Prospects and Problems of Constructive Journalism in Bangladesh: A Study on the Northern Region

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Abstract:

This study aims at identifying the scenario of possible applications and barriers for establishing Constructive Journalism (CJ) in Bangladesh with the special reference of northern region. A total number of 215 responders from communication and media arena have participated in the study through online platform. The study found that the idea of constructive journalism is familiar to the majority number of responders (93.95%). It can be more applicable in our country due to the presence of huge socio-economic backwardness and human resource constraints. But lacks of policy, negativity, information lack, media ownership complexity, political instability are the possible obstacles for implementing CJ in our country. So, a strong policy, mass awareness and positive media environment can play a significant role in establishing and strengthening CJ in Bangladesh.

Key Words: Constructive Journalism, applications, barriers, negativity etc.

Introduction:

From the earliest known journalistic product in ancient Rome the ActaDiurna to modern technology-based news publishing, there have been so many addition-subtractions in the theory and practice of journalism. In 21st century the availability of information is the blessing of technology on one hand, the overflow of fake or negative news story is a curse for our mental health on the other. Every time we open a browser/TV/newspaper, tons of news story shows up, some stories are positive but most of the stories are covered by highlighting the negative aspects. Negativity in news story affects the subconscious mind of the viewer.

In Bangladesh recently media have seen the gruesomeness of negative news in Covid-19 period. Many people got scared about the Covid vaccination process just for some rumors and misinformation. Every new technological invention, industrial revolution added a new term in journalism. The term 'Constructive Journalism' is one of them. Constructive journalism is distinguished from watchdog journalism in that journalists focus the public attention on any one problem long enough to stimulate discourse, which would lead to a solution (Rosen, 1996, 1999). Hickman (2011) succinctly describes constructive journalism as going beyond exposing corruption and other vices by channeling the people's outrage into something constructive. According to Seligman (2011), constructive journalism is guided by five key themes, namely positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meanings, and accomplishment. Positive emotion requires the journalist to reveal the people who have solved the problem or conflict. Constructive news story provides a more accurate portrayal of the world. Bangladeshi Media is very flexible to adapt new form of journalism; we have seen the successful implementation of Citizen Journalism, Online Journalism previously. So, there is a possibility of successful implementation of Constructive Journalism in Bangladesh too.

The first part of this article will elaborate on the Definition, history, concept and elements of Constructive Journalism. It is a very new concept for Bangladeshi Journalism so in second part

the possible problems and prospect of constructive journalism in Bangladesh will be discussed through a survey analysis.

Conceptual Framework

Definition

Constructive journalism is a response to increasing tabloidization, sensationalism and negativity bias of the news media today. It is an approach that aims to provide audiences with a fair, accurate and contextualized picture of the world, without overemphasizing the negative and what is going wrong. Constructive elements in journalism can be applied to several stages of the news process including story generation, information gathering, and production (McIntyre and Gyldensted, 2017). "A form of journalism that is public-oriented, solution-oriented, future-oriented and action-oriented, trying to avoid a bias towards negativity in the news" (Hermans & Drok, 2018, p. 679)"An 'alternative', more inclusive and accountable practice of journalism that actively looks for positive values and emotions when gathering and telling the news, and that points out possible solutions, in doing so bringing affirmative, inspiring and often untold narratives" (Mast et al., 2019, p. 494).

Constructive journalism is a solutions-focused approach to news in which reporters don't just concentrate on problems but also examine solutions. Rather than merely investigating what's going wrong in the world, they explore what's going right — and why. Constructive journalism isn't about ignoring negative news or covering fluffy, feel-good stories. It's rigorous reporting about responses to social problems showing what people are doing to tackle important issues.

History of Constructive Journalism:

Constructive journalism breaks away from the traditional premise that news mirrors the world. The traditional view assumes that there is a recognizable reality beyond us that can be reflected by objective reporting; a journalist's function is to act as a detached observer and as a watchdog. In this model, journalism's main purpose is to disseminate information and to control power and hold institutions accountable. In practice, there is a distance between journalists and their public. Journalists decide for citizens what is important to know. Constructive journalism goes beyond these traditional functions and includes a more facilitating and mobilizing function (cf. Bro, 2008; Hanitzsch and Vos, 2016; Weaver and Willnat, 2012).

McIntyre and Gyldensted (2017) coined the term constructive journalism 'as an emerging form of journalism that involves applying positive psychology techniques to news processes and production in an effort to create productive, accurate and engaging coverage, while holding true to journalism's core functions'. But Wasserman (2014) argues that constructive journalism concept is related to the long history and associates it with development journalism. In the very newspaper where UlrikHaagerup published his original call for a constructive journalism, action journalism had a century earlier been described as the very type of journalism on which the future of newspapers would depend (Cavling, 1909). These were words that resembled those of William Randolph Hearst's own newspaper, The Journal, which had gone so far as to claim 'the journalism of action' represented 'the final stage in the evolution of the modern journalism' (Campbell, 2001: 180).

Elements of Constructive Journalism:

Constructive journalism is an umbrella term covering several applications intended not to replace traditional journalistic news practices but rather to supplement them. The intent is to have a more

complete, balanced and engaging coverage of world affairs: covering both setbacks and progress (Gyldensted, 2011). In 2016, the Journalism Department at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands set out to make a classification of constructive journalistic elements. By combining the university's existing teaching methods within constructive journalism and applications of constructive journalism found within the profession, Windesheim developed six constructive elements:

- 1. Solutions: When covering problems, also add a solution-oriented framing of news.
- 2. Future Orientation: Adding a 'What Now?' question to the traditional journalistic questions (who, what, where, why, how). Adding a future orientation allows for a possible productive perspective about the future and about our ability to get there.
- 3. Inclusiveness and diversity: Include more voices and perspectives in the news. Work against polarizing dynamics created by news media.
- 4. Empower people: Ask other questions and include variety to empower so-called victims and experts. Questions should inquire about possible resources, collaborations, common ground and solutions.
- 5. The Rosling: Explain the news and give context. Use data to create clear infographics, explaining the news. The intent is to go from covering incidents to covering contexts.
- 6. Co-creation: Engage and empower the public. Co-create the journalistic content with citizens.

Conceptual framework: Cover much news Lack of policies Cover less news **Excessive negative news** News in first page **Inadequacy of information** News in last page **Private ownership** News in mid pages **Unhealthy competition** News in print media **Political instability** News in electronic media Socio-economic instability News in online media **Obstacle of Frequency of** constructive constructive news **Journalism Definition Constructive Journalism Development** Element **Understanding** of constructive **Journalism Application** of constructive **Policy formulation** Concept **Journalism Spread concept** Degree of application Discourage negative news **Prevent river erosion** Control private ownership **Prevent desertification Political stability** Deal with climate change Socio-economic stability Reduce natural risk

Here, the researcher identified 5 major aspects on prospects and problems of constructive journalism in Bangladesh: Understanding on constructive journalism, frequency of constructive news in media, obstacles of constructive journalism, development of constructive journalism and possible applications of its.

Understanding on constructive journalism includes concept, definition and elements that help to identify constructive news in media and depict clear picture of its.

Frequency of constructive journalism includes degree of news coverage; in which media constructive news get more coverage, etc.

Obstacles of constructive journalism identify some problems related to the practices of its. Here, it includes lack of policies, coverage of excessive negative news, inadequacy of information, media's private ownership, unhealthy competition, political instability, media's socio-economic instability.

Factors associated with development perspective on constructive journalism includes formulation of proper policies, spread the concept of constructive journalism, discourage on covering negative news, control private ownership of media, political stability, develop media's socio-economic stability.

Another aspect of constructive journalism in Bangladesh is possible applications or spaces where journalists practice this form of journalism. Degree of application, prevent river erosion and desertification, deal with climate change and its impact as well as reduce natural risks.

Literature Review

Constructive journalism provides alternatives to traditional negative stereotypes through holistic coverage of people. It contributes to effective health communication to identify, contain and cure diseases. It is an empowering approach for focusing on possible solutions (Zhang & Matingwina, 2016). It has become positive image build up tool considering the media contribution for societal development. It also encourages avoiding negative psychology of news consumption among media-oriented people through civic engagement (Yanqiu & Matingwina, 2016). It has extended the boundaries of news production-publication pattern of mass media through positive psychology. It comprises action-oriented model for news flow management focusing social development perspective (MacIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017). It focuses on social responsibility theory of the press. It encourages active participation in enhancing societal well-being (MaIntyre & Sobel, 2017). Information and communication technology, socio-cultural factor and economic development play vital role in supplying information among community people. Constructive journalism has taken place. It's the update version of civic journalism including public solution, future and action oriented. It avoids biasing towards negativity (Hermans & Drok, 2018). Constructive journalism indicates meta-journalistic discourse which includes normative roles of journalism. It focuses on solving vexing social issues and advocates for positive social change. Mainly it seeks to the betterment of the society (Aitamurto & Varma, 2018). Constructive journalism is the substitute of service journalism. It provides social role for the journalists. It has become integral part of present media scenario due to commercialized and globalized media in the world (From & Nørgaard, 2018). Constructive journalism is the new hopes and positive aspirations for avoiding negativity and biasness in news pattern. It has started in ensuring infotainment, emotional attachment, loyalty to media house-micro level impact and progress to society-macro level impact (Meier, 2018). Positive psychology is the heart of constructive

journalism which implicates from the collection of information to publication of news. It focuses on true journalism as core functions with alternatives techniques (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018). Constructive journalism focuses on behavioral sciences, namely positive psychology. It indicates solution orientation, future orientation, depolarizing techniques and seeking cooperation with the public as constructive elements for the development of society. Thus, it has started making tremendous changein the public aspects of news judgments (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2018). Constructive journalism is not a new term, it is historically evaluated. It's mainly composed of action journalism and public journalism. It ensures the classical role of journalism with updated psychology for the positive audience dimension (Bro, 2018). Constructive journalism works on the constructive approaches for the positive news philosophy and journalistic practice. It has become a new phenomenon for the practitioner with solution-oriented psychology (Mast, Coesemans & Temmerman, 2018). It plays significant role in regaining audience trust and engagement, fighting terrorism, serving the public interest and reviving the economy of the mainstream media. But political condition, private ownership and negative tendency are the main obstacles for the approach (Allam, 2019). Audience acceptance plays crucial role in media industry. They avoid news due to lack of interest on current events or negative perception of exposure and absence of basic principles of journalism profession. Constructive journalism aims at producing positive social impact on society through social responsibility of media (Serrano-Puche, 2020).

It is evident from reviewing the above studies there have been many studies conducted in developed countries like while some studies found in African countries. It is also noticeable that most of the studies have covered on constructive journalism activity. In addition to this, there is no study that investigates the status and pattern of constructive journalism at Rangpur in Bangladesh perspective. This study is an attempt to fill up this gap.

Study Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the possible applications and obstacles of constructive journalism in Rangpur Division's urban and rural areas. Along with this purpose, the study will be designed to elicit the specific goals as follows:

- 1. To investigate the pattern of understanding on constructive journalism among media learners,
- 2. To depict the content of the journalism with the frequency,
- 3. To explore the factors associated with development perspective among media members on various issues.

Methodology

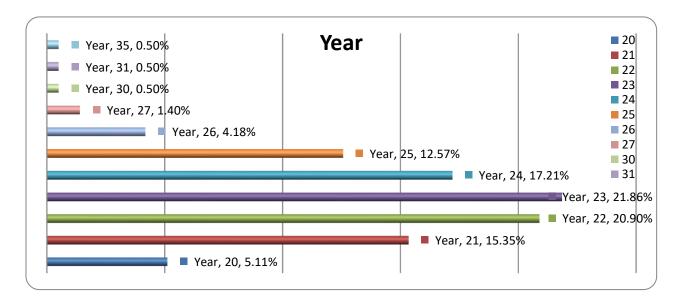
In an attempt to achieve the desired research outcomes, the present study used a quantitative research approach designed with an online-based survey. It attempted to address the descriptive analysis by addressing the questions concerning the different aspects of constructive journalism on various issues. The study population was the journalists, students and teachers of media education in Rangpur Division during the study period. For data collection, this study was carried out the Rangpur City corporation area. Researchers purposively selected these responders. In purposive sample, respondents, subjects, or elements are chosen for specified characteristics or attributes, and those who do not meet these criteria are eliminated from the sample. Purposive sampling involves researchers selecting respondents who use a particular media and asking them specific questions about it (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Data were collected from March 11 to 25, 2022. Study data were collected using a pretested, structured, and

self-administered questionnaire. The questions used in the questionnaire were prepared based on reviewing related literature. Afterwards, a brainstorming session was conducted to finalize the questionnaire. The questionnaire was modified, and few questions had been excluded from the questionnaire being ready for pre-testing through this series of processes. After pre-testing and revising the questionnaire, researchers finalized the questionnaire and provided it for collecting data. Respondents were requested to carefully read and fill up the questionnaire. To conduct this study, closed-ended questions were used in the questionnaire for the convenience of the respondents. The questionnaire was consisting of two parts. Before carried out the study informed consent was taken from respondents and authorities. The participant of the respondents was voluntary. This study is descriptive-analytical. Quantitative data were collected by using a questionnaire survey, interviews and data are analyzed by Microsoft (MS) Excel program. The total sample for the study was 215. The researchers were conscious to avoid asking questions that might shame them and make an embarrassing situation for the respondents.

Data Analysis:

Respondents' age

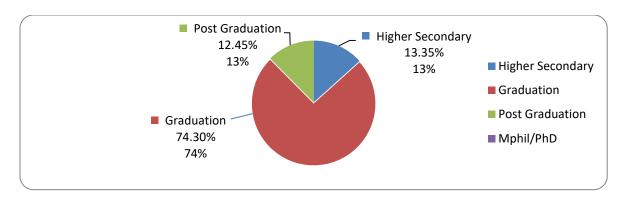
To know the respondents' age, researchers set up an open-ended question where the result shows that most of the participants belong from 20 to 26 year old.



The above figure presents that 97.1% respondents belong 20 to 26 years where 21.86% belong 24 years, 20.90% respondents belong 23, 17.21% respondents belong 17.21%. Rests of the respondents belong 27 to 35 year old and their participation was very limited.

Respondents' educational qualification

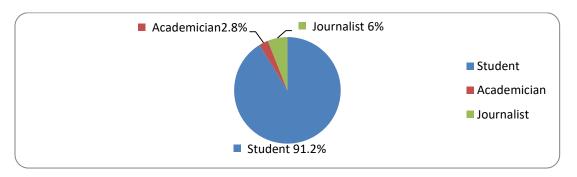
To know the respondent's educational qualification, researcher set up a question classifying into four categories- Higher secondary, Graduation, Post-graduation, MPhil/PhD.



The figure shows that 74.3% respondents' educational qualification is graduation level where higher secondary and post graduation participation are 13.35% and 12.45% respectively.

Respondents' occupation

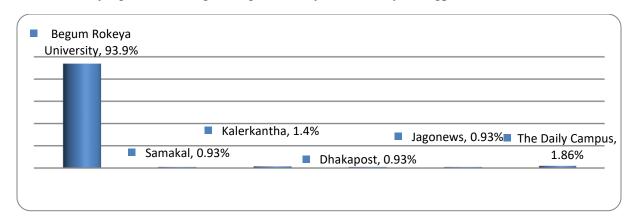
To identify respondent's occupation in this study, the researcher found that majority of the participants were students (91.2%) as the responders are involved with communication and media education.



91.2% respondents are student where the participation of academic and journalists are 2.8% and 6% respectively.

Respondents' institution

To know the respondents working and studying institution, the study found that 93.95 respondents are studying and working at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur.

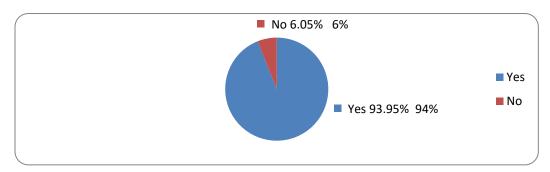


Rests of participants are working in the Daily Samakal, the Daily Kalerkantha, Dhakapost, Jagonews and the Daily Campus.

Understanding onconstructive journalism

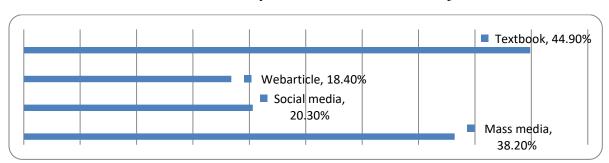
To investigate the pattern of understanding on constructive journalism among media learners, the researcher asked the participants whether they know about constructive journalism, from which medium they know about constructive journalism, its definition and the elements of constructive journalism to depict the original scenario of its.

Concept of constructive journalism



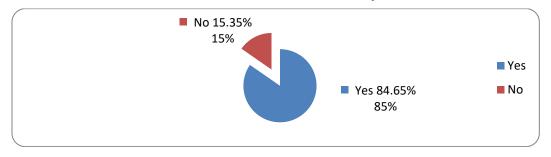
Among 215 participants, 93.95 told that they have the understanding on the concept on constructive journalism where 6.05 have no idea about on this.

From which medium you know about constructive journalism

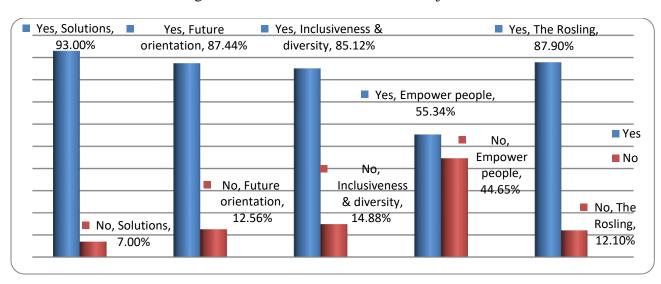


Among the participants, 44.90% respondents stated that they know about constructive journalism from textbook, 38.20% stated that they now from mass media. 20.30% and 18.40% stated that they know from social media and web article respectively.

Definition of constructive journalism



To identify the status on constructive journalism, the researcher provided a definition of constructive journalism and asked whether they know about it. 84.65% said they know about the general definition of its.



Knowledge about the elements of constructive journalism

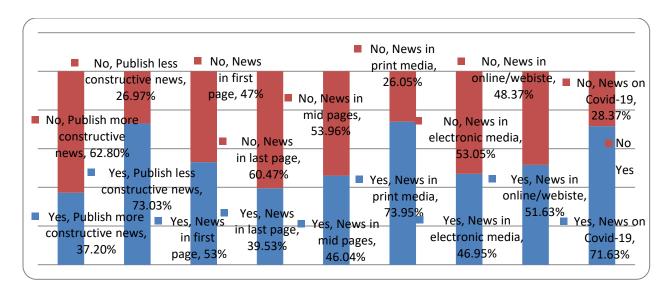
To investigate the genuine picture of constructive journalism, the researcher provided some elements of its where 93% stated that they know about solution is an element of constructive journalism. Future orientation (87.44%), inclusiveness and diversity (85.12%), empower people (55.34%) and the Rosling (87.90%) got positive responses respectively.

Frequency of the constructive news in media

To depict the content of the journalism with the frequency, the researcher asked the participants some specific questions which determine the content frequency of constructive news in media. That means how media cover or publish constructive news.

About 37.20 participants stated that media publish more constructive news. To give clear concept, a same question has been asked where 73.03% stated that media publish or cover less constructive news. 53% said media publish constructive news on first page, 39.53% stated media publish on the last page and constructive news got coverage on mid pages (46.04%). To know the coverage of constructive news, 73.95% stated that print media give more

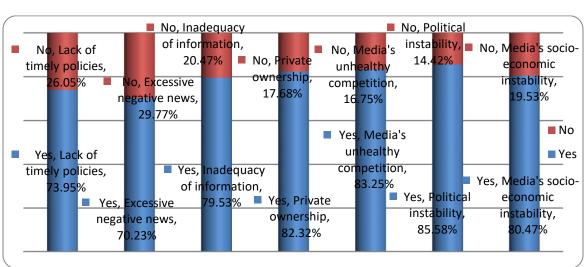
Content frequency of the constructive journalism in media



coverage, 46.95% stated that electronic media give more coverage and 51.63% believe that constructive news got more coverage on online portal/news websites. During the ongoing pandemic, 71.63% respondents believe that media give more coverage on covid-19 related news.

Possible obstacles of constructive journalism

To identify the possible obstacles of constructive journalism in Rangpur Division's urban and rural areas, the researcher set up close-ended questions of possible obstacles of it.



Obstacles of constructive journalism

The figure shows that 73.95% respondents believe lack of timely policies on constructive journalism is one of the major obstacles of its. 70.23% participants believe publishing excessive negative news on media is another obstacle of constructive journalism practices in Bangladesh.

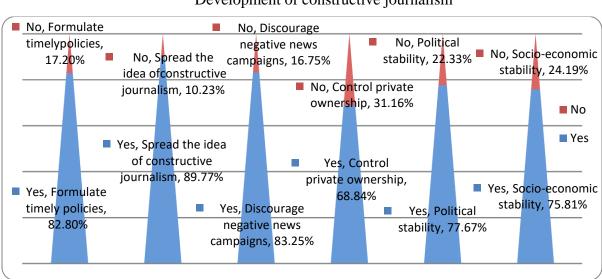
79.53% stated that inadequacy of information is the root cause of constructive journalism practices. Media's private ownership (82.32%) is another obstacle of constructive journalism. 83.25% believe media's unhealthy competition are responsible for not developing this field.

85.58% believe political instability is the root obstacles of constructive journalism practices. Media's socio-economic status can be also possible obstacle and 80.47% stated that it can be an obstacle.

Factors associated with the development of constructive journalism

To explore the factors associated with development perspective among media members on various issues for practicing healthy constructive journalism, the study found that formulation of timely policies (82.8%) can develop the constructive journalism field in Bangladesh.

89.77% respondents believe that spreading the idea of constructive journalism can be a way to develop its field in Bangladesh.



Development of constructive journalism

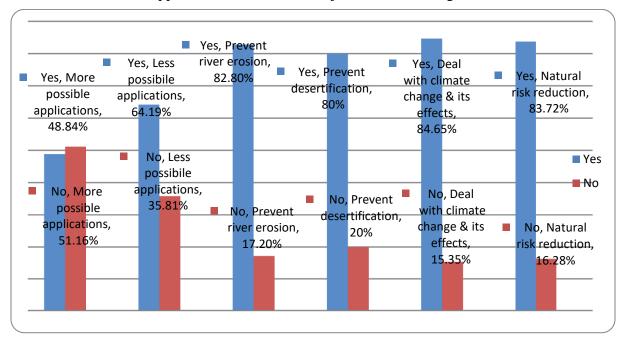
It is noted that 83.25% respondents believe discouraging negative news publishes might develop this sector. 68.84% participants believe that control of private ownership might be helpful for the development of constructive journalism in Bangladesh.

77.67% respondents believe political stability can create good opportunity for constructive journalism. Media's socio-economic status (75.81%) is one of the factors associated with development perspective of constructive journalism in Bangladesh.

Possible applications of constructive journalism in Bangladesh

To investigate the possible applications of constructive journalism in Rangpur Division's urban and rural areas, the researcher asked some specific questions related to the applications of constructive journalism in Rangpur, Bangladesh.

Applications of constructive journalism in Bangladesh



Among participants, 48.84% respondents believe that Bangladesh have more possible application areas. In another question of same picture, 64.19% believe Bangladesh have less scope of constructive journalism. To depict the field of applications researcher set some problems related to constructive journalism, the figure shows that 82.80% believe constructive journalism can help preventing river erosion, 80% believe help preventing desertification, 84.65% stated that constructive journalism can deal with climate change and its impact and 83.72% believe that it helps to reduce natural risks.

Discussion and conclusion

The study presents that 97.1% respondents belong 20 to 26 years.Rests of the respondents belong 27 to 35 year and they were academician and professional journalists. 74.3% respondents' educational qualification is graduation level, and they were journalism students. This study also reveals that 91.2% were student here. As only a university in northern part of Bangladesh provides journalism education institutionally, so most of the respondents (93.95%) were from Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur. Rests of them were from various mass media representatives in Rangpur

Investigating the pattern of understanding on constructive journalism among media learners, 93.95% told that they have the concept on constructive journalism. Participants have heard about the constructive journalism from textbook (44.90%), mass media (38.20%), social media (20.30%) and web article (18.40). Identifying the clear concept on constructive journalism 84.65% respondents said they know the definition of its provided by the researcher. This study also presents that 93% respondents know about solution as an element of constructive journalism. Future orientation, inclusiveness and diversity, empower people and the Rosling got 87.44%, 85.12%, 55.34% and 87.90% positive responses respectively from the participants. The Journalism Department at Windesheim University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands set out to make a classification of constructive journalistic elements in 2016 where they identified six

elements included the above five. It is an empowering approach for focusing on possible solutions (Zhang & Matingwina, 2016).

The current study found that 37.20% participants stated media publish more constructive news. To give clear concept, a same question has been asked where 73.03% stated that media publish or cover less constructive news. 53% said media publish constructive news on first page, 39.53% stated media publish on the last page and constructive news got coverage on mid pages (46.04%). The study also revealed that 73.95% stated print media give more coverage, 46.95% stated that electronic media give more coverage and 51.63% believe that constructive news get more coverage on online portal/news websites. During the ongoing pandemic, 71.63% respondents believe that media give more coverage on covid-19 related news.

73.95% respondents believe lack of timely policies on constructive journalism is one of the major obstacles of its. 70.23% participants believe publishing excessive negative news on media is another obstacle of constructive journalism practices in Bangladesh. 79.53% stated that inadequacy of information is the root cause of constructive journalism practices. Media's private ownership (82.32%) is another obstacle of constructive journalism. 83.25% believe media's unhealthy competition are responsible for not developing this field. 85.58% believe political instability is the root obstacles of constructive journalism practices. Media's socio-economic status can be also possible obstacle and 80.47% stated that it can be an obstacle. In this context Allan (2019) identified political condition; private ownership and negative tendency are the main obstacles for the approach.

The study found that formulation of timely policies (82.8%) can develop the constructive journalism field in Bangladesh. 89.77% respondents believe that spreading the idea of constructive journalism can be a way to develop its field in Bangladesh. It is noted that 83.25% respondents believe discouraging negative news publishes might develop this sector. 68.84% participants believe that control of private ownership might helpful for the development of constructive journalism in Bangladesh. 77.67% respondents believe political stability can create good opportunity for constructive journalism. Media's socio-economic status (75.81%) is one of the factors associated with development perspective of constructive journalism in Bangladesh. Another study found that it encourages avoiding negative psychology of news consumption among media oriented people through civic engagement (Yanqiu&Matingwina, 2016).

This study depicts that 48.84% respondents believe that Bangladesh have more possible application areas. In another question of same picture, 64.19% believe Bangladesh have less scope of constructive journalism. To depict the field of applications researcher set some problems related to constructive journalism, the figure shows that 82.80% believe constructive journalism can help preventing river erosion, 80% believe help preventing desertification, 84.65% stated that constructive journalism can deal with climate change and its impact and 83.72% believe that it helps to reduce natural risks.

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