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Media Representation of Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh's Business Landscape: A Gender-Based Analysis

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Abstract: **This study examined how entrepreneurs were represented in Bangladeshi media with particular attention to gender differences. Using a qualitative design, a purposive sample of 60 articles was coded for tone, narrative frames, visuals, and gendered language. In addition, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with five entrepreneurs representing diverse sectors. Results showed that while all media coverage was positive in tone, approximately 18% of articles contained explicit gendered framings, most often applied to women through family or emotional narratives. Visuals largely depicted entrepreneurs in solo or workplace contexts, but family images appeared mainly in women's stories. FGD participants confirmed unequal access to coverage, biased questioning, and the risk of misrepresentation, though they also stressed the credibility benefits of positive media visibility. The findings underscore how media both uplifts and stereotypes entrepreneurs, and they highlight the need for gender-sensitive reporting, journalist training, and systematic coverage of entrepreneurship in Bangladesh.**

Keywords**: media representation, gender, entrepreneurship, Bangladesh, content analysis, focus group.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become an increasingly important driver of Bangladesh's economic and social development, spanning startups, small businesses, and emerging digital enterprises. The media plays a pivotal role in shaping the public imagination of entrepreneurship by selecting whose stories are told, highlighting specific entrepreneurial qualities, and framing narratives that influence perceptions of legitimacy and success. In contexts like Bangladesh, where cultural norms and gender roles are deeply embedded in public life, media representation becomes more than a reflection of reality. It actively shapes the boundaries of opportunity. So, the study asked: (1) What dominant frames are used to portray. entrepreneurs? and (2) Do representations differ by gender?

Existing literature has demonstrated that gender bias in media representation remains a persistent global phenomenon. For example, Wang [1] found that over 65 percent of surveyed female entrepreneurs reported experiencing negative effects of biased reporting on their entrepreneurial spirit, while about 70 percent believed the media did not fairly represent their businesses. Such findings highlight how media narratives can reinforce inequality by dampening women's confidence and limiting their access to recognition. Other studies suggest that media depictions often confine female entrepreneurs to stereotypical frames. [2] analyzed portrayals of women in a lifestyle magazine and found that entrepreneurship was presented as domestically centered and tied to traditionally female activities. This framing not only narrowed the perceived scope of women's entrepreneurial activities but also influenced how stakeholders such as clients and financiers interacted with them. At the same time, comparative studies reveal that media play a role in strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems by transmitting shared cultural narratives. [3], in their comparative analysis of local newspapers, showed that media representations often foreground ambition, success, and innovation, which can inspire collective entrepreneurial identity. However, they also found gaps: risk-taking and failure were less visible, and representations varied across regions, reflecting differences in ecosystem maturity. Taken together, these studies show that the media does not merely mirror entrepreneurship; it constructs its meaning and legitimacy in gendered and context-dependent ways. Yet, in Bangladesh, systematic research on how entrepreneurs, especially women, are represented in the media remains limited. This paper addresses this gap through a gender-based analysis of media coverage of entrepreneurs, combining content analysis of 60 articles with focus group insights from practicing entrepreneurs.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Content Analysis

A purposive sample of 60 media articles was collected online from three leading outlets in Bangladesh: *The Daily Star* (20 articles), *Prothom Alo* (20 articles), and *The Future Startups* (20 articles). Articles were selected to capture feature-style coverage of entrepreneurs between 2020 and 2024. Each article was coded using a structured matrix covering:

Gender of entrepreneur(s) (male, female, mixed, unclear)
Business sector (e.g., tech, retail, creative industries)

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Tone (positive, neutral, negative, or mixed)
Narrative frames (e.g., innovation, success, resilience, family, policy)
Visual representation (portraits, family, workplace, product, event)
Gendered language or stereotypes (family/household emphasis, emotional framing, appearance-based descriptions, "despite being a woman," etc.)

The coding scheme was adapted from existing media studies frameworks and is provided in Appendix A.

B. Focus Group Discussion

An FGD was conducted with five entrepreneurs (two women, three men), representing diverse ages (below 18 to above 35) and sectors (clothing, crafts, edtech, marketing & advertising, and social enterprises supporting disabled people). Four of the five participants had prior media exposure through television, newspaper, or online media.

The FGD explored entrepreneurs' perceptions and experiences of media representation, focusing on themes of accessibility, fairness, gender differences, and impacts on credibility (Appendix B). The session was recorded in detailed meeting minutes and thematically analyzed.

III. RESULTS

A. Content Analysis

Table 1. Gender of Featured Entrepreneurs

Gender of Entrepreneur	Frequency	Percentage
Male	24	40.0%
Female	23	38.3%
Mixed/Multiple	11	18.3%
Not specified/unclear	2	3.3%
Total	60	100%

All articles were coded as having a positive tone.

Table 2. Narrative Frames in Articles

Narrative Frame	Prevalence	Notes
Success/Achievement	High	Awards, recognition, growth
Innovation/Leadership	High	Vision, creativity, risk-taking
Resilience/Struggle	Moderate	Overcoming barriers
Social Contribution	Moderate	Community /social impact
Technical/Business Detail	Moderate	Market, finance, product detail
Family/Human-interest	Low	Emphasized mainly for women
Policy/Institutional	Rare	Government, ecosystem focus
Controversy/Critique	Very low	Not observed in this sample

Visuals reinforced these patterns: solo portraits and workplace/team photos dominated, while family images were rare but appeared mainly in women's profiles.

About 18 percent of articles included gendered language or stereotyping. The most frequent were family/household emphasis and emotional/maternal framing. B. Focus Group Discussion

Table 3. Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Age Group	Sector	Media Exposure
P1	Male	<18	Edtech	Yes
P2	Male	26-35	Marketing & Advertising	Yes
P3	Male	26-35	Crafts	Yes
P4	Female	18-25	Clothing	Yes
P5	Female	>35	Home decor	No

Themes and Illustrative Quotes

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Access to Coverage: Media attention often required references or hype. Early ventures struggled. *"Initially, the media don't give attention; once there's hype, then they get attention".*

Selective and Biased Framing: Women-led ventures were often highlighted for novelty rather than substance.
"You all got featured because you all were girls".

Gendered Questioning: Women were asked personal or family questions, while men faced business queries.
"For men, they only ask about the business, but for women, they ask if the husband or in-laws allowed her".

Impact of Coverage: Coverage enhanced credibility but risked harm when misrepresented. *"When donors do background research, positive news is a good sign".*

Recommendations: Participants urged media reform and training. *"Media should focus on the entrepreneur's work, not gender".*

IV. DISCUSSION

The triangulation of content analysis and FGD findings paints a nuanced picture of media representation of entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. On the surface, coverage was overwhelmingly positive, yet deeper analysis reveals unequal access and gendered portrayals.

First, visibility itself is uneven. Entrepreneurs with PR support, references, or competition success were more likely to attract coverage, while early-stage founders struggled. Positive tone, therefore, conceals structural inequalities in access.

Second, gendered patterns persist. About one in five articles included stereotypes, emphasizing family roles or emotional qualities. FGD participants confirmed that women faced more personal and intrusive questioning, while men were asked strictly business-oriented questions. These framings reinforce traditional gender roles and risk undermining women's credibility.

Third, coverage functions as credibility capital. Media visibility influences donor and investor confidence, directly affecting entrepreneurial opportunities. However, sensational or tokenistic portrayals, as described in the FGD, may backfire and damage reputations.

Finally, outlet differences reflect broader editorial incentives. Mainstream dailies leaned toward human-interest and novelty, while *The Future Startups* highlighted technical and leadership narratives. This points to a tension between audience-driven virality and substantive representation.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Bangladeshi media both amplify and constrain entrepreneurship. The challenge lies not in tone but in access and framing, issues that call for more systematic and gender-sensitive media practices.

V. CONCLUSION

This study makes three contributions. First, it documents that Bangladeshi media portray entrepreneurs positively but unevenly, with access depending on PR, networks, or visibility events. Second, it highlights how gendered framings persist in nearly one-fifth of coverage, disproportionately affecting women. Third, it shows that media visibility directly influences entrepreneurial credibility, yet misrepresentation can cause reputational harm.

Limitations include the small FGD sample of five entrepreneurs and reliance on a purposive dataset of 60 articles. Broader surveys and cross-regional comparisons could enrich future work.

Practical recommendations include training journalists in gender-sensitive reporting, dedicating media segments to entrepreneurship, and supporting underrepresented entrepreneurs with communications resources. Policymakers and ecosystem actors should recognize that media narratives are not neutral but help construct entrepreneurial opportunities.

Future research should examine how new media platforms, such as YouTube and social media influencers, are shaping entrepreneurial representation in Bangladesh.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Content Analysis Coding Scheme

Variable: Gender of Entrepreneur

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- 1 = Male
- 2 = Female
- 3 = Mixed/Multiple
- 4 = Not specified/unclear

Variable: Sector

- 1 = Tech
- 2 = Retail/Trade
- 3 = Real Estate
- 4 = Finance/Banking
- 5 = Education
- 6 = Health/Pharma
- 7 = Food & Beverage
- 8 = Creative/Media
- 9 = Manufacturing
- 10 = Services (youth development, training, consulting, travel & logistics, etc.)
- 11 = Agriculture/Agri-business
- 12 = Mixed
- 13 = Other/Not specified

Variable: Tone

1 = Positive
2 = Neutral
3 = Negative
4 = Mixed (praise and critique)

Variable: Narrative Frame

- 1 = Success story (achievement, growth, recognition)
- 2 = Resilience/Struggle (overcoming barriers)
- 3 = Innovation/Leadership (visionary, risk-taking)
- 4 = Family/Human-interest (personal life, family role)
- 5 = Social contribution (impact on community/society)
- 6 = Technical/Business (strategy, finance, market detail)
- 7 = Controversy/Critique (failure, scandal)
- 8 = Policy/Institutional (government, regulation, ecosystem)

Variable: Visuals

0 = No image
1 = Solo portrait
2 = With family
3 = Team/Workplace context
4 = Product/Building focus
5 = Group photo (event/conference)

Variable: Gendered Language/Framing

- 0 = No gendered language
- 1 = Family/household emphasis
- 2 = Emotional/maternal framing
- 3 = Appearance-focused
- 4 = “Despite being a woman” framing
- 5 = Masculinity/leader trait emphasis
- 6 = Other stereotypical framing

Appendix B. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questions

[1] Could you briefly introduce yourself, your business, and have you or your business ever been featured in the media?
[2] How do you feel entrepreneurs in Bangladesh are generally represented in the media?
[3] Have you personally had any positive or negative experiences with media coverage?
[4] Do you feel that media coverage helps or hinders your business's credibility?
[5] From your perspective, do male and female entrepreneurs receive different kinds of coverage? In what ways?
[6] (To women) Do you feel your stories are framed differently compared to men?
[7] (To men) How do you perceive media coverage of women entrepreneurs compared to men?
[8] What role do you think the media should play in promoting entrepreneurship fairly across genders?
[9] What changes would you like to see in how Bangladeshi media covers entrepreneurs?

Appendix C. Media Article Sample

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