



From quota reform to regime change: A comparative corpus-assisted discourse analysis of Bangladesh's July Uprising

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Abstract

In the rapidly shifting landscape of digital-era protest, Bangladesh's July Uprising stands out as a pivotal moment where demands for quota reform evolved into a broader call for systemic transformation. Using the framework of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), this paper analyzes two corpora of 380 news reports comprising 332,259 tokens published by *Prothom Alo* and *Jamuna Television* between 1 July when the protest first came to public attention, and 5 August, the day the regime fell, thereby capturing the outlets' full coverage of the event. The results reveal that *Prothom Alo* sustained an institutional, formal language of immediacy and confirmation, with temporal deixis such as "today" and "yesterday", and lexical fields of bureaucratic justice: "quota reform movement". Yet, with increasing state repression, its vocabulary gradually got to terms such as "arrest" and "tear gas" that indicated an escalating tension, reframing the protests as reverberations of authoritarian excess. Meanwhile, in a vocabulary abounding with urgency, resistance, and passion, *Jamuna Television* portrayed students as protesters but not just that, as torchbearers of a democratic movement. The terms like "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina" turned into focal points, and "attack on protesters" pulled the narrative into a moral universe, foregrounding a regime-critical stance, where the state was no longer a neutral entity but a power to be addressed, challenged, and held to account.

Keywords

discourse analysis, July uprising, media coverage, quota reform, regime change

Introduction

Social movements play a crucial role in shaping political landscapes, often serving as catalysts for significant socio-political transformations (Tilly, 2004). Bangladesh, a nation with a history of mass uprisings and political activism, witnessed a critical juncture in July 2024 when student-led protests against quota reform in public sector employment escalated into a broader movement against authoritarian governance. The protests, which began as a demand for equitable job distribution, soon evolved into a nationwide demonstration against corruption, suppression of dissent, and electoral manipulation. This study examines how the linguistic framing of protest narratives by *Prothom Alo* and *Jamuna TV* evolved, reflecting a shift from advocating for quota reforms to supporting regime change.

The July Revolution began on June 5, 2024. Following a petition from the families of freedom fighters, the High Court declared the circular that abolished the freedom fighter quota (from the 9th to 13th grade) in government departments, autonomous and semi-autonomous institutions, and various corporations. In Dhaka, students gathered in front of the central library of Dhaka University and held a brief rally at the Shaheed Minar. Their peaceful protests quickly gained momentum, drawing support from a wide cross-section of society, including professionals, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens who were fed up with the perceived corruption and nepotism in government appointments.

Nevertheless, the student wing of ruling government, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), attacked the student protesters in front of Bijoy Ekattor Hall in Dhaka University on 15 July (The Daily Star, 2024). As well as, the killing of six students during demonstrations on July 16 acted as a flashpoint, catalyzing broader mobilizations and the transformation of the movement into a nationwide call for political accountability and change. By July 21, the Supreme Court reduced the quota reservation from 56% to 7%, prompting a brief suspension of protests. The government declared an “extraordinary holiday” from July 21 to 23, though violence continued, with at least seven people killed during the shutdown and curfew period. A report revealed that 345 people had died during the protests, including 32 children, as confirmed by UNICEF (Mishra, 2024).

By August 3, the protests had gained unprecedented momentum, leading to the formation of a non-cooperation movement, which demanded the resignation of Sheikh Hasina, former PM of Bangladesh. Despite the government’s attempts to suppress the movement by reinstating curfews and imposing further restrictions, the movement gained momentum, with clash between protesters, and the law enforcement personnel and ruling government’s supporters on 35 July (4th August) that took almost 100 lives, *The Guardian* reported. Nevertheless, the real scenario was much more dangerous and bloody. Therefore, under intense pressure, on August 5, Hasina resigned, marking the culmination of years of struggle and a hard-won victory for the people.

Although there have been studies (Tanima & George, 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2025) that enlightened us about student-initiated protests and policy-specific movements like this event, what stands out is the remarkable lack of insight into the way media discourse

changes shape when such movements spiral beyond demands for reform towards demands for systemic change. Most notably absent is a detailed, empirically driven exploration of how Bangladeshi media, amidst growing digital authoritarian pressures, reconstitutes narratives during such turbulent transformations. However, the data for this study are op-ed articles and news reports published online by *Prothom Alo* and *Jamuna TV* from 01 July 2024 to 05 August 2024. *Prothom Alo* is selected for its credibility and widespread acceptance as a trusted media source in the country, while *Jamuna TV* is chosen for its extensive and in-depth coverage of the protests, making them both pivotal in shaping public discourse.

Research Objective

The objective for this study is to analyze how linguistic choices in protest discourse evolved from quota reform demands to regime change advocacy

Literature Review

Tilly (2004) exclaimed that social movements have long been a focal point for political landscape formation, particularly among nations that experience democratic backsliding or persistence. Collective action and mass mobilization, scholars argue, can serve as agents of change for politics either by forcing changes in policy or contributing to broader regime changes (Tarrow, 2011). In hybrid or authoritarian regimes, where democratic institutions are weak, social movements are alternative avenues of resistance and representation (Bayat, 2013). The July Uprising in Bangladesh, having begun as a quota reform protest, thus follows standard patterns seen in movements that expand beyond initial demands to challenge systemic patterns of governance. This brings to mind phenomena such as the Arab Spring, in which the initial protests against unemployment or corruption had morphed into calls for regime change (Gunning & Baron, 2014). The trajectory of Bangladesh's movement illustrates a convergence of student-led movements and general democratic movements, a theme both regionally and worldwide historically.

Student politics and social movements in Bangladesh have played a pivotal role in shaping both national and regional political dynamics, evolving from nationalist mobilizations to highly politicized groups aligned with mainstream parties. Nasrin and Rahman (2019) trace this evolution by placing student activism from its early nationalist roots under British and Pakistani rule to its present politicization, where party loyalty often overrides broader ideological loyalty. The research also illustrates the fall in the public perception of student movement since 1991, owing to factors such as factionalism, violence, and disruption of academic classes. In this context, Jackman (2020) places the 2018 quota reform and road safety protests in the backdrop of authoritarian consolidation of Bangladesh's Awami League regime, highlighting the two-fold nature of the movements in questioning regime legitimacy while simultaneously fostering intra-party factional divisions. Later, Hossain et al. (2023) provide a detailed analysis of the 2018 Quota Reform Movement, demonstrating how a policy dispute in local governance became an issue of geopolitical relevance by reshaping Bangladesh-India bilateral relations. Similarly, Tanvir (2023) examines the dual nature of student activism,

appreciating its role in social justice and democratic engagement and balancing its disruptive impact on educational institutions. This may refer to the possibility of grassroots mobilization being channeled into national and regional debates, demonstrating the intertwinement of local protest movements and general political change.

Besides, the literature on women's political representation in Bangladesh demonstrates the interaction between affirmative action policies and structural barriers to substantive representation. Akbar (2018) illustrates the effectiveness of political quotas as a policy that, in increasing numerical representation, is unable to ensure substantive policy representation because of deep-seated patriarchal culture and institutional resistance. Likewise, Panday (2008) criticizes the quota system for promoting "representation without participation" since women, albeit in political spaces, are still outside the decision-making arena. From these criticisms, Ara and Northcote (2020) theorize a gender wall of socio-economic, cultural, and ideological obstacles to women's political participation in spite of quotas. Therefore, these may underline the insufficiency of quota remedies to rectify systemic gender inequality, invoking the imperatives of more extensive socio-political reforms to ensure substantive empowerment.

On top of that, the role of media in political discourse and mobilization is a central theme across a number of academic works with varying yet complementary points of view. Mattoni et al. (2010) address the transversal potential of alternative media as a force for projecting marginal voices and establishing counter-public spheres, with particular focus on social movements in the post-Soviet states and Eastern Europe. Their study emphasizes the manner in which digital and non-digital alternative media resist hegemonic discourses, but they also note the limitations of such platforms, such as susceptibility to commodification and repression by the state. Conversely, Al-Zaman (2020) examined the social media's role in facilitating democratic participation through bottom-up grassroots mobilization or top-down grassroots mobilization approaches while changing the mode of interaction between citizens and political leaders. Considering these claims, Roy (2019) studies the 2013 Shahbagh Movement and the continuing influence of the interconnection between new and traditional media and grassroots movements. He also looks at mediated politics and online political activism and their influence on political activity in Bangladesh's developing digitally integrated political systems.

Furthermore, corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADA) has been utilized for examining news coverage of protests (Flowerdew, 2012), political communication (Wodak, 2015), and social media activism (Zappavigna, 2012). Thus, applying CADA to the July Uprising in Bangladesh provides us an opportunity to deconstruct the narrative construction, its impact on public opinion as well as the changes in ideological thinking. Gerbaudo (2017) has shown that Arab Spring and the Occupy Wall Street protests evolve, through their narrative, from the stocks of grievances to general criticism of the system. The present study contributes to this literature by analyzing how the discourse around quota reform got transformed into a wider call for political change in Bangladesh.

Method

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the theory of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) (Partington et al., 2013). CADS has especial pertinence to sociopolitical discourse research as it enables the researcher to tease out recurrent patterns of language use and interpret such patterns within the context of ideological structures, power relations, and social transformations. Partington et al. (2013) explain that CADS allows for the analysis of the two-way interaction between discourse and the sociopolitical fields. This observation has particular applicability to Bangladeshi context, where protest movements are largely mediated through language, slogans, and other media channels. In a parallel train of thought, Baker et al. (2008) opine that the coupling of corpus tools with discourse analysis produces a synergy that reveals hidden or systematic bias in language.

To operationalize CADS, this study employs three core analytical tools: word lists, multiword expression (MWE) lists, and concordance lists. Each of these tools offers a different entry point into the discourse and is grounded in corpus linguistic literature. Word lists rank the most frequent lexical items in a corpus, helping to identify key themes and topics. The premise here is that lexical frequency often reflects discursive salience: what is said most often is often what matters most (Stubbs, 1996). By comparing the word lists of the two corpora, the study identifies which concepts dominated each corpus. Accordingly, Baker (2006) adds that keyword analysis based on statistically unusual frequency can further highlight ideologically significant terms, making word lists essential to the CADS methodology.

Multiword expression lists capture frequently occurring sequences of words that form meaningful units that are especially important in political discourse. These MWEs often function as condensed expressions of collective emotion, identity, or resistance. Biber et al. (1999) argue that phraseologies serve as building blocks of discourse, reinforcing cohesion and consistency. In protest discourse, they often become part of a shared lexicon that unites participants and strengthens group identity. Fairclough (1995) emphasizes the role of these recurring expressions in shaping ideological narratives and legitimizing specific viewpoints. MWEs in this study thus reveal how linguistic routines evolve alongside political escalation.

Concordance lists, finally, allow for the close examination of how particular words or phrases are used in context. This KWIC (Key Word in Context) method makes it possible to analyze the semantic prosody of specific terms whether they are used in positive, neutral, or negative contexts and to detect discursive strategies such as delegitimization, irony, or calls to action. However, for this study the researchers choose the lemmas of “Resignation”. Because, analyzing the concordance lines for “resignation” enables the study to trace how the narrative shifted from sector-specific reform demands to regime-level critique. Hence, Sinclair (1991) argues that contextual analysis is vital for understanding collocational meaning, while Hunston (2010) notes that evaluation in discourse often hinges on subtle phraseological cues that concordance lines can reveal. This method supports the qualitative side of CADS, enabling detailed interpretation of

how protest discourse frames authority, urgency, and resistance. Therefore, this is the appropriate theoretical lens for this study.

Sampling and Procedure

This study draws on a purpose-built two corpora consisting of online news articles published by two major Bangladeshi media outlets, *Prothom Alo* and *Jamuna TV*, during a critical phase of the country's political unrest. The data collection window spans from 1st July to 5th August 2024, encompassing the height of the July Uprising. A total of 278 articles were collected from *Prothom Alo*, yielding 281,476 tokens, while 102 articles were sourced from *Jamuna TV*, producing 50,783 tokens. In total, the combined corpus consists of 380 articles and 332,259 tokens. The selection was based on relevance to the protests, using wayback machine tool. Only the articles that explicitly referenced the events, actors, and discourses related to the July Uprising were included in the final corpus and cleaned by JusText demo.

The corpus was analyzed using Sketch Engine, a powerful corpus analysis platform that allows for both quantitative and qualitative interrogation of text data. Key corpus tools such as word lists, multiword expression (MWE) lists, and concordance lines were employed to identify lexical patterns, collocational routines, and shifts in discursive framing between and within sources. The outputs from these tools were systematically organized into tables. The results were then qualitatively interpreted in light of the study's theoretical framework.

Results and Discussion

The corpus-assisted analysis of linguistic shifts in Bangladeshi media discourse during the July Uprising reveals a striking evolution in protest rhetoric shifting from a technically grounded demand for quota reform to a broader, emotionally charged call for regime change.

Table 1. The comparison of top 10 most frequent words between Prothom Alo and Jamuna Television corpora

Prothom Alo		Jamuna Television	
Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
Quota	553	Quota	160
Police	446	Students'	139
Students'	442	Police	129
Today	383	Time	121
Movement	361	July	100
Time	347	Movement	93
Yesterday	300	Student	80
Various	297	Protest	72
Dhaka	295	August	68
Reform	287	Announcement	67

The lexical frequency data reveal a number of significant contrasts. In *Prothom Alo*, the term “quota” appeared 553 times, overshadowing all others. Words associated with institutional structures and immediate chronology, such as “police” 446 times, “today” 383 times, “yesterday” 300 times, and “reform” 287 times, indicate an early framing rooted in procedural critique and day-to-day updates. In contrast, *Jamuna Television* markedly registers lower frequencies for the same keywords. Notably, while “quota” appears 160 times, it is significantly surpassed in relevance by terms like “protest” 72 times, “student” 80 times, and most notably “July” 100 times, suggesting a shift in focus toward a more event-centered, narrative-driven style of reporting.

These differences suggest that *Prothom Alo* served primarily as a chronicler of initial discontent, framing the movement through the lens of institutional reform, temporal immediacy, and actor-centric reports. This is consistent with Tarrow’s (2011) notion of collective action, where early protest movements often rely on diagnostic frames that identify the source of injustice, in this case, quota policy. The frequent use of “reform” in *Prothom Alo* supports this, reinforcing a discourse focused on achievable policy change rather than radical transformation.

However, *Jamuna Television* shows signs of the evolution that Snow and Benford (1992) termed frame amplification where a movement gradually expands its lexicon to resonate with broader audiences and more emotionally charged themes. Words like “protest”, “announcement”, and time-stamped references such as “July” and “August” anchor the discourse in historical urgency and invoke a collective memory. These linguistic shifts are not merely stylistic; they signify a discursive escalation from specific policy grievances to a broader confrontation with state power. This aligns with Melucci’s (1996) argument that modern social movements increasingly rely on symbolic language to forge identity and emotional resonance rather than merely procedural claims.

Moreover, the lexical item “police” maintains a prominent position in both corpora, ranking second in *Prothom Alo* (446 mentions) and third in *Jamuna Television* (129 mentions). In *Prothom Alo*, the term may function descriptively highlighting law enforcement actions at protests. In *Jamuna Television*, the recurrence may serve a more affective function, emblematic of state oppression and serving to catalyze opposition sentiment. This correlates with Hall’s (1997) concept of representation, where repeated media associations between authority and coercion help encode ideological meaning into everyday language.

The declining use of “reform” and the rising relevance of “protest” and “student” in *Jamuna Television* supports a narrative of political intensification. Reform becomes backgrounded, and youth agency is foregrounded. This mirrors Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement, where initial calls for electoral transparency gave way to more radical demands for systemic change as discourse and repression escalated (Lee & Chan, 2018). Similarly, the frequency of the word “student” only appears in *Jamuna Television* (80 instances), absent from the top frequencies of *Prothom Alo*, highlighting a rhetorical move from student representation as an analytic category to a politicized identity.

Temporal markers also shift discursive frames. While *Prothom Alo* emphasizes “today” 383 times and “yesterday” 300 times, indicating a focus on immediacy and reportage, *Jamuna Television* instead emphasizes historical framing with “July” 100 times and “August” 68 times. This echoes Anderson’s (2006) notion of imagined communities, where the recounting of collective historical moments enables the creation of national or sub-national solidarities. The July uprising, thus, is framed not just as an episode but as a turning point in political consciousness.

The word “Dhaka”, which appears 295 times in *Prothom Alo* but is absent from *Jamuna Television*’s top words, reveals another important divergence. Its prominence in *Prothom Alo* suggests a geographical anchoring of the movement, reporting from the epicenter of protest. *Jamuna Television*, by decentralizing the uprising from the capital and emphasizing broader, more emotive language, might be re-scaling the discourse to a national or even existential level transforming the movement into a symbol of civic resistance beyond its origin. This transformation in discourse aligns with researches on the discursive evolution of protest movements. Gerbaudo (2012) found that digital and media discourses often shift from rationalistic claims to emotionally potent messages as movements gain traction. Similarly, Wodak (2009) emphasizes that critical discourse analysis must attend to the shifting use of pronouns, emotional triggers, and historical allusions that reframe a protest’s purpose. While the data of this study is primarily lexical, the substitution of technical-institutional terms like “reform” with affective-political terms like “protest” or “announcement” reflects this rhetorical pivot.

An essential implication of this shift is the reorientation of audience targeting. Early discourse marked by “reform” and “quota” targets policymakers and technocrats, seeking change within the existing regime. Later discourse, emphasizing “protest” and “students”, targets broader publics, possibly aiming to galvanize mass mobilization. This reflects the strategic duality identified by Porta and Diani (2006), where protest movements oscillate between insider and outsider strategies depending on state response and internal momentum. This discursive development is also apparent in the lack of certain words. For example, “announcement” is found in *Jamuna Television* but not in *Prothom Alo*. This indicates a broadcast tendency to dramatize and highlight calls to action or announcements crucial to mobilize emotions and audience. These rhetorical strategies are in line with the movement dramaturgy (McAdam, 1982), in which public performances both verbal and non-verbal are crucial to the maintenance of collective action.

Most importantly, such a change in discourse is consistent with larger patterns in social transformation, as marginalized agents increasingly take up symbolic and affective lexicons against established power. Disillusion with the technocratic vocabulary and the creation of politicized identity terms, such as the student as revolutionary subject, attest to disillusion with institutional solution. What emerges is a battle over ownership of the story: as *Prothom Alo* attempts to channel dissent within a context of policy reform, *Jamuna TV* re-defines it as an ethical reckoning for state power. Both stories also reveal the political agendas of the media. Where one media complex attempts to acquire legitimation by remaining close to power, the other acquires energy by remaining distant from power and articulating disaffection and dissent. But this bifurcation has material

consequences. Media are not passive reflections but constructors of political possibility. By deciding what to label, what to highlight and what to omit, they construct the stage of social action. In the case of the July Uprising, this was either assigning the movement in the mendable or excluding it from the revolution. Between these poles, not only is regime change discussed, but it is conceived, experienced, and perhaps made possible.

Table 2. The comparison of top ten tri-grams between Prothom Alo and Jamuna Television corpora

N-gram	Frequency
Prothom Alo	
Spoke to Prothom Alo	146
Anti-discrimination student movement's	98
Demand for quota reform	84
Quota reform movement	72
Law enforcement agencies	59
Movement surrounding reforms	54
Medical college hospital	46
has been Arrested	45
Tear gas shells	44
Quota in government jobs	42
Jamuna Television	
Anti-discrimination student movement's	36
Demand for quota reform	17
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina	15
The incident occurred	13
Traffic is stopped	12
Quota reform movement's	11
Abu Sayeed murder	10
Sayeed murder case	10
Police station officer-in-charge	10
In Judicial investigation	9

In *Prothom Alo*, “spoke to Prothom Alo” came across with great frequency, indicating a journalistic preference for direct sourcing and interview reporting. This frequent attribution of voice is a fertile ground for the rhetoric of credibility and checkability in the professionalized journalistic traditions. The deployment of this phrase invokes a discursive strategy of being dialogic, the publication becomes a platform where voices, especially student protesters or eyewitnesses, are documented and authenticated. This contrasts with *Jamuna Television*, where such journalistic self-referencing is absent from the N-gram dataset, implying a style less reliant on direct sourcing and more inclined toward declarative, broadcast-style narration.

A shared N-gram between both outlets “anti-discrimination student movement's” stands out as an ideologically dense phrase. Its recurrence across both sources reflects a critical phase in the discursive evolution of the movement, where the issue was no longer framed purely in terms of “quota” but as part of a broader struggle against systemic discrimination. This lexical shift suggests the consolidation of a political identity among

protesters. It moves the protest frame from a grievance over distribution (quota policy) to a confrontation with structural injustice. This aligns with the framing processes articulated by Benford and Snow (2000), particularly the concept of ideological amplification where protest lexicons evolve to incorporate moral justifications and collective identities that transcend initial goals.

Another recurrent phrase, “in demand of quota reform”, found in both corpora but with greater frequency in *Prothom Alo*, represents the movement’s initial diagnostic frame. Its grammatical structure, featuring a passive verb, underscores a formal, almost bureaucratic tone, emphasizing demands within a legal-institutional framework. However, this is complemented in *Prothom Alo* by other semantically adjacent N-grams like “quota reform movement” and “surrounding the reform movement”, which shift the narrative from a specific policy request to a broader societal mobilization. This re-definition of the terminology is an articulation of the move from personal needs to collective action, a discursive turning point towards what McCammon (2012) refers to as discursive opportunity structures where protests escalate based on broad political and cultural alignments.

The use of terms like “law enforcement agencies” and “has been arrested” in *Prothom Alo* signals a topical shift towards state response and repression. These terms are indexes of state power and coercive possibility and imply an expansion of the discursive space of the movement from the bureaucratic to the juridical. Above all, these terms in *Prothom Alo* indicate increasing hostility between state and citizen, between power and opposition. This is reflected in Tilly’s (2004) theorization of contentious politics, in which the show of state repression is often a provocation to further protest rather than a deterrent. Militarized discourse continues with the deployment of term: “tear gas shells”, which conjures images of war and pain. This term has visceral implications compared to vague assurances of reform, and it indexes injury and violence. This affective language is what Jasper (2011) has referred to as affective framing that engages the public emotionally and legitimizes protest. This language indicates a shift from technocratic reason to embodied contention, from statement to struggle.

Conversely, *Jamuna Television*’s phraseological options demonstrate a change in discursive approach. Specifically, “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina” is conspicuous, revealing personalization of power and a drift towards regime-based discourse. The personalization carries twofold implications: whereas it facilitates political accountability, it transforms the dynamic of critique from structural blame-finding to leader-based blame. Such rhetorical personalization tends to trigger a regime delegitimization process, reflecting patterns in the Arab Spring, where media started naming and questioning individual leaders instead of abstract systems (Khondker, 2011).

Phrases like “the incident occurred” and “traffic is stopped” anchor the protests in spatiotemporal immediacy. These are a visual, immediate, and disruptive journalistic logic of broadcast television news. They select dramatic moments, and they tend to divest events of more profound ideological context. Nevertheless, their discursive role is in rendering the material effects of protests, thus emphasizing their size and effect. Their use in *Jamuna Television* indicates a dramatized, event-driven style of reporting protests.

A particularly telling discursive development in *Jamuna Television* is the prominence of legalistic and justice-oriented expressions such as “Abu Sayeed murder”, “in the Sayeed murder case”, and “in judicial investigation”. These concepts relocate the quota reform discourse within a broad attack on state brutality and judicial transparency. The vocabulary choices suggest that the movement has adopted high-profile cases to stand in as representative of a sweeping crisis of governance. This is indicative of what Koopmans and Olzak (2004) theorize as issue bundling whereby disparate but related grievances are paired to produce a critique of a broader status quo.

The inclusion of “police station officer-in-charge” is particularly noteworthy. This suggests a discursive localization of state accountability, not just the prime minister but also mid-level bureaucratic figures. This rhetorical descent into specific institutional actors echoes Fairclough’s (1992) notion of power that is not only located at the top but is exercised across layers of institutional apparatuses. The naming of such actors helps to scaffold a regime critique that is multifaceted rather than monolithic.

Table 3. The comparison of top ten concordances of the lemma “Resignation” between Prothom Alo and Jamuna Television corpora

Left Context	KWIC	Right Context
	<i>Prothom Alo</i>	
They. Additionally, due to the failure to protect national resources, the Prime Minister’s	Resignation	They have demanded it. The Communist Party of Bangladesh
At the same time, acknowledging responsibility for the killings, the Awami League government	Resignation	They have made this demand. In a statement, these demands were made
The government is responsible for the killings. Acknowledging this responsibility, the government	Resignation	Must be done. In support of the students’ legitimate demand for quota reform
Claims this. Otherwise, taking responsibility for the failure, the government must immediately	Resignation	The people believe it should be done. In the statement, law and order
Those who gave the orders to shoot, who incited the Chhatra League, their	Resignation	Wants them removed from the party and the government. So that the Prime Minister can
A political solution to the crisis must be reached. The solution is	Resignation	Transfer power to an interim government.
This non-cooperation movement, starting from, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s	Resignation	Will continue until it is done. The report further states
Islam. He said, “She (Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina) must	Resignation	Must be done. She must face trial.
Took to the movement. Yesterday, Monday, from the position of Prime Minister	Resignation	Sheikh Hasina left the country. The deceased Abu Saeed from Rangpur
Sheikh Hasina left the country. The deceased Abu Saeed from Rangpur	Resignation	Following the news of leaving the country, since 4 PM last Monday, in Narail

Left Context	KWIC	Right Context
<i>Jamuna Television</i>		
Has happened. For justice regarding the indiscriminate killing of people, the government must	Resignation	Must be done. Meanwhile, in front of the National Press Club, protestors
Nahid Islam said, "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her cabinet must	Resignation	Must be done. This government will not remain for even one more minute.
This government will not remain. One demand, one goal: Sheikh Hasina's	Resignation	The coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement further stated
Has happened. All members of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's cabinet	Resignation	In demand, from Sunday (August 4), a nationwide full-scale non-cooperation
Announced. He said, This government and its cabinet must	Resignation	At this time, he also brought up several other issues
This incident happened while trying to resist the forces behind it. His own	Resignation	In response to the question, he said, If such a situation arises and the Prime Minister
At this time, the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement's single demand for the government	Resignation	Regarding this, the Minister said, We always work for the country; in this case
Nahid Islam. He said, This government and its cabinet must	Resignation	Must be done. At this time, he also brought up several other issues.
Writes, Justice for the brutal killings during the peaceful movement, and the perpetrators	Resignation	And the program will continue as a protest against indiscriminate mass arrests.

The term "resignation" appears consistently across multiple contexts in both *Prothom Alo* and *Jamuna Television* corpora, yet its usage reveals a significant evolution. Initially invoked to criticize governmental failure (e.g., failure to protect national assets), the term gradually morphed into an imperative directed explicitly at the Prime Minister and her cabinet. This transition mirrors the discursive shift described in comparative protest studies, where slogans and key terms become radicalized over time as state responses become increasingly coercive (Tilly, 2004).

In early instances, "resignation" appears embedded within broader appeals for accountability: "Due to the failure to protect national resources, the Prime Minister's resignation has been demanded". This reflects a classic *grievance-framed protest discourse* (Benford & Snow, 2000) where protestors frame the state's failures as justifications for leadership change without yet calling for structural transformation. The critique remains issue-specific, resonant with prior movements that mobilized around specific reforms such as the Shahbagh Movement where demands were largely legal and justice-oriented rather than regime-threatening. However, as state violence escalates, highlighted in texts referencing indiscriminate shootings and state repression, the discourse radicalizes. Statements such as: "He said, 'She (Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina) must resign'", signify a shift from suggestion to imperative. Linguistically, this marks the transition from conditional and passive forms to direct, and active calls. The modality of

must reflects a definitive moral framing, resonant with what Fairclough (1992) terms the authorization of moral authority in protest rhetoric.

More notably, the discourse shifts from targeting bureaucratic failure to challenging the entire regime's legitimacy: "One demand, one goal: Sheikh Hasina's resignation". This monosyllabic, sloganized version of the demand reflects the evolution into a mobilizational discourse (Snow & Benford, 2005), where language is no longer informative but performative. It relates the Arab Spring (Al-Rawi, 2014), where terms like *رحيل* (Leave!) condensed complex grievances into a single rallying cry. Moreover, the repetition of "resignation" in both independent clauses and as concluding imperatives reveals its increasing salience. In the *Jamuna Television* dataset, protest voices adopt "resignation" as the sole demand anchoring a unified, singular focus: "The government and its cabinet must resign". The modal "must" recurs with marked insistence. This modal verb's syntactic consistency mirrors a lexical crystallization, a phenomenon discussed by Charteris-Black (2005) where particular words gain symbolic capital in populist movements. "resignation" becomes not merely an action but a synecdoche for the broader revolutionary project.

The call for resignation as a prerequisite for peace creates a causal relationship between system failure and leader exit that mirrors the evidence in discourse research on Chilean protests (Somma et al., 2021) where certain lexical options paired inequality with elite blame. Also, the contrast between resignation and judicial punishment: "She must face trial" extends the meaning of resignation from a procedural act to a moral denunciation, invoking what Wodak (2001) refers to as discourse of blame and guilt attribution. This semantic enlargement elevates "resignation" from a political act to a vehicle of symbolic justice.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, both corpora show increased co-occurrence of "resignation" with terms like "non-cooperation" and "indiscriminate killings". These collocates suggest a discursive bundling of concepts, where "resignation" signals not just leadership failure but state violence, reinforcing moral framing of political narratives. Interestingly, both *Prothom Alo* and *Jamuna Television* avoid directly naming opposition parties in resignation calls, suggesting a civilian, non-partisan framing of protest legitimacy.

These structural circumstances are not simply the context of the rhetoric of "resignation" but are the very crucible in which it is forged, radicalized, and recycled. At the initial phase of this discursive development, the media operate within what could be defined as a semi-open civic order: institutional legitimacy is still in effect, and the public sphere, if narrowed, still has the vestiges of procedural democracy. The resignation call, as it initially arises, is couched in the language of a moral-political imperative linked to particular grievances. Thus, intermediary media outlets enable the codification of public outrage into formalized criticism. Power relations are still negotiated through normative processes, and the media's role, while limited, is still within watchdog function. Yet as coercive force becomes the state's default mode of interaction, that scaffolding ossifies. Protestors are no longer simply appealing to a broken bureaucracy, they are facing off against a regime that appears immovable, inscrutable, and fundamentally illegitimate.

The language of the media, in turn, reflects this shift. The word “resignation” loses its conditional inflection and takes on the blunt moral imperative of “must”. Not just a linguistic shift, this is a deep social rupture. When institutional dissent is discredited and institutions are commandeered, the voice of the protestor, as magnified by the media, becomes the final location of resistance. Social order is then a terrain of struggle between monopolized power and the popular moral imagination.

Accordingly, the discursive association of “resignation” with terms such as “indiscriminate killings” and “non-cooperation” means that the term becomes shorthand for state terror, moral betrayal, and revolutionary intention. It does not call for a substitution of leadership; it encodes a new polity. In a social order where official channels are shut down, this discursive condensation is a grammar of resistance, an insurgent vernacular where grief is translated into demand and demand into rupture. The work of the media, then, is more than journalism. In a social order marked by executive dominance, judicial collusion, and securitized public space, media organizations become liminal actors both bounded by and transgressive of the hegemonic order. Their accounts, particularly of “resignation”, do not simply record a political juncture, they dramatize it. They convert words into actions, grammar into resistance. In doing so, the media complete the deficits in the social formation of the present, expressing a popular hunger for a different future, not in policy agendas or party politics, but in the repetitive, poetic utterance of a single word: resignation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative corpus-assisted discourse analysis of *Prothom Alo* and *Jamuna Television’s* coverage of Bangladesh’s July Uprising demonstrates the way in which language does not simply represent but actively constructs political realities. Even in a standard, fact-based journalistic register, lexical evolution over the time from bureaucratic to crisis vocabulary in *Prothom Alo* charted the building tension, thereby implying the course from administrative protest to democratic resistance. *Jamuna TV*, on its part, went for emotive narrative and symbolic hyperbole, politicizing the revolution as spectacle that appealed to collective memory and national identity. Together, these arguments suggest that news media cover no events at all but mediate and reinterpret on ideological whim because “language cannot escape ideology” (Lukin, 2019, p. 16) and editorial discretion, dictating terms on public imagination and political knowledge.

However, this study is not without limitations. Firstly, the corpus was confined to two media outlets, which, while ideologically distinct, may not encompass the full diversity of Bangladesh’s media ecology. Outlets with overt political affiliations or those operating at grassroots levels might offer alternative discursive strategies not captured here. Secondly, the analysis relied on a primarily lexical approach and did not deeply engage with visual or multimedia contents that increasingly define digital journalism. Thirdly, the temporal scope of the study was limited to the specific timeframe of the July Uprising, excluding earlier mobilizations or subsequent developments that might illuminate the trajectory of media framing in protracted protest cycles. Thus, future study can expand the dataset to include multilingual content and vernacular press, incorporate visual and

audio-visual modalities, and adopt a longitudinal lens to track shifts in protest framing over time. Including audience studies could also offer insights into how these narratives are received, resisted, or internalized across different demographic groups.

As Bhatia (2005) writes, linguistic domination has generally followed political subordination, and nowhere more so than in coverage of conflict where framing of narrative can have the power to decide whether a movement is or is not recognized as legitimate resistance or disruptive disturbance. Journalists and scholars need to be alert, therefore, to the power residing in lexical choice. In *Jamuna TV's* account, students were cast as historical agents of change; in *Prothom Alo's*, they were procedural actors within an institutional order. The difference not only tells us something about editorial agendas, but also encourages us to consider how collective identities are forged or dissolved through mediated communication. Because Liaropoulos (2022) rightly points out, humanity has navigated the complex equation of using information as both liberating and contradictory resource, that can not only drive the development of societies but also infuse new complexities, and it is in these terms that media literacy must be reaffirmed as a civic skill and a political necessity.

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