

Towards Producing Gender-inclusive Media Contents: SACMID's Experience through Interventions in Selected Media Outlets of Bangladesh

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Abstract

Media can play an important role in promotion of gender equality by breaking the patriarchal gender stereotypes. But most of the time the media outlets portray women as a sexual object or portray according to society's common gender norms. SACMID has been monitoring media contents of six selected media outlets of Bangladesh since July 2021, to investigate the representation of men and women in media. By using a structured GMM tool of global standard, the organization is doing monitoring on daily basis, producing monthly & quarterly reports and share the findings with editors, journalists and relevant stakeholders through interactive workshops, meet with the editors and publication of Bulletin- 'Inclusion'. Besides, training has also been organized at media houses to build capacity of the journalists and raise awareness of the concerned media-house authorities. With this SACMID has aimed to contribute in achieving SDG 5 & 16 and Government's 8th 5-year plan. This paper will share SACMID's experience and key observations whether and how far the changes took place at the end of one year, and what more to do.

Keywords: Gender, Gender-inclusive, Media Contents, SACMID's experience, Interventions, Media outlets, Bangladesh

Introduction

We live in a scientific and technological era in which all forms of media have become an integral part of our daily lives. The number of media outlets such as electronic, print, and social media is rapidly increasing with the pace of time. However, it is unlikely that the contents of these media outlets reflect society in terms of gender balance, and we can see a clear disparity in male and female representation in all categories of media. As media shape our outlook and influence our daily lives, these contents do not play the expected role in reforming our mindset. Only a few media contents highlight the role of women with a positive image in their contents. As women are contributing in every sector of Bangladesh including education, healthcare and government jobs, we cannot ignore their contributions. In order to achieve gender equality, both male and female should treat equally in every sector. As media is called the fourth estate of a nation, it is the duty of media

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to work for achieving women empowerment. South Asia Center for Media in Development (SACMID) is working to investigate the representation of men and women in different media contents of Bangladesh as a part of PRIMED (Protecting Independent Media for Effective Development) global project, where SACMID is the local partner of FPU (Free Press Unlimited) in Bangladesh. SACMID's media monitoring has shown that women are portrayed as the victims of sexual or physical violence in media and the contents are made mostly to attract male readers of Bangladesh. SACMID has found a clear disproportion between male and female representation in all types (print, electronic, online) of media.

2. Aims and Objectives

The immediate objective of this task is to investigate how different media of Bangladesh represent gender in their news content and analyze the gender gaps during the project period that has been started since July 2021. Broadly, this aims to improve gender sensitivity among Bangladeshi media outlets and to increase the gender diversity of their content. This initiative has already helped Bangladeshi media to improve their contents on the basis of gender as SACMID has initiated many advocacy works like workshop with different stakeholders and meeting with the editors of media houses to bring changes. The study was greatly influenced by the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). There were 17-19 variables in the content monitoring of the study which were similar with GMMP monitoring tool.

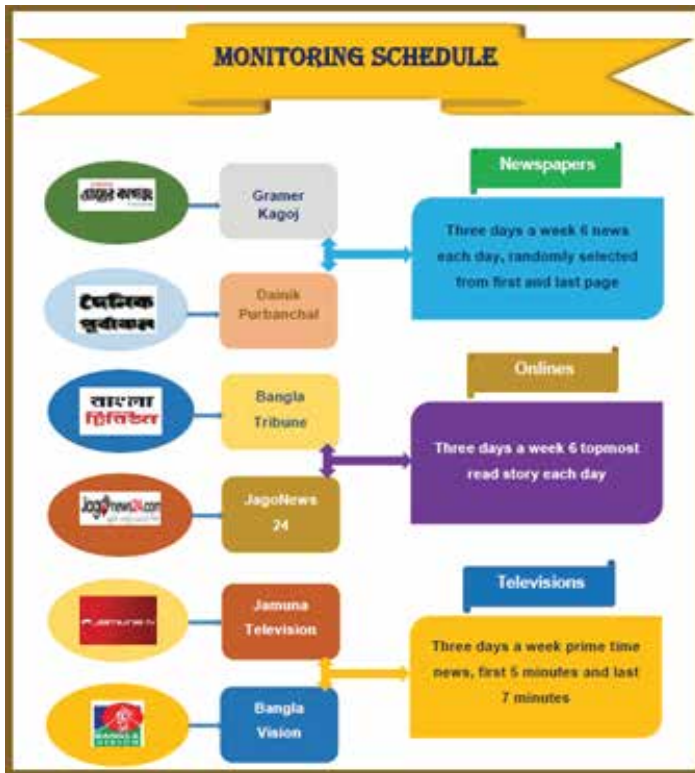
3. Methodology

The study was a content analysis of 6 media houses of Bangladesh. Among them 2 media are television channels, 2 are newspapers, 2 are online portals. SACMID has developed a gender monitoring tool through month long consultation with FPU and on the basis of existing global Gender Media Monitoring (GMM) tools which constitutes 17-19 variables. Some major variables are- gender of the reporter, gender of the presenter, sex of the first person, family role etc. For sampling, PRIMED committee has pre-selected three media houses through background research (media-outlet assessment process), these are Daily Gramer Kagoj(-Jashore-based), Bangla Tribune and Jamuna Television. Later SACMID has selected three outlets of the same category as non-PRIMED samples to see whether any changes happened after interventions of PRIMED project. Non-PRIMED media outlets are Dainik Purbanchal(Khulna-based), Bangla Vision and Jagonews24.com. SACMID monitored these media on regular basis. 3 days news in a week were taken as sample from each media.

4. Media outlets and monitoring schedule

4.1 Newspapers

4.1.1 *Gramer Kagoj (Daily Newspaper – Regional)*: Gramer Kagoj is one of the two regional daily newspapers for this monitoring project. Three day’s sample of a week (Saturday, Monday, and Wednesday) has been taken from 1st July 2021 for this monitoring. A total of six news has been chosen randomly from each day’s newspaper. Among them four news are from the first page and two news from the last page.



4.1.2 *Dainik Purbanchal (Daily Newspaper – Regional)*: Dainik Purbanchal is another regional daily for this monitoring project. Sampling of this newspaper is same as the Gramer Kagoj. Three day’s sample of a week (Saturday, Monday, and Wednesday), a total of six news chosen randomly from each day’s newspaper. Among them four news is from the first page and two news from the last page.

4.2 Online Portals

4.2.1 *Bangla Tribune (Online News Portal - National)*: Bangla Tribune is a national Online Portal selected as a sample for this monitoring project. Three day’s

sample of a week (Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday) has been taken from Bangla Tribune. A total of six news has been chosen from each day's news.

4.2.2 *JaagoNews24.com (Online News Portal – National)*: JaagoNews24.com is another Online Portal. This is also being monitored three days a week (Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday). A total of six news is being chosen from each day's news.

4.3 Television Channels

4.3.1 *Jamuna Television*: Jamuna Television is one of the two national television channels for daily monitoring. Three day's sample of a week (Saturday, Monday, and Wednesday) has been taken from 1st July 2021 for this monitoring. First five minutes and last five minutes of prime-time news bulletin have been monitored as sample.

4.3.2 *Bangla Vision*: Bangla Vision is another national television channel. Sampling of this newspaper is same as the Jamuna Television (three day's sample of a week - on Saturday, Monday, and Wednesday). From Bangla Vision, first five minutes and last five minutes of prime-time news bulletin has been monitored as sample.

5. Findings

A total of five quarterly media monitoring reports were published by SACMID during 1st July 2021 to 31st October 2022. In this time period, some trends have been noticed in media regarding gender of the reporter, presenter and first person of the news stories. In all these indicators, women are very low in number than male. Furthermore, victims of news stories are mostly women. They have also been identified by the male members of their family. Moreover, women voices are neglected as spokespersons and experts in the news. Now all these findings will be described in details below.

5.1 Female reporters are neglected

The gender media monitoring of SACMID has identified whether the news was reported by a male or a female reporter. This part was necessary for understanding the contribution of women in reporting news stories. If a report is by lined (news with reporter's name) by a woman, that means she has produced the report by her own and got the acknowledgment for the report. In terms of television, reporter's gender has been identified by their voice over.

The study has explored that, a total of 7,605 news items has been monitored in five quarters (1st July 2021-31st October 2022). Among them only 223 (10.11%) news items were reported by female reporters, whereas 1,982 (89.89%) news items were reported by male. Rest of the 5,400 new items did not acknowledge the identity of the reporters.

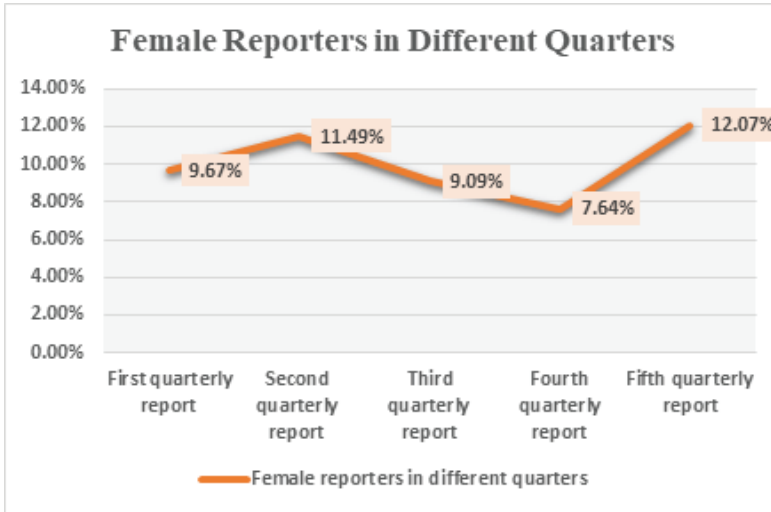


Figure-1: Number of female reporters in different quarters

The Figure-1 is showing the percentage of female reporters in different quarters. In terms of five quarters, the percentages of female reporters has been increased. It has started with 9.67% in the first quarterly monitoring. In the fourth quarter it became 7.64%. But it was ended with an increase of 12.07% in the last quarter.

The figure-2 is showing gender of the reporter in different media. The chart is showing that Jamuna Television has engaged the highest number of female reporters (14.45%). On the other hand Dainik Purbanchal has the lowest female reporters (2.56%).

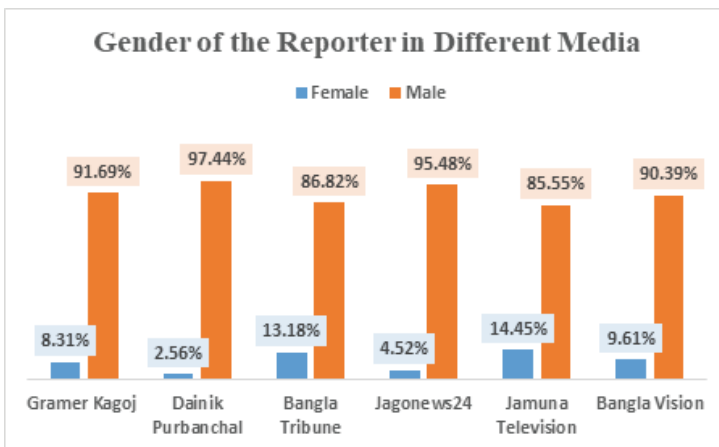
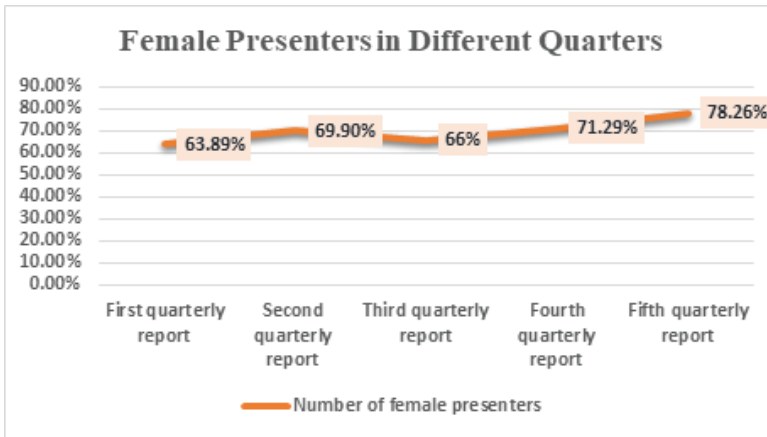


Figure-2: Gender of the reporter in different media outlets

5.2 Presenters are mostly female

It has been found that among 2,673 news in two television channels (Jamuna TV and Bangla Vision) in five quarters, 70.26% presenters are female and on the other hand 29.74% presenters are male. Among them 68.85% presenters in Jamuna TV are female and 71.58% presenters in Bangla Vision are female.



5.3 Women as first persons are very low than male

The figure-3 is showing female presenters are increasing notably in different quarters. Television channels are attracting the male audiences by presenting female anchors. It is a common gender stereotype that male are the drivers of the economy and the main wage earners in the family. If the male audiences could be attracted by female anchors, it would increase the revenue of the television.

The first person in the news can be a subject, spokesperson, expert, eye witness or she/he can give personal opinion. A total of 1,699 (26.46%) female were the first persons of the news during the five quarters. On the other hand male were the first persons in 4,723 (73.54%) news. Rest of the 1,183 news do not have any first or second person.

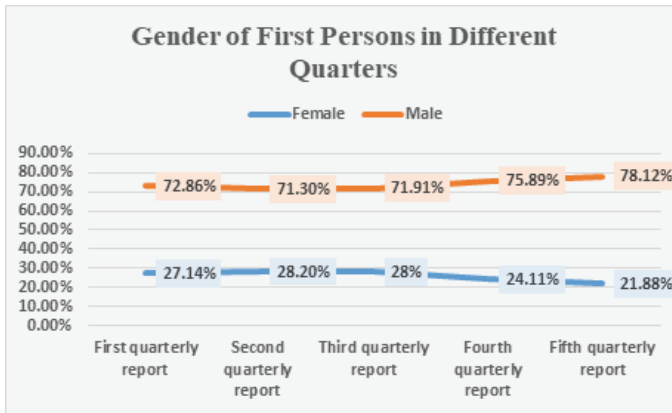


Figure-4: Gender of first persons in different quarters

The figure-4 is showing gender of the first persons in different quarters. The percentage of female first persons in news are decreasing day by day whereas the percentage of male first persons are increasing in every quarter. This situation is promoting gender stereotypes as media are focusing more on male than female.

5.4 Women Spokespersons are very low than male

A spokesperson is a person who tells anyone on behalf of another person or organization. A total of 3,113 spokespersons were found in five quarters (1st July 2021-31th October 2022). Among them 549 (17.64%) spokespersons were female when they were the first persons, on the other hand 2,564 (82.36%) spokespersons were male. This is the evident that participation of women as spokespersons is very low in number than male.

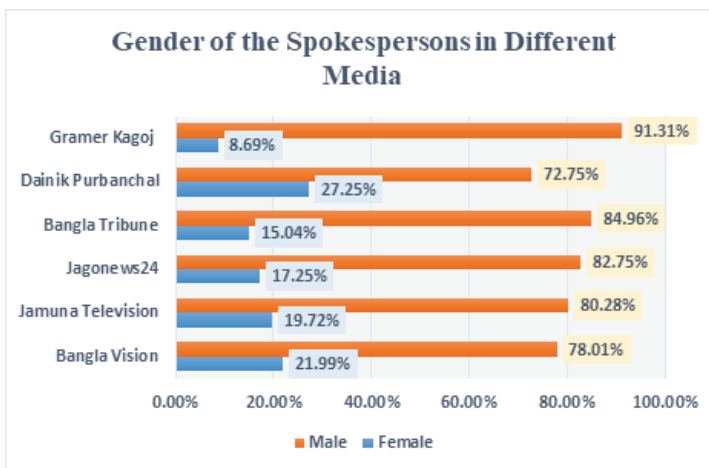


Figure-5: Gender of the spokespersons in Different Media outlets

Figure-5 is showing gender of the spokespersons in different media outlets. The chart is showing Gramer Kagoj has the lowest female spokespersons (8.69%) comparing to the male. On the other hand Dainik Purbanchal has the highest female spokespersons (27.25%). The other four media outlets have also a good percentage of female spokespersons (at least 15%). This is a good sign that media outlets are now taking opinions from female spokespersons.

5.5 Women experts are very low than male

A total 212 expert opinions were taken in this five quarter. Among them 27 (12.74%) expert opinions have been taken from female experts, whereas 185 (87.26%) expert opinions have been taken from male experts.

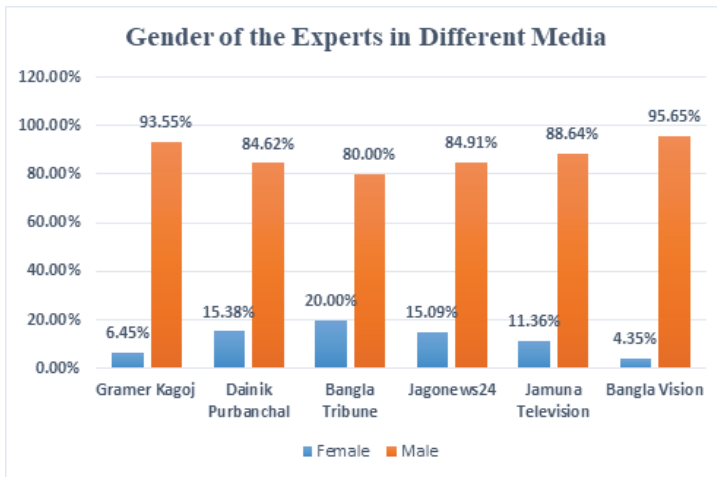


Figure-6: Gender of the experts in Different Media outlets

The figure-6 is showing gender of the experts in different media outlets. The chart is showing that Bangla Vision and Gramer Kagoj have consulted the lowest female experts 4.35% and 6.45% respectively. On the contrary Bangla Tribune has the highest female experts (20%) comparing to the male experts.

5.6 Women are mostly shown as victims

Victim is a person who loses her/his life or suffers by any physical or financial damage. Media are more prone to present women as victims. From the data found in five quarters, it has been revealed that women have been portrayed as victims in 512 (30.14%) news items out of 1,699 news items where they were the first persons of the news. On the other hand, male have been portrayed as victims in 561 (11.88%) news items out of the total 4,723 news where they were the first persons. So we can say that, women are more prone to portray as victims in news.

Though media are prone to show women as victims, but it has been found that women victims are decreasing subsequently in every quarter. It was 41.4% for female and 13.76% for male in the first quarterly media monitoring (July 2021-September 2021). It is now 24.78% for female and 7.51% for male in the fifth quarterly media monitoring (July 2022-October 2022). So it is clear that female as victim has been decreased almost half in the last one and a half year.

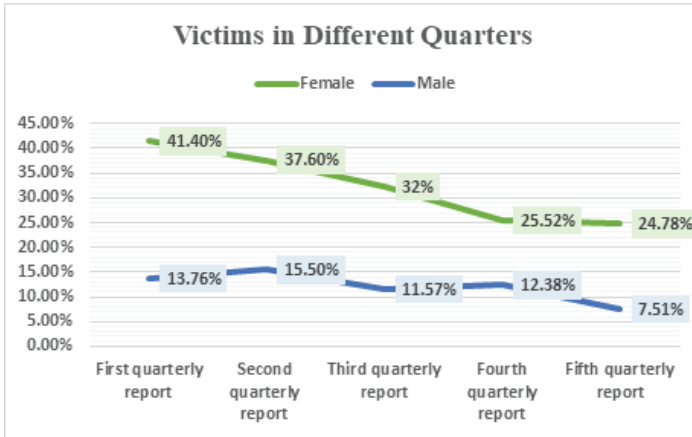


Figure-7: Victims in Different Quarters

The Figure-7 is showing that, the ratio of both Female and male victims are decreasing rapidly. This is a good sign that media outlets are breaking down the tradition of showing women as victims. But still a long way to go!Media should focus on the news those break gender stereotypes of the society.

5.7 Women are identified by male family members

Female are often identified in the news by their familial relationships such as ‘wife of someone’ or ‘daughter of someone’ etc. Data from five quarterly media monitoring has found that, women were identified by their male family members in 428 (25.19%) news out of 1,699 news items where they were the first persons of the news. On the contrary male have been identified by their male family members in 428 (9.06%) news items out of 4,723 news where they were the first persons. But here is a slight difference between male and female familial presentation. Female are identified by their husband or father’s name, but male persons are never identified by their wife or mother’s name.

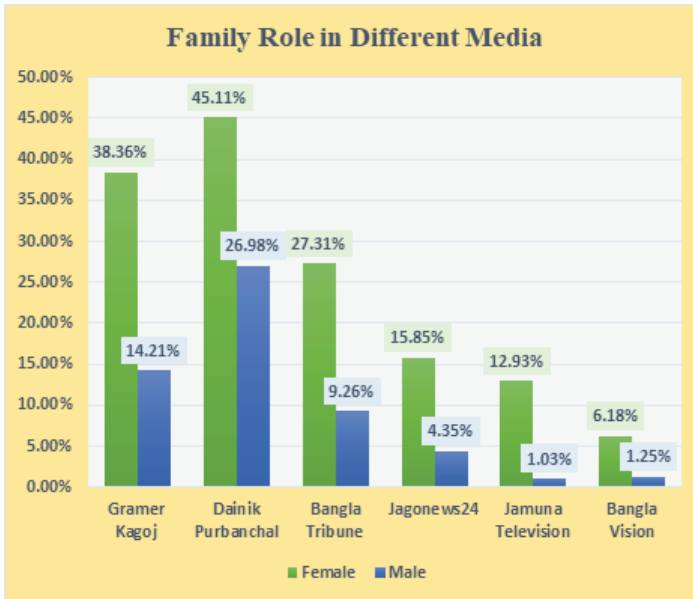


Figure-8: Family Role in Different Media outlets

The figure-8 is showing family role in different media outlets. The chart is showing that women have been identified by their family members more than male in every media outlet. Among them Dainik Purbanchal has the highest female family role (49.11%). On the other hand Bangla Vision has the lowest female family role (6.18%). But in both cases the ratio of female family role is more than male. Male have been rather identified as 'spokespersons' or 'experts'.

5.8 Voices of women are very low in number

A total of 2,064 direct quotations and 5,124 voxpops have been found in five quarters (1st July 2021-31th October 2022). In both cases, female voices are very low in number than male voices. Female direct quotations were 387 (18.75%) in two newspapers (Gramer Kagoj and Dainik Purbanchal) and two online portals (Bangla Tribune and Jagonews24) whereas male direct quotations were 1677 (81.25%). On the other hand female voxpops collected from two television channels (Jamuna Television and Bangla Vision) were 1036 (20.22%) whereas male voxpops were 4088 (79.78%).

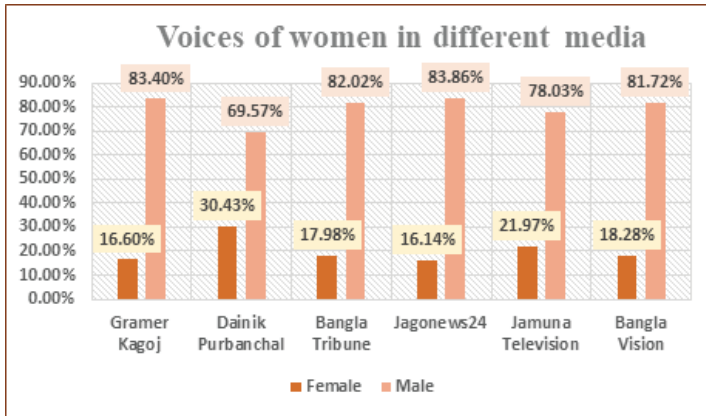


Figure-9: Voices of women in different media outlets

The figure-9 below is showing direct quotations and voxpops in different media outlets. Female direct quotations and voxpops are very low in every media outlets. Among them Dainik Purbanchal has got the highest female quotations (30.43%). The other media outlets are confined in 17%-21% range. Bangla Tribune has got the lowest female direct quotations among them (17.98%).

5.9 News that challenges stereotypes are very low in number

Media stories are not challenging social stereotypes. They are rather strengthening the common gender norms of the society. The findings of five quarterly media monitoring have found that, among 7,605 news items that monitored in these 15 months, only 152 (2%) news stories have challenged existing gender stereotypes of the society.

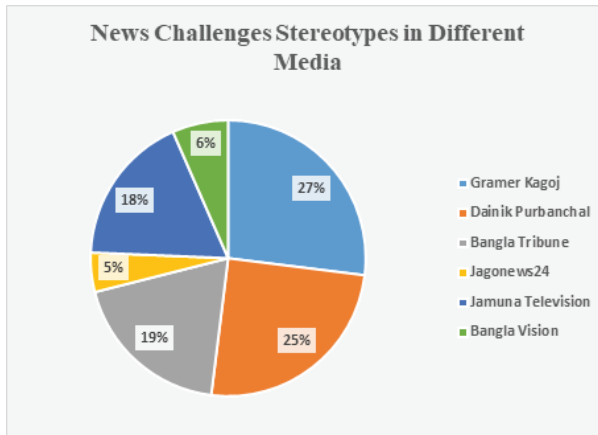


Figure-10: Stories Challenges Stereotypes in Different Media outlets

The Figure-10 is showing news that challenges stereotypes in different media outlets. The chart is showing that, Gramer Kagoj and Dainik Purbanchal have the highest news that challenged social stereotypes (27% and 25% respectively). On the other hand Bangla Vision and Jagonews24 have the lowest news that challenged social stereotypes. (6% and 5% respectively).

6. Recommendations

According to the above analysis and key findings, some recommendations can be made to improve the gender inequality in the media sector. We believe these recommendations will draw attention of the media outlets and other relevant stakeholders and also will bring potential changes. These are given below-

- ⇒ Journalists need to be trained by workshops or seminars regarding reporting about gender sensitive issues.
- ⇒ Women participation in producing news can be increased.
- ⇒ Female byline news in newspapers and online news portals should be practiced more.
- ⇒ Taking female expert's opinion is highly recommended, especially when there are significant numbers of women experts are available.
- ⇒ Media should avoid the common practice of identifying women by their husband's or father's names.
- ⇒ Journalists can start using mother or wife's names too as media has responsibility to shape the society towards an equal living place for all.
- ⇒ Media can also portray more challenging stereotyped stories where men and women are playing different role by breaking the old stereotypes like; women takes financial responsibility of her family or men are taking care of their children.
- ⇒ Those stories should be highlighted where women are portrayed as leaders, change makers or players in any unconventional/exemplary role in the society.

7. Conclusion

Nowadays we are depending on media for information and knowledge. In this age of globalization, media have become an essential part of our day to day lives. Media reflect and show the diversities of the society. This study has captured the findings of gender content monitoring in six selected media outlets of the country from July 2021-October 2022. It includes a comparative analysis of male and female representation in selected printed media, online and electronic news media. According to the findings, women journalists are underrepresented in all forms of media. Women's participation in all media outlets is very low compared to male reporters. Women's participation is particularly visible as presenters on television

screens. This contributes to the stereotyping of women's visibility. Moreover, media has a common tendency to illustrate male personality more powerful and in maximum news men are represented as spokesperson or expert. When women are portraying as first persons in the stories, they are mainly portrayed as victims. But women victims are decreasing subsequently in every quarter. Women are often identified by their father and husband's identity. It has also been observed that most of the news ignored independent identity or mother's name. News that challenge social stereotype is overlooked in media. The study has also found that, women's voices are often underreported in the media.

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