

# Editorial articles as source of information on COVID-19: A study of “The Telegraph”

**Swapna Banerjee**

University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India

**Tania Sarkar**

University of Calcutta, Kolkata, India

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to analyze the information on COVID-19, as reflected through the editorial articles, and to find out how these articles will benefit the scientists, policymakers, researchers, and librarians etc.

**Methodology:** The contents of the editorial articles of the newspaper were examined using content analysis method to find out what kind of information they served and appropriate keywords were selected pertaining to the COVID-19 issue.

**Findings:** Total 43 keywords were found from the articles which were analyzed to find out on which facet of COVID-19 the newspaper stressed.

**Research limitations:** The present study is limited to only one national newspaper widely circulated in West Bengal. The time span chosen covered the first wave of the pandemic i.e., from March 2020 to March 2021. Only editorial articles of the newspaper are taken for the study.

**Originality:** To the best of the researcher's understanding, this type of work has seldom been undertaken in the country. This type of research is very much required to aware the public regarding COVID-19, and the steps taken by the Government in combatting it.

**Social implications:** The role of newspaper in society is noteworthy, especially when newspapers concentrate on some news related to the health education scenario, and especially if it is very much in the public interest. The editors have a great role to play in bringing out the exact scenario of COVID-19 to the public. Therefore, this work has a great social implication.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, editorial articles, social media, frontliners.

## **1. Introduction**

Media plays a major role in our daily life. It keeps us updated about the happenings of the world. Every form of media i.e. electronic media, print media, etc. plays important role in spreading information. Newspaper is a rich source of information. Newspapers gave us various information on COVID-19 as they were publishing several articles on COVID-19 every day. They kept us informed about the impact of COVID-19 in the world, how to fight and prevent COVID-19.

Editorial articles are the articles where the editors express their opinion, based on various findings, on recent issues. The editors of any newspaper are the experienced and knowledgeable persons. Editorial articles form the most important part of a newspaper, because the important coverage on any aspect is the responsibility of the editor and it can be assumed that editorial articles will never give any misinformation or fake news. As the editorial articles reflect the opinion of the editor on certain issue, we get to know what they are thinking about that issue. Editorial articles commonly appear on a dedicated page in the newspaper and generally they do not contain the writer's names. These editorial articles are rich sources of information.

Though Medical Science is playing the most important role in the fight against the pandemic, other sectors are also playing pivotal roles. Media, both print and electronic is one of the most important of these. For conducting research in this field, information from different spheres is very much necessary. Media is providing the information as and when necessary. Whenever we open any newspaper or any other media channel, we find several news on COVID-19 pandemic. Several newspapers published numerous editorial articles on COVID-19 pandemic from the very first day of the pandemic and they are still being published. Research in this area is reflected through the editorial articles on COVID 19, published in various newspapers all over the world. When we were stuck in home because of the pandemic, the media gave us information on different issues related to COVID-19 pandemic.

## **2. Statement of problem**

There is a need to sum up the editorial articles of leading newspapers as much as possible to find out the information they are serving about the pandemic. This is important because many information get unnoticed in the various newspapers. The people in editorial board of the newspapers are highly knowledgeable and in these editorial articles they provide their opinions regarding the recent issues. The editorial articles provide in short, the information of recent incidents in the country. So, these editorial articles on the pandemic are rich with information as well as the views of knowledgeable persons, which in turn are rich sources for research. Keeping these facts in mind, the present study focuses in gathering editorial articles on COVID-19 of leading newspapers in India and analyzing the information they provide.

### **3. Background of the study**

COVID-19 is a contagious disease which is caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus. The first case of COVID-19 pandemic was confirmed on December 1, 2019, in China and India confirmed the first case on January 30, 2020 in Kerala. On 30th January 2020 COVID-19 was declared as Public Health Emergency of International Concern by World Health Organization (WHO) and on 11th March 2020 it was declared as a global pandemic. We lost many people because of COVID-19. Till date the number of total deaths across the world is 53.5Lakhs and in India the number is 4.78 lakhs. The entire world is fighting together against the pandemic. Doctors, nurses and the whole medical science are striving to defeat the virus. With the rapid progress in research, vaccine is already ready, and people are getting vaccinated in entire world.

Editorial articles are the articles where the editors express their opinion, based on various findings, on recent issues. The editors of any newspaper are the experienced and knowledgeable persons. Editorial articles form the most important part of a newspaper, because the important coverage on any aspect is the responsibility of the editor and it can be assumed that editorial articles will never give any misinformation or fake news. As the editorial articles reflect the opinion of the editor on certain issue, we get to know what they are thinking about that issue. Editorial articles commonly appear on a dedicated page in the newspaper and generally they do not contain the writer's names. These editorial articles are rich sources of information.

### **4. Literature review**

AlAfna (2020) presented a paper that examined the media bias, media ideologies and dominance of two newspaper articles on COVID-19. The paper revealed that the topics which were foregrounded by the American newspaper, were backgrounded by the Chinese newspaper and vice versa. Eminent researchers Apuke and Omar (2020) viewed different aspects of media coverage in Nigeria. They paid attention to the frequency and depth of coverage, story format, news sources, media tone and themes of four popular newspapers between February 2020 and April 2020 to understand how they covered the information of COVID-19 pandemic. Asad, Srivastava and Verma (2020) in their study examined the “temporal growth” of COVID-19 in India up to 4th August 2020. They found that at first death count in Indian states was similar to infection counts. They concluded that in the time span of their study, most of the states were still not close to the flattening of the COVID-19 curve. Dutta (2020) in his study sought to find that the kind of social media used to spread learning resources to the students. The paper also explained the effectiveness of e-learning. Ghosh, Nundy and Mullick (2020) presented a paper where they studied the impacts of COVID-19 in India. In this work, they discussed how India is prepared to handle the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, dealing with the current situation such of COVID-19 lockdown. They examined how lockdown due to COVID-19 affected Indian economy, human lives, and environment.

Jena (2020) presented a paper in which he showed that like all other domains, the education system of India has got a major setback due to COVID-19 pandemic. In his study, he found that around 32 crore learners have stopped education during this pandemic. The paper showed some measures which are taken by Government of India to give continuous education in India. Jena suggested some measures to continue educational activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kapasia et al. (2020) in their study tried to measure the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on Graduate and Undergraduate students in West Bengal. They found out that 70% students studied in online education. They also found that students faced several problems related to depression, anxiety, poor internet connectivity, and unfavorable study environment at home. Students from remote areas and marginalized sections faced enormous challenges in e-learning during this pandemic. The study suggested that strategies are urgently needed to build a strong education system in the state. Msugther and Phillips (2020) in their study showed that media coverage on COVID-19 is more inclined towards economic and financial crisis in Nigerian newspapers. The articles which were published between February and May 2020 in two popular newspapers of Nigeria cased the pandemic more as economic and financial crisis –downplaying the important aspects such as health, safety, or quality of life. Naeem, Bhatti and Khan (2020) presented a paper in which they tried to seek types and sources of misinformation in social media. They found out and analyzed 1225 pieces of COVID-19 fake news stories taken from fact-checkers, myth-busters, and COVID-19 dashboards. The study concludes that the COVID-19 infodemic is full of false news, “half backed conspiracy theories” regarding COVID-19. The study suggested that fake news in social media is harmful for people and care should be taken in providing accurate information.

Onwe et al. (2020) did content analysis of online newspapers’ reportage of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Their study showed that the newspapers did their duty of informing the general people about different aspects like prevalence and fatalities and the preventive measures to be taken to stop the pandemic. The study also showed that the selected online newspapers’ reportage (February to March 2020) of COVID-19 were done in such ways that made the audience nervous even before the eventual outbreak of the pandemic. Parvin et al. (2020) presented a paper and in their study has discussed how the Asian Print media has portrayed the pandemic. They have chosen the editorial articles five Asian newspapers between January 20th, 2020, and March 31st, 2020, and discussed their approach towards Pandemic and several aspects which are associated with life in pandemic. Tejedor et al. (2020) seeks to understand the representation of the corona crisis by the newspapers of Italy and Spain. They studied 72 front pages of the newspapers and analyzed the data for this. Thomas et al. (2020) in their study discussed how Australian media places responsibility for COVID-19 in Australia. Chipidza et al. (2021) in their study compared early coverage of COVID-19 Pandemic in different media and noticed there was a lack of news on public health and the news was mainly related to epidemic, politics, and economy. Hammes et al. (2021)

conducted a study on the newspaper coverage of top 3 newspapers of 25 countries to understand how they presented the data of COVID-19 to their readers. After studying 75 newspapers they found inconsistencies in reporting of COVID-19 epidemiological data. Swathi and Babu (2021) in their study showed how the news coverage of COVID-19 lost its vigor with time. To show this, they reviewed the articles of two popular newspapers of India between March and August 2020. Zafri et al. (2021) did a content analysis of 7209 newspaper articles that were published in three eminent newspapers of Bangladesh on COVID-19 between January and October 2020.

Very Little research has been done on the aspect of communication of COVID-19 related editorial articles in newspapers up to now in not only Library Science, but also in other fields like Journalism and Media Science. Therefore, this study will pave the way to better understand the role of editorial articles in newspaper in combatting COVID-19. This will be helpful for the citizens of a country to be aware of the real situation in the pandemic.

## **5. Objective of the study**

The specific objectives of the study are–

- i. To analyze the information on COVID-19 as reflected through the editorial articles.
- ii. To find out how these articles will benefit the scientists, policymakers, researchers, and librarians etc.

## **6. Hypotheses**

The study will undertake to provide following hypotheses:

- i. The editorial articles are rich in information about the pandemic.
- ii. The articles cover almost all the relevant, associated factors of the pandemic.
- iii. The articles are utilized to the maximum by the researchers of various fields.

## **7. Methodology**

The method employed in this study is content analysis method. The contents of the editorial articles of the newspaper were examined to find out what kind of information they served. The content of the editorial articles was read very carefully, and appropriate keywords were selected pertaining to the COVID-19 issue. The keywords were selected in “The Telegraph” directly from the content.

The standard vocabulary of the keywords pertaining to the COVID-19 were scanned, and it was found that a glossary of COVID-19 terms was prepared by LIS professionals which was published in the leading newspapers and also in subject journal. The keywords were matched with this vocabulary and some additional keywords were coined by the researcher. Then the frequency of occurrence of these keywords was matched in these newspapers.

### **7.1 Scope and coverage**

The newspaper “The Telegraph” was chosen since this newspaper has the largest circulation in Kolkata. The editorial articles of this newspaper from March 2020 to March 2021 were studied and a total of 153 editorial articles from “The Telegraph” were found on COVID-19.

### **7.2 Collection of data**

The editorial articles of the leading newspaper were collected from the archive of its website in the timeline from March 2020 to March 2021. The website is <https://epaper.telegraphindia.com>.

### **7.3 Data analysis and Interpretation**

After collecting the data, the data was analyzed to know the nature of information the articles are providing. After analyzing the articles, they were sorted according to some keywords, and these are represented by charts and graphs. Based on the analysis, the conclusions and suggestions on various aspects covered in the study have been drawn. The editorial articles of thirteen months from the newspaper were studied, and in total 152 articles on COVID-19 were found.

### **7.4 Limitations**

The present study is limited to only one national newspaper widely circulated in West Bengal, taken for the study. The time span chosen covered the first wave of the pandemic i.e., from March 2020 to March 2021. Only editorial articles of the newspaper are taken for the study. Due to time constraint, the study is limited to only one newspaper. But the study could be done by taking other national newspapers, and also extending to the other articles in the newspapers too.

## **8. Background of “The Telegraph”**

Newspapers play very important role in human lives. Newspapers are the authentic sources of information as many eminent journalists gather these information for people. In the time of pandemic, when we could not go out of our home, due to lockdown, the newspapers serve as the medium of communication with the outside world. They made us aware about the situation; they informed us about how medical science is treating COVID-19. They gave us news of vaccine. Now let us take a look on the background of the newspaper, which is taken for the study, i.e. The Telegraph.

The Telegraph is one of the most popular newspapers of India. It was launched on 7th July 1982 by the house of Anandabazar Patrika. The design director of London's The Sunday Times, Edwin Taylor, designed the newspaper. The first editor of the newspaper was M. J. Akbar, and the present editor of the newspaper is Atideb Sarkar.

According to Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2019, “The Telegraph” is the Eighth

most-read English Language Newspaper of India. According to Audit Bureau of Circulations ‘The Telegraph’ has a daily circulation of 326176 (Main). The Telegraph has three editions which are: Kolkata edition, South Bengal edition and North Bengal edition. Apart from several important news coverage of state, country and world, The Telegraph has a wide variety of segments for all the age groups of readers everyday such as The Telegraph Metro (a city connect on Calcutta’s top stories), t2 (a tabloid covering fashion, entertainment and lifestyle), Wellness (on health and fitness.), YOU (a supplement for students), Glamour (a section for women), Knowhow (an update on the newest stories on science, technology, gadgets and gaming), Portfolio (an insightful investor advice and more in-depth information on personal finance) and The Woods (an entertainment section fresh with stories and gossip from Hollywood and Bollywood). The Telegraph covers all kinds of ongoing events of Kolkata, ranging from School Awards to Food Festivals, Christmas Parties to Puja Celebrations, Debates and Talk shows and so on. This newspaper also has several pages in different social media platforms which has huge number of followers.

## 8. Findings

Information in The Telegraph: Total 43 keywords were found from the newspaper ‘The Telegraph’. The keywords, found in the editorial articles, were arranged alphabetically and represented in tables and graphs. Table 1.a, 1.b and 1.c depict the occurrence of keywords. Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 also show the occurrence of keywords. The keywords are divided in three parts:

- (i) A-L (22 Keywords)
- (ii) M-R (12 keywords)
- (iii) S-Z (9 Keywords).

COVID-19 related keywords in The Telegraph:

### (i) A-L

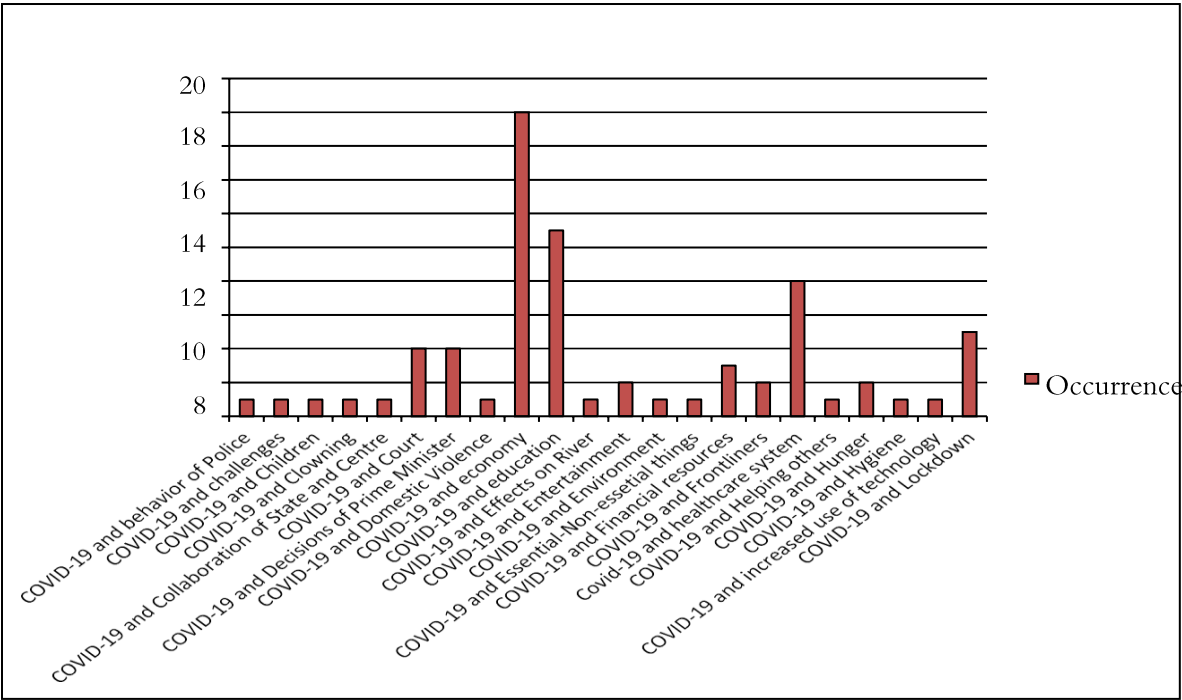
Table 1.a shows that there is total 22 keywords whose initials are started with the stated alphabets. Among all the keywords, the highest occurrence is of the keyword “COVID-19 and Economy” (18 times). The second highest occurrence was of the keyword “COVID-19 and education” (11 times) and the third highest occurrence was of the keywords “COVID-19 and healthcare system” (8 times). The lowest occurrence was of the keywords “COVID-19 and behavior of Police”, “COVID-19 and challenges”, COVID-19 and Children”, COVID-19 and Clowning”, “COVID-19 and Collaboration of State and Centre”, “COVID-19 and Domestic Violence”, “COVID-19 and Effects on River” etc. (only once).

**Table 1.a: Keywords with A-L**

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>
COVID-19 and behavior of Police	1
COVID-19 and challenges	1
COVID-19 and Children	1
COVID-19 and Clowning	1
COVID-19 and Collaboration of State and Centre	1
COVID-19 and Court	4
COVID-19 and Decisions of Prime Minister	4
COVID-19 and Domestic Violence	1
COVID-19 and economy	18
COVID-19 and education	11
COVID-19 and Effects on River	1
COVID-19 and Entertainment	2
COVID-19 and Environment	1
COVID-19 and Essential-Non-essential things	1
COVID-19 and Financial resources	3
COVID-19 and Frontliners	2
COVID-19 and healthcare system	8
COVID-19 and Helping others	1
COVID-19 and Hunger	2
COVID-19 and Hygiene	1
COVID-19 and increased use of technology	1
COVID-19 and Lockdown	5

Figure 1.1 is the graphical representation of Table 1.a where the keywords and their occurrences are represented graphically.





**Figure 1.1: Graphical representation of keywords with A-L**

**ii. M-R**

Table 1.b shows that there are 12 keywords whose initials were started with the stated alphabets. Among all keywords (the keywords are given in table), the highest occurrence was of the keyword “COVID-19 and Migrant Workers” (11 times). The second highest occurrence was of the keyword “COVID-19 and Religious Festivals” and “COVID-19 and Role of Government” (6 times) and the third highest occurrence was of the keywords “COVID-19 and Mental Health” and “COVID-19 and Privacy” (4 times). The lowest occurrence was of the Keywords “COVID- 19 and Prejudice, Discrimination”, “COVID-19 and New Normal” (only once).

**Table 1.b: Keywords with M-R**

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>
COVID-19 and Mental Health	4
COVID-19 and Migrant workers	11
COVID-19 and New Normal	1
COVID-19 and New words, Grammar	2
COVID-19 and Politics	2
COVID-19 and Pollution	3
COVID-19 and Prejudice, Discrimination	1
COVID-19 and prisoners	2
COVID-19 and Privacy	4
COVID-19 and Religious Festivals	6
COVID-19 and Responsibilities	2
COVID-19 and Role of Government	6

Table 1.b shows that there are 12 keywords whose initials were started with the stated alphabets. Among all keywords (the keywords are given in table), the highest occurrence was of the keyword “COVID-19 and Migrant Workers” (11 times). The second highest occurrence was of the keyword “COVID-19 and Religious Festivals” and “COVID-19 and Role of Government” (6 times) and the third highest occurrence was of the keywords “COVID-19 and Mental Health” and “COVID-19 and Privacy” (4 times). The lowest occurrence was of the keywords “COVID- 19 and Prejudice, Discrimination”, “COVID-19 and New Normal” (only once).

Figure 1.2 is the graphical representation of Table 1.b where the keywords and their occurrences are represented graphically.

### **iii. S-Z**

Table 1.c shows that there are 9 keywords whose initials were started with the stated alphabets. Among all keywords (the keywords are given in table), the highest occurrence was of the keyword “COVID-19 and Vaccine” (11 times). The second highest occurrence was of the keyword “COVID-19 and Workers” (4 times) and the third highest occurrence was of the keywords “COVID-19 and Technology”, “COVID- 19 and Women” and “COVID-19 and Work from Home” (2 times). The lowest occurrence was of the Keywords “COVID-19 and Sightings of Wild Animals”,

“COVID-19 and Twin Challenges (health and economy)”, “COVID-19 and Unscientific behavior”, “COVID-19 Waste” (only once).

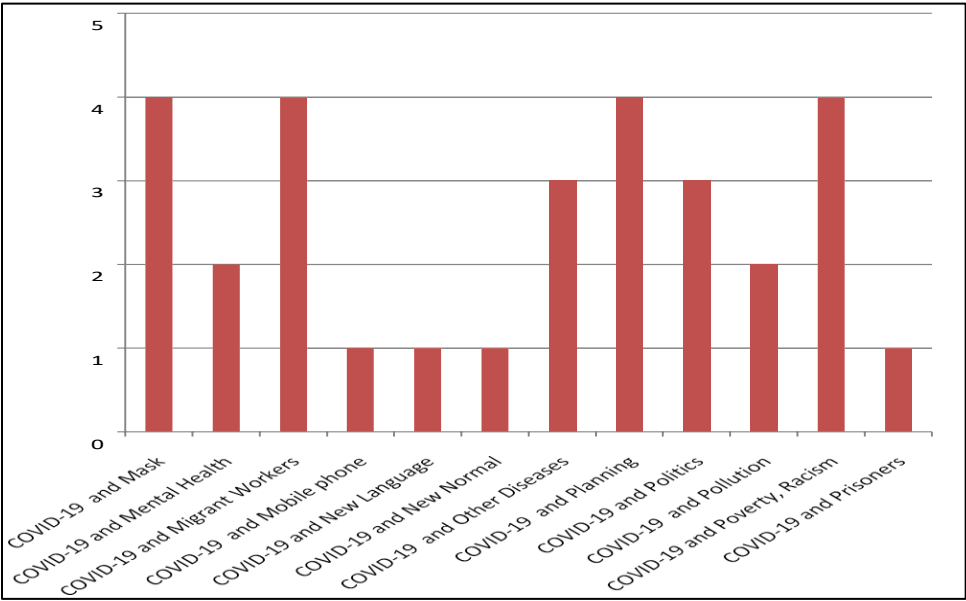


Figure 1.2: Graphical representation of Keywords with M-R

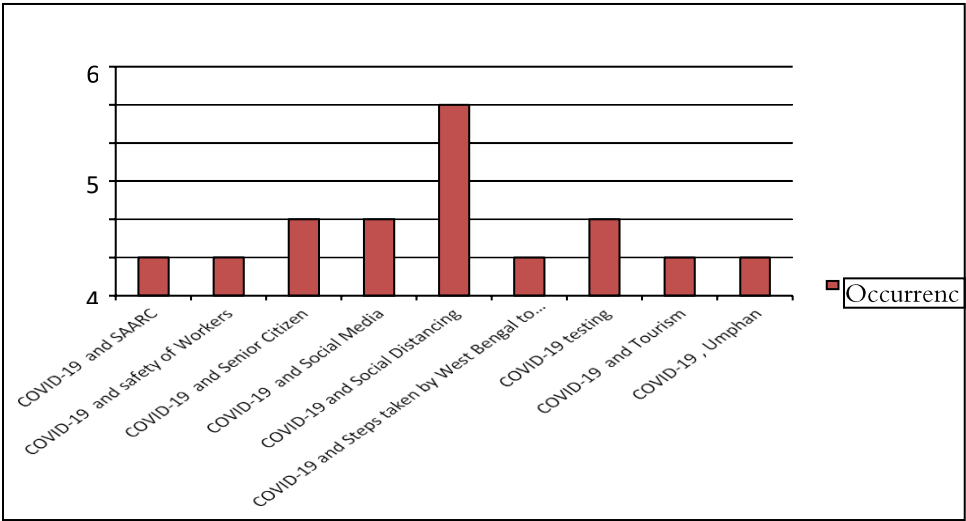


Figure 1.3: Graphical representation of Keywords with S-Z

Figure 1.3 is the graphical representation of Table 1.c where the keywords and their occurrences are represented graphically.

**Table 1.c: Keywords with S-Z**

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>
COVID-19 and Sightings of Wild Animals	1
COVID-19 and Technology	2
COVID-19 and Twin Challenges (health and economy)	1
COVID-19 and Unscientific behavior	1
COVID-19 and Vaccine	11
COVID-19 Waste	1
COVID-19 and Women	2
COVID-19 and Work from Home	2
COVID-19 and Workers	4

## 9. Discussion

By analyzing all the keywords found in the editorial articles of this newspaper, it was found that the most discussed term in this newspaper was economy. As discussed earlier, Indian economy as well as global economy was very much affected by this pandemic. So national newspaper like ‘The Telegraph’ gave immense importance to this term and this importance is reflected in the editorial articles.

The terms which got second most importance in the editorial articles of this newspaper were education, migrant workers, and vaccine. Education system almost shattered for the pandemic and the lockdown. Everyone was worried for the education system and the editorial articles of this newspaper were no exception. This was reflected in the editorial articles as they discussed the term repeatedly.

We all know how much these migrant workers suffered due to the pandemic and the associated lockdown. The people in the editorial board of this newspaper were much concerned with the issues of these workers and their concern was reflected in the editorial articles.

As discussed for the other newspaper, people were very much concerned with the vaccine because vaccine was very much needed to fight the pandemic effectively. The editorial articles of ‘The Telegraph’ also discussed with the issues related with vaccine with much importance.

The term which held the third place in the editorial articles of this newspaper was healthcare system. Healthcare system must be very good to fight any pandemic with ease. So, the editorial articles gave much importance to this issue. These articles praised the healthcare system for the immense support it provided, sometimes discussed the faults of healthcare system. But it did not get as much importance as it deserve in the editorial articles of this newspaper.

The editorial articles of this newspaper gave importance to the terms like religious festivals and role of government. The common mass celebrated various religious festivals during the pandemic. Sometimes they ignored the COVID protocols for celebrating these festivals, sometimes their celebration was affected for the pandemic. The issues related to the religious festivals were discussed repeatedly in the editorial articles.

The Government of any country plays a major role in fighting any urgent situation. The editorial articles criticized the role of the government repeatedly. They also discussed several decisions of the government.

This newspaper did not provide much importance to the term lockdown in the editorial articles. Lockdown, that took place for the pandemic was obviously a major concern of the common mass as it affected their lives in several ways. But the editorial articles of this newspaper did not reflect this.

The terms like court, the decisions of the Prime Minister, mental health, privacy and workers were discussed in the editorial articles. Though these terms did not get as much importance as the terms discussed earlier, they got moderate importance in the editorial articles of this newspaper as we see them occurring repeatedly.

There were several other terms (as shown in the table) that occurred a less number of times in the editorial articles of 'The Telegraph' like "COVID-19 and Domestic Violence", "COVID-19 and Prejudice, Discrimination", "COVID-19 and Unscientific Behavior" etc. This shows that the editorial articles do not consider them as very important terms.

The editorial articles of this newspaper did not provide much importance to the issue of domestic violence. Issues like helping others in pandemic, unscientific behavior did not occur repeatedly, though these terms are important. So, it can be said that this term did not get as much importance as it deserves.

## **10. Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to analyze the information on COVID-19 as reflected through the editorial articles and to find out how these articles will help scientists, researchers, librarians etc. For this purpose, a content analysis of the editorial articles of the newspaper was conducted by the researcher.

Content analysis of any work helps in determining the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e., text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. As an example, researchers can evaluate language used within a news article to search for bias or partiality. Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time encompassing the text.

The content analysis of the editorial articles determined certain keywords on which the editorial articles were based. This will help in understanding the focus of the newspaper articles in the time of pandemic.

In The Telegraph, there were 152 articles on COVID-19 and 43 keywords were there on which the articles were based.

Editorial articles are always rich source of information, and these articles reflect the opinions of eminent personalities of a newspaper's editorial board.

It will be a cooperative work between the scientists and administrators if this content analysis of the editorial articles is studied in depth. Librarians will also know the documents, or the issues of the newspaper contain pertinent information on COVID-19 and they can disseminate this information to the users.

The role of newspaper in society is noteworthy, especially when newspapers concentrate on some news related to the health education scenario, and especially if it is very much in the public interest. The editors have a great role to play in bringing out the exact scenario of COVID-19 to the public. They can raise awareness and concern among general public by their unbiased articles.

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## Author biography

**Dr. Swapna Banerjee** is professor of Department of Library and Information Science in University of Calcutta. She has teaching experience of 11 years. Her areas of specialization are knowledge organization, information processing & retrieval, classification, preservation and conservation, information management. Her research interest is on Children's libraries, sociological aspect of libraries and Preservation in libraries and archives. She has several publications which include journal articles, books, book chapters etc.

**Tania Sarkar** is M.Phil. Scholar of Department of Library and Information Science in University of Calcutta. She has completed her BLIS and MLIS from University of Calcutta. She has completed her M.Phil. from University of Calcutta.

## Corresponding author

**Dr. Swapna Banerjee** can be contacted at: [swapna.banerjee98@gmail.com](mailto:swapna.banerjee98@gmail.com)