

FALL OF NEWSPAPERS' SPORTS COVERAGE DURING CORONA PANDEMIC IN BANGLADESH: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

In this study, we have tried to analyse how the newspapers dealt with the pandemic situation. Due to COVID-19, sports events (both international and national levels) were stopped for a long time. In those days, it was a challenge for the daily newspapers to continue sports pages with regular trends. The policies and new trends that have been taken by the national dailies to cope with this situation have been analysed here. To conduct the research, we used the content analysis method. In this research, we have observed a significant decline in the number of news items and news areas on the sports pages. Cricket and football were the main sources of news, and most of the news items were male-centred. During the pandemic, using colours in headlines decreased. *The Prothom Alo* experienced a scarcity of advertisements though *The Daily Observer* did not experience it. The trend of using photos (with news) increased a little during the pandemic. Overall, many challenges were faced during this period by the newspaper industry, especially by the sports desk.

Keywords: Pandemic Journalism, COVID-19 Crisis, Representation, Sports Pages, News Frequency

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both international and national sports events were stopped for a long time. Those days, the daily newspapers faced a lot of challenges to continue sports pages properly. To tackle the situation, they brought some changes in their policies and trends. As a result, the sports coverage was not as good as the regular one. In Bangladesh, almost every daily newspaper has

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a dedicated page for sports, and it helps to achieve a larger readership (Haider & Joy, 2020, p.189-206). That is why it is necessary to analyse the coverage of sports pages of newspapers, especially Bangladeshi newspapers. It might be helpful for any daily newspaper to handle the sports pages during the pandemic further in the future.

Emergence of Sports Journalism

There is ample scope for sports journalism, such as storytelling about the games, stories about the sportspersons, and writing about the issues surrounding sports. Moreover, the sports journalism business is also about hype and entertainment. It has manufactured spectacles to sell newspapers, magazines and advertisements.

Patrick S. Washburn and Chris Lamb (2020), in their book titled '*Sports Journalism: A History of Glory, Fame, and Technology*', have tried to find out the changes in sports journalism over time and explore why they occurred. They have also discussed the roots of American sports journalism. From this book, it has become known that the rise of sports journalism in the 19th century was revealed through the stories of John Stuart Skinner and William T. Porter becoming publishing successes. In the meantime, daily newspaper publishers such as James Gordon Bennett Sr. had seen the economic advantages of sports coverage in the New York Herald. However, during the last century, the news industry did not have a clear conception of sports journalism. Over time American sports journalists have become a more diverse venture. The authors try to discuss the coverage of race and gender issues in their books too (Washburn & Lamb, 2020).

Sports Journalism of Bangladesh

'*Dhaka Prakash*' is the first name to be found in the circulation of sports news. The year was 1861. The least news of sports was published then. In the Pakistani ruling period, Dhaka Stadium was built. Besides, Aga Khan Gold Cup Football and various kinds of series and tournaments started to take place. Consequently, the number of sporty sports went upwards. The newspaper started hiring sports journalists, fulfilling the demand of readers. '*The Morning News*', '*The Daily Observer*', '*The Daily Azad*', '*The Daily Ittefaq*', and '*The Daily Pakistan*', played a vital role in the introduction of sports journalism. At that time, sports-related news was generally published on the last page daily (Mahmud, 2018, p.21-23).

After the emancipation of Bangladesh, almost every daily newspaper started publishing a sports page as well as sports magazines. At present, some dailies

not only have their own sports journalists but also have individual camerapersons (Ibid.). Post liberation, in the 1980s, sports started its journey as a separate section in the newspapers. Besides daily news on sports, weekly sports pages, special sports news, and journalists, reporters from home and abroad, sports photographers reached a new height. After the year 1990, the number of newspapers increased in the market, and sports news started attracting readers. At the same time, the sports page increased from 1 to 2 (Alam, 2004, p.3-11).

A previous study found that news on football and cricket occupied most of the print area. And the very tiny area was allocated for the news on local sports (Haider & Joy, 2020, p.189-206). Moreover, in Bangladesh, female participation in sports is much restricted. Many stereotypical thinking regarding gender differences is responsible for the low sports participation of girls and women in sports. In the year 2020, the Bangladesh Sports Education Institute in Savar, Dhaka, enrolled 1,041 students. The number of female students was only 182 there. On the contrary 859 students were male. Besides, among its 100 coaches, only 12 coaches were women while 88 were men. A similar scenario was found at the six Physical Education Colleges. There were only 182 women out of their combined 1,100 enrolees (Shefali, 2021, p.25-34). And its clear impact was found in a study conducted on sports pages of newspapers. That study revealed that only 4.17% of the news published on the sports pages of The Prothom Alo were female sports person-centric stories (Haider & Joy, 2020, p.189-206).

COVID-19 and World Sports

The outbreak of COVID-19 was discovered in Hubei (Wuhan), China in November 2019 (Davidson, 2020). And soon it was spread to almost all countries of the world. This pandemic disrupted the regular aspects of life. Sport was one of them. It impacted greatly on the sports industry. Many elite sports teams and organizations suffered an immediate financial impact with losses due to a lack of live spectators. Various leagues suspended their seasons. In an analysis, it estimated that about 2.2 billion U.S. dollars of national TV revenue for the sports industry was lost during the pandemic (Statista Research Department, 2020).

It is not only elite sports that were been impacted, grassroots sports and leisure clubs and organizations have also been hit financially (Grix *et al.*,2021, p.1-12). To understand the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the sports industry, it is necessary to analyse the report titled 'Effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on sports industry revenue worldwide in 2020' provided by German

data platform 'Statista'. The report has shown that in the year 2019, the sports industry revenue was about 129 billion U.S. dollars worldwide. The projected sports industry revenue for the year 2020 was about 135.3 billion U.S. dollars. But as a result of the crisis, this projection was adjusted to almost half that of the pre-COVID-19 estimates (Gough, 2020).

According to a study titled *An Overview of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sports Industry: Causes, Implications, and Options*, conducted by Badr A. Fallatah, the coronavirus outbreak forced the host cities to revise their plans. More than 84% of surveyed host cities believed that this pandemic had a significant impact on every sporting event planned to be held at that time (Fallatah, 2021).

Soeren Dressler, Sandra Dressler, Thomas Rachfall, and Dirk Foerster-Trallo in an empirical analysis titled *The Financial Impact: Will Professional Soccer Return to Its Market Value After the COVID-19 Crisis? Insights and Results from an Empirical Study* found that unpredictably the level of support shrank among the fans of teams and athletes. About 28% of the supporters feel less affected by the teams or athletes of their choice during the pandemic. On the contrary, only about 10% of people feel a closer connection to their most beloved stars. It was assumed in that study that people had to deal with themselves as well as some other challenges during the pandemic. That is why people were emotionally less supportive of sports at that time (Dressler So. *et al.*, 2021, p.40-59).

Pandemic Journalism

Pandemic Journalism is a newly learned phrase. COVID-19 taught us some new words that existed but were not of daily usage. These are - self-isolation, social distancing, quarantine, etc. In that period, mainstream and online journalists were locked down. The quantity of news decreased, what stayed was news on COVID-19. Sports pages published some international sports news only. At that time, matches did not take place and their content met a downfall. Reporters faced challenges publishing sports news (Grix *et al.*, 2021, p.1-12).

They backed it up by publishing other types of news, such as detailed writings on sports journalism, special interviews held on the Zoom platform, the daily lives of sportspersons, their photographs, and some series of reports. Reporters started filling the sports page with these contents. But filling pages was tough then too. So, they minimized the number of pages or the area of the sports section on the page. Sports-related programs also got cancelled. Some countries also started sacking reporters/workers.

Sports Journalism during the Pandemic

COVID-19 has undoubtedly had a profound impact on the lives of all members of society. We looked to adapt to what was frequently termed as the 'new normal'. The COVID-19 pandemic affected every sector of the world and, obviously, sports-related institutions.

In the year 2020, the pandemic hit the sports industry hard. All sports-related institutions were stopped during this period. All pre-scheduled matches and sports events were cancelled or postponed. The sports clubs and sports-related institutions, sports events' broadcasters, and sponsors were trying to mitigate the impacts and implications of event cancellations and modifications (*Ibid.*).

The impact of the lack of sports events and the cancellation of various important sports events was also felt in the newspapers, especially on the sports pages of the newspaper (Sadri *et al.*, 2022, p.493-512).

Research Questions

RQ1: How are sports/sports events covered in Bangladeshi newspapers?

RQ2: How different is newspaper sports coverage between pre-pandemic and pandemic periods?

RQ3: What are the weaknesses of newspapers' sports coverage?

Sampling

Timeframe: The COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The virus was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Later, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, and a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). In this study, there are two timeframes have been selected for data collection. One of them is the pre-pandemic situation, and the other is from the pandemic period. The pre-pandemic timeframe is 1-15 January 2020, and the timeframe selected from the pandemic is 1-17 April 2020.

Newspaper: Here, using the Purposive Sampling method, we have selected two Bangladeshi newspapers: one Bengali newspaper - *The Prothom Alo*, and one English newspaper - *The Daily Observer*. Both newspapers used to have two Sports Pages. They have their own sports desk. In comparison to others, both newspapers

have a large number of circulations within their respective groups (Department of Films & Publications, 2022).

Content Analysis

Content analysis is one of the methods used in communication research. According to Berelson (1952, cited in Krippendorff, 2003), ‘Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.’

That is to say, he referred to content analysis as a method of objective, systematic, and qualitative analysis of various public objects of communication. Two methods are used in content analysis to collect and analyse data. *E.g.* 1. Quantitative method, 2. Qualitative method.

Leites and Pool (1942; cited in Krippendorff, 2003) describe four functions of content analysis:

1. To confirm what is already believed,
2. To correct the “optical illusions” of specialists,
3. To settle disagreements among specialists, and
4. To formulate and test hypotheses about symbols.

Berelson (1952, cited in Krippendorff, 2003) highlights several uses of content analysis in communication research. Such as:

1. To explain the tendency of communication elements,
2. To unveil the propaganda strategy of the media,
3. To identify the purpose and other characteristics of communicators, and
4. To compare media and different levels of communication etc.

Qualitative Interview

Kvale (1996), in his book titled *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, proposed various ways to conduct a qualitative interview and its implications. The qualitative research interview aims to obtain nuanced descriptions of the different qualitative aspects of the interviewee’s life; it works with words, not numbers. Here, the interviewer tries to remain open to new and unforeseen phenomena rather than imposing any ready-made framework. It

focuses on particular themes. Thus, it is an enriching experience for interviewees, who, through dyadic interplay with the interviewers, obtain new insights into their life-world and the research theme (Kvale, 1996, p.32-33).

Here, we have used the content analysis method to find the trends in sports news as well as to analyse some interviews taken for this research project.

Results & Discussion

RQ1: How is sports covered in Bangladeshi newspapers?

Table 1: Distribution of News Frequency by Timeframe

| Timeframe | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic |
|--------------------|--------------|----------|
| News Frequency | 437 | 247 |
| Total = 684 | | |

In the current study, we have found 684 news items (Including photo stories) from our defined timeframe. Among them, there are 437 items from 1-15 January 2020, and the other 247 items are from 1-17 April 2020.

Table 2: Scenario of News & Advertisement Ratio by Timeframe

| Timeframe | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic | Total |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| News Area (Including Photos) | 6780.5 (88.7%) | 3206.55 (86.88%) | 9987.05 (88.11%) |
| Advertisement | 732.05 (9.58%) | 436.65 (11.83%) | 1168.7 (10.31%) |
| Standing Matter | 131.4 (1.72%) | 47.5 (1.29%) | 178.9 (1.58%) |
| Total | 7643.95 (100%) | 3690.7 (100%) | 11334.65 (100%) |

In this study, we found a small increase in Advertisements (Table 2).

Table 3: News Referencing Gender by Timeframe

| Timeframe | Pre-Pandemic | | | Pandemic | | |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Not Specific | Male | Female | Not Specific |
| News Frequency | 382 (87.4%) | 23 (5.3%) | 32 (7.3%) | 205 (83%) | 13 (5.3%) | 29 (11.7%) |
| Total | 437 (100%) | | | 247 (100%) | | |

In some previous studies, it was found that most of the sports news was male-centric or so-called male-dominated sports events related. The current study is also no exception. The scenario is almost the same here. More than 80 percent of news items were male sportsperson-centric. On the contrary, female sportspersons have only gotten a little over 5 percent of the coverage.

Table 4: News Referencing Specific Sport by Timeframe

| Sports | Total | | Sports | Total | |
|------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-----------|------------|
| | Frequency | Percentage | | Frequency | Percentage |
| Cricket | 287 | 41.96 | Swimming | 2 | 0.29 |
| Football | 279 | 40.79 | Shooting | 1 | 0.15 |
| Tennis | 39 | 5.70 | Taekwondo | 1 | 0.15 |
| Golf | 10 | 1.46 | Rugby | 1 | 0.15 |
| Handball | 9 | 1.32 | Carrom | 1 | 0.15 |
| Chess | 8 | 1.17 | Cycling | 1 | 0.15 |
| Athletics | 7 | 1.02 | Kabaddi | 1 | 0.15 |
| Archery | 5 | 0.73 | Skating | 1 | 0.15 |
| Wushu | 5 | 0.73 | Sprint/ Marathon | 1 | 0.15 |
| Volleyball | 3 | 0.44 | Wrestling | 1 | 0.15 |
| Hockey | 2 | 0.29 | Others | 17 | 2.49 |
| Badminton | 2 | 0.29 | Total | 684 | 100 |

The study has found that in both timeframes, football and cricket got the most percentage of the coverage. They got more than 80% coverage together. Except for this, only tennis got a significant percentage of the coverage. On the contrary, domestic or native sports have very low coverage.

RQ2: How different is newspaper sports coverage between pre-pandemic and pandemic periods?

Table 5: Changing of News Frequency by Timeframe

| Newspaper | <i>The Prothom Alo</i> | | <i>The Daily Observer</i> | |
|----------------|------------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------|
| | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic |
| News Frequency | 279 | 150 | 158 | 97 |

Analysing our 684 news samples, we found that, during the pandemic, the news items have come down to about half the normal time. Not only that, we have also found that before the pandemic, *The Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Observer* used to allot two pages primarily for sports. But during the pandemic, only one page was allotted for sports.

Moreover, on 04/04/2020 and 11/04/2020, it was found that *The Prothom Alo's* sports page had been turned into a half page. Besides, *The Daily Observer*, which used to allot a coloured page and black & white page for the sports, has allotted only one black & white page for the sports.

Table 6: Types of News as to Size by Timeframe

| Newspaper | <i>The Prothom Alo</i> | | <i>The Daily Observer</i> | | Total | |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------|--------------|------------|
| | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic |
| 1C | 125 | 59 | 31 | 17 | 156 | 76 |
| DC | 78 | 44 | 25 | 36 | 103 | 80 |
| 3C | 35 | 17 | 59 | 34 | 94 | 51 |
| 4C | 21 | 24 | 23 | 6 | 44 | 30 |
| 5C | 12 | 3 | 14 | 3 | 26 | 6 |
| 6C | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| 7C | - | - | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 8C | - | - | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Box | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 |
| | 279 | 150 | 158 | 97 | 437 | 247 |
| Total = 684 | | | | | | |

The Prothom Alo follows a six-columns-per-page style, whereas *The Daily Observer* follows an eight-columns-per-page style. So, for *The Prothom Alo* banner news size is 6C and for *The Daily Observer*, it is 8C. Before the pandemic, *The Prothom Alo* published 2 banner news, and *The Daily Observer* published 5 banner news. But during the pandemic, the number decreased; in fact, for *The Daily Observer*, it was zero. *The Prothom Alo* published Single Column news most, but *The Daily Observer* published 3C news most. Box news items are very important for page makeup. Besides, boxes help in news grading. We found box news in *The Prothom Alo*, but *The Daily Observer* was not interested in box news.

Table 7: Coloured Headlines by Timeframe

| Timeframe | Pre-Pandemic | | Pandemic | |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | Used | Not Used | Used | Not Used |
| News Frequency | 42 (9.61%) | 395 (90.39%) | 18 (7.29%) | 229 (92.71%) |
| Total | 437 (100%) | | 247 (100%) | |

Coloured headlines are helpful for news gradation. Coloured headlines are also influential for page makeup. It was found that during January 2020, 9.61% of news items had a coloured headline, which is a little more than that of April 2020.

During April 2020, *The Daily Observer* did not publish any news having coloured headlines. Actually, at that time, *The Daily Observer's* sports pages were black and white. So the decreasing number of coloured headlines also indicates the decreased influence of sports news.

Table 8: News having photos by time frame

| Time | | Pre-Pandemic | | Pandemic | |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage | |
| News | With Photo/s | 214 | 48.97 | 131 | 53.04 |
| | Without Photo | 223 | 51.03 | 116 | 46.96 |
| Total | | 437 | 100 | 247 | 100 |

In this study, it is found that before the pandemic; almost 49% of stories were published with photo/s. During the pandemic, the percentage of photo usage was increased.

Table 9: Distribution of News & Advertisement ratio by Newspaper

| Newspaper | <i>The Prothom Alo</i> | | <i>The Daily Observer</i> | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic |
| News Area (Including Photos) | 2810.75 (82.18%) | 1466.85 (92.29%) | 3969.75 (93.99%) | 1739.7 (82.69%) |
| Advertisement | 478.25 (13.98%) | 75 (4.72%) | 253.8 (6.01%) | 361.65 (17.21%) |
| Standing Matter | 131.4 (3.84%) | 47.5 (2.99%) | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 3420.4 | 1589.35 | 4223.55 | 2101.35 |

During the pandemic, *The Prothom Alo* had no commercial/institutional advertisement; they used their own advertisements for 5 days only. On the contrary, the percentage of advertisements in *The Daily Observer* increased almost thrice in the same timeframe (**Table 9**).

Table 10: Distribution of News having photos by Newspaper

| Newspaper | | <i>The Prothom Alo</i> | | <i>The Daily Observer</i> | |
|--------------|---------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Timeframe | | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic | Pre-Pandemic | Pandemic |
| News | With Photo/s | 120 (43.01%) | 64 (42.67%) | 94 (59.49%) | 67 (69.07%) |
| | Without Photo | 159 (56.99%) | 86 (57.33%) | 64 (40.51%) | 30 (30.93%) |
| Total | | 279 (100%) | 150 (100%) | 158 (100%) | 97 (100%) |

From **Table 10**, it can be said that *The Daily Observer* had shown the tendency to use photo/s a little more than *The Prothom Alo*. We found that most often the photos were of the male sportsmen. It clearly indicates that sports pages are still representing the domination of males. Although the amount of news with photos in both newspapers has declined, the percentage of photo usage in *The Daily Observer* has increased by 10%. It has helped *The Daily Observer* fill the pages.

RQ3: What are the weaknesses of newspapers' sports coverage?

After collecting the data, we interviewed four sports journalism experts regarding the present state of sports pages. We talked about female and differently-abled people's sports, the dominations of football and cricket, and the lack of investigative reporting. Through the interviews, some important aspects of sports pages come forward to us. Such as:

Female's and Differently-abled People's Sports

Most of the news items were male-centric. Only 5.35% of news frequency was female-centric. During the pandemic, the use of color in headlines declined from 9.61% to 7.29%.

Nayir Iqbal (2022), Deputy Head of Sports & acting in charge of *The Prothom Alo*'s Sports Department, has thought that women need to achieve more success in sports to increase the coverage of women in sports. More success for women in

sports will create a demand for news; more readers will be created. He added that the sports of specially-abled athletes are also getting coverage. In this context, he mentioned that *The Prothom Alo* had sent their correspondent for the purpose of covering the Physical Disability World Cricket T20 tournaments held in Dubai and England in 2016 and 2019 respectively (Iqbal, 2022).

Azad Majumder (2023), Joint news editor of *The New Age*, has shared much the same thoughts. He said, whenever any female sportsperson succeeded, they got adequate coverage. The success of Bangladesh's female athletes in multi-event meets is always widely reported. Bangladesh's women's cricket team gets regular coverage. The age-group women's football team gets more coverage than many other countries. When Bangladesh's women's football team won SAFF, it was on the front page regularly. The coverage could have been better if we had more female sporting icons like Rani Hamid, Zobaira Rahman Linu, or Sabrina Sultana (Majumder, 2023).

According to Senior Sports Reporter of *The Daily Star*, Anisur Rahman (2023), It may seem to have poor coverage of the female and mentally or physically challenged athletes in the newspapers but the fact is that they are also getting the coverage as per merit of news items as well as the frequency of competitions in respective fields. Bangladesh's sports are mostly dominated by outdoor sports such as cricket, football, and hockey, which are played by male athletes around the year at the domestic and international levels; thus they get more exposure than female and disabled athletes in the newspapers. There are hardly any domestic competitions of football, cricket, and hockey for female athletes, so the coverage of those sports is not seen in the newspapers. Meanwhile, there are hardly any opportunities to have sports for disabled athletes in the country (Rahman, 2023).

Md Rana Abbas (2023), Head of Sports, *The Aiker Patrika*, said recalling the news coverage of the SAAF 2022, actually sports page coverage is often success-focused. A team that is more likely to be successful has more big stars. People always feel interested to know them and the media try to give more emphasis on that sport. I think people's interests play an important role in getting coverage (Abbas, 2023).

Dominations of Football and Cricket

Cricket and football were the main sources of news which covered almost 83% of news frequency. In answer to a question, Nayir Iqbal (2022) said that the popularity of other sports in Bangladesh is much less than that of football and cricket. There is

not that much success in other games. The newspaper has to consider the demands of the reader (Iqbal, 2022).

As to Azad Majumder (2023), Football is the most popular team sport across the world. Though local football has lost its glamour, it is still popular among the masses. Cricket is the only sport in which Bangladesh has a global stake. Again, international tennis gets coverage due to the glamour associated with it. It is because of its star appeals created by Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic, Maria Sharapova, Serena Williams, and others that tennis gets coverage (Majumder, 2023).

Anisur Rahman (2023) thought that a large number of fans of the country follow international football, cricket, and tennis, so it also gets more coverage than other sports. However, the local sports are not being overlooked; rather they also get coverage on its merit despite the less interest among the readers. He also added that the authority of newspapers tries to promote the less popular sports by giving coverage. However, because of the limitation of the printing area, it is often not possible to give the coverage (Rahman, 2023).

In this regard, Md Rana Abbas (2023) shared that most sports pages or websites are trying to publish star-based stories like - their sporting happenings, controversies, success, and personal life, etc., while local sports almost get null. But regional sports like '*Jobbarer boli*' in Chattogram get more space in the regional edition than sports page (Abbas, 2023).

Investigative Reporting in Sports Journalism

Azad Majumder (2023) said generally, in-depth or investigative reporting is rare in Bangladeshi media. Sports should not be singled out for this. In most newspapers or TV stations, we have only a handful of reporters, and they need to produce multiple contents every day. It is tough to continue investigating while keeping oneself busy with bits and pieces every day. No media outlet will allow one reporter to spend two months on a single piece when it needs two pieces from him or her every day. So, time is the biggest hurdle. The second biggest hurdle is money. Investigating reports requires a budget, which is conspicuously absent. The third reason is the lack of knowledge or training. A journalist investigating something needs to go by book; without a certain amount of knowledge, the investigation may turn into a mess. It is the lack of time, money, and knowledge that appears to be the biggest hindrance to in-depth sports reporting (Majumder, 2023).

Anisur Rahman (2023) shared the same thought that reporters remain very busy covering daily events. Besides, there is also a shortage of manpower in most houses to have in-depth reporting, while the lack of training also hinders the reporters from filing in-depth reporting. However, the newspapers and electronic media bring out many reports related to the financial irregularities in sports bodies, nepotism in selection, fixing scandals in matches, the organisational failure behind the success of different disciplines, and many other things (Rahman, 2023).

Md Rana Abbas (2023) thought that both professionalism and house policy are responsible. As to him, professionalism is more responsible regarding this matter. In our country, maximum sports reporting is quote-based. More in-depth reporting depends on concrete sources, documents, deep knowledge, and mentality for a huge amount of time spent, effort, and house policy (Abbas, 2023).

In the context of a lack of in-depth or investigative reporting on sports pages, Nayir Iqbal (2022) said, it could be due to the lack of professionalism of sports journalists and the limitations of being able to think. However, there have been reports in the newspapers about cricket and football, corruption in the construction of stadiums, etc. Although it is declining and that is certainly a concern. The lack of training for sports journalists in the media houses to keep an eye on various issues outside the playground is responsible for this (Iqbal, 2022).

Concluding Remarks

In this study, we have tried to analyse how newspapers have been dealing with the pandemic situation. Both international and national sports events were suspended for a long time due to Covid-19. In those days, it was really a challenge for daily newspapers to maintain sports pages with regular trends. Analysing the policies and new trends adopted by national dailies to deal with this situation, we observed a large decrease in the number of news items and news areas on sports pages. Newspapers decrease their number of pages, usage of colour, and number of news items. They observed a scarcity of news items. They tried to keep some special news stories on sports pages but couldn't ensure that continuously.

Sports pages are very important for any newspaper. Sports pages have their own large readership. Besides that, it has great importance in newspaper advertisements and other financial matters. During the pandemic, *Prothom Alo* experienced a lack of advertising, but the Observer did not. The usage of photos (along with news items) increased by 4.43% during the pandemic. The cricket and football were the main sources of news. Most of the news items were male-centric. It

is because of people's interest in male sports events. It is people's interest that influences the news category most. Houses do not want to invest in domestic or other sports events which have less interest groups. It is also a reason for having fewer investigative reports in sports. Besides, because of having less professional experience, a reporter refrains from doing special investigative reports.

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