Conventional Media Credibility and Current Affairs News: Emergence of Alternative Media in Hasina-Era Bangladesh

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Abstract

In Hasina-era Bangladesh, the credibility of traditional media had increasingly come into question, especially when it came to current affairs and political news. This research investigates the reasons for mass distrust and the rise of alternative media. Based on in-depth interviews with media professionals, this study found that state censorship, political interference, and a lack of transparency were some of the key reasons behind the collapse of public confidence in traditional media outlets. This study looks at the origins of mass distrust, and the resulting new media. The study, in a series of in-depth interviews with media practitioners, chose to identify some of the reasons behind general mistrust and the growth of new forms of media. It found control by the government over the press and political interference in editorial policy as major stumbling blocks for credibility among common people. Results have shown a marked drift towards social media and independent news channels, perceived to be more credible. This transition of traditional media to new media depicted an increasing demand of the public for accuracy and impartiality in Bangladesh. The study identifies comprehensive media reform as a key requirement to enhance transparency and independence within the media sector-a need also relevant to post-Hasina Bangladesh. Such changes are very important in building public self-confidence and making sure news organizations are free from unjustified political influence. The results will give valuable recommendations for policymakers and news houses on how to build and sustain reputable media arenas in Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Media Credibility; Government Censorship; Political Interference; Social Media; Alternate Media; Bangladesh*

Introduction

Press freedom as well as censorship in Bangladesh had been at loggerheads, profoundly affecting the credibility of conventional media, especially when it came to political news. Public concern over

mainstream media's reliability and independence had grown owing to perceived government interference, censorship, and absence of transparency (Hasan-Ashik, 2021). Censorship in Bangladesh, including both direct actions (such as the arrest of journalists and newsprint control) as well as indirect actions (such as subsidies and rationing essential resources) aimed to curtail communication that were anti-state (Islam & Rahman, 2021). Such authoritarian attitudes significantly restricted freedom of expression, limiting vital press role needed for safeguarding human rights and democratic institutions (Hasan Ashik, 2021). Political pressures on media from the government, political parties, as well as religious organizations resulted in visible decline in public trust in conventional media, with members of the public increasingly perceiving those sources as biased, being beholden to political agendas (Ahmmed, 2014).

As a result, there has been a shift in paradigm in news consumption with a clear inclination towards social media sources like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This has been owing to a deficiency of trust in the mainstream media — in the domain of credibility on one hand and the use of, large-scale audience reach and availability offered by social media websites, which can offer real-time news dissemination and engagement using multifarious content, on another. Such a migration to non-traditional media sources had far-reaching consequences, affecting the opinion of the masses and challenging the conventional mainstream media monopoly. With more and more people relying on social media and other alternative sources, mainstream media credibility and reliability came into doubt (Fišer & Držanić, 2021). The study explores the Bangladeshi public's attitude towards the credibility of mainstream media, especially for political information, and establishes the trend towards alternative sources of information. The study chronicles the extent to which the Bangladeshi populace is aware of and accepts these non-conventional sources of news, and the flaws and authentication problems of the political reporting of conventional media. Despite the existence of a flourishing media culture within Bangladesh, Hasina's government environment of intense censorship, political threats, and propaganda dissemination has exerted pressure upon established avenues for the dissemination of information, precipitating a translocation of the populace's confidence as well as the consumption of the media (Bhadra, 2024).

Problem Statement

The present research addresses the important knowledge gap in understanding how the general population in Bangladesh perceives alternative information sources and uses them in light of concerns about the credibility of traditional media especially when it comes to political news. With a thriving media landscape challenges like growing censorship, politicization of interference and misinformation have created public distrust in conventional platforms. Muzykant et al. (2022). Bangladeshi citizens are increasingly turning to social media, blogs and independent online news sources for information they consider more credible. This research is essential for studying the impact of these shifts on public behavior democratic participation and accountability ultimately aiming to inform media policy and restore confidence in traditional media (Ahmed, 2018).

Research Objectives

1. To assess the perceived credibility of conventional media among Bangladeshi citizens, particularly in the context of political news.

2. To analyze the shift in news consumption from conventional media to social media platforms in Bangladesh, exploring the reasons behind this change.

3. To investigate how censorship and political interference in conventional media influence public trust and the adoption of alternative information sources.

Research Questions

1. How do Bangladeshi media consumers perceive the credibility of conventional media, particularly in the context of political news?

2. What factors contribute to the shift in news consumption from conventional media to social media platforms in Bangladesh?

3. How do censorship and political interference in conventional media influence public trust and the adoption of alternative information sources?

Significance of the Study

The research is significant in understanding the complex nature of the media landscape in Bangladesh and notably on freedom and credibility issues. It will help in putting a finger on the various factors driving public trust in media downwards due to government censorship political pressures and shifts of news consumption. The findings will be quite enlightening for the policymakers, media organizations, and human rights advocates to act as a guide towards formulating strategies that support the independence of media and address challenges faced. This research also forms a stepping stone toward scientific scholarly exploration of media freedom and its censorship in Bangladesh. By strengthening civil society's ability to comprehend how the public reacts to media control, the research may more effectively mobilize support for a free and independent media in the nation (Al-Zaman & Noman 2024).

Literature Review

The literature review discusses studies in media controls, press freedom, and public views in Bangladesh, taking into consideration the level of acceptance and influence of alternative information sources, such as social media. This review places the dynamics between government regulation, political manipulation, journalistic ethics, and public confidence in media within a context where traditional media faces serious challenges in Bangladesh. This research utilizes the theories of media dependency and gatekeeping to explain the shift from traditional to alternative media. According to Media Dependency Theory, people depend on media to fulfill their informational needs, while Gatekeeping Theory upholds that media professionals have control over the flow of information, especially in environments where censorship exists.
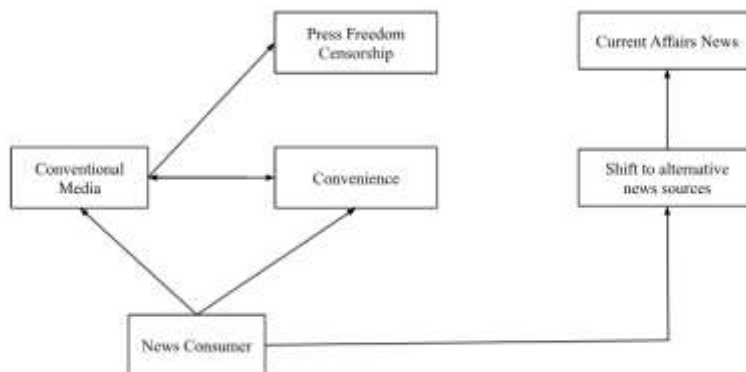

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The media dependency theory suggests that individuals rely on the media to satisfy a need, such as gathering information, pleasure, or gaining social contact. When traditional media cannot fulfill these needs due to elements of censorship, bias, and/or lack of transparency, they seek out social media as an alternative source offering more diverse sources from which they are able to pick up knowledge on (Jung, 2017). This can be seen in Bangladesh as political constraints in the mainstream media have made many seek less regulated alternatives. The Gatekeeping Theory points out the role of media professionals in information dissemination. In Bangladesh, widespread censorship and political control of gatekeepers often restrict information flow reinforcing Government narratives and limiting critical viewpoints (Erzikova 2018; Ullah This control affects the public perception These combined theories explain the movement toward alternative sources of information in Bangladesh. The Media Dependency Theory shows that when traditional media does not work, people seek other options; the Gatekeeping Theory explains how political agendas control what is being given out as information. With access to traditionally distributed media becoming increasingly limited, more people depend on social media and other platforms for a wider range of content facilitated by ease of access to information through these channels.

Government Censorship, Political Interference, and Press Freedom in Bangladesh

Government censorship and political interference in Bangladesh significantly impact press freedom and public trust. Direct censorship includes shutting down media outlets, restricting website access, and altering sensitive content. The Digital Security Act (DSA) has led to the arrest of journalists, creating a climate of fear and self-censorship (Islam & Rahman, 2021). For example, a 2014 Al Jazeera report by Syed Tashfin Chowdhury highlighted that Bengali newspapers and TV channels were shut down due to government censorship and political interference. Journalists were arrested, and media houses critical of the ruling party faced closures (Chowdhury, 2014).

This illustrates the extent to which direct government actions can stifle free expression and restrict the flow of information. In 2019, Al Jazeera and Voice of America reported that Bangladeshi authorities shut down 54 news portals, including those linked to the opposition, citing security reasons. These actions raised concerns about press freedom, limiting public discourse, and reducing the diversity of perspectives available (Agence France-Presse, 2019; Mahmud, 2019). Such indirect censorship strategies further undermine the credibility of traditional media. According to The Guardian (2023), the closure of Dainik Dinkal, a newspaper associated with the main opposition party, exemplifies how government actions can erode press freedom. The Dhaka district authorities mandated the shutdown, which was upheld by a press council, citing breaches of printing regulations. This move, alongside numerous arrests under the DSA, reflects a broader crackdown on dissenting voices (The Guardian, 2023). Research by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) reveals that 451 journalists have faced lawsuits under the DSA, with 255 cases directly related to their journalistic activities. This has resulted in significant self-censorship among journalists, further diminishing the diversity and reliability of news (The Daily Star, 2023). Indirect censorship, such as licensing controlled by political allies and financial pressures from advertisers, limits media freedom (Islam & Rahman, 2016).

Government Utilization of Conventional Media for Political News Dissemination

The Bangladeshi government uses conventional media to manipulate public opinion and control news. Political pressure on media owners and editors fosters a culture of self-censorship among journalists. Studies indicate that political pressure and ownership control severely compromise the credibility and objectivity of information in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2012). For example, market-orientated journalism prioritizes sensational and government-approved content over critical and investigative reporting (Andaleeb & Rahman, 2015). Additionally, ethical issues and corruption within the media industry exacerbate these problems, forcing journalists to follow government directives to protect their jobs (Elahi, 2013). Government-owned media channels are controlled through legislation, regulations,

licensing restrictions, and taxation. Politicians and officials influence editorial decisions, leading to biased reporting and a narrow range of perspectives (Ahmmed, 2014). This systematic control not only undermines the integrity of journalism but also restricts citizens' access to free and fair political news (Islam, 2016).

Perceptions of Conventional Media Credibility

Public trust in conventional media in Bangladesh is declining due to perceived biases and government control. The influence of political parties on media ownership creates an environment where news coverage often reflects specific political interests rather than objective reporting (Islam & Rahman, 2016). The general audience's perception of the media's credibility often determines the success or failure of news media efforts to inform, educate, persuade, and impact audiences (Wanta & Hu, 1994). According to Hasan and Wadud (2020), many perceive local news sources as lacking credibility, with some expressing the belief that money can buy journalists in Bangladesh and that Bangladeshi TVs need more credibility. These perceptions underline a significant trust deficit within the Bangladeshi media landscape, suggesting that a portion of the public view's conventional media as unreliable, compromised, and susceptible to external influences (Hasan & Wadud, 2020).

Disseminating misinformation, often stemming from unhealthy competition between news networks, significantly undermines the credibility of television news in Bangladesh. This competitive environment forces media organizations to priorities sensationalism and speed over accuracy, resulting in the spread of false or inaccurate news (Islam, 2016). Television networks' political affiliations also contribute to biased reporting, further eroding public trust.

Shift Toward Alternative Information Sources

The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube has fundamentally transformed news consumption in Bangladesh. These platforms offer rapid dissemination of information, diverse perspectives, and greater freedom of expression compared to conventional media. Increased government censorship and control over traditional media have driven this shift, as many Bangladeshis seek more reliable and varied sources of news (Ullah et al., 2023; Chowdhury, 2024). According to a Pew Research study, 87% of journalists believe that social media has positively impacted their ability to promote stories, highlighting the critical role these platforms play in enhancing news visibility and audience engagement (Atske & Atske, 2024). Additionally, about 80% of journalists view social media as beneficial for connecting with their audience and finding sources for their stories, revolutionizing the news production process (Atske & Atske, 2024). Ullah et al. (2023) noted that young people in Bangladesh increasingly use the internet, mainly via mobile devices, as their primary news source, leading to a decline in interest in conventional media. Data from the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) indicates a high number of mobile phone subscribers and internet users, with over 103 million people having mobile internet connectivity. This widespread use of mobile internet drives the shift towards digital platforms (Ullah et al., 2023). Chowdhury (2024) found that news is the primary content consumed across media platforms, with Facebook as the leading source for 73% of respondents. This trend is more pronounced in rural areas and among educated respondents, indicating a significant shift towards social media for news consumption (Chowdhury, 2024).
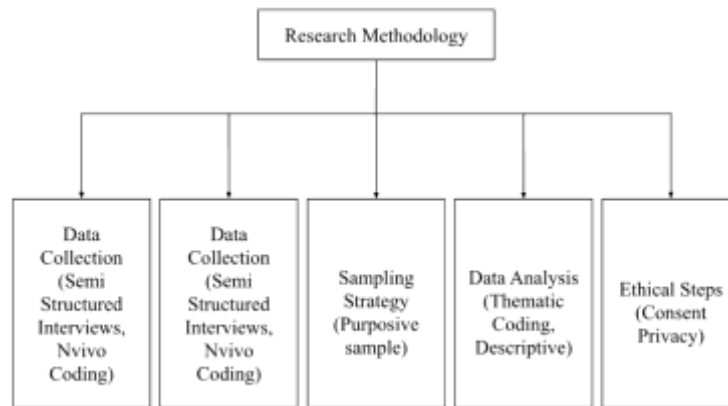
Methodology

Figure 2. Research Methodology

Research Design

Qualitative research design is adopted for the research to comprehend Conventional Media Credibility and Current Affairs News: Emergence of Alternative Media in Hasina Era Bangladesh. Accordingly, detailed, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with media professionals, academics, and analysts. Participants were selected who had expertise regarding the traditional and alternative media landscapes. NVivo 15 software was used to identify patterns and themes, which was important to ensure comprehensive grasping of challenges constituting the setting of media credibility. Informed consent and confidentiality were ensured through the adherence to a strict ethical guideline.

Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews with an emphasis on participants' perception of media credibility, censorship, and alternative media adoption were the primary means of data collection. Six media experts, including journalists, lecturers, and analysts with over five years of experience, were purposively selected to ensure the diversity of participants' views. Virtual interviews took 30–60 minutes. The interviews were recorded and verbatim transcribed. This involves systematic coding and data analysis using NVivo 15 software. Themes of media bias, public trust and shifting to alternative media were identified. The ethical considerations such as informed consent and confidentiality were addressed.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted as the main method of data collection. Their questionnaires aimed at mapping the experience and views of the participants regarding media credibility, censorship, and adoption of alternative media. The interviews were performed virtually, lasting from 30 to 60 minutes. In order to assure the quality of the data, all interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. NVivo 15 was used for data management and analysis.

Nvivo Software 15 Users

NVivo 15 software facilitated a systematic analysis of the interview data. Transcriptions were coded to identify recurring themes, such as media bias, public trust, and alternative media usage. The software enabled thematic mapping and categorization, providing a clear structure to explore participants'

perspectives. NVivo's tools ensured a robust and organized approach to data analysis, enhancing the credibility of the research findings.

Interview Protocol

The interview schedule consisted of a list of broad questions that aimed at getting rich information on the participant's participation in Conventional Media Credibility and Current Affairs News: Emergence of Alternative Media in Bangladesh.

Examples of questions included:

1	Which media outlets (TV, newspapers, social media, etc.) do you use most frequently?
2	Can you describe your typical media consumption habits?
3	Has your media consumption changed over the past few years? If so, what were the factors that led to such changes?
4	Have you found yourself turning to alternative information sources (social media, independent news websites) for current affairs-related news in Bangladesh?
5	How would you describe your level of trust in conventional media sources (newspapers, TV, radio) for current affairs-related news? What specific factors influence your trust or mistrust?
6	How do you assess the credibility of news obtained from alternative sources compared to conventional media?
7	Have you noticed any changes in the credibility of conventional media over time?
8	What role do you believe government censorship and political interference play in the credibility of conventional media?
9	Have you faced any challenge or issue concerning news consumption from alternative media sources? If so, what were those challenges or issues?
10	Has there been any significant shift from conventional to alternative sources of media for political and current affairs news consumption in Bangladesh? If so, has this shift been observed?
11	What improvements or changes (if any) would you like to see in the media landscape of Bangladesh?

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to select six experts from diverse media backgrounds, including journalists, university lecturers, and media analysts, with at least five years of experience. The selection criteria ensured representation across various traditional and alternative media platforms in Bangladesh. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and their rights, including confidentiality and the ability to withdraw at any stage.

Table 1. Participant's Category

No	Participant's Category	n
1	Associate Professor	1
2	Assistant Professor and Media Analysts	1
3	Conventional Media Journalist	2
4	Lecturer (National University)	1
5	Alternative Media Journalist	1

Sample Size

Six participants were selected, including a cross-section of expertise from the Bangladeshi media landscape. A sample size was selected to optimize depth and diversity to allow rich qualitative insights while not compromising the manageability of the data.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was supported by the use NVivo 15 software. Data analysis involved coding to predefined and emergent themes including perceptions of credibility, the impact on censorship and shift towards alternative media. This was a structured way through which in-depth exploration of patterns and issues raised by the participants was possible.

Ethical Consideration

The study had strict ethical consideration. Informed consent was provided by all participants, and the identities of participants were anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Data stored securely and access restricted to research team members. Ethical authorisation sought in advance of the study.

Limitation

While the qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth look at the media credibility perceptions, the findings cannot be generalized for the whole population of Bangladesh. Since the research design relies on self-reported data, there is a chance of biases to occur in that participants might withhold sensitive information or provide socially desirable responses. Furthermore, the small sample size, though adequate for qualitative analysis, limits the breadth of perspectives.

Media Professionals' Justifications

The participants discussed the continuously falling credibility of traditional media in Bangladesh, caused by political interference, censorship, and sensationalism. Though a few participants indicated that mainstream outlets are trying to uphold ethical standards, many perceived their closeness to political or corporate interests. Alternative media were lauded for their timeliness and diversity, while criticized for not having serious editorial processes. As one participant mentioned, "Social media presents diverse viewpoints but rarely guarantees fact-checking." These reflect the tension produced in changing public trust in traditional and alternative media.

Findings

Table 3. Objective 1: Perceived Credibility of Conventional Media

Participants	Key Findings	Percentages coverage
Lecturer (National University)	High trust in reputable outlets like newspapers and TV for non-political news.	(3.19%)
Conventional Media Journalist		(1.19%)
Conventional Media Journalist	Decreased trust in political news due to **bias** and **government influence.**	(2.82%)
Assistant Professor and Media Analysts		(2.10%)
Alternative Media Journalist	Credibility of conventional media has **declined** due to **political interference** and **sensationalism**	(2.77%)
Conventional Media Journalist		(3.24%)

Result

Table 1 summarizes the findings on the level of trust in traditional media, political bias, misinformation, and perceived decline in media credibility. The data denote divergence in the respondents' points of view with regard to conventional media credibility. The Lecturer, National University 3.19%, and the Conventional Media Journalist 1.19% also prove to be placing a high degree of trust in reputable outlets like Prothom Alo and The Daily Star even for nonpolitical news, therefore underlining traditional media's importance in specific contexts. Still, when political news is concerned, this level of trust changes dramatically: the Conventional Media Journalist (2.82%) and Assistant Professor and Media Analysts (2.10%) pointed out that political bias and pressure from the government regarding editorial policy were among the reasons for such low levels. The graph also showed a downward trend in perceived credibility for conventional media over time. According to the Alternative Media Journalist and the Conventional Media Journalist, political interference and sensationalism are the reasons for this erosion of confidence in conventional media at 2.77% and 3.24%, respectively. These findings point to a need for institutional reforms to clear perceived partiality and sensationalism in conventional media, if public confidence in traditional news sources is to be regained.

Table 3. Objective 2: Shift in News Consumption

Participants	Key Findings	Percentages Coverage
Assistant Professor and Media Analysts	**Social media** provides **immediacy** and is preferred for political and current affairs news.	7.28%
Alternative Media Journalist		2.64%
Assistant Professor and Media Analysts	Decreased trust in political news due to **bias** and **government influence.**	7.28%
Alternative Media Journalist	Social media allows for **faster updates**	5.05%
Conventional Media Journalist	and **diverse opinions**, which traditional media can't match due to **press times**.	3.89%
Conventional Media Journalist	Younger generation prefers **alternative media** for **faster**, **diverse**	1.43%
Associate Professor	**viewpoints** in political news.	4.99%

Result

Table 2 reveals a clear correlation between the shift in news consumption, increased reliance on social media, and the declining trust in conventional media, as reflected in the percentage feedback from respondents. Assistant Professor and Media Analysts (7.28%) and Alternative Media Journalist (2.64%) emphasize the preference for social media platforms such as Facebook and online news portals, owing to their immediacy and live updates. These platforms are especially favoured for political and current affairs news, illustrating their growing role in delivering real-time information. Additionally, the restrictive nature of conventional media contributes significantly to this shift. Assistant Professor and Media Analysts (7.28%) noted the political biases and lack of freedom in traditional media as crucial factors driving individuals toward alternative platforms. Similarly, Alternative Media Journalist (5.05%) and Conventional Media Journalist (3.89%) highlighted the advantages of social media in providing faster updates and access to a diverse range of opinions, an edge that traditional media struggles to match due to press schedules. Furthermore, the younger generation's preference for alternative media is underscored by Associate Professor (1.43%) and Conventional Media Journalist (4.99%), who pointed out the appeal of social media in offering faster, more diverse viewpoints on political news. These findings suggest that

conventional media must adapt to the changing preferences for freedom, speed, and diversity in news consumption to maintain its relevance and regain public trust in an increasingly digital age.

<p style="text-align:center">Table 4. Objective 3: Censorship and Political Interference</p>

Participants	Key Findings	Percentages Coverage
Assistant Professor and Media Analysts	**Government censorship** has caused conventional media to become the	4.96%
Conventional Media Journalist	**mouthpieces** of the ruling party, **eroding credibility**.	2.98%
Assistant Professor and Media Analysts	Decreased trust in political news due to **bias** and **government influence.**	3.01%
Alternative Media Journalist		4.26%
Alternative Media Journalist	**Political interference** and	4.26%
Conventional Media Journalist	**government restrictions** have led to **incomplete**, **biased reporting**, and public **skepticism towards** mainstream media.	3.88%
Alternative Media Journalist	The **shift to alternative media** is	4.99%
Conventional Media Journalist	mainly due to the **lack of editorial independence** in conventional media.	2.71%

Result

Table 3 shows strong associations between government censorship, political interference, and a consequent shift in news consumption to alternative media. Assistant Professor and Media Analysts (4.96%) and Conventional Media Journalist (2.98%) remark that as a result of government censorship, conventional media has been forced to align itself with the ruling party, which has eroded their credibility.Government monitoring and restrictions on alternative media platforms were other disincentives to free expression. Assistant Professor and Media Analysts, 3.01%, Alternative Media Journalist 4.26% observe that tracking anti-government content on alternative platforms underlines the repressive media environment. On the contrary, political interference along with restrictive laws, especially laws impeding journalistic freedom, has fostered public skepticism towards the mainstream media. Alternative Media Journalist (4.26%) remarks that these have led to partial and incomplete reporting, which, in turn has posed an added threat to people's confidence in traditional news sources. Conventional Media Journalist (3.88%) adds that such legislations have made journalistic integrity lose their strength. All this biasness towards alternative media has been largely influenced by a lack of editorial independence among conventional media. Alternative Media Journalist, 4.99%; Conventional Media Journalist, 2.71%: The audiences would like to shift toward an alternative platform, as they feel it provides quicker, diversified, and more independent coverage. Again, this demonstrates that serious reform in conventional media is required if the public trust is to be upheld and freedom of the press is to be equilibrated.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a serious decline in the public trust of traditional media in Bangladesh, shaped by factors such as government censorship, interference from political parties, and sensationalism. These elements have been highly critical in undermining traditional media's credibility, especially on political news, which has shifted public reliance to alternative media platforms like

Facebook, YouTube, and independent news websites. Part of the appeal in these platforms-especially to younger generations-lies in the immediacy, the diversity of perspectives, and the lack of structure imposed by traditional gatekeeping. Alternative media, though opening new avenues toward democratization of information, raise a number of challenges-notably the assurance of editorial judgment and counteracting misinformation.

Interpretation of Findings and Comparison with Previous Research

This finding is supported by the Media Dependency Theory which states that people seek other means when traditional media sources cannot satisfy the audience's informational needs (Jung, 2017). This is similar to previous studies where public trust has been lost on the conventional media due mainly to biases, sensationalism and government interference (Hasan & Wadud 2020). This study further develops the Gatekeeping Theory, explaining how political priorities in traditional media impede fair and multi-sided information dissemination (Erzikova, 2018). In contrast to this, the finding differs from past research by explaining the unique situations of alternative media in Bangladesh. It is exceptionally prone to misinformation because there was no strong editorial control. These results echo global trends where audiences increasingly turn to social media for diverse viewpoints but also reflect the need for measures to ensure information accuracy (Ullah et al., 2023).

Broader Implications

These results have deep implications for the Bangladeshi media landscape. The growth of alternative media reflects immense potential to democratize information access by dodging traditional gatekeeping mechanisms and offering manifold perspectives. This shift, while expected, has underlined balanced reforms in both conventional and alternative media. According to Chowdhury (2024), repealing restrictive laws, such as the Digital Security Act, which are misused to muzzle mainstream media, will be key in restoring citizen trust in these traditional outlets. These must be developed in tandem with efforts on media literacy with which audiences assess the credibility or otherwise of traditional and alternative forms of news. It is also worth mentioning that the framework of independent regulatory bodies for alternative media goes to the extent of showing ways in which the risks of misinformation are curtailed while those platforms are kept open. This will eventually yield a balanced and credible information ecosystem that answers public demand for accurate and diverse news.

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

First, there are some limitations that need to be discussed. Even though the sample size is small, which is suitable for qualitative research, generalization across such a huge and heterogeneous population is limited. Second, self-reported data may be biased due to either social desirability or reporting personal experiences, not general trends. Thirdly, the focus on urban media consumers limits the representativeness of rural populations, who might have limited access to alternative media platforms. Finally, due to the day-to-day change in digital media and government policies, it risks becoming irrelevant in the medium to long term, with new platforms emerging and regulations changing. It is also recommended that further studies be conducted with an even larger sample size, including rural and underrepresented populations, to achieve a full-scale understanding of the overall media consumption pattern in Bangladesh. Quantitative studies can also be carried out to take further investigation on the effect of alternative media on public opinion, political participation, and levels of trust in conventional media. Second, longitudinal studies will be instructive regarding how shifting government policies and emergent digital media technologies shape changing trust dynamics. Future research could also consider how emergent technologies of artificial intelligence and machine learning could enhance editorial control and reduce misinformation on alternative media sites. These represent some key research areas, through

which serious input can be provided to the policy makers and media organizations for fostering a credible and balanced media environment in Bangladesh.

Recommendation

Legal, educational, financial, and organizational reforms are just some of the indispensable parts needed to reinstate public confidence in conventional media. First, there is an urgent need for the abrogation of repressive laws like the Digital Security Act, which has been assailed for compromising journalistic expression and encouraging self-censorship (Hasan & Wadud, 2020). A supportive legal framework would ensure that the journalists report freely and more accurately, adding credibility to media reporting. This is where media literacy needs to be developed in the general public through educational programs to help distinguish news from credible sources and misinformation. These programs will, therefore, provide an educated and aware population which can be effective in ensuring accountability from the media organizations (Ullah et al., 2023). Financial support for investigative journalism is another important aspect; it can help reveal the truth that might otherwise be hidden due to political pressure and financial reasons. Funding opportunities and grants for independent journalists would encourage in-depth reporting and increase the credibility of the media (Islam, 2023).

Additionally, the media organizations must diversify their revenue models in order to decrease their reliance on traditional advertising that often compromises editorial independence. Models of subscription, crowdfunding, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations keep the spirit of journalistic integrity alive in ways that reduce sponsor influence. Such a situation arises in Chowdhury, 2024. Lastly, accountability will be increased through independent regulation of media practices. These bodies should work independently of the influence of any government and enforce standards of ethics on journalism so that the public can again trust media institutions and foster a sense of responsibility and integrity. According to Ullah et al. (2023), all these steps will collectively help conventional media reclaim their role as a credible and trustworthy source of information.

Conclusion

The study shows that public trust in conventional media in Bangladesh is fast eroding due to reasons such as government censorship, financial straits, and partisan bias. The findings indicate a sharp turn in the attitude of people towards making options for alternative media sources more credible and pluralistic. The changeover underlines the growing requirement for all-round media reforms that would help traditional media regain public trust. The restrictive legislation in place needs to be rolled back to improve press freedom. Additionally, media literacy should be developed among the citizens to empower them with critical thinking about the sources of information for developing informed and active citizenry. Similarly, the development of regulatory bodies as independent institutions will introduce accountability and ensure transparency in the media. These bodies should work independent of the government to ensure that standards and ethics in journalism are maintained. In addition, support for investigative journalism through suitable funding schemes will be essential in unlocking truths veiled by political alliances and other economic pressures. Conclusion In the light of these various challenges facing the media landscape of Bangladesh, multi-dimensional approaches are very much crucial in building a resilient and reliable media landscape. If these recommendations are taken and implemented, that would be stakeholders' contribution toward the building up of a media landscape that not only informs the public but does so in concert with democratic, accountable, free-expression principles.

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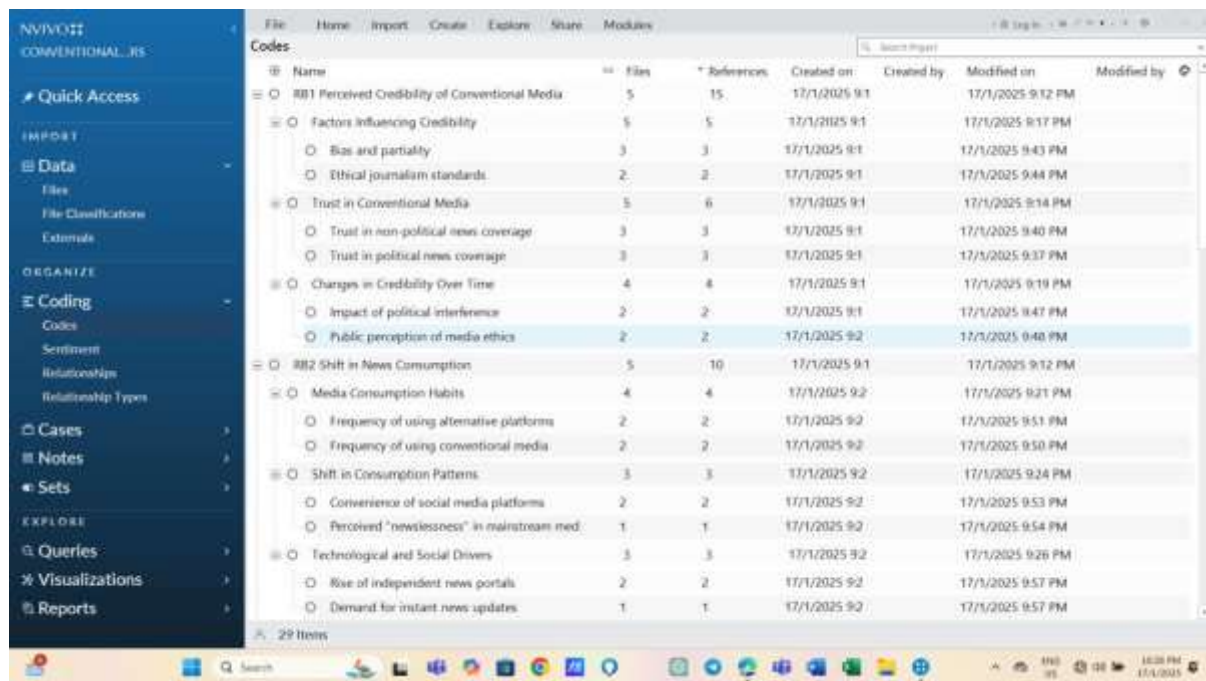
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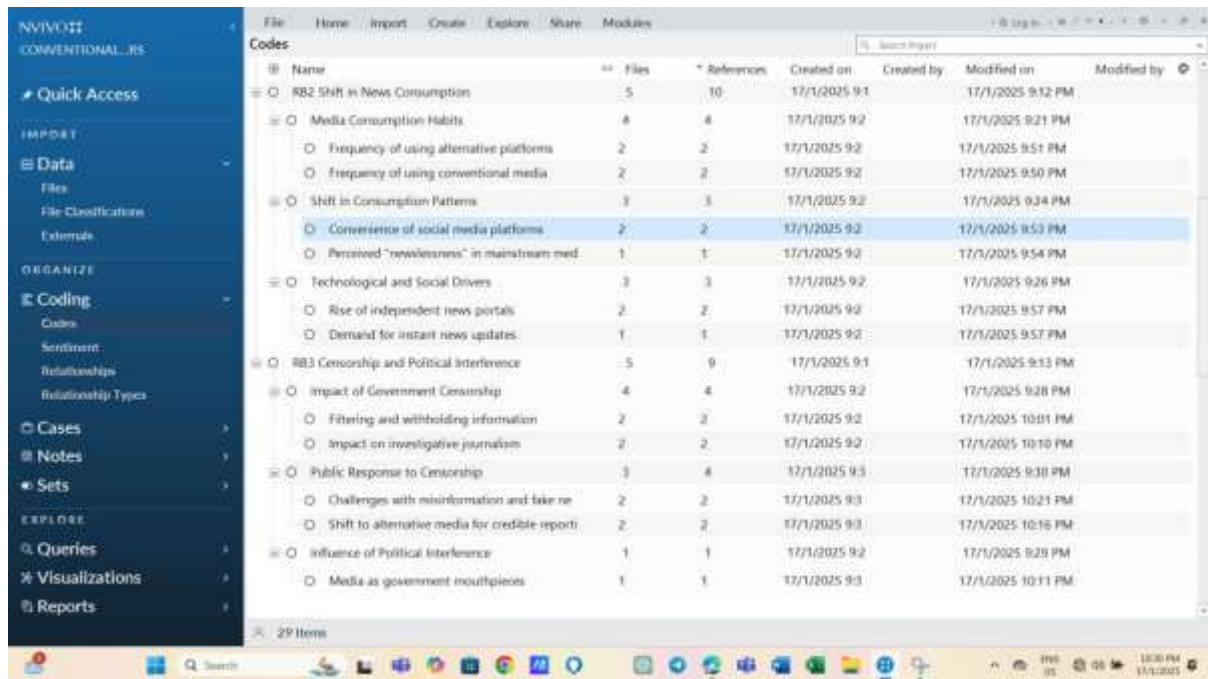
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Appendix