



MEASUREMENT OF MILITANCY NEWS COVERAGE IN THE NATIONAL DAILIES OF BANGLADESH

Mamunor Rashid¹ and Md. Motiur Rahman^{2*}

¹*Mass Communication and Journalism Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna-9208, Bangladesh*

²*Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Bangladesh*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to measure the militancy news coverage in the national dailies of Bangladesh. Content analysis method is used to get information. The purposive sampling technique is used in this study where agenda setting theory is applied. A total of five national dailies are taken as samples in this study. Those are The Daily Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, The Daily Ittefaq, The Daily Kaler Kantbo, and The Daily Janakantha. Publications from 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2019 of these five dailies are included in this study. All sorts of militancy-related news are counted here and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. This study unearths that five dailies publish about 1,62,000 pieces of news in a year. Among them, the number of militancy related news is 377 which is far fewer compared to other news. Here only 0.23% of the news is regarding militancy. Out of five dailies, The Daily Janakantha publishes the highest news regarding this issue. On the other hand, the Daily Star has the lowest coverage. Daily Prothom Alo, Daily Ittefaq and Daily Kalerkantbo secure second, third and fourth position respectively among the five dailies on publishing militancy news in a year. Here most of the news is one-columned. Again, almost one-third of the news is without photos. Besides, the highest numbers of news are published in the inner pages. Here November has the highest coverage and August has the lowest. The study also explores that most of the militancy-related stories are presented fairly, systematically, and well-balanced. The study recommends that the daily newspapers of Bangladesh should increase the publication of militancy news in a constructive manner with more sincerity.

Keywords: Militancy, News, Newspaper, Coverage, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Militancy refers to using violence or aggressiveness, usually to support a cause. It can be defined as the quality or state of being militant. Militancy is also defined as the use of violent or hostile methods to support a political or social reason (Anwuri and Olanrewaju, 2020). It is one of the most talkative issues in this present era. It is a matter of concern for the peace-loving people around the world. Militants are active in different countries with different ideologies, names, and systems (Qaim, 2018).

One of the serious matters in Bangladesh is militancy. When Afghan war was started in 1980s Bangladesh started becoming victim to militancy. Around 3000 people joined at that war from Bangladesh. During this period some people met Usama Bin Laden and they started militancy operation in Bangladesh after returning Bangladesh (Manik, 2005).

A lot of militant groups are active in Bangladesh in different names. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), Harkat-ul-jihad-al islami bangladesh (Huji-B), Islamic State (IS), Ansar ul Islam, Allar Dol, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Al-Qaeda, Bangladesh, Shahadat E Alhikma, Islamic Solidarity Front, Tamiruddin Bangladesh, Shahadat E Nabuyah, Towhidi Trust, Al Harat Al Islamia, Muslim Millat, Al Khidmat hijbul Mahdi, Al Markajul Al Islami, Shahaba Parisahad, Katel Bahini, Kalema Jamat, Forkan Movement, World Islamic Front, Sariah

*Corresponding author: <motiurrahmanfaisal@gmail.com>
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council, Bangladesh Anti-Terrorist Party, Zaid Al Qaeda are among them (“*Bangladesher Joto*,” 2019). Most of the militants are from 20-30 years old and students by profession (Riaz, 2008).

A huge number of students are missing now, and nobody knows their present condition, not even the members of their family. Law enforcers suspect that those students have joined any of the militant groups (Sultan, 2022).

Media are covering these incidents from different angles in recent days. The study is conducted to explore some objectives. First of all, its aim is to measure the quantity of militancy news coverage in the national dailies of Bangladesh. Secondly it tries to identify the style of militancy news coverage in the dailies of Bangladesh and to unfold the nature of presentation of militancy news published in the dailies of Bangladesh.

Theoretical framework

This study is closely related to agenda-setting theory. This theory suggests that the media plays a significant role in influencing which topics or issues are considered important by the public (McCombs and Reynolds, 2002). Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw proposed this theory in 1972. This theory highlights the role of media not in telling people what to think, but in influencing what to think about (Entman, 2007).

This theory operates on three levels:

Media Agenda: This refers to the issues and topics that media outlets choose to cover and present to their audiences. Through their editorial decisions, media outlets determine what information is accessible to the public.

Public Agenda: This is the set of issues that the public considers significant. It is shaped, to a great extent, by the media agenda. The prominence and frequency of media coverage influence which topics the public deems important.

Agenda-setting theory doesn't assert that media dictate people's opinions, but it underscores the media's power to shape the emphasis and priority attached to issues. The media's role is particularly crucial when individuals lack firsthand experience or direct information about an issue.

Policy agenda: There are lots of issues in media which are introduced by the policy maker of a society. Policy maker's decisions, speech, opinion regarding any issues is also covered by media (McCombs et al., 1972).

As media publish the militancy related stories depending on their own style, agenda setting theory is most appropriate in this study.

Literature Review

To investigate the militant news coverage in newspapers, some studies were conducted in different countries in different angles. A study was conducted in Nigeria to find out the overall quality of militancy news. Here Onyekosor (2015) explored that having a few flaws, fair and balanced reporting is covered in Niger Delta. It also found that the newspapers give low importance to reporting on militancy in this area and do not approve of militancy as an important option for settling down the problems in Niger Delta.

A study was published from India to investigate into the frame of the militancy related news. Kaul and Saxena (2022) stated that the Media to publish the fight in the nationalist frame, reporting basically on how authority is confronting militancy. They also said reports seemed concerned with detailing diseases, actions of stone palters and the administration's move to regulate the militancy, but sources quoted in most news were from the authority.

In another study Ebim (2017) said that the range to which the speech of media tagging has affected the overall discourse of rebel activities as published in the Nigerian newspaper. The study also said that tagging in the media is critical and can cause alienation. The study also reveals that speech use and the selections made either capture or worsen a situation, particularly in a crisis or disordered area.

In Malaysia a study was conducted regarding Islam and terrorism entitled. Here Yusof et al. (2013) said that after the Twin Tower attack international media began publishing news which made link between Islam and Terrorism. Another study by Powell (2018) entitled Framing Islam/Creating Fear: An Analysis of U.S. Media Coverage of Terrorism from 2011–2016 says Muslim terrorists are framed in on way and non-Muslim are another way.

To investigate into the placement of militancy news a study was conducted in Nigeria. In that study Amenaghawon (2018) said that most of the militant stories are placed on the inside pages, instead of the cover or

back pages. It also says that the media absorbed on instant incidences in the Niger Delta, rather than publishing detailed information.

Regarding war and terrorism, some studies have been carried out. Hussain and Munawar (2017) explored Pakistani media are more vulnerable to conflict journalism framing than peace journalism framing in publishing information. Regarding the position of news stories, they stated that most of the information becomes published at the front page.

Based on Indian conflict, a study was published in 2017. Kumari and Kohli (2017) said Daily Excelsior, a Jammu centric highly circulated newspaper, narrates pro-state news. On the other hand, Greater Kashmir narrates pro-separatist news.

On Gaza crisis Firdous (2009) conducted a study on the contents of CNN and Al Jazeera. He found that these two media frame the incident in Gaza from two different angles.

Another study was conducted to unfold the sources of the conflict's news in Nigeria. Here Gever et al. (2018) said the privately owned media used sources from sociocultural and political groups, on the other hand government-owned media used mainly sources from the government in the news. Besides the economic frame was used by the private media and the conflict frame was promoted by the government-owned media.

To know the media influence on people Evans (2010) conducted a study. He said that the media affects policymakers both indirectly and indirectly. Indirectly is its influence on public opinion, and directly, is making perception of 'reality'.

Here we found that the newspapers give low importance to reporting on militancy. Muslim terrorists are framed in one way and non-Muslim are another way. Most of the militant stories are placed on the inside pages, instead of the cover or back pages. We also found different media frame the same incident in different angles. It is also found that private and public media take two different types of sources for militancy related news.

Numerous studies were conducted on militancy in different countries, but no study was conducted in Bangladesh on this issue. We think this study will contribute to know the militancy news coverage in Bangladesh.

Method and Materials

The Content Analysis Method has been administered in this research. A coding sheet was made to collect information. The data was collected from dailies and those were collated and analyzed in Microsoft Excel.

Population

All daily newspapers of Bangladesh are the sample of this study. These dailies are national and published from the capital of Bangladesh-Dhaka. There are 254 national dailies published from Dhaka ("Bangladesh Newspapers," 2023). All of these are the population of this study.

Sample

Purposive sampling technique is used in this study. A total of five national dailies are taken as samples in this study. Those are The Daily *Prothom Alo*, The Daily Star, The Daily *Ittefaq*, The Daily *Kaler Kantbo*, and The Daily *Janakantha*. Publications from 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2019 of these five dailies are included in this study. About 1800 issues of these five national dailies are used here as the sample.

Results

The key findings of the study are described here one by one.

Total news regarding militancy

Figure-1 shows the total number of militancy related news covered in five national dailies. These dailies covered 377 militancy related news in one year. About 1,62,000 pieces of news were published in five dailies in a year. Among them only 377 pieces were regarding militancy which is only 0.23% compared to other segments of news. The ratio of covering news of the five dailies was not the same. The Daily *Janakantha* published the highest news regarding this issue and the Daily Star published least news on this issue.

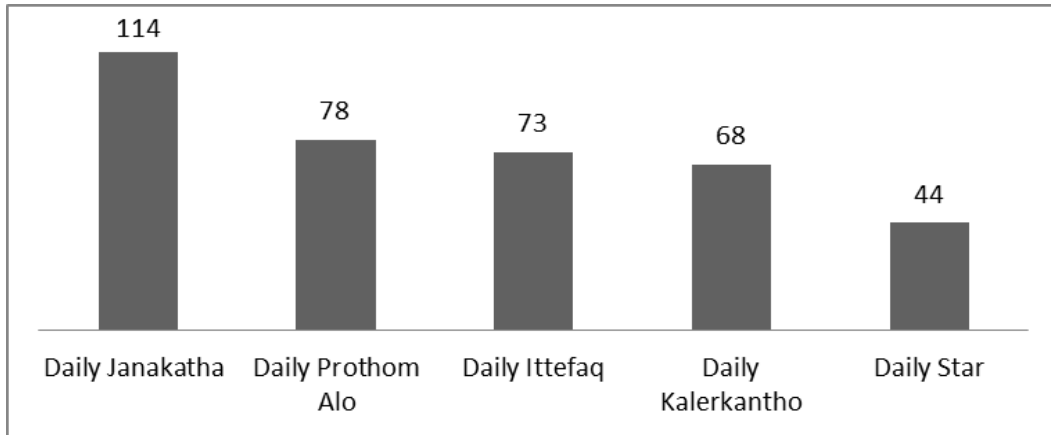


Figure 1. Numbers of news covered in the 5 dailies.

Column wise news coverage

All news of the five dailies was not published in the same way, same column, and same manner. There are varieties in presentation, especially in column. All news was between one column to five columns. Out of 377 pieces of news, the number of single columned news is 161, double columned 143, triple columned 42, four columned 16 and 15 news were five columned. There are also 12 special stories among 377 pieces of news.

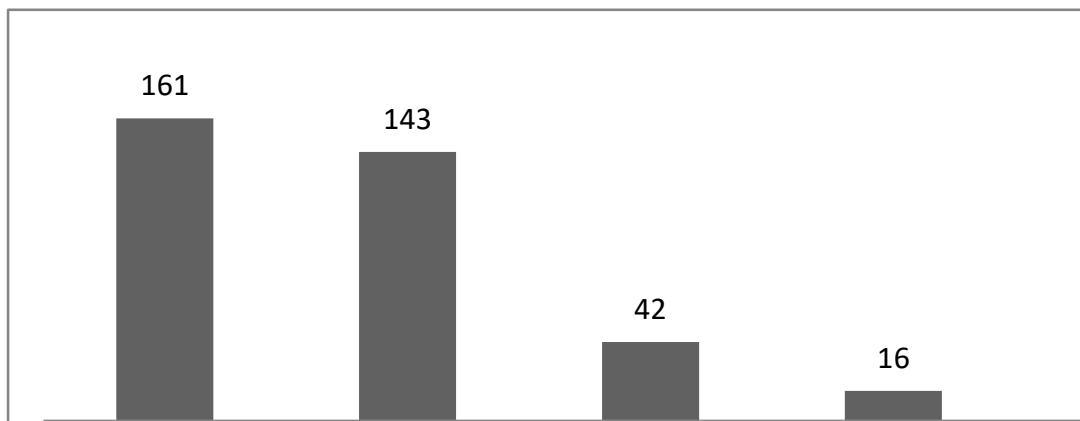


Figure 2. News treatment by positioning size.

Total Editorials and post editorials

Every newspaper covers different types of editorials. Basically, these editorials are written by the prominent personalities of the relevant field. Sociologists, academicians, human rights activists, veteran political person, prominent journalists, members of the editorial board of a house as well as victims pass their constructive opinion regarding militancy. Their writings are displayed with great importance in the newspapers. In the five dailies a total of 52 editorials were published in different times.

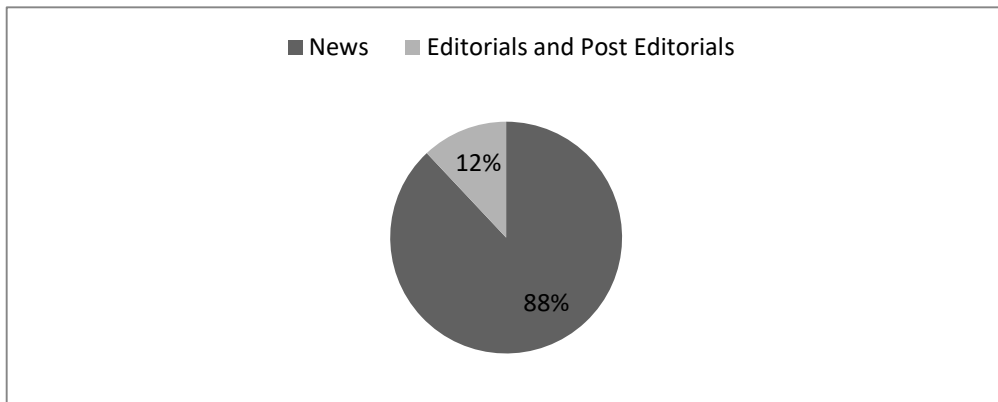


Figure 3. Comparative presentation between news and post editorials.

Photo used in the news

A photo is more powerful than thousands of words. It can enhance the attraction of news easily. This news also covers photos according to the needs. Relevant photos were used in 139 (36.88%) news and the rest 238 pieces of news (63.12%) were without photo. Among the photos some were colored, and some were not colored.

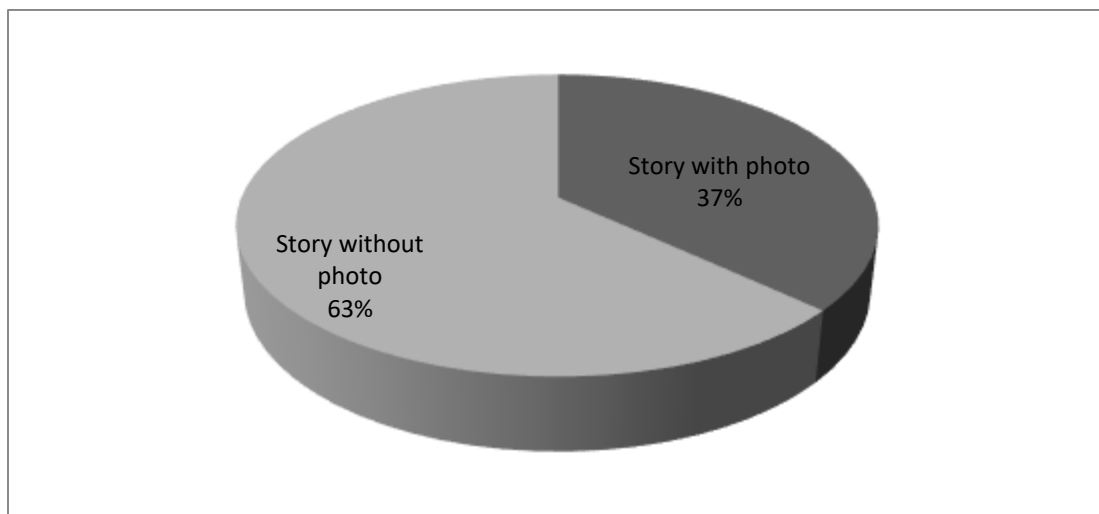


Figure 4. Photograph covering in the news story.

Position of the news

The position of the news denotes the importance of the story. All news was not published on the same page. A total of 377 pieces of news have been covered in different pages of the newspapers. Obviously the first page has another priority. In the first page, 144 (38.20%) news has been published. There is also extra priority of the main news which is known as lead story or lead news. Lead news is the most important news of a newspaper. Among 144 news, 17 news (11.81%) became lead story. In the last page 66 pieces of news were published and the rest 167 pieces of news were published in the inner pages.

Table 1. News treatment by positioning page

Position	Number	Percentage
First Pages	144	38.2%
Second Page	66	17.51%
Inner Pages	167	44.30%

Monthly news coverage of 5 dailies

Figure 5 shows the monthly coverage of militancy related news in the five dailies. Here November has the highest coverage of militancy news. Out of 377 pieces of news 59 (15.64%) news regarding militancy was published in this month. March has the second top coverage. In March 2019, 47 pieces of news were published. But August has the lowest coverage. Only 5.30% of news of militancy was published in this month. Again, June has the second lowest coverage.

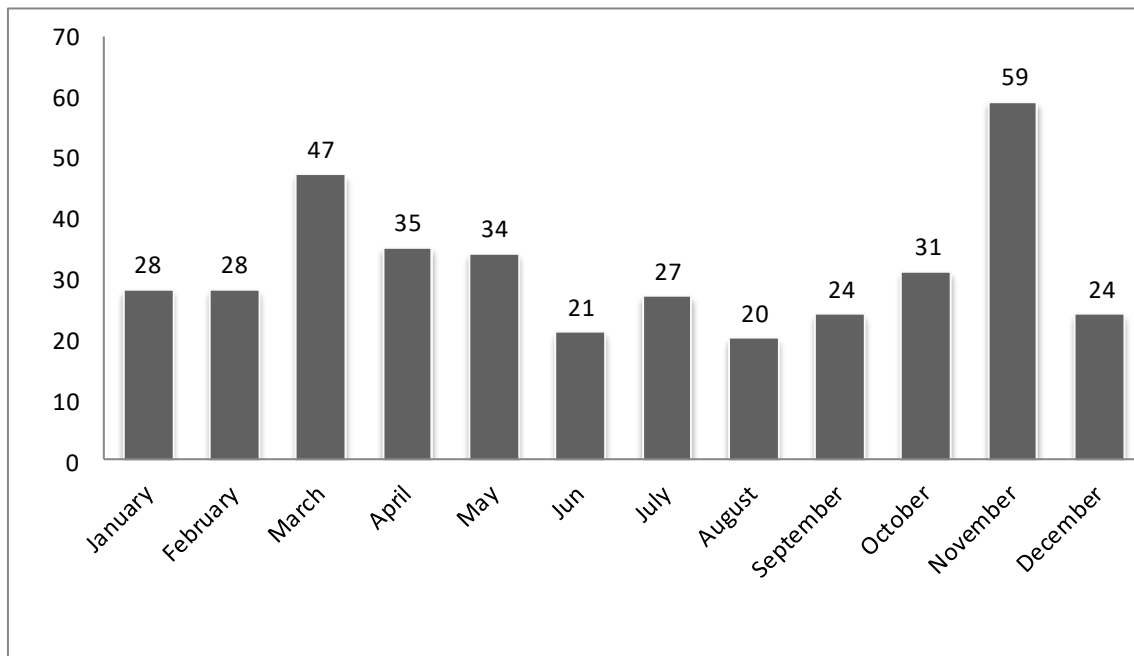


Figure 5. Militancy news presentation in the newspapers.

Sources of the news

Most of the news stories have proper sources. Victims, accused, law enforcers, government authority, non-government authority, specialists, mass people all have been used as sources. Despite these named sources, some stories used some unnamed sources.

Nature of the news

Different types of militancy news were published in these five dailies. Those are militant arrest, attack or death anniversary, case news, drive of law enforcers, militant attack, missing from home, leaving country, conference/seminar against militancy, human chain against terrorism, speech of PM against terrorism and militancy, court verdict, opinion of specialist etc. Hard, soft, special, follow up, interpretative, investigative news also covered in the five dailies.

Mostly used words in the news

Militancy, active militant, suicide, female, religion, JMB, susceptible, terrorism, extremist, court, police, arrest, remand, interrogation, capital punishment, imprisonment, chaotic, IS, explosive, terrorist, jihadi books these are mostly used words in militancy related 377 stories of these five dailies.

Coverage of the Daily *Prothom Alo*

Daily *Prothom Alo* published 78 militancy related news in the whole year. Among the five newspapers Daily *Prothom Alo*'s position is second and 21 percent. Among the news, 23 were published on the first page, 15 pieces of news was on the last page and 40 was published on the inner pages. There were 29 pictures with the news and the rest 49 news was without picture. There were 3 special stories and 12 editorials, and 2 lead stories based on militancy. The treatment of the news is not same. Here 35 pieces of news got a single column, 28 double columns, 9 three columns and 6 pieces of news get four columns treatment. But no news of Daily *Prothom Alo* regarding militancy got five columns.

Coverage of the Daily Star

Daily star is the top circulated English newspaper in Bangladesh. This newspaper covered 44 news articles on militancy in a year and it had the least coverage among the five dailies. All news was published on different pages. Daily Star published 23 pieces of news on the first page where 15 were published in last page and the rest 6 pieces of news were published in inner page. Lucrative photos with relevant captions were published with 13 pieces of news and the rest 31 news were without photo. Among 44 news stories 21 were single columned, 17 were double columned and 6 were triple columned. There was no news of four or five columns. There were also 3 special stories and two lead stories regarding militancy in a year.

Coverage of the Daily *Kaler Kantho*

The Daily *Kaler Kantho* has emphasized publishing militancy news. It published a total of 68 news reports on this issue in a year and captured 4th position among the five dailies. This daily covered 29 pieces of news in the first page and among them 7 were lead news. On the other hand, 20 in the last page and the rest 19 pieces of news were published in the inner pages. Among 68 news articles 25 were photo based while 43 pieces of news did not have any photo. Out of 68 pieces of news 4 was special story. We also found that there were 26 single columns and 29 pieces of double columned news on this issue in a year. There were also 8 pieces of third columned news and 3 pieces of fourth columned news. This newspaper also published 2 five columned news with great importance.

Coverage of the Daily *Janakantha*

It has the highest coverage of militancy news among these five dailies. On this issue the Daily *Janakantha* published 114 pieces of news. Among 114 pieces of news, relevant photos were attached in 43 pieces of news and the rest 71 pieces of news were without photo. In the first page 49 pieces of news were published and among them two became lead stories. In the back page 47 pieces of news were published while 18 were published in the inner page. It means Daily *Janakantha* emphasizes militancy news more. For this reason, it covered this issue on the first page more than any other daily newspaper. All news was in a different style and format. For this reason, we can see covering the story in different forms of column. There are 38 news articles which were one column. The Daily *Janakantha* published double columned news more and the number of news was 49. There were also some three and four column news, and the numbers were 8 and 6 respectively. It also covered 13 five columned news which is the highest among the five dailies.

Coverage of the Daily *Ittefaq*

The Daily *Ittefaq* is one of the oldest and prominent newspapers in Bangladesh. It also published militancy related news with great importance. It published 73 pieces of news on this issue and the position among these five dailies is third. Among the 73 news articles 29 had photos and captions and the others 44 pieces of news did not have any photos. These were covered on different pages. With great importance 25 pieces of news were published in the first page but there were no lead story from these. It covered 11 news articles on the last page and the greatest number of

news was published in the inner pages and its number was 37. There is also variation of treatment in the column. There were 41 single columned news, 20 double columned, 11 triple columned and only one fourth columned news regarding this event but there is no fifth column news on militancy in the Daily *Ittefaq* in that year.

Discussion

This study observes that most of the militancy related stories are presented fairly, systematically, and well balanced. Onyekosor (2015) found the similar scenario in the newspapers of Niger Delta. He said that Nigerian newspapers published militancy news in a fair, balanced, and responsible manner in the Niger Delta despite some flaws.

Here victims, accused, law enforcers, government authority, non-government authority, specialists, mass people are used as the sources. On the other hand, Gever et al. (2019) found the similar results in her study conducted in India occupied Kashmir where both government and non-government sources were used in the news.

This study also unearths that out of 377 pieces of news, 144 pieces of news (38.20%) were published in the first page and 66 (17.51%) were published in the last page and the rest 167 pieces of news (44.30%) were published in the inner pages. But the study Amenaghawon (2018) found different results in his study. He said that the Nigerian newspapers published most of the militant news on the inside pages, instead of the cover or back pages.

The current study also found that all five-newspaper published news giving lots of suggestions, tips, and techniques to prevent militancy in Bangladesh. Kaul and Saxena (2022) showed similar results. They said that media organizations have a habit to present the battle in nationalist frame. But we see a different scenario in Jammu Kashmir. The Jammu based Daily Excelsior reports pro-state stories and Kashmir based Greater Kashmir reports pro-separatist news against the state. Again, Hussain and Munawar (2017) said Pakistani media are prone more towards war journalism framing than peace journalism framing.

Most militancy stories are about militant arrest, attack or death anniversary, drive of law enforcers, militant attack, conference/seminar against militancy, human chain against terrorism, etc. where Kaul and Saxena (2022) found almost same thing in their study. Kashmir newspaper covers deaths connected with militancy, movements of stone palters and government's struggles to control the militancy.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the coverage of militancy news in the national dailies of Bangladesh. Finally, the study satisfies unearthing the militant news coverage investigating five prominent dailies of Bangladesh. This study finds a total of 377 militancy related news in the year of 2019. Among them the Daily *Janakantha* published the highest news, and the Daily Star published the least news on this issue. During 2019 militancy news was published most in the month of November but in August there was the least coverage.

We know, media are the fourth state of a nation. It could contribute to prevent militancy of a nation by different means. Militancy news coverage is very poor compared to other news. As militancy has become one of the biggest threats of Bangladesh, newspaper should increase militancy news coverage in a constructive way. Anyone can be victim to militancy if the news was not written properly as militancy is a sensitive issue. So, newspapers should be more alert during covering militancy. Youths are being targeted for militancy. Newspaper can publish different anti-militancy news to save the youth of Bangladesh from militancy. Finally, the findings from this research will contribute to future studies. We hope conducting more research and adopting proper measures on militancy news coverage will contribute to prevent militancy from Bangladesh.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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