

Journalism in the Time of 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. 60 working journalists -20 each from print, electronic, and online media- were surveyed profoundly. Also, in-depth interviews with three journalist leaders were conducted to investigate this matter deeply. The findings suggested four types of challenges were the most dominant- health, professional, financial, and technological. Most of the respondents echoed similarly 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

Access to information is one of the most basic rights of citizens in a democratic state. Being the fourth estate, the media fulfills the duty of providing information to the audience irrespective of the situation. However, the urge for timely and accurate information reaches its peak amid any crisis. A significant increase in readership can be observed during any political or health crisis. In this era of rapid advancement of technology and social media, misinformation and rumors may remain responsible for deteriorating the crisis unless the flow of accurate information stays active in traditional media. That is where mainstream news media's role becomes exigent, as it can influence mass people with accurate information and intermit the flow of misinformation, by strengthening its gatekeeping capability.

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 duty 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 the countless challenges that they have 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 down fall of circulation worldwide, journalists faced economic challenges also (Radcliffe,2021).

Since the first day of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, journalists have relentlessly fought to raise public awareness about the fatal virus and keep them updated about new data and instances. Like many other sectors, Covid-19 has hit hard on the media industry as well. The pandemic has been deadly to many journalists and newsrooms worldwide, as well as jobholders in a variety of professions. According to ICFJ (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic had a subversive impact on many journalists and newsrooms worldwide, as well as jobholders in a variety of professions. The study, conducted among 1406 reporters from 125 countries, revealed that 80% of the respondents are facing negative psychological effects due to the pandemic, and 60% of them believe that their jobs are less secure than before COVID-19.

The situation in Bangladesh was no exception. Journalism as a profession in Bangladesh faces challenges like political censorship and the decline of circulation frequently. 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 of working under such a fatal health emergency. As a result of the pandemic, several newspapers in Bangladesh have been

forced to halt publishing. This has exacerbated the profession's insecurity, and local journalists' livelihoods have been in more jeopardy than ever before. With layoffs, irregular salaries, salary arrears, journalist fatalities, and torture, the industry was in jeopardy (Bashudev& Beauty, 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 the 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

The coronavirus pandemic has significantly impacted every aspect of society, and journalism is no exception. In a study, Sujoko (2022) discussed the challenges of battling rumors, misinformation, and disinformation by journalists while covering news. With many mainstream media getting shut down in the earlier phase of the pandemic, people heavily relied on social media for information experienced a widespread 'infodemic'. This 'infodemic' even caused an increase in vaccine hesitancy, which the WHO even listed as one of the top ten global health dangers over two years before the Covid-19 vaccines were approved (Wysonge, et. al, 2022).

A countrywide survey conducted on information consumption practices showed that individuals who self-report being exposed to a misinformation-rich social media environment have greater false beliefs about COVID-19 (Bridgman et. al, 2020). 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 contents 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. Autocrats and authoritarian governments used COVID-19 as a pretext to control the dissemination of news, applying censorship and monitoring coverage (Johnson, 2020). Astonishingly 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 the 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 free 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).

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's 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).

Being exposed to sickness while covering the news, unable to enter their workplaces or homes for fear of carrier of 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 also. The editorial independence of media is affected by media ownership, advertising revenue, 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).

In Bangladesh, during the pandemic, some news media outlets had to stop their operation due to the economic impact caused by the pandemic situation (Anwar et al. 2020). A qualitative analysis showed that the Bangladeshi journalists faced severe restrictions on publication due to using Digital Security ACT (2018) as a suppressing tool. Even the colonial Official Secrets Act (1923) was also applied when a female journalist tried to extract information on public health from government office. The authorities from health departments showed reluctance to provide to journalists which narrowed their way to get access to authentic information and fight the infodemics. They had to adapt to new technologies and platforms to collect and share information. The journalists themselves did not receive enough support from their media houses to save themselves from the contagion of the virus, which resulted in making them carrier of the virus to their family members. While all of these issues physically and psychologically affected them immensely, they were in constant fear of getting sacked, as many of the journalists lost their jobs during the pandemic even without prior notice. Additionally, not getting salary on time, paycheck cutoffs, reduced salary and bonuses became regular phenomena. Even the different reports' unions did not protect their rights (Razu et al. 2024).

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 the 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.

Objective of the Study

The main objectives of this research are to recognize the hazards Bangladeshi journalists had to face in their professional field during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study also sheds light on how journalists have adapted themselves to daunting challenges and continued to serve people with apt information. Considering these, the specific objective of this study is-

- To identify what types of challenges the Bangladeshi journalists faced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Research Question

To establish the objective, a considerable research question for this study is-

- What sort of challenges have the Bangladeshi journalists faced during a global crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic?

Theoretical Framework

To assess the challenges of working journalists during the pandemic and give it a theoretical framework, Media Convergence Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) have been applied in this study.

Media Convergence Theory

The concept of media convergence was introduced by Henry Jenkins in his book 'Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide. Media convergence theory refers to the merging of different mediums, 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 cluster occurs 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 the 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 denying strategy the company denies the existence of any crisis and does not take any responsibility. In 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 (Amarensan, 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.

Method and Sampling

The study adopts a mixed-method approach, comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods, to explore the nature of hazards experienced by Bangladeshi journalists during this Covid-19 pandemic. Professional journalists working in mainstream Bangladeshi media, including reporters, sub-editors, and photojournalists, have been considered the target population for the study. For conducting this study, a convenient collection technique has been used to collect data from samples. The study has been conducted in two phases. In the first phase, journalists have been provided with a detailed questionnaire. A total of 60 professional journalists (20 each from print, broadcast, and online media) have been taken as a sample size for the questionnaire survey. The sample size includes both male and female journalists. The sample has been chosen by the purposive sampling technique. The language mode of the survey questionnaire is purposefully chosen as Bengali, as it provoked the respondents to respond more comfortably. In the second phase, in-depth interviews with three journalist leaders were taken. The objective of this in-depth interview is to figure out the probable solutions to the challenges the journalists are facing

Findings of the Study

Data gathered by the survey of 60 professional and mainstream journalists help to reflect on the overall scenario of the working environment for journalists throughout the pandemic. 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’ effort (Figure 02).

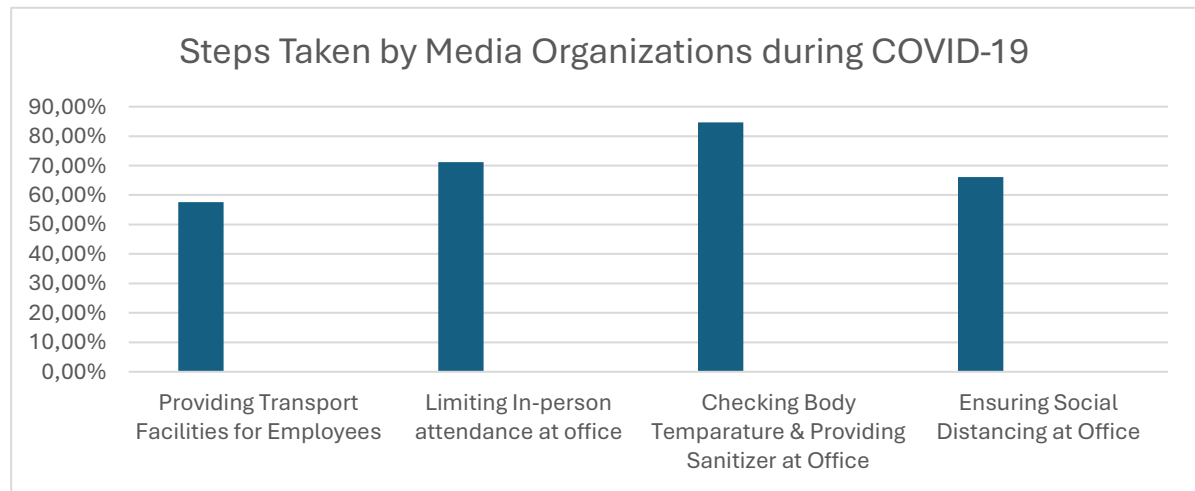


Figure 01 (indicates the steps taken by the offices to ensure the safety of the employees)

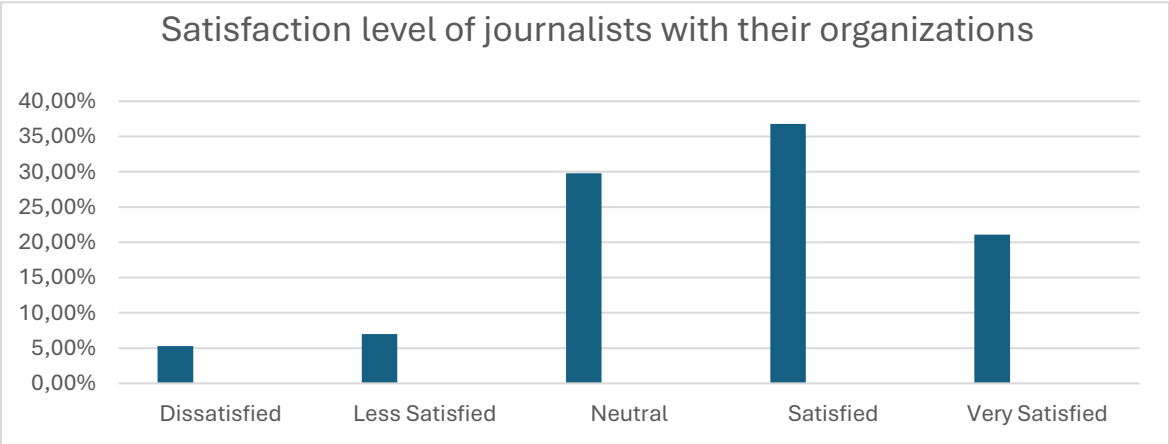


Figure 02 (Indicates the satisfaction level of employees with the steps taken by office during Corona)

However, when it comes to the point of mental health of the journalists, the situation is not that 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 was 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 result indicates 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.

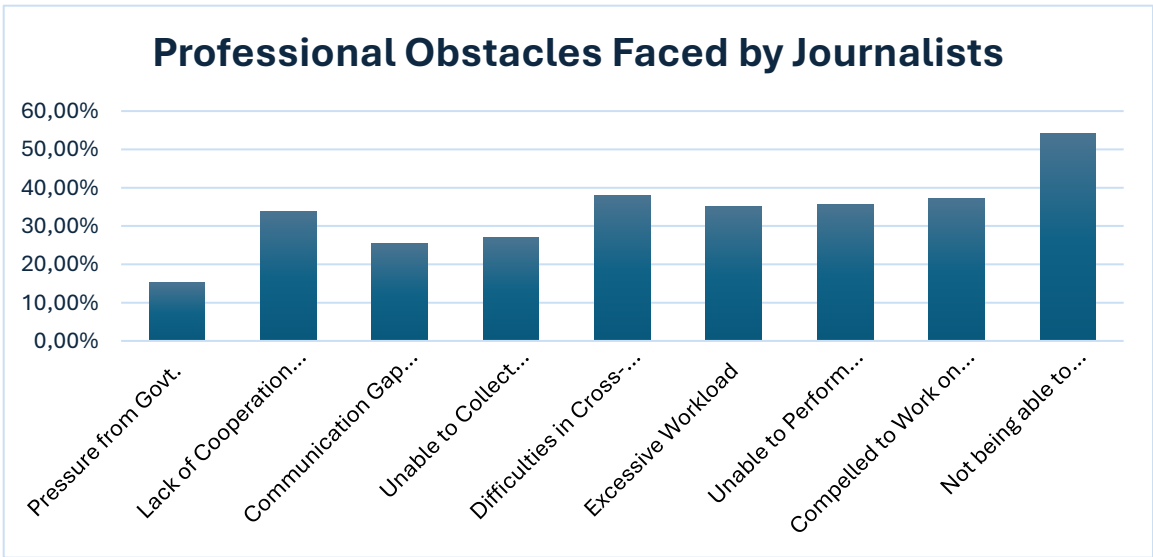


Figure 03 (exhibits the obstacles journalists had to encounter while working in lockdown)

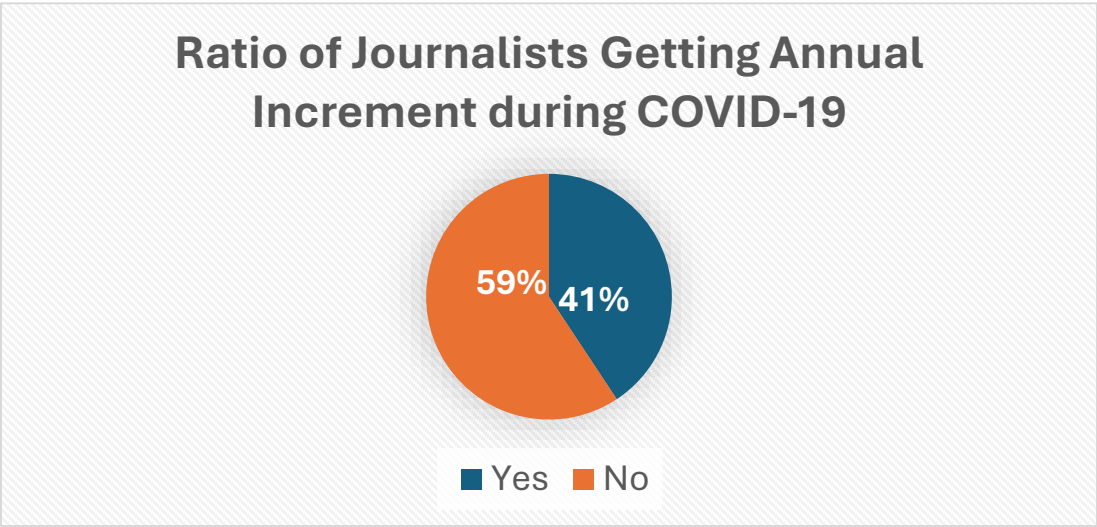


Figure 04 (Indicates the ratio of journalists receiving festival bonus during the pandemic)

Though the journalists faced plenty of new professional challenges, media houses were reluctant to address this issue, as many of those 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 Corona 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 (Figure 04); however, the most lamentable thing was that almost 44% of them did not get a single penny of their deserved bonus, which should not be 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 (Figure 05).

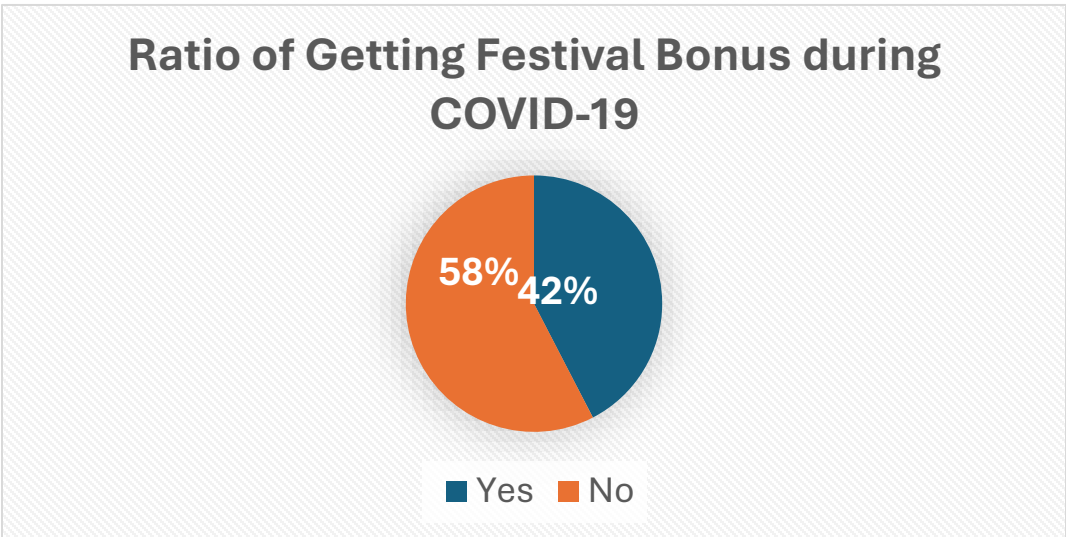


Figure 05 (indicates the ratio of journalists getting annual increment during the pandemic)

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 taken using various mediums, like Zoom, Viber, WhatsApp, Google Meet, MS Teams, etc. The complicacy of gathering information was minimized by the usage of technology, as Google and other internet facilities made the work much easier for the journalists. Not being accustomed to many technological tools and platforms caused a 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 them with the required technological knowledge, taking the help of the content hub available in the digital world.

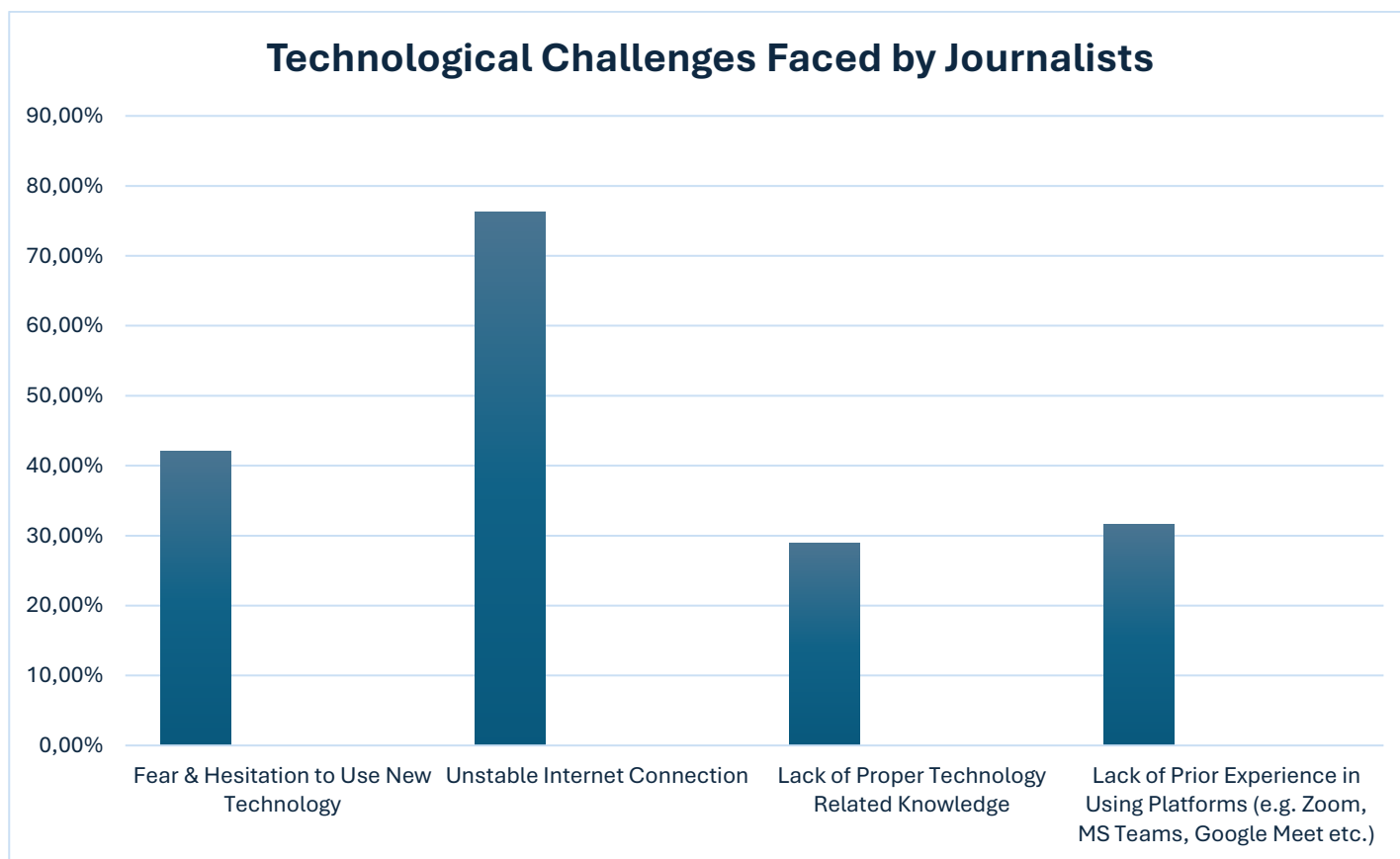


Figure 06 (indicates the technological challenges faced by journalists during the pandemic)

Figure 06 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 lack of technological knowledge created challenges, and 42.1% said apprehension and hesitation in adapting to the new technology was tough for them to adjust.

Discussion on the Findings

Despite not being of the same frequency in terms of respondent size and geographical area, the findings of this study are quite allied with 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. Findings of the other two studies denote 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 for almost two years in the pandemic, they were concerned over 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 the studies, by ICFJ & Tow Center for Digital Journalism, found in similarity with this study. ICFJ study found it as the 3rd most challenging stuff, whereas the current study found it as the 2nd most challenging one. As journalists are working as front-liners in this critical time, they must be ensured of financial security and provided with enough rest time between shifts.

Study conducted by Osmann et al. (2021) found that over 80% of the journalist respondents had 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 have arranged proper training for them so that they could 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, rather all over the world, 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 both at the same time. Many journalists said they had to remain more active than usual on social media for mapping new information. For cross-checking this information, they had to toil hard as well, which is also aligned with the global phenomenon (Osmann et al. 2021).

To shed more light on these issues, the researcher arranged an in-depth interview session with some of the journalist association leaders. They did not recognize being compelled to work on multiple beats during the pandemic as an extra burden on journalists, as they think it was the call of time to survive in that period. However, they recognized the practice of not maintaining the timetable of shifting as a concern.

When notified about the finding that 63% of respondents did not receive any official training from their organizations to deal with the professional challenges that emerged during the pandemic period, journalist leaders admitted the fact that it was a negligent act from media organizations. When asked whether the trend of home office would be sustainable in the field of journalism, they responded negatively, as they think journalists will go to spots whenever they get the opportunity. However, they believe the tradition of the home office is the start of a new journey, as the journalists will have more resources and flexibility in the future if they face a similar situation again in the future. When asked to focus on the financial challenges journalists faced during the pandemic, the interviewees termed it as an acute challenge for the media sector in Bangladesh. Most of the news organizations went through turmoil in the first phase of the pandemic, however, after the situation got a bit normal, still many journalists did not receive

their due financial facilities. Though it was true that circulation of print media declined drastically, they somewhat recovered with the help of their online version. One of the main reasons they stated behind this poor financial scenario of the journalists is that media houses in Bangladesh are traditionally lethargic to meet the basic needs of journalists. The Corona pandemic provided them with an extra layer of opportunity to deprive journalists of their rights. Lastly, when asked about the role of several journalists' organizations in this matter, they said only the Trade Union of Journalists holds the legal power to make the editors accountable for this scenario.

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 making 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 job, pay cut or festive bonus deduction. Another important finding is that many of the journalists said media organizations should be more sedulous regarding the mental health issue of their employees, especially during 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 the journalists but also the editors and media house policymakers should be prepared to proactively handle any crisis, learning from the pandemic days. Unlike the pandemic situation, the reporters, journalists, and editors' unions should play a better role in protecting their rights in times of crisis.

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