

The Reposted Agenda: Topic Dominance and Ethical Issues in Bangladeshi Media's Facebook News Distribution

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ABSTRACT

News media frequently share news content on social media. While audience behaviour regarding news sharing has been extensively studied, the practices of the media outlets themselves in this regard remain underexplored. This study examines the characteristics, frequency, and ethical standards of repetitive news sharing by Bangladeshi traditional media on Facebook. Using manual content analysis and computer-assisted textual analysis (CATA), the study analyses 764 repeatedly shared news posts collected from the Facebook pages of five leading media outlets. News items were coded on three dimensions, news topics, genre and ethical characteristics, and a textual analysis of 6,528 headline terms was performed using Voyant Tools to identify dominant themes and collocations. Findings reveal that traditional media mostly repeat hard news (71.7%). Politics is the most covered topic, followed by sports and crime. Despite Bangladesh being an agricultural country, agriculture is among the least frequently shared topics by traditional media on Facebook. In contrast, soft news, while being shared less often, contains much higher percentage of unethical elements than hard news. Repeated headlines have 24.30% unethical characteristics, with exclamation marks (9.90%) and clickbait (6.50%) being the most frequent. A textual analysis reveals that political actors and major sporting events such as the World Cup are also dominant in the repeated news agenda. The study highlights the need for greater ethical consistency in social media news distribution and calls for broader thematic diversity.

Keywords: *News sharing, news topic, news genre, social media, traditional media.*

INTRODUCTION

The widespread dissemination of news content through social media has emerged as a prevailing and widely adopted behaviour (Bhagat & Kim, 2022; Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018; Wang & Rzeszutarski, 2023). News outlets across the globe are increasingly turning to social media as a means to expand their online viewership. Moreover, social media is considered a vital platform for building a broader following and attracting more traffic to their websites (Park & Kaye, 2023). Hiaeshutter-Rice and Weeks (2021) also claim that news organisations rely heavily on social media to reach out to potential viewers and increase website traffic. It is seen that news articles from traditional media sources get more shares than unreliable sources (Nekmat, 2020). Similarly, Choi et al. (2017) found the new and more active approach of news sharing where the audience shares news from the traditional media's news link. Users generally trust the news that contains traditional media news hyperlinks for its recognised credibility (Verma et al., 2017). However, social media has altered the way traditional media consumers engage with news. Users are now exposed to misinformation and fake news through these platforms. This has led to a tendency to share unethical news, ultimately driving up website traffic and views (Pelau et al., 2023).

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Although news-sharing patterns across different social media platforms may differ, Valenzuela et al. (2017) found that these differences are not significant. Among various social media platforms, Facebook has become an integral part of the media house (Hiaeshutter-Rice & Weeks, 2021). It stands out as the most dominant platform for sharing news (Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018). It has about 2.9 billion monthly users, and Bangladesh ranks ninth globally, contributing nearly 43 million users (Statista, 2023). Bangladesh has a wide media landscape with 30 television channels and 3,025 print media outlets (Media Landscape, 2023). However, Bangladeshi media are under heavy political pressure. As this media system actively maintains strong relationship with political parties and commercial conglomerates, its editorial independence is frequently compromised (Reporters Without Borders, 2023). Media ownership is also a critical issue here. Most of the outlets are owned by large corporations or political leaders of the ruling party. These business elites and politicians do not take the media as a service of information to the people, rather they fulfil their vested political and commercial interests through the media (Kabir, 2023). On the other hand, lack of diversification of income sources creates pressure on the media. Advertising, especially government-owned advertising, is the major source of revenue for some of the media. This dependence distorts news priorities and suppresses critical reporting (Habib, 2023). These dynamics make Bangladesh a unique case study for exploring the priority of media houses' practices in the selective and repetitive resharing of news on Facebook.

Over the past few years, many studies have examined how users share news on social media. Scholars have delved into understanding the intricate behaviours and trends associated with the dissemination of news content across these platforms (Al-Rawi, 2024; Al-Zaman, 2024; Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018; Maniou & Papadopoulou, 2024; Thompson et al., 2020; Wang & Rzeszotarski, 2023). However, there has been less emphasis in research on the extent to which traditional media disseminates news on social media platforms. In addition, existing studies in this field have evolved around audience-driven news-sharing behaviours in Global North contexts and left a significant gap in understanding the organisational sharing practices of traditional media in the Global South. Few studies have examined the resharing news behaviours by traditional media in politically complex environments like Bangladesh.

Due to the limited literature on the news-sharing behaviour of traditional media, the following review focuses on the audience's news-sharing behaviour, as the pattern is relevant. Through this approach, our primary objective is to construct a framework that offers insights into the factors of traditional media news-sharing. This framework aims to enhance our understanding of how traditional media organisations distribute news and interact with their audiences in the process of sharing information. This framework develops the concept of news-sharing factors into three sub-themes: (i) news topics as news-sharing factors, (ii) news genre as news-sharing factors, and (iii) ethical characteristics of news as news-sharing factors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

News Topics as News-Sharing Factors

The pattern of news sharing is highly influenced by the nature of news topic, with political news consistently identified as the most shared topic, as demonstrated by studies conducted by Duffy and Ling (2020) and León et al. (2021). However, Bright (2016) and Thompson et al. (2020) challenge the idea that political news always has universal appeal, as it may not hold attention in entertainment-focused contexts. Moreover, León et al. (2021) investigated the interaction between political news and other news topics, including crime, culture, economy, and sports, showing that during electoral periods, the heightened sharing of political news

significantly curtails the sharing of other news categories. They argue that this happens because public attention is limited and becomes overly focused on politics, reducing interest in other topics. On the contrary, Valenzuela et al. (2017) found that users are less likely to share news related to conflict, as they tend to avoid such content and instead prefer sharing information that fosters social harmony. Similarly, Bright (2016) also revealed that crime-related stories were less shared, while technology and science content were more spreadable. These findings are corroborated by Park and Kaye (2023), who argued that stories with social issues were observed to be shared more frequently on the Facebook pages of newspapers. Furthermore, Kalsnes and Larsson (2018) found that celebrity news, representing the entertainment category, was among the most frequently shared topics among audiences. In contrast, Duffy and Ling (2020) reported an alternative trend, revealing that celebrity news actually had the lowest frequency of sharing, followed closely by news related to the arts and sports.

News Genre as News-Sharing Factors

The relationship between news genre and sharing behaviour has garnered substantial scholarly attention, particularly in studies examining how different types of news influence audience engagement and sharing trends. News genre strongly affects social media sharing, with hard news shared more often than soft news. Kalsnes and Larsson (2018) discovered that on 'X' (Twitter), hard news is shared most frequently, while soft news is shared less often. Similarly, García-Perdomo et al. (2018) found that soft topics like entertainment and odd news were less common among shared news than hard news. In contrast, Duffy and Ling (2020) and Lamot (2022) found that soft news receives more engagement and shares than hard news. Valenzuela et al. (2017) also discovered that content angles typical of hard news, such as conflict and economic consequences frames, significantly reduce the number of shares for news stories. In terms of impact of news genre, Segesten et al. (2022) found that while hard news was more frequently shared, soft news had a significant impact on long-term audience engagement.

Ethical Characteristics of News as News-Sharing Factors

Ethical characteristics like fake news, sensationalism and clickbait can significantly impact news-sharing behaviour. Several studies have explored how these factors influence the way people engage with and distribute content on social media platforms. The widespread spreading of fake news or misinformation on social media has become a significant concern (Allcott et al., 2019; Nuseir et al., 2023; Zannettou et al., 2019). Marwick (2018) reveals that fake news and clickbait headlines drive social media shares effectively through emotional appeal and sensationalism. Zhou et al. (2020) on the other hand found clickbait headlines and sensationalism in social media influence user engagement and news sharing. Conversely, sensational news elements initially attract more attention but often reduce content credibility (Pelau et al., 2023), while Kalsnes and Larsson (2018) observed that clickbait stories shared most by audiences. Carcioppolo et al. (2022) explored the influence of exaggerated and clickbait headlines on user engagement and news-sharing behaviour. Similarly, Nanni et al. (2020) found that news articles with the presence of graphic or sensationalistic content and provocative or emotive elements are more likely to be shared by users. Furthermore, Watson et al. (2024) identified a strong correlation between the sharing of news and fascinating content, particularly elements like controversy or surprise. Sensationalist headlines, clickbait,

and fake news boost virality but erode news source credibility and journalistic integrity (Jung et al., 2022). Khuntia et al. (2016) raise ethical concerns arise when media boost engagement at the expense of integrity, including whether to produce less shareable conflict-oriented news.

Repetitive News-Sharing and Priming

Priming suggests that the repeated exposure to certain news topics increases their salience in people's minds, affecting their subsequent judgments and decisions (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020; Su & Borah, 2019). For instance, repeated focus on economic issues leads audiences to judge politicians mainly by economic policies. Priming occurs when media coverage makes certain issues more accessible than others, influencing how audiences subsequently evaluate the issues (Baran & Davis, 2021). Priming can be seen as an extended concept of agenda-setting. McCombs and Valenzuela (2020) explained that media agenda-setting extends to priming, where repeated coverage makes topics more salient for public decision-making. As coverage increases, these topics gain greater public importance, a phenomenon known as agenda-setting. Importantly, the institutional act of reposting or resharing content on Facebook (whether editorial or algorithmic) is the direct operational process through which media priming is implemented in digital spaces. In contrast to traditional broadcasting, where content is broadcasted once and the audience is a passive receiver, the intentional sharing of news content brings it again to the public's attention after its initial publication date, re-activating salience effects with each redistribution (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020). Recent evidence indicates that such resharing frequently occurs without users even reading the article itself, amplifying repeated topic exposure (Sundar et al., 2025). Thus, the organisational resharing behaviour turns Facebook from a passive channel of news into an active tool of agenda building for traditional media institutions.

Given the afore mentioned reasoning, we have approached two research questions to identify the overall repetitive news-sharing behaviour of traditional media outlets in Bangladesh.

RQ1: Which news topics and genres are prevalent in repetitive news sharing?

RQ2: To what extent do unethical elements appear in news headlines of repeatedly shared news?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised content analysis, the most commonly used method in research on news-sharing practices on social media (Lepird et al., 2024). A computer-assisted textual analysis employed to assess the characteristics of the news, ethical standards, dominant terms, and collocation of repeated news. We categorised the news characteristics into three sub-categories and the ethical standards into eight sub-categories, using a manual coding sheet. The dominant terms and collocations were explored using the computer-assisted tool Voyant, following the approach of Al-Zaman (2023).

Pilot Study

Since no dataset in Bangladesh records news articles as required for our study, we manually collected the data from the Facebook pages of the selected media outlets. A pilot study was carried out to identify the coding and any inconsistencies or errors inspired by Thompson et al. (2020). The trial ran for seven days, from January 1 to 7, 2021. Data from the pilot test showed that traditional media repeatedly shared certain content, with daily events reposted

multiple times within a day or throughout the week. Even, some older content was frequently reshared, aligning with McCombs and Valenzuela's (2020) priming concept of agenda-setting theory. So, these repeatedly shared news content have been considered as the unit of analysis to understand the pattern and agenda of media outlets.

Sampling

We selected four top-circulated Bangladeshi newspapers: Bangladesh Pratidin, The Daily Ittefaq, The Daily Jugantor, and The Daily Kaler Kantho (Department of Film and Publications, 2023). Although TV is Bangladesh's most widely viewed media, print media ranks second in prevalence (Media Landscape, 2023). Notably, *Somoy TV* and *Ekattor TV* stand out as widely favoured among the various news channels (Reporters Without Borders, 2023). Due to its popularity, we selected Somoy TV as our sample and analysed its content on Facebook. In Bangladesh, Facebook remains the most used social media platform, followed by YouTube (Statcounter, 2023).

Table 1: Basic description of the data

News Organisation	Page Address (<i>fb.com/</i>)	Media Category	Total Pages like (<i>As of 2022</i>) ^a	Repeated News (<i>N = 764</i>) ^b <i>n (%)</i>
Bangladesh Pratidin	dailybangladeshpratidin	Print	2.0 million	289 (37.83%)
The Daily Ittefaq	DainikIttefaq	Print	2.7 million	9 (1.18%)
The Daily Jugantor	DainikJugantor	Print	6.7 million	123 (16.10%)
The Daily Kaler Kantho	KalerKantho	Print	7.3 million	27 (3.53%)
Somoy TV	somoynews.tv	TV	9.0 million	316 (41.36%)

a The page-like counts were collected on 01 January 2022, from the respective Facebook pages.

b The repeated posts were collected manually by two trained research assistants.

Data Collection

After the pilot study, we collected content from the Facebook pages of the five selected media outlets between December 1 and 31, 2021. Of 10,050 news items, 764 were identified as repeated. Using a deductive approach, two trained research assistants collected the data by compiling repeated posts into a private Facebook group and transferring them to Google Sheets. An initial 1,088 repeated posts were scraped, which were reduced to 764 after removing duplicates, and these were analysed. After conducting the pilot study in January 2021, we continued to monitor the news-sharing activities of traditional media throughout the year by reviewing the respective Facebook pages of the selected media outlets. This observation indicated that the news-sharing pattern was similar across all months. Therefore, based on our considerations and conveniences, we selected the last month of 2021 for formal data collection and analysis.

Coding

To identify the pattern, the articles were carefully read, summarised, and categorised under three overarching categories: (i) news topics, (ii) news genre, and (iii) ethical characteristics of news.

Firstly, the news topics were analysed across the following fifteen main areas: *politics* (including political leaders' statements); *entertainment* (including lifestyle and celebrity); *economy* (including business and banking); *crime* (including law and order); *culture* (including art and heritage); *weather* (including climate and environment); *technology* (including science

and discovery); *sports* (including sports celebrities); *accidents* (including road or industrial incidents); *health* (including medical advancements and public health); *education* (including school and university-related issues); *development* (including infrastructure and urban projects); *agriculture* (including farming and rural development); *religion* (including religious events and practices); and *social issues* (including social welfare activities and success stories) inspired by León et al. (2021), Kalsnes and Larsson (2018), and Almgren (2017). Two of these categories, agriculture and religion, were added from the perspective of Bangladesh.

Secondly, we defined genre in two categories, namely *hard news* and *soft news*, following the definition provided by Kalsnes and Larsson (2018). They characterise genre as the type of news story, primarily distinguishing between news, comment, and feature to convey the tone of voice. Otto and Glogger (2019) defined hard news as news stories that are timely, fact-based, and focused on serious, significant issues such as politics, economics, crime, or international affairs. These stories emphasise objective reporting on events of major public importance and are typically presented in a straightforward manner. Conversely, Otto and Glogger (2019) defined soft news as news stories that are more entertaining, less time-sensitive, and often focus on human-interest topics, lifestyle, culture, or personal well-being. It typically involves emotional storytelling.

Thirdly, we classified the ethical characteristics of news into two broad categories: ethical news and unethical news. Unethical news was conceptualised from the following sub-categories: *one-sided news* (including ideological bias, constructed based on implied information, or self-generated deduction, and imbalance); *exaggeration* (including satire, unrealistic false stories, humour or hyperbole, and parody); *highly emotional and inflammatory content* (including appeals of emotion, manipulative contents); *news that is not fact-checked* (including claims, figures or quotations presented without verification, sourcing or attribution); *advertisement and promotion* (including persuasive information, promotional content, sponsored content, or paid content); *clickbait* (including misleading headlines designed to attract attention); *use of exclamation marks* (including excessive punctuation to create urgency); *sensational news* (including divisive content, and misleading information); and *opinion pieces* (including commentary, emotionally charged writing, narrative writing, and frequent use of “should” as an opinion linguistic marker). The categories were constructed by synthesising distinctive features from various conceptual and operational definitions (Molina et al., 2021; Tandoc et al., 2018; Zannettou et al., 2019). If a news piece does not fall under these categories, it is coded as ethical news.

Finally, we analysed the repeated news items in two phases. In the first phase, a faculty member and a graduate student in mass communication manually coded the data after completing training workshops on the coding protocol and variable definitions. To ensure coding consistency, they first coded a training sample of 50 repeatedly shared Facebook news posts independently. Intercoder reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa (κ) with a coefficient of $\kappa = 0.84$, which shows substantial agreement (Li et al., 2023). After that, the few coding discrepancies were discussed and resolved, and some minor modifications were made to the coding guidelines before the remaining dataset was coded. During the coding process, the first author monitored the initial coding decisions. The second author independently checked the assigned categories to ensure consistency across the final dataset. For news covering multiple events, the most dominant event was coded following Park and Kaye (2023). In the second phase, we conducted a computer-aided textual analysis (CATA) inspired by Al-Zaman (2023) on repeatedly shared news headlines to identify patterns and priming in traditional media. CATA is a valuable content analysis method due to its

efficiency in processing large datasets quickly and reliably (McKenny et al., 2018). Using Voyant Tools (voyant-tools.org), developed by Stéfan Sinclair and Geoffrey Rockwell, we analysed our 6,528-word dataset to identify frequent words and collocations, revealing dominant themes (Dicle & Dicle, 2018). Furthermore, we analysed the collocations to identify significant two-word combinations by comparing their co-occurrence with each word's associations across the corpus (Bosshard et al., 2022). Prior to analysis, we professionally translated frequently shared Bangla headlines into English to retain context, enabling English stop-word removal and lemmatisation in Voyant (which lacks full Bangla support).

RESULTS

The analysis of 764 repeatedly shared news posts from the Facebook pages of five major Bangladeshi news organisations revealed patterns in the types of content prioritised for redistribution, the ethical standards exhibited in repeated headlines, and the thematic prominence observed through computational text analysis. This section presents the findings in three parts: (a) the distribution of news topics and genres in repeated posts (Table 2), (b) the prevalence and nature of ethical and unethical elements in these headlines (Table 3), and (c) the dominant terms and collocations that characterise the repeated news agenda (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 2: Frequency of news topic and news genre, and their ethical standards, in repetitive news reported on traditional media in Bangladesh, 2021 (N = 764)

Characteristics	Frequency (%)	Ethical Standards of News (%)	
		Yes	No
News Genre			
Hard News	548 (71.7)	453 (82.66)	95 (17.34)
Soft News	216 (28.3)	124 (57.41)	92 (42.59)
News Topic			
Politics	168 (22.0)	151(89.89)	17 (10.11)
Entertainment	76 (9.9)	35 (46.05)	41 (53.95)
Economy	40 (5.2)	29 (72.5)	11 (27.5)
Crime	103 (13.5)	71 (68.93)	32 (31.07)
Culture and Heritage	8 (1.0)	2 (25.00)	6 (75.00)
Weather	33 (4.3)	24 (72.73)	9 (27.27)
Technology	21 (2.7)	10 (47.62)	11 (52.38)
Sports	139 (18.2)	116 (83.45)	23 (16.55)
Accidents	31 (4.1)	24 (77.42)	7 (22.58)
Health	23 (3.0)	17 (73.91)	6 (26.09)
Education	23 (3.0)	21 (91.30)	2 (8.70)
Development	26 (3.4)	19 (73.08)	7 (26.92)
Agriculture	9 (1.2)	8 (88.89)	1 (11.11)
Religion	17 (2.2)	16 (94.12)	1 (5.88)
Social issues	47 (6.2)	34 (72.34)	13 (27.66)

Table 2 demonstrates the overall frequency of repetitive news-sharing behaviour among national traditional news media in Bangladesh. In the news genre category, news organisations predominantly repeat hard news (71.7%) with a smaller percentage of news violating ethical standards (17.34%). However, in the soft news category, 28.3% of shares are repetitive, with a higher incidence of unethical practices (42.59%) compared to hard news. In terms of news, organisations mostly repeat shares related to politics (22.0%), sports (18.2%), and crime (13.5%). Conversely, the least repeated beats are culture and heritage (1.0%) and agriculture (1.2%). When it comes to unethical practices, the highest percentage of unethical news is seen in the culture and heritage beat (75.00%). The second highest is in entertainment (53.95%), followed by technology (52.38%). The crime beat also shows a notable percentage of unethical news (31.07%). In contrast, the religion (5.88%) and education (8.70%) beats have the lowest percentages of unethical news.

Table 3: Ethical standards of repetitive news on social media platforms of traditional media in Bangladesh, 2021 (N = 764)

Variables	Category	Frequency (%) N = 764
Unethical practices in News	One-Sided	4 (0.50)
	Exaggeration	22 (2.90)
	Highly Emotional and Inflammatory	9 (1.20)
	Not Fact-Checked	12 (1.60)
	Advertisement and Promotion	5 (0.70)
	Clickbait	50 (6.50)
	Exclamation Mark	76 (9.90)
	Sensational	3 (0.40)
	Opinion Pieces	5 (0.70)
Ethical Practices in News		578 (75.70)

Table 3 illustrates an analysis of ethical and unethical practices in news headline. The data reveals that a large proportion of news (75.70%) is seen as ethical standards. Meanwhile, 24.30% of the news presented unethical practices. Among the unethical practices, exclamation marks are the most common, occurring in 9.90% of news headlines. This punctuation practice often aims to sensationalise content and draw attention, which may affect the perceived credibility of the news. Clickbait headlines appear in 6.50% of cases and exaggeration in 2.90%. The less frequent categories of unethical practices are advertisement and promotion (0.70%), opinion pieces (0.70%), highly emotional and inflammatory (1.20%) and not fact-checked (1.60%). One-sided headlines and sensational headlines are the least frequent with 0.50% and 0.40% respectively.

Table 4: Dominant terms in the news headlines of repetitive news

Rank	Term	Collocate	Contextual Freq.	Rank	Term	Collocate	Contextual Freq.
1	World	Cup	22	16	BNP	Arrested	30
2	BNP	BNP	30	17	World	BNP	22
3	BNP	Dhaka	30	18	Country	Quader	21
4	World	Final	22	19	Country	Minister	21
5	Cup	Final	19	20	Minister	Quader	20
6	Arrested	Capital	18	21	Minister	Country	20
7	BNP	Rally	30	22	Killed	Mirza	19

8	BNP	Quader	30	23	Cup	Winning	19
9	BNP	Country	30	24	Cup	Messi	19
10	World	Messi	22	25	Bangladesh	People	19
11	Country	Day	21	26	People	Bangladesh	18
12	Country	BNP	21	27	Arrested	BNP	18
13	Death	Stabbed	18	28	BNP	Wants	30
14	BNP	World	30	29	BNP	Play	30
15	BNP	New	30	30	BNP	Messi	30

Analysis of dominant terms in repeatedly shared news headlines in Facebook provides a comprehensive view of the prevalent themes and narratives (Table 4). BNP (Bangladesh Nationalist Party) one of the largest political parties in Bangladesh was the most dominant term in repeatedly shared news headline. This underlines the important focus of the Bangladeshi media on these political issues. The frequent mention of key political figures such as “Quader” and “Fakhrul” also indicates a detailed coverage of their activities, statements and the political dynamics around them. The high frequency of words related to the World Cup such as “World,” “Cup,” “Final,” and “Messi” shows the great popularity and large number of articles that cover this important international sports event, which reflects the impact of the sports event on media attention. The high frequency of words such as “Killed,” “Arrested,” “Death,” and “Police,” besides the political and sports coverage, points to a large extent of coverage on crime issues. These terms imply that news about violence, law enforcement and judicial actions are topics of importance to the public, drawing attention and concern. There are broader socio-political themes that are evident too, with terms such as “Country,” “People,” “Bangladesh,” and “Democracy” indicating discussions of national identity, governance and public welfare. These terms show that the news, of national importance, was shared many times by the media house.

Table 5: Term collocations in the headlines of repetitive news

Rank	Term	Count	Relative	Rank	Term	Count	Relative
1	BNP	30	0.004537	16	Fakhrul	13	0.001966
2	World	22	0.003327	17	Win	12	0.001815
3	Country	21	0.003176	18	Police	12	0.001815
4	Minister	20	0.003024	19	League	12	0.001815
5	Killed	19	0.002873	20	Dhaka	12	0.001815
6	Cup	19	0.002873	21	Metro	11	0.001663
7	Bangladesh	19	0.002873	22	Final	11	0.001663
8	People	18	0.002722	23	Capital	11	0.001663
9	Death	18	0.002722	24	Argentina	11	0.001663
10	Arrested	18	0.002722	25	Ronaldo	10	0.001512
11	Quader	17	0.002571	26	Road	10	0.001512
12	PM	16	0.002419	27	Home	10	0.001512
13	Cold	14	0.002117	28	Democracy	10	0.001512
14	Mirza	13	0.001966	29	AL	10	0.001512
15	Messi	13	0.001966	30	Years	9	0.001361

The analysis of term collocations in news headlines shows significant patterns in the coverage of political events and sports (Table 5). The word “BNP” is often used with a variety of collocates: “Dhaka,” “Rally,” “Quader,” and “Country,” which have contextual frequency of 30. This shows a heavy media focus on the activities of BNP, political rallies and pronouncements by politicians. The frequent occurrence of “BNP” with words like “Arrested” and “Wants” indicates news regarding legal cases and political demands related to the party.

Besides political coverage, terms related to the “World Cup” are also dominant. Terms such as “World,” “Cup,” “Final,” and “Messi,” are examples of the huge coverage of this major sporting event. The use of “Cup” also seems frequent with “Winning” and “Messi”, indicating the focus on star players and key moments in the tournament.

Other noteworthy collocations are “Country” with “Quader” and “Minister”, indicating discussions about national governance and political leadership. “Arrested” paired with “Capital” and “BNP” means that the news covers the actions of the political party and government in the capital city. Terms such as “Death” and “Stabbed” suggest that this report concerns violent events and their aftermath.

DISCUSSION

Our investigation into the patterns and ethical considerations of repetitive news sharing on Facebook by mainstream media in Bangladesh centres on two research questions. First, we examined the characteristics of news repeatedly shared by traditional media on Facebook, and second, we analysed the extent to which unethical elements in news headlines appeared in the repeated-shared-news on the platform.

Under these two questions, we found four key findings: (a) Hard news (71.7%) is the most repeatedly shared category, but it has a lower rate of unethical practices (17.34%). In contrast, soft news (28.3%) is less frequently shared but has a higher rate of unethical practices (42.59%) (b) In terms of news topics, politics (22.0%), sports (18.2%), and crime (13.5%) receive the most attention in traditional media in Bangladesh for repeated sharing on social media. However, culture and heritage (75.00%), entertainment (53.95%), and technology (52.38%) are the topics where media houses most frequently violate ethical practices (c) Repeatedly shared headlines (75.70%) generally adhere to ethical standards, though exclamation marks (9.90%) and clickbait (6.50%) are common unethical practices (d) Prominent terms in these headlines include political figures and parties (BNP, Quader, Fakhrul), sports events and personalities (World, Cup, Final, Messi), and crime-related terms (Killed, Arrested, Death, Police).

Our finding of national media outlets’ high rate of hard news sharing behaviour suggests that Bangladesh's traditional media prioritises reporting on daily national events. Kalsnes and Larsson (2018) found that the most shared stories on ‘X’ are hard news, focusing on topics like politics. By focusing on daily events topics, the media can influence public perception by carefully selecting which daily events and topics to emphasise or minimise. Depending on their political affiliations or biases, media outlets may choose to present certain controversial issues in a way that aligns with their interests (Alimi & Maney, 2018). It also allowed media to attract more audience to their news site (Choi et al., 2017) and increased media traffic on topics often leads to greater public importance and serves agenda-setting (Guo & Vargo, 2020; McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020).

Conversely to the hard news, traditional media outlets are less interested in repeat shares in soft news (28.3%). However, the high number of unethical practices (42.59%) that happen in these categories indicates a tendency toward sensationalism. Amazeen (2020)

found that soft news is more likely to contain sensationalism and ethical violations in the context of digital media. One reason the media may compromise ethics in soft news is that they can exploit the opportunity to promote advertising disguised as news. Many readers found it difficult to differentiate between advertising and traditional news, underscoring a lack of clarity in this area (Amazeen & Wojdynski, 2020). Such practices may undermine the ethical responsibilities of media outlets, raising concerns about the quality and reliability of the information provided to the public (Molyneux & Coddington, 2020).

We have seen that in topic-wise coverage, politics gets 22.0% of shares which emphasises the media's alignment with national and political narratives. In textual analysis, we have found that the most dominant term is a leading political party (BNP) of Bangladesh. This finding reveals that coverage of traditional media is heavily dominated by political events. Duffy and Ling (2020) and León et al. (2021) also found that the media shows a greater interest in covering political news. Habib (2023) argued that media coverage in Bangladesh often favours certain individuals or groups, particularly those with political connections or power. One reason is that the media may try to create a certain type of political reality in Bangladesh. Khawar and Boukes (2024) stated that coverage and mass media have interrelations and may create a social reality for audiences with low media literacy. However, Al-Zaman and Noman (2024) found a steady decline in political news coverage. The preference for reposting political hard news is to be read more critically. The systematic reposting of political hard news is not simply the neutral dissemination of news but an exercise of agenda power that constantly reasserts certain political narratives among the millions of Facebook users in Bangladesh who are repeatedly exposed to this content. Moreover, the regular presence of one opposition party in shared Facebook headlines repeatedly suggests that traditional media influence which political actors are provided with public attention. This selective sharing of news may also drive political polarisation, by restricting audience exposure to different political views.

On the contrary to excessive coverage of political events, the media pay minimal attention to cultural (1.0%) and agricultural news (1.2%), which depicts that outlets are less interested in societal issues. Kabir (2023) learnt that news outlets have largely ignored issues such as agriculture, which significantly affects underprivileged communities, and neglected the social needs of marginalised individuals, effectively sidelining the concerns of those who often lack a voice.

Our study also reveals that while a majority of the news (75.70%) adhered to ethical standards, a significant portion (24.30%) engaged in unethical practices. The prevalence of clickbait (6.50%) and sensational punctuation (9.90%) indicates a trend toward prioritising engagement over ethical reporting. Lee (2022) argued that newspapers are facing growing market pressures that privilege financial interests over the public welfare. This may lead to sensational headlines to attract the audience. This trend raises significant questions about the responsibility of news organisations to maintain accuracy and editorial integrity, especially in an age where social media allows the rapid spread of misinformation. Our results also show that unethical practices are particularly prevalent in the culture and heritage beat, where 75.00% of repeatedly shared news was classified as unethical. This implies that the media should be more attentive to its editorial decisions. Otherwise, such practices could dilute the quality of cultural reporting, reinforce stereotypes and distract the public from important cultural and social issues. Such findings are a major contradiction to the digital media ecosystem in Bangladesh. The same news organisations that are capable of producing consistently quality hard news, also use unethical tactics to boost their soft news. This leads

to a two-prong approach. They still rely on sensationalism to attract audience attention in entertainment and culture, but hold credibility in political and crime reporting. Such practices seem to put platform visibility above editorial integrity. This is particularly worrying in Bangladesh, where digital and media literacy levels are not uniform. Many audiences may find it difficult to distinguish between credible journalism and content that is primarily designed to generate engagement (Khawar & Boukes, 2024; Scacco & Muddiman, 2020).

Our findings of this study also align with the priming effect of agenda-setting theory. Baran and Davis (2021) state that priming involves providing extensive coverage to a specific topic among competing issues. In the case of traditional media in Bangladesh, the extensive focus on hard news (71.7%) suggests that the media is setting an agenda on current issues. It also shapes the audience's thinking and decision-making processes this way (Moy et al., 2016). Additionally, the higher rate of unethical practices in soft news (42.59%) compared to hard news (17.34%) indicates that while soft news is less frequently shared, it is more likely to contain elements that could manipulate public perception through sensationalism or clickbait and this process influences the audience's emotional engagement and learning from news. Watson et al. (2024) suggest that readers' recall of information, whether positive or negative depends on the emotional tone of the news content they encounter first. The prominence of certain terms in headlines, such as political figures, sports events, and crime-related terms, suggests that these topics are being primed in the public's mind. This can influence how the public evaluates political figures, societal issues, and even their own safety and well-being. McCombs and Valenzuela (2020) explain that when topics receive more media coverage, they become more important to the public, a process known as agenda-setting.

Based on the findings, we suggest that traditional media in Bangladesh need to re-evaluate their news-sharing strategies on platforms like Facebook. We suggest that headlines are very important for social media news consumers. Outlets should be careful when writing them, as misleading headlines can impact the trust and credibility of the media. Furthermore, we recommend that the media diversify their coverage beyond politics to include areas like agriculture, culture, and heritage, which can provide a broader view of society.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the repeated news sharing by traditional media on Facebook, focusing on news topics, dominant terms, news genres and ethical practices. The findings suggest that some news organisations engage in repeated news-sharing strategies that do not always align with accepted journalistic standards, and that may affect their online credibility. However, some limitations should be recognised. First, the data were collected manually as there is no publicly available dataset for Bangladesh which may have introduced coding or selection bias. Second, generalisability of the findings was limited by the use of a relatively small sample from a single country. Third, the analysis was mainly based on quantitative content analysis and it did not consider the organisational processes or audience responses that underlie the repeated sharing of news. Future research could use qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to explore newsroom decision-making, audience trust and engagement, and cross-national variations in repeated news-sharing practices.

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