SMALL TALK, BIG ISSUE: DEVELOPMENT, SILENCE AND THE ELITE AGENDA IN A BANGLADESHI NEWSPAPER

Shah Nister Kabir

Jagannath University, Bangladesh, *snj_kabir@yahoo.com*

Abstract

In an examination of development issues appearing in the highest circulated mainstream English daily newspaper in Bangladesh— the *Daily Star (DS)*— this study discursively argues that this newspaper provided much less attention and even remained silent on development issues related to education and agriculture that are of close concern to underprivileged people. The newspaper's silence and inconsistent coverage sidelines social needs important to voiceless people. Their coverage pattern can be likened to *snapshots* that have no value in solving the issues. The newspaper's coverage favours the elite but dehumanizes and ignores the circumstances of underprivileged people. While problems of development need to be debated in the mass media; the *DS* would rather remain silent and engage in a social exclusion process that breaches the norms of development journalism. The disinterest has impacts, not only in sidelining development issues, but also in dehumanizing and excluding the circumstances of underprivileged people.

Keywords: development journalism, newspaper, Bangladesh, elite agenda, discourse

Introduction

The role of mass media in development is undeniable. From the outset, it was suggested that mass media be used in national development (Lerner, 1958; Rogers, 1963; Servaes & Malikhao, 1991). Mass media coverage encourages debate on various issues, including national development (Ettema, 2007; Norris, 2000; Schudson, 1995), which can make the elite and their bureaucrats accountable for their social involvement (Maia, 2009, p. 376). Many nations across the world face development challenges, and mass media can be a crucial player in addressing them (McPhail, 2009; Servaes & Malikhao, 1991). However, journalists may sideline an issue by selecting and manipulating both information and the perspective of the issue (Westerstahl, 1983, p. 408). The media establish the prominence of an issue for the public, and a media "text is really the imprint of power— it registers the identity of actors or interests that have competed to dominate the text" (Entman, 1993, p. 55). In this process, media texts appear to legitimate the authority of the elite (Fairclough, 1992, p. 87). Through the "schemata of interpretation" of media (Goffman, 1974, p. 31) readers construct their understanding of an issue. The media also select what stories and events should be brought to readers' attention (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002). Therefore, the reality media players construct and the 'truth' they craft for social consumption, may not be the 'reality' but an outcome of the imagination of some people involved in the news selection process (Shoemaker & Versee, 1996; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002; Entman, 2004). Further, a newspaper does not simply inform people, it does something more through selecting information and through the form of the story telling (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002, p. 180). The media's "self-serving 'truth' […]" (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 246) and media constructed reality "affects" the perceptions of members of society and how they regard the world (Creutz-Kamppi, 2008, p. 297). This study, thus, aims to examine the coverage of development issues by a mainstream newspaper— the *Daily Star (DS)*— to identify how development issues are represented. This study specifically examines how a Bangladeshi newspaper covers agriculture and education-based development— two issues are of close concern to the underprivileged people. It will also identify whether the *DS* glorifies the power elites and how its silence boosts elite interests. The *DS* is the highest circulating English newspaper published in Bangladesh. All news that appeared on the front and back pages in a two-year time frame will be examined. It needs to be noted that the front page is the most important page of a newspaper; and in Bangladesh, the back page also carries importance in terms of news coverage.

From a normative position, mass media will cover an issue and provide information important to society; but it is also argued that "[l]ess melodramatic, but more important stories, about education, health, diplomacy and community relations, get less coverage" (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 2). Even media accountability may differ depending on the event defined by the media, social actors and the problem perceived by the media and the actors— the power elite, for example (Maia, 2009). An enormous amount of research in the field has been carried out across the world—for example, in Singapore (Latif, 1998, 1996; Xu, 2005); in Malaysia (Ali, 1980; Wong, 2004); in China (Chen, 1991; Gan, 1983; Yuehui, 1987); in India (Murthy, 2000; Vilanilam, 1975, 1984): in Nigeria (Edeani, 1993); in South Africa (Domatob & Hall, 1983); in Latin America (Isiaka, 2006); in Tanzania (Mwaffisi, 1991)—but the attention of researchers to this issue in Bangladesh is rare. Therefore, this study is an attempt to cover the gap in the literature. It is expected that mass media will raise its voice for the voiceless, and thereby help the underprivileged. The irony is, Bangladeshi mass media either remain silent in a context where mass media players really need to raise their voices in favor of the voiceless (Kabir, 2018). The mass media may glorify one group while dehumanizing others through the power of text (Fairclough, 1989, 1992). Therefore, one can understand the abuses, misuses and power relationships inside society through examining the text.

Development, Society and Politics

Politics is fundamental in shaping development choices, in that development encompasses many issues and elements related to health, agriculture, education, construction, politics, economy etc. However, the understanding of development has changed in many societies for a variety of reasons— gaining new knowledge, for example. As an illustration, one might look at the example of development in the 1940s and 1950s when development experts expected strong-arm or authoritarian regimes to mobilize for development (Kuznets, 1966; cited in Ruttan, 1986). The positive view of such regimes' attitudes towards development was quickly dismissed in the1960s with the widespread of authoritarian states across the world (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013), and the world witnessed the harm politics could do with respect to development and poverty (Correll, 2008). However, since the start of the development process, we have seen that a group of people, especially the elite, appear on the platform of politics with development. This group also controls social institutions such as mass media, and whether it be internal or international-assisted development, it has a close connection to politics (Carothers & De Gramont, 2013) that no society can avoid. Further, it is not that a society will observe no change in development, despite the involvement of politics in every aspect of it— when underprivileged people can rely on public services, we might see progress in development (Department for International Development [DFID] Research and Evidence Division, 2010) with access to education, health and economic activities becoming the main paths to development. However, it is also important to note that national interest groups interfere with development issues. One can argue that for the betterment of the poor or the underprivileged, governments and social institutions need to step forward; and to do so, social institutions need to be free from unnecessary self-censorship and restrictions of the government. Further, the social institutions also need to work for the people that have no voice.

Media, Elite Agenda and Underprivileged People

Glasgow University Media Group (1976, p. 1) has stated: "news is not a neutral product ... it is a sequence of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society". The argument may be applicable to any media text. The bias of media texts appears under a "veil of impartiality" (Laughey, 2007, p. 67) that favors the interests of the media and the interests of the elite. However, it can also be argued that there are cases where the media can challenge the elite (McQuils, 2007, p. 24), and influence the elite in the decision-making process. This study, thus, questions how and whether the *DS* constructs the elite agenda in covering development issues, and has adopted a theoretical angle—media frame—in analyzing the answer. The media make an issue salience for readers' attention (Entman, 1991, 2003, 2007) by culling down some interpretation and by highlighting others (Entman, 2007, p. 164). Media content, whether it receives public attention or not, in most cases is *'dumbed down' and apolitical* (Davis, 2003, p. 669 [emphasis added]), and due to class

consciousness, high level media persons support capitalist ideology and "structural inequalities" (Hackett, 1986, p. 143). Therefore, the circumstances of underprivileged people and their issues may not receive media attention as such. The elite controls social discourse and the mass media appear to help them through controlling information (Davis, 2003, p. 670) and becoming counterparts of the social elite (Norris, 2000; Reese et al., 2001; Schudson, 1995; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The mass media maintain the interests of the ruling elite avoiding the rights of underprivileged people in society (Davis, 2003, p. 673; Clement, 1975). Political actors have their specific political objectives when it comes to national development and the mass media helps to perpetuate an agenda (McNair, 2011, p. 4; Franklin, 2004) that may overlook the development issues related to underprivileged people. The media frame the agenda to serve the elite through the images they produce for social consumption. The media may keep silent in situations where its voice could favour the ordinary people and challenge the elite (Entman, 2004; Kabir & Hamid, 2015). The agenda may also be preserved and legitimized through the media's silence, the omission of information and reduced social discourse. Many important issues that demand attention, emphasis and repetition (i.e., follow-up) may receive no attention in media representation. Therefore, the power of the media to influence people (Entman, 2007) can be understood. The mechanism of selection and omission of images (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991) controls and constructs the reality; and thus, favors an elite agenda, bringing into question the professionalism of the journalist (Hargreaves, 2005, pp. 3-4).

Media and Development Issues

Initially, development was perceived superficially and identified as being similar to economic growth and, therefore, growth in capital was more important than anything else (Mefalopulos, 2008, p. 6). Gradually, other aspects of development appeared in the discourse. For example, voting rights and power to elect representatives (Schumpeter, 1950; Riker, 1982) came to be seen as the basis of national development, but this was criticized by others, as the power to vote does not and cannot establish many other aspects of social development (Cingranelli & Richards, 1999; Poe & Tate, 1994; Mueller, 1992; Zakaria, 2003; Whitten-Woodring, 2009; Servaes & Malikhao, 1991)— health and education, for example. Pye (1963), Mueller (1992), Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) argued for freedom of expression; their perception being that if right to freedom of expression was established, the social development process would automatically be progressed. Many earlier thinkers' contributions— e.g., Lerner (1958), Schramm (1964), Deutschmann et al. (1968), Rostow (1960), Rogers (1963), Pye (1963)— addressed the need for mass media in development work in a nation. They suggest that in the development process the mass media are critical players. Parallel to their argument, some organizations, such as United Nations (e.g., 2006) also contributed to the development process. In this process, multiple communication tools, including mass media, were suggested for the positive development of a society and to improve the quality of human society (Acunzo et al., 2014, p. 107). However, due to their various involvements in society, the mass media do not and cannot help in the development process smoothly. For example, the mass media appear to preserve the interests of the owners (Bagdekian, 1993; Kellner, 1996); can be biased in the coverage of interest groups (Denhan, 1997; Malek, 1996; Merrill, 1995: Hargreaves, 2005, p. 3; McNair, 2011, p. xv); may falsify media coverage (Kabir, Alkaff & Bourk, 2018); compromise journalistic standards and ethics (White, 2008), and corporate, cultural and national interests (Said, 1978; Kellner, 2001; Nossek, 2004; McPhail, 2009, p. 25); lack freedom to cover an issue (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Mueller, 1992; Zakaria, 1997, 2003). Overall, in many cases mass media play a critical role in the development process to support the power elite (Okoro, 2013; Sebudubudu & Molutsi, 2011); and the power elite also tries to control not only the development process but also social institutions. Among others, the elite agenda is also critical for the Bangladeshi mass media. For example, while covering natural disasters (Kabir et al., 2018) and crime news (Kabir & Alkaff, 2018) Bangladeshi newspapers preserve the elite agenda and downplay the underprivileged people. Therefore, it is important to examine how Bangladeshi newspapers represent development issues for social consumption.

Development Journalism

Development journalism is rooted in development communication. The term "developmental journalism" was first used at a seminar in the Philippines in 1968 (Stevenson, 1994, p. 232) by the seminar chair Alan Chalkley. A regular journalist will cover a story, report the facts and make a conclusion, but a development journalist has to promote the issue from a positive angle. In addition, the journalist needs to write the news story in a way that helps the readers realize the seriousness of the issue and find a solution to the problem (Chalkley, 1968). Chalkley (1968) argues that development journalism is not initially a journalism for the elite or upper class; rather, it is for ordinary or underprivileged people— where a journalist will focus on the circumstances and the 'story' of the unprivileged people. Therefore, the journalist needs to be interested in issues relating to the grassroots, and more committed (Gunaratne, 1978) than a 'usual' beat reporter — e.g., crime, politics etc. This kind of journalism was also seen as involving reporting on and interpreting various development projects undertaken by the government (Aggarwala, 1978). A development journalist would be a critical examiner of the development work, evaluating and assessing the relevance and impact of a project (Ogan, 1982, p. 10; Aggarwala, 1978). Development journalism challenges the policy makers and power elites— "hold(s) them [i.e., the issue] up in the sunlight and demonstrate(s) the connections to readers, viewers and listeners" (Galtung & Vincent, 1992, p. 146). Galtung and Vincent (1992) maintain that development cannot and does not work in a vacuum as it is tied up with democracy and social participation; and therefore, "exploitation" in covering development issues can be observed (p. 150). For example, Domatob and Hall (1983, p. 18) argue: "most African ruling groups consolidate and perpetuate power in the name of development journalism". In Bangladesh, the mass media is not free from government domination and suppression (Kabir & Alkaff, 2018). Therefore, it is important to check how the *DS* represents development issues, and this is critical to social development, especially for the underprivileged.

Methodology

As mentioned, this study examines the coverage of development issues that are closely related to underprivileged people. It considers all news stories relating to agriculture and education that appeared in the *DS* from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019— a two-year data set. During this time Bangladesh had taken some multi-million construction projects— Metro Rail, Padma Bridge, for example— that mostly facilitate elite and urban people. Therefore, how the issues relating to the underprivileged people is framed during this time needs to be examined. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis will be employed in analyzing the data. Nonetheless, the main emphasis would be given to qualitative analysis. Further, as part of the quantitative analysis the frequency of reports is counted, i.e., how many news stories appeared in the newspaper. Quantitative analysis helps in understanding the background, which, in turn, makes for a better understanding of the qualitative discussion. This study employs media frame analysis as a tool for qualitative discussion. It focuses on how the *DS* newspaper discursively frames development issues, and whether it frames the issue to favor a particular group. Entman (1993) argues that media frame an issue to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text". Therefore, media make some issues and aspects of issue prominent but sideline others; and cover an issue from a particular angle (Entman, 1993) that supports a particular group or individual. The framing process appears to be "culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative" (Entman, 2007, p. 164) in a way that highlights a particular angle to endorse the power elite. However, they do it in a way so that the readers will not question them (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980). Therefore, through examining news frame one may identify the priority that appear through the media selection, silence, salience and overall coverage— for example, whether the elite is given priority when it should have been given to the underprivileged people. Through analyzing media frame one can understand media biasness which may appear in three ways— *distortion bias, content bias and decision-making bias* (Entman, 2007, p. 63 [original emphasis])— to understand how some people and issues are given priority and others are omitted. Such priority treatment may come through news narratives, headlines and photographs, for example (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 365). Framing analysis as qualitative research aims

for an understanding of the social life, institutional sidelining, the power of the text, the uses, abuses and misuses of power; and, therefore, the distortion of social images that appear to promote a particular group and legitimize their power over others (Entman, 2007; Wodak & Van Dijk, 2000). This study, thus, discursively examines the news frame to understand how the *DS* perceives development issues— for example, how the elite agenda is set in a social exclusion process. Mentioned before, news frame analysis helps us to identify how a particular group or individual is given priority through media interpretation while others are hindered (Entman, 2004, p. 417). Through analyzing frame, thus, one can understand how mass media as social institutions construct a distorted image of social reality (Entman, 2004; Bennett & Entman, 2002) that undermines and sidelines the circumstances of the underprivileged people. Therefore, analyzing media frame, in this case, would be applicable in identifying how the sidelining of a social institution has taken place to represent a distorted image; and how the social images are shaped, reshaped and distributed through exploitation for social consumption that glorifies the power elite (Entman, 1993, 2004). Mentioned earlier, this study considers all news that appeared in the *DS* in its front and back pages during the timeframe. All news relating to agriculture and education was considered. These two issues— agriculture and education— are closely concerned to the underprivileged people of Bangladesh. For example, Bangladesh is an agriculture-based country and the people that depend on agriculture in Bangladesh for their livelihood are mostly poor and are less privileged in education. In addition, these people are mostly uneducated— having being no or very less formal education in school. Therefore, how the *DS* as a part of social institutions constructed these crucial issues in their coverage can be understood by examining news frame. In this study, however, no criminal offences per se, no uprisings, no strikes, and no crises of the urban elite were included, as these types of incidents easily attract the news media's attention.

Findings and Discussion

In the two-year data set, this study found a total of 109 news stories. The frequency of reporting provides an impression of how development issues were overlooked and ignored in the coverage. Further, it published 43 reports on agriculture (in which the *DS* covered 39 issues); and 66 reports on education (in which the *DS* covered 58 issues). There was no consistent coverage of a particular issue. Therefore, one might argue that the *DS* was reluctant to cover development news. Such coverage pattern suggests to readers that the issues are not important and they need not be worried about them.

By observing the large number of issues that appeared in a limited number of stories through a *snapshot* of reporting, one might argue that this newspaper provided much less attention to critical issues; and its reluctance in covering development issue is reflected in its silence and inconsistent coverage, thereby, indicating to readers that the issues of underprivileged people can be ignored. The number of news stories on a particular issue and subject reflects the 'house policy' of a particular media outlet. It also reflects the attention and importance attached to an issue. The *DS* covered many issues providing no follow-up, where rigorous attention might have been expected by the readers; and might also have challenged the power elite. All issues appeared as part of routine work— there was no in-depth reporting, there was no challenging voice. The newspaper provided snapshots and departed from its responsibility. A big issue, thus, becomes a minor one. One might observe that the development issues covered in this newspaper appeared to endorse a particular group— the power elites. The main job of a development journalist— raising a voice in favor of the voiceless —is clearly undermined. At this stage, this study prefers a discursive discussion.

Education: Endorsing the Elite

The *DS* covered a large number of non-critical events related to the success and happiness of the underprivileged. From the outset, it also encouraged, endorsed and glorified the power elites. For example, the first report on education informs the readers about how happy school students are with receiving new books at the beginning of the year. In reporting this story (*A GLOW WITH JOY*: January 2, 2018 [original emphasis]), and associated editorial and two color photographs, the *DS* announced that there was "*Festivity at schools across the country* [original emphasis]", and endorsed Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid by quoting him that it was a "New Year Gift" for the students. A similar

story appeared the next year (i.e., 2019) as well (*Smells of new books fill little souls*: January 2, 2019), with a similar message. These front-page news stories legitimized the elite through endorsement. They quoted intellectuals such as Professor M. Zafor Iqbal and writer Anisul Haq to glorify the elites, as they contended that "only Bangladesh can do it [i.e., supplying book to the students]"— all of which appears to glorify the elite. These intellectuals were hired by the power elites and to complete the assignment— promoting the elite agenda. To endorse the elite, thus, the *DS* publishes reports informing that the elite are working for academic development (see for example: *Primary Education Project: Teachers' training in English given top priority*: May 24, 2018; *Secondary Education: Massive spending planned for skill development*: June 4, 2018; *Primary Schools: Govt to feed students from January*: August 20, 2019). Consequently, the evaluation appears as front-page news— *Human Capital Index: Bangladesh outshines India, Pakistan* (October 12, 2018)— to reinforce that Bangladesh is advancing fast; and in education and health it has surpassed India and Pakistan, and the achievement is due to the hard work of the power elite. The image of the power elite, thus, framed as savoir for the underprivileged people. These reports are covered prominently— for example, appearing on the front page as lead stories, with color photographs, and including interviews with ministers and bureaucrats to boost elite interests in the name of development. However, they failed to provide emphasis to report that many schools are in a dilapidated state (*7 schoolgirls wounded as ceiling plaster falls on them*: July 10, 2018), that schools have no quality teachers; and even that there are not enough benches to seat students in classes (*Studying in total mess*: July 17, 2018). These were one-off stories. When the question of environment in educational institutions needs to be framed for attention, the *DS* again played a sloppy game. The failure to report extends to the activities of corporate businesses, for example, making a primary school unhealthy, and how students of a school cannot study well due to the noise and environment pollution created by the elite (*Stone traders occupy Jaflong school ground* [February, 2018]; *Brick kiln menace* [May 5, 2018]; Smoked out of school [July 2, 2018]). These issues received no attention, despite the fact the elite deserved to be questioned on them and a rigorous investigation was indicated. These were simply one-off stories. It seems that the *DS* was not interested in challenging the elite and thus, they presented how Bangladesh was advancing under the control of the elite— glorifying the elite by not making their activities controversial.

The *DS* rarely focused on critical issues; and its promotion of entertainment and happiness left the elite unchallenged. For example, the report *Defying age for schooling* (January 2, 2018) informed that a senior person attended school in class five; and how an elderly man aged 81 started a library to assist in the spread of education (*Change maker: For the love of learning*, March 3, 2018). A similar story — *Primary school with a difference* (March 18, 2018)— focused on how the local people of an underprivileged area— Patiya, Chittagong— started a school to spread education. The readers also received a similar flavor of encouragement and happiness in many other reports, e.g., *A school with vision* (April, 7, 2018); *Home of hope* (May 19, 2018); *A school for the poor* (May 27, 2018); *A school of change (July 19, 2018); Wall uniting pupils against poverty (October 22, 2018); Amader Pathshala: Changing lives, quietly but surely* (January 31, 2019); *A school with a difference* (February 11, 2019); *Of a farmer with passion for education* (March 17, 2019); *The school of dreams* (July 27, 2019). This type of reporting spreads happiness but avoids critical issues that might challenge the power elite. As mentioned, the main job of development reporters is to raise a voice in favor of the voiceless. Nonetheless, the *DS* fails to uphold the circumstances of the underprivileged people. This, once again, legitimizes the inactions of the elite, through unchallenging reports. Therefore, the news story— *English, Math Exams: Lack of quality teachers behind poor show*: January 1, 2018— appeared to report that the quality of teaching was deteriorating and that, in effect, reduced the quality of students. The readers received a suddenly dropped of the critical issue. The readers, however, received a related news report later (*Primary Education Project: Teachers' training in English given top priority* [May 24, 2021]) that endorsed the elite again for their extra attention towards the development of primary education. Indeed, the report said that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was "giving utmost priority to children's learning", while neglecting to mention that there were many unresolved issues surrounding primary teaching, e.g., whether the elites were aware that the underprivileged were deprived as schools in urban areas were prioritized. This report was a one-off story though.

Agriculture: Elites Go Unchallenged

As was seen in education reporting, in agriculture stories the *DS* once again started encouraging readers through sharing images of happiness and entertainment. For example, the first agriculture news story in the dataset (*A charitable garden*, February 3, 2018) informed that a 55-year-old day laborer, Hydar Ali, worked for a charitable garden where people were free to enjoy themselves. To promote development in the agricultural sector, the *DS* reported that Bangladesh "achieve[ed] self-sufficiency" in animal protein production under the headline *Self-sufficient in fish, meat* [February 11, 2018]). People were also encouraged with information that Bangladesh was producing out-of-season pineapples, which indicated raised fortunes for farmers who were "enjoying the additional income benefits of selling the fruit out of season" (*Pineapples in March*, March 5, 2018). In another story, the *DS* encouraged a female farmer when she became a successful businesswoman. The eye-brow of the report informed: *Once penniless, Pabna woman reinvents herself as agriculture businesswoman*". The report states how she succeeded through her confidence and labor. The news frame helps us to conceptualized that Bangladesh is progressing well and people are happy; and, the ordinary people are not alone, the elites are working hard for them. A later report also told of the success of a couple in farming land (*The unsung tale of women in farming*: October 15, 2018). The *DS* covered many stories of success, such as: *Bogra's aloe vera pioneer* (April, 28, 2018); *Mangoes hit C'nawabganj market, finally* (May 30, 2018); *Enriching soil with biochar* (July 3, 2018); *Watermelons before time*: March 11, 2018); *Amsotto: Turning pulp into profits* (July 15, 2018); *Rambutan starts rocking Rangamati* (July 23, 2018); *Scoring big with Avocados* (September 25, 2018); *Mango, even in winter* (January 10, 2019); *Homemaker to trendsetter* (February 10, 2019); *Off-season watermelon brings smile to farmers* (September 25, 2019). All these stories promoted happiness and highlighted the success of individual initiatives, but they failed to address the issue that the farmers are losing their land due to the activities of the elite — for example, corporate businesses with the support of political elites snatched cultivable land (Gardner & Gerharz, 2016).

The *DS* published many stories that promoted happiness in agriculture, such as: *Seeds of Change* (March 10, 2018). In this one-off story, the *DS* reported that farmers could grow more crops all the year round. However, it failed to underline that no farmer would or should be interested in farming, as in many cases farmers could not make a profit while producing crops on their farmland (see for example, *Cauliflower sold for just Tk 1 a kg* [February 20, 2018]; *Bumper Harvest: Wholesale price of tomatoes drops to Tk 1 a kg* [February 22, 2018]; *Yields high, prices low* [August 11, 2018]). The *DS* never presented any follow-up reports on these critical issues. It repeatedly forgot to focus upon issues important to underprivileged people. For example, at one time good farming land lost its fertility (*Dredging makes a desert* [April 5, 2018]) due to a decision of the elites— to dig a channel in an unplanned way; and due to corporate activity— that turned fertile farmland into a brickfield (*Fertile land made barren for bricks* [June 20, 2018]). It was a cruel game that the power elites and corporate businesses played with the faith and future of poor farmers, and in both cases the *DS* failed to give them prominence. These back-page reports appeared as one-off stories. Yet, the report says that "some syndicate members forcibly lifted topsoil" and at "least 45 brick kilns were emitting plumes of smoke nearby" (*Fertile land made barren for bricks*, June 20, 2018) but the *DS* does not follow up with another report. This critical issue fails to get any attention from the *DS*. Yet another report states that "villages of Hurka and Charakhali in Bagerhat's Rampal upazila are now a mini-desert" (*Dredging makes a desert*: April 5, 2018), but the elite was not questioned. There were no interviews, there was no follow-up, and there was no investigation despite the fact this was a crucial issue for the underprivileged. The *DS* started glorifying the elite instead— the government was going to reduce the price of fertilizer and the Prime Minister had approved it (DAP *Fertiliser: Govt moves to cut price by Tk 9 a kg*, December 5, 2019). The glorification, in the news frame, appeared prominently on the platform when the Prime Minister applauded the achievement of her government and she asked to work "sincerely" for "the huge potential of jute and jute products" as "jute and jute products have good demand at home and abroad" (*Work to tap potentials of jute*: PM, March 7, 2018). The journalist, however, failed to question the elite— how they expected "sincere" work to achieve success in the jute market, while the government was closing jute mills and many of them were already closed. This is how the *DS* through its coverage framed the development issues that favored the power elite and left it unchallenged in the name of

development journalism. It kept silence when it was required to challenge the elite; it stopped reporting when it should have raised its voice in favor of the underprivileged.

Conclusion

From a normative position, it is expected that mass media as social institutions will raise its voice for the voiceless and, thus, will promote and, if necessary, negotiate with the power elite for the betterment of underprivileged. The *DS*, in their news frame, not only failed to uphold the circumstances of the voiceless; but also glorified the power elites by unnecessarily focusing upon them and their activities. Mentioned before, media do not construct the elite image controversial; and thereby, they frame the issue in a way so that the social members would see that the elites are busy for the wellbeing of the social members. The image that the *DS* imposed in framing the issue of agriculture and education clearly supports that it is not the circumstances of underprivileged that worried mass media. It frames the issues to glorify the power elites. Further, the aims and philosophy of development journalism will be achieved through rigorous investigation that questions and challenges the power elite, so that a journalism for the underprivileged will be established. The *DS* constructs the news frame in a way that do not challenge the elite; rather, when the elites could be questioned, it suppressed information by not producing any follow-up or investigation. Mass media need to encourage people, but it is not their main duty; rather, while reporting, a development journalist should suggest a solution to the imbalance, dehumanization and exploitation in society that the power elite are involved in. Therefore, a development journalist should highlight the crises that underprivileged people regularly encounter. The distortion and exploitation were clearly visible in the context when the *DS* avoided critical issues from its coverage which would have to be debated for public attention. The *DS*, while reporting on development issues, failed to realize the aims and philosophy of development journalism. Their snapshot coverage downplayed issues relating to the underprivileged. Yet, the *DS* sometimes brought critical issues in front of the readers, but the coverage failed due to a reluctance to challenge the elite, lack of investigation and follow-up stories. The way the *DS* framed the issues and the way it highlights happiness, clearly hides the agony and circumstances of underprivileged people. In addition, their unnecessary endorsement of the elite in news frame overlooks the elite's inaction towards development. The power of the text can be understood when a media outlet supports the elite agenda in its coverage, sidelining the circumstances of the voiceless and glorifying the elite through a distorted image of society. Snapshot reporting overwhelmingly focused on the happiness and success of underprivileged people while downplaying their agony and avoiding critical issues important to them; thus, reducing social discourse to boost the social elite. Therefore, the inaction of the elite was legitimized but the circumstances of underprivileged people were sidelined. Under this process, bleaching the norm of development journalism, the *DS* engaged in an exclusion process by offering a fragmented and distorted image of reality that dehumanized people who lacked the power to raise their voices.

References

Acunzo, M., Pafumi, M., Torres, C., & Tirol, M. S. (2014). *Communication for rural development: Sourcebook.* https://www.fao.org/3/i3492e/i3492e.pdf

Aggarwala, N. (1978). News with Third World perspective: A practical suggestion. In P. C. Horton (Ed.), *The Third World and press freedom* (pp. 197–209). Preager Publishers.

Ali, S. M. (1980). Notes on the changing role of the press in Asia's economic development, *Media Asia*, *7*(3), 153–155, https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.1980.11726007

Althaus, S. L., & Tewksbury, D. (2002). Agenda setting and the "new" news: Patterns of issue importance among readers of the paper and online versions of the New York Times. *Communication Research*, *29*(2), 180–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650202029002004

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image music text.* Fontana Press. https://monoskop.org/images/0/0a/Barthes_Roland_Image-Music-Text.pdf

Bennett, W. L., & Entman, R. M. (2002). Mediated politics: An introduction. In W. L. Bennett & Robert M. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy* (pp. 1–32). Cambridge University Press.

Carothers, T., & de Gramont, D. (2013). *Development aid confronts politics: The almost revolution.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wpk93

Chalkley, A. B. (1968). *A manual of development journalism.* Vikas Publications.

Chen, L. (1991). The door opens to a thousand blossoms: A preliminary study of communication and rural development in China (1979–88). *Asian Journal of Communication*, *1*(2), 103–121. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292989109359533

Cingranelli, D. L., & Richards, D. L. (1999). Measuring the level, pattern, and sequence of government respect for physical integrity rights. *International Studies Quarterly*, *43*(2), 407–417. https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00126

Clement, W. (1975). *The Canadian corporate elite: An analysis of economic power*. McClelland and Stewart.

Correll, D. (2008). The politics of poverty and social development. *International Social Work*, *51*(4), 453–466. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872808090239

Creutz-Kamppi, K. (2008). The othering of Islam in a European context: Polarizing discourses in Swedish-language dailies in Finland. *Nordicom Review*, *29*(2), 295–308. https://doi.org/10.1515/nor-2017-0192

Davis, A. (2003). Whither mass media and power? Evidence for a critical elite theory alternative. *Media, Culture & Society*, *25*(5), 669–690. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437030255006

Denhan, B. E. (1997). Anonymous attribution during two periods of military conflict: Using logistic regression to study veiled sources in American newspapers. *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly*, *74*(3), 565–578. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909707400310

Department for International Development Research and Evidence Division. (2010). *The politics of poverty: Elites, citizens and states.* https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedkingdom/48688822.pdf

Deutschmann, P. J., Ellingsworth, H., & McNelly, J. T. (1968). *Communication and social change in Latin America: Introducing new technology*. Praeger Publishers.

Domatob, J. K., & Hall, S. W. (1983). Development journalism in Black Africa. *International Communication Gazette*, *31*(1), 9–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/001654928303100102

Edeani, D. O. (1993). Role of development journalism in Nigeria's development. *International Communication Gazette*, *52*(2), 123–143. https://doi.org/10.1177/001654929305200204

Eldridge, J. (Ed.). (1993). *Getting the message: News, truth, and power*. Routledge.

Entman, R. M. (1991). Framing U.S. coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. *Journal of Communication*, *41*(4), 6–27. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1991.tb02328.x

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, *43*(4), 51–58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

Entman, R. M. (2003). Cascading activation: Contesting the White House's frame after 9/11. *Political Communication*, *20*(4), 415–432. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600390244176

Entman, R. M. (2007). Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power. *Journal of Communication*, *57*(1), 163–173. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00336.x

Ettema, J. S. (2007). Journalism as reason-giving: Deliberative democracy, institutional accountability, and the news media's mission. *Political Communication*, *24*(2), 143–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600701312860

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Polity Press.

Fiske, J. (1987). *Television culture*. Routledge.

Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. Routledge.

Galtung, J., & Vincent, R. C. (1992). *Global glasnost: Toward a new world information and communication order?*. Hampton Press.

Gamson, W. A., & Lasch, K. E. (1983). The political culture of social welfare policy. In S. E. Spiro & E. Yuchtman-Yaar (Eds.), *Evaluating the welfare state: Social and political perspectives* (pp. 397–415). Academic Press.

Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, *95*(1), 1–37. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2780405

Gan, F. (1983). The role of China's rural publications in the development of agriculture. *Media Asia*, *10*(4), 183–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.1983.11726128

Gans, H. J. (1979). *Deciding what's news: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Pantheon Books.

Gardner, K., & Gerharz, E. (2016). Introduction. Land, 'development' and 'security' in Bangladesh and India. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, *13*. https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.4141

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making & unmaking of the new left*. University of California Press.

Glasgow University Media Group. (1976). *Bad news* (Vol. 1). Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.

Graber, D. A. (1988). *Processing the news: How people tame the information tide* (2nd ed.). Longman.

Graber, D. A. (1996). Say it with pictures. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *546*(1), 85–96. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1048172

Gunaratne, S. (1996). Old wine in a new bottle: Public versus developmental journalism in the US. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, *1*(1), 64–75. https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1180&context=apme

Hackett, R. A. (1986). For a socialist perspective on the news media. *Studies in Political Economy*, *19*(1), 141–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/19187033.1986.11675600

Hargreaves, I. (2005). *Journalism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Hartley, J. (1996). *Popular reality: Journalism, modernity, popular culture*. Arnold.

Isiaka, B. T. (2006). Paradigm shift in development journalism practices for effective dissemination of agricultural information. *The Journal of Development Communication*, *17*(1), 56–71.

Jackson, J. H. (2011). Envisioning disaster in the 1910 Paris flood. *Journal of Urban History*, *37*(2), 176–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144210391608

Kabir, S. N., & Alkaff, S. N. H. (2018). Selling crime, criminals and commercializing social panic: Three case studies in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, *13*(1), 212–229. https://www.ijcjs.com/article-detail.php?id=240

Kabir, S. N., & Hamid, M. O. (2015). Muslims in Western media: New Zealand Newspapers' construction of 2006 terror plot at Heathrow Airport and beyond. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *35*(4), 469–485. https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2015.1112120

Kabir, S. N., Alkaff, S. N. H., & Bourk, M. (2018). Iconizing "Muslim terrorism" in a British Newspaper and public perception. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *38*(2), 179–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2018.1466487

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1984). Choices, values, and frames. *American Psychologist*, *39*(4), 341–350. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.39.4.341

Kovach, B., & Rosenstiel, T. (2001). *The elements of journalism: What newspeople should know and the public should expect*. Crown Publishers.

Kuznets, S. (1966). *Modern economic growth: Rate, structure, and spread*. Yale University Press.

Latif, A. (1996). Asian values in journalism: Idle concept or realistic goal?. In M. Masterton (Ed.), *Asian values in journalism* (pp. 152–157). Asian Media Information and Communication Centre.

Latif, A. (1998). The press in Asia: Taking a stand. In A. Latif (Ed.), *Walking the tightrope: Press freedom and professional standards in Asia* (pp. 3–15). Asian Media Information and Communication Centre.

Laughey, D. (2007). *Key themes in media theory*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Lerner, D. (1958). *The passing of traditional society: Modernizing the Middle East.* Free Press.

Maia, R. C. M. (2009). Media visibility and the scope of accountability. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *26*(4), 372–392. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295030903176666

Malek, A. (1996). New York Times editorial position and U.S. foreign policy: The case of Iran revisited. In A. Malek (Ed.), *News media and foreign relations: A multifaceted perspective* (pp. 224–245). Bloomsbury Academic.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1993). The evolution of agenda-setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas. *Journal of Communication*, *43*(2), 58–67. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01262.x

McNair, B. (2011). *An introduction to political communication* (5th ed.). Routledge.

McPhail, T. L. (2009). Major theories following modernization. In T. L. McPhail (Ed.), *Development communication: Reframing the role of the media* (pp. 21–48). Wiley-Blackwell.

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.

Mefalopulos, P. (2008). *Development communication sourcebook: Broadening the boundaries of communication.* The World Bank.

Merrill, J. C. (Ed.). (1995). *Global journalism: Survey of international communication* (3rd ed.). Longman.

Morse, J. M. (2008). Confusing categories and themes. *Qualitative Health Research, 18*(6), 727–728. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732308314930

Mueller, J. (1992). Democracy and Ralph's pretty good grocery: Elections, equality, and the minimal human being. *American Journal of Political Science*, *36*(4), 983–1003. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111357

Mwaffisi, S. (1991). Development journalism: How prepared are Tanzanian journalists?. *Africa Media Review*, *5*(2), 85–94. https://d.lib.msu.edu/jamr/183/datastream/OBJ/View/

Norris, P. (2000). *A virtuous circle: Political communications in postindustrial societies.* Cambridge University Press.

Nossek, H. (2004). Our news and their news: The role of national identity in the coverage of foreign news. *Journalism*, *5*(3), 343–368. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884904044941

Ogan, C. L. (1982). Development journalism/communication: The status of the concept. *International Communication Gazette*, *29*(1-2), 3–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/001654928202900101

Okoro, E. (2013). The media, development communication, and governance in Nigeria: The press for national integration. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *3*(11), 541–553. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v3-i11/374

Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political Communication*, *10*(1), 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963

Poe, S. C., & Tate, C. N. (1994). Repression of human rights to personal integrity in the 1980s: A global analysis. *American Political Science Review*, *88*(4), 853–872. https://doi.org/10.2307/2082712

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(2), 137–145. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137

Pye, L. W. (Ed.). (1963). *Communications and political development*. Princeton University Press.

Reese, S. D., Gandy, O. H., & Grant, A. E. (Eds.). (2001). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Riker, W. H. (1982). *Liberalism against populism: A confrontation between the theory of democracy and the theory of social choice*. Waveland Press.

Rogers, E. M. (1963). *The diffusion of innovations*. Free Press.

Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto*. Cambridge University Press.

Ruttan, V. W. (1989). *What happened to political development*?. Economic Development Centre, University of Minnesota, USA. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/7061989.pdf

Schramm, W. L. (1964). *Mass media and national development: The role of information in the developing countries*. Stanford University Press.

Schudson, M. (1995). *The power of news*. Harvard University Press.

Schumpeter, J. A. (1950). *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. Harper & Row.

Sekula, A. (1984). *Photography against the grain: Essays and photo works, 1973-1983*. Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Semetko, H. A., Brzinski, J. B., Weaver, D., & Willnat, L. (1992). TV news and U.S. public opinion about foreign countries: The impact of exposure and attention. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *4*(1), 18–36. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/4.1.18

Servaes, J., & Malikhao, P. (1991). *Concepts: The theoretical underpinnings of the approaches to development communication: Integrated approaches to development communication: A study and training package*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274193384_Jan_Servaes_ed_Approaches_to_Development_Communication_UNESCO_Paris_2003

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1991). *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content*. Longman.

Stevenson, R. L. (1994). *Global communication in the twenty-first century*. Longman.

Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. Free Press.

United Nations Children's Fund. (2008). *Meena Communication Initiative*. Retrieved from www.unicef.org/rosa/media_2479.htm

United Nations. (2006). *Brussels programme of action: Addressing the special needs of the least developed countries*. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/ohrlls/sites/www.un.org.ohrlls/files/brussels_programme_of_action.pdf

Van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Discourse semantics and ideology. *Discourse & Society*, *6*(2), 243–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926595006002006

Vilanilam, J. V. (1975). Developmental news in two leading Indian newspapers. *Media Asia*, *2*(1), 37–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.1975.11725838

Vilanilam, J. V. (1984). Rural press for development. *Media Asia*, *11*(4), 183–187. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.1984.11726158

Wanta, W., & Hu, Y.-W. (1993). The agenda-setting effects of international news coverage: An examination of differing news frames. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *5*(3), 250–264. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/5.3.250

Westerstahl, J. (1983). Objective news reporting: General premises. *Communication Research*, *10*(3), 403–424. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365083010003007

White, A. (2008). *To tell you the truth: The ethical journalism initiative*. International Federation of Journalists.

Wodak, R., & van Dijk, T. A. (Eds.). (2000). *Racism at the top: Parliamentary discourses on ethnic issues in six European States*. Drava Verlag.

Xu, X. (2005). *Demystifying Asian values in journalism*. Marshall Cavendish Academic.

Yuehui, W. (1987). Rural development leads to a press boom. *Media Asia*, *14*(2), 63–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.1987.11726244

Zakaria, F. (1997). The rise of illiberal democracy. *Foreign Affairs*, *76*(6), 22–43. https://doi.org/10.2307/20048274

Zakaria, F. (2003). *The future of freedom: Illiberal democracy at home and abroad*. W. W. Norton & Company.