

Impact of Social Media for Political Mobilization and Awareness in Bangladesh: Opportunities and Challenges

Ayesha Siddika¹, Rifa Tasfiah²
Md. Abdur Rahman Tajbid³

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between social media engagement and political awareness and mobilization in Bangladesh. This study used surveys from 434 respondents and 6 in-depth interviews (IDI) and 4 key informant interviews (KIIs) using purposive sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS, and qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The study identified risks related to misinformation and polarization. In this study, the chi-square test revealed that having an active account, frequent use, and posting political content were significantly associated with increased interest in political discussions. Furthermore, political mobilization through social media has a significant positive correlation with political awareness and behavior. Contact from political actors through social media positively correlates with an individual's motivation to participate in political activities (e.g., rallies, petitions). Understanding of candidates' positions has been found moderately correlated by social media campaigns and multimedia content. Voting decisions showed moderate positive correlation with the exposure to social media campaigns and multimedia posts. Respondents further identified associated challenges which includes misinformation, little to no scrutiny over fake news, political polarization and selective engagement can mislead or discourage users.

Keywords: Social Media, Political Mobilization, Political Awareness, Politics, Bangladesh.

¹Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Email: ayesha.siddika.pa@bup.edu.bd

² Undergraduate Student, Department of Public Administration, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Email: tasfiahsifa154@gmail.com

³ Undergraduate Student, Department of Public Administration, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), Email: tasfiahsifa154@gmail.com

Introduction

Political mobilization is an extension of group identification and is on the same continuum as voting and other lower-cost manifestations of group affiliations (Gamson, 1989). Social media is now a major source of news for a significant percentage of the population, demonstrating how the digital era has changed how individuals obtain and use political information (Newman, 2011). Social media allows activists the ability to effectively coordinate their actions through tools like group organization, event creation, and instant messaging. For example, during the Arab Spring, social media was widely used to spread information and plan protests, demonstrating the platforms' capacity to support group action (Breuer et al., 2014). The Social Movement Theory, which describes how social structures and interactions give rise to collective action, provides the theoretical foundation for the revolutionary impact of social media on political mobilization around the world (Goh & Pang, 2016). Besides, social media's multi-dimensional framework gives rise to accelerated information circulation, making it a powerful tool for organizing collective action and mobilizing public support in real-time (Chowdhury, 2018).

Traditional political systems can be challenged by decentralized grassroots mobilization, real-time coordination of collective activities, and the amplification of marginalized voices through social media (Baxter & Marcella, 2012). Social media has made it possible to communicate quickly and widely, and it has allowed for the unprecedented pace and scope of local and global campaigns. Social media enables more flexible, informal, and adaptable modes of engagement than traditional forms of political mobilization, which usually rely on formal organizational structures, party affiliations, or hierarchical institutions (Hasan & Paul, 2025). Social media activism's flexibility enables movements to react swiftly to political events, frequently surpassing official institutions' responses (Arceneaux et al., 2013).

Alternative political narratives have been less accessible to the public in many nations due to official control over print and broadcast media. On the other hand, social media provides a direct channel of connection between the public and activists, allowing uncensored information to spread and promoting mass mobilization even in the context of authoritarian governments (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016).

Although these platforms provide forums for discussion and interaction, they also create ideological silos and echo chambers where users are largely exposed to viewpoints that support their preexisting opinions. Social media has completely changed the way public opinion is formed and reformed, how political agendas are created, and how leaders and movements acquire legitimacy. Crucially, it also offers a platform for underrepresented groups' counter-narratives (Hasan & Paul, 2025). Social media platforms not only make it easier for information to spread quickly, but they also allow people to plan group activities in real time. One of the most difficult parts of political mobilization is frequently coordination, especially when members are spread out over a wide geographic area. By offering a centralized platform where people may exchange information on protest sites, talk about tactics, and reach decisions as a group, social media lowers the practical obstacles to coordination. For example, social media was essential in coordinating large-scale demonstrations against the government's decision to restrict democratic changes during the 2014 Hong Kong protests, also referred to as the Umbrella Movement (Kim & Kim, 2019).

Literature Review

The political landscape is affected by the usage of social media as a tool for influencing people and altering opinions (Butt & Awang, 2017). Because of social media, voters are now actively involved in politics, and social media is eliminating the element of politics that is based on patronage.

Impact of Social Media

As social media influences its users' voting decisions, it is effectively helping the public and voters become more politically aware than they have ever been (Ghani et al., 2020). The most significant benefit of social media is that it forces politicians to keep their word to their constituents; if they don't, they risk being criticized on social media sites. The impact of social media has led to the discussion and resolution of numerous societal concerns. Social media has unquestionably shown itself to be a very practical and affordable form of communication, especially across political divides (Riezebos et al., 2011).

Studies on generational differences in political media use and civic involvement have shown that social media has a cross-generational impact on political engagement (Andersen et al., 2020). A notable effect was observed in countries with greater media freedom, indicating that people were less likely to indicate a desire to engage in political mobilization. But in nations with media restrictions, an interesting interaction effect surfaced, highlighting the connection between low group efficacy and online media use (Kharel, 2024). Concerns regarding the caliber and diversity of information found on social media are raised by users' exposure to content that supports their preexisting opinions, underscoring the necessity of resolving these issues in order to maintain a positive online political atmosphere (Boulianne, 2016).

A comprehensive approach that takes into consideration both social media's empowering and destabilizing effects is necessary to comprehend its complex function in political mobilization. On the one hand, it has made political engagement easier and given people the means to organize and resist in large numbers. However, it has also brought along new vulnerabilities, such as susceptibility to surveillance, ideological polarization, and misleading data. Social media platforms' architecture, which places an emphasis on interaction, frequently makes it possible for sensational or inaccurate content to spread virally. These factors have the power to skew public opinion, divide communities, and influence election results (Hasan & Paul, 2025). Social

media users are at risk from deliberate online political harassment, chitchat, and rumors. Media politics becomes scandal politics during elections and other significant events. Concern for laws and rights, political knowledge, and political interest are also necessary for online political involvement (Mahmud & Amin, 2017). Democratic debate and informed civic engagement are directly threatened by the ease with which misleading information spreads online (Beam et al., 2020). Existing literature mostly highlights the nature of civic engagement through social media. However, there has been a very limited studies that assess political mobilization and awareness through social media, especially in the context of Bangladesh. To address this empirical research gap, the objective of this study is to examine the impact of social media in shaping political mobilization and political awareness in Bangladesh

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens of the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) by Verba, Schlozman & Brady (1995) theorizes using the principles of rational choice theory and the SES model. CVM explains participation through three mechanisms; (a) because they cannot, (b) because they do not want to and (c) because nobody asked. Political participation is determined by three interlocking mechanisms; resources (skills, information, access), psychological engagement (interest, awareness, efficacy), and recruitment networks (mobilizing contacts) (Verba et al., 1995). The resources component of the CVM model involves money, time, and civic skills and is considered vital for political participation (Verba et al., 1995). Civic skills, measured by education and political knowledge (Schlozman et al., 2018), and financial resources vary by gender, race, and class, influencing participation gaps (Verba et al., 1995). The second component of the model, psychological engagement, explains individuals' motivation and willingness to participate in politics (Verba et al., 1995), which includes political interest, internal

efficacy, information behavior, and party affiliation, all positively linked to participation (Schlozman et al., 2018). The recruitment component of the model emphasizes the role of an individual's social environment including family, peers, workplaces, voluntary associations, and religious institutions in encouraging political participation (Verba et al., 1995).

As a well-established framework, Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) has been widely applied in studies examining public political activity, especially in the online context (Kim & Khang, 2014; Goetting & Becker, 2025; Alscher & McElvany, 2025; Guo et al., 2020; Kirbiš, 2017; Kusumarani & Zo, 2019). In this study, social media has been used as a new infrastructural resource that reshapes all three CVM components. In the context of this study, social media is conceptualized as a mechanism that simultaneously operates across all three dimensions. First, as a resource, social media influences informational and participatory barriers by providing access to political content, thereby enhancing individuals' civic skills and political knowledge. Second, as a form of psychological engagement, exposure to political discussions and content through social media is expected to increase political interest, awareness, and perceived efficacy. Third, as a recruitment network, in this study social media is expected to facilitate mobilization by enabling direct and indirect contact between political actors and citizens, lowering coordination costs for participation.

Methodology

Participants

Bangladesh was home to 60.0 million social media user identities in January 2025 (DataReportal, 2025). Using Yamane's formula, a sample size of about 400 respondents ($n = 399.99$) would statistically represent Bangladesh's 60 million social media users with a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error at a

95% confidence level. This resulted in a total of 434 respondents ($M_{age} = 28.1$ years, $n_{female} = 48.8\%$ and $n_{male} = 51.2\%$). The sample size was determined using Yamane (1967) and Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) formula to select the appropriate number of respondents to justify the study.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \times e^2}$$

(n = sample size, N = population size, e = acceptable sampling error)

However, while Yamane's formula provides a reference for sample size adequacy, the use of purposive sampling limits statistical generalizability. This study employed a mixed methods design to examine the role of social media in political mobilization and awareness in Bangladesh and participants were selected using purposive sampling based on participant's access to social media.

For the qualitative analysis, 6 respondents for in-depth interviews (IDI) were selected and 4 respondents were selected for Key Informant Interview (KII) based on purposive sampling. The four participants (academicians and student-activist) of KIIs were selected based on their professional expertise, active engagement on social media, and knowledge of social media's impact on public engagement. For IDIs, six participants were selected to represent active social media users from different backgrounds (students and retired government employees) with varying levels of political awareness and online participation.

Measures

Drawing on the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), this study incorporated social media engagement as a dimension of resource access to predict political interest and awareness. Surveys were administered through google forms with prior consent of the participants. The survey included a series of demographic questions (age, gender, income), frequency of the use

Impact of Social Media

of social media, political awareness and political mobilization. In this study, the internal consistency of political awareness (4 items) was acceptable (Cronbach alpha, $\alpha = .817$) and political mobilization (9 items) was acceptable (Cronbach alpha, $\alpha = .818$).

For qualitative data, the study used interviews (KIIs and IDIs) covering use of social media on political awareness and political mobilization. Interviews were conducted in Bangla, audio-recorded with consent of the participants, transcribed verbatim, and translated to English for analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

This study used descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests examined associations between social media use variables and political engagement outcomes. Spearman's rank-order correlation was employed in this study to assess the strength and direction of monotonic relationships between ordinal variables of social media use and political mobilization. This study evaluated the impact of social media on political awareness and voter behavior using ordinal logistic regression (OLRs). Model fitting used the logit link function. The Test of Parallel Lines indicated that the proportional odds assumption was met with the model. Model diagnostics showed non-significant Pearson and Deviance χ^2 values ($p > .05$), confirming adequate fit between observed and expected frequencies. The Nagelkerke Pseudo- R^2 (0.178 - 0.335) and -2 Log Likelihood were used in this study to assess overall model fit (Table 5). The likelihood-ratio χ^2 tests demonstrated that most models significantly improved prediction over their intercept-only counterparts ($p < .05$). Qualitative data were examined in thematic analysis, and each interview response was summarized descriptively and grouped into broad themes. To ensure reliability, all qualitative data were reviewed twice, and categorizations were cross-checked by a co-author.

Findings

Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants

Table 1 represents the socio-demographic profile of the participants of the respondents (n = 434). 48.8% of the respondents were female, and 51.2% were male. Among the respondents, the majority (71.9%) had an undergraduate level and majority of them (72.6%) were students. Most of the respondents (89.2%) were found to have resided in urban areas. Among the respondents, 40.8% of families have an average monthly income between 32000 to 60000 Tk, while 35% earning between below-32000 Tk.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic Characteristics	(%)
Age	
13-20	15.7
21-30	57.8
31-40	12.4
40-Above	14.1
Gender	
Female	48.8
Male	51.2
Educational Level	
Primary	0.5
Secondary	2.8
Higher Secondary	11.5
Undergraduate	71.9
Postgraduate	13.4
Profession	
Student	72.6
Govt. job	8.1
Private job	4.6
Teacher	2.1
Banker	1.4
Politician	.2
Driver	.9
Business	.7
Others	9.4
Location	
Urban	89.2
Semi-urban	5.3
Rural	5.5
Income	
Below- 32000	35
32000-60000	40.8
60000-90000	8.2
90000-300000	10.2

Table 2 presents the use of social media among the respondents. Among the respondents, the majority (66.8%) use Facebook on a daily (85.3%) basis. Among the respondents 88.7% of respondents find it helpful to stay informed about political news and policies. However, barely 30.2% of people post on political issues, 23.3% active in social media political groups and pages and 23.5% comment on political issues.

Table 2: Use of Social Media

Particulars	n (%)
Frequency of social media use	
Daily	85.3%
Several times a week	8.8%
Weekly	2.3%
Rarely	2.3%
Never	1.4%
Most used media	
Facebook	66.8
Youtube	14.3
Instagram	17.7
Twitter	0.5
Tiktok	0.7
Access to political news and policies through social media	88.7%
Yes	11.3%
No	

Chi-square statistics was used to examine the association between use of social media and political engagement through social media (Table 3). Based on the Chi-Square test, the study found a significant association in between interest in political discussions, understanding candidates' positions better, voting decisions, and motivation to participate in political activities with respondents' active social media account, frequency of social media use, most used media and posting about political issues on social media.

Table 3: Association between use of social media and political engagement

Political Engagement through social media	Active Social Media Account	Frequency of social media use	Most Used Media	Posting about political issues on social media
Increased interest in political discussions	.000*	.037*	.195	.000*
Understand candidates' positions	.126	.066	.000*	.000*
Influence on voting decision	.005*	.018*	.666	.017*
Motivated to participate in political activities (e.g., rallies, petitions)	.014*	.036*	.040*	.000*

*p < 0.05

Social Media on Political Awareness and Political Mobilization

Through spearman correlation analysis examined the relationship between different forms of social media engagement and political attitudes and behaviors (Table 4). Specifically, posting about political issues online showed a significant positive correlation with increased interest in political discussions ($\rho=.342$, $p<.001$) and understanding candidates' positions ($\rho = .272$, $p<.001$). Active participation in social media groups or pages focused on politics had the strongest positive correlations across all political attitude and behavior measures, including interest in political discussions ($\rho=.452$, $p<0.001$), understanding candidates' positions ($\rho=.416$, $p<0.001$), and motivation to participate in political activities ($\rho=.420$, $p<0.001$).

Table 4: Correlation between social media and political awareness (Spearman rho, ρ)

	Posting about political issues on social media	Active in social media groups or pages that talk about politics
Increased interest in political discussions	.342**	.452**
Understand candidates' positions	.272**	.416**
Influence on voting decision	.178**	.303**
Motivation to participate in political activities	.289**	.420**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Spearman correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between political actors' social media strategies and citizens' political awareness and participation (Table 5). Citizens' interest in political discussions shows the most positive correlation with active participation in social media groups and pages discussing politics ($\rho=.452$, $p<.001$), whereas direct offline contact from political actors was less influential ($\rho=.235$, $p<.001$) (Table 5). Understanding of candidates' positions has been found moderately correlated by social media campaigns ($\rho=.405$, $p<.001$) and multimedia content ($\rho=.379$, $p<.001$). Voting decisions showed moderate positive correlation with the exposure to social media campaigns and multimedia posts ($\rho=.311$ and $\rho=.305$, $p<.001$, respectively). Furthermore, social media contact from political actors encourages me to participate in political events or discussions positively correlates with the individual's motivation to participate in political activities (e.g., rallies, petitions) ($\rho=.521$, $p<.001$).

Table 5: Correlation between political awareness and political mobilization strategies (Spearman rho, ρ)

	Increased interest in political discussions	Better understanding of candidates	Influence on voting decisions	Participation in political activities
Social media campaigns	.375**	.405**	.311**	.356**
Use of multimedia content	.305**	.379**	.305**	.269**
Online interaction through polls, surveys	.232**	.327**	.271**	.265**
Strategic youth engagement	.281**	.268**	.247**	.235**
Offline campaigns (leaflets, in-person visits) of political parties	.235**	.271**	.174**	.286**
Contact from political actors through social media	.325**	.305**	.260**	.521**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 presents the results of logistic regression models estimating the association between different forms of social media engagement and political outcomes (Odds ratios (Exp(B)) are reported). The findings indicated that engagement in online political communities was positively associated with political outcomes. Respondents active in political groups or pages had 1.21 times higher odds of having their voting decisions influenced and compared with respondents who always engage, those in the comparison category had 84.1% lower odds. In contrast, online political expressions (commenting or posting about political issues) demonstrated stronger effects across all dimensions. The odds of reporting increased political interest were 186.7% higher among respondents who engaged in political expression, while the odds of participating in political activities were more than twice as high (OR = 2.173). The strongest associations were observed for staying informed through social media. Participants who reported using social media as a primary source of political information were over seven times more likely to report political interest. Similarly, staying informed had 4.532 times higher odds of reporting better understanding of candidates' positions, with 4.542 times higher odds of reporting influence on voting decisions, and 3.055 times of higher odds of increased participation in political activities.

Table 6: Logit analysis of social media and political awareness and voter behavior (Odds Ratio, exp(B))

	Interest in Politics	Understanding candidate's position	Voting decision is influenced	Participation in Political activities
Engagement in online political communities in social media (Ref. category: Always = 5)	0.080	0.072	0.213	0.159
Online political expression (Ref category: No = 2)	2.865	1.679	1.848	2.173
Staying Informed through social media (Ref. category: No = 2)	7.109	4.532	4.542	3.055
Pseudo R-Square (Nagelkerke)	0.335	0.259	0.178	0.235

A total of 10 participants took part in the qualitative phase, including 4 Key Informant Interviews (KII) and 6 In-Depth Interviews (IDI). Participants ranged in age from 21 to 64 years ($M_{\text{age}} = 33.8$), comprising five males and five females (Table 7). This composition ensured diversity in terms of age, gender, and occupational exposure to social media-driven political participation in Bangladesh.

Table 7: Particulars of the Respondents of Interview

<i>Interviews Format</i>	<i>Respondent ID</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Profession</i>
KII	RN1	28	Male	Academician
	RN2	26	Female	Academician
	RN3	22	Male	Student-Activist
IDI	RN4	28	Male	Lawyer
	RN5	23	Female	Student
	RN6	24	Male	Student
	RN7	21	Female	Student
	RN8	22	Female	Student
	RN9	64	Male	Govt. Employee (Rtd.)
	RN10	60	Male	Govt. Employee (Rtd.)

The analysis identified three themes: enhanced political mobilization, increased political awareness, and political polarization/reliability of information (Table 8). Under the first theme, the codes included shift from traditional to digital mobilization, accountability and online protests, and political actors' adaptation to social media. The second theme comprised access to political content, digital democratization, and engagement of apolitical youth. The third theme included propaganda and selective narratives, digital illiteracy, and lack of reliable fact-checking mechanisms.

Table 8: Themes and their underlying codes

Themes	Codes
Enhanced political mobilization through social media	• Shift from traditional to digital mobilization • Accountability and online protests • Political actors' adaptation to social media
Increased political awareness	• Access to political content • Digital democratization • Engagement of apolitical youth

Political polarization and
reliability of information
disseminated

- Propaganda and selective narratives
 - Digital illiteracy
 - Lack of reliable fact-checking mechanism
-

Enhanced Political Mobilization through Social Media

People frequently engage in political mobilization via social media. After the July Movement, 2024, people of all spheres of occupation, specifically youth, show collectivism towards the impact of misappropriation. Political parties become more aware of their activities.

“Political actors/Government usually works more on those news that goes viral on social media”- RN5, Female, 23 years, Student

However, lack of people’s participation in the traditional way and the continuous misappropriation of law and order lead people to find social media as an alternative tool to ensure democracy. Various activists use this media to share their political insights and provoke people towards collectivism. People from the root level take part in social media, which is supposed to enable political actors to shift their engagement from traditional leaflets to online promotions.

“Social media has become a great platform for youth engagement, a single post on social media against any kind of injustice can gather 1000 people in an instant.”- RN3, Male, 22 years, Student-Activist

The response of the participant reveals that people are more aware of their rights, while political actors act in a manner of people’s perception. They urge people to disseminate post documentation of their engagement. Moreover, during the election campaign, political actors tend to use social media by sharing short clips, archived documentaries for their publicity.

Political Awareness

In the political landscape, social media emerges as a transformative force, particularly in people's awareness and shaping voting behavior. Respondents frequently emphasized rapid digitalization and how it enhanced people's awareness. Respondents added that political mobilization through social media facilitated the youth-led movement on July, 2024. As one of the respondents mentioned,

“If we talk about the recent ‘Movement of 24’, or even the earlier road safety movement, in fact, both movements were entirely driven through social media. From gathering people to deciding where and how the protests would take place, every plan and program was organized based on social media.” – RN6, Male, 24, Student

Traditional media sometimes fall into government censorship and bias, while social media excels in democratizing information. Moreover, youth who bear apolitical thoughts using the phrase I hate politics at one moment are engaged in political movements, which led to the 2024 uprising.

Reliability of Information Disseminated and Political Polarization

The responses from the participants reviewed positive reaction towards social media in political shifting, despite having drawbacks. Since 2014-15, social media has emerged as a platform to add value for political shifting in Bangladesh. Gradually, it becomes a trusted accompany to the participants that influences them to make decisions. Nowadays, social media users feel/perceive an incomparable transition regarding political participation. Participants who reside in every corner of the country have a social media account, and that make sense the transition of traditional protest system over social media activity posters. It also acknowledges the participation of Gen Z and their powerful stand against the injustice, further amplifying the significance of social media's impact on political mobilization.

Respondents emphasized their concern over propaganda profoundly distorting their political perspective in social media by framing reality through selective narratives, clicktivism, algorithmic amplification, and religious triggers.

“Misinformation and disinformation are major issues because a segment of society deliberately creates and spreads such rumors. They are highly trained individuals, yet they engage in these acts to fulfill their political agendas. This is a serious challenge.” - RN3, Male, 22 years, Student-Activist

Moreover, digital illiteracy is cited as an obstacle in this case. In this decade, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is regarded as an additional stage of digitalization, although it has some misappropriation, hampering people’s political perspective, particularly voting behaviour. The inability of the fact-checking system and the authorities' lack of accountability mislead country’s sovereignty.

Table 9: Participants’ quotations aligned with the themes

Indicators	Quotes from the Respondents
Enhanced Political Mobilization through Social Media	“A biggest benefit for social media users is they can expose any injustice while remaining anonymous”- RN5, Female, 23 years, Student “The style of election campaigning has changed, the Dhaka University Central Students’ Union election can be the recent example”- RN8, Female, 22 years, Student “Political actors often tweet about their activities on Twitter” – RN9, Male, 64 years, Govt. Employee (Rtd.)
Political Awareness	“Political actors nowadays create content about their good works and spread it through social media to win people’s heart, which influence their voting behavior as well”- RN8, Female, 22 years, Student “Exaggerated political discussions on social media can lead people to move towards depoliticization and disengage from their political rights”- RN3, Male, 22 years, Student-Activist

Reliability of Information Disseminated and Political Polarization	“Rumors often create violence, mob lynching can be the example of”- RN8, Female, 22 years, Student “If we can spread the light of education, people will become more aware” – RN4, Male, 28 years, Lawyer “Bangladesh media is nothing but a yellow media in case of political perspective” – RN8, Female, 22 years, Student “Because of algorithmic system on social media, people see more about propaganda related news as their feed shows them. I think adopting the approach of ‘customizing my feed’ will reduce the effect of the problems faces”- RN3, Male, 22 years, Student-Activist “The flow of information on social media, where information comes from multiple sources, making it possible to verify what is true and what is false” – RN9, Male, 64 years, Govt. Employee (Rtd.) “Earlier politics was confrontational politics, current politics believes in elimination” – RN10, Male, 60 years, Govt. Employee (Rtd.)
--	---

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings suggested that active engagement in political social media communities had the strongest positive influence on political knowledge, discussions, and participatory intentions, while more passive behaviors, such as sharing content or staying informed, show weaker or negative associations. Specifically, engagement in social media showed a strong positive association with political interest, signifying that social media serves as a critical resource enhancer for civic engagement which was further identified in the qualitative findings. This aligns with prior studies emphasizing that digital participation reduces traditional barriers to political involvement by democratizing access to information (Newman, 2011; Goh & Pang, 2016; Chowdhury, 2018).

Online political expression and staying informed through social media enhanced political awareness and influenced voting behavior. However, several respondents repeatedly expressed concern regarding misinformation, rumors, and polarizing content, acknowledging that while social media can

motivate political participation, it can also mislead citizens and complicate informed decision-making. Furthermore, as the ordinal logistic regression revealed, those who never engage in online political communities have significantly lower odds of being interested in politics compared to those who always engage, controlling for other variables. Besides, staying informed through social media enhances interest in politics by six times higher compared to those who are not. The findings of the study further align with the proposition of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's (1995) Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM). As a resource component, social media engagement on political issues increases political awareness. Active participation in online political communities (groups/pages) increases individuals' informational resources, resulting in higher political interest. Furthermore, social media served as a component for psychological engagement for political awareness. The impact of social media as recruitment component through its effect on political mobilization by political actors. The findings of the study, therefore, indicate that social media acts as a tool for empowerment and mobilization by spreading information, raising awareness, and lowering participation barriers. However, the challenges remain due to persistent spread of misinformation, peer pressure, and selective engagement. As such future research should further inquire about the extent and nature of political participation among citizen considering their socioeconomic variables and social media engagement.

References

- Ahmed, S., & Matthes, J. (2016). Media representation of Muslims and Islam from 2000 to 2015: A meta-analysis. *International Communication Gazette*, 79(3), 219–244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048516656305>
- Alscher, P., Graf, E., & McElvany, N. (2025). Political participation and the Civic Voluntarism Model: How do resources, psychological engagement, and recruitment shape willingness to participate during adolescence? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*. Advance online publication. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/xge0001766>
- Andersen, K., Ohme, J., Bjarnøe, C., Bordacconi, M. J., Albæk, E., & de Vreese, C. (2020). Generational Gaps in Political Media Use and Civic Engagement. *Routledge Studies in Media, Communication, and Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003111498>
- Arceneaux, K., Johnson, M., & Cryderman, J. (2013). Communication, Persuasion, and the Conditioning Value of Selective Exposure: Like Minds May Unite and Divide but They Mostly Tune Out. *Political Communication*, 30(2), 213–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2012.737424>
- Baxter, G., & Marcella, R. (2012). Does Scotland ‘like’ this? Social media use by political parties and candidates in Scotland during the 2010 UK General Election campaign. *Libri*, 62(2), 109–124. <https://doi.org/10.1515/libri-2012-0008>
- Beam, M. A., Hutchens, M. J., & Hmielowski, J. D. (2020). Facebook news and (de)polarization. *Routledge EBooks*, 26–44. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429243912-3>
- Boulianne, S. (2016). Social media use and participation: A meta-analysis of current research. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(11), 1465-1486. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1008542>
- Breuer, A., Landman, T., & Farquhar, D. (2014). Social media and protest mobilization: evidence from the Tunisian revolution. *Democratization*, 22(4), 764–792. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2014.885505>
- Butt, J., & Awang, M. (2017). Intention for voting in Pakistan: The role of social media, ethnicity, and religiosity. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 4(5), 1-15. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v4i5.88>

- Chowdhury, M. Z. (2018). Social media, social movement: Bangladesh's Shahbag movement and Hefazat-e-Islam. *Bangabidya: International Journal of Bengal Studies*, 10, 474-497.
- DataReportal. (2025, March 3). *Digital 2025: Bangladesh*. Kepios. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-bangladesh>
- Gamson, W. A. (1989). Reflections on "The Strategy of Social Protest." *Sociological Forum*, 4(3), 455–467. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/684616>
- Ghani, A., Muhammad, U., Chaudhary, Minhas, S., Jabeen, S., & Hussain, T. (2020). Social Media a Tool of Political Awareness and Mobilization - A Study of Punjab, Pakistan. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*. 14(5), 2020. https://www.ijicc.net/images/Vol_14/Iss_5/151019_Chaudhary_2021_E1_R.pdf
- Goetting, K., & Becker, S. (2025). Explaining political participation intention through the lens of the civic voluntarism model and extended theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 519, 145437. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2025.145437>
- Goh, D., & Pang, N. (2016). Protesting the Singapore government: The role of collective action frames in social media mobilization. *Telematics and Informatics*, 33(2), 525–533. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2015.07.008>
- Guo, J., Liu, N., Wu, Y., & Zhang, C. (2020). Why do citizens participate on government social media accounts during crises? A civic voluntarism perspective. *Information & Management*, 58(1), 103286. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2020.103286>
- Hasan, M., & Paul, A. (2025). The Role of Social Media in Political Mobilization: A Systematic Review. *Business & Social Sciences*, 3(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.25163/business.3110221>
- Kharel, A. B. (2024). Cyber-Politics: Social Media's Influence on Political Mobilization. *Journal of Political Science*, 24, 103–115. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v24i1.62857>
- Kim, Y., & Khang, H. (2014). Revisiting civic voluntarism predictors of college students' political participation in the context of social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36, 114-121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.03.044>

- Kim, Y., & Kim, Y. (2019). Incivility on Facebook and political polarization: The mediating role of seeking further comments and negative emotion. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 99, 219–227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.05.022>
- Kirbiš, A., Flere, S., Friš, D., Krajnc, M. T., & Cupar, T. (2017). Predictors of conventional, protest, and civic participation among Slovenian youth: A test of the civic voluntarism model. *International Journal of Sociology*, 47(3), 182-207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207659.2017.1335518>
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607–610.
- Kusumarani, R., & Zo, H. (2019). Why people participate in online political crowdfunding: A civic voluntarism perspective. *Telematics and informatics*, 41, 168-181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2019.04.011>
- Mahmud, A., & Amin, R. (2017). Use of Social Networking Media in Political Participation: A Study on Dhaka University Students. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 5(6), 481–488. <https://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2017.050607>
- Newman, N. (2011). *Mainstream media and the distribution of news in the age of social discovery*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:94164da6-9150-4938-8996-badfdef6b507>
- Riezebos, P., de Vries, S. A., de Vries, P. W., & de Zeeuw, E. (2011). The effects of social media on political party perception and voting behavior. In *Proceedings of the IADIS International Conferences ICT, Society and Human Beings 2011, e-Democracy, Equity and Social Justice*, 11-19. <https://research.utwente.nl/en/publications/the-effects-of-social-media-on-political-party-perception-and-vot>
- Schlozman, K., Brady, H., & Verba, S. (2018). The roots of citizen participation: The civic voluntarism model. In *Unequal and unrepresented*, 50-80. Princeton University Press.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L., & Brady, H. E. (1995). *Voice and equality: Civic voluntarism in American politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Yamane, T. 1967. *Statistics, An Introductory Analysis*. (2nd ed). New York: Harper and Row.