**REGULATIONS AND PRESSURE ON THE PRESS IN BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY**

**ABSTRACT**

This paper focuses on the constraints and impediments journalists and the media encounter in Bangladesh. This article investigates the most common types of harassment and obstacles faced by Bangladeshi journalists, as well as the acts and laws frequently used to impede the freedom of the press, by examining the case of Rozina Islam, a senior crime reporter at the Daily Prothom Alo, who was physically assaulted and later harassed through legal constraints for reporting on the corruption and irregularities of a government official. The paper also examines the interrelationships among the press, politicians, and government officials. Finally, the research shows that a variety of challenges faced by Bangladeshi journalists, such as physical assault and harassment, as well as laws and regulations put in place by the British colonial government about 200 years ago to restrict press freedom, significantly disrupt press freedom in Bangladesh.

**KEYWORDS**

Pressure on the Press; Freedom of the Press; Press Regulation; Press Act; Colonial Act; Censorship.

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**Regulations and Pressures on the Press in Bangladesh: A Case Study**

# INTRODUCTION

The media serves as the nation's fourth state and fulfills a watchdog role by scrutinizing and exposing corruption, irregularities, and mismanagement within the government, authorities, and influential individuals. If the media cannot act with full freedom, the other societal institutions will be unable to carry out their responsibilities effectively, disrupting democracy within society. The media can only pursue democratic goals and objectives within the permitted ways of their operating environment. Davis (1991) argues that limitations on the press that impede its operation are also perceived to impede the operation of the democratic system (p. 118). However, in developing countries like Bangladesh, a range of methods curtails the freedom of the press, and journalists face assault, harassment, and violence from several interested parties. Furthermore, multiple entities exert pressure that ultimately restricts journalists from fully exercising their profession, leading to the practice of self-censorship.

Bangladesh is a small developing country in South Asia with a huge amount of population. Press freedom is poor. British colonial control and military regimes also made media and journalists uncomfortable. Most Bangladeshi media restrictions and rules were established under the British colonial administration from 1857–1947 and still restrict press freedom. During decolonization, the government retained press control by keeping the press acts' major governing instruments.

British colonial forces enacted press regulations and acts in Bangladesh, such as the Penal Code of 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898, the Official Secrets Act of 1923, the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1973, the Special Powers Act of 1974, the Newspapers (Annulment of Declaration) Ordinance of 1975, and the Martial Law Orders of 1976. Ahmed (2009) noted that ‘Bangladesh still maintains the continuity of colonial past in its post-independence administrative and political systems, where reforms have been slight’ after analyzing these media activities. After independence, the Information and Communication Technology Act of 2006 (amended on October 9, 2013) and the Digital Security Act (DSA) of 2018 (amended as the Cyber Security Act (CSA) on August 7, 2023) were also harsh press freedom laws.

This paper investigates how press rules hinder press freedom in Bangladesh. The report also reveals the stakeholders who put the most pressure on media and journalists and the unique barriers, violence, threats, and harassment Bangladeshi journalists encounter.

## Research Gap & Significance

There are many research articles and statistics that provide insights into press freedom in Bangladesh. These sources present an analysis of media regulations and laws in Bangladesh, opinions, and information acquired from interviews with media experts. However, these research findings are superficial and have not definitively established a precise representation of press freedom. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive and specific studies that provide a detailed understanding of the various media acts frequently used by different stakeholders to hinder press freedom, including obstruction, pressure, threats, and violence against journalists.

This study aims to provide insight into the frequent use of media acts and legislation to restrict press freedom and silence journalists in present-day Bangladesh. This research strives to identify the interested parties and stakeholders, such as political parties and their activists, government officials, criminals, religious fanatics, and others who actively suppress press freedom in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, the study intends to depict the state of the freedom of the press in Bangladesh by examining the forms of pressure, such as physical assaults, acts of violence, threats, and judicial harassment, that journalists in the country face while performing their professional duties. The findings and analysis will comprehensively assess the state of the media and journalists in contemporary Bangladesh. This will help identify how the relevant authorities may support journalists and contribute to the advancement of press freedom in the country. Forthcoming scholars will benefit from this study by gaining access to empirical facts and comprehensive analyses that they can apply in their investigations on this subject.

## Research Background and Context

According to Article 39 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (1972), 1. Freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed. 2. Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the states, public order, decency, or morality, or to contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to an offense. (a) The right of every citizen to freedom of speech and expression and (b) Freedom of the press are guaranteed.

The Constitution Bangladesh guarantees press and speech freedom to all citizens. Since the 1971 independence, Bangladesh's media and journalists have never had real press freedom. They are continually restricted and attacked, denying them freedom and protection. Except for four state-owned newspapers, the government banned several newspapers after independence. Bangladesh experienced autocratic rule from 1975 to 1990, which suppressed press freedom (Islam & Rahman, 2016). Media has changed significantly since the 1990s as the country moved from military dictatorship to democracy. The 2006 Information and Communication Technology Act (tightened by amendment on October 9, 2013) and the 2018 Digital Security Act (DSA) (amended as the Cyber Security Act (CSA) on August 7, 2023) have again restricted press freedom and created a hostile environment for journalists, forcing them to self-censor.

Today, journalists are murdered, assaulted, threatened, or punished in Bangladesh's legal system. Unfortunately, most of these events go unpunished because the offenders are government officials or governing party sympathizers. The journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi were murdered in their leased flat in West Rajabazar in the capital on 11 February 2012. Sagar was a news editor at the private TV channel Maasranga, while his wife Runi was a senior reporter at ATN Bangla. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) investigating this matter has requested 98 extensions to present its findings to the court between March 19, 2012, and June 22, 2023. The two previous organizations produced two delays, resulting in 100 probe report deadline postponements in 11 years (Habib & Bappi, 2023). The district administration and magistrate physically assaulted and filed a case against Ariful Islam, the Kurigram correspondent of Bangla Tribune, at his home on March 13, 2020, because of writing an investigative report against the then-deputy commissioner (ইসলাম, ২০২০). On March 9, 10, and 11 of 2020, Saifuzzaman Shikhor, an Awami League MP from Magura-1, together with two other members of the Jubo Mahila League, filed three separate cases against the Bangladeshi photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol under the Digital Security Act of 2018. The charges against Kajol included disseminating inappropriate, slanderous, offensive, and fabricated content on Facebook about ministers, lawmakers, and top members of the Jubo Mahila League (The Daily Star, 2021). Kajol faced many forms of harassment, including legal measures, after being arrested and incarcerated in connection with three complaints filed against him (স্বপন, ২০২০).

Rozina Islam's case, where she endured physical assault and legislative harassment for exposing a government official's corruption and irregularities, is not unique or uncommon. Instead, it is another repeated manifestation of the current media landscape in Bangladesh.

## Research Questions

# What types of pressure and barriers do Bangladeshi journalists encounter?

# Which acts and regulations are applied against Bangladeshi journalists?

# Which stakeholders put pressure on the Bangladeshi media?

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The prime objective of this study is to examine the different types of pressure and challenges encountered by journalists in Bangladesh, along with the rules and regulations implemented to limit their work in present-day Bangladesh. Numerous research studies have examined press freedom, freedom of expression, constraints on media, and other media-related issues in the country. This literature review seeks to acquire an in-depth comprehension of the present condition of journalists and media in Bangladesh. It does so by examining prior research articles that specifically concentrate on Bangladeshi media legislation, freedom of the press, and media control. Additionally, it explores the difficulties, security concerns, and pressures encountered by journalists in Bangladesh. An attempt will be made to comprehend the acts and regulations of the Bangladeshi media, the pressure put on the press, the cases of attacks and killings of media workers, and the state of the freedom of the press in Bangladesh by conducting a thematic analysis of the literature. However, this study will solely concentrate on the aforementioned media concerns, excluding any publications regarding the media and journalists that are unrelated to Bangladesh.

**Acts and Regulations Against Media in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has a range of media rules and regulations initially established by the British colonial authority. The majority of these media rules and regulations in Bangladesh tend to restrict press freedom and are not suitable for the country's reformed setting. Despite knowing the shortcomings in the press regulations, the government of Bangladesh is reluctant to reform those acts (Ahmed, 2009). According to Ahmed (2009), the legal regulations in Bangladesh impose unreasonable limitations on the collecting, processing, storing, and distribution of information. In addition, governments, ruling party leaders, and other authorities utilize media rules and regulations to strengthen their authority. Indeed, the media laws and acts of Bangladesh, stemming from historical origins, original objectives, and prevailing practices, explicitly or implicitly curtail press freedom. Yet, the subsequent administrations of the nation preserved certain aspects of authoritarian practices in the media field (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). The media laws in Bangladesh, like the Official Secrets Act of 1923, the Special Powers Act of 1974, the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1973, the Penal Code of 1860, the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898, the Newspapers (Annulment of Declaration) Ordinance of 1975, and the Martial Law Orders of 1976, originated during the British colonial period between 1857 and 1947 and were implemented to limit press freedom in the region. The Official Secrets Act of 1923, specifically Sections 3, 3(1), 5, 5(2), and 14; the Special Powers Act of 1974, specifically Sections 16, 17, and 18; the Printing Presses and Publications Act of 1973, specifically Section 12; the Penal Code of 1860, specifically Sections 99, 80, 499, 500, and 501; the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898, specifically Section 99A; the Newspapers (Annulment of Declaration) Ordinance of 1975, specifically Sections (2) and (3); and the Martial Law (Seventh Amendment) Orders of 1976, specifically Section (15), are the most notorious laws that restrict press freedom in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2006). During the decolonization process, the authorities retained the major governing instruments of these acts in their favor, enabling them to continue exerting influence over the press and media (Ahmed, 2009). Khan & Kaarisma (2014) explained that the Printing Presses and Publication Act of 1973 gives the government direct control over news coverage in Bangladesh.

In the last two decades, the government of independent Bangladesh has implemented media laws like the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act of 2006 and the Digital Security Act (DSA) of 2018, which are excessively harsh towards journalists and significantly limit freedom of the press (RSF, 2023; Ashik, 2021). Ahmed (2020) noted that the government or government agencies in Bangladesh employ the Legal Structure and Media Acts as instruments to exert influence over the media. The ICT Act of 2006, which imposed substantial constraints on the country's freedom of expression, was identified by Ashik (2021) as the main obstacle encountered by the media in Bangladesh. In addition, the government utilized Section 57 of this legislation to greatly restrict individuals' freedom of speech. The introduction of the Official Secrets Act of 1923, the ICT Act of 2006, and the DSA of 2018 instilled a widespread feeling of apprehension, leading journalists in Bangladesh to engage in self-censorship. Ahmed (2012) found that the enforcement of the Official Secrets Act of 1923 in Bangladesh led to journalists practicing self-censorship, the politicization of the press, and the interruption of unrestrained information dissemination. Ahmed (2020) concurs with the same finding, asserting in the article that the ICT Act of 2006 and the Digital Security Act of 2018 have generated a feeling of dread among journalists. In his article, Hossain (2020) contends that the Digital Security Act (DSA) of 2018 has generated a sense of dread among journalists and activists in Bangladesh, leading to a society characterized by fear and coercion. This 'fear' includes indiscriminate arrests, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and other manifestations of state-sanctioned legal repression. The autocratic regime has arbitrarily utilized the DSA 2018 to harass journalists, writers, teachers, and other citizens who try to practice their right to freedom of speech. He concluded that Section 32 of the DSA 2018 weakens the core journalistic duty, causing journalists to practice self-censorship when exposing news.

In contrast, the government, ruling party lawmakers, and administrative officials in Bangladesh take advantage of the media rules to harass journalists and stifle press freedom. Prothom Alo (2023) reported that the controversial Digital Security Act (DSA) charged 229 journalists in Bangladesh from January 2020 to March 2023. Following the charge, a total of 56 journalists were quickly arrested without having undergone any examination or investigation. The Prothom Alo (2023) report, based on data analysis conducted by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS), a private research group, reveals that out of the 1,295 cases filed under this Act between October 2018 and April 11, 2023, 355 cases (27.41 percent) were filed against journalists. The plaintiffs in most of these lawsuits were individuals who held leadership positions and were actively involved with the ruling Awami League.

**Attacks and killings of media workers in Bangladesh**

Journalist murder, attack, abuse, and harassment are prevalent in Bangladesh, and recent attacks have increased drastically. In 2023, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that 35 journalists and media persons had been murdered in Bangladesh between 1992 and 2023. A Bangladeshi renowned online news portal *bdnews24.com* (2023) reported that 56 journalists in Bangladesh faced abuse, harassment, litigation, threats, and obstacles to their work between January and March 2023. Prothom Alo (2023) reported that 217 Bangladeshi journalists were tortured and harassed in the first nine months of 2023, citing ‘Ain o Salish Kendra’ (ASK). Politicians, activists, criminals, government officials, fundamentalists, and other extreme organizations are among the entrenched interests that harass, threaten, and physically assault journalists in Bangladesh (RSF, 2023; Ashik, 2021). According to the index analysis (political context) of RSF (2023), Awami League members and supporters often physically assault journalists they disagree with and use court harassment to silence or close the media. The index analysis (Safety) of RSF (2023) concludes that the lack of justice for acts of violence against journalists in Bangladesh makes the country's journalists more susceptible to assaults, assassinations, and other forms of violence. According to Ashik (2021), criminal gangs, political factions and their adherents, government officials, Islamists, socialists, and other radical organizations in Bangladesh frequently harass and assault journalists. Attacks on journalists have typically targeted their coverage of stories involving human rights abuses, corruption, criminality, political violence, or the growth of secular fundamentalism.

**Freedom of the Press in Bangladesh**

Bangladeshi journalists are restricted by numerous parties, and the media are not liberal. According to Islam & Yousuf (2017), Bangladesh's media is neither authoritarian nor libertarian. They said it is slowly becoming libertarian despite certain authoritarian tactics. Chowdhury (2017) paints a more bleak picture of Bangladeshi journalistic freedom. His book, How Happy Are Professional Journalists? A research evaluation shows Bangladeshi journalists' workplace and professional freedom statistics. The report named ‘Swadinbhabe Daittopalon’ (Work with Freedom) answers the question, ‘Whether they work with freedom or not 196 (59%) of 334 journalists said they may operate freely occasionally. 101 (30%) journalists said they could always work freely, while 37 (11%) said they could never. Hossain's (2020) poll and in-depth interviews of journalists and media professionals support Chowdhury's (2017). 18 (52%) of 35 respondents to Hossain (2020) said Bangladesh's freedom of expression (FOE) was terrible. Only 4 (12%) think it's perfect. Another 9 (26%) responders have FOE issues. Participants rated the current FOE scenario in Bangladesh from 1 to 5, with 1 being the worst and 5 being the best. Islam & Rahman (2016) believe that ‘press freedom’ in Bangladesh is mostly ‘freedom of media owners’, not journalists. They determined that Bangladesh's "press freedom" is mostly media owners' freedom, not journalists. Foreign media organizations often rank Bangladesh low in terms of press freedom. Bangladesh scores 35.31 on Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index (2023), ranking 163rd out of 180 countries. Bangladesh ranks 39.06 out of 154 in political indicators, 36.11 out of 142 in economic indicators, 35.22 out of 154 in legislative indicators, 36.55 out of 157 in social indicators, and 29.60 out of 167 in security indicators, according to RSF. Since Bangladesh's independence, successive administrations have used the media, especially state-owned ones, as a communication weapon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has been in power since 2009, is no exception (RSF, 2023).

**Pressure on the press in Bangladesh**

Bangladeshi journalists self-censor due to professional pressure and personal insecurities. Two university professors, Muhammad Zakaria, and A.K. Azad, noted in “Journalism as a Profession in Bangladesh: An Overview” that Bangladeshi media practitioners encounter many challenges (Zakaria and Azad, 2009). Chowdhury (2017) observed that 51% of 37 journalists who indicated they never had a free hand reported feeling pressure from their bosses or editors. 43% of respondents felt political pressure, 40.54% from house management, 18.92% from advertisements, 16.22% from colleagues, and 8.11% from external stakeholders. Bangladeshi journalists face threats and pressure from governments, bureaucrats, political leaders, advertising corporations, media owners, and others. Ahmed (2020) claimed, Bangladeshi journalists exercise self-censorship because of legal constraints, political involvement, ownership, advertising, partiality as unprofessional conduct, and religion. He observed that journalists and media experts most often blame legal impediments, government influence, and politics for self-censorship. Institutions punish journalists who break government or political party laws. Khatun et al. (2017) identified various press freedom determinants in Bangladesh. These include political parties and their rivals, religious parties, media owners, corporate pressure, self-censorship, law enforcers, and criminal threats. Bhatti et al. (2021) stated that the government, political activists, powerful people and institutions, corrupt bureaucrats, media owners, advertisers, criminal mafia, religious extremist groups, society, press laws, and self-censorship pressure Bangladeshi journalists, limiting press freedom. Islam & Rahman (2016) found that the government, judicial harassment, corporate houses and advertisers, new ICTs, and media owners all threaten press freedom in Bangladesh. Government, political parties, and religious organizations exert political pressure; corporate houses and advertising pose an economic danger; and the government takes judicial measures against the media. In Bangladeshi electronic media journalists' professional stress, ‘inadequate assistance from management’ is the biggest cause, whereas ‘harassment’ at work is little. Other main causes of professional stress include ambiguous goals, an uncertain job market, high time pressure, friction, long working hours, and life risks. Those affected by their stories subject crime and corruption reporters to external harassment (Huda & Azad, 2015). Ashik (2021) concludes that institutional policies that impose self-censorship and media work under state-control mechanisms like laws, media policies, and intelligence agency monitoring are the biggest threats to a free press in Bangladesh. Government requests and policies must be met by media authorities. Islam and Yousuf (2017) allege that media owners' political and business interests influenced journalists. Some journalists reported getting orders from the government or governing party leaders to publish or kill stories. Due to physical assault and judicial harassment of journalists by Awami League members and sympathizers, editors in Bangladesh did not challenge the government (RSF, 2023). Ahmed (2012) discovered that private-owned media journalists in Bangladesh faced harassment through incarceration, questioning, police searches, and threats, illustrating the utilization of laws to pressure the media.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is a ‘blueprint’ or a guide for a researcher in investigation (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). This research is based on two normative theories (authoritarian and libertarian) of the mass media and aims to determine which theory Bangladesh's contemporary press freedom and media control system align with.

During the early 20th century, while the normative theories of mass media were still in their early stages of development, two opposing theories emerged concerning the role of mass media. These are: 1. radical libertarianism; 2. technocratic control. However, following these two theories, another two normative theories were developed later (Baran & Davis, 2010). These are: 1. authoritarian theory; 2. libertarian theory. The foundation of the authoritarian theory lies in Plato's (407–327 BCE) concept of 'Philosopher Kings' in his political philosophy. According to Plato, a select group of wise individuals ensured the security of the state through governance (Haider & Sanin, 2014). To define the authoritarian theory, Baran & Davis (2010) state, ‘Authorities justified their control as a means to protect and preserve a divinely ordained social order’. Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm (1956) define it as a normative theory that places all forms of communication under the control of a ruling class or authorities (as cited in Haider & Sanin, 2014).

On the other hand, to define the libertarian theory, Baran & Davis (2010) say, ‘A normative theory that sees people as good and rational and able to judge good ideas from bad’. A libertarian theory emerged as an opposition to the authoritarian theory. Sixteenth-century philosopher Lao Tzu, seventeenth-century British philosopher John Locke, the great poet John Milton, and John Stuart Mill were several of the patrons of this theory (Altschull, 1990, as cited in Haider & Sanin, 2014).

# RESEARCJ METHOD

This study adopts qualitative research methodology to analyze a particular case and offer its findings. This research includes the selection of a recent and fairly noteworthy case that functions as a representative example. Since it is significant in social science research to select a case that represents many homogeneous phenomena to investigate it effectively (Begum, 1988).

## Case Study

The case study method is a prevalent methodology used in qualitative research. Case studies are performed by researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of or provide an explanation of a particular phenomenon. This approach involves the systematic examination of individuals, groups, organizations, or events by utilizing a wide range of data sources (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). According to Yin (2003), the case study is a research method that involves examining an occurrence in its real-life setting using many kinds of data. The case study aims to understand the relationship between the phenomenon and its context, where the boundaries between the two are not apparent. (Yin, 2003, as referenced in Wimmer & Dominick, 2013).

## Data Analysis Method

The content analysis method has been used to study the selected case and analyze its data for this research. Despite being an autonomous research approach, the content analysis method has been applied in this study to examine the data due to its widespread use and effectiveness in analyzing written content.

## Content Analysis

Content analysis has multiple definitions. Walizer and Wienir (1978) define content analysis as a methodical approach to analyzing the content of recorded information (as stated in Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). Researchers have recently utilized content analysis as a novel research methodology. Currently, this approach is widely used to examine various aspects of mass media, such as propaganda, campaigns, marketing, and readability. It is a method that relies on written records or documents (Islam, 2010).

## Data Sample

This study examines the case of Bangladeshi journalist Rozina Islam, a senior reporter of the Daily Prothom Alo, who was physically assaulted while gathering information for an investigative report. Additionally, she endured continuous legislative obstacles and harassment for exposing the corruption and misconduct of a government official. This case has been deliberately chosen using purposive sampling, a sort of non-probability sampling, due to its recent occurrence. This case is a suitable example for examining the media rules and regulations in Bangladesh, as well as the level of press freedom in the country.

This research has been undertaken using news stories and articles specifically related to the selected case published in two Bangla Daily newspapers.These two Bangla daily newspapers, the Daily Jugantor and the Daily Samakal have also been chosen purposefully since they are recognized as moderate media by readers due to their impartiality, as they neither engage in radical criticism nor blindly back the ruling government.The research focuses on the time frame between May 17, 2021 (the first day of the incident) and May 21, 2023 (the most recent hearing date of the case so far).

# RESULTS

This study has reviewed and discussed the contents of 54 news reports published in the two selected newspapers concerning Rozina Islam. The Daily Jugantor website published 29 news articles, while the Daily Samakal website published 25 news articles about Rozina Islam between May 17, 2021 (the start of the incident) and May 21, 2023 (the final court hearing). These news reports were obtained from the online archives of the two chosen newspapers. The case of Rozina Islam has been examined using the information from these reports, and the contents of the reports have been qualitatively reviewed following the study questions.

## Findings Analysis

Upon reviewing Rozina’s case and analyzing the contents of the gathered news reports, the subsequent representations of the media, media rules, and journalists have been found.

* **Pressure & Barriers to Media:**

It becomes evident that Bangladeshi journalists face pressure and attacks, including physical assaults and legislative harassment while carrying out their professional duties, as evidenced by the example of Rozina Islam. This case reflects the authoritarian theory, as the accused authority, a government official from Bangladesh's health ministry, harassed Rozina Islam on the spot and later lodged a case against her in an attempt to deter her from publishing their irregularities and mismanagements.

* **Rival Attitude towards the Press:**

A deputy secretary of the health ministry of Bangladesh has charged Rozina Islam under the Penal Code of 1860 and the Official Secrets Act of 1923, both of which are British colonial laws. This particular instance exposes the rival attitudes of the Bangladeshi administration and government officials towards journalists and media. In addition, upon Rozina's arrival at the police station, the officers at that particular station displayed rude behavior towards both Rozina and her visiting family members. Likewise, the police's decision to seek a five-day remand for Rozina, together with their continuous delays in submitting the probe reports, clearly demonstrated their hostile stand towards journalists. Meanwhile, the health minister asserted that Rozina had committed an error and later alleged that the incident of Rozina becoming sick at the police station was a pretext. The statements and actions exhibited by government officials, police, and political leaders reflect their antagonistic position toward journalists.

* **Attacks and Harassments of the Journalists:**

Bangladeshi journalists suffer many forms of harassment when they expose corruption, irregularities, and mismanagement within government institutions or officials. Below, are various forms of assault and intimidation commonly encountered by journalists in Bangladesh.

* **Physical & Mental Harassments**

Rozia was detained in a room within the secretariat for more than five hours and assaulted while gathering information to investigate corruption. Meanwhile, the authorities refused to provide her with medical care, despite her illness and subsequently falling to the floor. Furthermore, following Rozia's arrival at the police station, she underwent an approximate 11-hour period without receiving any medical care until her family members provided her with basic treatments. The harassment and crude behavior with Rozina serve as evidence of the challenging circumstances that Bangladeshi journalists undergo while carrying out their professional duties.

* **Violation of Privacy & Basic Human Rights**

It is apparent that Rozina Islam was subjected to physical harassment, and her personal bag and cell phone were forcefully seized. This indicates an apparent violation of a person's safety and privacy.

* **Judiciary Harassments**

Rozina Islam encountered several kinds of legislative and administrative harassment, exemplifying the judicial obstacles and legislative harassment that journalists in Bangladesh suffer simply for carrying out their professional duties. Rozina faced initial harassment, with multiple lawsuits lodged against her under two British colonial acts. In addition, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit summoned Rozina's bank account, and the administration unlawfully seized her passport, press card, and two mobile phones despite her release on bail. In addition, despite the probe report declaring Rozina innocent, the plaintiff lodged another appeal, accusing Rozina of guilt. These occurrences revealed the authorities in Bangladesh applying all available and feasible legal systems as tools against journalists.

* **Procrastination in the Judiciary Process**

Following the apprehension of Rozina Islam, the authorities repeatedly delayed without any obvious basis. The authorities delayed the initial hearing of Rozina's case twice and submitted the investigation report around 14 months later, despite projecting a submission timeline of 25 days. Furthermore, the belatedly submitted probe report asserted Rozina's innocence. The health ministry filed a dissatisfied appeal after seven months, and the court again appointed the PBI to investigate. Subsequently, the PBI delayed submitting the probe reports. Under the guise of a court procedure, Rozina has faced harassment. This case demonstrates how the judicial process in Bangladesh can be used as a tool against the media.

* **Other Harassments**

Besides physical attacks and legislative persecution, Rozina experienced harassment through the unauthorized access of her personal Facebook, email, and Yahoo accounts by an unidentified hacker during her imprisonment. This also reveals a different side of the persistent harassment Bangladeshi journalists experience.

# DISCUSSION

## Results Discuss

* **Types of Barriers & Harassments Bangladeshi Journalists Face**

The study found that Bangladeshi journalists face repression and assault through various means, such as physical and mental harassment, confinement in blocked rooms, violations of safety and privacy, filing of cases, delays in the judicial process, confiscation of bags, mobile phones, passports, and press cards, as well as hacking of Facebook, email, and other accounts.

* **Which Stakeholders Curb Press Freedom in Bangladesh?**

Upon examining Rozina's case, it is evident that stakeholders in Bangladesh, particularly those in executive, legislative, and political positions, actively suppress press freedom by attacking, harassing, and using laws and regulations as tools against journalists. This study reveals that government officials, bureaucrats, police, and political leaders actively suppress journalists by imposing both physical and legislative hurdles.

* **The Acts & Regulations Used Against Bangladeshi Journalists**

Journalists in Bangladesh face repression and press freedom is curbed through the use of several acts and regulations, such as the Penal Code of 1860 and the Official Secrets Act of 1923. These acts, originally enacted during the British colonial period to impede press freedom in the Indian Sub-continent, continue to be employed as weapons against journalists.

## Limitations

Three main limitations of the 'case studies' research methodology include a general absence of scientific precision, challenges in generalization, and a time-intensive nature (Wimmer & Dominick, 2009). Like many other case studies, these limitations have been present in this study. While the chosen instance for the research is representative, the outcomes and findings cannot be generalized due to the lack of scientific precision in the data gathering and analysis process of the study.

Furthermore, there are limits in terms of duration, lack of funds, and a significant amount of prior study on the subject. The author's limited proficiency in research areas is a significant drawback to carrying out the research with scientific rigor. Interviewing the subject of the case and media specialists, which may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the country's press freedom and rules, has been impossible due to limited time and funding.

# CONCLUSIONS

This study evaluates the pressure, persecution, and difficulties Bangladeshi journalists face while carrying out their professional duties. The study also identifies vested stakeholders who coerce and legally prevent journalists from revealing corruption and irregularities. The data provides substantial evidence that confirms the objectives and focuses of the study. The findings suggest that the media and journalists in Bangladesh face many obstacles, including physical attacks, breaches of privacy, legislative harassment, and delays in the court process.

The results also demonstrate that most of the acts and rules used to attack media and journalists in Bangladesh today originated in British colonial policies to restrict press freedom. Furthermore, several particular bodies, such as the government, government officials, bureaucrats, police, and political leaders, actively attempt to suppress the freedom of the press by subjecting journalists to harassment. In addition, Bangladeshi journalists sustain various forms of violence and persecution when investigating corruption and irregularities in administrative, executive, legislative, and political authority. Overall, the study's findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the state of Bangladesh's press, including press regulation, press pressure, and the repression and harassment faced by journalists.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation for future researchers**

Those interested in researching press freedom, press regulation, media, and politics can focus on the following areas which might be a great inclusion on this topic.

* Do cases like Rozina’s harassment ultimately force journalists to exercise self-censorship?
* Between Physical or legislative harassment, which one does curb press freedom comparatively more in Bangladesh?
* Among police, bureaucrats, and political leaders, which party is most hostile to the media?
* In investigative journalism in Bangladesh, between female and male journalists, which part face more risk?

**Recommendation for taking steps**

To improve press freedom and ensure the safety of journalists, the following steps can be taken and implemented.

* Implement the rules of the country's constitution about press freedom.
* Ensure the security and freedom of the media and journalists to foster democracy and good governance.
* Revise and reform the media laws and regulations that restrict press freedom.
* Rather than exerting pressure on the press, the government, government officials, law enforcement, and political leaders ought to strive towards promoting press freedom.

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