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**Narratives of Mobocracy: A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Discourse in Post-Hasina Bangladesh**

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Corpus-Based  
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**Abstract**

This study examines how mob-related incidents are represented in Bangladeshi English-language newspapers following the political transition after Sheikh Hasina's exit in August 2024, a period marked by heightened violence, instability, and public disorder. Despite growing concern over mob violence, limited research has systematically explored its media representation using corpus-based approaches in the Bangladeshi context. Adopting a Corpus-Based Discourse Studies (CBDS) framework, the study draws on a self-built corpus of 123 news articles (approximately 68,000 tokens) collected from *Bdnews24*, *The Daily Star*, *Dhaka Tribune*, and *Daily Sun* between 6 August 2024 and 1 March 2026. Using LancsBox, the analysis combines frequency, collocation, and concordance techniques to identify recurring linguistic patterns. The findings reveal that mob violence is consistently framed through themes of physical brutality, institutional response, and broader socio-political contexts. The linguistic patterns demonstrate that these incidents are presented not as isolated events but as recurring narratives linked to governance, accountability, and public concern. This study contributes to corpus-based discourse analysis by showing how patterned language use shapes media representations and influences public understanding of violence in contemporary Bangladesh.

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**Introduction**

Sheikh Hasina's downfall and a student- and public-led uprising brought Bangladesh into several years of political turmoil, ending her 16-year rule and resulting in an interim government in August 2024 (OHCHR, 2024). This was

followed during and after these protests with increasing violence, including attacks on homes, political people and citizens, while mob violence became more evident as political instability developed (Chaudhury D.R., 2025; Asia News, 2025). This also included public institutions like Prothom Alo

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and The Daily Star that mirrored wider social disorder and posed a threat to the country's stability (EUAA, 2025).

The media is one of the most important sources of information and plays a critical role in producing the ideology of violence, framing actors either similar (friends) or opposing (enemies) against each other (Entman, 1993). In mob violence, social actors (mobs, victims, and authorities) are visualized as particularly responsible, and outright agency is assigned. The media relies a lot on which groups get more blame, and which group is victimized or not involved at all; this also affects how violence is interpreted (Hassan, 2018).

This framing shapes the ways in which society understands who is responsible for violence, and how it should be combatted (Vladislavjevic, 2015). Media frames violence augmented ideologically (Abu Rumman & Haider 2022; Ghaffar & Siddique 2025), thereby creating narratives contradicting elements of society and the political elite that influence public perceptions of just punishment and a stabilizing societal order. Since ideological portrayals of violence tend to highlight specific narratives, often emphasizing victimization or criminality, they help shape how the public views violence and its causes (Aivas, 2025)

Corpus-based discourse analysis (CDA) is a method used to detect linguistic patterns in media texts, more specifically in reporting violent events such as mob violence. This enables researchers to explore prevailing lexical characteristics and how they influence media portrayals (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). This CDA method is used to disclose how ideological structures embedded within media narratives re-frame events in ways that encourage particular normative understandings of responsibility and blame (Baker, 2006). CDA is particularly relevant for the study of media reporting as it allows us to examine how violence is ideologically framed and sheds light on deeper power dynamics (Baker & Egbert, 2016).

CDA exposes the ideological framing of violence in journalistic discourses, arguing how it reflects notions of justice and accountability (Li et al., 2023). It also reveals the ideological foundations of reporting, as they foster bias and sustain narratives of blame (Lu et al., 2022). CDA enables the mapping of power relations at play in media coverage, allowing for a critical reflection on the representation of violence (Fairclough, 1995). Repetitive discursive elements (e.g., words or phrases) used in the framing of violence add to the social construction of violence and its underlying causes (Wasim et al., 2023).

One of the main challenges in corpus design is ensuring that both representation and linguistic diversity are respected. To capture the variety of public discourse, the corpus must span a wide range of media sources and linguistic styles (Brezina, Hawtin, & McEnery, 2021). The corpus must represent a variety of perspectives and language use types in order to be analyzed in a meaningful way (Bednarek, Schweinberger & Lee, 2024). Furthermore, data transparency is critical for validating and verifying discourse analysis. Transparent methods of data collection also help ensure that the analysis is

not biased and accurately reflects media portrayals of mob violence (Kemp, 2024; Gillings et al., 2023).

Corpus-assisted methods, including keyword analysis and concordance, provide powerful tools for analyzing media representations of violence that reveal linguistic patterns and expose systemic ideological biases in the coverage of mob violence (Yu et al., 2024). Corpus analysis has the merit of uncovering ideological framing and lexical/aspectual patterning inherent in media texts. In contrast to traditional approaches, which frequently depend on subjective interpretation, corpus-based analysis provides the precision and depth necessary for a systematic study of news coverage of violence (Liu, 2024; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

Existing research has shown that corpus-assisted discourse analysis is effective for examining how newspapers construct representations of protest, violence, and ideological difference in public discourse. Abu Rumman and Haider (2022) demonstrate this in their analysis of protest movement coverage, while Attia and Romero-Trillo (2022) show how violent crisis reporting is shaped through patterned media language. Similarly, Samaie and Malmir (2017) reveal how recurring discourse patterns sustain ideological representation in news media. However, little attention has been paid to how Bangladeshi English-language newspapers represent mob-related incidents through recurring lexical and thematic patterns and their evaluative implications. (Goloshchuk & Tomczak-Boczek, 2025).

**Research Objective:** To examine how mob-related incidents are represented in Bangladeshi English-language newspapers through recurring lexical, collocational, and thematic patterns.

**Table 1: Research Design**

Approach	A Corpus-Based Approach
Method	Corpus-based method
Sampling Area	English-language Bangladeshi news outlets
Selected Outlets	Bdnews 24, Daily Star, Dhaka Tribune, Daily Sun
Sampling Type	Purposive Sampling
Sampling Size	123 News Articles

### Research Approach

This research followed a corpus-based linguistic approach. Corpus linguistics has significantly developed over recent decades, expanding its methodological sophistication and interdisciplinary applications (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Biber et al., 1998). According to Baker (2006), there are five

key merits of the corpus-based approach: (1) helps to recognize the “big picture,” (2) indicates areas of interest, (3) allows for closer (qualitative) analysis, (4) enables the examination of a large number of instances of a specific pattern (through concordance), and (5) allows triangulation/checking of intuition (10–21, 175–181). This approach enables a more robust and efficient study of linguistic data, allowing researchers to formulate more reliable interpretations and generalizations about prevalent discourses within a corpus. (Semino & Short, 2004).

### Research Method

This study followed a computational corpus-based method. The tool LancsBox X Edition 5.5.1. (Brezina & Platt, 2025), a corpus-analysis software package developed at Lancaster University, was used in this study. This software is free for non-commercial use and includes powerful features, such as frequency wordlists, keywords, data visualization, a KWIC (keyword in context) tool, and an N-gram tool. Scholars (McEnery and Hardie, 2012; Weisser, 2016, p. 170) have warned that when researchers want to take advantage of the capabilities of different software, it should be noted that the results may be inconsistent with one another, as different software may produce differing results due to different core algorithms, tagging systems, and definitions of “word.” Therefore, LancsBox v.5.5.1. was used as the sole tool for the corpus analysis.

### Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to identify newspaper articles specifically centered on mob-related incidents in Bangladesh. This strategy was appropriate because the study targeted a bounded discourse domain rather than general news coverage (Gablasova et al., 2017; Biber, 1993). Articles were retrieved through Google Advanced Search from the selected English-language Bangladeshi news outlets. An initial screening of search results was conducted using the keyword “mob” to identify relevant lexical patterns. Based on that pilot screening, the search string was refined to “mob OR mob attack OR mob killed OR lynched OR beaten to death.” Only articles centrally focused on mob-related incidents were retained, while irrelevant results were excluded (Table 1-3).

### Data collection

Four English-language outlets were selected to collect the data. These outlets are: BDNews24, Daily Star, Daily Sun, and Dhaka Tribune. The outlets were selected based on the updated SCImago Media Ranking. The key theme of this study was to examine “mob” incidents in Bangladesh. The Google Advanced Search option was optimized, with the timeline set from “6th August 2024 to 1 March 2026” and the keyword implied there. In the search bar option, the articles were first searched by outlet, and then 123 were retrieved from the official source.

**Table 2. SCImago ranking positions of the selected English-language Bangladeshi news outlets**

Rank	Outlet	Domain	Overall Score
481	The Daily Star	thedailystar.net	59.00
1277	Bdnews24	Bdnews24.com	50.50
1923	Dhaka Tribune	Dhakatribune.com	46.25
2705	The Daily Sun	Daily-sun.com	41.75

*Source note.*

[https://www.scimagoedia.com/rankings.php?country=Bangladesh&language=English&edition=2025\\_03](https://www.scimagoedia.com/rankings.php?country=Bangladesh&language=English&edition=2025_03)

**Table 3. Distribution of retrieved articles across the selected news outlets**

Newspaper name	Number of articles retrieved
The Daily Star	32
Bdnews24	38
Dhaka Tribune	35
The Daily Sun	18
Total	123

### Corpus Building

All the retrieved articles were first saved as DOCX files by each outlet. Since the articles were copied directly from the official sources, they were manually cleaned by removing dates, advertisements, tags, photos, sources, and other non-textual material. Then, each Word file for each outlet was converted into TXT format. Subsequently, the four TXT files were uploaded to LancsBox X. As decisions made at the corpus-building stage can have far-reaching consequences for the quality of research based on them (Gablasova, Dana, Brezina, Vaclav, & McEnery, Tony, 2019), this study first examined the quality of the self-built corpus and finalized a corpus of 123 articles and approximately 68,000 tokens.

### Result

#### Keyword analysis (Frequency-Based Approach)



get the recurring context-specific key topics that had been covered in the corpora (Rahimi, 2026) (Table 4).

**Table 4. Thematic Categorisation of the Top 100 Content Keywords in the Corpus**

Theme	Representative Keywords	Proportion
Violence and Disorder	mob, violence, attacks, attack, vandalised, incidents, death, fire, incident, attacked, killed, mobs, uprising, beaten, vandalism	20.44%
Media, Reporting, and Attribution	said, media, daily, star, prothom, according, alo, added, journalists, report, statement, called	15.69%
Law, Justice, and Security Response	police, justice, law, rights, action, enforcement, state, freedom, cases, accused, legal, security, order, arrested	15.46%
Politics, Leadership, and Institutions	government, political, sheikh, md, league, interim, former, awami, chief, institutions, election, party	11.16%
Social, Civic, and Cultural Actors	people, public, social, human, group, society, students, chhayanaut, individuals, citizens, cultural, movement	10.39%
Time, Chronology, and Process	set, take, night, during, last, august, december, time, year, following, july, new, taken, took, day	9.91%
Place and Physical Setting	Bangladesh, Dhaka, country, station, office, building, home, house, shrine, area	9.06%
Discourse Framing, Stance, and Connectors	also, about, even, situation, however, including, general, fear, what	7.32%
Numerals	Numeric expressions	0.57%

The proportions were calculated using a total frequency base of 9,448, representing the cumulative raw frequency of the top 100 content keywords; thematic percentages were derived by dividing each theme’s total frequency by this base, resulting in

proportions that collectively approximate 100%. The thematic distribution set out in Table shows that discourse about mob violence is built through several intersecting domains, not just a single dominant narrative. The actual cooccurrence of keywords related to violence, legal processes, political actors, and media-related framing occurred at high frequencies in press releases news articles, suggesting that mob violence is framed by news reporting within broader institutional and socio-political contexts. They highlight the ways in which governance, accountability and public interpretation also modulate layers of representation beyond episodic reporting.

**Collocation analysis of the node word “mob”**

Collocation means the systematic co-occurrences of two words with frequency above chance in a specific corpus. In other words, A collocation is “a collection of the occurrences of a word-form, each in its own textual environment (Sinclair, 1991:32). Collocation denotes the relationship between a node word or ‘an item whose total pattern of co-occurrence with other words is under examination’ and its collocates or ‘any one of the items which appear with the node within a specified span’ within a particular span (Sinclair et al., 2004, p. 10). In this study, the keyword “mob” was analyzed in Graphcoll to identify its collocates. Among the 1,394 overall collocations, the keyword “mob” had 133 collocates. Those 133 collocates were then manually checked, and only the content words were selected. The content-based collocations were then categorized based on their semantic preferences which are nothing but groups of words that tend to collocate with certain words. In other words, “the relation, but not between the individual words, but between a lemma or a word form and a set of semantically related words. (Stubbs, 2001:65). The categorizations of the collocates further mirror the thematic configurations (Table 5).

**Table 5. Semantic Preferences of the Content Collocates of the Node Word "Mob"**

Semantic preference	Content collocates extracted from the graph
Violence, bodily harm, and disorder	violence, attack, attacks, beating, beatings, beaten, killed, killings, death, deaths, lynching, incidents, surge, rise
Law, justice, and control	justice, police, law, cases, action, prevent, rule, tolerate, tolerated
Media and reporting	media, journalists, said
Political and national context	government, political, Bangladesh, country
Social actors	people, individuals

Semantic preference	Content collocates extracted from the graph	Law, justice, stance against any form of mob justice". and control
Temporal and event progression	august, recent, last, become, involved, result in end, number	Contacted, Lawyer Sara Hossain is not sufficient. Laws concerning mob justice should be enacted as is no such thing as mob violence. The police are working Azad: "Empower the police, end mob rule The frightening number of take stringent action to prevent mob justice' Police say they will
Cultural/public concern	culture, concern	Media and of mob violence against media Mob attacks on reporting leading media outlets as well as the orchestrated mob violence against independent journalists and general secretary, Laisa Ahmed Lisa. Mob attacks on Star, Prothom Alo journalists. Police sound alarm as mob attacks intensify Despite assurances from questioning the government's response to mob violence targeting leading newspapers, Prothom

**Concordance analysis of the node word- "mob"**

Apart from utilizing the top content collocates categorized by their semantic preferences, concordance analysis was utilized, which aims at scrutinizing the co-occurring words that frequently appear around the node words (J. Sinclair, 1991, p.170). The node word "mob" was searched on the Keywords-in-context (KWIC) feature of the Lanc box. For the conditioning, the span was set to five words to the left and five words to the right of the node word, as this is commonly considered a useful range for examining collocational patterns. This means some entries stop mid-clause (e.g., ending on "political" or "one of"), which is expected in concordance presentation and should be retained (Table 6).

The result showed 447 concordance lines of the node word "mob". As in the previous subsection, the collocations of the node words were categorized based on their semantic preferences. The 447 concordances were critically examined, and based on the existing themes of the collocates, the strongest representative concordances were manually selected and then extracted in the table. This assures the qualitative interpretations of the themes surrounding the keyword and its collocates. Additionally, as only the function words were selected, it scrutinizes the representativeness of the co-current themes around the node word.

**Table 6. Representative KWIC Concordance Lines for the Node Word "Mob" by Semantic Preference**

Semantic preferences	Strongest-matched concordance lines (KWIC; node highlighted)
Violence, bodily harm, and disorder	Masud was killed by a mob while he was buying medicine Penal Code. In cases of mob beatings leading to death, all 179 people were killed in mob attacks between August 2024 last acting with impunity Incidents of mob lynching spiked with 21 people 5. On March 6, a mob stormed and ransacked a flat

rights activist Nur Khan Liton. Mob violence becomes frequent amid political  
over the rising trend of mob violence in the country and  
of 40 percent. Govt condemns mob violence, vows justice for attacks  
termed the indirect endorsement of mob violence by certain government high-ups.  
of mob violence in Bangladesh Mob violence has become one of  
people were reportedly killed in mob violence. According to the Human  
many people faced action for mob violence, he said, 'I don't  
21 people were killed in mob beatings, up from 10 deaths  
country. Some individuals were using mob beatings as a means of  
April 6, 2025, 'Why can't mob violence be contained?' demands urgent  
21 people were killed in mob attacks in January alone, double  
the number of deaths in mob violence spiked recently, it has  
has recorded 111 deaths from mob violence between January this year  
Ahmed has categorically declared that mob culture will not be tolerated  
been labelled "mob justice" or "mob culture", though they are neither  
to normalise impunity,' he said. Mob culture and resilience in sensible  
the results, overall concern about mob violence stands at 80%, concern

## Discussion

Using a corpus-based discourse analytical approach, this study aimed to investigate the representation of mob related incidents in English language newspapers in Bangladesh. Analyses of lexical frequency, collocational patterns and concordance contexts illuminated discursive structures through which news coverage was framed. The results point to three high-level themes in the narrative: and disorder media attribution and institutional response, wider socio-political framing. The following dialogue helps to understand that these behaviors shall be read in this light, as they will inform us of how a cartography of the representational practices on mob-related happenings (and its media discourse) is articulated.

As indicated by the keyword distribution, themes of violence and disorder as well as institutional reaction represent a significant portion of news discourse (Entman, 1993). The domination of violence related wording contextualizes mob events as public disasters rather than simply individual crimes (Hassan, 2018). This attention to attributions of responsibility and institutional responses works its way through the media-reporting and law-justice terms also in relation to coverage (Vladislavjevic, 2015). Political and social actor keywords link the mob violence to broader national and societal tensions (Abu Rumman & Haider, 2022). And together, these patterns show how the media framing process shapes public understanding of violence as well as accountability (Entman, 1993) in selective ways.

The semantic field surrounding the word ‘mob’ is consistent and anchored in concepts of violence and disorder, as shown through the collocation patterns (Baker 2006: 163). Killing, beating, attacking and dying are often associated with riots in news discourse (Lu et al., 2022), intensifying the sense of collective brutality. This continued redundancy with police, justice, law and action places institutional control of the body as well as institutional accountability at its center (Fairclough, 1995). Media and political collocates frame mob violence, more broadly, in the context of public governance and national discourse (Baker & Egbert, 2016). The systematic association of these terms reflects ideologically conditioned framing rather than random lexical co-occurrence in news media (Li et al., 2023).

A concordance-based analysis offers the most explicit contextual evidence of how “mob” operates in news discourse (Brezina et al., 2021). The “mob” is repeatedly collocated with each such reference to killing, beating, attacks and violence in KWIC lines, creating the impression of collective harm (Yu et al., 2024). Many cases also link the term to police action, justice and legal response mechanisms (Liu, 2024). Such representations, however, go beyond isolated events, and just as well referring to broader societal discourse (Bednarek et al., 2024; political and public concern contexts). Such concordance patterns together reinforce the sense of a coordinated, ideologically framed coverage evolving into dominant narrative themes centered on mob violence (Gillings et al., 2023).

## Limitations of the Study

When interpreting the results of this study, it is essential to acknowledge several methodological limitations that may affect the interpretation and transferability of the findings.

Firstly, the use of purposive sampling was used to collect data from the English-language-based newspaper outlets. If the prominent Bengali newspapers were selected, the data would be more robust and have much diversification.

Secondly, the data of this self-built corpus was only from a focused timeline from 6h august 2024 to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026. However, this specificity only ensures the phenomenon of the study is deeply rooted in the most specific context and time.

Thirdly, the analysis is solely based on the self-built corpus, which has data from 4 distinct newspaper outlets. However, this study only focused on finding out the thematic features as a whole; if the outlets were compared and contrasted, the verbatim of exquisite features of the news editorial specific features could have been identified.

Fourthly, the potential for researcher bias should be considered. The researcher’s prior familiarity to the events of the core theme—“mob”—may have influenced his analysis. Thus, the systematic software-derived analytical method validates the analysis to be re-examined in the same way.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable exploratory insights into the corpus-based discourse analysis by using modern software specifically in the media discourse of mobocracy.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and thematic insights of this study, several targeted recommendations are proposed to enhance corpus-based discourse analysis, especially on media discourse. Each recommendation directly corresponds to the core themes and evidence identified in the research.

Firstly, media organizations may consider improving multilingual accessibility by publishing news content in both native and English languages. Such practices would enhance accessibility for wider audiences and facilitate academic analysis across linguistic contexts. With the advancement of digital technologies and artificial intelligence-assisted translation systems, multilingual publication has become increasingly feasible.

Secondly, the researchers may collect data from two different timelines, especially with a difference of a decade. This diachronic variant analysis may also enable the researcher to find out different linguistic patterns across different timelines.

Thirdly, the researchers may use other software like AntConc, USAS Web Tagger, etc. As this study was purely based on the

thematic and lexical pattern, by implementing different software, they may be able to analyze the grammatical features of the contents as well.

Finally, the researchers may focus on building corpora for different discourses like classroom, office, and society. As corpus-based discourse primarily focuses on written discourse, spoken discourse across various settings can also unleash significant features of human attribution and human psychology as well.

## Conclusion

This study explored the representation of incidents related to mob violence in two Bangladeshi English-language newspapers using a corpus-based discourse analytical framework. The joint analysis of the keywords, collocations and concordances showed recurring discursive patterns across news about all those events. These act as frames for mob incidents in terms of the violence being committed, how institutions respond, and framing through larger structures of society and politics. Instead of treating events as neutral facts, the news discourse exhibited structured and patterned linguistic representation. As such, repeating lexical and contextualizing choices played actively in how mob-related events were constructed and thus understood through the lens of media narratives.

Corpus-based discourse studies applying to the locale of Bangladeshi English language journalism are furthered as this research investigates the media representations. These findings provide deeper understanding of how linguistic patterns influence media framing of mob related violence from social perception perspective.” The study uncovers structured discursive tendencies that emphasize the systematic yet participatory role of media language in shaping public understanding and construction of meaning. Overall, the analysis highlights the ongoing potential of corpus-based analytical methods for analyzing contemporary media discourse critically

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