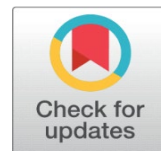


THE PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION ON THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA: A BANGLADESH STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Media played the vital role in socialization process. Over the last one and half decade's media have been receiving increasing amount of attention as an alternate Watchdog that think tanks in addressing many things. This study develops a framework of talk media socialization in Bangladesh.

Methodology: This study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Both quantitative and qualitative method applied for the collection of data through questionnaire survey interviews and case study.

Results: The study shows that the present-day media is highlighting a good number of reports on public sector corruption, education, public health, public policy, women empowerment etc. which have both tangible and intangible impacts. But the overall media role is way to reach at satisfactorily well and respondents expressed their reservation with media's performance. People also believe media controlled by public influence. This study describes the terms political influence and communication level. Public opinion is made in democracy by watching responding to polls besides participating in elections. This research report tries to explain the agenda setting role of mass media during any crisis moment for building consensus of people in Bangladesh. This study investigates both positive and negative assorted influences on public discourses disseminated to Bangladeshi mass media.

Keywords: Mass Media, Socio-Economic Status, Chittagong Division Bangladesh

1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

All of us who professionally use the mass media are the shapers of society. We can vulgarize that society; we can brutalize it. Or we can help lift it onto a higher level.

-William Bernbach

The power of media has expanded in a vast way. Mass media is considered as a tool for giving information, entertainment and education. Media are the main source of information and knowledge in society (Rogers, 1991). Rabbi (2012) argued that mass media creates awareness on education which decreases the rate of early marriage and fertility in Bangladesh. Islam (2015) argued that though print media in Bangladesh is publishing minimal number of environmental and climate change news, it could play a prominent role to inform, educate and persuade people on environmental and climate change issues. Mass media communication could be more cost-effective way to influence behavior than organized interpersonal communication. It has been found that in Bangladesh, mass media exposures have influence on filling critical knowledge

gaps of people through public health programs such as HIV, family planning and immunization [Mashreky et al. \(2015\)](#).

Mass media are tools that contribute in accelerating communication to reach the general people (the mass) in a short period of time. Mass media includes newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and more recently, the internet –all of which plays dominant influence from shaping public opinion to determine political agenda. Over the last few years, a boost in the spread of mass media has been observed in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has now twenty-nine satellite television stations, 35 radio stations and 3025 registered print media [Azad \(2018\)](#). The Bangladesh Press Council is the only formal regulatory authority for Bangladesh media. The Bangladesh Press Council is the only formal regulatory authority for Bangladesh media. Since the colonial period to present day, freedom of media has been hindered by the ruling authority of the state. Though the constitutions of Bangladesh provide for freedom of speech, expression and the press (Article 39.1) where as these rights are weakened by Article (39.2) which proclaim this right are subject to “reasonable restrictions” in the interest of “the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency and morality in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.” Though the constitution of Bangladesh guarantees press freedom and freedom of expression within reasonable restriction, media outlets have been harassed [Khan and Kaarisma \(2014\)](#). According to the Press Media Index, the Bangladeshi media is ranked 146 out of 180 countries, with 1st being most free [Reporters without Borders \(2018\)](#). This research report tries to explain the agenda setting role of mass media during any crisis moment for building consensus of people in Bangladesh.

The role of mass media in a democratic country is similar to the role of judiciary and executive. To some extent, it plays a more effective role than judiciary and executive organs of the country. [Ahmmed \(2014\)](#) stated that In Bangladesh mass media sometimes provide voting and responding polls for mass people beside election which helps to accumulate public opinion through democratic campaign. Inversely, media faces challenges for being politically and culturally unbiased. [Ahmmed \(2014\)](#) argued that the news of mass media could be shaped by the journalists’ political, cultural and religious views, opinions and beliefs. Therefore, the news could be presented differently and created different level consciousness and perspectives among the audiences.

[Khan and Kaarisma \(2014\)](#) stated that in America the great newspapers are the bands of powerful financial syndicates, in England they are in the hand of capitalists, in Russia they are under the control of the government. Therefore, it could be said that it’s not easy for mass media to ignore the political, social, financial influences. Likewise other countries, Bangladesh mass media could not get rid of the control of political inference, financial syndicates or social pressure. In spite of having a regulatory body for print media called The Bangladesh Press Council, the agency has not been yet played any significant role to ensure transparency, accuracy and authenticity of newspapers. [Azad \(2018\)](#) argued that Ministry of information (2010) said that the council was nothing but a ‘paper tiger’.

Statement of the Problem

Mass media has both positive and negative influences in the socialization process. It could create public awareness regarding social, educational, political, health or environmental issues (Rabbi, 2012), [Islam \(2015\)](#), [Azad \(2018\)](#). On the other hand, the media has sometimes fanned the flames of discard by taking sides, reinforcing prejudices, mudding the facts and padding the truths. Hence, media is not out the control of powerful authorities, political inferences and religious or

cultural biasness [Azad \(2018\)](#). Media is a part of society and creates the cognitive and emotional awareness and consciousness of mass people. It could be said that it is an instrument for educating people regarding different issues. Since mass media is not free from being neutral, the false message could lead audiences toward a wrong direction. Therefore, the study was conducted to identify the role of mass media according to respondent's personal view, judgment and opinion.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study was both descriptive and exploratory in nature. In the present study the researcher selected the 9 divisions of Bangladesh. Due to the paucity of both time and money, the peoples staying in Chittagong city (from 9 division of Bangladesh) are treated as the population of the study. The study followed both qualitative and quantitative methods (Triangulations). The qualitative data have been collected through a number of key informant interviews and case study. To draw samples for quantitative study, the probability of systematic random sampling technique has been used and a total of 200 samples have been drawn. Besides, both primary and secondary data have been used for the purpose of the study. The relevant primary data has been collected form the sample respondents through a structured and non-structured questionnaire designed in the light of the objectives of the study. Collected data has been presented using table and graphs. Statistical analysis like, frequency, percentages, valid percentages, etc.

3. THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Social cognitive theory, as proposed by [Bandura \(2009\)](#), offers framework to understand people's voluntary involvement in different fields including mass media. Audience of the mass media get the opportunity to recognize with attractive characters that exhibit behavior and emotional engagement and allow mental rehearsal and modeling of new behavior (Bandura, 1949). The behavior of models in the mass media also offers beaker vs. reinforcement to motivate audience member's adoption of the behavior. [Bandura \(2009\)](#) argued that the conception behavior is shaped and controlled either by environmental influences or by internal dispositions. In this research the participants identified the role mass media in their personal cognitive learning on different fields like education, health, and environment, political and social awareness.

Theories of mass communication have always focused on the cause and effects notion, i.e., the effects of the media and the process leading to those effects on the audience's mind. [Lasswell \(1948\)](#) asserted that the convenient way to describe the act of communication is to answer following questions who says, says what, in which channel, to whom and with what effect. [Lasswell \(1948\)](#) argued that who says hot in hot channel of issues brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions have some kinds of effects.

Functionalist sociologists are not particularly concerned with an examination of individual ideas, meaning and interpretation [Livesey \(2010\)](#). Rather it focuses on social system and social structure. According to functionalist theory society is considered as an organized structure which is inter-related with different social institution [Livesey \(2010\)](#). In the mid 20 century functionalist theorists focused on the ways in which media help to integrate and bind societies together. Following the media theorists Denis Mcquail (2000), one can identify 5 important social functions of the media that may work to stabilize the social system-

- 1) Information

- 2) Correlation
- 3) Continuity
- 4) Entertainment
- 5) Mobilization

Political economy approaches see the media as an industry and examine the way in which the major means of communication have come to be owned by private interests. In Bangladesh it has been found that the ownership of the media has often been concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy people [Azad \(2018\)](#). (Is this your own opinion or cited from somewhere? Please relate the functionalism with the ownership. According to functionalist theory, the conscience of society is expressed as a kind of 'sum total' of beliefs and values of the people who belong to that society, mass media should focus on social demand and progress by developing social awareness.

Role of Mass media in Bangladesh

[Salami \(2011\)](#) mentioned Professor AAMS Arefin, the previous vice chancellor of the University of Dhaka, highlighted the role of mass media in the socio-economic and the educational development of a developing country. Professor AAMS Arefin's message was that both the print and broadcast media could play a vital role in enhancing education in a developing country [Salami \(2011\)](#). It could shape and create public opinion towards on related issues by applying its strength and bring changes among individual.

In recent ages, Media is expanding in Bangladesh. The numbers of media stakeholders are increasing with the expansion of Medias. Media plays roles in different sectors of the country like education whereas today, Bangladesh is now in a state of media expansion. Media is one of the main sources of entertainment in Bangladesh. Media also has an important educational role: students from rural areas can take lesson from watching certain television programs such as Sesamepur (Produced by the Sesame Workshop, Bangladesh), BBC Janala (Produced by BBC Media action, Bangladesh). They also can learn a lot of things listening to Radio. In this era of digitalization, education is much more than going to schools and colleges, its purpose is to create awareness among people for ensuring personal and social development, where, mass media is providing this kind of knowledge outside of the school room. Thus, it is playing a vital role in which helping for creating awareness both in rural and urban areas of the country

Role of Print Media

Print media in Bangladesh is very powerful. People, especially the students read newspapers for learning different aspects of life, art, culture and science of both home and abroad. Almost every paper has its own education page. In the page they published educational articles written by teachers, trainers, students and experts. It also publishes different difficult explanation, questions and answer of secondary and higher secondary levels. Some English dailies publish the articles on learning English language and grammar, while some scientific magazines publish scientific explanations and new inventions. Some dailies publish weekly magazines; which focuses mainly on the higher education. In addition, they publish the prospectus of different educational institutions. Again, students as well as adults can learn good English from the English newspapers. They can read articles about a certain topic and enrich their language knowledge. Besides, national dailies, both Bangla and

English often organized some discussion meetings, workshops and seminars for students and professionals, which is very powerful to create mass awareness.

Role of Broadcast Media

As we said earlier, where now in a state of “Media Expansion”, we have a lot of TV and radio channels and new channels are coming. Broadcasting media is the most common and popular in here. In the case of developing countries, like Bangladesh, implementation of education fully depends on appropriate use of broadcasting media technology. The government as well as private organizations are using radio and television for meeting the present demands. A significant result has already been received in the field of mass education of Bangladesh by using broadcast media. All the TV and radio channels present various educational programs for the students. These programs become very popular in the country.

“Meena cartoon” to create awareness

UNICEF in association of the Government of Bangladesh telecast a cartoon show named “Meena” where Meena is the main character. She represents the common rural girls of the country. She addresses serious issues such as education, early marriage, unequal food and other sensitive social issues. These cartoon shows get success to ensure mass awareness in Bangladesh. Now she became a role model of South Asian girl fighting against the society without any weapon and aware the society.

Data Analysis

Relevant data were collected from the respondent using an Interview schedule. Data were analyzed and presented in the following sections.

Socio-Economic and demographic status

Table 1 Sex of the Respondents		
Sex of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	89	44.5
Female	111	55.5
Total	200	100

In total, 200 respondents ranging from age 15 to 65 were interviewed. of them 44.5% was male and 55.5% was female in this study.

Table 2 The Distribution of respondents by Age		
Age of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid 15-25	63	31.5
26-35	80	40
36-45	42	21
46-55	11	5.5
56-65	04	2
Total	200	100

Get the above table shows that, form the total 200 respondents 63 (31.5%) in 15 to 25 age, 80 (40%) in 26 to 35, 42 (21%) in 36 to 45, 11 (5.5%) in 46 to 55 and the rest 04 (2%) respondents are 56 to 65.

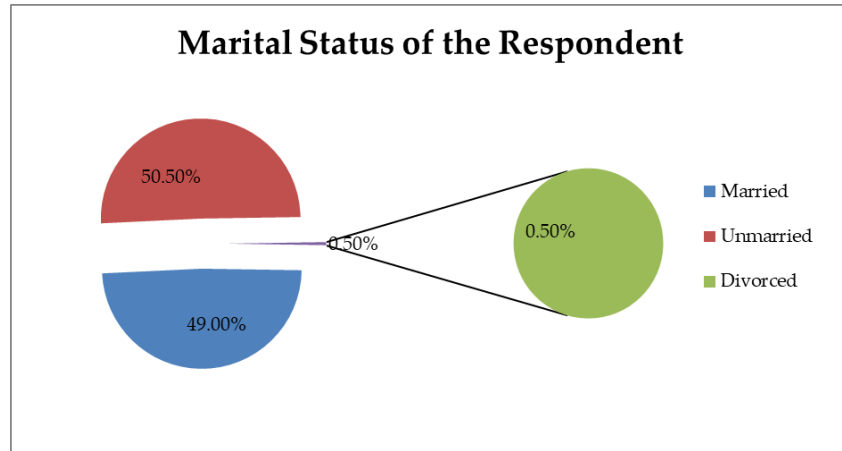


Figure 1 Marital Status of the Respondents

The above pie chart (Figure 1) shows that from the 200 respondents 98 married, 101 were married and 1 was divorced.

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-10,000	27	13.5
11,000-20,000	80	40.0
21,000-30,000	63	31.5
31,000-40,000	13	6.5
41,000-50,000	11	5.5
50,000+	6	3.0

From the table we see that around 40% respondents' monthly income was 11,000-20,000 and only 3% respondents' monthly income was 50,000+.

Religious Status of the Respondent	Frequency	Percent (%)
Muslim	155	77.5
Hindu	30	15
Buddhist	08	4
Christian	07	3.5
Total	200	100

The development of reason has different forms in different cultures. Some religious place and emphasis on belief, while others emphasize on practice. Some religions focus on subjective experience of the religious in visual, while others considered the activities of the religious community to be most important. The definitions of respondents by religion are presented on above table. The table shows that majority 77.5% of the respondents of the total sample were Muslims, followed by 15% Hindus, 4% Buddhist and 3.5% where Christians.

Table 5 Level of Education of the Respondents

Education Level of the Respondent	Frequency	Percent (%)
Illiterate	05	2.5
Five	20	10
Eight	13	6.5
SSC	15	7.5
HSC	20	10
Bachelor (in progress)	40	20
Masters	87	43.5
Total	200	100

The table shows that 05 respondents where illiterate, 20 were studied at class 5, 13 where eight, 15 year passed SSC, 20 were crossed HSC, 40 were Bachelor (in progress) and Masters were 87 of the total sample.

Table 6 Profession of the Respondents

Profession	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male Students	20	10
Female Students	20	10
Teacher	15	7.5
Doctor	15	7.5
Police	10	5
Political Personality	15	7.5
Service Holder	50	25
Businessman	20	10
Media worker	15	7.5
Day Laborer	20	10
Total	200	100

There are several professions included in this study. About 20% of the total respondents were students, where 10% was male and other 10% was female students. There was also teacher 7.5%, doctor 7.5% and political personality 7.5%,

service holder 25%, 10% was businessman, another 10% was day laborer and 7.5% was media worker.

Table 7 Origin of the Respondents/ Birth place of the Respondents

Place of Origin of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
Dhaka	40	20
Chattogram	40	20
Rajshahi	30	15
Barishal	25	12.5
Khulna	25	12.5
Sylhet	30	15
Rangpur	25	12.5
Mymensing	25	12.5
Total	200	100

Above table shows that 20% of total respondent's birth place was Dhaka division, 20% in Chattogram, 15% in Rajshahi and Sylhet and 12.5% in Khulna, Rangpur, Barishal and Mymensingh.

Table 8 Perception about media

Type	Frequency	Percent (%)
Print	50	25
Electronic	88	44
Online	47	23.5
Others	15	7.5
Total	200	100

Above table shows that, 25% respondent like print media, 44% like electronic media, 23.5% like online and 7.5% others media.

Table 9 Daily time passing on media

Time	Frequency	Percent (%)
15-30 Minutes	09	4.5
31 Min-1 Hours	39	19.5
1-2 Hours	101	50.5
2-4 Hours	27	13.5
4-6 Hours	17	8.5
Above 6 Hours	07	3.5
Total	200	100

Table 9, shows that 4.5% respondent past minimum 5 minutes behind media 19.5% of respondents past 30 minutes to 1 hour 50.5% past minimum 1 hour, 13.5% 2-4 hours 8.5% about 4 hours and on its 3.5 % above 4 hours past behind media.

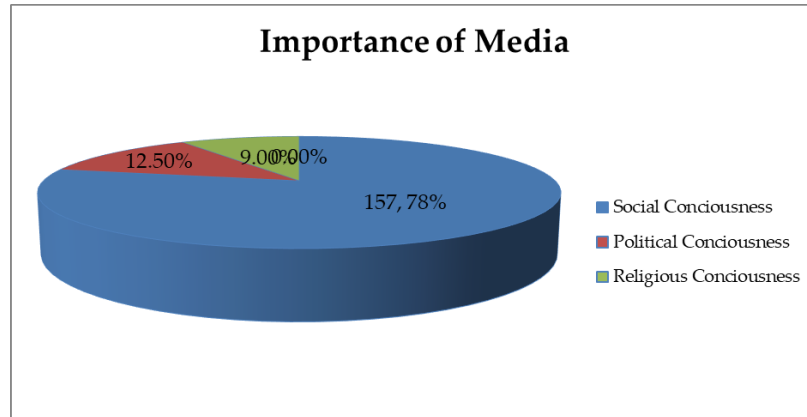


Figure 2 Importance of Media

Figure 2, shows that 78.5% respondent Think Social awareness is the most important side of media 12.5% political consciousness and 9% thing religious consciousness

Table 10 Peoples reliance on Bangladeshi media

Reliance on media	Frequency	Percent (%)
Reliable	41	20.5
Partially reliable	136	68
Unreliable	23	11.5
Total	200	100

Table 10 shows that most of the respondent 20.5% have Reliance on media 68% have partially reliance and 11.5% have no reliance on Bangladeshi media.

Table 11 Biasness of Bangladeshi Media

Biasness	Frequency	Percent (%)
Biased	104	52
Unbiased	96	48
Total	200	100

Table 11 shows that 52% respondent's think that Bangladeshi medias are unbiased and 48% think that media are biased.

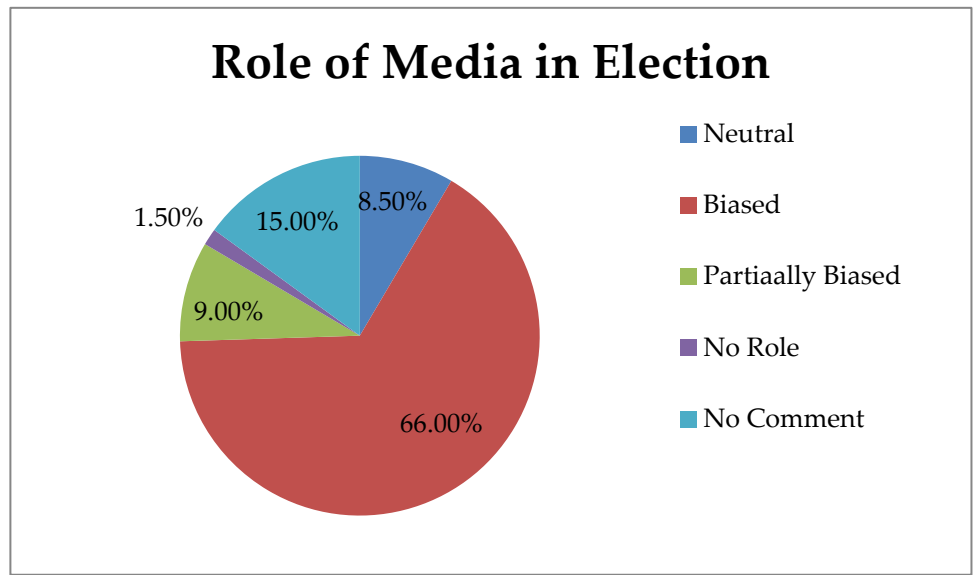


Figure 3 Role of media in election

Figure 3 shows that media has a great role in National and local election. most of the respondent about 69% think that media has a Biased role in local and national election. 25% think that media is partially best Android 4% think media is neutral in National and local election and 2% believe media has no role in local and national election.

According to the question respondents has stated separate opinion on behalf of their awareness. 69% said that media is fully biased on national and local election, because the media favors the government, media personalities are ethically based, political influence media personalities involvement in politics. 25% thing that media is partially Biased in National and local election. Because media professionals are sometimes ethical Biased and yellow journalism is also responsible for this biasness. Photos in respondents think that media is not Biased in local and national election. The rest of 2% had no comment on these statements.

Representative	Frequency	Percent (%)
The elite bourgeoisie	84	42
The middle class	49	24.5
The general people	19	9.5
All	48	24
Total	200	100

From the Table 12 we see that 42% respondents think that most of the Bangladeshi media were controlled by the elite bourgeoisie and around 25% respondents think that the middle class control the media.

4. DISCUSSION

Media has both pros and con effect in society. As for example media helps to create public awareness against early marriage and dowry. On the other hand, we sometimes media could miss guide people and create business. Define the "negative" and "positive" on the ground of media effect in the society. There might be government regulatory body's report on the assessment.

There were several professionals included in this study. About 20% of the total respondents are very students, where 10% of male and rest were female students. There were also 7.5% teachers, 5% doctors, 5% political personality, 25% service holders, 10% Businessman and 7.5%-day laborer.

4.5 % respondents pass minimum 5 minutes behind media. 19.5% of 30 minutes to 1 hour, 50.5% 1 hour, 13.5% 2-4 hours and about 3.5% pass about 4 hours behind media. Most of the respondents (66%) think that electronic media is more reliable than others. Because of its lives telecasting, easy availability makes them reliable. Though the electronic media has a chance to live telecast and live programs, it is comparatively fair and authentic, because there is a little chance to hide the actual scenery or news on live. On the other hand, 34% think that print media as reliable. Because it has abounded in news and information and no chance to type a lot or false news. Another 10% respondent thinks online media as reliable to them. Because of its instance, news presents performance and its availability.

52% respondent believes that Bangladesh media is completely Independent and 48% think it is dependent and biased. Due to media ownership, political personality's involvement to media, business influence, government pressure media sometimes remain biased.

Most of the respondent believe that media is Biased in National and local election. About 69% think so. They think that media favors the government and government favors the rich and rich favors the media.

100% respondents think that media spread education positively. Media also ever people about social problems like dowry, human trafficking, women oppression, unemployment, poverty, eve teasing, and Juvenile delinquency etc. Most of the respondents (63%) think that crime trend is increasing due to the influence of media. Their argument of that media has a direct influence on audience. The tools and strategies of Crime College are scene in media positively. Cinema and Drama always disseminate the rapist, smugglers, criminals as hero and winner and they are always beyond in punishment. Almost every Bangla cinema disseminates rape as interesting job and focus the rapist and hero and winner. They believe that media can make day night and the night as day. Most of the time media persons are ethically biased and influenced by the government or rich.

The study reveals that most of the respondents were the viewer of electronic media (44%) where as other respondents where the reader of print media (25%) and some (23.5%) are the users of online media and the rest (7.5%) are the users of other media.

Studies have shown that those who suffer from loneliness find comfort by watching TV programs and TV characters. It can be helpful for entertainment but this study has mainly South effect of media in its positive and negative role-perspective Bangladesh. In this study the researchers found that media sometimes can be helpful for common people or sometime it misguides people. Music quotes on eyes in various social, political and economic activities happening around the world.

It is like a mirror which shows us or strikes to show us the bear truth and harsh realities of life. The study found that 89.5% respondent think that media is very essential for citizens. the media has undoubtedly evolved and became more active over the years.

In this regards the study found that 87.5% respondents said, democracy can develop through media. Newspaper, television and radio have made a significant achievement in educating rural illiterate, in making them aware of all the current by their language.

Most of the respondents said that (78.5%) Social awareness is the most important side of media in Bangladesh. 12.5% said that political awareness is the most important site and the rest 9 person said about the religious awareness.

On Reliance in Bangladesh media 68% was wondering said that the media Bangladesh is partially reliable, 20.5 % said we level and 11.5% said totally unreliable.

Media has a strong influence in creating awareness. 100% respondents agreed with the media role of creating awareness.

Media has a great role in creating awareness about environmental pollution. Hundred percent was found inside that media has a strong role in creating awareness about the environmental pollution.

Bangladesh media is not always neutral at its work. 87.5% of respondents said that the media of Bangladesh doesn't work neutrally, and the rest 25% said that media of Bangladesh work neutrally.

Media has a role in expansion of terrorism and militancy. 77% respondent said that media has a role in the expansion of tourism and militancy. 63% said the crime trend is increasing due to the influence of media.

Media sometimes take role in flourishing communal harmony. Thus, media also has a role in preventing dowry and early marriage. Negative point 5% said that media has a vital role in preventing Dowry and early marriage.

Since our liberation to present day's movement on demand of Road Safety, Media has made significant contribution in forming or shaping public opinion. Mass media was found as an effective intervention method for improving the knowledge and practices of mothers on poor IYCF (Infant and Young Children Feeding) when the government of Bangladesh launched a national mass media campaign using the most widely viewed television channels and programs in the country at the end of 2010. [Mashreky et al. \(2015\)](#). The study conducted on Mass Media Exposure and Its impact on Family Planning in Bangladesh indicates that both radio and TV exposure to family planning messages and ownership of a radio and TV have a significant effect on current use of family planning methods. (Islam, 2000). In addition to the print and digit media, social media can play substantial contribution in social development. Khatun (2013) reveals that voluntary groups are formed and administered by social media to promote social inclusion of the marginalized people of the country.

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study give support to the "Mobilization" approach, suggesting that the more people use mass media for political information the more they tend to participate in different forms of political actions. This study provides evidence that peoples learn from the media about the efficacy and integrity of political institutions in their country, thus gaining and in-depth understanding of their general performance. Consequently, the information acquired through news, media becomes an important dimension of attitude formation towards those political institutions. This study provides theoretical argumentation and empirical evidence suggesting that by affecting different levels of political trust, mass media create an environment in which peoples are not blindly submissive and trusting but neither totally distrustful of the political institutions in their country. The evidence from this study suggests that rather than inducing opinion change. Media's effect on a transitional society was more likely to crystallize previous predispositions. Particularly, the existence of a pluralistic partisan press in some transitional

societies might provide to have a rather important role in building partisan loyalties and stabilizing the volatile electorate, characteristic for transitional societies.

This study suggests that rather inducing opinion change, it has effect in transitional society are livelier to crystallize predispositions. In Bangladesh, the reach of mass media has gradually increased in the last few decades, now people are more conscious about issues like education and health. The government and human rights organizations are giving various social awareness advertisements in newspapers, radio and TV, which plays a vital role in expanding education among people.

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