

DISABILITY REPRESENTATION IN BANGLADESHI MEDIA

A Study on Inclusion in Content and Organizational Practices

Implemented by: SoMaSHTe

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1. Executive Summary

The Disability Equality in the Media project, implemented by SoMaSHTe in collaboration with UNESCO, is a significant initiative aimed at promoting disability equality in media in Bangladesh. The project seeks to address the gaps in disability representation within mainstream media and foster a more inclusive media environment where the voices of persons with disabilities are adequately heard and represented. Through research, consultations, and advocacy, the project is working to enhance media professionals' understanding of disability issues and encourage equitable and comprehensive media coverage of these topics.

To understand the level of media coverage of disability issues in Bangladesh today, SoMaSHTe carried out a thorough study through desk reviews, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and media content analysis. This report focuses on the findings from the study that endeavored to probe how disability concerns are reported within the Bangladeshi media, whether through print, internet, or broadcast. It highlights the importance of portraying persons with disabilities (PWDs) in an inclusive, respectful, and rights-based way. Media has a strong influence on public opinion, yet coverage of disability often lacks depth and reinforces stereotypes, focusing more on charity than empowerment. This study aligns with Bangladesh's Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) to identify challenges and opportunities for creating more disability-inclusive media.

Key Findings:

Representation: Disability-related stories and content are increasing but are often tied to specific events or observance days. These stories frequently lack depth and rarely highlight the achievements or rights of PWDs. Gender-balanced and diverse portrayals are gradually improving but remain limited.

Accessibility: Many media formats exclude PWDs by not using tools like sign language, Braille, or subtitles. Inclusive practices remain underdeveloped.

Workplace Inclusion: While sensitization has been seen in hiring employees with disabilities, inaccessible workplaces, limited support, and insufficient training remain significant challenges.

Public Perception: Media has the potential to reduce stigma and discrimination and is gradually contributing to this effort, but its approach lacks consistency and systematic focus.

Recommendations:

Rights-based reporting: Focus on empowerment and showcase the abilities and contributions of PWDs.

Capacity Building: Train journalists in disability-sensitive reporting and inclusive storytelling.

Workplace Inclusion: Enforce non-discrimination policies, provide accommodations, and create accessible work environments. **Improve Accessibility:** Use inclusive tools such as sign language, Braille, and subtitles to ensure content reaches all audiences.

Collaboration: Work with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to ensure accurate and sensitive reporting.

Monitor Media Practices: Develop systems to track and evaluate media progress in disability representation and accessibility.

This study shows that the media can play a transformative role in reducing stigma, promoting inclusion, and empowering PWDs. By adopting these recommendations, media organizations in Bangladesh can advance disability equality and support the full participation of PWDs in society. Strong partnerships, adherence to national and international guidelines, and ongoing advocacy are crucial for success.

2. Introduction

The media shapes public perceptions, particularly influencing how society views persons with disabilities, who make up 16% of the global population. Embracing diversity in the media unlocks the potential of a vast and growing audience: persons with disabilities. By increasing their market share and purchasing power, they become empowered consumers while ensuring their fundamental human rights and freedoms are met. By explicitly addressing disability issues in editorial policies, creating accessible content, and fostering inclusive workplace practices, media professionals can transform societal attitudes toward persons with disabilities.

Recognizing the importance of disability inclusion and empowerment, the *Society for Media and Suitable Human-communication Techniques (SoMaSHTe)*, supported by the UNESCO Dhaka Office, launched the Disability Equality in the Media project to promote fair and inclusive representation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Bangladeshi media. This initiative aims to enhance public awareness and encourage media organizations to adopt disability-inclusive practices in their reporting and management structures.

One of the major initiatives of the project was to find out the situation with disability media coverage in Bangladesh. This in-depth review involved information on the coverage of disability issues in the media. The study examined the portrayal of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in print, TV, and online media over two years (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2024) alongside their inclusion within media organizations.

2. Objective of the Study

- Analyze the representation and portrayal of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in media.
- Examine the inclusivity within media organizations, including staffing, management practices, and attitudes toward employing PWDs.
- Identify challenges, gaps, and potential solutions for improving disability representation and inclusion in media

3. Scope

- Coverage of print, TV, and online media across a diverse sample.
- Analysis of content themes (e.g., rights, inclusion, employment) and presentation aspects (e.g., tone, language, visual portrayal).
- Evaluation of editorial practices and workplace inclusivity in media organizations.

4. Methodology

The study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore the representation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the media and their inclusion within media organizations. The table presents the probe areas and methods employed for the study:

| What | Who/Source | How |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Quantity of PWD-related content | Newspapers, TV bulletins, online content | Content Analysis |
| Qualitative representation of content | Newspapers, TV bulletins, online content | Content Analysis |
| Situation and trend analysis | Media personnel | Focus Group Discussion (FGD) |
| Situation and trend analysis | Experts/Media policymakers | Key Informant Interviews (KII) |

4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

An FGD was conducted in Dhaka in October 2024 with 16 media professionals, including program officials, reporters, and editorial staff. The discussion focused on:

Representation: Examined how persons with disabilities are portrayed in news and media content.

Current Trends: Discussed the state of media coverage on disability-related issues, including recent changes or patterns.

Challenges: Identified structural, editorial, and capability-related barriers to covering disability issues effectively.

Impact: Highlighted the importance of sensitive and responsible media portrayal to influence public perception positively.

Recommendations: Explored actionable steps to improve the representation of disability issues across various media platforms and the need for capacity-building among media professionals.

Data Collection Tool: A structured discussion checklist guided the session.

4.2 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted as part of the study to gain insights from relevant stakeholders on the representation of disability in media. These stakeholders included one managerial authority, editor, expert on disability issues, and radio station manager. The discussions aimed to identify current practices, challenges, and opportunities to improve disability inclusion in media.

Key Areas Discussed

Managerial Authority (TV): Discussed organizational policies and the scope for improving workplace inclusivity for persons with disabilities. Highlighted the importance of accessible infrastructure and supportive environments for hiring and retaining disabled employees

Editor (Print): Observed that media coverage of disability remains inadequate, often lacking depth and balance. Structural barriers and limited capacity among reporters were highlighted as key reasons for the gaps.

Expert on Disability Issues: Emphasized the need for ethical standards in reporting on disability issues, focusing on avoiding negative stereotypes and harmful language. Recommended adopting inclusive policies to guide media content.

Station Manager: Addressed the representation of disability in radio programming and news. Identified challenges in including disability topics consistently and recommended training for staff to enhance awareness and improve program quality.

Data Collection Tool: Tailored interview questionnaires were used to structure the interviews.

4.3 Content Analysis

The study analyzed disability-related content across six newspapers, two online news portals, and four TV channels (news bulletins only). The study aimed to understand how disability issues are covered, focusing on both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Quantitative Analysis

- Examined the number of content pieces, their type, placement, and treatment in newspapers.
- Analyzed the contributor and source of information, location, and types of disability addressed.

Qualitative Analysis

- Evaluated tone and language, focusing on sensitivity and appropriateness.
- Reviewed the depth of information, including the use of data and incorporation of relevant statistics.
- Assessed portrayal of disability with attention to gender and ethical sensitivity.
- Analyzed whether content included consultation with persons with disabilities (PWDs) or their families.

Media Platforms Analyzed

Print Media: Prothom Alo, Samakal, Kalerkantha, Daily Star, Dhaka Tribune, Desh Rupantor

Online Portals: BD News, Jago News

TV Channels: Channel i, NTV, Somoy TV, Bangla Vision

Analysis Dimensions

- Coverage frequency, depth, and themes in the content.
- Diversity of representation in terms of age, gender, and disability types.
- Language sensitivity and tone, ensuring respectful and accurate narratives.

Data Collection and Analysis

Templates were developed to catalogue print and online content and TV bulletins systematically.

5. Limitation of the Study

Scope of Media Coverage: The analysis was limited to selected print and online media outlets, which may not capture the full spectrum of disability representation across all media platforms including regional media outlets.

Sample Time Frame: The study only covered content within a specific time frame, potentially missing long-term trends or recurring issues related to disability reporting.

Media Coverage Disparity and Edition Limitation: The study found that online content was often higher than print content, but the analysis was limited to print editions. Additionally, only city editions were scanned, excluding regional editions that may have contained more relevant content.

TV Bulletin Limitation: The study analyzed only one news bulletin per TV channel per day, which may have led to an underrepresentation of disability-related content from other bulletins aired throughout the day.

5. Study Findings

This section presents the key findings from the study, derived from three primary methods: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and Media Content Analysis. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how disability issues are represented in the media, the challenges faced by media professionals, and the opportunities for improving inclusivity and sensitivity in disability-related content.

5.1 Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

The findings from FGDs shed light on the current state of disability representation in Bangladeshi media, the fairness and balance of reporting, prevailing trends, challenges, and potential solutions for improvement. These insights highlight both the progress made and the gaps that persist in portraying disability issues sensitively and inclusively.

Representation of Persons with Disabilities

Positive Aspects

- Some media outlets, such as RTV, have dedicated programs highlighting disability issues, including autism, and inspirational stories of individuals overcoming challenges.
- Specific initiatives, like Sokaler Gaan, provide inclusive content for visually impaired audiences.
- Success stories, such as Limon's journey or a boy with no legs being included in an Islamic program after media intervention, reflect media's role in promoting inclusion.

Gaps in Representation

- Disability-related stories are often reserved for designated observance days, such as Autism Day, receiving limited depth and attention.
- Coverage is frequently tokenistic, focusing on evoking sympathy rather than empowering narratives that showcase the talents and achievements of persons with disabilities.
- Many stories fail to adopt a rights-based approach and instead perpetuate stereotypes, portraying individuals as objects of pity rather than agents of change.

Fairness and Balance in Reporting

- Positive Efforts: Some stories demonstrate efforts to address discrimination, such as reporters advocating for individuals initially excluded due to disability.
- Limitations: Coverage often lacks follow-up, depth, and consistent placement, with disability-related news placed on less prominent pages or time slots.
- Sympathetic Framing: Success stories are often presented to evoke pity rather than celebrate abilities and resilience.

Current Trends in Media Coverage

Progress

- Disability-related stories and inclusive representation have increased in recent years, particularly in advertisements, movies, and news.

- Social media has amplified visibility for disability advocacy and campaigns.

Challenges

- Coverage remains inconsistent and superficial, with disability issues often deprioritized in favor of broader social or political topics.
- Lack of funding for in-depth reporting and systemic investment threatens the sustainability of current advancements.

Challenges in Reporting Disability Issues

- **Structural Barriers:** Limited acknowledgment from senior management in media organizations curtails editorial focus on disability topics.
- **Stereotypes and Awareness:** Journalists and media professionals often lack awareness or training, resulting in superficial or stereotypical portrayals.
- **Resource Constraints:** Insufficient funding and sponsorship hinder consistent and in-depth reporting on disability-related issues.

Impact and Recommendations

Significance: Sensitive and responsible portrayal of disability issues is critical for raising public awareness, combating stigma, and promoting inclusion.

Recommendations:

- **Improved Representation:** Media should adopt a rights-based approach, focusing on empowerment rather than pity, and consistently cover disability issues beyond special observance days.
- **Capacity Building:** Awareness and training programs for journalists on disability issues, ethical reporting, and sensitivity are essential.
- **Inclusive Practices:** Involving persons with disabilities in content production, decision-making, and representation can create authentic and impactful narratives.

5.2 Findings from Key Informant Interviews (KII)

This section synthesizes key findings from interviews conducted with professionals across media, management, and expert domains. The purpose was to explore perceptions, practices, challenges, and opportunities in disability representation in media and workplace inclusion. The findings reveal a mix of progress and ongoing gaps, with actionable recommendations for improvement.

A. Representation of Disability in Media

Limited but Growing Visibility: Disability-related topics are gaining some attention, with increasing media coverage in recent years, often tied to specific events or awareness days. However, proactive and consistent reporting remains insufficient. Disability stories frequently appear on less prominent pages or are underrepresented in national media narratives.

Barriers to Coverage: Structural issues, including limited editorial support and reporter capacity, hinder in-depth reporting. Challenges also stem from families' reluctance to share stories due to stigma and societal judgment, leaving many issues underreported.

Mixed Portrayal: Media often portrays disability as a humanitarian or welfare issue rather than emphasizing the rights and capabilities of persons with disabilities. This reflects a lack of training and awareness among journalists.

B. Challenges in Media Practices

Knowledge and Skill Gaps: Reporters often lack knowledge about the diverse types of disabilities, leading to generalized or superficial reporting.

Structural and Managerial Hurdles: Newsrooms prioritize mainstream topics like politics and corruption, sidelining disability issues. Limited managerial encouragement for disability-focused content reduces the scope for impactful storytelling.

Language and Sensitivity: Inappropriate or outdated language persists in media coverage, further stigmatizing disability rather than fostering inclusion.

C. Workplace Inclusion Practices

Positive Outlook: Employers increasingly recognize the potential of persons with disabilities, moving away from a perspective of pity. Successful examples of inclusion, particularly in digital roles, demonstrate the contributions of employees with disabilities.

Need for Support Systems: While some accommodations, like special assistance, are provided, critical needs, such as accessible transportation, workplace adjustments, and assistive technologies, remain unmet.

Policy and Training Gaps: Inclusive policies and regular staff training are essential to create an equitable and supportive work environment.

D. Ethical and Policy Recommendations

Inclusive Reporting Guidelines: Media houses should adopt ethical standards emphasizing the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, avoiding sensationalism or pity-focused narratives.

Training and Capacity Building: Workshops, e-learning, and face-to-face discussions with experts can build journalists' skills and foster a nuanced understanding of disability issues.

Tailored Content Creation: Disability-specific coverage requires tailored approaches to ensure accurate and respectful representation across different types of disabilities.

E. Path Forward

Collaborative Initiatives: Partnerships with organizations such as NGOs and media training institutions can bridge gaps in reporting and representation. Programs that engage both reporters and families can reduce stigma and improve storytelling.

Policy Advocacy: Consistent media advocacy for policy changes can enhance disability inclusion in society. This includes holding authorities accountable for implementing disability rights and promoting societal awareness.

The findings highlight the need for systemic change in media and workplace practices to ensure equitable representation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Addressing these challenges through structured interventions and collaborative efforts can create a more inclusive and informed society.

5.3 Findings from Content Analysis

Newspaper and Online Portals: Quantitative Aspect

Number of News

The content analysis identified 344 content on disability-related topics across various newspapers and news portals. Samakal had the highest number with 88 content, followed by Kalerkantha with 73, Prothom Alo with 45, and BDNEWS with 44 (Figure 1). Other outlets, such as JAGONEWS, The Daily Star, Desh Rupantor, and Dhaka Tribune, contributed fewer articles. However, the study highlighted some limitations, including a disparity in media coverage, with online content generally surpassing print editions. The analysis was also restricted to city editions, potentially overlooking relevant content from regional editions.

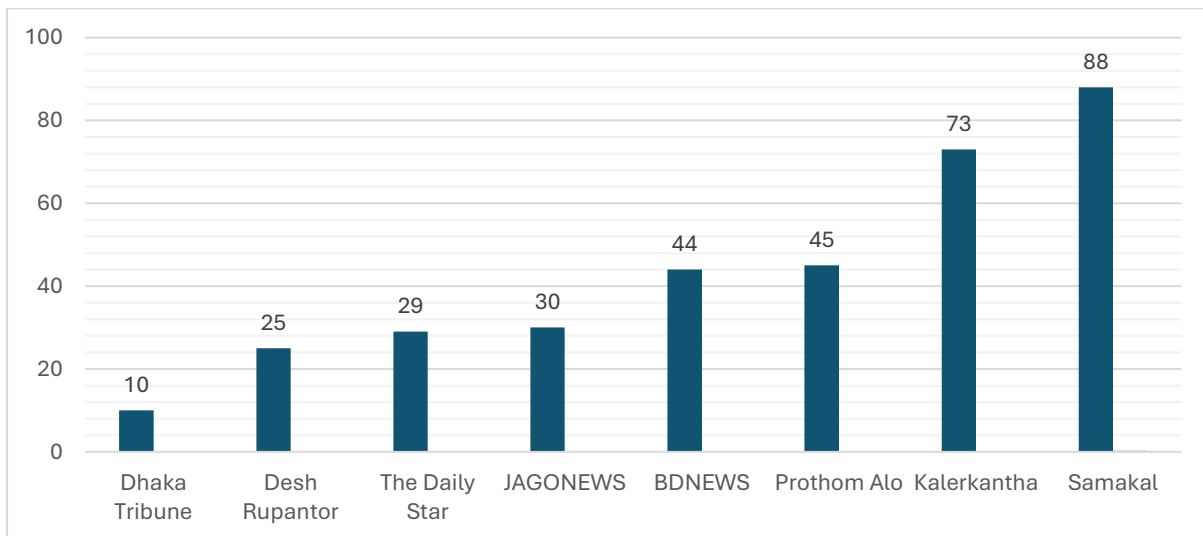


Figure 1: Disability Coverage Across Media

Type and Source of Content

The analysis of the content types revealed a predominant focus on hard news and event-based coverage, accounting for nearly 63% of the total articles. Feature articles followed at 16%, while opinion pieces made up 12%. Editorial content was relatively low, representing just under 4%. Investigative news and analytical articles were the least frequent, at 0.58% and 4.36%, respectively. This distribution highlights a strong emphasis on immediate reporting over in-depth or opinion-driven pieces.

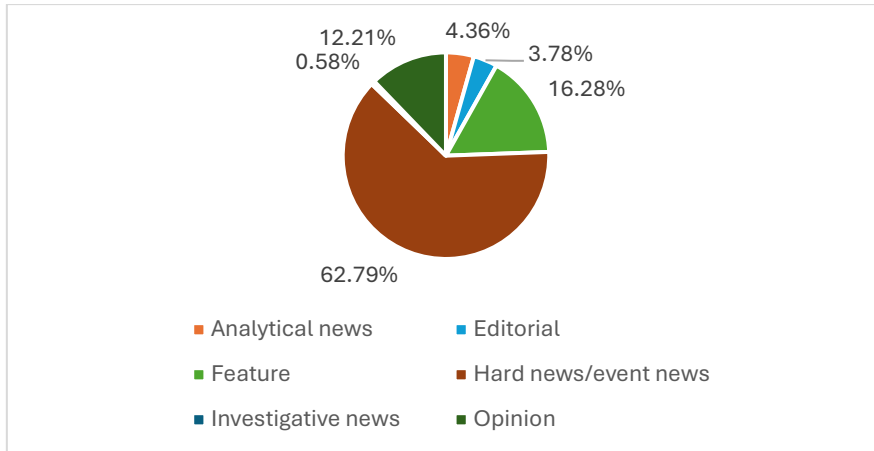


Figure 2: Types of Content

The content sources in the study showed that the majority, 81%, was produced by own or staff reporters, reflecting the significant role of in-house journalism. Columnists and experts contributed 13% of the content, providing specialized insights. Editorials made up 3%, offering institutional perspectives. Only 2% of the content was sourced from press releases or agencies, indicating limited reliance on external content for the coverage.

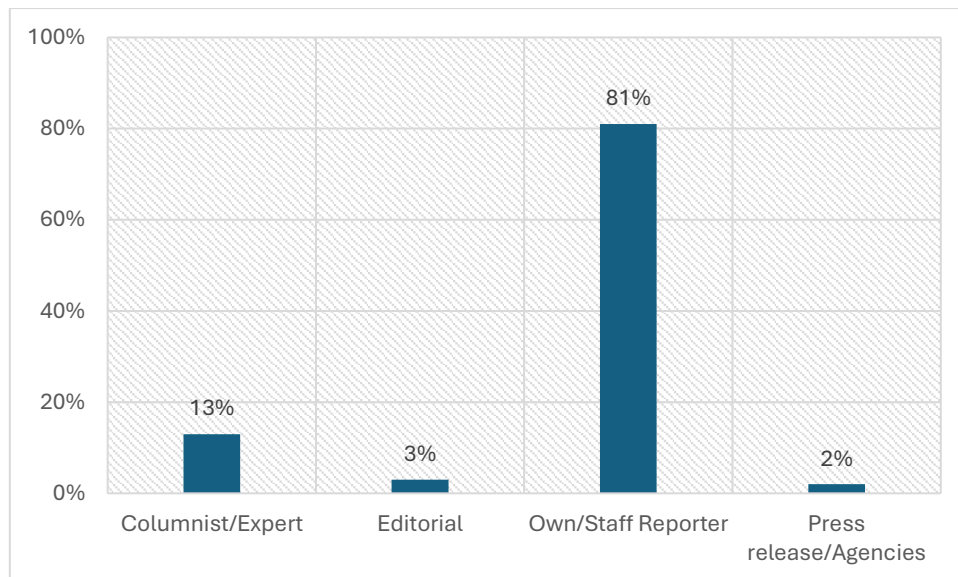


Figure 3: Source of Content/Contributors

Type of Disability Addressed

The analysis of content related to disabilities reveals that a significant portion (32.27%) did not specify a particular type of disability. Among the specific disabilities, multiple disabilities were the most frequently mentioned, accounting for 13.95%. Physical disability (16.86%) and visual disability (6.98%) were also prominent. Other disabilities such as autism (6.69%), intellectual disability (5.52%), and speech disability (4.94%) were covered in notable but smaller proportions. Disabilities like cerebral palsy (0.58%), deaf-blindness (0.29%), and hearing disability (2.91%)

had minimal representation. The remaining 2.33% of the content was categorized as not applicable, as it does not specifically relate to any particular type of disability.

Theme of Content

The content addressed a wide range of topics, shedding light on the challenges, achievements, and needs of persons with disabilities. Many media reports focused on accessibility, particularly in education, healthcare, and public infrastructure, emphasizing the need for inclusive facilities and policies. Stories also discussed the social stigma faced by individuals with disabilities, aiming to foster greater awareness and empathy among the general population. Several articles highlighted inspiring achievements of individuals overcoming physical and societal barriers, serving as role models for others. Coverage also included government initiatives and non-governmental efforts to support disability inclusion, with a focus on gaps in policy implementation. However, certain reports pointed out instances of negative portrayal or limited representation, underscoring the need for more sensitive and balanced reporting to reflect the lived realities of persons with disabilities.

Placement and Treatment

The content placement analysis showed that the majority of content, 270 in total, was published in print newspapers, with 90% appearing on inner pages, reflecting a typical arrangement for most reports. A small portion (5%) appeared on the back page, while only 4% made it to the front page.

The treatment of content in print newspapers varied in terms of visibility. About 41% of the content was placed with low visibility, indicating that these articles were less prominently featured. Around 20% of the articles were prominently displayed, ensuring higher visibility. The remaining 39% were placed in regular or secondary positions, reflecting a more standard treatment that may not attract as much attention as prominently displayed content. This distribution highlights the varied visibility and attention given to different news types.

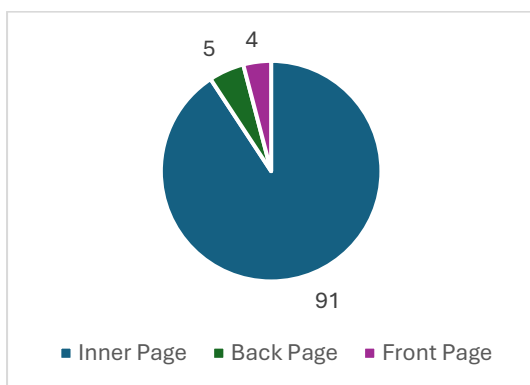


Figure 4: Placement of Content

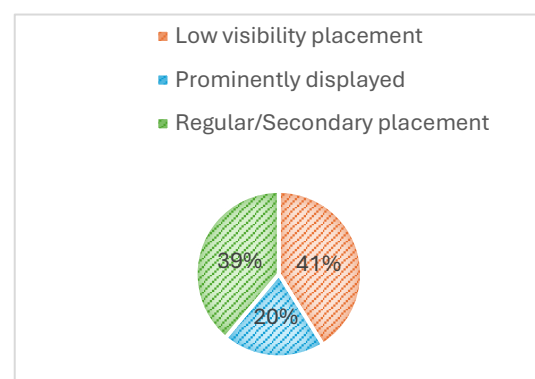


Figure 5: Treatment of the Content

Newspaper and Online Portals: Quality Aspect

Source of Information and Consultation with Persons with Disability or Family Members

The content predominantly relied on primary sources, highlighting a high standard of information quality. About 43% of the content used multiple direct sources, while 19% relied on a single direct

source. Additionally, 17% combined direct and secondary sources—another indicator of quality information. Meanwhile, 10% were based solely on secondary sources, 8% were opinion-based, and 3% appeared as editorials.

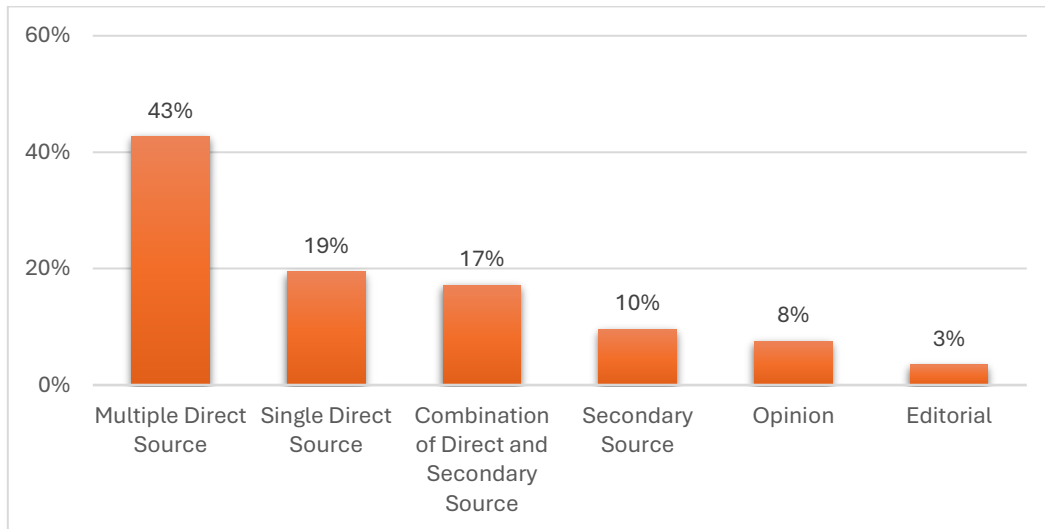


Figure 6: Source of Information

The consultation with persons with disabilities (PWD) or their family members was relatively low, with 39% of content indicating that they were consulted and included. However, 8% of the content mentioned PWD but did not involve consultation. A low portion, 19%, showed no consultation at all, while 34% of the content was categorized as not applicable, referring to content not directly related to PWD.

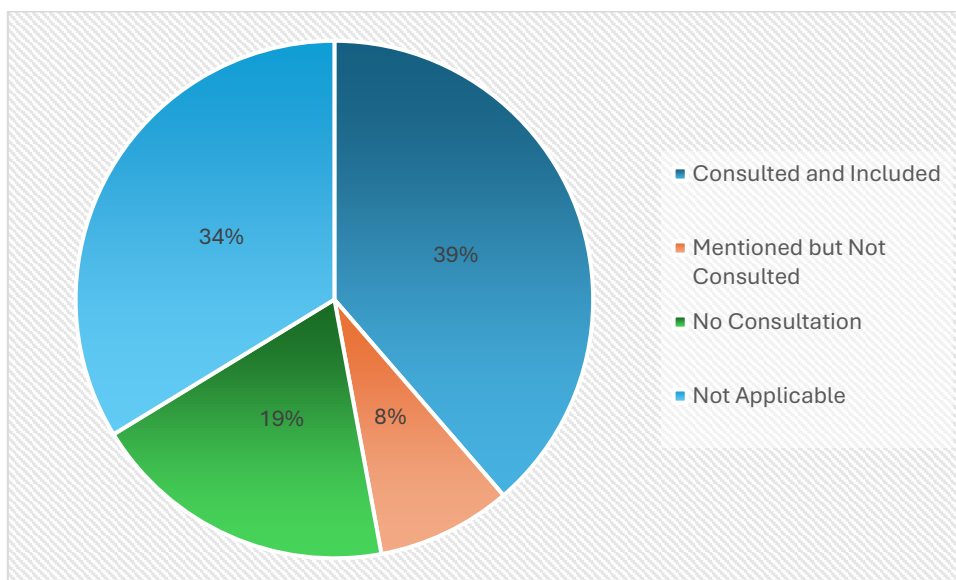


Figure 7: Consultation with PWD/Family Members

Depth of Information

The depth of information in the content varied, with the majority (50%) offering only surface-level coverage, indicating lower-quality reporting. A substantial portion (32%) provided partial or moderately detailed information, while just 18% of the content was truly in-depth, reflecting a limited focus on comprehensive coverage of disability-related topics.

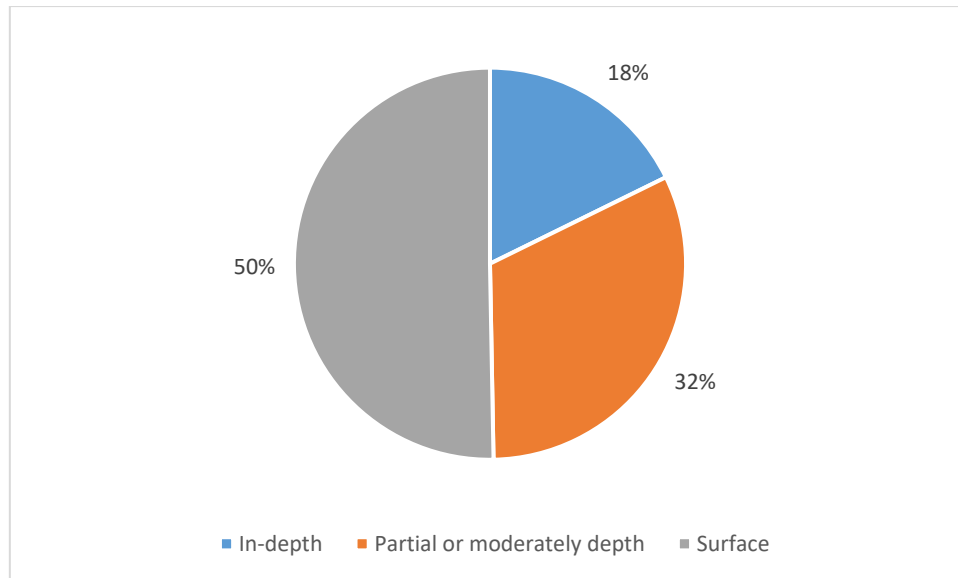


Figure 8: Depth of Information

Tone and Language

The language and tone of the content were predominantly positive, with 50% of the content reflecting a positive tone. A significant portion, 32%, maintained a neutral tone. Meanwhile, 18% of the content contained elements that could be perceived as negative at certain points or in specific contexts, highlighting a mixed portrayal of disabilities.

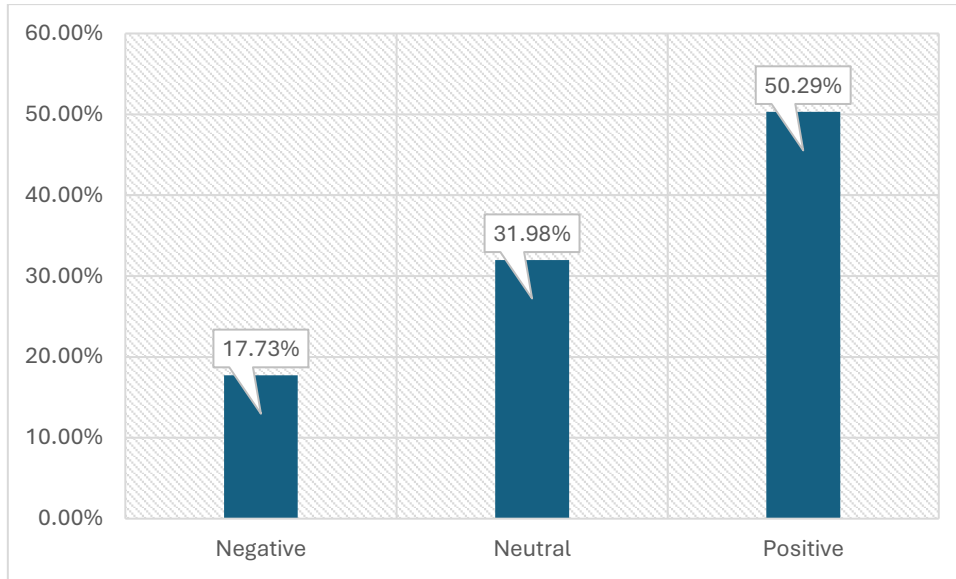


Figure 8: Language and Tone

Portrayal of Disability

The portrayal of disability in the content was mostly neutral, accounting for 38%. A significant portion, 33%, presented a mix of empowering and inspirational narratives. About 18% portrayed disabilities in an empowering light, while only 10% reflected disempowering portrayals. Stereotypical portrayals were minimal, making up just 1% of the content.

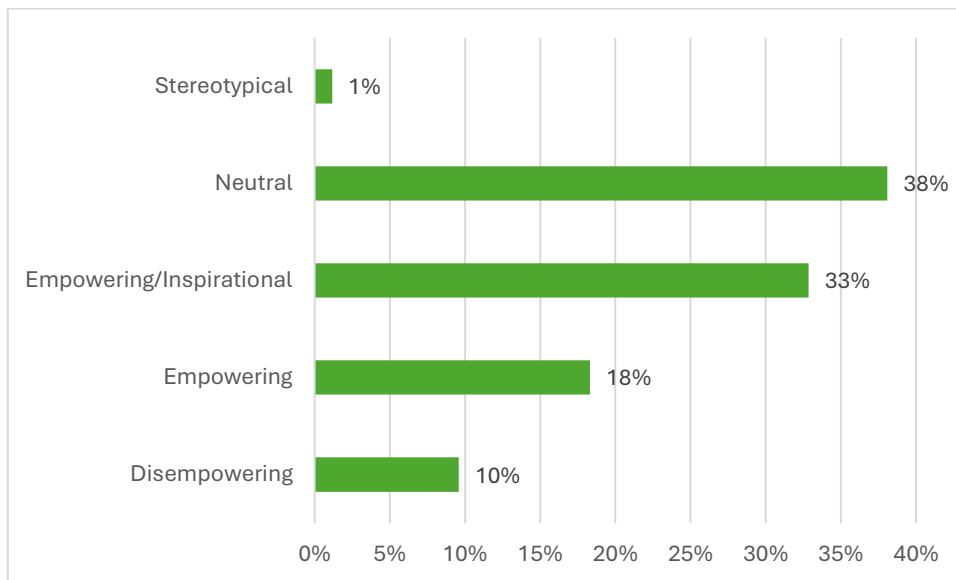


Figure 9: Portrayal of Disability

Gender Sensitivity

The analysis of gender sensitivity in the content shows that most of the content (69%) was categorized as "Not Applicable," meaning gender-related elements were not relevant in those pieces. Among the content where gender sensitivity was applicable, 20% was highly gender-

sensitive, and 8% was moderately gender-sensitive. Only a small portion, 1%, displayed gender-stereotypical elements, and 2% was not gender-sensitive.

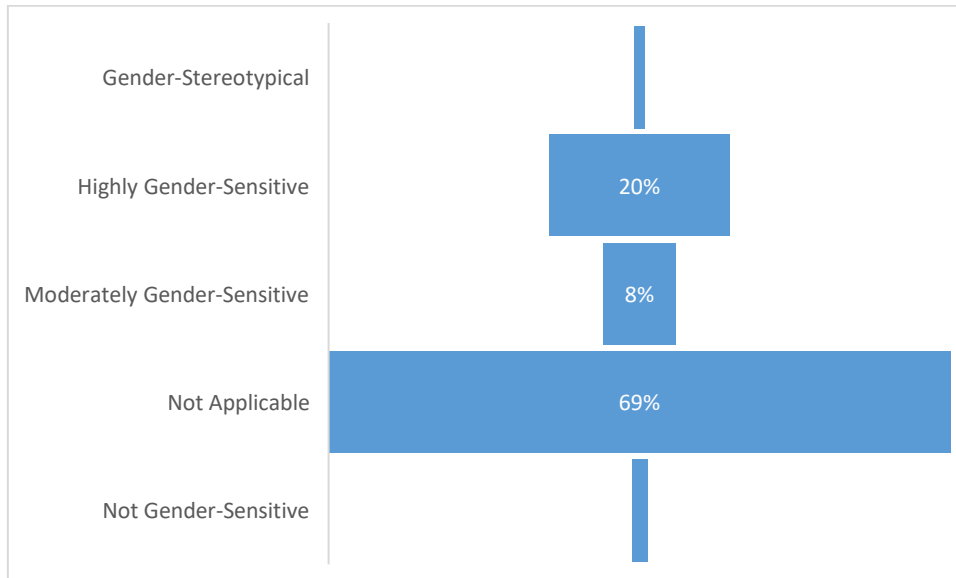


Figure 10: Gender-sensitivity

TV Bulletin: Quantitative Aspect

Number of News

The analysis of disability-related news from TV bulletins covered 32 pieces of news from five TV channels. Most of the content came from Channel I with 21 pieces from its 10:30/11:00 PM bulletin. NTV had 5 pieces from its 10:30 PM bulletin, while Somoy TV and BanglaVision had 5 and 1 piece, respectively, from their 7:30 PM bulletins. Since each channel airs multiple bulletins, only one bulletin per channel was analyzed at specific times, which may have missed relevant content from other bulletins. All the news was reported by channels' own staff and correspondents.

Key Topics and Types of Content

The TV bulletins covered a range of key topics related to disabilities. Achievements and Inspiration featured stories of individuals overcoming challenges in education, entrepreneurship, and sports. Awareness Events highlighted days like Autism Awareness Day and Mental Health Day, along with cultural and advocacy programs to raise awareness. Accessibility Issues addressed the gaps in education, healthcare, and mental health services, focusing on regional disparities. Hardship Stories shared struggles faced by individuals and families, including societal stigma and economic challenges. Finally, Policy and NGO Efforts emphasized government and NGO initiatives aimed at improving disability inclusion and supporting people with disabilities.

The TV bulletins primarily featured event coverage, which made up the majority of the content with 20 pieces. These reports focused on specific events and happenings related to disabilities. Feature reports followed with 10 stories, offering in-depth insights into various issues. Only 2

pieces were classified as analytical reports, providing detailed analysis of specific topics related to disability.

Type of Disability Addressed in News

The TV bulletins covered a range of disabilities, with autism or autism spectrum disorders being the most frequently addressed, featuring 8 stories. Other common disabilities discussed included physical disabilities and visual disabilities, each with 6 and 4 stories respectively. There were also mentions of Down syndrome, mental illness leading to disability, and multiple disabilities, which appeared less frequently with 1, 2, and 2 stories respectively. Some stories did not focus on a specific type of disability, making up 6 pieces, while 3 stories highlighted other types of disabilities.

Treatment

In terms of treatment, the disability-related content from the TV bulletins was distributed across various segments. The majority of the coverage appeared in the Prime Segment, with 14 pieces of news. Mid-Broadcast Coverage featured 8 pieces, while Low-Visibility Segments also had 8 pieces. Only 2 pieces of content were featured as the Headline/Main Story, indicating that disability-related topics were mostly placed in less prominent segments of the bulletins.

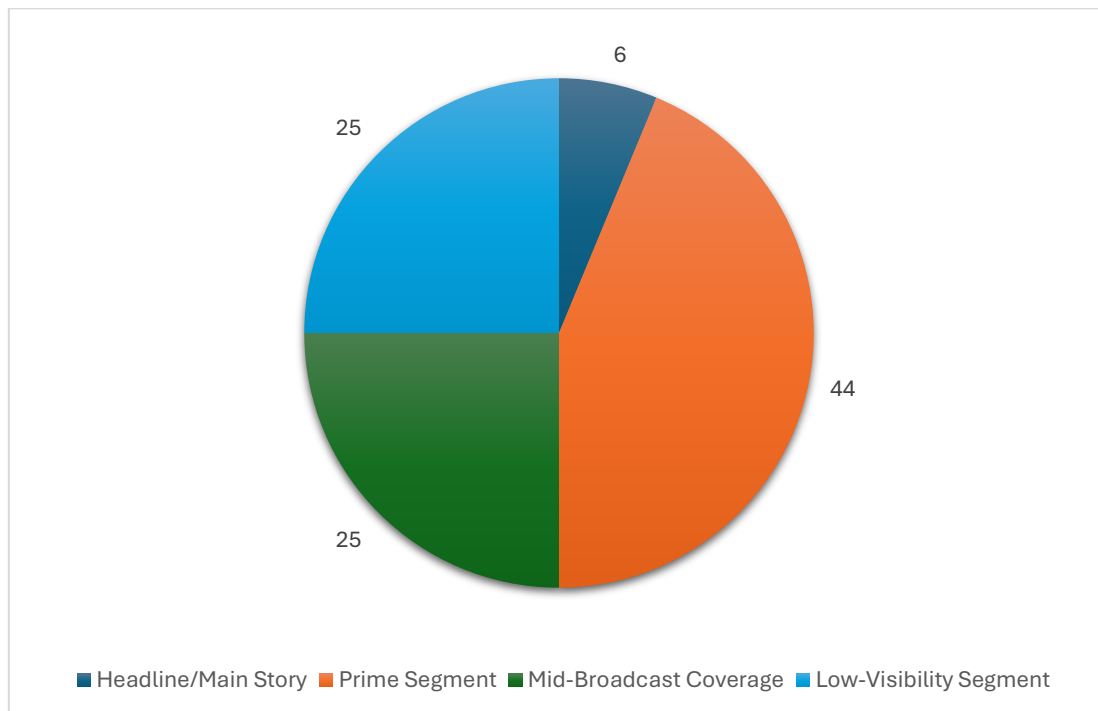


Figure 11: Treatment of TV News

TV News Qualitative Aspect

Types of News

Out of the 32 news analyzed, the majority (63%) focused on event coverage, highlighting ongoing programs, initiatives and activities related to disability issues. Feature reports made up 31% of

the content, offering more in-depth storytelling, personal narratives, and contextual insights. Meanwhile, only 6% of the articles were analytical reports, indicating a limited emphasis on critical examination, trends, or investigative perspectives on disability-related topics.

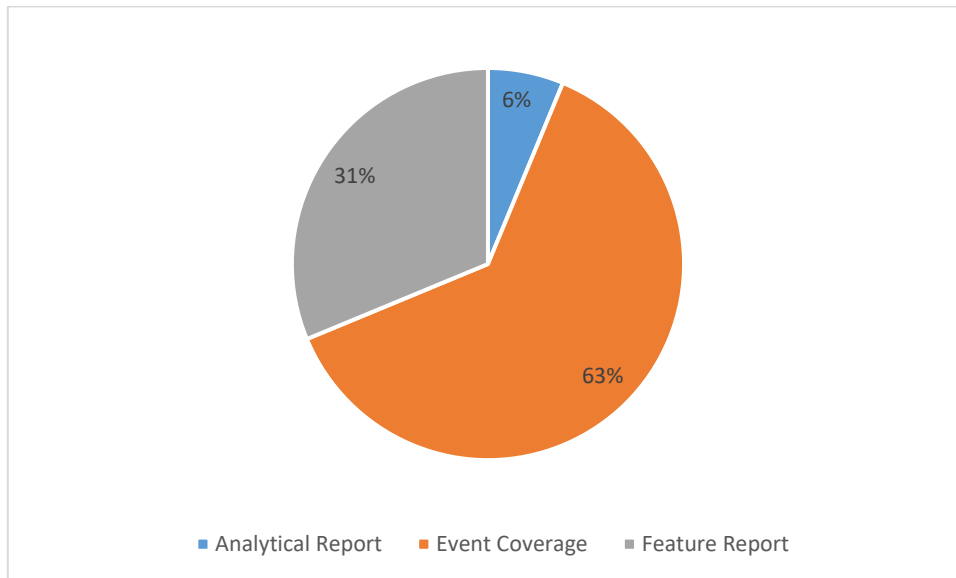


Figure 12: Types of Report

Source of Information

The sources of information for the TV bulletins varied. A significant portion of the stories (56%) relied on event coverage. Stories using multiple direct sources made up 31% of the content. Only 6% of the stories combined direct and secondary sources, while another 6% used a single direct source for gathering information. This distribution indicates that most of the news was derived from events, with a smaller portion drawing from multiple sources for more comprehensive reporting.

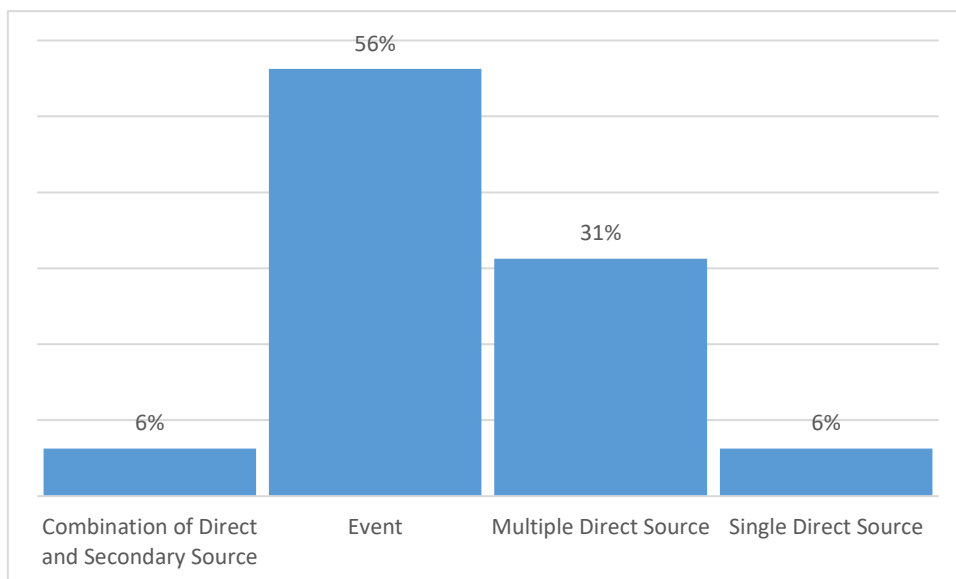


Figure 13: Source of Information

Depth of Information

The depth of information in the TV news coverage varied. 38% of the stories provided in-depth coverage on disability-related topics, while 16% offered partial or moderately detailed information. The remaining 47% only touched on the surface of the issue. This suggests that while some stories explored disability issues in detail, many others provided a more superficial or brief treatment of the subject matter.

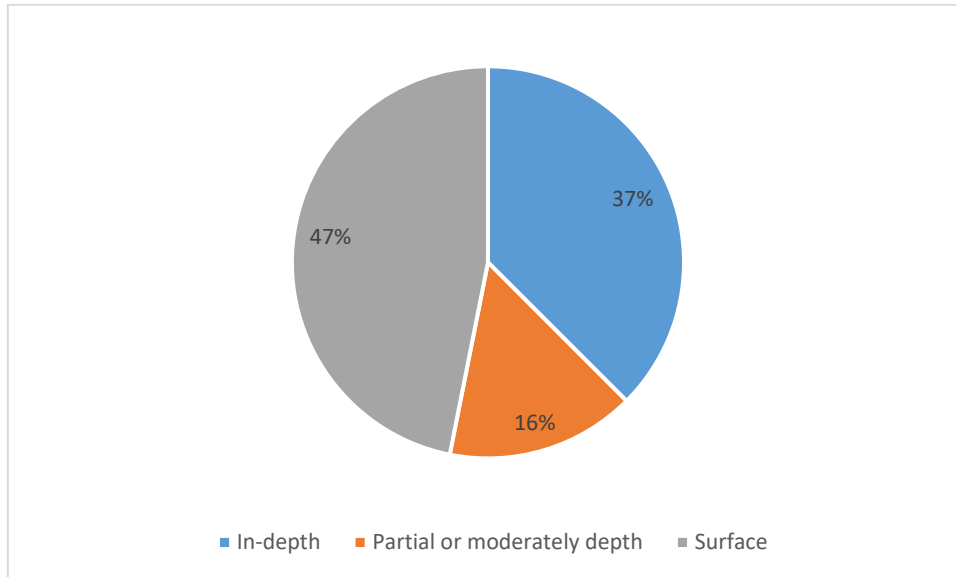


Figure 14: Depth of Information

Consultation with PWDs or Family Members

In terms of consultation with persons with disabilities (PWDs) or their family members, 38% of the stories included direct consultation and input. 6% mentioned PWDs or their families but did not involve consultation. 16% of the stories did not consult with PWDs or their families at all. For 41% of the content, consultation was not applicable, as the stories did not focus on personal experiences or interviews with PWDs.

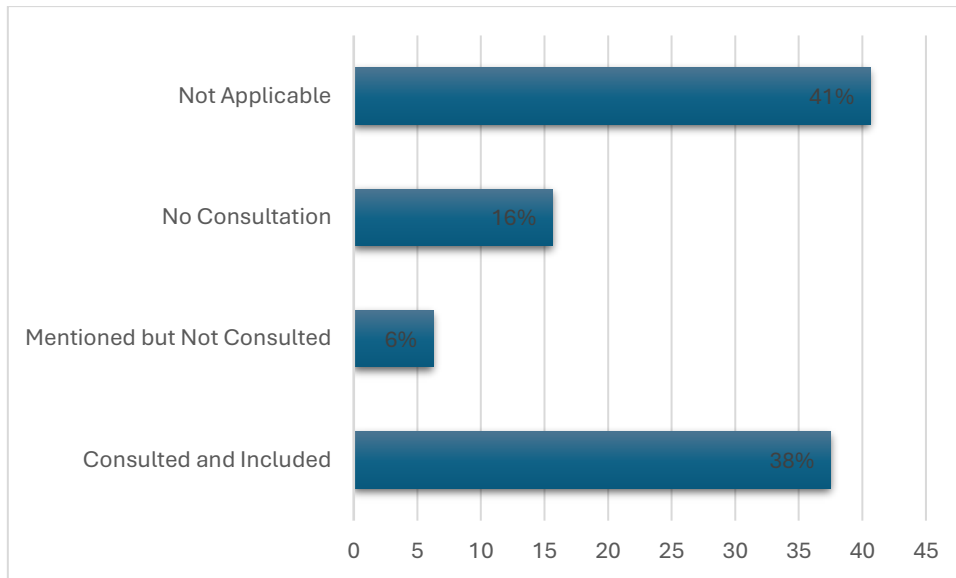


Figure 15: Consultation with PWD or Family Members

Tone and Language

In terms of tone and language, 28% of the stories used a neutral tone, while 72% presented a positive tone. The coverage generally focused on conveying an optimistic outlook on disability-related topics, with a larger proportion of stories leaning towards a positive portrayal.

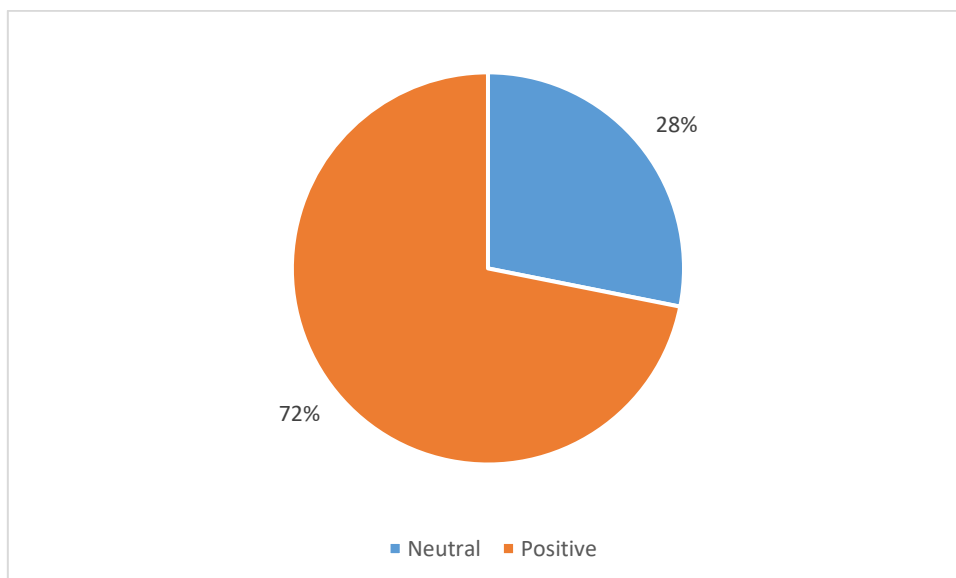


Figure 16: Tone and Language

Portrayal of Disability and Visual Representation

The portrayal of disability in the TV news coverage was largely neutral, with 59% of the stories presenting a neutral portrayal. However, 41% of the stories offered an empowering representation, highlighting the strengths and achievements of individuals with disabilities. This

shows a balanced approach in reporting, focusing on both the challenges and positive aspects of disability.

All 32 pieces of TV news analyzed demonstrated accurate and respectful visual representation of disability-related topics, indicating a positive approach in portraying individuals with disabilities in a dignified and correct manner

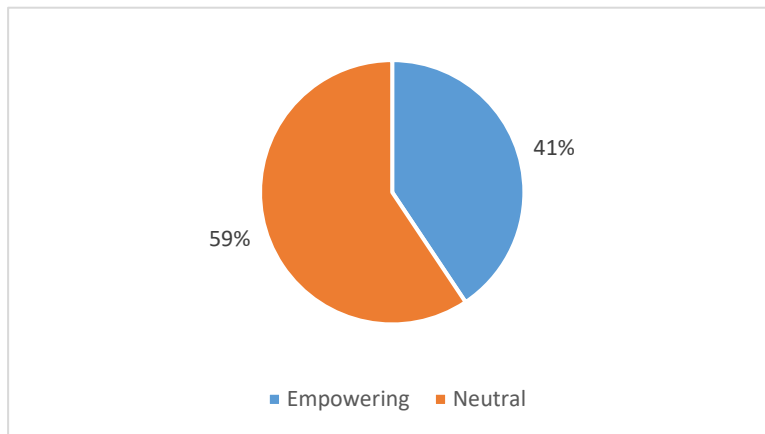


Figure 17: Portrayal of Disability

Gender Sensitivity

Out of the 32 pieces of TV news analyzed, 84% were gender-neutral, while 16% included women with disabilities. This suggests a strong focus on inclusive and neutral representation, with some content specifically highlighting the experiences of women with disabilities.

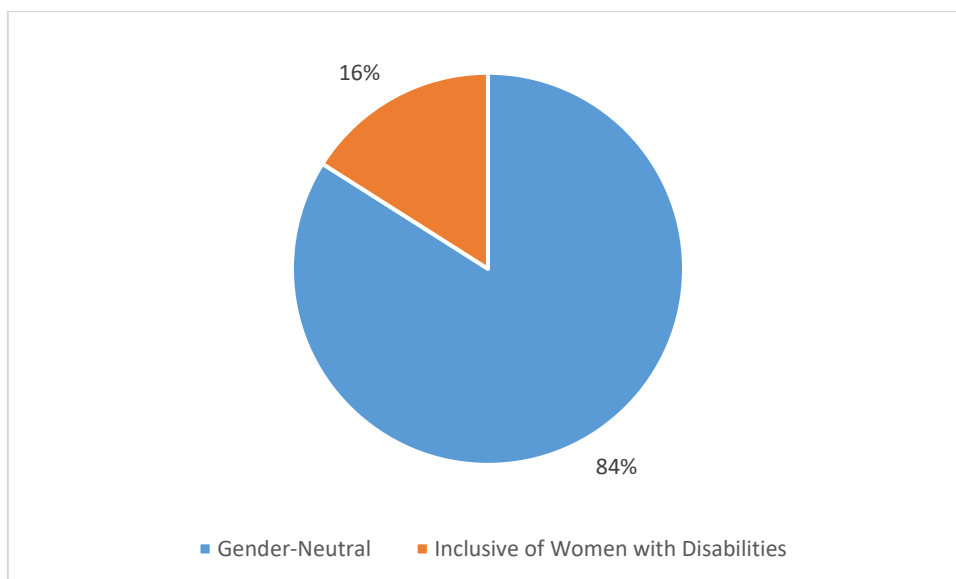


Figure 18: Gender Representation

6. Analysis and Discussion

This study provides important insights into how persons with disabilities (PWDs) are portrayed in Bangladeshi media, focusing on print, TV, and online platforms. While some progress has been made, key challenges and gaps remain:

Representation Gaps: Coverage of disability-related topics has increased but is often limited to specific events or observance days. Many stories lack depth and focus on sympathy rather than empowerment. This limits a rights-based narrative that highlights the achievements and abilities of PWDs.

Media Practices: Disability-related content is underrepresented compared to mainstream topics like politics or entertainment. Such news is often placed on less prominent pages or in secondary TV segments. Limited resources and attention from media management further reduce the impact of reporting on disability issues.

Workplace Inclusion: Some media organizations have begun including employees with disabilities, especially in digital roles. However, challenges like inaccessible workplaces, lack of proper support, and insufficient training continue to create barriers.

Content Analysis: The tone of reporting is generally neutral to positive, with respectful visual representation. However, most stories lack depth and fail to address specific disabilities effectively. There is limited consultation with PWDs or their families, which affects the richness of the narratives.

Public Perception and Impact: The media is slowly helping to reduce stigma, but its reporting often reinforces incomplete or outdated views of disability. More empowering and thoughtful storytelling is needed to foster greater inclusion and positively influence public attitudes.

7. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following actions are suggested to promote disability equality in media:

Focus on Rights-Based Reporting: Media should highlight stories that showcase the rights, achievements, and abilities of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Moving away from sympathy-driven narratives to empowerment-focused storytelling is essential.

Train Journalists on Disability Reporting: Offer training on disability-sensitive reporting, ethical practices, and inclusive storytelling. This can include workshops, online learning, and expert-led sessions to build skills and awareness.

Increase Visibility of Disability Topics: Ensure consistent coverage of disability issues by giving them prominent spaces in newspapers and prime-time slots on TV, rather than limiting them to event-based reporting.

Make Media Workplaces Inclusive: Improve workplace accessibility by providing assistive tools and creating supportive policies for employees with disabilities. Regular staff training and sensitization can create a more inclusive work environment.

Collaborate with Disability Advocates: Partner with NGOs, advocacy groups, and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to improve the representation of disability in media. Involving PWDs in storytelling can add authenticity and depth.

Develop Ethical Reporting Guidelines: Introduce editorial policies that promote respect and inclusion. Clear guidelines on language, visuals, and tone can help ensure responsible reporting.

Engage Diverse Stakeholders: Involve PWDs, their families, and disability advocates in the content creation process. This can bring varied perspectives and make narratives more meaningful and accurate.

8. The Way Forward

The study emphasizes the vital role of Bangladeshi media in promoting inclusion and equality for persons with disabilities (PWDs). While progress has been made, gaps in representation, accessibility, and workplace inclusion remain. Key priorities include adopting inclusive formats like sign language and subtitles, showcasing diverse and gender-equal portrayals, and fostering inclusive workplaces with proper accommodations. Collaborating with disability organizations and monitoring practices can further ensure sensitivity and accountability. By embracing these measures, media can help reduce stigma, uphold the dignity of PWDs, and create a more inclusive society.