadings, and the news (Tankard, 2001). Another four types of frames were: coverage of news stories (size and engagement), issues of news, sources of news, and tone of photos (Wong, 2004). The media framing theory was applied to the framing analysis of the portrayal of news, sources of news, structures of news, issues of news, types of news stories, etc. Figure 1 illustrates the research framework for this study.
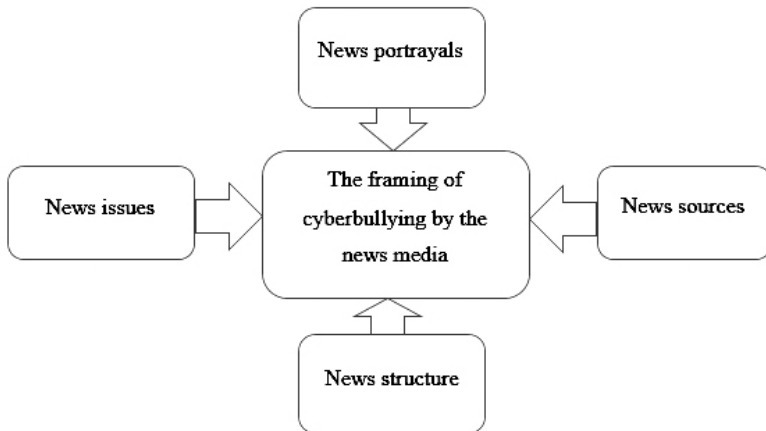
Source: Developed by the Researcher, 2024.

Findings and Analysis

Portrayal of News

The portrayal of news regarding cyberbullying against women posted on social media, especially the Facebook pages of

the media above outlets, has been investigated in this study. There are four types of news portrayed on the Facebook pages of each media news link with text, video link with text, news link only, and video link, respectively. Table 1 shows that 25 (41.67 percent) of the news were found up the news with text links. In addition, 16 (26.67 percent) were simply news links, and 11 (18.33 percent) were merely video links. On the other hand, eight (13.33 percent) were text-based news with video links.

Table 1

Portrayal of News

Category	Number	Percentage
Text and News link	25	41.67
News link	16	26.67
Video link	11	18.33
Text and Video link	8	13.33
Total	60	100.00

Source: Data received from Facebook pages -2023

For example, on the Facebook pages of Daily Prothom Alo, a news story with the headline 'Women are the most victims of cyber bullying' was posted with text and a news link. The Daily Star posted a headline of a news story, '73% of women face cybercrimes: Tarana,' with text and a news link. Only a news link headlined 'You are sick, your husband doesn't know, how does the sir of your other department know? -The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP)' was posted on the Facebook page of Jamuna Television. In addition, Somoy News TV posted a news story titled 'Cyber bullying; Many takes courage when I speak' on their Facebook page in video format. Moreover, a news story published on the Facebook pages of Bdnews24.com with the heading 'Apu Biswas at DB office: ate food, filed a complaint' with only a news link. In addition, a news item posted on the Facebook page of Newsbangla24.com, with the heading of 'Cyberbullying is increasing alarmingly,' is a news link with text.

Structure of News

The structure of news regarding cyberbullying against women issues was analyzed in the present study. There are mainly seven structures of news stories found in the published news stories: straight jacket news, opinion, interview, investigative news, interpretative news, program, feature, etc. The following Table 2 presents the structure of news stories posted on the Facebook pages of selected media outlets. The data revealed that 24 (40.00 percent) news articles were identified as straight-jacket news with inverted pyramid structures, 18 (30.00 percent) were opinions about different issues with cyberbullying against women, six (10.00 percent) were investigative news, and four (6.67 percent) were interviewed, respectively. In addition, two (3.33 percent) were interpretative news stories with several pieces of information about cyber bullying, and another three (5.00 percent) different programs and featured news stories were found from the published news.

Table 2

Structure of News

Category	Number	Percentage
Straight Jacket News	24	40.00
Opinion	18	30.00
Investigative News	6	10.00
Interview	4	6.67
Program	3	5.00
Feature	3	5.00
Interpretative News	2	3.33
Total	60.00	100.00

Source: Data received from Facebook pages -2023

According to the findings, straightjacket news mostly presents cyberbullying issues relating to women, celebrities, actors, actresses, students, teachers, police, etc., with different incidents like statements, complaints, legal actions, protests, press conferences,

rights, rape, crime, entertainment, campaigns, etc. On the other hand, investigative news stories cover the broad scenario of events with various analytical descriptions of cyberbullying issues. Moreover, interpretive news, opinion, and featured news describe an issue by providing more information and basic facts and evidence about a particular issue of cyber bullying. The interview and program describe an issue from someone's personal view with possible solutions that women are faced with on virtual media with the explosion of different social media platforms throughout the world.

For example, on the Facebook pages of "The Daily Prothom Alo", a news story titled "Women are the most victims of cyber bullying" was published, which was a special feature story. The Daily Star published a news story titled "Cyberbullying now adds to her trauma," which was an investigative news piece with an explanation of the issues of cyberbullying against women in Bangladesh. In addition, Jamuna Television posted a news story titled 'Sonali was raped before death! The haze is gradually increasing their Facebook page' with straight news. A video story posted on the Facebook page of Somoy News TV, with the heading of 'Countermeasures of Vabna against cyber bullying,' thought about the consequences of cyberbullying against women on social media. A news story published on the Facebook pages of Bdnews24.com with the heading of 'Relationship, marriage, and divorce, not a crime: Mithila' was also an opinion story. In addition, news items posted on the Facebook page of Newsbangla24.com, with the heading 'Facebook is floating under the pressure of protest,' were investigative news about religious issues in society. This story describes the situation of Bangladesh from several perspectives, considering this complaint.

Issues of News

The present study exposed different issues of news relating to cyberbullying against women on the Facebook pages of the

mainstream media in Bangladesh. After analyzing the news stories there are twelve issues including entertainment, crime, legal, social, religious, environment, rape, sports, campaign, education, transgender, and lifestyle has been portrayed in the Bangladeshi news media. Table 3 indicates that 15 (25.00 percent) news articles were found on entertainment issues, 12 (20.00 percent) were criminal issues, 10 (16.7 percent) were legal and social issues, and three (5.00 percent) were religious and education issues, respectively. and two (3.30) news were from sports issues; on the other hand, only one (1.7 percent) news was found from campaign, rape, transgender, and lifestyle, and environment, respectively.

Table 3

Issues of News

Category	Number	Percentage
Entertainment	15	25.00
Crime	12	20.00
Legal	10	16.67
Social	10	16.67
Education	3	5.00
Religious	3	5.00
Sports	2	3.33
Campaign	1	1.67
Lifestyle	1	1.67
Rape	1	1.67
Transgender	1	1.67
Environment	1	1.67
Total	60	100.00

Source: Data received from Facebook pages-2023

The findings confirmed that most of the news about cyberbullying against women has been portrayed as entertainment and criminal issues. Some of the news was also from different legal and religious issues, but only one percent of the news was from

campaign, education, transgender, and lifestyle issues, respectively, from the selected news from the study.

For example, on the Facebook pages of Daily Prothom Alo, a news story with the headline 'Why did he write ‹Don›t Love Me Beach› said Parimony' That was an entertainment-related issue. The Daily Star posted a news story with the heading of 'Cyberbullying now adds to her trauma' that was a legal issue. On the Facebook pages of Jamuna Television, a news story with the headline 'Caste discrimination, body shaming is fading merit and be confident in intellectual practice, not as women' reflected social-related issues. In addition, Somoy News TV posted a news story titled '73 percent of online harassment victims are women' on their Facebook page that was about criminal issues. Moreover, a news story published on the Facebook pages of Bdnews24.com with the heading of 'The police informed that a leader of Dhaka District North Chaatra League has been arrested in the case of cow theft' was a crime-related issue. In addition, a program presented on the Facebook page of Newsbangla24.com, with the heading of 'Women are more affected by cyber-attacks' was also a legal issue.

Sources of News

The present study also investigated the different sources of the portrayal of news about cyberbullying against women on social media. Table 4 indicates that there were fourteen sorts of sources found in the selected news 18 (30.00 percent) were celebrity actresses used as a source of the news on cyberbullying issues, nine (15.0 percent) were police, and five (8.3 percent) were lawyers used as sources for consulting different legal issues relating to the cyber world. Furthermore, four news stories (6.7 percent) were cited by students, while three more news stories (5.00 percent) were found by journalists, lawmakers, and unreliable sources of relevant news. Only two (3.30 percent) used actors, teachers, government officials, family, women rights

activists, and victims of cyber as a source of different news, but only one (1.7 percent) used newsroom editors and press releases for the sources of different news.

Table 4

Sources of News

Category	Number	Percentage
Actress	18	30.00
Police	9	15.00
Lawyers	5	8.33
Student	4	6.67
Journalist	3	5.00
Victims	3	5.00
Lawmaker	3	5.00
No Sources	3	5.00
Teacher	2	3.33
Actor	2	3.33
Family	2	3.33
Officer	2	3.33
Women Rights Activists	2	3.33
Press Release	1	1.67
Newsroom Editor	1	1.67
Total	60	100.00

Source: Data received from Facebook pages -2023

According to the findings of the study, most of the news regarding cyberbullying against women used different celebrity actors, actresses, police, lawyers, journalists, students, teachers, women rights activists, and the victims of cyberbullying as a source. Nevertheless, journalists from various newsrooms, parliamentarians, and mainstream media outlets in Bangladesh each discovered a single news item.

Types of News

The Facebook pages of selected media outlets posted a variety of news stories regarding cyberbullying against women in the news media of Bangladesh. Positive news stories and negative news stories were separated from the total amount of news. News items that positively support the victims of cyberbullying were considered positive, while the news that is unfavorable to the victims of cyberbullying was considered negative. The two types of news stories are shown in table 5. There are 24 (40.0 percent) news stories that were treated as positive in favor of the victims of cyberbullying. On the other hand, the remaining 36 (60.0 percent) stories were considered negative, which is uncomplimentary to the victims of cyber harassment on virtual media.

Table 5

Types of News

Category	Number	Percentage
Negative	36	60.00
Positive	24	40.00
Total	60	100.00

Source: Data received from Facebook pages-2023

The findings indicate that most of the news stories posted on the Facebook pages of the Bangladeshi mainstream media were treated negatively, which is harmful to the victims of cyber-harassment. For example, the news report on The Daily Prothom Alo titled 'Raise your voice, protest against harassment' was supportive of raising awareness against cyberbullying against women, while 'Women are more victims of cyberbullying' was negatively posted on the Facebook of the Daily Prothom Alo. Moreover, the news article in the Daily Star titled "Digital Sexual Harassment in Digital Bangladesh" was a favorable post on cyber toward women on social media. Jamuna Television posted a news story with the heading 'Nipun acts as a sex worker!' that was negatively portrayed on their Facebook pages.

On the other hand, Somoy News TV.com published a news story with the heading of 'Mithila called for an end to cyberbullying' and was positively called upon to stop cyberbullying against women on social media. Bdnews24.com also positively posted on news titled 'Cyber Harassment: Chanchal Chowdhury's Different Protest' about the cyberbullying against women on social media. News items on the Facebook pages of NewsBangla24.com posted with the heading of 'Women are more affected by cyber-attacks' were a positive sentiment toward the issues of cyberbullying against women on social media.

Discussion

Although cyberbullying is a global phenomenon, there is inadequate coverage of news relating to cyberbullying against women in the news media of Bangladesh. The present study examined sixty news stories of cyberbullying against women on the Facebook pages of six media outlets published between 2020 and 2023. Previous studies revealed that Facebook is the most available information source for social media users worldwide (Bene, 2017; Silver & Matthews, 2017). Several studies were found as a source of news, the popularity of Facebook is increasing daily, which means more people are consuming news from Facebook currently (Lampe et al., 2012; Shearer & Gottfried, 2017).

This study also used Media Framing Theory to analyze how cyberbullying is covered in the media, focusing on Western nations and analyzing how it is influenced by media (Balakrishnan, 2017). Previous studies have mostly focused on political communication, with little evidence supporting its application to social issues (Goffman, 1974). The study also found that most news stories are unfavorable to cyberbullying victims, with text-based and video stories being the most popular content. This suggests that social media users are slightly more visually biased, as previously claimed, due to the video's visual appeal (Lee et al., 2009).

Conclusion

The study reveals that Bangladeshi news media often misrepresents the news regarding cyberbullying against women, focusing more on celebrities, lawyers, and police officials while overlooking the general people. Coverage tends to highlight students, teachers, and showbiz figures. While offering valuable insights, the study is limited by its small sample size, which may not fully capture media portrayals of cyberbullying against women in the context of Bangladesh. It recommends that news media prioritize publishing cyberbullying stories on Facebook to boost user engagement. Further research could explore diverse user reactions to provide a clearer picture of cyberbullying against women in the context of Bangladesh. The news media can help combat cyberbullying by raising awareness and educating the general people of Bangladesh.

Acknowledgments

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