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Observing Online News Portals Activities and Responsibilities during Covid-19

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Observing Online News Portals Activities and Responsibilities during Covid-19

Nadia Nahrin Rahman [α] & Monira Begum [σ]

Abstract- This study observes the significant roles and responsibilities of online news portals during this Covid-19 outbreak in Bangladesh. The findings and result analysis of this study manifest the tasks along with the activities which online news portals pose specifically in a pandemic situation are on the satisfactory level. Through the use of two theories and a quantitative approach this study attempted to distinguish how people think of these portals as a potential media in creating awareness. People seem to prefer online news portals more than other media for getting covid-19 related news which lead them to believe and depend on what these portals offer actually. On the other hand, sometimes these online news portals also teem with some fear regarding moral panic, misinformation and rumors, even sometimes news with full of confusing, repetitive with inadequate reporting languages. Despite having all confusion, respondents of this study think online news portals have played a responsible role to keep the mass people updated during the Covid-19 situation especially in that situation where the whole world was facing an emergency lock down.

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I. Introduction

After the outbreak of corona virus from China to worldwide, it has turned into a pandemic declared by the WHO in March, 2020. Therefore, the earth went to lockdown several times along with some prevention methods like quarantine, isolation and social distancing to stop the spread of this disease. But the realities in some developing countries, especially in Bangladesh people are facing the worse situation now. Self quarantine, isolation and social distancing have brought threat for people both mentally and physically. Particularly the working class and poverty stricken people had to break the instructions out of their will only to survive. Apart from self-quarantine or isolation, misinformation in mass media also can lead to adverse psychological effects among people such as anxiety, rage or sadness.

From the beginning, though it took time to spread the disease everywhere in Bangladesh, the country had faced awful situations afterward without authorities having strict preparation. Since people came to know about the virus sooner they started to share information and their own opinions about Covid-19. It was also significant that people were sharing numerous misinformation thus spreading rumors about the virus. Social media significantly became one of the platforms for these mass people to share misinformation at a full tilt. Consequently, it created a moral panic among the mass people which mislead them towards confusion. Regarding the circumstances it is primarily required to have the authentic information from the reliable sources[1]. In this case, the mass media have made themselves trustworthy as critical sources of public perceptions of risk. The more people use social media, read online news on Covid-19 the more these numbers of usages increase rapidly. This research study deals with the online news portals' roles and activities during the time of pandemic. As corona pandemic has introduced a severe change that took place in the news-media industry, all the users of media have found that the traditional print oriented newspapers had to make a pause on their publication. Additionally, most of these print media have expanded their online platform for the audience more than before. It also added a beneficiary aspect to compensate to their own-selves. Most of the print oriented newspapers have broadened their existence more boldly by utilizing the online space than before. Moreover, like online news portals, these newspapers also took an attempt to create enormous engagement with the audience through this digitalized online sphere.

Social media is highly used by people for acquiring and spreading the news as well on marketing, sports, technological advancement, healthcare, education, tourism and significantly activities for generating social awareness. On the other hand it was evident that misleading information, cyber-bullying and hacking during the corona pandemic were expanding[2]. Social media activists have been seen sharing the information on numerous online news portals more than any previous situational instructions or announcements given by govt. Sooner people started to believe and share this particular news through social media actively. This study tries to understand people's perception

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[1] Hua, J., Shaw, R.: *Corona Virus (COVID-19) "Infodemic" and Emerging Issues through a Data Lens: The Case of China.* International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 2020, 17(7), p. 10.

[2] MALLA, N.: *Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Networking Sites*. Honest Pros and Cons 12, 2020 Available at: https://honestproscons.com/social-networking-advantages-and-disadvantages/.

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regarding the roles and responsibilities of online news portals in creating public awareness during Covid-19.

a) Aim and Objectives

The objectives of this article are to develop the understanding and perception of people about the roles and responsibilities of online news portals during the Covid-19. Furthermore, this study follows specific objectives. These are,

1. To examine the news portals maintaining their prime responsibilities in creating consciousness through authentic facts and knowledge among people and for people; And
2. To the extent if these news portals spread misinformation, moral anxiety among their audience or not.

b) Research questions

To find out the salient responsibilities and activities as well of online news portals in creating awareness during this pandemic, there are some basic questions in this study. These are as follows:

1. What specific roles have been maintained by the online news portals to increase awareness among people?
2. Have these online news portals created any panic/ 'Moral-panic', misinformation and confusion?

II. Literature Review

Apparently some recent studies have observed the contents of online news portals to analyze their framings to spread panic and semantic emotions among mass audience. A research conducted by Lusiana & Husein (2021) discussed the dominant semantic emotion in the online news about COVID-19 in their study. The study has analyzed total 28 sentences from CNN News and Jakarta Post. Both the researchers have found diverse sentences used in news that were rich in semantic emotions. Among them 43% are about fear, 18% of sadness and 14% of joy. Other 25% news had no basic emotions because it only portrayed information on an event basis. So, it is clear that the dominant emotions that are used in COVID-19 online news are mostly fear related emotions[3]. Similarly Arafat et al. (2020) have evaluated online news portals regarding panic buying during this COVID-19 pandemic. They analyzed different headlines including positive and negative ones. They also scrutinized reports on the country basis like high-income vs. low-income countries. Almost half of the reports were on the prominent actions taken by government to handle the situation. Furthermore, other reports have discussed the panic among people while buying necessary goods. It has been also observed that people tend to buy things as they believe opinions from others like PB (Panic Buying), the psychology of PB. Here rumors and suggestions on remedial measures also play a major role to create the panic to purchase things in rush. Researchers have also revealed that previous events of PB were mostly similar to the recent COVID-19 pandemic (95%). Though only a few events are also related to different events like disasters, festivals, fuel price hike and even war. Most importantly Researchers have found a major result that portals have a propensity to cover news on PB that is mostly imbalanced. It has been also analyzed that a negative tone was followed in most of the reports. Though '*highlighting panic buying in the title, mentioning the cause of PB, and illustrating the report with photographs of people involved in PB were some of the commonly observed negative and undesirable reporting characteristics. In contrast, positive aspects of reporting such as mentioning the impact of PB, discussing corrective governmental steps, and educative aspects such as expert*'[4].

Chakraborty & Bose (2020) took the challenge of identifying the general sentiment in online news articles that have been published globally during this pandemic. Most of the news articles were published from un-supervised authority that had a tendency to transfer the learning-based approaches. After finding the results, in one point, the researchers depicted negativity as a pre-dominant sentiment in global news. The specific global news covered some political and different social factors that urged the negativity online quite strongly, which could lead to long-standing impact on mental health of the news audience[5].

Media as an important mechanism of accountability in a country have the competency to prevent the spread of diseases. It can provide information to mass people from different communities. Mass media being a vital part of communication hold the major responsibilities to initiate the government policies on health, environment or pandemic to enlighten people through education and information. One of the prominent roles that mass media can play is promoting awareness campaign for healthcare and safety during any pandemic situation. Different contents can be covered regarding these situations that can reach to the targeted audience rapidly.

A study was found by Kiragu and Omotara (1992) in Nigeria. The purpose of that particular study was to analyze the media impact on the targeted audience to promote family planing procedures. The

[3] Lusiana, D., Husein, R.: *Semantic Emotion in COVID-19 Online News*. Annual International Conference on Language and Literature (AICLL), KnE Social Sciences, 2021, p. 222.

[4] Arafat, S. M. Y. et al.: *Media portrayal of panic buying: A content analysis of online news portals*. GLOBAL PSYCHIATRY, 2020, p. 252.

[5] Chakraborty, A.., Bose, S.: *Around the world in 60 days: an exploratory study of impact of COVID-19 on online global news sentiment.* Journal of Computational Social Science, 2020, p. 396.

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study revealed different media contents produced by radio, Television, print material along with the advocacy campaigns. The primary goals were to reach the Nigerian mass people in order to bring a positive outlook among them for applying different family planning approaches. This case is also relatable to Avian Influenza disease in the same country, Nigeria. Nigerian press played an indespensable role to cover the outbreak of that disease and also encouraged mass audience to follow necessary safety preventions. Not only that, the international pertinent agencies including the United Nations and World Health Organization also exercised the importance of mass media communication in their advocacy levels to raise awareness specifically to combat the menacious diseases like deadly malaria, polio, other epidemic viruses including Ebola, SARS. Nigerian media have recorded success in encouraging people and preventing the risk during the deadly Ebola virus. This killer disease had killed more than seven thousand and three hundred people mostly in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and Democratic of Congo according to the media reports in 2014. As it was turning into an epidemic situation the government and advocacy agencies along with the media started taking obligatory steps. Finally their approaches were edible in bringing out success[6].

Media do not only report the incidents but they also use diverse frames. Through framing media change and edit terms, the real meaning, transform or even emphasize any particular news by adding picture with specific captions. Catchy headlines with colorful fonts are also prevalent in covering news. The same approach is also applicable during any pandemic or epidemic. In the study conducted by Mark Davis on epidemic and media influence, he analyzed that media were intensifying the 21st century pandemics like influenza, SARS and Avian flu[7]. This approach can be addressed as 'Narrative Matrix' where media framings and public interest on any specific incident including pandemic start to interplay[8]. The same perspective is also applicable to the present global pandemic of Covid-19. As per the narrative matrix Covid-19 has been creating a threat among people who want to know the updates around the globe rapidly. Media pick the intention and utilize its own framing methods where terminologies, words vary in providing the update to the audience. Media tend to do this activity frequently. Thus the public interest and covering news in a certain way continue. But the basic fact is the media providing information to encourage people for following safety have not been that proper during this Covid-19. It has also been analyzed in an individual study that along with the framing method media also create and tag different identities.

In the study conducted in Central Africa during the Ebola virus, the researchers found that Congolese newspapers had created several identities. Identities like victim, offender or someone who is responsible for the virus-outbreak directly. Many reports have addressed that local government officials in Congo were responsible directly for not taking prevention in time. On the other hand doctors and other health professionals were shown as 'Heroes' as they were able to prevent the outbreak later. The victim identity was generally given to those living in the remote villages having no profound consciousness. Some of these were described as 'Bushmeat Eaters', 'Poor People'[9].

Along with the positive aspects, the media also had played negative approaches during these pandemics. During the Ebola virus outbreak Liberian newspaper Cyprien (2014) referred the metaphorical term 'Civil War' which highly brought negative impact in that EVD affected country. The cost of necessary daily utensils was raising high and people were rushing to gather their eatable products which were an effect of that rhetorical phrase civil war. Even an armed conflict took place in that EVD outbreak situation[10]. The same situation was seen also during the Covid-19 outbreak while people were rushing in terror to buy their daily utensils and medicines. According to McRobbie & Thornton (1995) media also can create 'Moral Panic' during any outbreak or emergency situation. What is moral panic? Well, the concept indicates a prime mover to emotional involvement of mass audience approached by media framing, terms, identities. Emanating both from sociology and mass media ground this concept sometimes plays as a threat agent. But the Congolese media used this conception positively for audience in mobilizing against the Ebola virus. And that step was taken in a proper time that the second wave of outbreak could not turn into a massive phase[11].

[6] Santas, T.: *An Appraisal of Mass Media Awareness Campaign in Curbing the Spread of Ebola Virus Disease Among Residents of Minna, Nigeria*. Review of Coiiiiiiiinictilhii and Media Studies, 2015, p. 83.

[7] BRIGGS, C., NICHTER, M.: *Biocommunicability and the biopolitics of pandemic threats*.: Medical Anthropology, 2009, cited in Davis, M.: "*Is it Going to be Real?*" *Narrative and Media on a Pandemic.* Qualitative Social Research, 2017, p. 4.

[8] Davis, M.: "*Is it Going to be Real?*" *Narrative and Media on a Pandemic.* Qualitative Social Research, 2017, p. 4.

[9] Tshiswaka, D. et al.: *A Qualitative Analysis of Newspaper Response to the Ebola Outbreak in Central Africa.* Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, 2017, p. 230.

[10] Tshiswaka, D. et al.: *A Qualitative Analysis of Newspaper Response to the Ebola Outbreak in Central Africa.* Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, 2017, p. 229.

[11] Tshiswaka, D. et al.: *A Qualitative Analysis of Newspaper Response to the Ebola Outbreak in Central Africa.* Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies, 2017, p. 233.

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III. Theoretical Framework

This article is followed by two theories, Uses and Gratification and Social Responsibility Theory.

Uses and Gratification Theory: This theory narrates why people select a specific medium depending on their demographic and monographic backgrounds. Media do not only provide information to their audience but also it is the media that become the source of entertainment, relaxation or even education. Depending on these needs this theory depicts why audience select a specific media and remarkably if the media can serve their needs[12]. During this lock down of Covid-19 the usage of social media in Bangladesh has increased by 61 percent, though Bangladesh has been already ranked as the fifth-largest country in Asia for using the Internet. The reasons for using the Internet and social media by this large number of population during this pandemic can be analyzed with this U&G theory. Along with the social media, mass people have increased their seeking information from different online news portals too. Newspapers or any broadcast media have perceived their online news portals to reach to the audience and to keep them updated with any kind of information. But sometimes this continuous flow of information or even some misleading news created a 'Moral Panic' or an 'Infodemic' among the audience[13]. Sometimes it had become hard to differentiate in between the authentic information and rumor or even any misleading news. When it comes to the information seeking behavior from online news portals, it seems that this number has been escalated than previous periods. These online news portals along with the other media have been trying to provide information to their audience to keep them aware and conscious.

Social Responsibility Theory: Lying between authoritarian and libertarian theories this communication theory is a brain child of Hutchins Commission. Here press will face no censorship except liberty of expressing truth but at the same time media should be accountable to people. The private ownership of media will be emphasized on covering the interpretative reports rather than the common objective ones. Because being liable to mass audience it is one the most prominent responsibilities of media to represent facts and the consequences so that targeted audience can be enlarged from broader perspective[14]. The unfolding developments or any event of society are needed to elucidate to the members of this society. Media must ensure their responsibilities as people follow and rely on this watchdog.

Like previous pandemics during this breakthrough of Covid-19 people followed and depended on mass media for any information. The social media based news portals have taken a prime place in the digitized period and have been providing all the information faster than any other medium. As people have been maintaining social distance and being locked into their houses the rate of checking these online news sites has been increased in this pandemic. Yes, the questions of trustworthiness and accountability have also raised with the different rumors in these news sites. But this has been acknowledged that mass people checked these online news sites for updates than any previous period. A report published from The New York Times has shown usage of different apps including Zoom, Microsoft Team, online class platforms, video games, and video chat platforms increased highly. Among these Internet based platforms online news sites are not lagging behind by their targeted audience. Large media organizations including Foxnews.com, NYTimes, Washington Post or CNBC.com all obtained more audience than before[15]. Another report published from Statista website showed that more than 67% news coverage are taking place through online platforms[16]. But the most salient question still appears, could these news sites provide accurate information by making people enough aware? In the study of Ebola Virus (Santas, 2015) outbreak in Nigeria it is shown that majority of the people were misinformed about the curing the disease. They were informed to drink bitter kola and eat more salt to get cure from the disease. Even people without seeking any medical advice bought this kola and suffered later. Some even lost their lives. In our country same kind of misinformation about curing Covid-19 by eating garlic or different herbs speeded among people. In this study, how accountably online news portals have played their role and responsibilities during covid-19 has been observed through the people's perception.

[12] Karimi, L. et al..: *Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory to Compare Higher Education Students' Motivation for Using Social Networking Sites: Experiences from Iran, Malaysia, United Kingdom, and South Africa.* CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY, 2014, p. 55.

[13] Panday, P. K., Kaioum, M. M. A.: *Infodemic amid pandemic: A Bangladesh perspective.* The Business Standard. Bangladesh, July 08, 2020. Available at: https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/infodemic-amid-pandemic-bangladesh-perspective-105976.

[14] Bernarte, R. P.: *HISTORY OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THEORY IN THE PHILIPPINE MASS MEDIA*. University of the Philippines, 2000.

[15] Koeze, E., Popper, N.: *The Virus Changed the Way We Internet.* The New York Times. New York, April 7, 2020.
Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/04/07/technology/coronavirus-internet-use.html.

[16] *In-home media consumption due to the coronavirus outbreak among internet users worldwide as of March 2020, by country*. Statista, March, 2020.
Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1106498/home-media-consumption-coronavirus-worldwide-by-country/.

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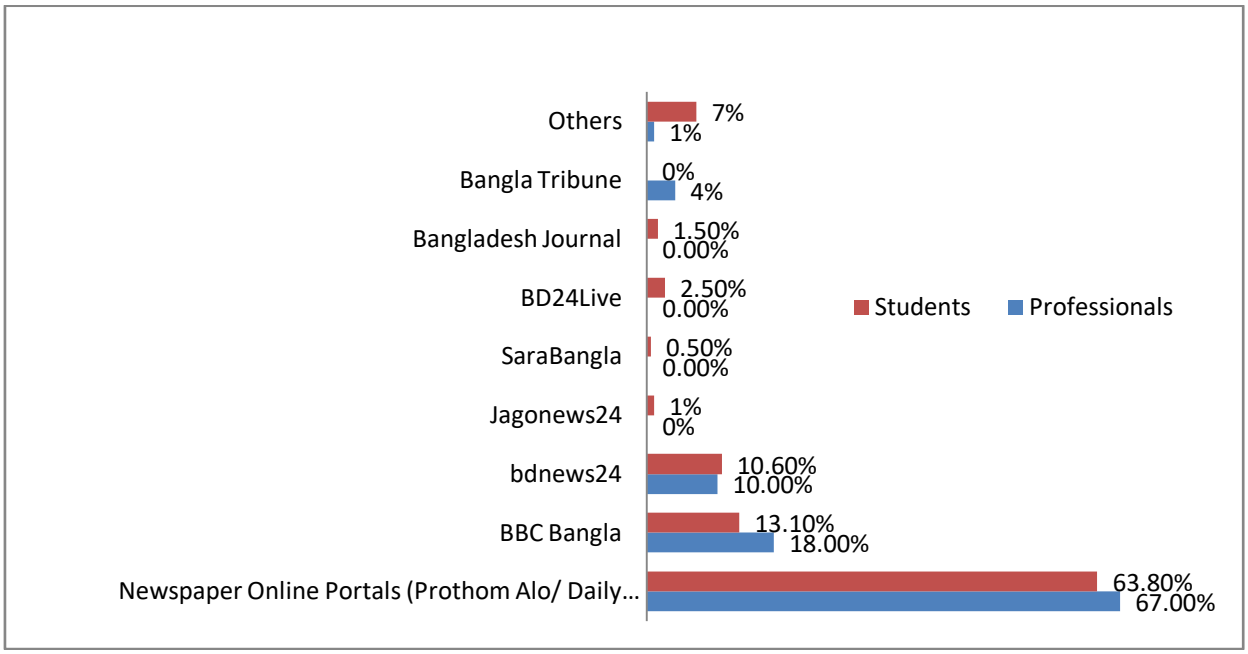
IV. Methods of the Study

The methodology section of this research paper strives to analyze the role of the online news portals during this pandemic. Defining the research objectives, quantitative method has been followed. In this case, for getting a good observation, a survey is conducted on 200 public university students from different departments and universities, and 50 professionals from all sectors who follow some specific online portals which are selected for this research. A questionnaire was provided to the respondents through online survey form to analyze their gratification by seeking information from these news sites.

In this study, 12 online news portals have been selected according to the ranking of 2019 for finding out their functions in creating awareness against Covid-19. Moreover, the respondents of 250 students and professionals have been selected randomly, and after the completion of collecting data from the selected respondents, the results have been analyzed carefully.

V. Data Analysis and Results Discussion

Table 1: Mostly Seeking Online News Portal for Covid Related News



Source: Own Processing, 2021

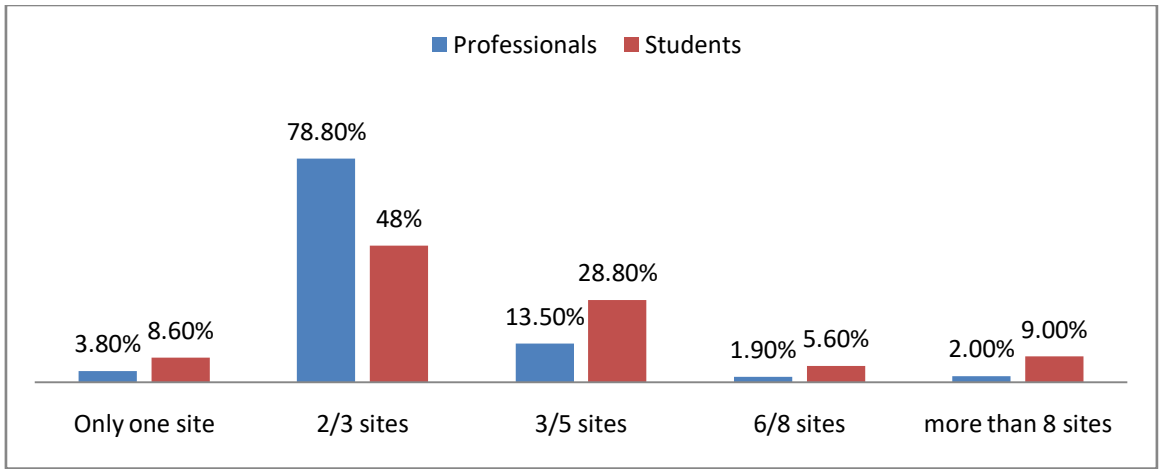
According to the Table 1, 67% of Professionals are more likely to read newspaper online portals (Prothom Alo/ Daily Star/ Dhaka Tribune etc), 18% of them search BBC Bangla, 10% search bdnews24, 4% search Bangla Tribune and the rest of 1% seek Covid related news from others online sites. On the other hand, 63.80% of students read newspaper online portals mostly than other media. But also they have engagement with BBC Bangla (13.10%), bdnews24 (10.6%), jagonews24 (1%), SaraBangla.net (0.5%), BD24Live (2.5%), Bangladesh Journal (1.5%) and the rest accounts for 7% in searching Covid related news.

a) *Mostly seeking online news portal for Covid related news*

The data from the Table 1 compares the percentages of students and professionals' evolving with searching online news portals for Covid related news. From the data results, the study reveals that students have more access and seek more online news portal for Covid related news than the people who are job holder or professionals.

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Table 2: The Number of Sites Are Followed During This Pandemic



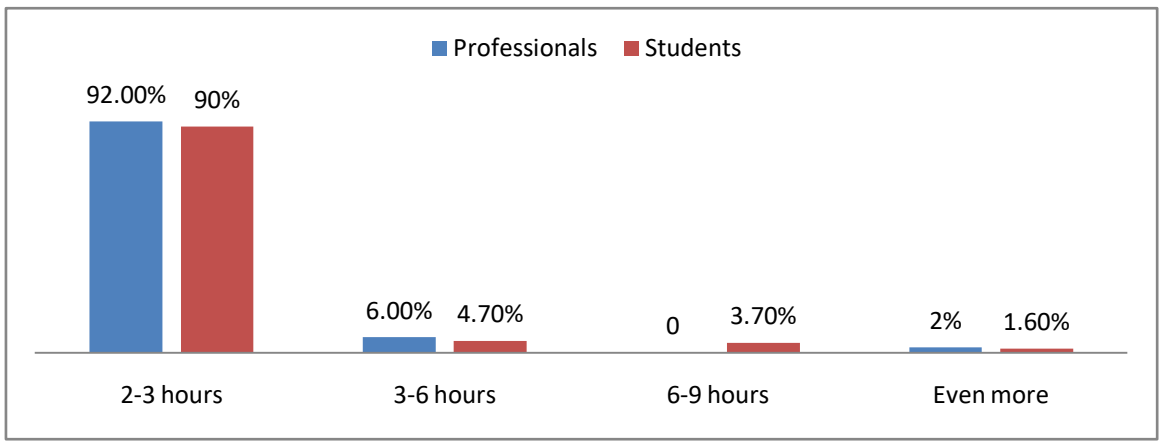
Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 2, most of the respondents of professionals (78.8%) follow 2/3 news sites for getting Covid news while the second big percentage of 13.5% of professionals follow 3/5 sites. Also, 3.8% of professionals search only one site while the close percentage of 2% professionals follow more than 8 sites, and the lowest percentage of 1.9% of professionals follow 6/8 sites. On the contrary, 48% of students follow 2/3 sites while the second highest percentage of students of 28.8% follow 3/5 sites while the close percentages are 9% and 8.6% who follow more than 8 sites and only one site respectively. And the lowest percentage of 5.6% of students follow 6/8 sites for searching Covid news.

b) The sites respondents are following during this pandemic

Interestingly, students and professionals have almost the close percentages in following the number of different news sites in a day. Data from the Table 2 shows that respondents follow more than 8 sites for getting any information and updates regarding pandemic. Comparatively, overall results depict that the most proportion of respondents searches at least 3 sites in a day and the least them follow 8 sites in number.

Table 3: The Amount of Time Respondents Spend on This Online News Portal Searching



Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 3, almost the same percentages of professionals (92%) and students (90%) accounts for spending 2-3 hours on online portals searching for Covid news. 6% of professionals spend 3-6 hours, and only 2% of them spend more than 9 hours in this regard. In comparison, 4.7% of students spend 3-6 hours, 3.7% of students spend 6-9 hours, and only 1.6% of them spend more than 9 hours in searching Covid news.

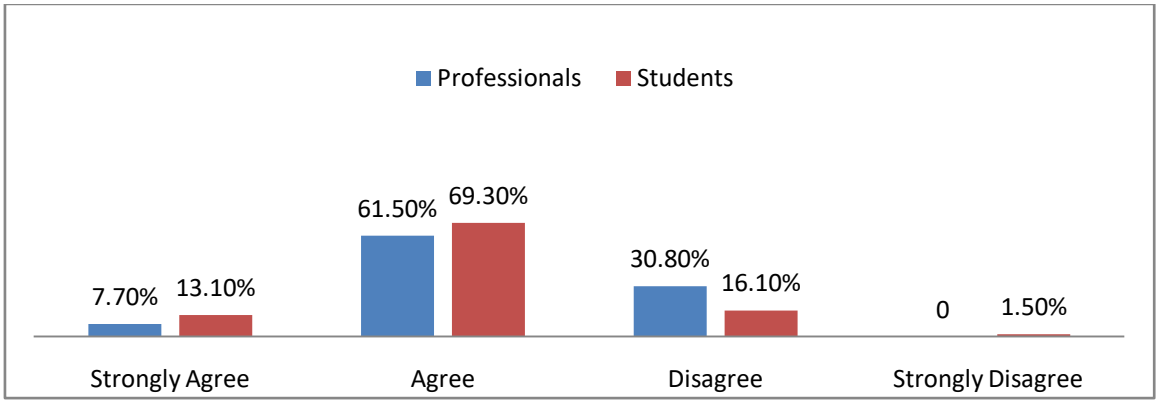
c) The time respondents spend on this online news portal searching

Data of the Table 3 also explains the timeframe whereas students and professionals actually spend on getting Covid related issues. A big proportion of

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percentages of respondents are likely to give at least 3 hours in a day for online news portal searching. Furthermore, there are some respondents who spend more than 9 hours in a day presented in Table 3.

Table 4: Ability of Online News Sites to Keep Ones Updates



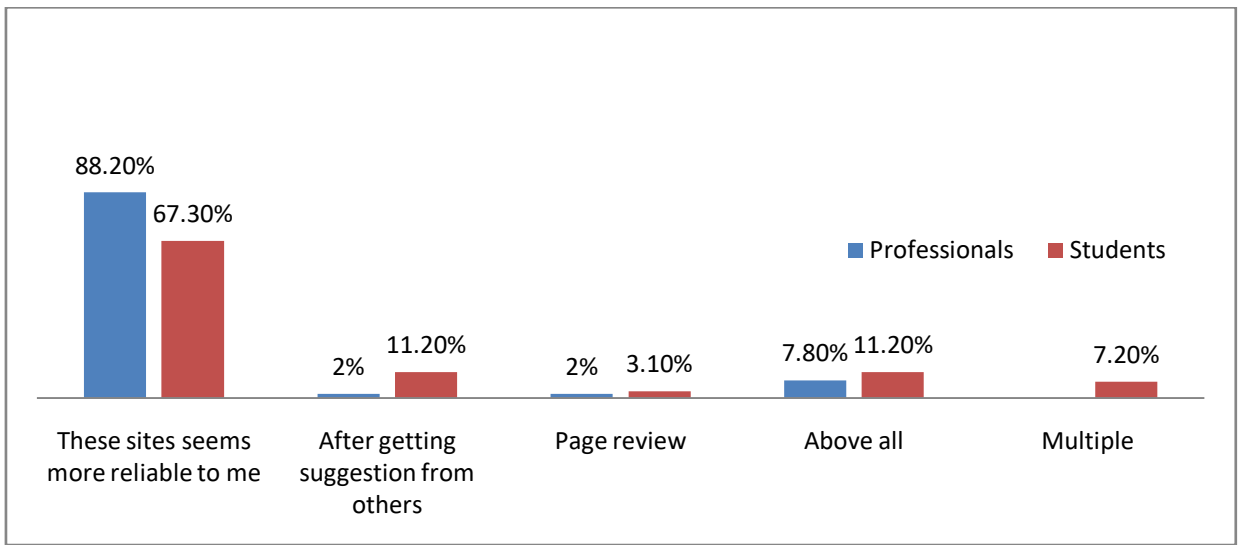
Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 4, About 61.5% and 7.7% of professionals are agreed and strongly agreed about the online news sites' ability to keep ones updated while lest number of percentage of 30.8% are disagreed. On the other hand, 69.3% and 13.1% of students say that they are agreed and strongly agreed on this matter. Comparatively the low number of percentage of 16.1% and 1.5% of students are not agreed and strongly disagreed to the answers of this question.

d) Ability of online news sites to keep ones updated

Data from the Table 4 shows that most of the students and professionals think that news sites is enough to keep ones updated all-time. Also there are some respondents who figure out the opposite position in this regard.

Table 5: The Reasons behind Choosing selected News Sites among Others



Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 5, a huge percentage covers 88.2% of professionals who seem to believe selected online news sites more than other media while only 2% of them select the sites after getting suggestions and page reviews. Overall 7.8% of professionals are agreed to all options. On the contrary, 67.3% of students select these kinds of sites thinking as more reliable sites than others. Moreover, 11.2% and 3.10% of students believe and take these sites after getting suggestions and page reviews, as well as 11.2% of students opine their reasons behind selecting these sites giving tick marks on above all options.

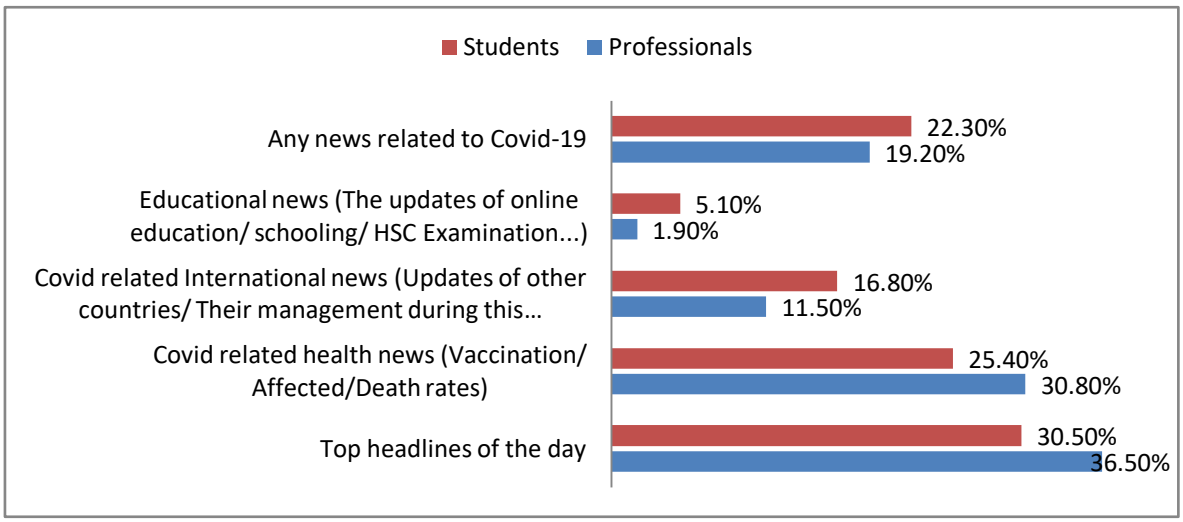
e) The reason behind choosing the selected online news sites among others

Respondents opine some factors behind selecting these news sites than others. Among all respondents, most of them have positive mind and think

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of these sites are more reliable than others. Some of the respondents believe others suggestions and page review. Also some respondents point out multiple factors in this regard.

Table 6: Types of Covid-19 related news respondents read most



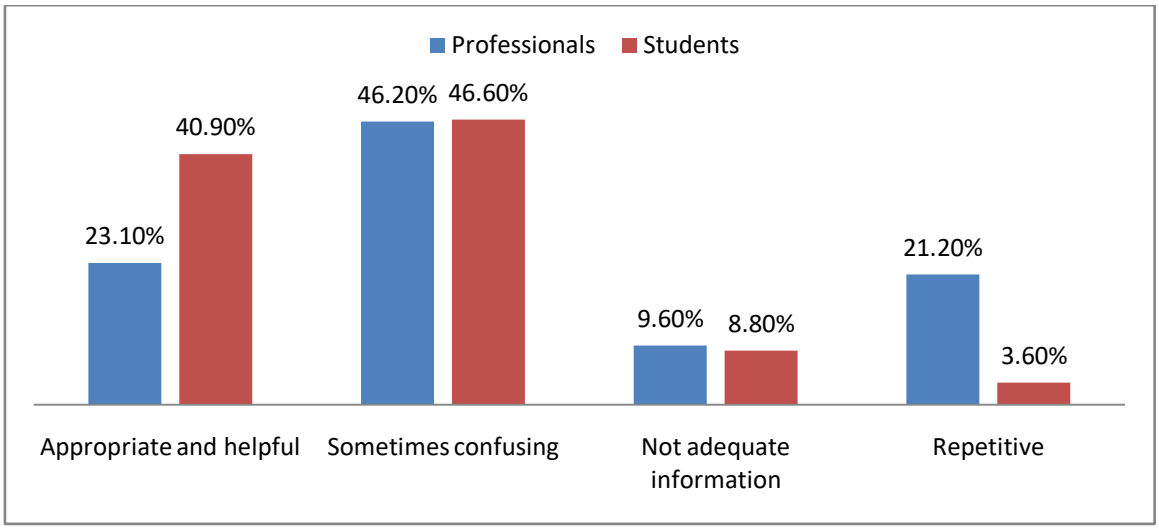
Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 6, 36.5% of professionals and 30.5% of students read top headlines of the day. The second most reading news is related to Covid health news, which is followed by professionals (30.8%) and students (25.4%) as well. The third highest percentage of professionals (22.3%) and students (19.20%) read any kinds of news related to Covid-19. 11.5% of professionals and 16.8% of students read Covid related international. Besides Covid related health news, lest number of professionals (1.9%) and students (5.1%) likely to read educational news.

f) Types of Covid-19 related news respondents read most

It is observed in Table 6 that most of the respondents give their priority in reading top headlines and then to Covid related health news (vaccination/ affected/death rates). There are also some respondents who read Covid related international news (updates of other countries and their management during Covid) as well as updates of educational news (online education/ schooling/HSC examination). All the data are presented in Table 7 carefully.

Table 7: The Language used by the Online News Portals



Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 7, Most of the respondents of professionals (46.2%) and students (46.6%) think the language which is used in reporting during covid-19 reporting writing has confusion sometimes, 21.2% of professionals and 3.6% of students opine that the language of the reporting is very repetitive while 9.6% of professionals and 8.8% of students find the reporting languages inadequate and

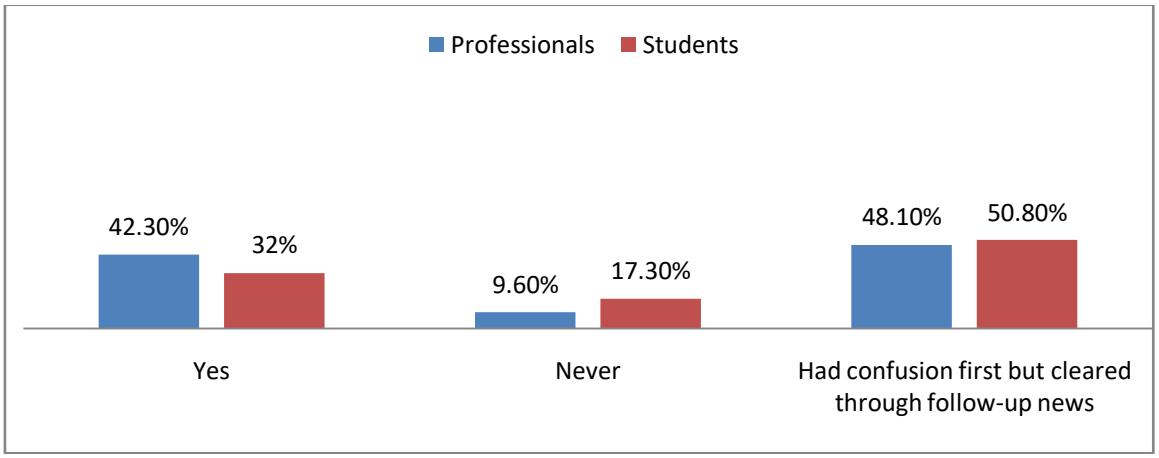
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not so informative. But among all respondents, 40.9% of students and only 23.1% of professionals think the language as very appropriate and helpful.

g) The language used by these online news portals during covid-19 Reporting

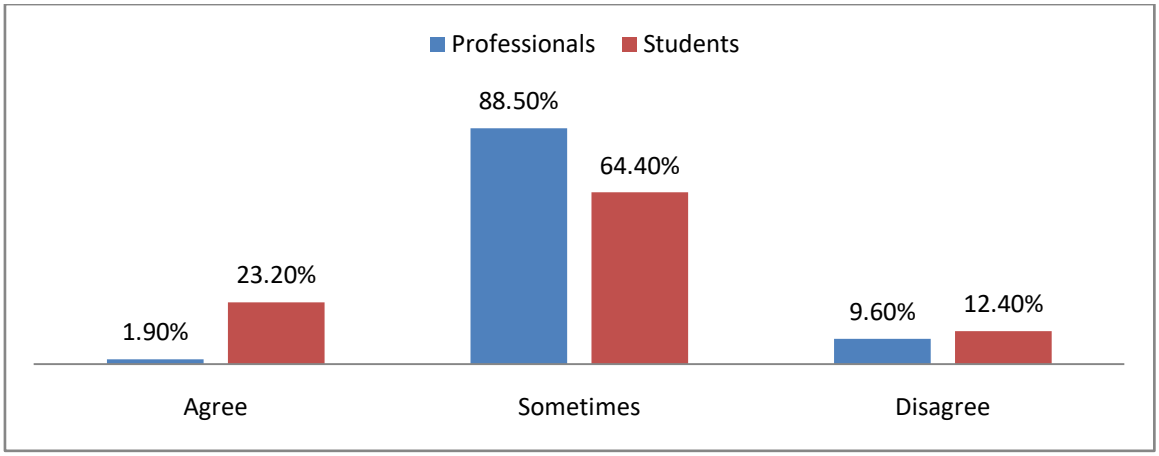
Respondents have different types of views on the language uses in online news portal's news about Covid related issue. Most of the respondents (students and professionals) find the language of news portals sometimes confusing, repetitive and full of inadequate information. Though most of the respondents have negative views, some remarkable respondents think that the language used in online news portals is appropriate and helpful.

Table 8: Any Confused or Fabricated News from These News Portals



Source: Own Processing, 2021

Table 9: Creating Panic and Fear among People during This Outbreak of Covid-19



Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 8, half of the students (50.8%) had confusion on these news sites first but cleared it through follow-up news while 32% of them think that these sites have full of confusion, and there's fabricated news. Only 17.30% of them have clear mind and they believe that there is no confusion with news. On the contrary, 42.3% of professionals' minds are full of confusion while 48.1% of them had confusion firstly but cleared after crosschecking and reading follow up news. Only 9.6% of them never have confusing mind in this regard.

According to the Table 9, data shows that among all respondents, majority of the professionals (88.5%) and students (64.4%) think news sites can create panic and fear sometimes among people during this outbreak of Covid-19 while 23.2% of professionals and 1.9% of students blame these sites for creating panic and fear. But the opposite answers from professionals (9.6%) and students (12.4%) shows that they speak on the behalf of news sites in this regard.

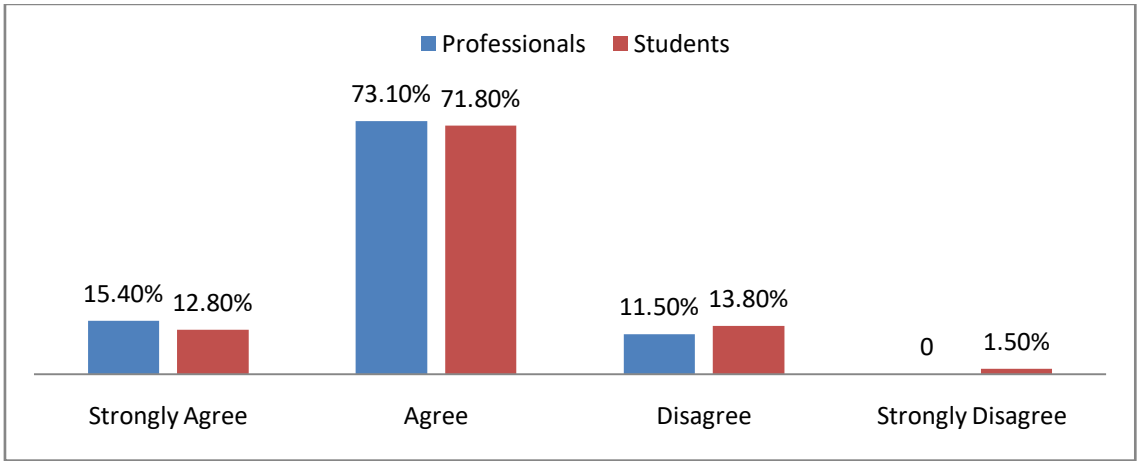
h) Confusion, moral panic, misinformation or rumors

From the Table 8 & 9 data, it can be found that there is almost the half of respondents who had confusion before about any news from news portals, which might have contained any confusion and fabrication of news, could lead to create confusing news. But they have cleared their confused mind right

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after reading, crosschecking and follow-up news from those news sites. Also a big part of respondents have clear vision that those sites can create any moral panic through misinformation and spread rumors.

Table 10: Encouraging News Awareness among People during This Outbreak of Covid-19



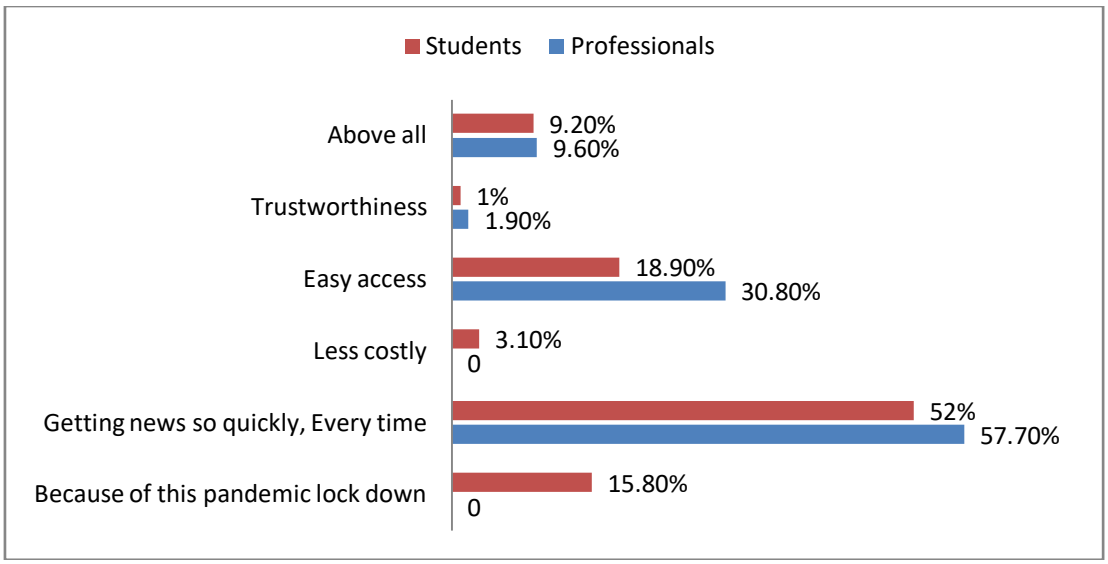
Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 10, Almost 88.5% of professionals positively say that selected sites are encouraging awareness among people during this outbreak of Covid-19 while 84.6% of students think the same. Comparatively less number of professionals (11.5%) and students (15.3%) have negative concept in this regard.

i) *Encouraging News Awareness through online news sites during this Covid-19 breakdown*

Though most of the respondents find that online news portals have confusing news or sometimes are full of moral panic creating information, but to the end they find news more effective way to encourage awareness among people through providing important and updated information always. Table 10 shows that most of the respondents' positive views on this while a small number of percentages of respondents don't think so.

Table 11: Reason behind Preferring Online News Portal than Other News Medium



Source: Own Processing, 2021

According to the Table 12, among all professionals, 57.7% get news quickly, 30.8% find easy access, 1.9% find trustworthiness and 9.6% mention all factors together. On the other hand, among all students, 15.8% prefer online media because of this pandemic and lockdown, 52% get news so quickly, 3.1% finds online media less costly, 18.9% finds easy access, 1% finds trustworthiness and 9.2% supports all factors behind preferring online news portal than other news medium.

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j) The obvious reason behind preferring online news portal than other news medium

There some factors why students and professionals prefer online news portals than other media. The factors are; trustworthiness of news, easy access in news and portals, less costly and getting news so quickly every time, and the most important is, due to this pandemic and lockdown people have only way to get any news from online news portals while print media house is still stooping their publication.

VI. Result Discussion and Conclusion

During this pandemic people are more likely to spend their off time with online media than attending in physical place because of restriction. And this online sphere turns people to involve with media more than before and lures them to use before sleep. In the first phase of pandemic, we observe lots of confusing, fabricated and misinformation everywhere in news sites because of untrustworthy news sources. But what we look on the media's activity, especially in online news sites, are trying to keep peoples updated and informed providing important news from the beginning. That arise lots of questions about the authenticity of online news and news sites, as well as the roles and responsibilities of online news sites.

The study finds that, all respondents (professionals and students) seem to prefer online news portals than others media because of some important factors of having easy access, less costly, trustworthiness and quickness. Though 88.5% of professionals and 84.6% of students said that news sites are encouraging awareness among people during this outbreak, but at the same time among the respondents, 88.5% of professionals and 64.4% of students doubt that online news sites can create panic and fear sometimes whereas 23.2% of professionals and 1.9% of students blame online news sites directly for creating panic and fear.

Importantly, the study finds that although people's dependency on online news portals is increasing lot but there's some alarming issues are found. 77% of professionals and 59% of students find the languages of the reporting as confusing, repetitive and inadequate.

Despite having all confusion, people are started to depend and use online portals especially newspaper based online portal most than others media for getting Covid related news. Most of the respondents think online news portals are more reliable and enough to keep ones' updated all the time especially during this pandemic.

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