

From Headline to Hashtags: A Comparative Analysis of Media's Transformation in Terms of Protests and Crisis Reporting

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the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis titled “From headline to hashtags: A Comparative Analysis of Media’s Transformation in terms of protests and crisis reporting,” submitted by me as per requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English, is my own original work. I am solely responsible for the content of this work. The research paper complies with the University rules against plagiarism. It has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University or for any publication. Lastly, I have cited all the necessary sources I used for the completion of this thesis.

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Approval

This thesis, titled “From headline to hashtags: A Comparative Analysis of Media’s Transformation in terms of protests and crisis reporting,” was submitted by Anika Bintee Hossain (22103051) of Summer 2025 have been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in February 2026.

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Ethics statement

Interviews were conducted following standard interview procedures. I have not disclosed any details except the names of the participants in the survey. Also, journalists' names were included in this paper with their permission. There is no other motive except academics.

Abstract

This research paper examines the contrasting roles of traditional media and social media in cases of protests and crises, focusing on issues such as censorship, immediacy, audience engagement, credibility, reliability, and public trust. While traditional media has long been considered a primary source of news, in the modern world, the engagement of social media in reporting is increasing daily. Recent events in Bangladesh, such as the July protest and the recent jet crash, have highlighted the limitations of traditional media in reporting due to political and editorial pressure, resulting in incomplete or filtered news. In contrast, social media platforms provided access to a wide range of information, including real-time and ground-level reporting, which helped inform and better understand the actual situation of the events. This paradox is not exclusive to Bangladesh; similar events are also evident in global history, such as the Arab Spring, the Hong Kong protests, Turkey's Gezi Park movement, and the ongoing movement in Indonesia and Nepal. In traditional media, the communication is largely one-way despite having various sources of reporting and publication. Conversely, various social media platforms and access to a wide range of information, including two-way communication, facilitate easy reporting and engagement with the public. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative protest cases and territorial incidents with qualitative interviews of civilians and journalists. By combining

Bangladesh and global cases, it will compare whether traditional media can still claim to be authentic while being pressured by upper levels and truthful, where news is coming from social media also, and whether social media has gained the trust of the public to be considered as an authentic and democratic source of information.

Keywords: Traditional media, social media, credibility, reliability, censorship, protest, journalism, ground-level journalism, digital activism, misinformation.

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Introduction

Journalism serves as a cornerstone of democracy, providing citizens with important information to make informed decisions. Traditional news media, such as television, newspapers, and FM radio, sometimes fail to provide the whole picture to the public due to political influence, upper-level pressure, and editorial concerns about their reputation and safety. To get information from this media, one has to go back to the same piece of information that was given in the newspaper or appeared on television, though television changes its news at a certain time, but for social media, it is accessible anytime and anywhere, and one can search for any news within a minute. In this sector, there is no particular pressure like traditional media, which allows it to serve all information to the public. This is one reason why people get news more frequently from social media. For example, in the July movement in Bangladesh 2024 and in the recent jet crash incident, crucial details and information weren't shared on traditional media, despite many journalists being on the ground level; they were either unable or not allowed to share all the details. On the contrary, social media platforms have played a crucial role in providing information to the public. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Discord gave unfiltered and raw information from the ground-level accounts that were provided by citizens, which helped other people to know about the event, shaping the public trust and perception.

This pattern is not limited to Bangladesh; rather, globally, this pattern is echoed in movements like the Arab Spring, the Hong Kong protests, and Turkey's Gezi Park demonstrations, where ground-level journalism by citizens and social media platforms has played a crucial role in providing raw and unfiltered information to the nation and internationally by bypassing censorship

and other obstacles. Yet, the question of the credibility and reliability of social media remains, as misinformation or fake news can be spread easily, just like real news alongside authentic reporting.

This research paper aims to examine the comparative strengths and weaknesses of traditional and social media in journalism and reporting in cases of protest, national incidents, and crisis. It will emphasize themes such as censorship, credibility, reliability, political or editorial pressure, public trust, and immediacy, using Bangladesh as a primary case study while drawing parallels to other global movements of this nature. By doing this, this paper aims to explore whether social media platforms can be recognized as a democratic form of journalism and whether traditional media can regain the trust of citizens in the digital era. This research's main objective is to determine if social media really overshadows traditional media in ground-level journalism by gaining public trust more and providing unfiltered information; on the contrary, traditional media is limited due to political influence, censorship, and external and internal pressure.

To understand the differences in terms of credibility, trust, and censorship between social media and traditional media, it is necessary to review scholarly research and articles, as well as investigate the ongoing protests around the world and those that have occurred. Previous research has explored how journalism and traditional media are influenced by political leaders and the government, and at the same time, they talked about how social media started to work for the people and became a place where they can express their opinion without any fear, and became a platform to challenge traditional media. But now things have changed, so the protests have as well. It is not only limited to social media vs traditional media, but it also goes beyond that. Small but important factors that drive these media were not fully mentioned in previous research, and more importantly, public opinion or interviews were not added to most research. This paper will try to

fill in the gap of trust, credibility, and public opinion by gathering information from research and people, particularly, the lack of research focusing on Bangladesh. Though after July 2024, many scholars have worked or become interested in working on Bangladesh, still, these points are unique and new to this country's media and people. This study will examine those points not only in Bangladesh but also in global protests, and merge them by collecting information.

Target audience

This paper is primarily aimed at the citizens of this nation, enabling them to understand the current state of traditional and social media. Secondly, it is essential for university and college students, who are a significant part of social media users, to understand the difference, as well as for international students studying or working in related fields. Additionally, it is for the researchers and scholars who do comparative studies and are interested in Bangladesh and the global protest movements. Thirdly, it aims for the CEO or owner of the IT in Bangladesh so that they can ensure that both fields provide accurate news. Lastly, it is for journalists and civil society, who use social media as a newsroom, print editors who are being pressurized, allowing them to understand the comparison of their credibility with citizen journalism.

Methodology

For this paper, I will use both qualitative and quantitative research methods. With qualitative, there will be a comparative analysis so that there can be a comparison of social media and traditional media factors like credibility, trust, reliability, etc. For qualitative research, I will rely on scholarly articles, research papers, newspapers, online articles, journals, news channels, and social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc, to gather information about

the Bangladesh protest and global protests. For quantitative research, I will conduct interviews or create an online survey with relevant questions for people, students, or journalists so that they can give their opinions about both media. Qualitative research will be done to collect available data that can be used academically and make my points strong, to present and quantitative research will be conducted to shape the research, fill the gaps this paper seeks, and support the points. A proper citation of all uses and privacy security will be maintained for the online survey or interviews.

Literature review

Around the world, numerous studies have been conducted comparing social media to traditional media; however, these studies are predominantly Western-centric, focusing primarily on the roles of both media in various areas. Researchers have studied the impact of media as a tool of oppression and resistance (Castells), the role of media in times of crisis (Kaun), citizen journalism, and censorship in times of protest (Tufekci), including its function in engaging the public in social movements. These topics have been studied by several researchers in a variety of papers, although only a few papers address more than one issue. Most studies tend to emphasize isolated issues, rather than making a comparative analysis of multiple issues like immediacy, credibility, public opinion, trust, and censorship. Although many studies address various concerns, research on Bangladesh is relatively scarce. A small amount of research has been done on the topic of citizen journalism, both the media's role in crisis moments, in the Bangladeshi context, which mostly becomes outdated because of massive changes in the media and world. This paper aims to connect protests in different countries, including Bangladesh, through the lens of both media's weaknesses and strengths.

In one article, a senior writer and journalist, Azam Khan, talked about how citizen journalism in Bangladesh has gained momentum over the past two decades, by using social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, which allow civilians to express their feelings freely. Traditional media, often constrained by political and corporate influences, sometimes fail to cover sensitive issues or provide a balanced perspective. This has created a space where independent voices can report on issues that mainstream media might overlook. He highlights that in the recent anti-quota movement, Shahbag movement, and the 2018 safer road movement, mobile phones were largely used for citizen journalism, which demonstrates the power of social media. He acknowledges that there are advantages but also disadvantages as well of citizen journalism (Azam). His analysis echoes the theory of Jürgen Habermas about the public sphere. Though his theory of the public sphere mostly focused on European bourgeoisie society, the basic concept of the public sphere and the importance of news in shaping and reshaping are applicable in the Bangladeshi context. According to Hamerbus, the public sphere is the space where people can form their opinions through rational discussion, where all people can participate. Newspapers, radio, television, and magazines are forms of the public sphere, but they have become outdated as the digital era emerges (Habermas 49, 50). Similarly, in the Daily Star article “Toll of citizen journalism in Bangladesh,” Mahjabin Khan critiques how immediacy and citizen reporting can gather people from everywhere by pointing out the recent jet incident in Bangladesh. She mentioned on social media that posting images of people in need and sharing helpful posts circulated a great deal of help, in contrast to traditional media, which remained cautious about publishing graphic content. She also argued that, although social media and citizen journalism seek immediacy, they are unsure about the depth of the news (Khan). This echoes with scholars like Kaun and others who discussed temporality in protest communication and prioritized the risk of

news speed over depth. Providing both sides of citizen journalism, she gave insight into how Bangladeshi citizen reporting fills the gap left out by the traditional media and raises new ethical challenges that it faces in crisis moments.

According to Herman and Chomsky's Manufacturing Consent (1988) propaganda model, which remains the foundational theoretical intervention in media studies, argues that in capitalist and democratic countries, news productions are shaped by institutional interests. Opposite to the assumption of the media that it acts neutrally or independently as watchdogs, Herman and Chomsky posit that news production houses serve as ideological instruments that maintain the higher level power. This propaganda model has five interdependent filters, which are ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and ideology. These are used to shape, select, and circulate news. These filters work structurally rather than through explicit censorship, that allow systemic bias to work individually without giving direct instruction. The propaganda model is not a theory, but it needs capitalism and society to define the theory. Many scholars have explored these dynamics. McChesney and Bagdikian argue that the mainstream media is centered on elite power that makes this field more vulnerable to corporate and political control (45). After that, scholars have tried to understand and apply this theory and to know how this theory works in protest and crisis by delegitimizing while emphasizing official voices. In contrast, citizen journalism offers a participatory culture where citizens can participate independently by posing a challenge to the mainstream media control during the time of a political event or protest. Studies show that social media platforms, including smartphones, laptops, or other devices, provide essential information that traditional media cannot provide. According to Tufekci, these platforms and the independence of people in terms of reporting, recording and sharing news have disrupted the elite sourcing

patterns of providing news (72). From the perspective of Fuchs, analytical and critical works also note that digital media allow platforms to produce news by using algorithmic rhythm, surveillance, and commercialisation, which may reproduce dynamics of propaganda in social media spaces (Fuchs).

During the protest, people from every sphere and place tried to share information on social media. While traditional media were siding with the government and publishing news, in contrast, people were trying to help and seeking the actual truth. Since this thesis paper is about comparative analysis of social media and traditional media in terms of citizen journalism and protests, this is not only the picture for Bangladesh but also for other countries that have faced protests. The 2020 Hong Kong protest is a perfect example of how social media serves as a tool of power and has been utilized for political mobilization. It emphasized that social media played a double role; on one hand, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter help people to spread information, on the other hand, they also make activists vulnerable to surveillance, censorship, and misinformation (Xinyue10). Poell and van Dijck used the term digital activism and argue that platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have made a place for themselves in activist materials, in their book, where they enable everything from eyewitness accounts to opinions to any news report. They mentioned the Arab Spring, Gezi Park, and some other protests as examples, and also analyzed how the traditional media platform was replaced by social media. Zeynep Tufekci has mentioned in her book *'Twitter and Tear Gas'* that social media platforms have changed the way people fight in protests and communicate with each other, while traditional media have less chance to do this (112). The propaganda theory of Lasswell (1948) states that propaganda is a systematic way of persuasion that is used by political parties to shape opinion. He introduced to the world the

famous formula of communication, which is “Who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect?” This model emphasizes some parts, such as who is the money sender and holds power, controls the message that has to be provided to the audience, how the news manipulates the audience by providing news, and what the outcome of the news will be like in July 2024, when the Bangladesh government cut out the internet and the ICT department minister told to the whole country that we didn’t cut off the line, it has been cut by its own, which was hilarious, and the outcome of this news was terrible, the media channels showed this news like it was nothing. This model describes that political and higher parties use traditional media like TV, radio, newspaper and press releases to influence public perception. In his theory, he said, propaganda serves to manage conflict, organize social order, and make the authority eligible. The prime example is given earlier of how the state institutions try to control the public through mainstream media, but citizen journalism challenges it. It mainly activates electronic devices such as mobile phones, laptops, recorders, and the internet to let people know what is happening. Citizen journalism also breaks the ideology ‘who says what to whom’ because here people work together against something as well as individually, but no one tries to impose anything like mainstream media. Chomsky's propaganda model gives this a structure.

However, both media face censorship, and trust and credibility have always been issues. Censorship mainly applies to the media from the government or upper levels, so that it can’t harm them or publish something that can be used against them. In one research, Abbasi and Al-Sharqi explore how governments use censorship to protect political power and suppress people from protesting. They highlighted that with the rise of social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, they have bypassed censorship, while traditional media cannot do that. Such as

during the Gezi Park protest in Turkey, Twitter and YouTube were temporarily blocked by higher authorities, as well as in Bangladesh. The authorities of Bangladesh had blocked the internet for the whole 11 days. Here, it connects to the theory of Carl Hovland's persuasion, where he emphasized how individuals are persuaded. The shift from structural attention power to psychological mechanisms is the core idea of this theory. He tries to give importance to how individuals are responsive to persuasive messages, source credibility, and cognitive processing. Chilly Trill's idea of receptors of contention added more to it. Repertoires are a set of actions and tools used by social movements to communicate and protest. It refers to the set of protests, behaviors, strikes, sit-ins, petitions, online activism, media campaigns, and other familiar tactics. He argues that social movements shift their structure based on how it develops and the change of repertoire depending on the current political situation, repression, and innovation. Now, digital activism through citizen journalism has become the prime and most important repertoire in the recent movements, not only in Bangladesh but also worldwide. Such as the Arab Spring, the Hong Kong protest, and not least the Palestine attack by Israel, these movements' significant weapon was social media and citizen journalism. In the recent protests, the repertoires have expanded to the livestream, algorithm, and social media posts. These repertoires compete with the traditional media platforms, where sometimes news is fabricated, censorship doesn't allow the real news to be published, creates trust issues among the public, and privileges some people who are related to the government or higher-level officials.

However, Tatour added by discussing Palestinian censorship in her research paper. She mentioned how authorities held access to the traditional media as well as in the institutions. They suppress the voices on campus, specifically in higher education institutions. This form of

censorship echoes with digital censorship, where citizen journalists share information by risking their lives and get shut down by the authorities. This also explains the effect of censorship from the street to the universities (12). Abbasi has argued that the government also hunts down citizens and journalists to prevent publishing reports against it and create an atmosphere of fear, harassment, and persecution. They talked about only one part of the story and didn't mention the other things, like activism, trust, people, etc (Abbasi). I tend to cover up those points as well in my thesis paper by merging and gathering information.

In the context of protest and crisis moments, credibility and trust have always been the central issue. Traditional media consists of professionals, but social media consists mainly of citizens. But, in times of protest, countries like Bangladesh, Palestine, Indonesia, and Nepal's role in traditional media raised questions about truthfulness. On the other hand, in social media, there is immediacy, citizen journalism, but immediacy can compromise accuracy, as in the case of the Hong Kong Anti-Elab protest, and also in the Bangladesh 2024 July uprising, there was misinformation spread on social media. Tufekci argues that trust in digital platforms is not rooted in institutional authorities, but the network connection among citizens shapes and unites people from everywhere (75). Though there are risks in both media forms, due to censorship, traditional media do not publish all news, while social media do not have this problem. A striking example of the media gap between the two is a viral video of journalists being set on fire during the Palestine conflict in 2024, which was uploaded on Facebook. Traditional media, such as the BBC or others, might delay it or hesitate to publish it. A study comparing cross-Asia societies by Guo and Lei shows that people in societies with greater press freedom and political polarization are more likely

to believe social media news rather than traditional news, especially when they cannot trust their political leaders, which reveals that trust is influenced by both media and political context.

Although there are numerous research articles, debates exist on social media and the traditional media's role in activism, protest, and opinions of people and government, trust and credibility of these media platforms, etc. Significant debates remain regarding the influence of these on people, lack of credibility, trust, and others. Scholars have pointed out one or two points that they found on ongoing protests or situations, but very few attempt to merge important topics. But even if there are comparative analyses, most of them focus only on the surface level of social media vs traditional media and general discussions; they don't include inner and deeper topics, which are interconnected to them, such as trust, credibility, etc, and even if there are some, but there are lack research on the Bangladesh protests and media and the internal matters. Little attention has been given to the topics of trust, ground-level journalism, credibility, and censorship, mostly on politics, government, and the situation of a country before and after a protest. Moreover, recent scholars have done research or academic progress on the global protests, such as the Arab Spring, Hong Kong, but minimal attention has been given to South Asian countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal, and particularly Bangladesh etc. Recently, these countries have faced protests, and lots of research is being conducted on these protests, but little research has been done on the lackings or role of the media.

This study seeks to fill in the gap of these topics by offering multidimensional perspectives and keeping Bangladesh protests as a major space, including global protests, to understand how immediacy and credibility shape the truth and how people accept it through their own lens as well

as media lens, and the link or debate between social media and traditional media. By examining both qualitative and quantitative methods, this research will provide an in-depth with existing information about the topics.

Research questions

1. In what ways are traditional media and social media different in terms of immediacy, censorship, credibility, and public trust?
2. How did social media and traditional media play their role in the July revolution of Bangladesh and major incidents?
3. How have the global movements, such as the Arab Spring, Hong Kong, Gezi Park, Indonesia, Palestine, Nepal, demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of both forms of media?
4. To what extent does citizen journalism provide alternative perspectives and information to traditional media?
5. Based on comparative studies, can social media be considered a more authentic and informative way of information in this modern era, or does traditional media still hold that place in authority of reporting?

Chapter 1

The journey of media and journalism and its shifts until today

Media, or means of communication, are the tools for providing information to the masses of people in society. It refers to the various channels of communication or platforms from which information is being provided to a wide audience. It mainly includes traditional platforms, such as newspapers, television, and radio, as well as digital platforms, including social media, websites, blogs, and podcasts, which have also established their presence in the media. The media is one of the state's main powers. The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain and inform and to include individuals with the values, beliefs and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society (Durham and Kellner). It plays a significant role in informing, influencing, and shaping people's minds. Maybe one of the most significant roles played by the media within modern democracies is watchdog role because this is the way through which media monitors the performance and conduct of governments, to ensure that they are right track to keep promises and expectations of those who put them into power. As a result, this role often become the source of conflict between the media, state and its institutions. The propaganda model of media control was introduced by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman in their book, '*Manufacturing Consent*', where they argue that the mass media in capitalist democracies do not serve the public, despite presenting themselves as doing so. Instead, they manufacture consents, which means they shape public opinion in ways that support the powerful people, such as the government, businessmen, media company owners, the military, and political interests. Essentially, they appear to be free in front of people, but in reality, they are bound by certain restrictions, and this structure is designed to produce content that supports the authorities. Which

kind of links to Grmaci's concept of hegemony, where there would be one ruling community, and others would be under the control of that community. This theory provides a wide framework to understand the difference between traditional media and social media, as well as why traditional media often fail to present the actual news during conflict or protests. Moreover, journalism is one of the most important aspects of the media, and it is deeply interconnected; journalism operates through the media by utilizing the information that the media presents to the public. They uniquely complement each other. While the media is a form of communication, and journalism refers to the professional practice of gathering, verifying, and presenting news to the audience, it also shapes their opinions and thoughts. According to McQuail, media serve as "the principal means of mass communication" that enable journalism to reach audiences and influence social and political discourse (McQuail 24). The contents, news, and information are provided by journalism, and the media provide a platform and technological tools to disseminate them to the public. Without media, there would be a lack of platforms, and without journalism, there would be no one to present news to the public. That's why two of these are connected. In a democratic society, journalism and the media are important for giving the public an understanding of news and other matters. This media or journalism is under some companies that hold higher positions or work under those people. One of the five filters that are under the propaganda model of Chomsky's is media ownership. The media do not work alone, and no media is unbiased. It transforms when it comes to public opinion, or after being discussed with the public. The famous line of Marshall McLuhan, 'The Medium is the Message', which shows that the media is the bridge of communication, and it is important to have good ownership to publish the news. It mainly happens with the traditional media, as they have a workspace and people working together for something. The companies are owned by political powers, top businessmen who have the authority, which makes the news the

way they like it by presenting it to the public, presenting that it was for them. In Bangladesh, most of the traditional media is connected to the political parties, mainly to the former government, which is why, in the July movement, most of the TV channels didn't publish news that could be used against the government. On the other hand, social media became another medium for the public where they can share everything, but as the individuals or pages that publish news are mostly not certified or professional, it sometimes causes huge chaos among the public. Fake news, misinformation, and, more importantly, AI-generated news that can easily provoke someone. The journey of media and journalism has been shaped by different eras, political changes, technological innovations, and the thoughts of people. Back in the early days, journalists used to write news and print copies of paper, which has now transformed into digital platforms where journalists are adapting new techniques for news reporting and empowering the public. To cover the news of politics, economics, and commercials in the 17th century in Europe, this journey began. Schudson explained in his book that in the 18th and 19th centuries, the newspaper rose and marked the institutionalisation of journalism as a profession that connects citizens to governance and public life. The media became what most of them call the "Fourth Estate", a protector of democracy, responsible for holding the powerful accountable and maintaining transparency in society (Schudson 22).

After the invention of the radio and television in the 19th century, the media entered into a new era of communication. The public then started to get news immediately and more accurately, and could get connected to both national and global events. McQuail in his book *Mass Communication Theory*, said that these forms of traditional media "shaped public consciousness and created a shared national experience" by broadcasting news to millions simultaneously

(McQuail 35). From this era, the media and journalism started to get stronger in verification, immediacy, trust, and reporting. It is also known as the digital revolution era due to the introduction of the internet, which has made communication and sharing news more accessible. Also, the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and many other platforms has increased immensely, making it one of the main tools for sharing information. It has closed the distance between the citizen and the journalist, as well as the news. Journalists can now share their thoughts and report news from anywhere in the world. Not only journalists but also normal citizens share news or events, though they are not officially counted. Deuze explains, this change in the whole process is the emergence of a “participatory media culture,” where journalism extends beyond institutional boundaries to citizens participating in sharing information. (Deuze 445) This is also called citizen journalism. “Citizen journalism is the practice of reporting news events by individuals who do not have formal journalism training, often utilising the internet and social media platforms to share information. Citizen journalists are typically ordinary people who report on significant events, including disasters and political crises, using smartphones and social media to disseminate real-time updates and footage” (Kivak). It refers to the journalistic activity of regular people, which means people report on the issues that affect their daily lives or create problems in their peaceful lives. It has created a space for people to raise their voices against wrongdoings. It breaks free from restrictions and corporate officials' control because of having an individual's own platform to post, which is really the opposite of traditional journalism and their ownership of companies. Countries like Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan don't actually post something against their government or authorities. The availability of technology has enabled citizen journalists to collect news and information from the scene and share this through their personal accounts, blogs, websites, or in a public account or space for other people to see. People

at the crime or accident scene, political movements, massacres, and events that need to be shown to the people upload to social media platforms. They do it even before traditional media or journalists, which has raised controversy as they are non-professional, not trained, and lack knowledge about this field, or don't know which news should be correct to show or not. They think that if they show what is happening, maybe people will like it or leave some comments, but it doesn't work like this. If we want to know where it began, then we have to look back to the infancy of the United States. According to EBSCO research, in the nineteenth century, Benjamin Franklin distributed news and information through his own publication, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. Thomas Paine freely wrote about liberty and rebellion in his influential pamphlet *Common Sense*. The anonymously published *Federalist Papers* analyzed the proposed Constitution, questioning the historic document that would form the basis of the nation's government. In the modern era, ordinary citizens have captured videos of historic events (Kivak). Traditional media and professional journalists only provide news that can be shown and the news that is accessible to the public. Due to the internet's accessibility to all kinds of people, citizen journalism has increased a lot. It received a major boost in the 2000s when South Korean journalist Oh Yeon Ho started an online newspaper named *OhMyNews*, covering national events by interviewing people on the streets and gathering news from ongoing events. It became acknowledged by everyone after he said that every citizen is a reporter. Citizen journalism has changed the way news is reported. At first, people used to get news only on the radio, television, or in the newspaper, but with the emergence of the internet, people now have unlimited access to news through various reporting channels.

Citizen journalism or ground-level journalism mainly happens when there are political events, movements, or any other big events. It has been observed that citizen journalism

significantly occurs when there is a protest around the world. People, when they are wronged by the government or when other countries are harming them without any reason, and traditional media puts a blind mask over their eyes, then citizen journalism takes its place to spread news and information all over the world. Several protests have been happening and have been done through social media and citizen journalism, such as the Arab Spring, the Hong Kong protest, the Gezi Park, more recently Palestine conflict, the Nepal and Indonesian protests, at last but not least, the Bangladesh 2024 July movement. All these protests have been done mainly through social media, as traditional media was not allowed to show news that would work against higher authorities. According to a research paper, it is evident that the media in Bangladesh has experienced an extended period of regulation, or there was a prevalent phenomenon where journalists resorted to self-censorship. This phenomenon arose because any news that presented a credible danger to the governing party frequently resulted in diverse manifestations of harassment for the individuals concerned (Riaz). Not only in Bangladesh but also in all the countries that have protested against the government faced the same difficulties.

In other words, it is called digital activism. The number of users on social media is increasing day by day. By 2025, the total number of internet users in Bangladesh is 77.7 million, which is 44.5% of the total population. Globally, it has increased to 5.56 billion, which is 67.9% of the global population, and 5.41% people use social media. The global report of 2025 says the number has increased by 2.5% from the previous year. This indicates how many people use social media. People use social media for many purposes, such as to upload something, to share information, to give an announcement, to gather something, to support something, or to protest something. “Digital activism refers to the voice on social media against wrongs. Online activism, also referred to as digital activism, is the process of using the Internet to communicate, spread

information, and organize traditional activism” (Martin). It requires social media; it is an online form of protest where people share their thoughts, give opinions, or make decisions together to take a step, such as in the July movement of 2024 in Bangladesh, where the march to the prime minister's house was declared on social media, and people started to gather based on that. It was not declared on traditional media; rather, the internet was cut down so that people could not gather and do something against the government. Noam Chomsky and Edward talked about it in their propaganda model, which refers to the three-number filter. It says traditional media or journalists depend on the final declaration for any incident to publish or not, also for a political declaration, and official press releases that made the report concise, leaving many important details that the public may need to know. This also links with the ownership or authorities, as they have to take permission from the upper level, and they represent it in their own way. But for social media, there is no necessity for permission; they can post it without any restrictions, which makes it easier for news to reach the audience first. It allowed the public to bypass the filter by doing live streaming, providing another way or source of news posting.

These shifts in media didn't happen rapidly; over the years, when people's rights are snatched, or wrongs become normal in some people's eyes, and the government stops caring for the citizens, then the general citizens take this space as their tool to protest. It connects to the concept of 'public sphere' by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. He says the public sphere is the space where people can come together and discuss issues; it can be an open space or a closed space. Traditional media is the platform where people can only see the news, but cannot participate or share their thoughts, whereas social media has become a platform where people can see the news, also comment or share. “Citizen journalism must be understood beyond individual social media posts; it extends to practices such as re-posting, tagging, rating, modifying, linking, and

commenting” (Goode). Traditional media and journalists are bound to their responsibilities and have some pressure from the upper level, so they cannot show everything. In the conflict in Palestine, not all traditional media are allowed to share everything; we get to know much of the inner news through social media. Even the food project that was from Egypt to Palestine was known by social media, as people did a live stream in the middle of the sea or before departing, some people gave updates on where they were then, and asked to pray so that they could safely reach Palestine. Later, it was covered by traditional media, but not all media covered it. According to Howard and Hussain, digital media tools empower and encourage people to raise their voice and mobilise protest (17).

In the past, people used to rely on this medium, but after the rise of the internet and easier access to social media, people started to rely on this medium. But the question of credibility, truth, and trust comes up when we talk about social media, as citizens are not professionals, so fake news or misinformation can easily misguide people. “New technology, such as social media, can be used to raise awareness and communicate with others about a cause, but it is not fully known if raising awareness translates into more meaningful and tangible benefits” (Kizilhan and Bal Kizilhan). Both traditional media and social media can have fake news, but people mainly consider traditional media news as the truth, as it comes from official sources. But nowadays, when people see their surroundings and cannot match the news that is shown on the channels or newspapers, or they gatekeep things from us, gradually, the citizens have started to believe social media news more. Marshall McLuhan's medium is changing day by day, as he says media shapes society more than the content. For example, TV changes society because of the medium itself, not only the shows and programmes that are shown on TV. In the same way, now smartphones, laptops, or PCs have

social media, which is the medium that creates a new kind of journalism. Also, his concept of ‘Global Village’, where people can connect very fast, like an interconnected village. One event, a protest or something unusual, would happen, and people would share it on their social media and let the world know. Such as in the July protest, the students of private universities emailed and connected with the BBC news and other people outside the country so that the world could know what was happening and take a step in it. It happens because of social media and citizen journalism, by which the world can know. It is not only in Bangladesh, but also in all the protests and events that happened around the world, where people are informed by social media more than traditional media, as can be seen in the case of Palestine, where the whole world stands against Israel and supports Palestine. The media is changing every day due to its needs, but as the question of which is more accepted by people in terms of reporting, trust news, and immediacy, in Bangladesh, whether it is traditional media or digital media, this paper aims to find that out with the help of the examples of global protests, conflicts, and the examples of Bangladesh protest such as July protest, Shahbag movement. Also, include the incidents that occurred in the country to differentiate between the two media.

Chapter 2

Impact of citizen journalism and role of social media and traditional media in worldwide protests

2.1 Role and evolution of citizen journalism and social media in protests

Firstly, let's talk about social media because this is the reason why the world is connected, and we can get anything within a second. The same goes for the news. The emergence of news communication has brought some major changes in the way of communication and receiving the news, or trusting them. “More specifically, interactive and mobile technologies are often cited as factors that help empower citizens by allowing them to publish their own account of incidents without intermediation” (Waldman). After the internet became available, electronic devices such as smartphones, laptops, and other devices became available, and people tend to get more into social media rather than traditional media. It has allowed people to have their own account, website, privacy, and options to be public, which made it fascinating and time-consuming. “The evolution of social media has been fueled by the human impulse to communicate and by advances in digital technology. Social media is defined as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). The 2019 report on social media use in the United States showed that 72% of American adults use some form of social media. In 2005, the year after Facebook went live, that number was 5%” (Maryville University).

In the 1980s and '90s, according to the history of social networks on the technology news site Digital Trends, the internet's growth enabled the introduction of online communication

services such as CompuServe, America Online, and Prodigy. They introduced users to digital communication through email, bulletin board messaging, and real-time online chatting. This gave rise to the earliest social media networks, beginning with the short-lived Six Degrees profile uploading service in 1997. This service was followed in 2001 by Friendster. These rudimentary platforms attracted millions of users and enabled email address registration and basic online networking (Maryville University). At first, weblogs, blogs, were the practices people used to do in social media, then Facebook was launched, which is the core of all social media platforms. Facebook was mainly used for personal reasons or to upload something, but gradually it became a platform for vlogging, livestreaming, posts, online activism, and petitions. After that, all other social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, reddit all came along and became a weapon for seeking justice or activism. Such as the Palestine-Israel conflict, where Israel attacked on them numerously harming all kinds of people, including women, children, and aged. What was happening there, everything was not shown in the traditional media. But through social media, people from all over the world get to know about the situation. There are many pages like Free Palestine, Euro News, and some individual ones that post live events or news that we didn't get from the traditional media. Zeynep Tufekci argues that social media has transformed people's way of organizing, their thoughts, and communication for protest. "Technology alters the landscape in which human social interaction takes place, shifts the power and the leverage between actors, and has many other ancillary effects. It is certainly not the only factor in any one situation, but ignoring it as a factor or assuming that a technology could be used to equally facilitate all outcomes obscures our understanding" (125). She also said that digital activism empowers normal people to share their information instantly and spread the news beyond the borders that challenges traditional media. Additionally, she mentioned that digital activism and social media tools allow protestors to

adapt to new forms of surveillance, censorship, and fake news. Though digital networks provide space for visibility, they also make activists vulnerable to state control. “Social media-enabled protests can make democracies more accountable, more inclusive, and more resilient. Yet the same speed, scale, and visibility can also enable extremists to mobilize for anti-democratic behavior and cause real-world harm” (Maryville University). However, despite some disadvantages, it remains one of the most powerful tools for protests. When Charles Tilly introduced the concept of repertoire of contention in 1995, he mentioned that repertoire includes petition, sit-ins, rallies, online activism, blockades, strikes, media campaigns, and citizen documentation, along with others. She argues that across time, these repertoires change because of politics, repression, and new inventions. And in the 21st century, protests online have become one of the important tools that are used for protests, so that people from other countries can know about this, including own country people. Tufekci mentions that social media allows people to communicate and connect without any proper organization, and that’s called rapid scale-up. This has not happened in one day. “According to Tufekci, “Thanks to social media, they really have it fairly easy compared to previous generations in terms of finding each other and finding their voice.” Growing youth unemployment, said Tufekci, also encourages these types of movements” (Dews). Earlier era, people used to protest in forms of groups by blocking roads or petition in front of the institutions, and that was only it. Social media was not powerful back then, and most people didn’t use social media, which made it more difficult. But now, the situation is different. The availability of digital media and the internet makes it easier and more convenient for consumers to use and provide information. The younger generation is the one that uses more social media, and for protests, they are the majority who become one both in social media and physically. For example, the recent Srilanka movement where the students protested against the government for legal justice and

against bribery. At first, it was a matter of inside, then it got spread on social media. Posts, video clips of protests, tag lines, hashtags made normal people also support them as well. But the traditional media did not step up. Because of censorship and surveillance, they continued to defend the government, but after all, it messed up, the sole reason is social media, and then the students, along with others.

Social media is also changing the way in which people interact with information. “Until now,” Eczacibasi said, “the media was always one-sided.” There was always one side providing the information and the other receiving the information. Tufekci expanded on this: “There is no more audience per se.” Younger generations have become accustomed to being part of the conversation by commenting (Dews).

Secondly, comes the term citizen journalism, which was discussed earlier in this paper. It refers to people who don't have any professional experience and training in journalism, but still, with their devices, accounts, and social media, they give a live update of any event. It is the normal people who are under the category of citizen journalism. “Citizen journalism refers to the production of journalistic content by ordinary citizens, such as current affairs-based blogging, photo and video sharing, and posting eyewitness commentary on current events” (Goode). The volume and types of citizen journalism practices have been increasing since the rise of social media all over the world.

On July 14th, 2024, in Bangladesh, when students were having a protest for quota, seat equality according to talent, not any reference to get government jobs, police, and the members of

the former government's student council 'Chatroleague' beat the students who were protesting there and some people or students took out their mobile phones and take a video or clip or photos to reach out the public. After this, it became a life-changing event for both the Bangladeshi people and government. This is a prime example of social media and the concept called citizen journalism, which happens when untrained people take on the responsibility of reporting news in their own hands by using whatever they have. In the book '*Online Newsgathering: Research and Reporting for Journalism*', Stephen Quinn and Stephen Lamble provide a more formal definition. They said that citizen journalism comes in two forms, one is when the public, who are not professional journalists and have no training or knowledge about the news media, but they still contribute content that is published on traditional media. Another one is when the normal citizens produce blogs, community websites, or publications for a specific purpose. In other words, citizens assume themselves to be journalists (44). Citizen journalism's recent popularity has been sparked by new technology media that have led to increased accessibility to information for the general public. Unlike traditional journalism, citizen journalism is not done by a group of trained people; it is more likely done by individuals who are not educated or trained in this field, and citizens who have no connection with this field. This mainly happens when any event occurs, maybe unusual, not likable, or does not adjust with society, people tend to follow what is happening on the spot. It mainly happens because they don't have enough trust in traditional media, they think that this media is biased and will not publish this, or offer irrelevant information that people would find difficult to believe. On the other hand, citizen journalism consumers tend to believe this because it is raw and comes from the spot without any filter. The second form is more accurate in the era of the internet, social media, and the availability of devices, which includes blogs, community websites, and others. Bowman and Willis argue that citizen journalism enables individuals to

contribute to the platform, where they can often share their opinions, which are usually excluded from the mainstream media (Bowman and Wills). Similarly, Gillmor said that citizen journalism challenges the one-way communication of traditional media by providing space for participants to contribute to the media. These shifts in media highlight a huge media ecology, where gatekeeping information is done by traditional media journalists and becomes biased, which leads these institutions to a downfall. Castells described this shift in his book '*The Network Policy*' as a broader way of communication that opens a gate for everyone to share information, and there is no power or centralized control over the information (127). In this networked environment, citizen journalism plays an important role in shaping people's minds and thoughts. Besides daily narratives, it works mainly in protests, political events, and crisis periods. In recent years, it has expanded more than ever because of the availability of the internet, access to information, and social media. Citizen journalists are accidental journalists who get involved in some events that maybe were not meant to be attended by them, or on the other hand, they get involved accidentally. It is not only used for protests or crisis moments, but also in humanitarian crises or state violence. Though it is not only for personal narratives but also for political reasoning, its impact remains particularly significant in times of protests or crisis moments, where it often fills the gap that is left by traditional media. But it is also not without flaws. Tufekci argues that maybe it can be good for people and advanced democracies, but it often leads to misinformation, fake news, and misguides others. Many debates are actually under journalism? Or what objectives does it have to be in the field? And others. Most probably, the biggest issues that have been issued is the possibility of a federal shield law, where it has its own section "Shield Laws: Who is a Journalist?" This law protects journalists from releasing confidential sources when they are targeted by a court. Several states have shield laws in place (Tufekci).

The possibility of one raises questions because it would essentially define who a journalist is, and depending on the definition, citizen journalists may not be included. There is much debate as to whether citizen journalists are “true” journalists and whether they should enjoy the same protections and privileges. The shield law section discusses this debate, as well as where the concept of a shield law came from and how it evolved over time (Hughes). However, citizen journalism challenges the structure of traditional journalism because of its gatekeeping of information, censorship, and transparency. Also, trust issues already created as mainstream media don’t disclose all the news or information to the public because of editorial and higher-level pressure. Similarly, when it's time for any movement or protest, they usually take the side of the government to have a safe place. The scholars widely describe this as a bottom-up model, which already emerges as a new dimension for the normal citizen because of participation rather than institutional authority. “Citizens’ active engagement in reporting of incidents may help challenge mainstream news institutions’ gatekeeping and sense-making functions, prompting some commentators to name citizen journalism as the fifth estate” (Cooper). It challenges the biased coverage of news and the lack of coverage of truthfulness in the news. It also damages the watchdog function of mainstream media. In addition to these affordances and advantages, there are some challenges that new media or citizen journalism face in protests or any event. For instance, misinformation, fake news, fabricated news, people sharing or commenting on nonsense, etc. The major is fact checking, whether the news is true or not, because in a protest or any heated moment, it is easy to provoke or manipulate the public, and social media is one of the important tools. Social media and citizen journalism are connected, and the main problem is in the media industry, where professional journalists and normal people who do reporting are against each other, not one side. Many TV channels also do live reporting and show the people what is happening, but

they still gatekeep some news. Credibility concerns also rise up when people do the reporting, but now people are more willing to believe the citizen reporting, not the mainstream media reporting. During protests, citizen journalists provide real-time footage, videos, photographs, and tweets, which enable global citizens to receive all the information and witness events as they unfold. Indeed, social media has accelerated citizen journalism in terms of real-time footage, transparency, and time-consuming efforts.

2.2: Global impact of traditional media and social media in protests

There has always been a debate between traditional media and social media about trust, credibility, censorship, and truthfulness. When people were not used to phones or when the world did not depend on the internet yet, traditional media was the one that people used to believe and have trust in them. Newspapers and radios have ruled the world for centuries. Later, television came and became prominent, but still newspapers held their place and gave timely news to the public. This media has acted as a trusted place for people for a long time and a source of primary information even in times of political situations. News productions provide news in a structured way, after verifying the content and checking if it is socially acceptable or not. Considering all these things, a news production or any professional journalist would publish news to the public. For example, in 1971, during the Bangladeshi liberation war, people used to get news from the traditional media, as there was no social media to use. People used radio, newspaper, or television to get information, even if they had to get news in secret or needed to gather people, they would send a special message or a person. Similarly, for the U.S. civil rights movement, people used to gather information through traditional media. Through television broadcasts, the news would become globally recognized. But things are changing, and people have started to use another form

of media to get news and information for protests. However, the internet emerged towards the end of the twentieth century, and the media began to shift, creating a balance between traditional media and social media. The Internet offered some platforms for people to provide and share information, and also provided immediacy and convenience that traditional media could not provide. It made progress in a way that allowed the public to read tomorrow's news today, and online journalism started to be accepted by people as they accepted new technology. In the late 1990s, internet citizen journalism began with nothing but blogs. Quinn and Lamble describe a blog as “a type of website where entries are written, or posted, the same way you would update a journal or diary” (31). Intelligence programmer Jorn Barger in 1997 proposed this term when he described his website, www.robotwisdom.com, as a “weblog,” although blogs did not receive much attention until they started to become a source for news (Quinn and Lamble 30). “One of the first major events that put blogs on the map was the 2002 Trent Lott incident. On December 20, 2002, Majority Leader Sen. Trent Lott, R-Tenn., resigned from his position following allegations of racist comments. Much of the criticism Lott encountered originally was generated in blogs” (30). Citizen journalism has become a vital part of protests recently, which has reshaped the way movements are documented, understood, analyzed, and practiced worldwide. Globally, citizen-generated reporting is ruling through social media platforms that have enabled people to be open to the world, which is somehow traditional media, either filtered, delayed, or entirely ignored. This shift is not sudden but has gradually occurred because of the spread of the internet, and the availability and accessibility of information on social media has made it possible today. But it was especially visible because of the Arab Spring uprisings, where people of Tunisia and Egypt used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and other platforms to circulate and publish the events that were happening, witnessing everything align with showing everyone live or posting

posts to let people know what the truth is. The rise of social media has made it easier for outlets to publish user-generated content recorded by citizen journalists.



Figure 1: Photos of banners where people find social media as a revolutionary tool more than any other tools and platforms

Social media has also helped ensure marginalized perspectives get the recognition they deserve. Social media has certainly prompted most newsrooms to think through their policies about using materials (Patel). Social media has become one of the significant tools for protests as it can be used for anything, such as gathering people, making announcements, expressing opinions, and others. Social media accelerates the news faster than traditional media, and it is one of the main reasons why people are more invested in this medium. Though the problem of credibility and truthfulness is still there. There are many protest examples around the world, which are recognised by the world through the hand of social media. Firstly, the Arab Spring. It started when a street vendor named Mohammad Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest against the police harassment, as he was told to pay a bribe for selling his merchandise, corruption, and injustices in the economy. This protest began on December 17, 2010, in Tunisia, and it rapidly spread to neighboring countries such as Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, and others. This self-act of his sparked the citizens

of that country, which made them gather together against the government. As the problems were deeply connected to the government, such as high unemployment, corruption, misuse of power, violation of human rights, and others. Traditional media tend to work for the government and higher-level officials. So this medium was not helping. Then, social media became a consequential tool for the protest. It filled the gap between the media and the public. Social media platforms mobilize events among people. “By the beginning of 2011, however, social media acted as an ‘accelerating agent’ that helped protesters hold online discussions and organize and stage popular uprisings, which, in turn, led to the resignation of two unpopular leaders, as well as their rapid spread across Arab countries, and transnationalization to the wider world” (Chebib and Sohail 150). People used to protest on the road as well, but social media has made it easier for everyone to gather and give virtual encouragement to others. “Often dubbed the 'Facebook Revolution', the Arab Spring is credited as the first instance where social media platforms were employed on a mass scale for the mobilisation and rallying of people across the Arab World” (Walid). Out of all social media platforms, Facebook was used the most as it has a long-term effect and features like ‘status updates’, ‘news feeds’ mobilise the posts and encourage people to participate and acknowledge the situation. Facebook pages and other social media platforms used hashtags like ‘We are all Khaled said’ and #Jan25 to mobilise the protest by going viral among protesters, and helped to raise awareness for social injustice. This rapid spread of stories, photos, and posts helped to form solidarity and attract global attention. According to Howard and Hussain the Arab Spring did not happen because of social media, but it accelerated and significantly altered its speed, scale, and visibility. Tufekci said that social media mobilizes rapidly and enables people to discuss this in one space. Citizen journalism played a crucial role as well (80). “The trend in citizen documentation was also monumental in invigorating protest. Notably, the fate of Tunisian street

vendor Mohamed Bouzizi- who self-immolated in protest of the violence and corruption of Tunisian government officials and law enforcement- was initially suppressed and censored by state television. However, the harrowing images were captured by citizen journalists and shared widely on social platforms, triggering the very first protests of the Arab Spring in Tunisia” (Walid). Where traditional media tried to help the government and was working for the government, online activism allowed this censorship to vanish and establish their opinion, and helped to fight for their rights. “While the majority of articles dealt with social media, a significant number of articles also focused on legacy media. Many of them argued that Arab newspapers and television channels, typically operating under state control, delegitimised protests and presented a largely pro-regime perspective” (Smidi and Shahin 200). Where social media accelerated the protest by giving space for people and letting them participate, on the other hand, traditional media worked under state control and worked in the way the government wanted. But after all, the power of the people, along with social media, helped them to take down their government, which is known as the Arab uprising or revolution. Similarly, Hong Kong’s ‘Umbrella Movement’, which is a political movement. It occurred because of the decline of the Chinese government’s genuine universal suffrage in Hong Kong on 31st August 2014. The People’s Republic of China kept selective places for candidates beforehand for the 2017 election in Hong Kong’s chief executive. It is called the umbrella movement or umbrella revolution because the umbrella became the symbol of this protest, as it protects the protesters on the road from pepper spray that police were spraying at them. And this term was first used by Adam Coin on twitter, a social media platform, which would call the umbrella movement, and rapidly spread among the public. Another Hong Kong protest that happened from 2019 to 2020, before COVID started. This was also against the government of China after introducing a bill to amend the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance in regard to extradition.

These two protests are driven by mobilization, organizations on social media, and physical participation in the protest. Traditional media was not helping them at all, as it was a political movement and they worked under state control; they would not publish any news that would affect the protest. On the contrary, social media worked as a great repertoire for this protest. Telegram and Twitter played a crucial role in enabling decentralised coordination and influencing global narratives of protest. Participants and members of the movement used social media to motivate activists and would-be activists to add their physical and digital efforts to the protest. “A kaleidoscopic entity comprising numerous activist groups with shifting agendas—used social media to gauge participant sentiments and plan strategically to increase pressure on the government” (Agur and Frisch). Social media enables the Umbrella movement to go beyond to the people who could not participate and the borderline as well. Twitter, WhatsApp groups, telegram and mainly Facebook were the medium of communication for most participants from all sides. Pre-existing groups were turned down by the traditional media and were forced to tell the public what the media wanted to publish. That’s why activists created a special group for all the people so that the politicians, police, armed forces, and journalists could not find them, and they could communicate there easily. They did not bother with press calls, emails, or debates because those were not helping the protest; rather, it was getting messier. All the people came together to fight against the government after discussing it on the social media platform. As Catesells said, digital communication facilitates easy movement and attracts people to the network. He used the term ‘networked social movement’ as a new type of protest that happens without leaders and is decentralized (184). Downey & Fenton state that Digital and social media should facilitate the sustainability of social movements by providing the space for counterpublic communication (20). Digital and social media allow movement groups and activists to continue to connect with potential

supporters (Lee, Chan, and Chen 4940). In addition, according to Howar and Hussain, social media serves as an accelerator for the public to protest and political mobilization (22). “Legacy media played little role as tactical platforms for on-the-ground developments. Social media was critical to, for instance, massing protesters in a certain area to deter a police charge, or mobilizing lawyers to defend and bail out arrested protesters” (Agur and Frisch). But newspapers, radio, and television remained an important part of their protest, as the public would know what they were thinking by reading and hearing their news. Some people would take the help of traditional media to share their thoughts as well, for instance, Joshua Wong gave numerous TV interviews and wrote many columns in the newspaper named *Ming Pao Daily News*, where some news may be published before than on social media. Foreign journalists took advantage of social media very well. They made an important use of Twitter to share posts and the current situation of the movement, which is under digital activism. Twitter played a minor role compared to Facebook in this protest, as leaders and activists were not so responsive on Twitter. Digital media allowed people to connect and communicate with each other online, which mobilized the protest. The latter movement was more accelerated by social media than the first movement, and it was one of the largest protests that took place in China. Various types of hashtags like #standforHongKong(60%), #freeHongKong(30%) were used to mobilize the protest, and it spread so rapidly through the internet on social media, not only among locals but also in the international community, that it became a global concern. At the end, maybe social media was not the only force to run the protest, but it fueled the protest and gave encouragement to the public online. In contrast, despite providing space to the public, it still worked for the government.

While talking about the protests and the role of both media, Turkey's Gezi Park movement should be mentioned. It began in late May of 2013 in Istanbul. To begin with, it was a minor protest with some environmental activists against the plan to demolish Gezi Park to establish commercial buildings. It started as a local protest, but ended up being an anti-government movement, which was the anger expressed by the public against the authoritarian government for eyewash, false hope, and police brutality against the protesters. Also, censorship in the media and elsewhere. At the beginning of the movement, Turkish traditional media heavily failed to cover the events. One moment that became a symbol of how this media is censored and is working under pressure, that famous newschannel, CNN Turk, broadcast a documentary about penguins when there was a massacre in the state. Despite broadcasting about the movement, they were broadcasting an animal programme. Social media has paved the way for sharing communication without censorship. In this protest, Twitter played a crucial role because of its rapid communication.

“Twitter makes it easy for both citizens and ruling elites to interact in an effective way. Especially in times of political crisis and polarization, Twitter can also be used as a public space for political engagement. During times of political polarization, social media sites including Twitter play a key role in making the society get mobilized and have the ability to participate mass demonstrations through online political activism” (Burak). In the Gezi Park protest, just like the Arab Spring protest, Twitter, which is a social media platform, was used extensively.



Figure 2: CNN Turk is airing penguins documentary at the time of the Istanbul riot

As these platforms serve as free interactive spaces for protesters, and anyone can access them, this medium has become one of the most communicative spaces and a tool through which the world and people get to know everything. Hashtags, posts, and opinions from civilians lead people and help them to stay on guard. Some examples that I found as hashtags that went viral on social media, which accelerated the movement.

“Tweet posted by artist Mehmet Ali Bora on May 30, 2013. Mesele sadece Gezi Parkı değil arkadaş, sen hâlâ anlamadın mı? Hadi gel. #direngeziparkı (It's not just about Gezi Park, buddy, don't you still get it? Come on #resistgezipark), Tweet posted by Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan on June 1, 2013. Taksim ve Gezi Parkı açıldı! Polis Dolmabahçe'ye çekiliyor! ARTIK SAKİN LÜTFEN! (Taksim and Gezi Park have been opened. Police are moving to Dolmabahçe! PLEASE CALM DOWN NOW!” (Burak) These hashtags and posts were not only to share opinions or communicate, but also to update the situation and live events. Citizen journalism was one of the parts of this movement. In April 2013, a post appeared on Twitter urging everyone to stand up,

and the aftermath was a historic protest. This is how social media impacted the movement. According to one report, it is estimated that approximately 3,600,000 activists participated in the protest, and Twitter users in Turkey increased from 1.8 million to 9.5 million on the first five days of the protest. Citizens turned to social media networks when it became apparent that mainstream media had been co-opted and was untrustworthy, pushing misinformation, propaganda, and lies. Gezi activists attempted to challenge the narrative presented by the government, government supporters, and mainstream media in the government's support (*View of Digital Traces of "Twitter Revolutions": Resistance, Polarization, and Surveillance via Contested Images and Texts of Occupy Gezi*). This protest is often compared to the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement because of the effect and use of social media.

According to Hacıyakupoglu and Zhang, "As a fast-paced, closed-group-communication tool, WhatsApp was most cited as a way of reaching sources of reliable news. This tool was used to double-check information received via mass or social media with friends on the ground. It was also used to arrange meetings with peers when in Gezi, and to ask for secure locations when Gezi was under police attack" (457). Physical presence in the field is shown by the citizen journalists by posting real-time events on Twitter, Facebook, and informing people where the police were attacking, where they would find shelter, and what the situation on the road was. TV news channels did not cover the whole protest; they were just doing their job under pressure and on the side of the government. While social media attracted citizens to reveal the brutal truth, traditional media were just covering surface-level events. According to a journal where civilians gave their opinions, they said that people were shocked that the media were not covering and informing what was happening. They couldn't find what they were looking for, and the TV was not showing anything

at all. The media was not working on their side, and had a great effect on the young generation. A 20-year-old girl said that they thought they were being properly informed, but suddenly they found that the media were ignoring a brutal reality being played out on the streets. And they realized, perhaps for the first time, that if this happened over Gezi, how could they trust anything that comes from the media? (Law).

Furthermore, the Palestine conflict with Israel adds more to it. It is the recent and newest conflict where both media roles can be seen perfectly. It is an ongoing military and political conflict between two countries over land. Israel wants to own the land and their military settlements are there, but Palestinians don't want to give it up as it's their territory. Also, religious conflict. Israel is backed up by the USA government, and all their supplies and weapons are provided by them. There was a conflict between them always, but it became bigger when Israel attacked Hamas and then Gaza. It has been going on since 2023. It is basically genocide, but the whole world is just seeing what is happening. To convey information, both traditional and social media worked here, but still, there are filters on traditional media news. Citizen journalism played a crucial role in informing everyone about the situation. They focused on every aspect of the country. Israel was attacking with bombs and missiles, and not caring about the women or elderly people. They didn't even spare the hospitals and journalists. Mainstream media like Al-Jazeera, CNN, and BBC played an important role in legitimizing the news and delivering it to the whole world. For instance, the BBC News has published an article about Israel destroying over 1500 buildings in Gaza since the ceasefire. Al Jazeera's news, where they used to give live updates and videos of the situation, has published how many were killed, what the destructions and what the current situation is.



Figure 3: These are the news that have been published by Al Jazeera after the ceasefire

They have tried to keep the world updated with their news. Even in some of the attacking videos, people are suffering, and journalists were elaborating on the situation, which was shown on the mainstream media, but there were influences of Israel and the higher countries. Journalists who were working on behalf of Palestine were captured, and more cruelly, the Israeli military set fire to their camp and burned one journalist alive. This video went viral on social media, which was not shown on mainstream media, and people who were there recorded and posted on social media, specifically Facebook, which was the main platform for people to connect with others.



Figure 4: Facebook post of Palestinian journalists burned alive in the tent

Civilians played a crucial role as citizen journalists, because of them, people get to know the behind-the-scenes situation. Even professional journalists had their personal accounts from where they shared everything.

“The cameras of ordinary people transformed into tools of resistance, capturing crimes committed against civilians. Citizens armed themselves with cameras and phones, documenting every moment of the war. They captured scenes of destruction and death, defying the Israeli-imposed ban on international journalists entering Gaza. Through every frame and every broadcast, citizen journalists revealed the unvarnished reality of Gaza ensuring that, despite the suppression, the voice of its people would echo far and wide” (“Citizen Journalism in Gaza: ‘the Last Witness’”). Various types of hashtags like #AlleyesonGaza, #AlleyesonRafah, #Gaza, #Freepalestine, #Freegaza were spread around social media, and these led to protests around the world, such as in Europe and Asian countries, to stop the war.

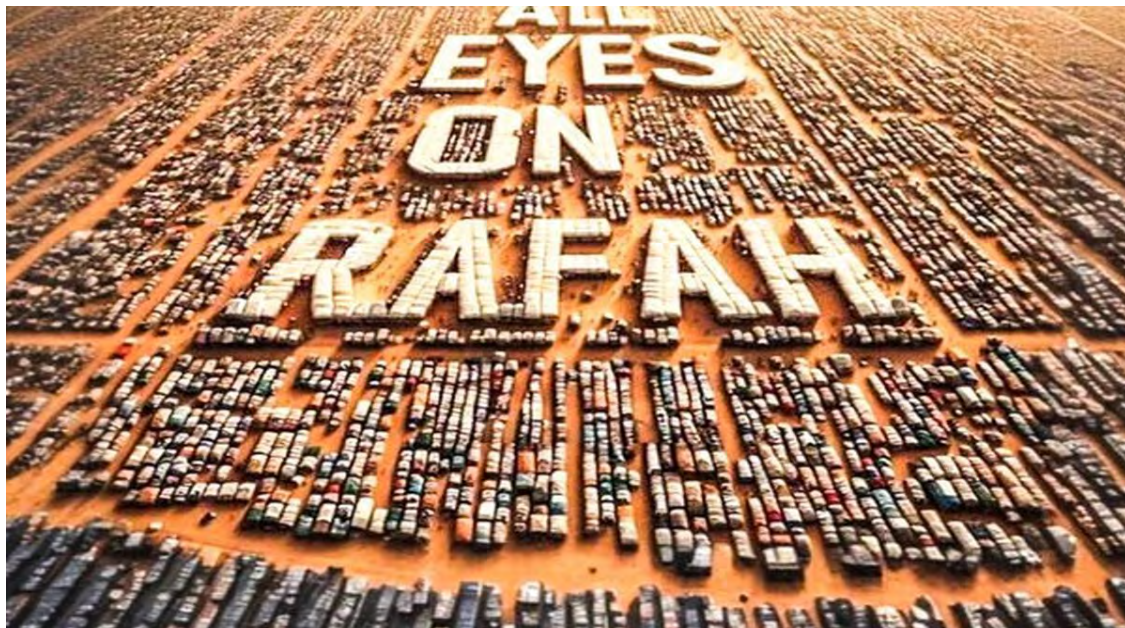


Figure 5: AI-created image by the public to seek awareness and help

This AI image was shared online, which gained 44 million views on Facebook, and this triggered people around the world, and later a post was shared saying that it was the AI image, now see the real image of murder.



Figure 6: This is a real image that was shared on Facebook and Instagram, showing how mainstream media is not providing all the information

Even donations were made by the local people around the world, along with NGOs, to the affected people when they showed us what was happening there: a lack of food, shelter, clothes, etc. Live documentation of the airstrikes, children dying in their parents' hands, people losing their everything, and doctors, journalists, all were helpless, were captured by citizen journalists and went viral on social media. During the ongoing war, young activists emerged as prominent voices,

bringing the cruel reality to the global audience. These individuals had described everyday bombing, airstrikes, hunger issues, displacement, destruction, and cruelty. For example, an activist named Musab Al Sharif, whose significant photos and videos went viral on social media, with some exceeding a million views. He said, “I realized that the world would not see our suffering unless we documented it ourselves. This is not just a camera; it is the voice of Gaza’s anguish” (“Citizen Journalism in Gaza: ‘the Last Witness’”). He further explained that he was just inches away from the bombing and felt like death was closer to him ever before. By miracle, he survived, but his companion Fadi became paralysed after a piece of shrapnel pierced his neck and lodged there. Traditional media failed to capture this insightful news, and even though they did somewhat, it went on social media before then on mainstream media. The coverage of the mainstream media was problematic. “Media routines, which include standard practices and workflows within news organisations, often prioritise speed and efficiency over in-depth reporting. Mainstream media have faced obstacles concerning their output on Gaza, including political barriers, ideological challenges, and logistical constraints” (Khamis). A post on Twitter was posted about mainstream media being the cancer that is eating away at humanity’s soul, as they are not providing true information every time. How is the public going to believe them?

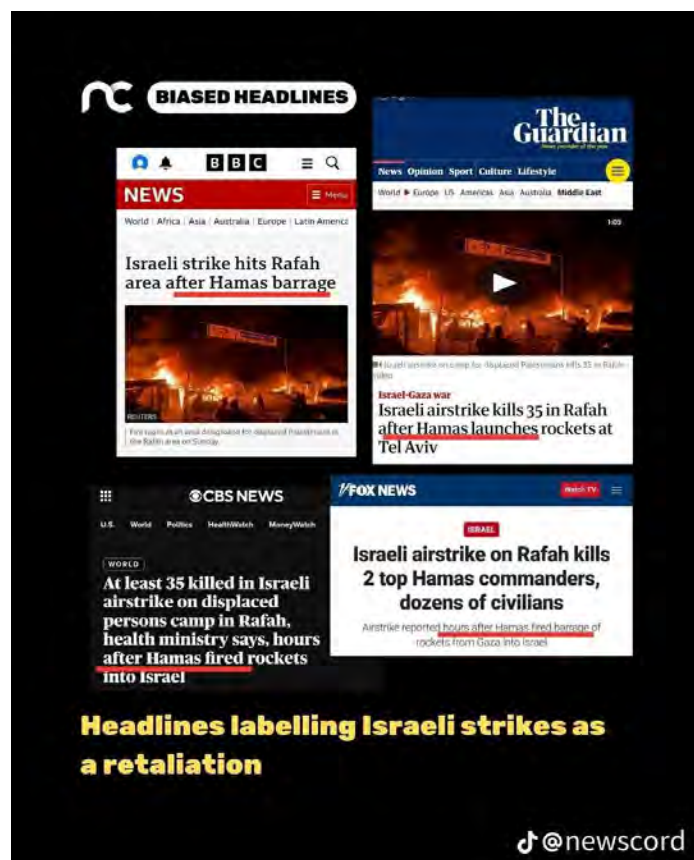


Figure 7: A Twitter post where mainstream media is called ‘cancer’ because of its activity towards the war

Lastly but not least, the recent Nepal and Indonesia protests. The Nepal protest is known as the Genz protest as well, and it mainly started in Indonesia when the government declared home allowances for MPs nearly ten times the minimum wage. More interestingly, this protest was started online as politicians' kids, aka nepo kids, were having facilities where local children and people were suffering. The government banned 26 social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, and Whatsapp which shows the power of social media. This was addressed only as regulatory compliance, but mainly it was done to silence public dissent, especially from the digital media platforms. Traditional media such as Reuters and BBC did cover the deaths, curfews, and

situation, but the censorship and pressure were still there. The government banning social media itself says a lot about the power of these tools. Yet still they couldn't stop the GenZ, the platforms like TikTok, discord and Instagram, especially Discord, which basically is used for gaming, but the young activists made this platform their weapon and a discussion room where they also shared the current situation. Ten thousand youth had participated in the live streams and chat platforms, which traditional media could not replace. All the production buildings, ministers' buildings, and offices were destroyed by the locals along with the young activists. This led the government to resign its position on 9 September. On a local newspaper named Nieman Reports, a writer shared her experience that she had never seen something like this before. While the main social media platforms were banned, the young protesters used Discord with different names so that no one knew who they actually were and continued to participate. Citizen journalism took over social media as individuals were sharing and posting whatever they found. A foreign vlogger who got stuck in the protest also took part in showing the current situation. Hashtags like #Genzisonfire and #nomorecorruption went viral, and people from outside, like Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Malaysia, also supported them online. Traditional media did their job, but as they work under the government, people didn't put their trust in them for covering the news. In Bangladesh, TV channels were showing a report that was recorded on social media to know the situation. This also proves that social media created a space for normal people to protest, not only that, but they can also gather information and people. Also, Charles Tilly argues that social media has become a powerful repertoire for protesters as it works as a discussion room.

2.3. Censorship and Surveillance of media in global protests

Censorship refers to the official control and suppression of any expression that can potentially jeopardize the order of the state. Historically, it has been used to monitor public

awareness and to shut down journalists. Socrates was one of the first victims of censorship in 399 BC, who was sentenced to drink poison for acknowledging unorthodox divinities. Traditionally, government censors apply at newspapers, journals, TV news reports, and others. In democratic countries, it applies more than in any other. They acknowledge this as a maintenance tool to maintain law and order, their real motive, and ignore the public. According to an academic paper, Dictatorships use brute force to shut down uncooperative media outlets and exile, imprison, or execute the journalists. Under the pretext of maintaining law and order, autocratic governments ransack news and enforce censorship. Resultantly, only a minority of people living in mature democracies can access diverse and independent sources of information. Press plays an important part in democratization and transparency of society, and also plays a vital role in the elimination of illiteracy internationally (Newth). It is mainly used in times of protest and national incidents in any country. No matter what country it is, if any protests occur, censorship and surveillance become the main problems for the media. With the rise of social media, where people can share anything without any restriction, and it has become one of the most important tools in movements, the higher officials and government tend to censor this.

At the beginning of the Arab Spring, the Syrian regime issued a legislative decree in 2012 that tightened censorship on many websites and blocked many press websites, such as Arabi newspaper, BBC English, and Wikipedia, and amended the cybercrime law, a form of intellectual and cognitive intimidation against users (Al-Saqaf). In Saudi Arabia, the internet was restricted to the kingdom. They also have a rule of not publishing anything against the government. They blocked the internet so that people could not use social networking and connect with other people. Because of social media, traditional media was weakening, and citizen journalists would provide

erie updates and information that traditional media was prohibited from providing. Still, they found ways to connect offline, and they fought on the road. The Gezi Park is also not out of this censorship. The mainstream media of Turkey downplayed the movement as they didn't pay attention to it. The production houses are owned by businessmen, the government, and other high officials. A widely known example is that of the Turk CNN channel that broadcast penguin documentaries during the movement. It was hugely criticized around the world. The state media regulator RTUK, which is a government channel, was heavily censored for covering the event. The government passed a new law for social media so that it can monitor. At that time, Turkey faced a massive amount of censorship in mainstream media. Similarly, the Hong Kong Umbrella protest also faced censorship and surveillance. There was a restriction on mainstream media already, and social media became one of the focuses of the government during protest as it was giving people space to connect and unite. Hong Kong is a special administrative region under China with a common law legal system, which was inherited from the British. Though this country was under the freedom of one country and two systems, the protest revealed that there were no such things. Direct censorship and pressure were subtle, but the media of Beijing framed the protesters as disruptive, illegal, and economically harmful. In the case of social media, Chinese platforms like WeChat and Weibo were heavily censored, which prevented Chinese citizens from getting involved with this. Surveillance created a dynamic on the movement as they created digital fear by monitoring them on social media platforms. In the case of Nepal and Indonesia, freedom of the press was already there, but during the time of protest, when it went against the government, they monitored the activists on social media as it was one of the most powerful platforms that was working against them.

Chapter 3

Media ecology and the impact of citizen journalism in Bangladeshi protests

3.1. Background of media in Bangladesh

In all democratic countries the media plays an important role. It is considered the fourth organ of a government. The word ‘Media’ is derived from the word medium, which means carrier. The media intend to reach a large audience. At first, it emerged through books and newspapers, then with the help of technology, it shifted to TV, radio, and the internet. The media nowadays plays an important role in terms of shaping people's opinions and creating awareness among people, which strengthens a society. The media in Bangladesh is shaped by the British colonial policies. Newspapers that were founded at that time, like the Azad (founded in 1936) and the Ittefaq (founded in 1953), helped Bangladesh in the language movement in 1956. After that, in the liberation war media was the core of support for Bangladeshi freedom fighters and the people also. It served as a platform for disseminating information and motivating people to go to war. The Ittefaq, which was later edited by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the radio station Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra (Free Bangladesh radio station) played a crucial role by informing the netizens about the situation, playing songs to encourage them, passing motivational speeches to the freedom fighters, or reciting rebellion poems written by various artists. It created a bridge of communication among the public. It also helped to reach war news to the world. As our country was dominated by the East Pakistanis now Pakistan, the print media faced a great level of censorship and trust issues. This medium was the only way to get information, but sometimes, due to state pressure, they used to give false information as well, like when there were Pakistani military murdering people non-stop, but the news they shared was ‘situation normal’, nothing is happening. This media was under their control since the 60s when Ayub Khan’s military government enforced a

law called the Press and Publications Ordinance. Despite censorship, newspapers tried to deliver accurate news as accurately as possible, which is why radio was the only powerful medium back then. After the liberation war, the media enjoyed a brief period of patriotism. After freedom, when the country was under the Awami League government, the media's freedom contracted. After that, from the period 1975 to 1990, when Bangladesh was under military rule, print media faced heavy censorship, coercion and patronage. At that time, many protests were held, such as anti-military dictatorship protests, student protests on the 'Education Minister Sedition case, and the anti-Ershad movement. These were the main protests of that time. In that period Bangladeshi media was in a vulnerable position. They had to deliver what they were told to deliver. State pressure and editorial pressure were always there. Noam Chomsky's and Edward Herman's propaganda model says that too. According to him, five elements shape news agendas and produce ideological content. One of them is ownership; the media productions are owned privately and driven by profit; they publish news according to their benefits, which is why their news reflects the owner's statement rather than accurate news. Print media are heavily dependent on the funds of advertisers, so they avoid content that will harm the corporate power or threaten consumerism. They also depend on the official announcements for the news. Official announcements include official sources like the government, the military, businessman and higher officials. Journalists, editors, and workers of the news production work under pressure; if anyone works outside their rule they would punish them. In the military era, newsprint was under their control, and many journalists were beaten and threatened so that they would not publish any news that would backfire them. The media was made for the public to gain knowledge, but under state pressure or censorship, it also plays a negative role. No matter whose rule is going on in democratic countries, traditional media is affected by the government. Political influence over traditional media was always there in Bangladesh. Laws like

the Digital Security Act have created a fear environment among journalists, which is why individuals are leading to self-censorship. Because of this, journalists and editors often avoid live crime scenes, protest areas so that they can prevent institutional backlash, and worse consequences. That's why there is a delay in reporting, not publishing the whole truth, relying on the official statements, and giving priority to the government over the public. This whole thing has made the print media of Bangladesh weak. Such as the case of Sagar and Runi murder case, who were prominent journalists of Bangladesh, were stabbed to death in 2012 under the rule of Awami League. It is rumored that they found something against the government, and they were stabbed to death. It is proof that print media in Bangladesh was never free. Television and newspapers are still the main sources of news in Bangladesh, but their role in protests is limited. There are live broadcasts and reports on TV, but they are shown from the perspective of the officials. The gap between citizens and truth are getting bigger that includes distrust in print media, and it is controlled along with the incomplete news in protest times.

In the 2000s, Bangladeshi media was introduced to a new form of news, which is online news. The rise of internet users, social media users and smartphone users was increasing rapidly. In the 2000s, internet users were 0.1% of the population, and some of them were using social media platforms. This has increased to 73% of the total population according to the last report of January 2024. Social media users also increased with this. This was a platform for people to share or for personal use, but gradually it has become one of the important tools for people for political discussion and protests. The perception that traditional media gatekeep information from the public has led to a dependence on alternative sources of information, such as social media platforms and

citizens themselves. Citizen journalism serves as a complementary role to professional journalists, particularly those working in the field of events and protests.

3.2. Role of Traditional media, social media, and citizen journalism in Bangladeshi protests and crisis

Over the past decade, the rise of social media in Bangladesh has represented the rapid growth and transformation in digital platforms in the global south. From higher-level users to normal public users, its revolution has shaped people's minds, thoughts, politics, business and way of life in society. Platforms like Facebook, Orkut (Google's platform), and YouTube were gaining recognition in the early 2010s. Bangladesh faced mass adaptation and revolution of mobile phones from 2013. In that year, commercial 3G launched, and Chinese mobile phones like Samsung and Symphony became accessible to the people, and this made the internet and mobile phones have in most people. According to BTRC data, internet users have jumped from 5 million in 2012 to 60 million in 2016. Gradually, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram started to expand throughout all of Bangladesh along with the internet. Facebook became one of the main tools in social media to share information, political expression, and connect with people, other than calls and meetings. Due to editorial pressure and political pressure, traditional media cannot deliver the whole truth of any events, so social media has become an alternative platform for getting news, along with expressing thoughts and opinions, especially in protests and crisis periods. Traditional media is a one way communication platform; conversely, social media is a two way communication platform, where people can get immediate information, easy access to ground-level information, eyewitness testimony, and various perspectives that are mostly absent or cannot be found in traditional media news coverage. This works as a public

sphere. German philosopher Habermas's concept of the public sphere refers to the group of people or community coming together in a place and discussing among themselves about any situation and creating public opinion. Traditional media allows this to happen, but social media platforms themselves become a place for people to be together, virtually. The concept of him later declined as social media rose, people shifting their connections from offline to online, political pressure on print media, and the public. The rise of social media enabled people to self-communicate, allowing activists to bypass information to the public, whereas traditional media gatekeepers keep information to themselves. According to Castells, one of the renowned sociologists defined information technology as "the converging set of technologies in microelectronics, computing (machines and software), telecommunications/broadcasting, and optoelectronics" (Castells 20). While Boyd and Ellison describe social network sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (215). Students and young people are the main users of social media, and the young generation is the one who does protests and participates in various events. The rise of new media, as social networks developed so rapidly, has become a crucial tool for social and political movements. According to Eltantawy and Wiest, social media has two types of influences on the movements. The first one is to accelerate recruitment, mobilisation, communication, and dissemination of information, and to expand spaces of mobilisation, which were absent in traditional mobilisation techniques. Through social media, movements can reach millions of people inside and outside of the country. The rapid spread of news helps to expand and validate more than mainstream media. This shift in media has enabled social movements to propagate

narratives that work to their advantage and benefit the protesters. The second is that social media led to some significant changes in the traditional media process that stimulate participation and organisation (1211). On the other hand, social media platforms do not follow the fact-check process before publishing something, which often leads to false information. A study by Hussaina and Howard claims that social media platforms played an important role in shaping political debates in the Arab Spring (24). Castells also agrees with it and tells about the strong and reliable relationship between social media and the mass movements around the world, especially the Arab Spring (Castells 15). To him, this is a platform of fear and hope where dignity meets suffering and humiliation of people pushes them to the streets to fight against injustice. In the movement of Tunisia, after Mohammad Bouazizi's self-immolation, the government took control of all the media to prevent the spreading of news, but social media break through it and paved the way to fight. Also, in the Hong Kong protest, recently, Indonesian and Nepal protest social media to unite activists to fight against injustice, and with unity, they took down the government.

Bangladesh is also not outside of it. There are protests in Bangladesh where social media mobilizes the movement, while traditional media fails to cover the news. Social media was first widely used in protest in the 'Shahbag movement'. On February 5, 2013, Bangladesh experienced a new kind of protest that was beyond the political context. People gathered in Shahbag in demand of national punishment for the war crimes that were committed in the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. People from abroad also actively joined them through social media. Experts claimed that social media and online young bloggers played a key role in this movement. Social media was used as a useful tool, in contrast to mainstream media, which had a strong connection to a strong group of people, and the political pressure on them prevented them from fully supporting the

movement, which brought people onto the streets. In this protest, if the young online bloggers only shared their thoughts and opinions with their families and friends, it was highly possible that people wouldn't have known about the situation, but they did the opposite. With the help of social media, they shared and made the discussion public, which resulted in mass mobilization. In 2013, 33 million people were using the internet, which was 20% of the total population, and 95% of these 33 million people had access to the internet through their mobile phones. This medium has played a vital role in uniting people. According to a BBC news report, the Shahbag movement was one of the biggest movements in Bangladeshi history until 2013. Protesters used social media to boost numbers at the rally, and this is the first movement in Bangladesh that was triggered by social media (BBC News). This movement was not led by any political party or a particular person; it was the outburst of people against the injustice. They used social media to gather public support and encouraged the masses to join the movement. The mainstream media supported, but there was complexity; they did live broadcasts and reporting of the ongoing movement. But the effect of mainstream media was not as much as that of social media. The young activists created a programme online where people from anywhere could join and participate, which created pressure on the government. The beginning of the Shahbag movement occurred due to social media discussion, mainly on Twitter and Facebook, against the injustice, which expanded to a larger population, which led to this movement. The first time Bangladeshi people witnessed a protest driven through social media. The mainstream media did not give importance to gathering the public in Shahbag, but the online portals, posts, and videos made people come to the field. The following days' support was more massive as people from all walks of life joined in the movement, and it allowed people to address political issues freely. The online activists began circulating mainstream media news coverage on social media, which gained more support on their side. "A

senior reporter working at a leading English daily newspaper said, ‘The social media movement forced the mainstream media to make it their agenda. The Ganajagaran movement was initiated through social media, and then it was picked up by the mainstream media. This is the first big example of social media’s influence in Bangladesh’ (Azim and Yasmin).

Furthermore, Citizen journalism emerged through this movement. This term has emerged as a powerful tool in protests and crises; in other words, it is called ground -level journalism. It is considered powerful, especially when the traditional media is silenced due to political or editorial pressure. The great access to the internet and social media platforms, and widespread use of smartphones, made it easier for people to record live events and real-time reporting on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This practice produces raw evidence of protests, eyewitness events that challenge mainstream media’s news coverage, immediacy, and trust in them. Citizen journalism refers to live updates, streaming, or reports of normal citizens who are not professional or trained. It helped to mobilize protests around the world, like the Arab Spring, Hong Kong protests, Nepal, and Indonesian GenZ protest. After the Shahbag movement of 2013, Bangladesh has experienced one of the biggest protests, the July 2024 revolution, in other words ‘Quota reform movement’ or ‘GenZ revolution.’ It first occurred in 2018, when Dhaka University students protested against the system of government jobs, where there is a higher percentage for those who are related to the Bangladeshi liberation war. But it didn’t create any impact on the government. But this time, it was different. In a similar way to 2018, it began with a few Dhaka University students protesting with banners like ‘Free Quota from government jobs.’ It occurred after the Supreme Court invalidated the government’s 2018 circular regarding job quotas in the public sector. It started on the road, but the movement mobilized through social media. It got fired

up when the former president, Sheikh Hasina, said in a press conference in response to a question regarding this, ‘So the children of the martyrs of the liberation war are not talented; only the Razakar’s children are talented.’ This ‘Razakar’ word fueled the students, which means the children of a traitor. She indirectly told all of the students that they are the children of a traitor. This word changed everything. At first, the students of Dhaka University then gradually all the public university students started protesting against this. The social media platform was filled with their slogan, which is ‘Who are you? Who am I? Razakar, Razakar.’ Hashtags like #Quotareform, #Razakar, #Quotamovement, #Bangladeshmovement spread over social media. Facebook played a crucial role in this protest. Students created posts and shared their thoughts and opinions on facebook and it rapidly spread all over Bangladesh. Citizen journalism was one of the main parts of this protest. Traditional media was covering the protest, but not from the perspective of students, but from that of government officials. Major private TV channels such as Channel I, Shomoy TV, ATN Bangla, Rtv, and others focused mostly on the massacre, like fire on vehicles, blockade of roads, and clashes. As students were protesting in front of the university, ‘Chatro league’, aka Student league, which is a student party under the Awami League attacks on them. The photos of the attack went viral on facebook which created rage among students. But surprisingly, popular Bangladeshi papers like Prothom Alo, Kaler Kontho, and Bangladesh protidin and others just gave headlines like they had a minimal fight, nothing serious. Instead of worrying about the students other party, BNP, was trying to provoke others.



ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ক্যাম্পাসে গতকাল বিকেলে কোটা সংস্কারের দাবিতে আন্দোলনরত শিক্ষার্থীদের সঙ্গে ছাত্রলীগের নেতাকর্মীদের ধাওয়া-পাল্টাধাওয়া, সংঘর্ষ ও ভাঙচুরের ঘটনা ঘটেছে।



ছবি : কালের কণ্ঠ

দফায় দফায় ধাওয়া-পাল্টাধাওয়া, সংঘর্ষ

ঢাকা মেডিক্যালে ভর্তি ২৯৭ শিক্ষার্থী ■ হামলা নিয়ে দুই পক্ষের পাল্টাপাল্টি অভিযোগ ■ সাজোয়া যানসহ পুলিশের সতর্ক অবস্থান

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ১

সরকারি চাকরিতে কোটা সংস্কার এবং প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনার 'রাজস্বকর্তা' বক্তব্যে অসন্তোষের দাবিতে গতকাল সোমবার পূর্বোদ্বিগ্ন কর্মসূচি পালন করেছেন দেশের বিভিন্ন পাবলিক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের আন্দোলনরত শিক্ষার্থীরা। এ সময় বেশ কয়েকটি বেসরকারি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষার্থীরাও এই আন্দোলনে যোগ দেন।

একই দিন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তব্যকে তুলতুলে উপস্থাপন করাসহ মুক্তিযোদ্ধাদের অপমান করার প্রতিবাদে ভিন্ন কর্মসূচিতে নামেন আওয়ামী লীগের ছাত্রপ্রতিদ সংগঠন ছাত্রলীগের নেতাকর্মীরা। শৃঙ্খল কর্মসূচি নিয়ে উভয় পক্ষ মুখোমুখি হলে এক পর্যায়ে তা সংঘর্ষে রূপ নেয়। এরপর দিনব্যাপী মহাযুদ্ধে উঠে এই সংঘর্ষ চলেছে থাকে।

এ সময় সংঘর্ষের কেন্দ্রবিন্দু হয়ে দাঁড়ায় ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের (ঢাবি) ড. মুহম্মদ শহীদুল্লাহ হল। পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে আনতে সক্ষম নয় নেতাদের আইন-শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষা বাহিনীকে সতর্ক অবস্থানে নিয়ে দেখা যায়।

সরকারি কলেজ, কলেজের বিদ্যালয় আন্দোলনে বিভাজন। এ বিষয়ে সরকারের হস্তক্ষেপ করার কোনো সুযোগ নেই। শিক্ষার্থীদের আন্দোলনে

▶▶ পৃষ্ঠা ২ ক. ২

আরো খবর ▶▶ পৃষ্ঠা ২, ১২ ও ১৬

রাজনৈতিক স্বার্থে
প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তব্য
বিকৃত করছে

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ১

গত রবিবার সবেদন দিয়েছিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দেওয়া বক্তব্য 'রাজনৈতিক স্বার্থে চরিতার্থ' করতে বিকৃত করা হয়েছে বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন আওয়ামী লীগের সাধারণ সম্পাদক ওয়ারীশুল কাদের।



ওয়ারীশুল কাদের

দুপুরে ধানমন্ডিতে আওয়ামী লীগ সভাপতি শেখ হাসিনার রাজনৈতিক কার্যালয়ে সবেদন সফলভাবে তিনি এমন মন্তব্য করেন।

সতর্ক প্রতিবেদন ও স্বেচ্ছা মন্ত্রী ওয়ারীশুল কাদের বলেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সংবাদ সফলতায়

বক্তব্যকে আন্দোলনের নেপথ্যে থাকা কুশীলবরা

▶▶ পৃষ্ঠা ২ ক. ২

ছাত্রলীগসহ ক্ষমতাসীন দলের
নেতাকর্মীরা রাজপথে থাকবেন

তৈমুর তুষার ১

কোটাবিরোধী আন্দোলন মোকাবেলায় কঠোর হওয়ার নীতি নিয়েছে ক্ষমতাসীন দল আওয়ামী লীগ ও তাদের সরকার। তারা আর আন্দোলনকারীদের রাজপথে থাকা ছেড়ে দেন না। একদিকে রাজপথে অবস্থান, অন্যদিকে সহিংসতাকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা নিতে আইন-শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষা বাহিনীকে সজ্জা রাখা হবে। আওয়ামী লীগের কেন্দ্রীয় প্রকল্প পরিচালক নেতা কাদের কটকে এমনটা জানিয়েছেন।

কেন্দ্রীয় একাধিক সূত্র জানায়, ২০১৬ সালের মতো এবার আর কোটাবিরোধী আন্দোলনের চাপে গিয়ে উঠতে চায় না সরকার। দল ও সরকারের নির্দেশনায় নীতিনির্ধারণী পর্ষদ সনে করছে। চমকাল পরিস্থিতিতে সরকার নির্বাহী আদেশ কোটাবিরোধীদের গণ্ডি বোম্বা দিলে তা ক্ষমতাসীনদের দুর্বলতা হিসেবে দেখা হবে। ফলে আন্দোলন সামান্য নিয়ে আন্দোলনের নিজস্বের

আপেক্ষায় থাকার পথে হাটবে সরকার। আওয়ামী লীগের কেন্দ্রীয় একাধিক নেতা জানান, সরকারের নীতিনির্ধারণী পর্ষদে কোটা সংস্কারের বিষয়ে অনেকটাই প্রস্তুতি নিয়ে রয়েছে। আন্দোলনের নিজস্ব বর্তমানে কোটা বিরোধীদের আন্দোলন চলিয়ে যাওয়ার বদলে একটি রাজনৈতিক মহলের হাত রয়েছে বলে মনে করছেন আওয়ামী লীগের কেন্দ্রীয় নেতারা। তারা নলে করেন, বিশেষ করে রক্তির সংবাদ সম্মেলনে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তব্যের অপব্যবহার নিয়ে শিক্ষার্থীদের সরকারের মুখোমুখি দাঁড় করিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে।

▶▶ পৃষ্ঠা ২ ক. ২

ক্ষমতা হারানোর
ভয়ে এই হিংস্র
হামলা : বিএনপি

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক ১

কোটাবিরোধী সংস্কারের দাবিতে আন্দোলনরত শিক্ষার্থীদের ওপর ছাত্রলীগ ও আইন-শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষা বাহিনী সশস্ত্র হামলা চালিয়েছে দাবি করে এ ঘটনার তীব্র নিন্দা ও প্রতিবাদ জানিয়েছেন বিএনপি মহাসচিব মির্জা ফখরুল ইসলাম



মির্জা ফখরুল ইসলাম

আমদানি। গতকাল সোমবার এক বিবৃতিতে তিনি এই প্রতিরোধ জানান।

হাসিনার ঘটনার গভীর উদ্বেগ প্রকাশ করে বিএনপি মহাসচিব বলেন, 'ক্ষমতা হারানোর ভয়ে এই হিংস্র হামলা করা হয়েছে। ক্ষমতায় টিকে থাকার জন্য শিক্ষার্থীদের ন্যায় দাবিকে

▶▶ পৃষ্ঠা ৪ ক. ২

Figure 8: the front page of the Kaler Kontho paper on 16 July 2024, the day after the attack

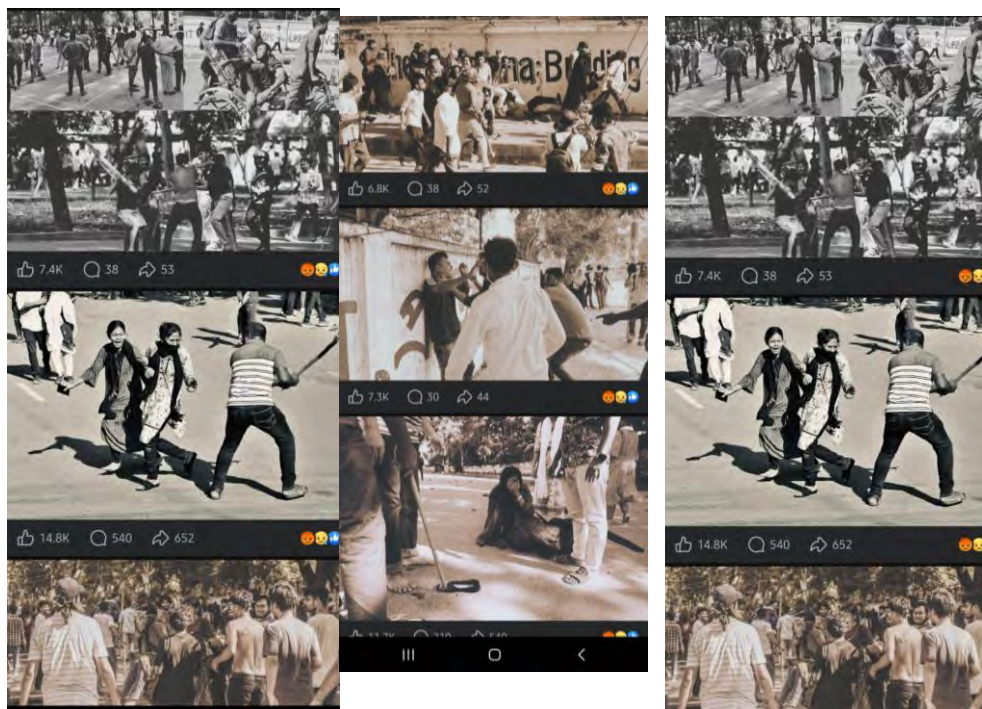


Figure 9: These are the pictures from Facebook posted by an individual that reached a million views

According to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), 141.28 million people used the internet, and among them, 68 million were Facebook users, making this platform crucial for the uprising. Then there are other platforms like TikTok, LinkedIn, and Whatsapp which were also used more than other times. These platforms have become an important tool for political protest and public discussion as well. From mainstream media, people couldn't get accurate news as they were restricted and were working under state pressure. They would write whatever the higher officials would finalize. This medium is also unable to give an immediate response like social media. These photos above were spread on the day it happened, but the mainstream media had published them after that day without the full truth. After the police attack on the students, the movement got messier and more dangerous. After telling the student Razakar when the student protest became stronger, she said in another press conference, "I didn't call them

Razakar. Now, they are calling themselves Razakar.” and the mainstream media did publish this without defending the students. On social media platforms, students expressed their outrage against this, and by posting and sharing, they gathered students from everywhere. That’s why, in every public university such as Rajshahi University, Khulna University, Chittagong University, Jahangir Nagar university there were several rallies against this injustice. Police and chatro league from each university attacked them, and those who managed to hide or elope recorded the attack, and some were doing live streaming on Facebook, which reached all over Bangladesh. And then private university students like BRAC, NSU, East West, IUBAT, and AIUB got together with them. Students from all over Bangladesh get together online and offline. Rampura, Badda, and Bashundhara, where these private universities are located, police fired on the students who were protesting on the road. Some died, and many of them were injured, and these updates we were getting from social media. Live updates of the situation, firing, and photos of the injured were all over social media, and traditional media didn’t cover the whole news. They covered only the firing on the BRAC university from outside, but there were no reports of injured or dead people on the news. Family and friends found out from social media. Journalists from different TV channels did live reporting, but they only showed the surface level. They cannot cover the whole area, but citizen journalists can, and in this movement, most individuals became citizen journalists, which helped others to know the situation. At night, police would go to the houses in search of those who were on the roads and who participated in the movement, and people got to know this from social media; mainstream media did not cover this. That's why trust in them became distant, and people didn't want to cooperate with them. The first person killed by police was considered on 16 July, named Abu Sayed. He participated in the Rangpur protest where he was shot, and this video of him being killed went viral in hours. But no TV channels or newspapers wrote about this. They

did mention killing, but the number was beyond that. Even the report that was shown on Jamuna TV was from social media. Even traditional media questioned his death, whether he was actually killed by a police bullet or activists bullet. When this aired, people started to get angrier, and this moment turned the whole situation. Videos of him being killed went viral, and photos and drawings of him also fueled the protest.



Figure 10: The left side's picture is Abu Syed's, which went viral, and the way he was killed and left side's picture is the news of Jamuna Television saying whether he was killed by the police or protesters.

From this news, people become more sure that traditional media is not helping them because they can clearly see on the recorded video that he was killed by the police. From the student movement, it became a mass movement, which in Bengali is called 'Ganajagoron'. After 16 July, the number of murders was increasing, and from social media, people got to know the names like Mughdho, Faiyaaz, and others. These names were not mentioned by any news channels,

newspapers, or journalists. These incidents created a distance and trust issues between print media and the public.

Furthermore, private university students emailed and informed BBC and CNN news so that it would go outside the country. But because of social media, it has already reached the world. Bangladeshi's from different countries supported online, and they also protested from their respective places. In a report published by the Human Rights Office in February 2025, more than 1400 people were killed by the military forces, police, and Bangladesh security forces. Thousands more people were injured in this movement, but the mainstream media claimed there were not more than 100. On the other hand, students were living in different hospitals where the injured students were taken and asking for blood. Citizen journalism works in a reverse manner that often influences mainstream media and journalists. For example, Luo and Harrison in their study of the context of China, describe that over time, the government feels pressured to alter the news patterns to control the media. This pressure arose because of the citizen journalists' widespread presence everywhere and the growing trend of media boycotts, which threaten the profitability of media houses and productions (Luo and Harrison). Facebook pages like 'Baishamma Birodhi Chatro Andolon', 'Quota Noy, Medha', were created during the protest, where students and normal people would post, write, or live-stream about the situation. This is why social media-based citizen journalism became the cornerstone of the successful regime in Bangladesh. The mainstream media was busy protecting their guardian rather than supporting the protest. The media remained ineffective and under fear due to the fear of the ruling party for 15 years. But social media is beyond fear and restriction, that's why it became an important repertoire for this movement. Because of all this, students who wanted nine demands for the quota reform concluded with one

demand, and that was ‘Take down the government’. Rapidly, it went all over social media, hashtags like # TakedownHasina, #GodiChar, #Shairacharinipakjak, #Akdofaakdabi united the people from all over Bangladesh, making it a mass movement. Citizen journalists’ videos from every place updated the activists about the situation. For instance, an individual was live from Pabna, and he was showing how the police were firing and how students were trying to defend themselves and getting injured. These videos mobilized the protest more than ever. That’s why the government shut down the internet servers all over the country. No one could access social media even from outside the country; all connections were blocked for a long seven days until the march to Dhaka. The previous ICT minister, Zunayed Ahmed Palak, came in front of the press, he said, it’s not their fault, and it shut down on its own. Another day, he said, It shut down because of rainwater getting into the satellite. TV channels and newspapers published this news as he said, with no defense. But disagreement and rage spread to all the people, and they tried another way to connect, like VPN, phone calls, and messages. However, these social media platforms united the students, people from all over Bangladesh, and, along with social media citizen journalists, worked as one of the pillars of information till the end. Even the march to Dhaka would happen, which was announced on social media by the protest leaders and hashtags, posts like #marchtodhaka, #marchtoganavobon, and #ShadhinBangladesh were trending and spread on digital media, which led people all over the country come to Dhaka in one night. TV channels made a news report based on this; they themselves were collecting information from digital sources. Students were live-streaming, saying when and where everyone will meet, from where they will start, and people from outside Dhaka posted how they are coming, and assured the students that they are with them. NTV news, Shomoy news, RTV, ATN Bangla, and News24 all TV channels broadcast the decision after the leaders made it official on social media. This whole process proves how crucial a role was

played by social media and citizen journalists in this mass uprising. As Charles Tilly says, for protests, there are many repertoires needed, and earlier it was only petition, rally, and others. But he argues now, in the modern era, when everyone has a mobile phone and access to the internet, they can record from anywhere and post what they want to post, which enabled political protests globally. Now, social media has become one of the important repertoires of protest.

Moreover, according to Lasswell's propaganda theory, the famous communication line 'Who says what, through which channel, to whom and with what effect?', this theory helps us to understand that for traditional media, who refers to the controller are the government officials, connected businessmen, and security forces (military, police, RAB), but for social media who refers to the citizens, eyewitnesses, and protesters. In this movement, a significant shift in the controllers' talk about a lot of social media platforms. TV, newspapers, and radios are the traditional media channels, where they framed this protest from official narratives, while Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the social media channels where these platforms circulated counter-narratives based on the ground-level experiences that worked to reshape and mobilize the July 2024 protest.

Media not only work in protests but also in every situation. That's why the media is considered an information desk where people can get daily and important information. Traditional media has been a form of information for a long time, and even now. But with the emergence of social media and the internet, people have been interpreting news in their own way. As traditional media is an official institution for a country, it can be governmental or non-governmental, and produces news as the owners want it to be. In democratic countries like Bangladesh, media

productions are owned by businessmen, politicians, or government officials; even if they are privately owned, they still work under the ruling party, because any opposition news can be dangerous for both owners, editors, and journalists. The prime example is the Sagar-Runi murder case, who were incredible journalists under a private TV channel. Not only in protests, but also in incidents or crisis moments media play an important role. But questions remain, which form of media play crucial role in protests and crises. Another example of a recent jet crash in Bangladesh, that happened in 21st July 2025. A Bangladesh Air Force Plane took off from Diabari, and after some time, because of a technical issue, the plane crashed into a school building named Milestone School and College. It happened while students were attending class in the school. There are different sections in the school, but it landed in the children's section, which created fear in everyone. Because of the crash, the building was mostly destroyed and students who were in the class also got burned. Some died, some managed to come out of that place. After crashing into the building, students from the other buildings came forward along with the other people. After crashing, it immediately went viral on social media as people there were recording and posting news about the crash. Videos like students running for their lives, some children were searching for their parents, some parents were searching for their children, friends were searching for their friend etc. These live records and posts made the whole country grieve. TV channels or reporters reached late, even though they reached the military wouldn't let them go, and gatekeep the information of deaths. If some journalists went inside, they did not publish the actual truth. At the scene, during the live report, they said twenty kids were dead, but in one individual's live, students who were there told that it is not true, we ourselves pull out at least thirty bodies. Live reporting of individuals lets people know the whole situation earlier than traditional media. Even the way the plane crashed was also recorded on some people's phone and this video was used on TV channels to publish

news. Military and traditional media tried to gatekeep the death news, but social media was beyond gatekeeping. The students who went missing, people put their names, ID numbers, and details on Facebook so that if anyone finds them, they can bring them to their parents. It also helped in blood collecting. Hashtags like #jetplanecrash, #prayformilestone, and #savechildrenmilestone went viral, and people from everywhere came to help them. Social media platform especially facebook helped people to unite and work for the children. Also, citizen journalists live-streaming and recording let people know about the truth that mainstream media was gatekeeping. They did cover the news, but the pressure from military and higher officials prevent them from letting out the whole truth.

While social media and citizen journalism provided immediacy and visibility, there are still concerns remaining about misinformation, fake news, and verification. However, during the July movement of 2024, many posts that were viral and inappropriate were all taken down by the Human Rights organization and ICT institutions. Despite its risks, social media provides people with truthful information and maintains the immediacy that traditional media was constrained by political pressure and censorship. Finally, the July movement 2024 illustrates how social media and citizen journalism overshadowed traditional media in terms of immediacy, truthful information, protest reporting, reshape public trust, and redefine journalism in Bangladesh.

3.3. Surveillance, censorship, and trust in media in Bangladeshi protests and crisis

Since the beginning of the media in Bangladesh, heavy monitoring, surveillance, and censorship have been there. Especially when it comes to protests and crises, traditional media and non-traditional media have been providing us with news, but the government and higher officials

have made it their mission to implement an Orwellian atmosphere of surveillance. Journalists I have interviewed told me that they were watched by state institutions like intelligence agencies, the head of the news production house, and the Ministry of Law and Enforcement. If they write or publish any wrong or sensitive writings that would go against the government or expose something that wasn't supposed to be exposed, the authorities would pressure them. The OHCHR has confirmed in its report that NTMC provided intelligence to government officials by monitoring the public's personal communication and information. They also mentioned how the previous government regime created a pervasive surveillance system that creates an atmosphere of always being watched.

As social media is rising, so is the advancement of technology. This has given a new meaning to the online news portal, which gives mass surveillance a new shape. By hacking software, governments tend to keep everything under control and keep a record of the phone calls, messages, and other information. The government keeps records of the public along with the journalists. There are many incidents of threatening and punishing journalists in Bangladesh. They are also not free from this. Human Rights Watch Show reported that the Digital Security Act law is frequently used to harass, arrest, and remove content that would go against them from the news websites, which led to pervasive self-censorship in newsrooms. The DSA also allows for invasive surveillance by permitting authorities to require service providers and other intermediaries to hand over data without requiring a court-obtained warrant. For instance, on April 4, 2023, a group of armed assailants reportedly attacked Chattogram-based journalist Ayub Meahzi by throwing him off the roof of a two-story building. Meahzi survived but said that he believes the attack was in retaliation for his reporting on the involvement of local government officials with a group engaged

in illegal land grabbing and hill cutting (“Bangladesh: End Crackdown Against Journalists and Critics”). Tufekci mentions that this tracking and surveillance would turn into a dangerous form during conflict and crisis, as it is used to acknowledge the public, and it would be used to control activists and dissidents (78). She describes social media as a networked protest, but in this networked room, people expand their connections and share information with each other. The government takes this as a chance and creates fake accounts so that they can enter the chat rooms of activists in social movements. (251-252) Digital tools in social movements work as a double-edged sword. On one side, it helps activists and protesters to keep their connection and work in unity; on the other side, they are being tracked down, making them vulnerable to the government and authorities. (254)

In 2013, Shahbag movement participants and activists faced surveillance, censorship, and repression, especially on the online platform. These were circulated under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, and immediately after the movement, this law was strengthened through the Digital Security Act (DSA). The ICT, which was a domestic tribunal which was established in 2010 to try the Razakars (collaborators with Pakistani forces) for atrocities committed during the liberation war of Bangladesh. In its totality, the ICT is a glaring failure in terms of the rights afforded to accused individuals. Organizations including Human Rights Watch, the International Bar Association, Amnesty International, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and the International Commission of Jurists have all voiced their reservations about the ICT (Sgf). The government established a nine member committee to observe and track down the bloggers, online participants who posted against them. Facebook and Twitter were the most useful tools for this movement, but this was also the main focus of the government.

Many bloggers and online participants were arrested in April 2013 under Section 57, which was established by the ICT Act. Journalists and mainstream media faced heavy censorship at that time. Not to mention the blackout night when the government cut all electric lines in Dhaka to murder the protesters, but there is no name for it. Until now, no one dared to reveal the photos or information of that event. Later in 2018, the ICT Act changed to the Digital Security Act (DSA), which is much stricter, but it wasn't used the way it should be used.

Furthermore, in the July movement of 2024, the Bangladesh media saw another heavy censorship through surveillance to a great extent. The extent of government surveillance went beyond professional journalists, activists, and protesters. Normal citizens were also the victims of this, and it was so much that they became self-censored on digital platforms and went to private messaging, where their communication was encrypted. During this movement, Bangladeshi people faced the longest internet blackout. From July 18 to August 5, 2024, the internet was totally cut down so that activists or protesters could not connect. The branch of government, NTMC, was responsible for this blackout, and they denied that time. But international observers like Cloudflare and Telenor ignored the excuse and confirmed that the shutdown occurred at the order of the government. They also intercepted calls, collected personal information illegally, and accused the innocents, which led to disappearances, arrests, and raids during the movement. This blackout is considered a violation of human rights. Bangladesh has a combined law with global organizations to give freedom and rights to express their thoughts online, which is under Article 39(2). Additionally, Bangladesh is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which mandates the protection of freedom of expression through any media of their choosing, as stipulated in Article 19 (Team). An investigative report by Al Jazeera in 2021 reveals

that Bangladeshi government officials purchased surveillance equipment to monitor the mobile phones of hundreds of people altogether from an Israeli company. Though it is prohibited to trade and make connections with that country for Bangladesh, they broke it. Eliot Bendenelli from Privacy International mentioned that this spying software can detect 200 to 300 devices at a time. This includes phone calls, chatting, website visits, and others, which is a human rights violation. The report also stated that this software had been used in Bangladesh over the years, especially during different movements and incidents. The July movement was also not out of it. In late July 2024, a mass arrest was conducted by the police and other branches of government based on some baseless general characteristics, for being active in the time of movement, for commenting and sharing something on social media, which was not acceptable. Without any criminal or inappropriate records, 70% people were arrested during the movement, according to a senior in the OHCHR report. Later, the officials confessed that there were orders of arrest from the government, and it was done by different security forces of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Chatra League, which is a student council under Awami League, also joined in the arrest, and one of my respondents said they faced this kind of situation. At late night they used to come to the buildings and raid students, or took students especially around the area of Badda, Rampura, Uttara, Banasree, and Mohammadpur. They used to come based on the social media posts and share, anyone they would find active on social media, they would arrest them, even though there were internet Blackout. Students used VPN and personal mobile messages to connect and contact others. Even on the roads, police used to patrol, and without anything, they would seize a phone and check it. Anyone in their perspective would look suspicious if they checked them without considering gender. After all of this, the government couldn't stop the young generation from protesting and using social media. But the massive inconvenience in privacy and obvious usage of surveillance

and intimidation tactics by the government, especially by the security forces who were supposed to be supporting the students, astonished and disheartened people.

Chapter 4

Findings and analysis

This study is conducted with qualitative and quantitative mixed methods to acknowledge civilians' perceptions and journalistic views on the role of traditional and digital media in protests and crises. Primary data was collected through surveys that were given to the civilians, mostly university students, and semi-structured interviews were taken from journalists who work in Bangladeshi print media. This attempt will help to understand the perceptions of the public and journalists about media censorship, ground-level journalism, and which media they prefer. The survey was conducted among 30 respondents, and among them, most are between eighteen and thirty years old. This number is selected because these are the young people who were most active on social media, especially during the protest time, on platforms more than any other, and mostly are university and college students, and some are jobholders. News is something that a person would watch daily, or perhaps every two or three days. Among the respondents, 50% people rarely use traditional media for news, 30% people use it a few times a week, and other 16.7% people never use this media for news and information. On the other hand, 90% people use social media for news, and the other 10% is a mix of people who rarely watch or a few times a week. This alone proves how social media is used by people in their daily lives, especially among the young generation. Survey results indicate a strong reference to how traditional media is influenced by political and editorial pressure. 30% respondents trust in social media, and 16.7% of them trust in print media, and both media are preferable for 36.7% people. This indicates how social media has become an alternative to traditional news, and some say that to confirm any big event, they prefer both media, but first, they get to know it from social media. Traditional media is affected by political pressure and censorship, which is why people are absent from getting truthful news during

the movement. 70% of respondents agree with this, and others are confused, but they said maybe it has a high chance of being it. As social media is an important part of everyone's daily lives, it is also really useful during protests and crisis periods. For immediacy in that period, 83.3 % of respondents think that social media is capable of giving an immediate update, while 13.3% people think both are the same. This demonstrates that social media is more considered than print media when it comes to getting news immediately during a movement or an incident. It not only gives immediate news but also provides raw and unfiltered content that makes people trust and rely on it more. 83.3% respondents consider social media platforms to be more transparent and eligible for ground-level reporting, while other the 16.7% people believe that both media provide transparency in providing news, but traditional media let alone is not transparent at all, as it is affected by the higher officials and government. The recent July movement 2024, which was a mass movement against the government, and they put pressure on traditional media, which is why people became more reliant on social media, and the majority of the respondents prefer this media for truthful and immediate information. One of the respondents, named Aruf, who is a job holder, said, 'Social media provides instant access to information and reaches millions within minutes. Their algorithms repeatedly show users content that matches their beliefs, which strongly shapes opinions over time. And for political pressure, print media cannot serve the nation with news properly.

Citizen journalism was one of the crucial parts of the protest as it provided real-time updates, inside information, and mostly unfiltered news. The protest was mostly driven by this and made the protesters powerful. The majority of the respondents think that citizen journalism made the protest powerful, but it comes with consequences. As in social media, before any updates, there is no need of filter, fact check, or restriction, which often leads the public the wrong way or

provokes them by giving misinformation, fake news, and rumors during protests and crises. 33.3% respondents are confident that in the July movement, there was some misinformation and rumors that misguided people and others think that, although there are high chances of providing misinformation or fake news, they still prefer social media. Yes, in terms of citizen journalism, there are some risks as well. Many respondents agree that it is accessible to everyone on social media, which sometimes leads to chaos. There is a chance to destroy the actual truth and spread misinformation. Sometimes people predict incorrectly about the given information and spread rumors. But the majority of them also agree that this is the form, despite these problems, they prefer it.

In terms of shaping public opinion, prioritizing public social media is better than mainstream media. A university student named Maeesha Farzana said, 'In this era, social media shapes public opinion the most because the platform is flexible enough for people to interact there, which results in influencing others' opinions.' Another student said, 'I believe social media has the strongest influence on public opinion today because when news circulates online, people can share their viewpoints, and comments and captions often shape how others think.' I took interviews with some journalists who were active in the movement. Tariqul Islam Tariq, who works under the Rangpur division, said that he has been working in this field for almost a decade. Traditional media is important, but credibility is often questioned due to political and commercial influence, and news is influenced by fear of punishment. Political pressure and ownership affect news headlines and the presentation of language. Due to security risks and administrative pressure, it is difficult to work independently. He faced both indirect and direct pressures, considering the situation. During the movement, there was direct pressure not to write something wrong. He also said, 'I have to admit Social media was more active and influential than traditional media during the

protest. It provides fast and ‘raw’ information, but verification is needed.’ He added that citizen journalism worked oppositely. It provides valuable ground-level information that print media couldn’t do properly, as there was pressure. Another journalist named Kamrul Hasan, who is a representative of Bangladesh Protidin, stated something similar to the other. He thinks there is less freedom for journalists in the case of political issues or sensitive issues. Directly or indirectly, they faced pressure, but mostly it acted as self-censorship. He agreed that in the movement, social media played a crucial role along with citizen journalism. Most news appeared before on digital platforms than in mainstream media. He also thinks that people are trusting social media now more because they believe that mainstream media is controlled or biased. He stated that mainstream media can restore trust from people if editorial independence is ensured, transparency increases, and a culture of admitting and correcting mistakes is developed. The majority of the survey respondents also agree with this. They said if they want to improve, they need to stop fearing higher officials, the government. They need to focus only on accurate news. And it is even better if both media can work together. Most news channels has online website ora Facebook page, they can be a team. This movement could be easier and better if both worked synchronously. Another journalist from the Bangladesh Protidin agreed with this. He said traditional media cannot deliver news immediately because of logistical problems, security risks, and complexities of permission. But social media can. In this movement, there are many examples of social media giving more information and ground-level reports than traditional media. Though there are chances of fake news, fact-checks, and others. The July uprising movement was the prime example of social media overshadowing traditional media.

After survey and interview questions, it reveals that social media worked as an important repertoire for the movement. Ground-level reporting added more to it. Traditional media was absent from giving immediate, accurate information. The majority trusts social media more for immediate and unfiltered information. Journalists themselves confirmed that they were pressured and restricted and had to stay alert while publishing news. Both groups identified that social media worked as a useful tool, despite remaining concerned with misinformation, fake news, and safety.

Limitations:

There are limitations despite its contributions:

1. The respondents and composition are limited. Most of the respondents were university students and urban social media users. Though they were the main part of the movement, they don't fully represent all the people, especially in rural areas. The result may not be applicable to the whole of Bangladesh.
2. It is highly dependent on self-recorded data from participants, journalists, and other papers and scholarly articles. The answers may be influenced by the political environment or personal issues.
3. This paper mainly focuses on Facebook as a social media platform, as it was the most used medium during the movement. Other platforms were not analysed in detail.
4. This paper does not answer the question of their comparative role with a yes or no. It is an analysis and statement given based on the majority.
5. In this paper, the main focus was on the July movement and the recent jet crash in Bangladesh with some global protests. Not every protest was deeply and briefly explained. As a result, there can be more than these findings.

6. In this study, there was no direct inclusion of deleted posts, unethical posts, shadow-banned content, or direct government-classified data, which was related to censorship and surveillance.
7. As digital media is rapidly changing, so are algorithms, posts, and public reactions. As a result, the findings only represent the time of research, and they may not capture any future changes.

Conclusion

This study was meant to examine the comparison between traditional and social media roles in terms of protest and crisis, especially focusing on the Bangladesh July movement, along with some global protests. This research shows that mainstream media and journalism have undergone a transformation where traditional media is considered an information gatekeeper and challenged by increasing social media platforms where people can share and communicate with each other without any restriction.

The analysis demonstrates that traditional media is produced by private ownership and the government as well. This media form is institutionally structured and professionally handled. In Bangladesh, especially the July movement of 2024 and other national crises, mainstream media and journalists showed restriction and limitation while covering the news, and in terms of live reporting and writing in the newspapers, they did not fully cooperate with the public. They tend to keep information from the public because of the political and editorial pressure. This pattern aligns with the concept of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, where traditional media publish news where there is ownership, political pressure, and censorship. Even in global protests like the Arab Spring, the Hong Kong Umbrella protest, the Gezi Park protest, the Palestine conflict with Israel, Nepal, and Indonesian protest traditional media showed limited coverage and were censored because of the government.

On the other hand, social media has emerged as a new tool for getting and sharing news and information, especially in the case of protests and crises. Citizen journalism was one of the most useful and prominent elements during the movement. It gives ground-level journalism, live reporting, and unfiltered news, while traditional media has restrictions that we can see in the protests. This platform has become a public sphere for people to express their thoughts and can

work in unity. Social media accelerated the movements, but this study reveals the paradoxical nature of digital activism. While social media has allowed immediate news, raw information, and trust of people, misinformation, fake news, and rumors have misguided activists and protesters as well. The study reveals that mostly are social media users and they get information from this platform. Especially, during the protest it helped to connect and gave unfiltered information, though there were some fake news and rumors. Even the journalists agreed that social media challenged traditional media.

Finally, this paper argues that social media will not replace traditional media, but the limitations and restrictions of this media are shown. For traditional media, they need to work for the public, rebuild public trust by giving proper information without keeping or hiding information. Social media needs more clarity and ethical checking. Citizen journalism has accelerated both Bangladesh and global protests and crises through social media platforms, where mainstream media was constrained. In the near future, both media can work together where traditional media will give proper information and ensure immediacy and credibility, while social media can provide something that will not be against, but rather together with them.

Appendix 1

Interview questions and answers:

Interview 1:

Role and experience in journalism/media work

I am involved in news gathering, fact-checking, and media analysis. Analyzing news in social and political contexts is part of my work.

2. How long have I been working in this profession

I have been involved in journalism and media-related work for almost a decade.

3. In your experience, how reliable and trustworthy is traditional media in Bangladesh?

Although traditional media is important, its credibility is often questioned due to political and commercial influence.

4. Does political pressure/ownership influence affect newsroom decisions? If so, how?

Yes, it affects news selection, headlines, and the language of presentation.

5. Can journalists report independently during movements or national crises? Why can/cannot?

It is difficult to work completely independently due to security risks and administrative pressure.

6. Have you ever received censorship, pressure, or instructions not to cover a specific topic?

Sometimes there is direct or indirect pressure, which takes the form of self-censorship.

7. How much freedom do journalists have in covering sensitive topics?

Freedom is limited in sensitive political and human rights issues.

8. How do you see the role of social media in breaking news?

Social media provides news quickly and often reveals information in advance.

9. Do you think citizen journalism provides valuable ground-level information?

It provides valuable ground-level information.

10. How important was social media reporting in recent movements (such as 2024)?

Social media was more active and influential than traditional media.

11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of social media in getting news?

Advantages: speed, video evidence

Disadvantages: fake news, rumors

12. Is fake news a big problem? How do journalists verify information?

Fake news is a big problem; journalists use multiple sources and digital verification.

13. Do you think people trust social media more now?

Many now trust social media more because they consider mainstream media to be controlled.

14. Is it possible to restore trust in traditional media?

It is possible through transparency, editorial independence, and accountability.

15. What types of censorship do journalists face in Bangladesh?

Legal, institutional, and self-censorship.

16. Is the news published influenced by fear of backlash or punishment?

Yes, much news is influenced by the fear of punishment.

17. Can traditional media provide timely ground-level coverage?

Due to logistical and security issues, timely coverage is not always possible.

18. Does social media provide fast and 'raw' information during a crisis?

It provides fast and 'raw' information, but verification is needed.

19. Are there examples of social media reporting first?

Yes, in many cases, social media has reported first.

20. What will be the relationship between social media and traditional journalism in the future?

The two media will coexist—one will provide speed, the other will provide verification and analysis.

Best regards

Md. Tariqul Islam Tariq

Representative

Shomokalin Barta

Pirganj, Rangpur.

Interview 2

1. Briefly describe your journalism/media work role and experience.

As a journalist, I mainly work to collect, verify, and present information in the public interest. I have experience in field reporting, source verification, news writing, and editing. The main philosophy of my work is that the news should be truthful, balanced, and ethical.

2. How long have you been working in this profession?

I have been actively involved in the journalism profession for several years. During this time, I have gained practical experience working in print and online media.

3. In your experience, how reliable and trustworthy is the traditional media in Bangladesh?

The traditional media in Bangladesh is still relatively reliable in terms of fact-checking and ethics. However, due to political and corporate influence, credibility is questioned in some cases.

4. Does political pressure or the influence of the owners influence the decisions of the newsroom?

How so?

Yes, in many cases, political pressure or the interests of the owners influence the agenda-setting of the newsroom. Some news is toned down, delayed, or not published at all.

5. Can journalists report freely during protests or national crises? Why can/cannot?

Partially. However, completely independent reporting is often not possible due to security risks, administrative pressure, and legal fears.

6. Have you ever been subjected to censorship, pressure, or orders not to cover a specific topic?

Many journalists face censorship directly or indirectly—especially when it comes to sensitive issues of the state or those in power.

7. How much freedom do journalists have in covering sensitive topics?

There is limited freedom. It depends on the type of topic, the political context, and the policies of the media house.

8. How do you see the role of social media in breaking news?

Social media provides information very quickly in breaking news, but it is not always verified.

The mainstream media plays the role of verification here.

9. Do you think citizen journalism provides valuable ground-level information?

Yes, citizen journalism often highlights information and views that mainstream media cannot reach.

10. How important was social media reporting compared to traditional media in recent movements (such as 2024)?

Social media was much more immediate and influential. In many cases, information was published before mainstream media.

11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of social media in getting news?

Advantages: speed, direct information, multiple sources

Disadvantages: fake news, rumors, propaganda

12. Is fake news a big problem? How do journalists verify information on social media?

Fake news is a big problem. Journalists verify using cross-checks, official sources, photo-video verification, and fact-checking tools.

13. Do you think people now trust social media more than traditional media? Why?

Yes, in many cases, people are trusting social media more—because it seems fast and uncensored.

14. Is it possible to restore trust in traditional media? If so, how?

It is possible—trust can be restored by building a culture of transparency, impartiality, speed, and admitting mistakes.

15. What types of censorship do journalists face in Bangladesh?

Legal pressure, digital security laws, advertising reliance, and political interference are common forms of censorship.

16. Does fear of backlash or punishment influence the news published?

Yes, self-censorship is a real problem that limits the freedom of the press.

17. Can traditional media provide timely, ground-level coverage? Why can't/can't?

Not always—because of bureaucracy, permissions, and security constraints.

18. Do you think social media provides fast and 'raw' information during a crisis?

Yes, but if that information is not verified, it can also be misleading.

19. Have you seen any incidents where social media reported before the mainstream media?

Yes, such incidents have been seen many times in the case of movements, violence or accidents.

20. What do you think the relationship between social media and traditional journalism will be in the future?

In the future, coexistence and cooperation will increase rather than competition between the two. Social media will be the source, and traditional media will be the platform for verification and analysis.

Kamrul Hasan,

Representative

Bangladesh protidin

Interview 3

1. Briefly describe your role and experience in journalism/media work.

I am mainly involved in news and media observation and analysis. I have experience in news gathering, fact-checking, and analyzing news in social and political contexts.

2. How long have you been working in this profession?

I have been involved in journalism and media-related work for about 10 years and have witnessed the structural changes and digital transformation of the media closely during this time.

3. In your experience, how reliable and trustworthy is the traditional media in Bangladesh?

Traditional media in Bangladesh is still an important source of information. However, due to political influence, ownership pressure, and commercial interests, its impartiality and credibility are often questioned.

4. Does political pressure or ownership influence newsroom decisions? If so, how?

Yes, it does. In many cases, there is a tendency to avoid sensitive issues, soften language, or emphasize certain points of view.

5. Can journalists report independently during movements or national crises? Why can/cannot?

Not entirely. Independent reporting is often limited by security risks, legal fears, administrative pressures, and institutional directives.

6. Have you ever been subjected to censorship, pressure, or orders not to cover a particular topic?

Many journalists face such pressure, either directly or indirectly. In most cases, it acts as self-censorship.

7. How much freedom do journalists have in covering sensitive topics?

Sensitive topics such as human rights, political violence, or issues related to state security have relatively less freedom.

8. How do you see the role of social media in breaking news?

Social media is now very important in breaking news. It provides information quickly and often brings news to the fore before the mainstream media.

9. Do you think citizen journalism provides valuable ground-level information?

Yes, citizen journalism often brings information and views that are not immediately available to the mainstream media.

10. How important was social media reporting in recent movements (such as 2024)?

Social media has played a very important role in recent movements. Many events were first reported on social media.

11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of social media in getting news?

Advantages: speed, eyewitness accounts, video evidence

Disadvantages: fake news, rumors, lack of verification

12. Is fake news a big problem? How do journalists verify information?

Yes, fake news is a big problem. Journalists verify information by comparing multiple sources, verifying photos and videos, and using reliable sources.

13. Do you think people trust social media more now?

In many cases, people are trusting social media more because they believe that mainstream media is controlled or biased.

14. Is it possible to restore trust in traditional media?

It is possible, if editorial independence is ensured, transparency increases, and a culture of admitting and correcting mistakes is developed.

15. What kind of censorship do journalists face in Bangladesh?

Legal censorship, institutional pressure, and self-censorship—these are three types of problems that journalists face.

16. Is the news they publish influenced by fear of backlash or punishment?

Yes, news is often presented in a soft manner for fear of lawsuits, harassment, or job loss.

17. Can traditional media provide timely ground-level coverage?

Not always. Delays occur due to logistical problems, security risks, and complexities of permission.

18. Does social media provide fast and ‘raw’ information during crises?

Yes, social media provides fast and raw information, which needs to be verified later.

19. Are there examples of social media reporting first?

In many movements and conflicts, news has first appeared on social media and then been confirmed by mainstream media.

20. What will the relationship between social media and traditional journalism be like in the future?

In the future, there will be a coexistence between the two—social media will provide speed, and traditional media will provide verification and analysis.

Md. Akhtaruzzaman Rana

Representative

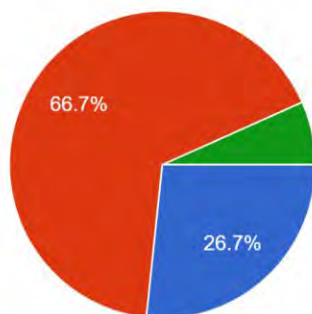
Bangladesh Protidin

Appendix 2

Survey

Age (বয়স):

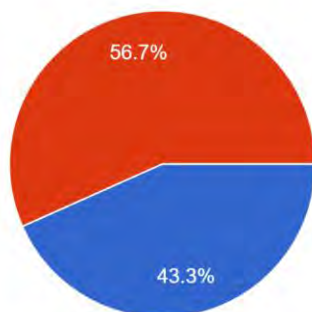
30 responses



- 18-22
- 23-27
- 28-32
- 32+

Gender (লিঙ্গ):

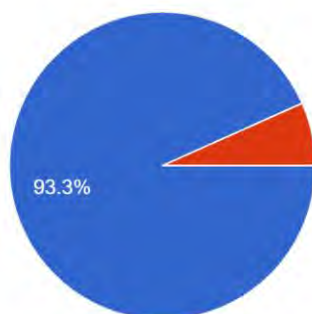
30 responses



- Male (পুরুষ)
- Female (নারী)
- Other (অন্যান্য)

Occupation (পেশা):

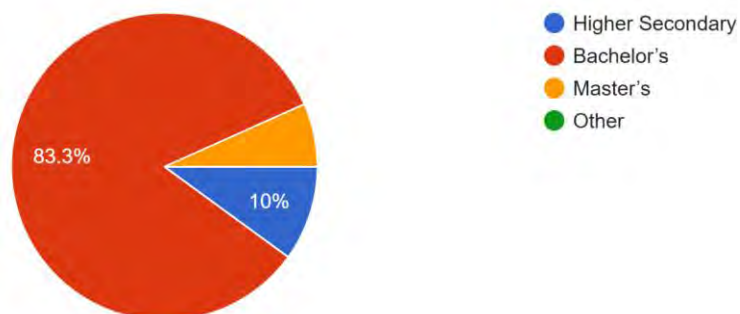
30 responses



- Student (ছাত্র/ছাত্রী)
- Service Holder (চাকুরিজীবী)
- Self-employed (স্বনিযুক্ত)
- Other (অন্যান্য)

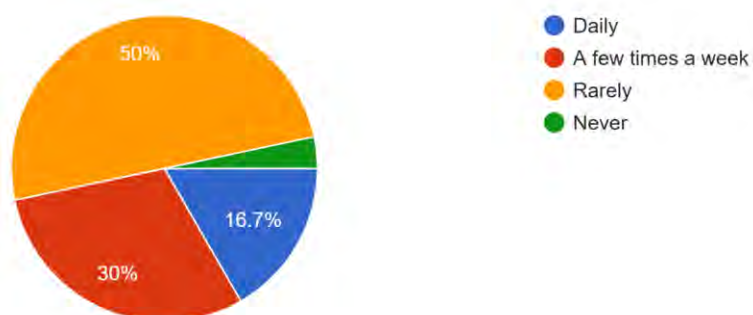
Education Level (শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা):

30 responses



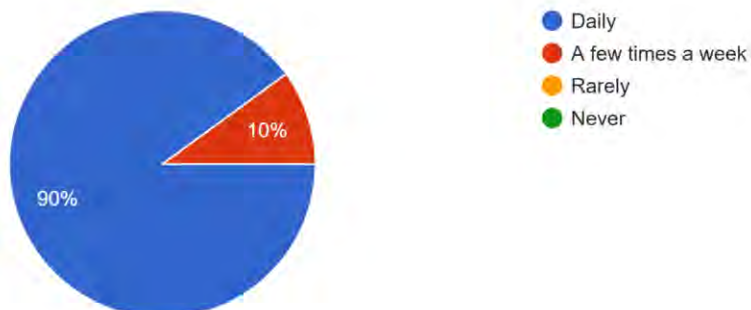
How often do you consume news from traditional media (TV, newspaper, radio)? আপনি কত ঘনঘন মূলধারার মিডিয়া (টিভি, পত্রিকা, রেডিও) থেকে খবর নেন?

30 responses



How often do you consume news from social media (Facebook, X/Twitter, YouTube)? আপনি কত ঘনঘন সোশ্যাল মিডিয়া (ফেসবুক, টুইটার, ইউটিউব) থেকে খবর নেন?

30 responses



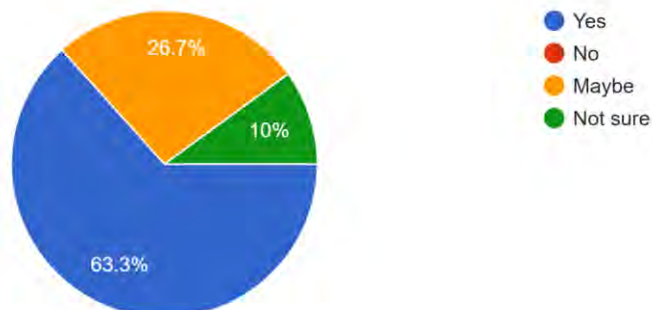
Which platform do you trust more for breaking news? ব্রেকিং নিউজের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কোন প্ল্যাটফর্মকে বেশি বিশ্বাস করেন?

30 responses



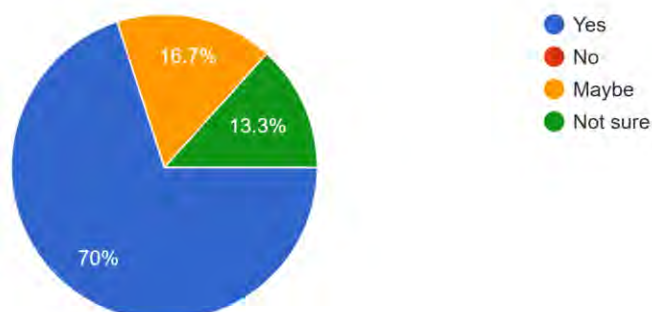
Do you believe traditional media is influenced by political or editorial pressure? আপনার কি মনে হয় মূলধারার মিডিয়া রাজনৈতিক বা সম্পাদকীয় চাপে প্রভাবিত হয়?

30 responses



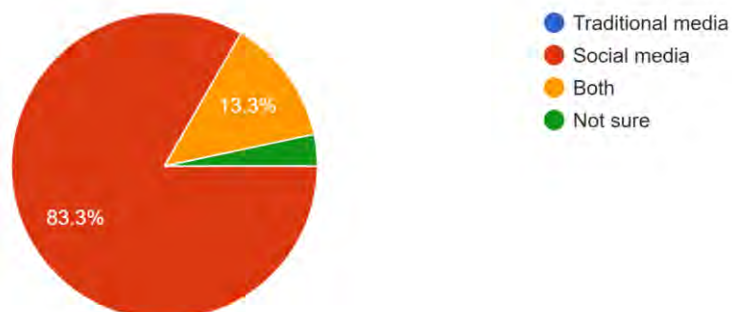
Do you think censorship affects the truth people receive? আপনার কি মনে হয় সেন্সরশিপের কারণে জনগণ সত্য তথ্য পায় না?

30 responses



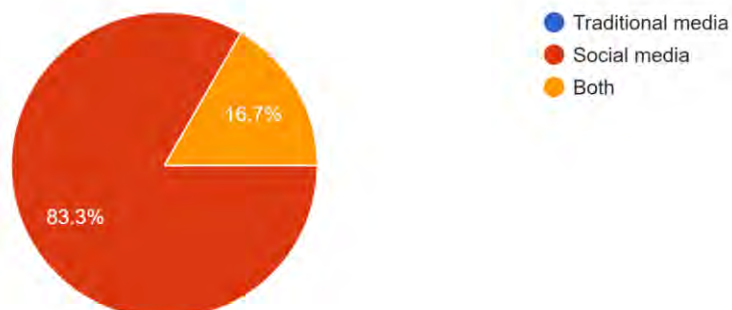
During protests or national crises, which platform gives more immediate updates? আন্দোলন বা জাতীয় সংকটের সময় কোন প্ল্যাটফর্ম দ্রুত খবর দেয়?

30 responses



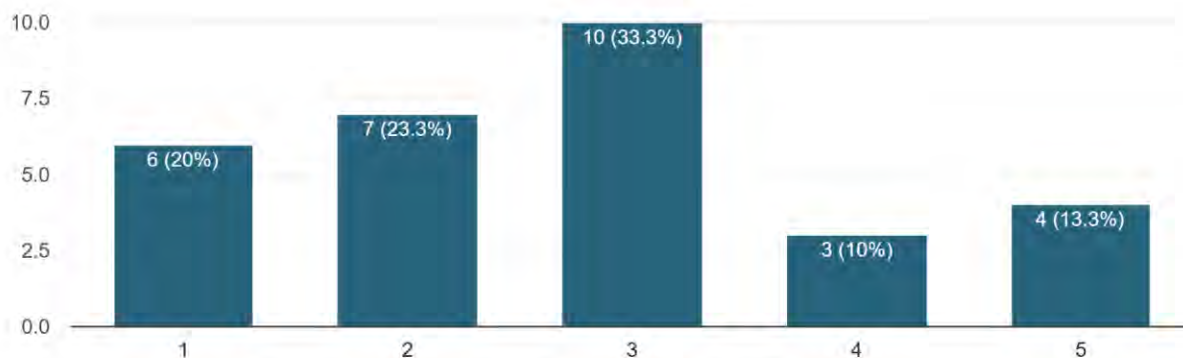
Which platform feels more transparent and "ground-level" during protests? আন্দোলনের সময় কোন প্ল্যাটফর্মকে বেশি স্বচ্ছ ও মাঠপর্যায়ের মনে হয়?

30 responses



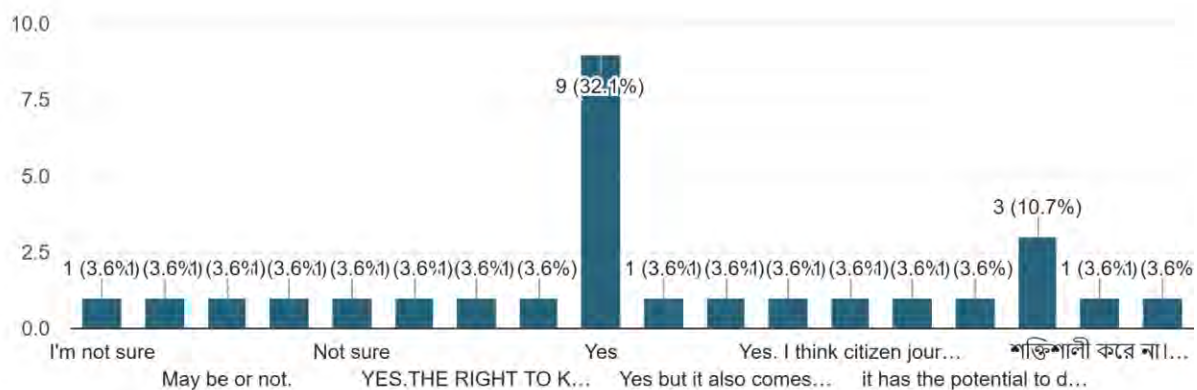
How confident are you that you can identify misinformation on social media? সোশ্যাল মিডিয়ায় ভুয়া খবর চিনতে আপনি কতটা আত্মবিশ্বাসী?

30 responses



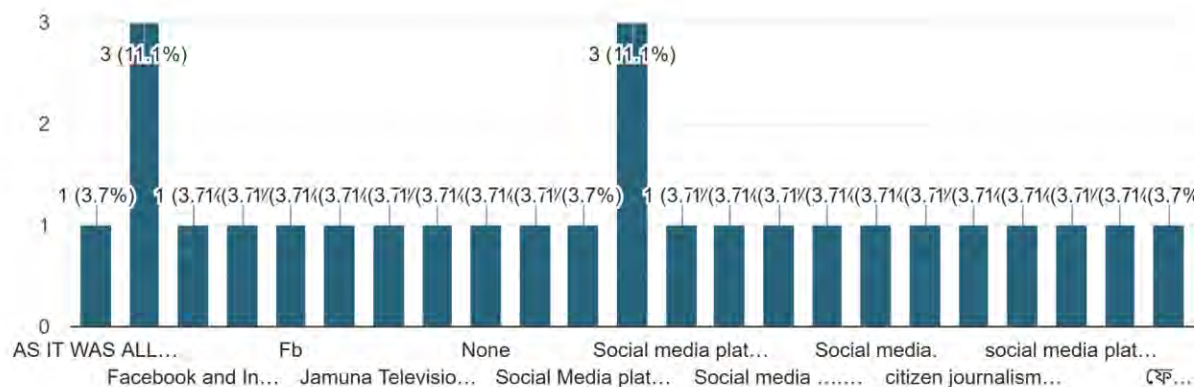
Do you think citizen journalism empowers people more than mainstream media? আপনার কি মনে হয় সিটিজেন জার্নালিজম মানুষকে বেশি শক্তিশালী করে? (Short answer)

28 responses



During recent Bangladeshi protests, which platform seemed more truthful to you, and why? সাম্প্রতিক বাংলাদেশের আন্দোলনে কোন প্ল্যাট...র কাছে বেশি সত্য মনে হয়েছে? কেন? (Short answer)

27 responses



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