

Coverage of Environmental Issues in Local Dailies of Chattogram Centering World Environment Day

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Abstract

This research attempts to explore the news coverage of environmental issues in two local newspapers of Chattogram, Bangladesh; The Daily Azadi and The Daily Purbokone. In order to carry out the objectives of the research, qualitative and quantitative methodology were employed. The researcher tries to find the answers to the problem of whether local newspapers of Chattogram cover sufficiently environmental issues and what extent of news they cover comparatively. It also finds the types of environmental issues they covered centering world environment day. Primary data was collected through content analysis of these two newspapers. The agenda-setting approach was the theoretical framework for the study. The research concluded that local newspapers of Chattogram do cover environmental issues, though the subject matter did not receive much analysis. Although environmental issues are not covered sufficiently in these two newspapers, it is concluded that The Daily Azadi covered the highest environmental news comparatively The Daily Purbokone around World Environment Day (WED). The ways of prominence given for environmental issues in these two newspapers were different considerably. In terms of the extent of coverage, types of environmental issues, level of prominence (nature of the story, item, placement, space, and treatment), it is evident that The Daily Azadi newspaper has given the significant representation or considerable coverage for environmental related issues than The Daily Purbokone. But, in The Daily Azadi and The Daily Pubokone, environmental issues were not only ignored but also (if covered) they were given very small portions of the newspaper and marginalized in relation to their presentation. However, Policy makers, academicians, environmentalists and students of environment studies will be the most beneficiaries of this study. Findings can be used as academic purpose as well as in policy making level. It is mentionable, as we studied only two local dailies of Chattogram, to some consideration, it does not represent the grand coverage tendency of Chattogram's local dailies. So, a further mass scale study can explore the overall propensity of Chattogram's local dailies regarding environment issues.

Keywords: environmental issues, news coverage, World Environment Day (WED), local dailies, Chattogram.

JEL Classification: Q0, Q5.

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Introduction

A great number of environmental issues and problems are uprising around the world frequently more than ever from strong typhoons, hurricanes and cyclones and other extreme natural disasters as well as pollution, floods, landslides, droughts etc. Therefore, people are more eager now for more and more information on environmental issues as there is a great link between awareness or knowledge and action.

It is a basic understanding that environment and environmental news and information are salient and prominent topic of the public and elites discussions these days. Hence, mass media plays a significant role in covering related news and information on environmental incidences, issues and problems (Pompper & Signorielli (as cited by Boyagoda, 2017)). A number of studies have shown that mass media is a powerful tool that has been and can continue to be used to effect of social change. According to Marx's argument, mass

media, known as a “means of production” which disseminate the ideas and world views are an agent of ideological control (Marx & Engels (as cited by Boyagoda, 2017)). Specifically, news articles related to environment play an important role in shaping the public’s perceptions and understanding of the government’s efforts to address environmental issues and resolve the relevant problems. The media not only reports on the environment-related events, but it also helps people to have the basic idea on how officials respond and what to do to protect themselves from problems that arises from environmental disharmony. Media also helps to keep people informed about the day-to-day progress of attempts to protect the environment, recycling programs, and efforts to conserve natural resources. This is how the public educates through mass media.

Among the mass media, the newspaper plays a major role in circulating information, form perceptions, create awareness and thus, catalyze environmental actions. In general, the term, environment is a “concept which includes all aspects of the surroundings of humanity, affecting individuals and social groupings” (Gilpin, 1996). The “environment” or “natural environment” is all of those non-human, natural surroundings within which human beings exist and which a prerequisite for their further evolution is.” Environmental communication is the “pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as human relationships to the natural world; it is the symbolic medium that human use in constructing environmental problems and in negotiating society’s different responses to them”. According to Development Cooperation and Environment (DCE), environmental communication is the planned and strategic use of communication processes and media products to support effective policymaking, public participation and project implementation geared towards environmental sustainability. Environmental Journalism can be explained as exploring risks and hazards and translating complex scientific issues into simple language and stories using varied sources: scientists, policymakers, NGOs, business, consumers, involved people, the general public (Wyss, 2008). The environment is one of the important decisive factors exerting influence on development's possibilities. The major problems related to environment such as deforestation, water pollution, air pollution, loss of fertile soil, solid waste disposal etc. are related to human activities and development.

In recent times, Bangladesh news media marked environmental news as a significant and urgent issue for discussion. Mainstream media, especially newspapers have considerable influences on the public perceptions about environmental changes and global warming. Most circulated newspapers like The Prothom Alo and The Daily Star regularly publish features, photo features, post editorials and expert articles on natural environmental elements like birds, flowers, medicinal plants and other species that have the threat of extinction (Islam,2015). Environmental reporting in Bangladesh attempts to merge environmental issues with social, political and economic context. Specific agendas on regional and global environmental issues have a powerful impact on public awareness, attitude, and behavior relating to the environment. Therefore, print media of Bangladesh is strong enough to influence environmental policies and raise voice for international climate change funds (Reza, 2010).

Literature Review

In 1962 a book published named “silent spring” written by Rachel Carson challenged the United States to start concerning ecological destruction and after that American mass media began environmental reporting for the first time (Marukatat, 1991). According to Hansen(1991), western news media started to cover environmental issues as news from 1960, and by the end of 1980, it became a distinct topic for news media because of its increasing public and political concern. In recent times, environmental problems due to climate change which emerged with global politics and economics are one of the most attracted subjects for global media (Lester and Hutchins, 2009). Researchers have now conducted studies in media studies discipline focusing on how environmental issues are covered by media although most of them from developed countries (Hansen, 1993, Spellerberg et al., 2006, Shanahan and McCOMAS, 1997).These research raised questions about the quality of environmental news coverage.

Roba (2012) investigated editors' and journalists' knowledge and editorial policy about environmental news. The outcome of this study was very frustrating because of news coverage and knowledge regarding the environment was at a low level. He revealed that most of the environmental news was too short and secondary priority compare to issues like sports, business, agriculture, education, and health. Media houses have no dedicated section for patronizing the environment beat. Readers or media audiences can not relate to environmental news because there were lots of scientific jargons and pro-environmental "mobilizing information" or crisis-oriented frightening messages (Liebler and Bendix, 1996). Nitz and West (2004) found

that environment-related news contaminated by contradiction, malformation, and data manipulation. The majority of news articles used negative headline and stories content are based on blame and action tone (Agwu and Amu, 2015). News related to the environment mostly gets inside pages of the newspaper (Okoro and Nnaji, 2012). Hoerisch (2002) showed that environmental issues related to political agenda get more coverage.

Pauly (1991) summarized that proximity, timeliness, nearness these common news values are suppressed in environmental news coverage so that environmental news coverage are ignored most of the time by print news media. Sometimes editorial policy of avoiding panic element in covering news was another responsible reason for ignoring environmental issues. However, environmental issues are essential for all, several studies found a big difference between developed and developing countries regarding environmental journalism. American media focused on the conflict between politicians and scientists (Brossard et al., 2004). Randazzo (2001) carried out a study on 'context and bias in environmental journalism in the leading U.S daily newspapers online vs. print: a content analysis' and discovered that the leading U.S daily newspapers gave equitable coverage about environmental topics. Online news media could undoubtedly be used more extensively to present environmental issues with more context compare to print newspapers.

In Europe, French media coverage emphasized international relations and event-based news related to the environment (Brossard et al., 2004). Bacon & Nash (2006) found that Sydney Morning Herald tried to demonstrate the seriousness of global warming as an issue; all coverage had an ideal aim to protect the environment. Norma and Hasan (2007) investigated Malaysian and New Zealand news patterns. They found that most of the stories in both countries newspaper are conflict-oriented one source event and highly dependent on government officials, especially the Malaysian government-controlled sensitive news. Editors' censorship was also common practice there. Journalists' lack of knowledge about science and environmental issues were other important findings. Norma and Hasan (2007) concluded that both countries' newspapers had not played a significant role in disseminating information for educating or enlightening people rather most of them were reactive regarding environmental issues. A study named 'Reporting Green: an exploratory study of news coverage of environmental issues in Sri Lankan newspapers' (2017) indicated that though several environmental coverages were done, the subject matter yet are neglected by print media. The Sunday Times newspaper published more environment-related articles compare to IridaLankadeepa and Virakesariwarawaliyeedu. In-depth analysis lacking was another problem, therefore environmental issues published in inside pages because the environment is not an influential topic to publish it on the front page of the newspaper (Boyagoda, 2017).

Dutt, Garg, and Bhatta (2013) scrutinized the environmental coverage in 31 prominent English-language Indian newspapers. Their paper showed that environmental news coverage numbers increased, but two-third of total proportion were focused only on climate change and global warming. The negative impact of global warming and climate change and their mitigation were the main agenda of the Indian newspaper. Lucas (2013) used a content analysis technique to study The Hindu and The Times of India regarding environmental coverage. Their results indicated that The Hindu paid more concentration to environmental issues than The Times of India. The study also recommended that print media should take a proactive approach for awaking citizens. In Pakistan, scarcity of expert journalists challenged environmental news coverage and its narratives; on the other hand, lacking authentic environmental data was a crucial problem for the environmental journalist. Journalist depended on government officials and other secondary sources (Yousaf et al., 2013).

Bacon, Das, and Zaman (2009) found that environmental reporting in Bangladesh as a developing beat which concerned with the political, economic, and social aspects of the environment. Reza (2010) concluded that Bangladeshi newspapers concentrated on global climate change issues, impacts, and debates. Newspapers have special advocacy orientated agendas to take relevant action for environmental changes, local and environmental issues were got importance on the newspaper page. Print media in Bangladesh is the most influential in setting national plans and policies for the betterment of the environment. Newspapers raised their voice for rising international funds for Bangladesh as it is the vulnerable country of global climate change.

The inter-governmental panel on climate change anticipated that 17% of the land of Bangladesh would devour with sea level rising by 2050, and 20 million people will displace (IPCC, 2007). As a south Asian country, Bangladesh is the largest delta in the world with a 147,570 square kilometers total land area (BBS, 2006). With this alarming scenario, mass media of Bangladesh have to play a vital role in upcoming environmental

challenges and adaptation. Islam (2015) criticized Bangladeshi print media as it depends on event-based coverage rather than in-depth investigation, follow-ups, and analysis. The study also found that newspapers mostly focused on "World Environmental Day" for covering environmental issues, after that coverage of environment-related issue declined.

World Environment Day (WED) is held on the 5th of June every year. Protect the environment and creating awareness among people is the motto of this day. Under United Nations supervision this day first celebrated in 1974.

In this study, we investigated the coverage of environmental issues in two local dailies of Chattogram named "The Daily Azadi" and "The Daily Purbokone" centering world environment day. Chattogram is the southeastern part of Bangladesh which is the major coastal city and financial hub of the country. It is also famous for its scenic beauty and bio-diversity. The world's longest sea beach of Cox's Bazar is also situated here (Mansur, 2002). Chattogram always plays a vital role in the Bangladesh economy. In recent times, the Bangladesh government invested a huge amount of money in creating an international standard economic zone in this area. As Chattogram is mainly a hilly area, it assumed that this economic development would make new challenges for biodiversity and the environment therefore to accommodate Rohingya refugees hill cutting were occurred several times. In this circumstance, local media should show their responsibilities to guide and aware local communities to protect their environment. Several studies found that journalists who live in the community will have more responsibilities on that community than the journalist who only visit the community to report on a particular event (Perreault, 2016).

Research Problem

Environmental problems and issues are gradually increasing around the globe. Therefore, people should have a clear understanding of how these environmental issues and problems are arisen and what action has to be taken. There is a growing demand from the public for more and more information on environmental issues and great link between awareness or knowledge and action. Thus, socially responsible media in their reportage can make issues be seen as important at a given time in a given society by placing emphasis on such issues. This could be through frequency of reports, nature of reports, the prominence given to the reports and analysis of the issues at stake. Thus, this research study explores the print media reportage on environmental issues on local newspapers of Chattogram, Due to its significant impact on human socio- economic life. Specifically, the existing literature advances that environmental issues and problems are of the lack of attention in newspaper reportage. Considering these, the researcher will be sought to find the answers to the problem. Do local newspapers of Chattogram cover sufficient environmental issues? If cover then what nature of issues they emphasize?

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to investigate the coverage of environmental issues in local dailies of Chattogram centering World Environment Day. Apart from this, there are some specific objectives which are given in the below.

1. To explore the extent of coverage given to environmental issues in The Daily Azadi and The Daily Purbokone newspaper.
2. To identify the reported environmental issues in The Daily Azadi and The Daily Purbokone newspaper.
3. To find out the level of prominence given to environmental issues reported in The Daily Azadi and The Daily Purbokone newspaper. (The level of prominence given to environmental issues is determined here through five criteria; Nature of the story, Item, Placement (page, Space and Trends.)

Methodology

In order to carry out the objectives of the research, qualitative and quantitative methodology were employed. Hence, primary data were collected through content analysis; two Local newspaper of Chittagong selected performing purposive sample selection method. Selection of these two newspapers was based primarily on their highest circulation. The total number of newspapers was sixty (60), Thirty (30) newspapers from each two newspaper were selected which published between May 15 to June 16 of the year 2019. Since the time frame (May 16 to June 14); specifically pre and post days of World Environment Day (June 5) was a

significant time to observe environmental agendas brought in forefront by the news media in general and newspapers in particular, the newspapers published in May to June 2019 centering World Environment Day collected for the sample. Unit of analysis, the smallest element of content analysis was the individual article on environmental issues.

Primarily, data gathered through content analysis and subsequently, comparison and contraction performed. Themes and patterns identified and environmental news and issues counted to see frequencies. Frequency counting was used to find the prominence of reporting on environmental issues in newspapers. The space of the news articles measured to see how much space allocated. The nature of the story, the placement, and trends of the articles analyzed to understand and draw conclusions about how important the media source felt the covered topic was or should be regarded by its' reader.

The constant comparative method used to develop concepts from the data by coding and analyzing at the same time. The constant comparative method “combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing”(Conrad, 1993). Finally, the findings presented in tables and graphs and deepened analysis with statistics (percentages).

Data Analysis and Findings

The extent of Environmental News Coverage

From the findings of the study, it became evident that local newspapers of Chittagong do cover environmental issues in a certain way. As indicated in Figure 1.0, the total number of articles of specific newspaper on the environmental issues varies considerably.

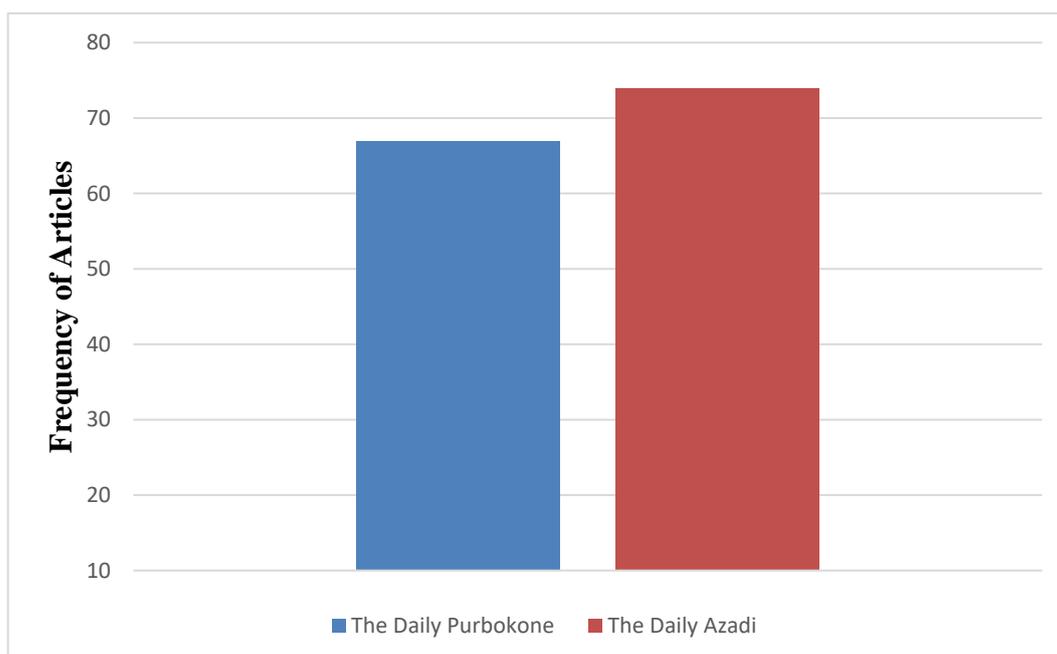


Figure 1. The total number of environmental articles printed by two local newspaper of Chittagong

Source: Researcher's field data.

The total number of environmental related news stories is taken as an indicator of how much attention is given to environmental issues by particular newspaper. The Daily Azadi newspaper devoted the highest environmental articles (74 articles) by contract to The Daily Purbokone; The Daily Purbokone which devoted sixty seven (67 articles) article during that period for the environment.

Types of environmental issues covered by newspapers

Below, figure 2 and 3 has shown a significant difference in numbers of categories of environmental issues printed by selected two newspapers and reporting trends throughout the whole year of study.

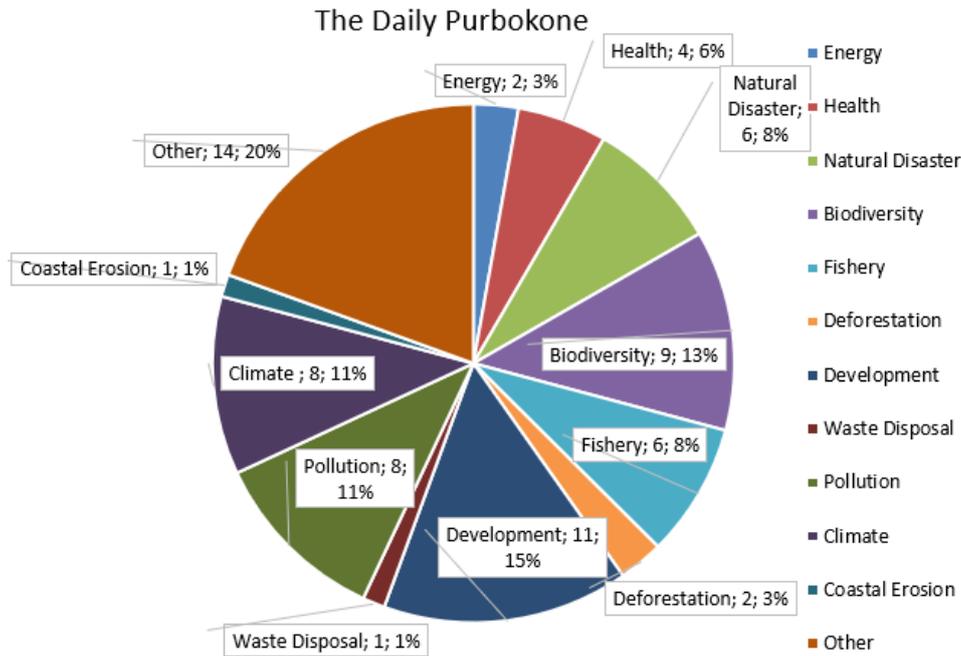


Figure 2. Number of Articles covered in The Daily Purbokone

Source: Researcher's field data.

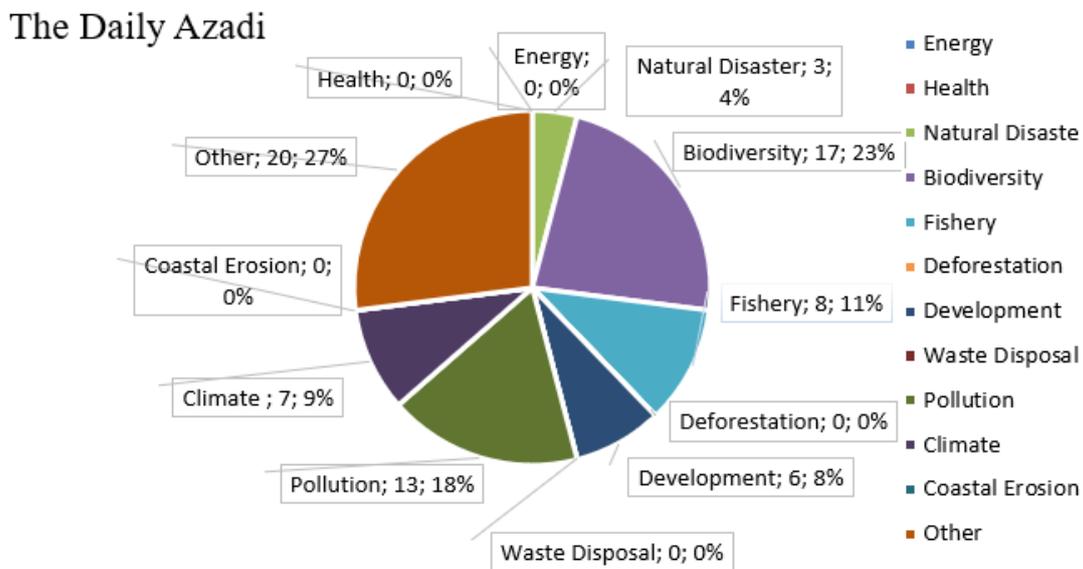


Figure 2. Number of Articles covered in The Daily Azadi

Source: Researcher's field data.

Level of prominence

Nature of the story

It is found that most of the stories have just reported without any in-depth analysis. The Daily Purbokone just reported 52% of its total coverage. And The Daily Azadi reported 63% just report without any in-depth analysis of the environmental issues. In the case of solution news, The Daily Purbokone published nineteen (28%) article where The Daily Azadi published eleven (14%) article. Also, The Daily Azadi devoted only single follow Ups article and lamentably the Daily Purbokone published no Follow-Up article. Eventually, the Daily Azadi published fifteen (22%) articles pertinent to environmental law and policy whereas The Daily Purbokone published twelve (20%) articles regarding the same nature.

Table 1. Nature of the story reported in three newspapers in 2014

Newspaper	Just Reporting	Solution	Follow Up	Law & Policy	Total
The Daily Purbokone	36 (52%)	19 (28%)	0%	12 (20%)	67
The Daily Azadi	47 (63%)	11 (14%)	1 (1%)	15 (22%)	74

Source: Researcher's field data.

The items published related to environment issues

From the above findings of the study, it is shown that most stories in two newspapers published just news report, giving low importance to the analysis, feature, editorial or commentary. The Daily Purbokone had only fifty-three (79%) news report and The Daily Azadi published sixty-one news report. On the other hand, The Daily Azadi has published five (7%) feature article and The Daily Purbokone published only one (1%) feature article. From the aspect of published news report, it is evident that The Daily Azadi has given more importance to environmental issues than The Daily Purbokone, but The Daily Purbokone published more featured article comparing to the first one. The Daily Azadi has published eight (12%) editorials, whereas Daily Purbokone published nine (13%) editorials. Besides, The Daily Purbokone published only four (7%) letter to the editor, albeit The Daily Azadi has published no letter to the editor in the framed time period. So, considering feature, editorial, and letter to the editor, The Daily Purbokone has given more priority to the environmental issues than the Daily Azadi.

Table 2. The items published in two local newspapers of Chittagong

Newspaper	News Report	Feature	Editorial	Letter to Editor	Total
The Daily Purbokone	53 (79%)	1 (1%)	9 (13%)	4 (7%)	67
The Daily Azadi	61 (81%)	5 (7%)	8 (12%)	0 (0%)	74

Source: Researcher's field data.

Placement of articles

We know that news placement judges the importance of news. In relation to the newspaper, it is thought that FrontPage (FP) and Back Page (BP) is the most important page for news placement; here the folder of the page also thought as a factor of importance. Hence, FrontPage and Back Page is the most important page for news placement. The study is shown that most of the environmental stories covered by the two newspapers of Chattogram placed in the inner page of the newspaper, which proved that environmental issues has given less importance compared to other issues. In that case, we perused, The Daily Azadi and The Daily Purbokone placed forty-seven (66%) articles and thirty-nine articles (61%) in the inner page particularly. Though both newspapers published a number of articles on front page (FP) and back page (BP), the percentage is not mention-worthy. The Daily Purbokone placed fifteen articles (22%) in the upper folder of front page and four articles (6%) in the lower folder of the front page. The same daily placed six (9%) articles.

Table 3. Page-wise placement of reports on environmental issues

Newspaper	Front Page		Back Page		Inner Page	Total
	FP-UF	FP-LF	BP-UF	BP-LF		
The Daily Purbokone	15 (22%)	4(6%)	6 (9%)	3 (4%)	39 (61%)	67
The Daily Azadi	11 (14%)	4 (5%)	4 (5%)	8 (10%)	47 (66%)	74

Source: Researcher's field data.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study depicts that the local print media of Chattogram, Bangladesh mostly showed interest on event-based coverage of the relevant issues rather than in-depth investigation, depth reporting, analysis, commentary, and follow-ups. The study also reveals that the dailies mostly concentrate on covering issues of pollution connected to developmental activities and bio-diversity around the 'World Environment Day'. And findings show that The Daily Azadi has published no news on health, energy, deforestation, waste disposal and coastal erosion at all, though these are the most pertinent factor to the environment. Besides, The Daily Purbokone though published a few articles on waste disposal and coastal erosion, which may say a very lamentable presentation. Besides, climate change, in spite of a burning issue for Bangladesh, did not receive commendable

coverage in the dailies of Chattogram. And there was almost no presentation on follow-ups news regarding the issues. Others specific catalyst of environment like fisheries, deforestation, energy has given less importance on both dailies. Considering page wise importance, it reveals that both of the dailies showed apathy on the environmental issues. Considering the significance of the 'climate change' issues globally in general and in Bangladesh particularly, the newspapers should plan and set agenda 'to inform, educate and persuade' people. Eventually, Print dailies of Chattogram should be more serious with the environment issue due to its ecologically vulnerable and sensitive condition. Thus way, news outlets should arrange comprehensive training for the reporters to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge on the issue to facilitate better coverage. Partnerships can be developed with the research and training organizations having demonstrated expertise in environment and climate change issues for the capacity building of the reporters. The universities and institutions that have courses and programs in environmental journalism may be beneficiaries of this data to know how local dailies cover environmental issues. Environmental journalism needs to treat as special beat and journalists need more training and necessary tools to cover it. Environment expert, media outlets can implement these recommendations and improve their media policy on environmental ground. Apart from this, government and non-government organizations (NGOs), domestic or global environmentalists, environmental activists, may use this research for better policy making. In this study, we considered two regional newspapers of Chattogram for only a month. In the future, we may conduct studies on national dailies of Bangladesh for a longer period of time. This research also revealed the need for further studies on environmental journalists about their professional experiences and challenges they are facing whilst cover environmental issues.

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