



TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

www.techniumscience.com



Vol. 75/2025
A New Decade for Social Changes

PLUS
COMMUNICATION P



International
Communication & PR

From Social Media to Socio-Political Change: How Gen Z Drives Political Reform in Bangladesh

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Abstract. This research explores the role played by social media in stimulating socio-political transformation, focusing on the Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024—a youth-led anti-discrimination movement in Bangladesh. Using qualitative methods, the research draws on thirty unstructured interviews, including twenty-five activist interviews and five key informant interviews with coordinating Somonnoyok and movement leaders in charge of the digital front, to understand the role played by social media in mobilizing such a movement. Thematic analysis of the interviews demonstrates how social media, including Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp, played the most critical role in decentralized network creation, collective identity-making, and giving voice to marginalized voices. Guided by a multi-theoretical framework—including Networked Social Movements, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Intersectionality, and Tactical Digital Activism—this study explains how digital tools shaped activist strategies and identities. With strategic deployment of central and peripheral influence strategies, activists successfully addressed broad audiences. In the face of challenges like internet shutdowns, censorship, and digital monitoring, the movement proved resilient, using end-to-end-addressed tools and offline strategies to maintain its decentralized network. Social media became not merely a communication device—it became a site of emotional support, acts of culture-making, and digital counter-action. In conclusion, findings highlight the promise of hybridized activist models integrating digital advocacy with ground-level mobilization. This study concludes by proposing support for ethical digital action, access for all, and reform in related policymaking to consolidate participatory democracy. This study foregrounds a digitally native generation that is making new politics in the Global South converge through networked, intersectional, and participatory practices.

Keywords. Digital Activism, Social Media, Generation Z, Political Communication, Socio-political change, Bangladesh

1.Introduction

Bangladesh has a rich history of socio-political movements. This historical context, particularly related to the language movement of 1952, the liberation war of 1971, and the establishment of an independent Bangladesh thereafter, is rich (Anisuzzaman & Mamun, 2022). Student activism has taken on contemporary forms, but the common denominator between 1952 and the present pertains to students' commitment to social progress and national development. In this digital era of 2024, both the internet and social media have played a huge role in the

political scenario of Bangladesh. It has allowed people to voice the things they don't like and to put the things they feel about the current government and their expected government. The stage has been set for a more participatory era of politics as a result of this transition, making the political landscape more alive than ever before. Approximately 52.90 million Bangladeshi people participate in social media, building digital cultures of activism, development, access, empowerment, control, contestation, and daily life (datareportal.com, 2024). This dynamic conceptualization has allowed for the emergence of alternative public spaces for the expression of civic agency and political activism, but growing restrictions on actors of the public sphere have emerged (ROY, 2024).

After long being a bastion of political autocracy, Bangladesh has seen a wave of political and social activism recently, much of it led by a young generation. However, these are far from the only movements students have undertaken; many, such as the Shahbagh Movement of 2013, the Road Safety Movement of 2018, and the Anti-Quota Movement of 2018, have provided meaningful evidence of how student activism has changed over the years. Among these movements, one of the most significant was the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, 2024), a student-led initiative aimed at combating discrimination based on socio-economic status, religion, and gender in educational institutions across the country. The young generation, particularly Generation Z, who were born between 1995 and 2010, largely drove this initiative (Mishu, 2024). This demographic has shown a unique ability to mobilize and organize around political and social causes, with social media serving as a key platform for their activities. Because in Bangladesh some television channels and some newspapers became tools of influence, Bangladesh has a long history of media ownership by businessmen-politicians over the years. Instead of providing independent journalism, these media houses have shielded their owners from tax scrutiny, circumvented customs regulations, and navigated through bureaucratic obstacles. As this dynamic has become entrenched, the line between journalism and propaganda has blurred, and trust in the media—both traditional and social—has plummeted (Mishu, 2024).

Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024 (Anti-discrimination Student Movement 2024) became a key example of how social media platforms can be utilized to galvanize the young generation, particularly students, and amplify their voices in the face of systemic inequality. Generation Z, who are often referred to as "Digital Natives," grew up in an age of the Internet and digital mobile technologies, knowing little or nothing about life before touch screens and social media (Kabir, 2024). Because of this, social media has played a pivotal role in the transformation. In an era of immediate and widespread access to information, platforms like Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, and YouTube provide students with an effective means to organize protests, share stories of discrimination, and demand reforms in ways that were previously unimaginable. *The Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon in 2024* serves as a prime example of how digital activism can bridge geographical gaps, connect like-minded individuals, and put pressure on traditional institutions to address systemic issues. This paper intends to explore how Gen Z in Bangladesh uses social media as a tool for driving socio-political reform in the context of *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024*.

The internet and social media have an important influence on the social life and political participation of citizens (Koiranen, Koivula, & Saarinen, 2020). Social media has a positive impact on the success of campaigns and on political information dissemination (Newman, 2012). While social media is being used extensively in political activism across the world, its influence in Bangladesh has not been explored, particularly with student-led movements such as the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024*. It poses an important

question: How much can social media actually help those kinds of movements succeed? What is the role of these platforms in organizing protests, increasing awareness, and demanding accountability from institutions around discrimination?

The study uses a number of related theories to help explain the digital growth of this movement and the forces that are driving it. The idea of "Networked Social Movements" by Castells (2012) helps explain how Gen Z activists in Bangladesh are using decentralized, internet mobilization to get around established power structures. The Elaboration Likelihood Model by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) helps us understand the movement's complex messages, which are meant to appeal to a wide range of people. Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality Theory helps us understand even more by showing how the movement fights against several forms of marginalization that are connected, such as gender, faith, and socio-economic barriers. Finally, Tufekci's (2017) framework on digital activism and tactical adaptation shows how the movement has been able to deploy encrypted applications, humor, and strength in the face of digital repression. These theories work together to give a clear picture of how digital is changing activism for Bangladesh's Gen Z.

To be sure, social media has certain benefits, including its reach, accessibility, and speed, but it also faces issues, including misinformation, censorship, and the digital divide, that could limit its ability to drive real, lasting change.

This paper seeks to address these gaps in knowledge by examining the use of social media in the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-discrimination Student Movement 2024) and how these platforms have influenced the aims and effect of the movement. This research will inform a better understanding of digital activism in Bangladesh by observing how students mobilize support, engage the public, and push back against discriminatory practices. It will also shed light on what social media can—and cannot—do to help political change in Bangladesh's particular socio-political context.

2. Gen Z and Political Reform in global context

Generation Z, digital natives, are redefining the global political landscape. They are deeply familiar with how social media and digital technologies work and are participating in politics in ways that often circumvent traditional institutions and formal bodies (Goswami, 2018). The hashtag movements, viral campaigns and decentralized mobilizations are the new way of doing politics for this generation.

Instead of falling on party lines, Gen Z is more likely to become involved in cause-based activism, which prioritizes social justice, inclusivity, and equality. Their work features emotional appeal, immediate participation, and transnational solidarity infrastructures (Lailiyah & Pradhana, 2020). These trends illustrate a move towards a more participatory and responsive mode of political engagement that is underpinned by digital literacy.

Disparate generational political behavior Gen Z's political behavior also varies widely across cultural and regional lines. In other than Western geographies, such as South Asia, there are also distinctive digital practices, social norms, and economic circumstances that configure political interactions differently (Yadav & Rai, 2017). But the motivation for reform, justice for all, and inclusivity continues to run through it.

In Bangladesh, there have, for example, been recent student-led movements that have shown how Gen Z uses digital platforms, not just for awareness but for real political change. They have managed to leverage organizing over social media to amplify voices from the margins and to contest longstanding, institutional injustices.

Generation Z's online experience is deeply affecting their politics and mindset. A report by Smith et al. (2020) published in the *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* highlights the influence of social media use among Generation Z on their level of political knowledge and political attitudes and behavior formation. The results suggest that in addition to being exposed to political content more frequently through social media, this generation is also more politically active and possesses a more strongly developed set of political beliefs, which indicates a strong correlation between digital engagement and political identity formation (Smith, 2020).

3. Social Media's Impact on Political Landscapes in Developing Countries

In the developing world, where more conventional routes to political discourse are often limited, the use of social media has become revolutionary in political affairs. A shift away from traditional mass media like television and newspapers has significantly impacted Gen Z, the generation most immersed in digital media. The role of social media The enormous power of political social media networks in shaping youth political values and participation is today a reality (Solihat, 2024). Historical events like the Arab Spring of 2011 demonstrate the potential of social media to mobilize the masses against authoritarianism (Howard & Aiden, 2011).

Youths in the Middle East are using a range of digital tools to fight back against authoritarian governments. The 2018 student activism for road safety in Bangladesh also illustrates how digital spaces were instrumental in the rapid circulation of information and organizational energy (Sharmin, 2024). These networks fostered a feedback loop between discussions and mobilizations online and on-the-ground movements. Globally, with phenomena such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, we are witnessing a trend where activism has leaped off the streets and onto the screens, redefining public participation.

4. Political Engagement of students in Bangladesh

Political engagement in Bangladesh has historically been characterized by large-scale demonstrations and youth-focused movements. Recent studies also highlighted that social media platforms enable marginalized communities, including youth and students in countries such as Bangladesh, to express their demands against discrimination, corruption, and human rights violations.

The use of social media has created new avenues for political activism for youth in Bangladesh. These were the places students dissented; they were able to raise awareness on matters such as corruption or social injustice and prepare collective actions. Movements such as those of Shahbagh and Quota Reform showed us how new media mediated between different classes and communities and led to mass actions and activism (Khondoker & Ahmed, 2019). Social media became the "social field" that expanded what counts as mobilization, linking micro-level grievances with macro-level change (Chowdhury, 2018).

During the 2018 road safety movements, remarkable online activism occurred, with Facebook and YouTube playing a central role in fostering student unity against systemic corruption. This road safety movement of 2018 saw significant online activism, where Facebook and YouTube were central in galvanizing student unity against systemic corruption (Parvez, 2022).

Platforms such as Facebook also played a significant role in the organization and endurance of protests in the Quota Reform Movement 2018, as fast communication and widespread reach were possible. Nevertheless, fears of fake news and digital surveillance also

arose, highlighting the power as well as the pitfalls of digital activism (Hasan, Biswas, & Ahsan, 2020).

The quota reform movement of 2018 in Bangladesh offers an excellent case study of how digital media participates in today's protest culture. Islam and Hasan (2018) look at how social media—mainly Facebook—were used to mobilize students of the University of Dhaka against what they thought was an unfair system of quotas in public jobs recruitment. Their study underscores how digital tools not only enabled the swift dissemination of information and helped organize offline activities but also reached a larger audience. Nevertheless, the study also highlights some of the downsides of the use of social media, suggesting that in the face of increasing public distrust in traditional media, individuals are in fact pushed towards social media platforms, which, despite providing a space for mobilization, were also a site of misleading information and incitement of mass violence (Islam & Hasan, 2020).

Recent studies on the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-discrimination Student Movement 2024) capture this change in political involvement. Changing patterns of political participation like these are also the focus of a newly released study. *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* is an outcome of these dynamics. Fueled by public outrage over the reintroduction of a job quota, students took to platforms such as Facebook, X, and Telegram to circumvent traditional media restrictions and organize resistance. Despite the internet restriction imposed by the government, the protesters used VPNs and received international media support, which reflects their digital mobilization that was creative and resilient (Nazrul, 2024).

Thus, these studies indicate that digital media plays a strong role in shaping Generation Z's political preferences as they get most of their political information on the Internet, therefore digital platforms are key in influencing their decisions. They are taught attitudes and behaviors with digital political content. And even though Generation Z still uses traditional media as a backdrop. This represents a huge swing toward digital media as the dominant medium of political involvement. This research zeroes in on the role of social media in the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* and looks at the issues that students faced when utilizing these platforms and why social media turned into a battle ground.

5. Methodology

This research takes a qualitative method to study the role of social media in political mobilization and sociopolitical transformation within Generation Z in Bangladesh, specifically targeting the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-discrimination Student Movement 2024). Thirty unstructured interviews were conducted, including five Key Informant Interviews (KII) with key movement organizers, locally known as *somonnoyok*, who played pivotal roles in conceptualizing and implementing digital campaigns. Insights into strategic planning, execution of campaigns through social media, and organizational adaptability were offered by the key informants. Further, twenty-five general activists involved in creating awareness and mobilizing online provided accounts of digital activism experiences. The study investigates how social media has been utilized to facilitate grassroots political mobilization, group identity construction, and counter-narratives. A critical exploration of challenges encountered during digital mobilization, including censorship, false information, and the digital gap, is further intended to contribute to richer insight into student-driven online resistance in Bangladesh's transforming political environment.

5.1 Research Design

This study makes use of primary data from unstructured interviews to discuss how Generation Z is using social media to mobilize political reform in Bangladesh, with particular focus on the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-discrimination Student Movement 2024). Five key informant interviews (KII) were included with coordinators renowned as *Somonnoyok*—core leaders responsible for the digital campaign and offering insight into leadership, decision-making, and the challenges of mobilizing while under the surveillance of the state. Their experiences provided strategic insight into organizing decentralized digital campaigns. In addition to the key informant interviews, twenty-five general activists shared personal accounts of their involvement in the movement, their use of social media platforms, and the emotional and practical challenges they faced during this time. A mixed respondent design offers extensive information about the digital activist ecosystem. Thematic analysis is used to identify important patterns and themes, especially regarding how people organize both online and offline, and how social media helps build unity and fight against established oppression.

5.2 Study Site

This study is conducted at various academic institutions in Dhaka, Bangladesh, including significant public universities such as Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University and some public medical institutions as well, such as Dhaka Medical College. The list features private players like North South University, private players such as Daffodil International University, BRAC University, Dhaka International University, and private colleges such as Milestone College and Ekram Ullah College. The study provides a diverse range of student ideologies from Bangladesh's political hotspots. These institutions, critical to Dhaka's educational and political landscape, have transformed into epicenters of youth-dominated social and political change.

Interview data is analyzed using thematic coding. This paper aims to discover how Gen Z activists tend to use social media tools for building political consciousness and mobilizing peers for socio-political change in real-world contexts.

5.3 Selection of Participants

Participants include representatives from various universities and digital activism networks around Dhaka, Bangladesh, so that all voices of the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-discrimination Student Movement 2024) are heard. The sample of this study is gender balanced and includes activists from varied academic and professional backgrounds.

Five coordinators (*Somonnoyok*) have led the efforts to coordinate and strategize the movement's digital camps; they are the first group of participants. They are chosen for their positions of leadership and for their important contribution to mobilizing online. Another group is organized around twenty-five activists in the movement, who are general students who acted as social media influencers and digital content creators who helped publicize the movement and get others involved through their digital platforms. The participant cohort represents a cross-section of Bangladesh's youth, taking into account academic discipline, socio-economic background, and political interest, to come away with a comprehensive view of the organizational tactics, barriers, and successes of the movement. To provide a full analysis of Gen Z organizing across platforms, participants from each sector will be interviewed.

5.4 Ethical Considerations

This study complied fully with ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Approval was secured from the Ethical Committee of Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTUEC), which reviewed and sanctioned the research protocol. Consistent with NSTUEC's requirements, informed verbal consent was obtained from each participant before data collection commenced. Participants are thoroughly briefed on the study's aims, their right to anonymity, voluntary involvement, and their ability to withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. Personal identifiers are not recorded to maintain confidentiality. The research team remains committed to protecting the rights, well-being, and dignity of all participants and has upheld all relevant ethical standards set by NSTUEC throughout the course of the study.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a multi-theoretical framework to explore how digital activism led by Gen Z is operated in Bangladesh in the context of *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024*. It's a kind of activism in no small part as a result of how its model recasts both platform and message. Four major theoretical perspectives help us understand how the movement drew people in, spoke to them, and got them to take action.

6.1 Networked Social Movements Theory

According to Castells (2012), networked social movements are actions that are digitally coordinated and conducted, without a command center in sight. This notion helps explain how activists used Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp to organize protests, share information, and communicate with other activists on other campuses. Castells argues, "internet is a free space of autonomous communication" (Castells, 2012). The movement leveraged that to leapfrog institutional media and speak directly to people in their neighborhoods. The communication was decentralized and horizontal, allowing students to create organizing forms that were open and adjustable. Students in this movement used peer-to-peer digital networks to receive help from individuals in local communities instead of going through state-controlled mainstream media. This goes along with Castells' concept that the flow of information determines who has power in society.

6.2 Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (ELM)

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) elaboration likelihood model argues that persuasive communication works in two ways—centrally and peripherally (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The movement employed both. The model explains that people engage with persuasive messages through two main routes: the **central route**, which involves thoughtful consideration of arguments, and the **peripheral route**, which is driven by surface-level cues like emotions, slogans, or imagery.

During the movement, in-depth Facebook posts, fiery live debates, and documentary-style videos embodied central-route persuasion—appealing to those willing to think critically about injustice. On the other hand, catchy memes, symbolic visuals, emotional video snippets, and viral hashtags like **#BoishommoBirodhi2024** worked through the peripheral route, grabbing attention quickly and emotionally. Together, this dual approach mobilized both politically engaged youth and the broader, more casual public, helping the movement cut across levels of awareness and involvement.

6.3 Intersectionality Theory

Kimberlé Crenshaw's 1989 theory of intersectionality says that diverse forms of oppression, such as race, class, gender, and religion, don't happen in a vacuum; they work together to make things worse (Crenshaw, 1989). This lens was embraced by the movement because it engaged in inclusive storytelling and spoke about multiple forms of prejudice, including religious, gender-based, and socio-economic. It was also then that social media allowed people to finally talk publicly about these intersecting forms of oppression, which served to unite students with different backgrounds and solidify the movement as “us.” Crenshaw says, “an appreciation of the relationships among multiple forms of domination” is necessary in order to effectively resist them (Crenshaw, 1989). That was evident in the movement’s message and how people participated. Instead than just looking at one issue, it looked at all the unfair things that kids from different backgrounds have to deal with, such as being from a lower caste, having a different gender identity, having a different religion, or being in a different socioeconomic category. Activists used social media & made the movement look open and inclusive. The movement became stronger and more relevant to more students because it focused on how different kinds of oppression affect one another.

6.4 Digital Activism and Tactical Adaptation

Zeynep Tufekci (2017) highlights the virtues and limitations of 2017’s internet-based activism. While Facebook and Twitter make it easy to mobilize the masses overnight, they also make the activists susceptible to emerging threats in the form of censorship, security watchfulness, and digital fatigue (Tufekci, 2017). In terms of networked protest theory propounded by Tufekci, the digital campaigns, not only need to be visible but also durable and adaptable.

The *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon* “demonstrated its flexibility, shifting to encrypted platforms like Telegram, using VPNs, and rallying offline when digital space was unsafe. These tactics demonstrate what Tufekci says are digital activism’s tenacity and creativity and are particularly relevant in the Global South, where governments are trying to clamp down on it. Thus, The movement’s adjustability in the era of adversity reflects the ingenuity Tufekci sees as the key to effective digital resistance.

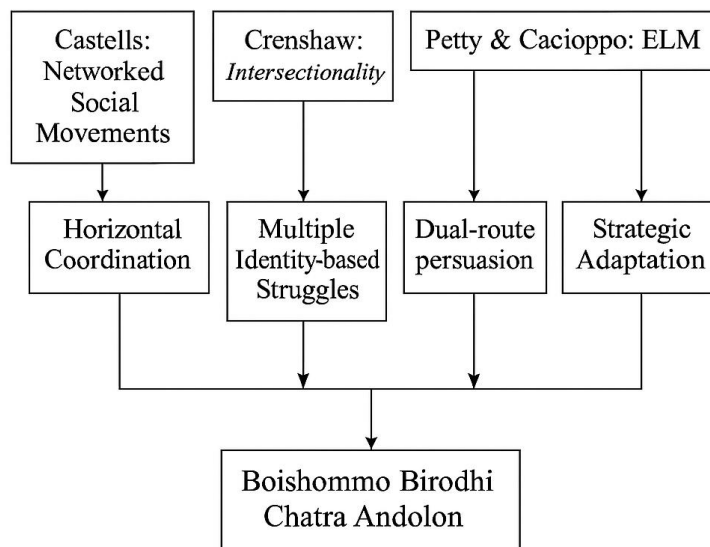


Figure-1: Integrated Theoretical Framework

In sum, the debriefing of the four frameworks—Castells’ networked movements, the ELM model, intersectionality, and tactical adaptation—gives us a full portrait of how Gen Z used social media to fight back against authority, forge a sense of community, and remain resilient in the face of repression. These theories help to situate the movement within the wider tradition of student activism in Bangladesh. They demonstrate how it has transformed how people feel, how inclusive it is and how it uses technology.

7. Findings

Bangladesh's *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024), written with each word of the student's blood, is a landmark not only for the country itself but also for the Gen Z students of Bangladesh in terms of political and social activism. This was a grassroots movement against caste- and gender-based discrimination and socio-economic discrimination, and social media transformed the model of activism. The Internet has played an integral role in the organization, mobilization, and advocacy for political change, in particular for a generation that was more comfortable in the virtual realm than in the political establishment. Social media became the weapon of choice for awareness, protests, and demands for reform, focusing on the digital activism movement.

7.1 Mobilization through Digital Platforms: Social Media as the Engine of Change

Social media plays an essential role in galvanizing and uniting the Gen Z activists in *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024). It can be seen how digital platforms like Facebook and others, such as Telegram or Messenger, were not only useful to communicate but also to organize, establish networks, and show solidarity. In an era of the information highway’s relay speed, these platforms played a crucial role in organizing protests, in spreading knowledge, and in linking together voices across different strata. “*Social media wasn’t just our tool, it was our lifeline,*” one activist said, pointing out how digital platforms were instrumental in ensuring that the movement stayed in motion when traditional forms of communication were hushed or controlled by powerful entities. Social media facilitated a quick spreading of the news that was essential for organizing the movement and obtaining wide support. Through these mediums, activists posted updates, made tactical announcements, and called for people, both in Bangladesh and internationally, to come join them. In a country where traditional media frequently faces censorship or bias, social media served as a vital platform for activists to express their views. “*Facebook was what gave us a voice when no one else would,*” their fears narrate their predicament, and circumvent state-controlled obstacles, the core coordinator of the movement said, indicating the importance of digital platforms for free expression and political movements. But more than a communications tool, social media also provided a platform for activists to counter the dominant media narrative with slogans, news flashes, and tactical information. The movement using live streams and real-time updates was a powerful resource for resistance, offering documentation of government crackdowns and oppression. Overnight, these platforms flipped the power dynamic, enabling young activists to tell their story—something that the traditional media model was unequipped to do. As one medical student participating in the movement shared, “*Our hashtags trended not because there were many, but because they stood for emotions and unity,*” underscoring the emotive power of the movement’s digital activism. Hashtags like #BoishommoBirodhi2024 gave gestures of solidarity to its supporters, knitting people to the cause no matter how near or far they were to the actual protests.

There was also a strong sense of community and solidarity among activists on social media. *“Digital platforms were the lungs of our movement. They let us breathe when the world conspired to silence our voices,”* declared one coordinator (*Somonnoyok*), emphasizing the need for these resources to sustain momentum when there was so much external pressure. The communication in real time and the personal impacts relayed on social platforms served as emotional ballast for the movement and helped create community when the protesters were physically apart or unable to participate because of limitations imposed on them.

Social media also transcended geographic and generational barriers. *“Even the students in the villages, who could not be there in person, were sitting with us digitally,”* said one coordinator (*Somonnoyok*), noting the accessibility of digital platforms across urban and rural areas. This link has drawn a wider network. This created a more inclusive network, allowing young people and students from all locations to have a place in the movement. Online links reflected this solidarity, transforming the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon* into a national movement.

The Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024 (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024) is a potent lesson on how social media, under the control of Gen Z, can change the nature of political activism. Social media played a crucial role in the movement by enabling rapid and honest sharing of information beyond the country's borders, circumventing local media censorship, and engaging with all social and economic demographics.

7.2 Overcoming Challenges: Resilience through Digital Adaptation

The Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024 (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024) encountered fierce challenges, including internet shutdowns and media censorship, to stymie its spread and regulate the distribution of information. Despite this, social media proved a crucial form by which the movement maintained energy. When activists were faced with hacked traditional platforms, they quickly adjusted, frequently migrating to other tools and procedures. *“When the state tried to shut us up, all we had was word of mouth and encrypted software like Telegram,”* one activist said, reflecting the movement's resilience and versatility.

When it was limited to avoid the possibility of uncontrolled crowds on the streets, activists swiftly moved to encrypted apps like Telegram and offline methods where they held face-to-face meetings to keep their endeavors alive. This adaptability was a sign of the flexibility of digital activism, as activists were still able to remain connected and mobilize under conditions of intensified surveillance. Not only did the digital platforms, therefore, help in managing logistics, but they were also instrumental in helping activists coalesce as a group. *“Every post, every livestream was a message of defiance,”* another coordinator (*Somonnoyok*) said, stressing that social media served as a virtual sanctum for activists to meditate, recount stories of struggle, and provide emotional support. Such platforms saved the movement and came to represent the protest against the oppression of the state.

The protest movement's ability to withstand a partial shutdown of the internet was a sign of its strength. *“We didn't have the internet, but we could still reach out and connect,”* a university respondent said, in an example of the activists' tireless dedication. One activist put it this way: *“The more they tried to cut us off, the tighter our ties came together,”* explaining how actions aimed at extinguishing the earthquake of the movement only fanned its flames.

The shutdowns and blackouts, aimed at snuffing the movement, revved it up. *“Every blackout was a new opportunity for us to experiment,”* another activist said, illustrating how the restrictions had pushed them to develop new ways of working. What I was witnessing in

the movement's ability to adapt, discover new tactics, and learn new technologies was the power that digital activism could have to ward off repression and keep the momentum going.

The Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024 illustrated the essential function of digital adaptation in the context of censorship. That the protest has been able to shift platforms and carry on offline demonstrates the malleability and tenacity of digital activism and is an example of its potential as a tool of resistance and social change.

7.3 Building Collective Identity: Social Media as a Cultural and Emotional Anchor

Social media was essential for Gen Z activists in the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024), and not just as a medium for logistics; it also became a battlefield for identity, a way of expressing cultural values. It served to magnify the collective identity of young activists, which fundamentally portrayed them as social actors. "It wasn't just a question of quotas; it was a question of who we are and what we care about," one participant said, adding that the movement was about defining shared values and beliefs. Activists infused their digital content with hashtags, viral slogans, poetry, and art, creating an overarching narrative of justice and resistance that turned online material into a potent symbol of solidarity.

In addition to organizing protests, social media provided a place for emotional support and connection. Zapatista organizers exchanged tales of resistance and political solidarity, building closer personal ties. "*We were not just fighting against something; we were fighting for each other,*" said a student at Dhaka University. "*Every post we made turned into a thread in the fabric of our shared identity,*" said another coordinator (*Somonnoyok*). They had this amazing emotional connection, which was incredibly unifying for the movement; it managed to perpetuate energies and enthusiasm for the cause on the personal level and the collective level, and it bound the individuals and activists together.

Humor and satire were also important tools for the movement's activism. Activists made jokes that went viral to mock government policies, transforming political critiques into shareable, digestible content. "*Sometimes, laughter was our most powerful weapon,*" said an activist, noting how humor made political messages more accessible and appealing. This fusion of culture, art, and humor allowed the movement to resonate with a wider public, so it was not just a political campaign but also a cultural and emotional one. Social media for *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* activists in Gen Z served as a site to develop collective identity, signal cultural values, and promote solidarity.

7.4 Counter-Narratives: Social Media vs. Traditional Media

With state-controlled outlets dominating traditional media, social media became the counter-narrative for the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024). Activists recorded government repression on videos, in photos, and on live streams. "*One of the biggest impacts was that social media wasn't just a platform but evidence for us,*" a coordinator (*Somonnoyok*) said. By creating digital archives of the living story of the campaign itself, of its struggles and branches, not only did these kinds of digital collections help to mobilize support for it, but they also worked to produce a record of the movement as it went along.

"*As for the truth, without social media it would be dead,*" another activist said, stressing how digital platforms have helped preserve the movement's story. Activists also saw the emotional potency of such a counter-narrative. "*Every video that we posted was not only*

proof, but it was also an appeal to action,” said a coordinator (Somonnoyok), depicting how the digital content was both evidence and an invitation to change. The rise of digital media made it possible for activists to push back against disinformation and elevate the voices of the marginalized in a parallel media environment that carried their stories beyond their communities and onto the global stage.

Activists also leveraged data analytics to measure the efficacy of their campaigns, adjusting their strategies in response to engagement and reach. *“We made every post a campaign, then broke it down qualitatively and adapted,”* another coordinator (Somonnoyok) said. This involved in-depth, data-driven digital activism that demonstrated the movement’s sophistication and willingness to use technology in strategic and sneaky ways.

7.5 Lasting Impact: Redefining Activism in the Digital Era

Gen Z activists transformed activism in the digital age through social media in radical, newfangled, and tactical ways. And in so doing, they redefined political engagement by turning their platforms into frontiers of advocacy and innovation.

“We proved that change is not only possible, but it’s inevitable when we stand together,” said one activist. *“The world saw what we can do with just our phones and our voices,”* said another participant. *“We made clicks into action and hashtags into history,”* one of the coordinators (Somonnyok) said.

The legacy of the movement hasn’t stopped: it remains a potent reminder of what the tools of the digital age can do to drive socio-political change and a model for the generations to come in how to use technology as a means for justice and reform. It was evidence that activism has slithered from the streets to the screens—the stories, strategies, and struggles that combine to inspire and empower.

Not only did Gen Z utilize social media to question the status quo during *Boishommo Birodhi Chatro Andolon 2024*, it also displayed the transformative nature of digital platforms. Activists are still contemplating their experiences, as one put it, *“We may not have changed everything, but we changed the way change begins.”* Another: *“Our struggle showed that the tiniest voice, when amplified through the Internet, can be transformed into the boldest cry for justice.”*

The movement continues to grow, partly because young activists across Bangladesh have embraced social media as a new public space. These are shifts in gear, paradigm shifts, motions towards the time when political/socio engagement matches the unlimited capacity of the internet

1. Theme	2. Sub-Themes	3. Key Quotes	4. Platform/Tools Used	5. Theoretical Link
6. 1. Digital Mobilization	7. Real-time organizing- Decentralized coordination	8. “Facebook wasn’t just our tool, it was our lifeline.”	9. Facebook, Telegram, Messenger	10. Networked Social Movements (Castells, 2012)
11. 2. Emotional Solidarity & Identity	12. - Emotional bonding- Hashtag unity- Cultural symbolism	13. “Every post we made turned into a thread in the fabric of our shared identity.”	14. Hashtags, Stories, Art, Satire	15. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989)
16. 3. Tactical Adaptation	17. - Internet shutdown response-	18. “When the state tried to shut us up, we had	19. Telegram, VPN, Offline meetings	20. Tactical Digital Activism (Tufekci, 2017)

	Encrypted migration- Offline coordination	encrypted software like Telegram.”		
21. 4. Counter-Narrative Creation	22. - Challenging state media- Visual evidence- Citizen journalism	23. “Social media wasn’t just a platform, it was proof for us.”	24. Facebook Live, YouTube, Story Posts	25. Networked Social Movements
26. 5. Dual-layer Persuasion Strategy	27. - Information depth for core supporters- Viral content for broader reach	28. “Our hashtags trended not because there were many, but because they stood for emotions and unity.”	29. Long posts, Videos, Memes, Hashtags	30. Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)
31. 6. Inclusivity & Intersectionality	32. -Representing multiple marginalized groups- Solidarity across identities	33. “It wasn’t just about quotas; it was about who we are and what we care about.”	34. Campaign visuals, Testimonies	35. Intersectionality Theory

Table-1: Integrated Theoretical Framework

8. Discussion

The 2024 *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon* (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024) mirrors the new trend of Gen Z activism in Bangladesh, which makes us wonder how social media has turned into a very potent lever of political mobilization and activism. According to Goswami (2018), Gen Zers’ digital savviness differentiates them from former generations and permits them to contest master narratives and amplify marginalized voices in cyberspace.

Traditionally, Bangladesh’s activist culture has been based around street protests and the print media. But this movement utilized venues including Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp to organize decentralized actions and expand their message more widely. This digital shift reflects international examples such as the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter, in which social media has been used to mediate for historically marginalized communities (Howard & Aiden, 2011; Smith et al., 2020).

The *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon* was not a typical student movement; instead, it evolved into a combined social and political protest against the government. Thematic analysis also identified ways in which emotional connection and resistance to repression and identity formation were linked to digital media. These results confirm theories in place and add to our understanding of activism outside of the Global North.

At last, the movement reflects a shift across generations—from old-school protest methods to tech-integrated strategies. Generation Z’s comfort with digital communications enabled them to effectively and quickly mobilize—transforming the political landscape in Bangladesh.

The *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* exemplifies the evolution of youth-oriented political activism in Bangladesh and demonstrates how, in the age of social media, it is Generation Z that is mobilizing most efficiently. What sets their brand of activism apart from that of previous generations is their fluency in digital tools. This movement marks a transition

away from on-the-street protest and print-based mobilization to new hybrid approaches that combine online and offline strategies.

The use of Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp allowed widespread, decentralized organizing without state overhang through official media. This is consistent with Castells' (2012) thesis of Networked Social Movements, in which horizontal digital networks foster grassroots participation. Activists even found ways to work around internet blackouts and surveillance by switching platforms or decamping offline, illustrating what Castells calls “digitally autonomous mobilization.”

The communication strategies of the movement parallel Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model. Using both central routes to media (deep videos and critical posts) and peripheral cues to media (memes, hashtags, and visuals), activists are able to reach all different kinds of publics. This two-tiered communication heightened both emotive and cognitive involvement, drawing the movement more broadly.

This can be seen in Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality Theory in the way the movement addressed discrimination according to gender, religion, and socio-economic status. By caring about interlocking systems of oppression, they built room for diverse marginalized voices. And digital platforms spread these narratives and helped form a collective identity based on similar victimization.

Reactions to censorship—like moving to encrypted apps and meeting in person—characterize Tufekci's (2017) tactical digital activism model. Protesters quickly adapted to the restrictions placed on them by the state, deploying humor, visual satire, and symbolic messaging to stay visible as well as raise the collective spirit. This flexibility is a defining characteristic of new digital resistance.

In addition to logistical coordination, online spaces offered emotional comfort. Solidarity and fortitude were forged through the telling of stories and cultural expression. Status updates, poetry, and satirical pamphlets provided emotional glue and reinforced group solidarity. As a result, social media served as both a place to strategize and a community gathering space.

The movement also served as a counter-narrative to conventional state-influenced media. Through live videos, testimonies, and documenting repression, activists essentially built who would be the living archive itself, countering disinformation and drawing support. And this user-generated media served as evidence-based activism.

In the end, *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* shows how Gen Z is changing activism in the digital era. Their tactics, which are highly emotionally intelligent and tech-savvy, are emblematic of new forms of political engagement in the South. This is a development, in theory and in practice, that highlights the power of social media not just to arrange but to nurture and sustain the energy of enduring social change.

9.Recommendation: Positive Utilization of Social Media in Future Politics

The way social media revolutionized *The Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* (Anti-Discrimination Student Movement 2024) is a perfect example of how digital platforms such as social media can serve as a tool for positive political engagement. In the politics of the future, social media should be institutionalized as a means of popular participation and inclusive, transparent, and decentralized political communication. Political parties and civic organizations must actively involve youth in social media while encouraging political literacy, digital responsibility, and dialogue. We need to develop local verified information hubs on all platforms, which can refute untruths and foster trust in digital dialogue.

Second, to bridge digital gaps, the government and NGOs need to work together to provide affordable internet access and digital literacy training, particularly for students in rural and disadvantaged regions. That would make certain that all citizens have the same opportunities to engage in digital activism and political discourse.

Third, the regulations must safeguard freedom of expression while simultaneously mitigating harmful propaganda, surveillance, and censorship. The plan includes establishing independent watchdog organizations to monitor digital rights violations and encourage ethical digital campaigning. Further, youth-led digital campaigns should be promoted through university-based digital activism cells working closely with policymakers to make sure that the voices from the margins are carried from online to on paper.

Finally, we must develop hybrid activism, which fuses online tools with offline mobilization, to ensure that social media advocacy has a real democratic effect. Used responsibly, social media has the potential to not only provide us with greater civic voice and bring us together across the generational divide but also to democratize the politics of Bangladesh so that politics in the future will be about participation, justice, and accountability.

Article I. 10. Conclusion

This research emphasizes the role of social media in facilitating socio-political transformation, with particular reference to the *Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon* of 2024 (Anti-discrimination Student Movement 2024) in Bangladesh. Generation Z, with its inherent level of digital expertise, has utilized social media tools such as Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp to fight against entrenched discriminatory policies within educational institutions. This study confirms how social media has been instrumental as a mobilizing tool, informing and creating a group identity among activists. This study shows how digital media enabled quick communication, decentralized mobilization, and effective dissemination of political messages, all of which supported the success of the movement. The hybrid model of using both online tactics alongside offline mobilization stood firm against challenges like censorship, surveillance, and the shutdown of the internet. Specifically, the movement's capacity to evolve to counter digital censorship by shifting to secret apps and offline strategies is evidence of the adaptability of digital activism in the modern political context. In addition, the movement's intersectionality, targeting various types of oppressions across gender, religion, and economic status, reflects the all-encompassing strategies of Gen Z to bring about socio-political transformation. Incorporation of aspects like memes, humor, and artwork in the movement's digital space created emotional solidarity and wide-ranging public support, making the movement relatable to different segments of society. The study does mention some notable challenges, such as digital inequality and disinformation, which hindered the reach and credibility of the movement. All these issues are typical challenges in digital activism, particularly in developing countries where the digital divide excludes some segments of society from actively joining political discourse in the digital space. In summary, *the Boishommo Birodhi Chatra Andolon 2024* is a strong case study of how digital media, if leveraged strategically, have the potential to bring about sweeping socio-political changes. This study asserts the need for ethical digital action and the development of policies to enable equal access to digital means for all citizens. As political activism continues to evolve in various forms, the experiences gained from this movement provide valuable lessons for the next generation of digital mobilization, emphasizing flexibility, broad outreach, and the integration of both digital and offline strategies to achieve meaningful change.

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