

Combating Fake News: Investigating Media's Efforts for Fact-Checking in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Given the growing threat posed by the spread of fake news to objective journalism, this study investigates the efforts initiated by Bangladeshi media organizations and journalists to counter this digital menace. The study employs both survey and in-depth interview methods to examine fact-checking practices and associated challenges within media organizations. While snowball sampling was used to recruit 51 journalists for the survey, purposive sampling was used to select 15 additional senior journalists from the 15 leading media houses. Separate unstructured questionnaires were used for both surveys and interviews. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The findings reveal that fact-checking efforts are significantly hindered by insufficient technical support and a lack of skilled personnel.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Bangladesh has experienced a significant rise in fake news, comprising both misinformation and disinformation. According to [Daily Star \(2025\)](#), the number of fake news in the country have increased by 58 percent in 2024 compared to the previous year. Fake news refers to totally fabricated content that mimics a form of mainstream news ([Zimdars & McLeod, 2020](#)). It typically takes two forms: misinformation, which is false information spread without the intent to mislead, and disinformation, which is also false content intentionally spread to serve malicious motives ([Stahl, 2006](#)). Fake news is often used to destabilize communal harmony ([Banaji et al. \(2019\)](#), [Khan et al. \(2019\)](#)), pursue personal and economic gain ([Clarke et al. \(2020\)](#), [Martens et al. \(2018\)](#), [Woolley \(2016\)](#)), and fulfil political interest ([Woolley, 2016](#); [Bastos, 2019](#)). The proliferation of fake news threatens the integrity of democratic systems, particularly the election process globally ([Vosoughi et al., 2018](#)). Although fake news has always existed, the term gained public attention during the 2016 US presidential election, and since then, its spread has only accelerated across the globe ([Vosoughi et al., 2018](#)). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the massive spread of fake news was labelled as 'infodemic' ([Zarocostas, 2020](#)), prompting the World Health Organization to urgently call for the establishment of global fact-checking platforms ([World Health Organization, 2022](#)).

Bangladesh, a South Asian nation with over 170 million people, is experiencing rapid growth in its netizen community. By early 2024, the country had approximately 53 million active social media users, representing approximately 30.4% of the total population ([DataReportal, 2024](#)). This digital expansion has facilitated a surge in online disinformation, particularly during sensitive periods such as elections. Additionally, the country has experienced communal violence, political unrest, and mob lynching fuelled by fake news and rumors ([Haque et al., 2020](#)).

In response to this crisis, several independent fake-checking initiatives such as Dismislab, Rumor Scanner, and Fact Watch have emerged, though their activities remain limited. Media organizations have both professional and moral responsibility to address it, and failure to do so may lead to a loss of public trust. Recognizing this concern, many media organizations worldwide have introduced dedicated fact-checking teams. Leading media organizations such as AFP, BBC, AP, Reuters, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times* have even established automated fact-checking system ([Fanta, 2017](#);



Túñez López *et al.*, 2018; Chan-Olmsted, 2019; Dörr, 2015; Lindén and Tuulonen 2019), a practice that is considered a dynamic effort to fight against fake news and build public trust. Collaboration between media and independent fact-checking bodies is increasingly seen as essential for improving the effectiveness of fake-checking efforts (Amazeen, 2013).

While fake news is a global crisis, responses to it varies with respect to region, culture, socio-economic and religious context, and political environments. Much of the existing research has examined the spread of fake news, its cognitive, psychological, and socio-political factors, fact-checking initiatives, and offered possible solutions, mostly focusing on the context of the Global North. There is a notable research gap in fact-checking efforts to counter the impact of fake news in the Global South, particularly in Bangladesh, where the fake news crisis poses a growing threat to fair and ethical journalism.

This study aims to address this gap by exploring how Bangladeshi media organizations and journalists engage in fact-checking to mitigate fake news crises. To this end, this study focuses on answering the following key questions:

RQ1: What efforts do Bangladeshi media organizations make to initiate fact-checking while the prevalence of fake news is increasing in the country?

RQ2: What challenges are media houses and journalists facing in combating fake news?

1.1. Literature Review

1.1.1. Fake News (Mis/disinformation): A Global Issue

Fake news is commonly used to spread misinformation, disinformation, rumors, and propaganda, with terms often used interchangeably (Cummings & Kong, 2019). It typically refers to pseudo-news or junk content generated through yellow or propaganda journalism that mislead the audience (Botha & Pieterse, 2020). Although misinformation is not a new phenomenon, it has recently become a major global concern, drawing attention from media scholars (Humprecht *et al.*, 2020). Misinformation campaigns were identified 2000 years ago when the Roman Republic was facing a civil war between Antony and Octavian (Posetti & Matthews, 2018). The invention of the Gutenberg Press significantly accelerated the spread of misinformation (Vida, 2012).

While propaganda is an ancient practice, technology has greatly expanded its reach and influence (Bode & Vraga, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2016; Edelman, 2016; Kaplan, 2020; Perach *et al.*, 2023; Wilder & Vorobeychik, 2019) and contributed to the emergence of a post-truth era (Marmot, 2017). Aimeur *et al.* (2023) described social media as a double-edged sword; on one hand, it offers limitless communication and real-time news and information sharing; on the other, it facilitates the rapid spread of fake news. Masri (2022) found that old videos, considering the killing of George Floyd, were republished more on YouTube and Facebook than on other digital platforms. Mainstream media also play a role in disseminating fake news (Marwick, 2018).

Fake news may threaten national security by promoting propaganda and interfering with elections (Westerlund, 2018). A significant example is the Russian government's alleged disinformation campaigns targeted at US voters in the 2016 presidential election (Badawy *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, political bots on Twitter have been reported to influence voters during the Brexit referendum in the UK (Howard & Kollanyi, 2016). Latin American countries were also affected. During Brazil's 2018 presidential election, fake content favouring President Jair Bolsonaro went viral on WhatsApp (Avelar, 2019). In Africa, several countries face deteriorating situations owing to fake news. The South African government passed a law labelling the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 as a criminal activity. This is because the virus only affects white people (Wild, 2020).

Asia is another epicenter of fake news. According to the 2018 Digital Society Survey, Taiwan is the most severely targeted country in the world for foreign disinformation campaigns (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019; Chien, 2019). India ranks first globally in risk related to disinformation and misinformation (World Economic Forum, 2024), where campaigns often focus on inciting religious hatred (Hussain *et al.*, 2020). During Indian elections, fake news has become a common threat to voters. For example, nearly 80% of first-time Indian voters were exposed to a wave of fake news on social media during the 2024 National Election (Singh, 2024).

Neighboring Bangladesh has also suffered from the effects of fake news. The country has experienced several mob lynchings and, attacks on religious minorities triggered by false social media posts and news (Alam & Ahmed, 2012; Siddique, 2016). In July 2019, rumors of child abduction led to a series of mob attacks that killed eight people (BBC, 2019). During the 2018 national election in Bangladesh, replica websites mimicking reputable news websites spread fake political news (Dhaka Tribune, 2018). In response, Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) blocked several pages and accounts (Siddiqui & Paul, 2018). A recent study suggested that 44.4% of fake news circulated from July to August 2023 was about political issues (Afrin, 2023).

In conclusion, the literature review indicates that mis/disinformation is a global crisis meticulously designed to gain political and religious agendas. In response, various countries have taken initiatives, including installing fact-checking platforms, passing new rules and law to address the digital menace.

1.1.2. Approaches for Combating Fake News

Fact-Checking: Fact-checking initiatives have grown substantially in response to an increasing volume of fake news circulating online. According to Duke Reporters' Lab, over 451 fact-checking platforms are actively operating across the world, 161 platforms are inactive, and two-thirds of these platforms are operated by news organizations. The practice of fact-checking began in the USA during the 1980s, when journalists faced doubts about politicians' claims during presidential election campaigns (Dobbs, 2012). Scholars across disciplines have already urged the integration of automated fact-checking (AFC) systems—computational and algorithmic approaches—to counter various forms of fake news (Graves, 2018). Researchers from the University of Texas at Arlington developed the tool ClaimBuster, which can automatically detect check-worthy factual claims (Hassan *et al.*, 2017). The Duke Reporters' Lab is currently using this tool, collaborating with PolitiFact, FactCheck.org, The Washington Post, and the Associated Press (Graves, 2018).

Similarly, Indiana University's researchers created tools such as Hoaxy and Botometer (formerly BotOrNot) to detect misinformation spread by social bots (Lou *et al.*, 2019; Yang *et al.*, 2019). These tools employ natural language processing and artificial intelligence to analyze textual patterns. Although algorithm is considered a promising tool to counter misinformation objects (Wilder & Vorobeychik, 2019; Hosseini *et al.*, 2023), its efficiency is still questionable. Aimeur *et al.* (2023) argued that AI models are unable to address fake news challenges. Kumar and Shah (2018) explained that AI-generated fake content closely resembles to real content, making it harder to detect. Yaqub *et al.* (2020) revealed the lack of trust in automated solutions. Pavleska *et al.* (2018) emphasized the need for further development of European fact-checking organisations after reviewing their activities. Given concern over automated systems, Human-Machine Communication (HMC) systems have been proposed as a more balanced approach to address the fake news problem (Nakov *et al.*, 2021).

In Bangladesh, eight fact-checking platforms are currently active (Duke Reporters' Lab, 2023), with BD Fact Check starting its efforts in 2016. Rumor Scanner, a popular platform, identified approximately 1,400 cases of false news in the media between January and December 2022 (Rumour Scanner, 2022). Social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube are primary online platform for spreading old photos, videos, false news screenshots, and false statements (Yesmin, 2023). Haque *et al.* (2019) investigated fact-checking platforms' activities and challenges in Bangladesh and neighbouring India and Nepal, identifying resource limitations and political pressure for fact-checking initiatives. Haque *et al.* (2020) conducted another study on the perceptions of journalists, fact-checkers, and social media users regarding fact-checking in Bangladesh. This study found a lack of collaboration between journalists and fact-checkers in conducting fact-checking. Islam *et al.* (2020) investigated Bengali Fake News Detection, reporting that their classification algorithm achieved 85% accuracy in distinguishing between false and true.

Media Literacy: Media literacy provides people with a set of critical thinking skills to evaluate media content and resist misinformation (Bulger & Davison, 2018). A well-informed generation is better positioned to accept or reject false information (Kaplan, 2020; Karnouskos, 2020). Ashley *et al.* (2022) underscored the potential of media literacy to counter health misinformation. However, media literacy initiatives remain confined to advanced countries. For example, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* offer media literacy related to curriculum resources (Bulger & Davison, 2018). Germany and Austria have also introduced this initiative at schools (Hipfl, 2019; Tulodziecki & Grafe, 2019).

Before the 2018 Indian national election, WhatsApp launched a television campaign to check the integrity of media content regarding the election (Balili & Desai, 2019). In another initiative, the local police of a district in the Southern Indian state of Telangana used folk songs to stop hate attacks caused by misinformation (Joglekar, 2018). In contrast, despite facing similar problems, neighboring Bangladesh lacks a formal media literacy program to combat fake news and rumors. A study on Bangladeshi villagers' perception of Covid-19 information exposed a reliance on religious faiths, local beliefs, and social values while confronting suspicious information (Sultana & Fussell, 2021).

Regulation and Code of Ethics: While people across the globe face a critical threat from fake news, many nations have taken regulatory measures. The European Union (EU) East StratCom Task Force, established in 2015, actively counters Russian disinformation campaigns (Stray, 2019). Another superpower China has also taken a massive project to counter fake news campaigns. A report suggested that two million people were engaged in monitoring online content (Stray, 2019). Some European countries separately introduced policies to combat fake news. For example, in a new rule in Italy, anyone who shares and posts false, exaggerated or biased information is considered a criminal activity

(Balili & Desai, 2019). Laws and policies against fake news have been introduced in many countries across North America, Europe, Asia and Africa (Funke & Flamini, 2019).

In the context of objective journalism, many academics and professional organizations have presented a long list of journalism ethics that prioritize accuracy and fairness. Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) presented a code of ethics (the SPJ Code of Ethics), which is considered the most accepted code of ethics for journalists worldwide. At the beginning of the code list, it is clearly described that journalists should take more responsibility for making reports and information more accurate (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). Bogart (2004) advocates integrity, fairness, balance, accuracy, comprehensiveness and diligence in journalism works. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) stated truth is the first obligation in journalism and verification is its essence.

2. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, applying both qualitative and quantitative data to examine fact-checking practices and the associated challenges within media organizations in Bangladesh. Data were collected from April 1, 2025, to June 30, 2025, through an online survey and in-depth interviews. For quantitative data, a structured survey was administered via Google Forms, which targeted journalists working in mainstream Bangladeshi media. As Table I shows that total of 51 journalists participated in the surveys, of whom 94% identified as male and 6% as female. Participants were selected using the snowball sampling method. This survey aimed to identify journalists' perceptions of fact-checking practices and challenges in their respective media houses. Key areas of survey inquiry included the existence of dedicated fact-checking teams, initiatives taken to enhance fact-checking activities, and major constraints hindering these efforts.

For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 senior journalists from 15 leading media sources, including newspapers, TV channels, and online news portals, through a purposive sampling method. Lavrakas (2008) states that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling that corresponds to the whole population size of a research topic for a specific logic or reason. The selected media houses included: *Daily Prothom Alo*, *Daily Bangladesh Protidin*, *Daily Jugantor*, *Daily Samakal*, *Daily Kaler Kantho*, *Daily Star*, *Daily Financial Express*, bdnews24.com, jaggonews24.com, banglatribune.com, dhakapost.com, Independent TV News, Somoy Television, Jamuna Television, and ATN News. Roughly 40 minutes of semi-structured interviews were conducted using Zoom with a set of questions. All questions were asked in Bengali (the journalists' native language) during the interviews. Subsequently, all answers were transcribed in English word by word.

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the interview data, following the methodological framework outlined by Bryman (2016). This process involves multiple close readings of all transcripts to identify recurring patterns. Generating codes from patterns and reviewing and naming themes reflect both the practices and challenges of fact-checking in media organizations in Bangladesh.

TABLE I: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Variable	Distribution
Gender	Male: 94% Female: 6%
Age	25–44 years: 86% 45–54 Years: 14%
Media type	Print-51% Online-37% TV-10%
Position	Sub-editors: 23.5% Senior Sub-editors: 23.5% Staff reporters: 15.5% Assistant/News editors: 12% Senior correspondents: 10% Senior reporters: 8% Editors: 4% Others: 4%
Experience	8–15 years: 41% 15+ years: 27.5% 4–7 years: 21.5%

3. RESULTS

3.1. Survey Findings

In a recent survey, journalists were asked whether their media organizations had a dedicated fact-checking team. Approximately 84% participants responded that their media organizations do not have such a team. Despite this, some participants noticed changes in their media houses regarding fact-checking activities: 44% noted that training and workshops were arranged, 9% said new policies were introduced, and 8% mentioned the integration of new technology. However, 27% of participants indicated their media organizations made no efforts toward fact-checking.

When asked about the methods (manual or automation) 90% of journalists replied that they relied on manual techniques. Regarding the question about how they gained fact-checking techniques, 39% responded training, and 28% replied learning through personal interest. However, remaining participants (approximately 33%) did not receive formal training.

Regarding the effectiveness of Bangladeshi media organizations' efforts to combat fake news, 47% of the respondents said the efforts were somewhat effective, 29% rated them as moderately effective, 16% as very effective, and 8% believed there was no effectiveness at all. Additionally, 41% journalists felt that media ownership and political influence significantly affect fact-checking efforts, 47% thought the impact exists to some extent, and around 10% said they saw no such influence.

When it came to correcting false or misleading news, 49% of respondents said they experienced no external pressure from political, editorial, or commercial interests. In contrast, 22% replied that such pressure occurs occasionally, 20% said it occurs regularly, and 10% did not comment on it.

As for the major challenges journalists face in verifying information, 37% identified technical barriers, 26% cited political pressure, 16% reported a lack of investment, and 22% mentioned other issues such as a shortage of skilled personnel.

To improve fact-checking activities in media organizations in Bangladesh, journalists have highlighted professional training as a top priority, with 75% supporting this approach. Additionally, 63% mentioned the need for more investment, 55% called for enacting a stronger editorial policy, 55% insisted on improving media literacy, and 33% supported collaboration between media outlets and dedicated fact-checking platforms.

3.2. Interview Findings

Interviewees in the study unanimously agreed that fake news posed a significant threat to journalism and society's overall welfare. Many journalists commented that digital disinformation is used across political, social, and religious domains, making it crucial for journalists to remain vigilant in countering such campaigns to avoid becoming an arm of their propaganda machine. Most interviewees emphasized that fact-checking by independent organizations supplements journalism, improve its standard, and hold professional journalists more accountable. However, interviewees said that interaction between journalists and independent fact checkers remains limited. Some interviewees noted that they occasionally reported obtaining information from fact-checking organizations.

3.2.1. Fact-Checking Practices in Media Organizations

Over the past few years, media organizations have incorporated new technologies for journalistic works. However, progress in using advanced technology for fact-checking to combat fake news remains limited. According to a survey, 90% journalists still rely on manual techniques to verify suspicious information while writing and editing reports. Many interviewees described fact-checking as an emerging practice in journalism but noted that a lack of technological support and skilled workers hinders its development.

Udisa Islam, Special Correspondent at Bangla Tribune, stated:

"When we have doubts about any information, we reach out to the respective sources—local correspondents, government officials, etc. All verification is conducted manually. We have no software or AI tool for fact-checking in our office."

Selim Khan, Executive Editor at Independent TV, added:

"In digital journalism, skilled manpower and logistical support are important for verifying information. But due to resource limitations, we can't engage in digital fact-checking activities."

The survey revealed that 44% of journalists had received fact-checking training. Most interviewees emphasised the need to make journalists skilled in fact-checking through more training, rather than

installing separate fact-checking units in media organizations. They argued that as journalists are already experienced in verifying sources or information during report writing and editing, they could easily adopt fact-checking techniques through professional training that needs to streamline newsroom activities and save on new recruitment costs for fact-checking.

Golam Mortuja, senior reporter at bdnews24.com, noted:

"We have no plan to install a fact-checking team in our media right now. Although such a team is important to counter the wave of fake news, our priority is to train journalists in fact-checking techniques. With the right support and facilities, we can handle disinformation effectively."

Despite the growing use of digital tools in Western media, some interviewees continue to value manual fact-checking.

Md. Mafuzur Rahman (Mishu), Special Correspondent at Jamuna Television, stated:

"We analyse first-hand information from the beat reporter and then verify it by checking the respective person's social media accounts such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), etc. If the information or reports remain unverified, we reach out to the persons via phone or email."

Zohaer Ibna Kalim (Zoha), a shift-in-charge, Central Desk at *The Daily Jugantor*, shared a real experience:

"Before the 2024 national election in Bangladesh, a letter regarding that election supposedly from European Union MPs was circulating online. We did not make a report based on the unverified letter. After failing to verify it through the EU website, we assumed the letter was fake. As the letter was an important update for our country's politics, I contacted our diplomatic reporter. He confirmed its authenticity after communicating with the EU Dhaka Mission."

Many journalists rely heavily on reputed international news organizations or agencies such as AFP, Reuters, BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times*. Reports from these media organizations are considered real.

Manwar Hossain, Senior News Editor at Somoy TV, stated:

"We fully rely on leading international news agencies, news portals, and TV channels for verification of international news. If they publish it on their official websites, we consider it credible."

Goutam Mondal, News Editor (online) at *The Daily Samakal*, added:

"Before publishing reports about international issues referring to the international media, we first evaluate their credibility, considering their reputation, and other indicators. This practice not only ensures the credibility of that news but also promotes our journalism standards."

Interviewees also highlighted the importance of verifying visual content such as images and, videos. Verifying image and, video content, they depend on technology, specifically Google Lens.

Zohaer Ibna Kalim (Zoha) recounted:

"A local correspondent sent some pictures claiming a group of wild elephants attacked innocent villagers. After contacting the correspondent to verify the images, I learned that he got the images from a villager who collected them from an online news portal. With a big suspicion, we used Google Lens to trace the image date and found they were originally published two years ago on an Indian online portal."

A few journalists attended fact-checking training and workshops organized by NGOs and independent fact-checking platforms. These external organizations usually invite media houses to send representative for training and workshops, as in-house training is rare.

Goutam Mondal commented:

"Fact-checking has not officially started in our media house. Only a few journalists, approximately 5%–10%, have some knowledge about digital fact-checking, and they apply their knowledge when needed."

Media and Fact-Checking Platforms Relation: Most journalists confirmed being aware of independent fact-checking platforms and following their websites and Facebook pages. However, interviewees revealed no existing collaboration between media organizations and these platforms to boost fact-checking activities. Some interviewees believed that collaboration could be highly beneficial in combating fake news and developing the quality of journalism.

Udisa Islam noted:

"I follow some fact-checking platforms that regularly publish their research-based reports. They analyse how much fake news was published across media outlets during certain periods and offer training on how to fight against fake content."

Some journalists mentioned that they occasionally sought help from their IT or social media team to verify digital content.

Razib Hasan, News Editor at *The Daily Prothom Alo*, stated:

"Since we have no dedicated fact-checkers, we consult with our IT and social media teams for digital verification. We are now planning to adopt a policy for using AI- tools or software in fact-checking."

Joyshree Bhadury, senior reporter at *The Daily Bangladesh Protidin*, added:

"When I need to verify news, I meet with our IT or social media team. If we had a fact-checking unit, I would consult with them. As a journalist, I believe information accuracy is essential to maintain media credibility."

3.2.2. Challenges for Fact-checking in Bangladeshi Media

Fake News not a Concerning Issue: Many interviewees stated that the fake news crisis is still not a concern in newsrooms. As a result, fact-checking has received minimal attention from journalists.

Golam Mortoza, Editor at *The Daily Star* (Bengali Section), stated:

"Journalism in Bangladesh is already facing some crises, such as government repression, legal crackdowns, unethical practices like paid journalism, etc. Fake news has now added to another dimension to these challenges. Unfortunately, many media organisations, policymakers, and media professional organisations have failed to perceive the seriousness of the issue. Until we acknowledge the crisis, we cannot find effective solutions."

Md. Mafuzur Rahman (Mishu) added:

"Many journalists still fail to recognise the scale of the fake news crisis. Even, they remain unaware of the impact of fake news, including AI-generated disinformation."

This unawareness of the fake news crisis can cause big trouble for media credibility.

Joyshree Bhadury stated:

"Recently, a person with high blood pressure stopped his medication after watching a misleading video on social media. for blood pressure. As a result, the person got a serious illness. Hundreds of fake videos like this were flooded on social media. Such misinformation has real-world consequences. Journalists have social and professional responsibilities to provide accurate information, where a fact-checking unit can play a role. Unfortunately, most newsrooms have not even initiated discussion on the unit."

Financial Constraints: In interview and survey, financial limitations were identified as a significant challenge for fact-checking in media organisations in Bangladesh. Many media houses struggle to pay regular salaries to their employees and often implement cost-cutting measures, including layoffs. Consequently, media organizations hesitate to invest money in setting up fact-checking units, which require both technologically sound manpower and expensive technological resources.

Zohaer Ibna Kalim (Zoha) stated:

"Although everyone acknowledges the need for a fact-checking unit in the media house, financial hardships prevent media organizations from integrating such teams. Forming a fact-checking unit"

requires not only skilled human resources but also investment in advanced technology and software, which is considered unaffordable for my media under current circumstances.”

Sheikh Salam, News Editor at ATN News, added:

“Verifying fake news needs advanced software or tools, which are absent in our media house. Additionally, we are not much aware of advanced tools or software that are commonly used in developed nations.”

Zohaer Ibna Kalim (Zoha) echoed the previous journalist:

“Without financial support, buying such advanced software and tools remains out of reach. Furthermore, the lack of proper training and skilled workers creates a further barrier to acquiring these tools in a media house.”

Shortage of Skilled Workers: Interviewees pointed out that technology alone could not solve the fake-checking problem. Journalists also need to acquire technological knowledge and skills for fact-checking. Training and workshops can help make media workers more skilled. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of training and workshops for developing these skills.

Sheikh Salam noted:

“Our TV channel has a shortage of such workers. We should seriously consider making journalists skilful by arranging in-house training that will greatly enhance the media's ability to combat fake news.”

Competition Pressure: Several interviewees mentioned that intense competition to publish news first contributes significantly to the spread of fake news by the media. Journalists, especially those working on news portals, often bypass the proper verification process to be the first to publish a story and attract readers. Newsroom managers sometimes encourage this practice.

Ariful Islam Arman, Future Editor at dhakapost.com, said:

“Competition culture is deeply rooted in media organisations, especially online media in Bangladesh. As a result, online portals are more likely to spread fake news. To achieve the news publishing target, journalists often publish reports without verifying sources and proper fact-checking.”

The interviews clearly show that during important issues—elections, crimes, or political unrest—media workers are more focused on publishing news first than on being accurate.

Golam Mortoza noted:

“Online news portals are locked in a race to publish news quickly. This trend becomes even more dangerous during important news events. If we are not aware of it now, the risk of spreading fake news will grow. Additionally, with AI tools that can generate fake video, audio, and images, fact-checking is more crucial than ever.”

Partisan Journalism and Political Pressure: Another major barrier to fact-checking is political and partisan journalism. Many journalists align with political ideologies and attempt to advance their parties' narratives, often overlooking true information. Some news outlets publish politically motivated fake news and fail to correct for false information.

Golam Mortoza further stated:

“The most damaging aspect of journalism in Bangladesh is how journalists have become mouthpieces of political parties. Even journalist leaders act as political leaders. Journalism, except for some top media houses, has derailed its core principles of objectivity and fact-based journalism. It has turned into a propaganda machine.”

Journalists have also reported threats from political leaders or government officials when reporting content against their interests.

Zohaer Ibna Kalim (Zoha) explained:

"In the current political circumstances, we intentionally avoid covering political debates. Publishing fact-checked news and articles could create some problems for the media and its business from the government or ruling party side. So, sometimes, we impose self-censorship to avoid conflict."

Lack of Fact-Checking Policy: Interviewees revealed that most media organizations do not have a formal, written policy on fact-checking. Journalists noted that such policies could guide them in practicing objective journalism and combating fake news.

Golam Mortuza quoted:

"There are two root causes of the crisis of credibility of journalism: malpractice and falsehood. Journalism is suffering a crisis of credibility for both. A recent report by Rumour Scanner, a Bangladeshi fact-checking platform, found that a single TV channel published 38 fake news stories in just six months. We should enact strong editorial policies to prevent false reporting, discourage reckless competition, and prioritise verification."

The Role of Government and Professional Bodies: Both government institutions and professional organizations for journalists are inactive in promoting fact-checking in media organizations. Although only two journalists received an offer for fact-checking training from the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB), a government organization, professional organizations are failing in their responsibility.

Golam Mortuza pointed:

"The leaders of our professional organisations were busy with politics. They do not have the headache of developing the country's journalism. As they are partisan journalists, professional journalists do not expect anything good from them. I never participated in their programs. I never heard that our colleagues got invitations to participate in their fact-checking training or workshops."

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Barriers to Fact-Checking

This study examined the practices of fake checking in media organizations in Bangladesh, exploring the limitations and challenges that hinder efforts to combat fake news—a growing threat to objective journalism. The interview and survey data indicate that no media organizations in the country use automation or digital systems to verify claims and fake content, largely due to a lack of advanced technology and skilled workers. Journalists typically rely on conventional methods such as contacting news sources, local reporters, political leaders, or government officials. Most journalists have no clear knowledge of automated techniques for fact-checking, which are common practices in developed nations. However, many interviewees acknowledged the importance of advanced technology and skilled digital journalism workers. This aligns with a previous study showing that approximately 70% of university students in journalism believe that advanced technology such as AI is effective in detecting fake news, and 64% of students marked AI as a valuable tool for news automation (Goni & Tabassum, 2020).

The lack of technical facilities and skilled personnel continues to disrupt fact-checking initiatives. Some interviewees noted that their media houses tried to hire fact-checkers but failed to find qualified candidates. As media organizations have no fact-checkers or fact-checking team, they can make their journalists efficient in fact-checking by arranging training, workshops, or seminars. Fatima *et al.* (2023) also found that journalists in Bangladesh need to acquire knowledge in this area. Similarly, Jamil (2020) highlighted low technical literacy among journalists in Pakistan, pointing to broader challenges in developing countries.

To combat disinformation, countries such as the USA, Germany, and Austria have introduced media literacy campaigns (Tulodziecki & Grafe, 2019; Ciampaglia *et al.*, 2015). Major global media outlets, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, have also initiated efforts to make people literate about curricular resources around information credibility, use of evidence, and news production (Bulger & Davison, 2018). These efforts help reduce the spread of fake news or disinformation and strengthen the credibility of fair journalism and democracy (Kaplan, 2020; Borges *et al.*, 2019; Qayyum *et al.*, 2019).

The study also found that most Bangladeshi media houses are not financially independent and, rely on funding from parent companies or commercial advertisements. Allocating resources to integrate fact-checking teams, including hiring skilled manpower and purchasing licensed software and technology tools, is often impossible. As a result, owners or high-up officials in the media do not consider

establishing fact-checking teams as a priority for developing journalism. They just run their media houses as a 'mouthpiece' for their business and political interest.

4.2. Journalists-Fact-Checkers Cooperation

Media organizations in Bangladesh lack both fact-checkers and trained journalists capable of performing fact-checking tasks. This has created a significant gap in their ability to address fake news crises. By contrast, many global media organizations, including almost all major Indian media houses, now operate with separate fact-checking teams (Fatima *et al.*, 2023). The absence of a fact-checking team and other facilities can help spread fake news rapidly across the society (Lowrey, 2017). Consequently, independent fact-checking platforms are increasing globally in response to the rise in digital disinformation. In the era of digital journalism, collaboration between media houses and fact-checking platforms is important. Unfortunately, such partnerships are virtually nonexistent in Bangladesh.

If media organizations and fact-checking platforms work together, the volume of fake news could likely be reduced. In the U.S., independent platforms such as [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org) and PolitiFact have worked closely with local and national news outlets to assist journalists with fact-checking and sharing verified content with media (Amazeen, 2013). While some journalists are aware of fact-checking organizations and their activities, a previous study found that many journalists do not trust their activities (Haque *et al.*, 2020). Although the fact-checking concept originated from journalism, some fact-checkers view their role as distinct from that of journalists (Graves *et al.*, 2016; Shin & Thorson, 2017). Most interviewees acknowledged growing public interest in the work of independent fact-checking organizations, a promising trend for the future of journalism in Bangladesh.

Freedom of Expression Under Pressure: The study also revealed that political pressure and partisan journalism pushed fact-checking efforts back. Many journalists in this study have become disinterested in uncovering the truth due to political pressure. Additionally, restrictive laws, particularly the Digital Security Act of 2018, have limited journalistic freedom. From 2018 to April 2023, 1,295 cases were filed under the Act, with 27% involving journalists (Hasan, 2023). These legal threats discourage journalists from exposing accurate reports and true information that may conflict with the interests of powerful figures.

Moreover, many journalists maintain close relationships with political leaders and top government officials. These politically biased journalists remain silent while exposing the interests of political leaders and government officials. Sometimes, partisan journalism encourages the publishing of fake news that help fulfil its political interests.

A previous study by Haque *et al.* (2020) reinforces this, noting an incident where a fact-checker verified that claims about Bangladesh's prime minister being the second-most honest global leader was false. The fact-checking organization received a warning from a government agency not to publish the report; otherwise, it would face consequences. This pressure suppresses fact-checking and journalistic integrity and undermines the fight against misinformation.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that formal fact-checking activities within Bangladeshi media organizations are significantly limited. The automation system is completely absent to support fact-checking and other journalistic works. Additionally, the shortage of skilled workers and the absence of advanced technologies pose substantial hindrances to fact-checking efforts. Although the study yields some remarkable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged—most notably, the relatively small sample size and brief research time frame. Additionally, participants in both surveys and interviews are both male-dominance due to the low presence of female journalists in the media in Bangladesh, which shows a significant gender imbalance. An expanded research scope and gender equality could make the research findings more generalized. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to understanding the importance of fact-checking and the development of fact-checking efforts in Bangladesh. Moreover, it provides avenue for future studies with broader scope.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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