

**Between Safety and Solidarity: International Students' Perspectives on the
July Revolution in Bangladesh**

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Social Sciences in Anthropology

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Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where it is appropriately cited with complete and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all primary sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

This research examines the understanding of participation and obstacles that international students in Bangladesh faced during the youth uprising of 2024 known as the July Revolution. Through interviews and qualitative research methods, the study investigates the relationship between cultural background legal obstacles, and online activism which affected their connection to the movement. Those students who come from politically restricted countries like Bhutan and Tanzania focused on staying safe while maintaining their academic achievements but the students from activist countries such as Nigeria and Uganda showed solidarity yet took safety precautions. The media platform's role was focused on delivering immediate news and misleading information simultaneously which compelled students to create critical verification systems to assess information truthfulness. This research shows that Hofstede's cultural dimensions specifically power distance and uncertainty avoidance determine how individuals perceive risk and participate in it. Some students overcame obstacles to participate in transnational solidarity programs through digital activism resulting in global protests being spread internationally. International student activism abroad results from the convergence of personal identity with structural restrictions along with the process of political education. The study makes valuable contributions to scholarly research about youth activism together with online engagement and cross-border connection during times of educational globalization. I recommend developing inclusion-based policies that protect foreign students from political disturbances yet promote active participation. The July Revolution demonstrates how transnational activism can potentially link activists but also demonstrates restrictions that require attention to media literacy and protected dissident areas.

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Chapter 1

1.1. Introduction

In 2024, the youth of Bangladesh rose to the occasion in full force to change entrenched socio-political systems that needed changes first and foremost. However, these movements, which have been extensively documented from a domestic perspective, have only paid scant attention to the views of international students living in Bangladesh. As a position between their cultural identities and the realities of the host nation, the international students provide a point of view that allows us to reflect on how youth activism crosses national lines to be heard across global narratives of justice, democracy, and resistance. In this thesis, I analyze the experiences, perceptions, and modes of engagement of the international students at BRAC University during the 2024 July Revolution. Drawing on the ethnography of a protest, it explores how these students negotiated their participation as they negotiated legal uncertainties, cultural dissonance, and safety concerns in an increasingly digitalized protest culture. International students, however, do not approach activism the same as local students: As a category marked by shared grievances, activism is emoted and practiced through the prism of state surveillance, academic risks, and precarious legal status.

Consequently, existing scholars has typically neglected how transnational educational spaces can serve as spatialization of political potential. A gap in this study is filled by evaluating the complex realities of international students, where their history in the home country influences their political orientations, digital platforms function both as a means to power and sources of mis/disinformation, and solidarity and disengagement are formed in transnational student communities. Through the critical engagement with these issues, this thesis makes a more nuanced

contribution to some understanding of youth movements in the context of a world of globalization, especially that of cross-cultural identities and constraints on political activity in a foreign setting. In these latter chapters, historical and contemporary contexts are described, previous literature is reviewed, and empirical findings from interviews are provided to develop a conceptual model that explains how international students position themselves as part of localized youth activism.

1.2. Background and Context

The history of youth movements in Bangladesh goes back a long time and these movements, being very strong, have always risen as a reaction to the political turmoil, economic insecurity, and social unfairness in this region. Be it colors, freedom, polls, or students, the youth of Bangladesh, both from the early days of the independence era right until recent years have been integral to pushing for alterations, occasionally by street protests and at other times by online protests. Young people have remained critical in demanding change, but also in bringing awareness to issues within the society as well as influencing communities and demanding policy changes. In the build-up to 1 July, this activism was again evident due to a continuing sense of past injustice, the socio-political issues that dominated the last decade, and the increasing cross-border young persons' global solidarity. Knowing the histories and contexts of these youth movements offers an understanding of, why, how, and with what consequences these youths were able to engage in activism, and in terms of the interconnections between local and global processes.

1.2.1 Historical Context

History shows youth formations in Bangladesh began with their significant involvement in the early 1970s liberation struggle against West Pakistani authorities during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War (Rahman & Fatema, 2018). Students and other youth members from across Bangladesh formed demonstrations and acted as freedom fighters during the liberation period, generating ongoing inspiration for modern youth activism in Bangladesh (Samrin, 2024). The millennial generation retains strong memories of this historical conflict which strengthens their belief that organized youth activism can create social transformation (Christiansen, 2019). Young activism led Bangladesh's post-war political evolution through its persistent drive against corruption, human rights violations, and socio-economic inequality (Talukdar et al., 2022)

Student movements served as the main impetus for the democratic uprising that led to the downfall of General Hussain Muhammad Ershad's military regime during the 1990s (Jalal, 1995). The activist movement showed youth had a practical method for fighting authoritarian regimes and building democratic systems which established an example for all future activist movements (Azim & Zaman, 2024). The increasing utility of digital platforms by youth mobilizers in recent years resulted in social media becoming their main channel to orchestrate protests and intensify political responsibility demands (Anowar, 2025). During 2013 the Shahbagh movement transformed youth activism by starting as a student protest for war crime justice which shifted into a secular and accountable government movement (Zaman, 2016). The demonstrations demonstrated that digital media tools like Facebook and Twitter could keep a widespread youth movement going as well as teach new generations about politics (S. Rahman

& Masud-All-Kamal, 2024). The young people of Bangladesh serve as leaders for environmental conservation and educational reform together with road safety activism (Saha & Tasnim, 2025). Young Bangladeshis organized the road safety demonstrations of 2018 as a response to student fatalities from reckless driving resulting in countrywide protests for better traffic oversight (“Young People Shaping Democratic Politics,” 2023). The successful youth protest activities forced the government to adopt immediate reform policies because youth activism proved directly effective (Talukdar et al., 2022b). Such movements experience harsh official responses that lead to brutality from law enforcement agencies unlawful detainment and threatening intimidatory tactics (Mostofa & Subedi, 2020). Youth advocacy in Bangladesh continues to develop pressure on gender justice by having young females and minority groups oppose patriarchal traditions while securing self-governed bodies (Raihan et al., 2021). The youth activists challenge systemic oppression by combining online campaigns with physical demonstrations which demonstrates their ability to adapt and their resilience (Ammari et al., 2022). Young people in Bangladesh persistently transformed the country's social and political dialogue since the liberation movement and modern digital activism.

1.2.2 Contemporary Issues

Today's Youth in Bangladesh face a considerable number of socio-political issues that directly affect their generation and its activist movement. The youth population faces three significant challenges in this country which consist of weak (Islam et al., 2022). The statistical data demonstrates that Bangladesh has more than 40% youth population yet youth unemployment persists throughout the country (*Skills Gap and Youth Employment in Bangladesh*, 2022). Many

students encounter job seekers' challenges before obtaining suitable careers which results in their frustration upon graduating from school. The economic troubles cause young people to seek open government information and reforms of systemic obstacles that block their professional prospects (Bank, 2016)). Young Bangladeshis actively monitor environmental pollution and climate change issues apart from economic matters (Uddin et al., 2024). Climate change affects Bangladesh severely because it exposes people to both environmental risks and dangerous weather changes that create extreme obstacles to life survival (Sultana & Mostafa, 2023). Young people managed to address this issue by creating environmentally focused movements combined with petitions and legislative activities to obtain climate-friendly development approaches (F. Sultana, 2021). The recent youth activism in Bangladesh combines global elements linked to climate change with local perspectives of environmental damage that affects human life (Mahmood, 2012).

Bangladeshi youths identify Freedom of expression as a major problem because the government has recently suppressed protests and blocked Facebook access (Nughat, 2024). The Digital Security Act (DSA) has become a tool to silence dissent among journalists and activists since its establishment in 2018. DSA functions as an oppressive tool to restrict young people from exercising speech freedom and protesting against political matters. Different youth movements operating in Bangladesh create a dual impact on freedom of speech because youth members now can express themselves while avoiding repression to contribute to national discussions (Thapa, 2025). Modern societal challenges which grew with international rights concerns and democratic demands produce youth who actively participate in politics (Andersen, 2019). Young Bangladeshis can distribute their activism through social media because these platforms let them easily communicate to spread information and organize demonstrations which make activism more

diverse and active (Das, 2020). Thanks to social media young activists have become more visible to the government so they face increased risks of detainment and harassment (Shams, 2024). The present features of Bangladeshi youth activism emerge from this difficult struggle between activists and state authorities who work to determine activist citizenship rights within diminishing civil liberties (Mahmud, 2002).

1.2.3 What makes me interested in this topic?

The greatest aspiration to have a greater understanding of Bangladesh's situation came along with the suppressed expectation of Bhutan's idea of freedom of expression. Bhutan holding its reputation of being happy with all those hidden tears and unfolded histories and narratives has brought grievance to many as well. The unrevealed part of Bhutan's flaws and disparities within its context have always been ignored in writing. The generation has heard the fragmented and white-washed histories and narratives. As per Christensen (2018), Bhutan became a parliamentary democracy in the year 2008 even after being a monarchy country in its history. However, this transformation has not diminished the monarchy's influence to a huge extent. On the one hand, the MSEs update the institutional foundations associated with democracy, on the other hand, some authoritarian features remain in the political structure of the country. King has a lot of symbolic powers and obligations and has a relatively large Authority over the culture and religion. Introduced the politics of Gross National Happiness which aims at the spirituality of the nation.

As per Christensen (2018a), The country sought a “national identity project” in the 1980s; namely, it sought a notion of shared cultural identity— “one nation one people”—civic and cultural heritage of the Ngalung elite. This was applied in the acceptance of Dzongkha as the national language, the wearing of national dress (Driglam Namza), and other such processes. The national identity project and related policies, including the 1985 stricter citizenship laws, marginalized the Lhotshampa, treating them as illegal immigrants resulting in the conflict of the early 1990s. Ethnic conflicts have been attributed to riots that erupted in the 1990s, traced to the Lhotshampa groups. More than eighty thousand Lhotshampa were forced to leave their homes either by expulsion or choosing to flee, which was six percent of the country’s population. Amnesty International described this as one of the largest ethnic expulsions carried out in the current generation. Refugees remained in a stateless condition for a long time and started to be resettled in third countries only in 2007. Organized by the Bhutanese authorities concerning the struggle against an “anti-national terrorist movement,” the problem did not involve admitting or reintegrating such groups. It is a banned subject that has been effectively erased from the public consciousness in Bhutan, it does not appear in the media, politics, education, and the construction of the Bhutanese nation. Namely, one of the peculiarities of the modern history of the conflict is their suppression. Due to the Orality of information passed down to them through the word of their parents and elders, young people particularly students construct Lhotshampa Wars based on personal observation augmented with rumors.

Ngolop Narrative is the construction of Lhotshampa as an over-emigree that betrayed Bhutan and its government and the legitimacy of its actions. Discrimination Narrative, to show the present exclusion of minorities and denial of citizenship to Lhotshampa. No Excuse Story; An impartial account of events that occurred due to decision-making from the government and the communities

displaced. (Christensen, 2018a). Driglam Namzha, this old set of manners in Bhutan presents guidelines on clothing and acceptable behaviors. It fosters community membership but has been associated with supporting structures and control of democratic principles such as; equality and liberty. Media and Freedom of Speech, Bhutanese media is however heavily checked and restricted and some topics such as ethnic issues, citizenship issues, and conflict are hardly or never discussed. Bhutan's political system is marked by restriction of information and curtailment of opposition. (Christensen, 2018)

Bhutanese society lacks “societal referent” or politically sensitive issues such as the confrontation in the early 1990s, citizenship problems, and the multiethnic structure of Bhutan. Powerful silence acts as an agent that keeps social stability and order and discourages hostility, but at the same time, it sows cracks and discourages free, inclusive discussion. Suppressing measures of the state include international and domestic rhetoric restraint and media regulation. This censorship is backed up by society, which is always scared of the consequences of defying the regime's authority. Youth and Protest, younger Bhutanese in social media activism and protest, while, self-censorship of dissent is still rife. Social Media acts as a Ground for Raising Doubts about Government Narratives and a Site for Anonymous Dissonance. (Christensen, 2018)

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions and modes of engagement of international students concerning the July Revolution in Bangladesh?”
2. What factors (cultural, political, legal) shape their decisions to participate or remain passive?
3. How do international students navigate digital activism and misinformation during political unrest?
4. How do their experiences contribute to or challenge the formation of transnational solidarity?

1.4 Research Rationale

First and foremost, this study analyzes the international students' perceptions and experiences relating to youth activism in Bangladesh, specifically, the engagement during the July Revolution. This research studies the complexity of the factors that affected the participation—or lack of participation—in the movement, and attempts to understand the critical role that the latter played in influencing the former, be it positively or negatively, both the cultural point of view, as well as the legal and the safety issues, and the digital activism. The study takes these dimensions into account to comprehensively understand international students' movements of political activism in a foreign context, and the challenges they face when they participate in or observe the social movement. Second, the research will explore how transnational solidarity is shaped or contested

through the lives of international students, to best examine the constitution of transnational student activism and international understanding within the lifeworld of global youth.

1.4.1. To Analyze the Perceptions and Experiences of International Students Regarding Youth Activism in Bangladesh

This first objective is to examine how the perceptions and experiences of international students during the July Revolution in Bangladesh have been formed. International students, with their various cultural, political, and social backgrounds, provide different ways of understanding the activism of youth. Cultural identities, personal history, and political systems of their home countries shape how they perceive and interact with activism in a country that is a host. Take as an example student from countries with a history of political unrest, such as Nigeria or Uganda, might see the revolution in July as a continuation of the struggle against government repression, while for example, the students from a politically more stable environment like, for instance, Bhutan might perceive the intensity of protests as something alien to them. This study examines how the experiences of international students explain those students who decided to get actively involved in the movement even though others did not. For instance, students from Nepal, where they have a tradition of pursuing activism in their country of origin, might have also felt solidarity with the Bangladeshi protesters but the risk might have felt too high. By contrast, Tanzanian students who used to be tightly controlled in public are possibly afraid to join in with the protests due to fears of deportation or disciplinary action. Familiarizing oneself with these various perspectives will be of great use when trying to understand the complexities behind youth activism and the involvement of international students in creating social movements.

- Theoretical Lens: Transnational social movement theory (e.g., Tarrow 2005) and cultural hybridity (Bhabha 1994).
- This study will apply the methodology of semi structured interviews to explain how international students' cultural and political background affect how they interpret July Revolution in Bangladesh.
- Key Dimensions: Contrast reactions: Comparison between students from politically unstable (i.e., Nigeria, Uganda) and functionary (i.e., Bhutan) contexts. Agency vs. constraint: Which of these prior activism experiences (or fears) of Nepali students or Tanzanian students impact engagement?
- The expected outcome is a framework that maps the transnational identities that mediate local activism participation.

1.4.2. To Examine the Role of Cultural Identity, Legal Constraints, and Safety Concerns in Shaping Engagement with Activism

The second objective is to investigate the effects of cultural identity, legal restrictions, and safety concerns on international students' involvement in the July Revolution. Political activism is affected by people's perception of culture and the issues they perceive as identity. For instance, Bhutan who have been brought up with a culture of promoting the use of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and peaceful governance might find the retaliatory attacks in Bangladesh, where protests that badly occurred, off its cultural values. Perhaps this cultural dissonance caused them to be so concerned with academic goals and personal safety that it seemed like it was a priority over the movement and their participation in it.

The July Revolution was also driven by safety concerns and legal constraints in the engagement with the revolution by international students. And a lot of students were acutely aware of the hazards involved in being 's a political activist in a foreign country, even the fact that you might lose your visa status, be deported, even you can be gassed.' Take for instance Nigerian and Ugandan students who had suffered police brutality and government repression in their home countries but would be more receptive to the movement because they were foreign nationals but might be disadvantaged due to their status as foreign nationals and the risks associated with joining protests from outside their home countries. Pakistani as well as Afghan students, used to frequent incidents of political turmoil in their schools of study may have felt overwhelmed by the extent of the upheaval in Bangladesh and go for the safer mode of seeking their interests than engaging in actual action. This study takes an exploratory approach to understanding the role played by national culture and safety in explaining the way international students engage in actions of youth activism. This analysis will provide insight into the problems encountered by international students in coping with political activism in a foreign context and the ways the problems impact international students' decisions to join or watch social movements.

- Theoretical Lens Structural violence (Galtung 1969) and risk perception theory (Slovic 1987).
- Barriers to participation Thematic analysis of interview data and policy documents (e.g. visa regulations)
- Dimensions: Cultural dissonance of the values and protest tactics of students. Legal/safety calculus: How deportation risks or trauma (e.g., Nigerian students) deter involvement.

- Expected Outcome Typology of structural and psychological barriers to transnational activism.

1.4.3. To Explore the Impact of Digital Activism and the Ways International Students Filter and Validate Information During Political Crises

The third objective is to investigate the influence of digital activism on international students' participation in the July Revolution and their ways of filtering and validating information during political crises. This July Revolution was carried out with the help of social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp as they had helped put in real-time updates and provide eyewitness accounts and protest narratives. These platforms then became an important source of information for many international students that was not available on traditional media. However, social media was double-edged—the power that it brought with it (as a source of empowerment) was coupled with misinformation (charged with misinformation at least). Social media was able to bring these students access to this valuable information, but it also exposed students to a combination of accurate and false updates, exaggerated or not. For instance, students who came from Nepal, Uganda, and Nigeria where they had harsh experiences with the organized media of their home countries, had a great dependence on independent news channels and other sources of alternative information. Nevertheless, they also came across misinformation like propaganda, spurious violence reports, and manipulated images that interfered with their capacity to accurately evaluate the situation. The purpose of this study is to categorize the types of information that were misinformation faced by international students during the July Revolution, and the strategies used to filter and validate information. This research to investigate the role of digital activism to explain

the movement engagement of international students conducts an analysis to put forth insights on how international students engage in the political unrest in the Internet age and how critical thinking and information verification matter in an age of social media.

- Theoretical Lens Networked publics (boyd 2010) and critical media literacy (Kellner & Share 2007).
- This research uses social media posts discourse analysis with interviews on verification practices. Twitter & Facebook role in mobilizing or misinforming are key Dimensions, The Platform dependence of Twitter/Facebook (Rich Critique if required).
- Filtering strategies How students in censored contexts (Uganda) handle misinformation.
- Expected Outcome A taxonomy of digital challenges and adaptive verification tactics during crises.

1.4.4. In order to Assess how International Students' Experiences form—or challenge—Transnational Solidarity

This study's fourth objective is to evaluate how the experiences of international students during the July Revolution resulted in forming or challenging transnational solidarity. As global citizens, international students hold the potential to be bridges between their home countries and their host countries, thus using cross-cultural understanding and solidarity in the face of common shared challenges. For instance, someone from Nigeria or Uganda who likewise had encountered contesting government repression and police brutality in the homeland would feel solidarity with the Bangladeshi protesters. The experience of fighting for democratic rights and social justice can forge transnational solidarity between youth movements despite borders. Although international students face different circumstances in a foreign country, transnational solidarity can be

compromised. For instance, students from Bhutan and Tanzania might not have been able to fully understand or immerse in the movement due to Bangladesh's level of political activism to which they were foreign. Students from Pakistan and Afghanistan were accustomed to political instability but they were shocked by the intensity of the unrest in Bangladesh and so may have set safety and academic pursuits before active participation in the protests. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that would facilitate or impede transnational solidarity development among international students. By focusing on how international students maneuver the barriers to political activism in the throes of war, this research will explore the possibility of international youth solidarity, as well as the difficulties of promoting intercultural exchange in times of political conflict.

The purpose of this study is to analyze international students' mindset and experience of youth activism in Bangladesh and their participation in the July Revolution. This research seeks to explore the impact of cultural identity, legal obligation, safety concerns, and digital activism on international students' involvement with the social movements issue through the analysis of what has been done so far. Finally, the study will examine how transnational solidarity is got or impacted by transnational students concentrating on the creation or opposition of global youth activism and transnational empathy. This research seeks to add to the body of knowledge of the difficulty, especially for Americans, in engaging in political activism in a foreign political environment, as well as understanding the difficulties of navigating such environments while attempting to maintain a level of global solidarity.

- Theoretical Lens, Cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2006) and boundary mechanisms (Lamont & Molnár 2002).

- Key Dimensions, Empathic solidarity, E.g., Nigerian students' alignment with Bangladeshi protesters.
- Host-country barriers, E.g., Afghan students' prioritization of academic safety over activism.
- Expected Outcome A model of solidarity formation/rupture in global youth movements.

Chapter 2

2.1. Literature Review

Youth activism includes political, social and environmental activities practiced by young people through protests digital mobilization and community activism. The dual status of young individuals as initiators of change and persons defined by structural conditions and institutional boundaries leads experts to this main discovery (Pickard,2022). Research confirms youth activism's power to transform the world, particularly in climate change activities and governance but investigates international actors' roles within local actions very infrequently.

The current wave of youth activation exists across different digital platforms under the category of Digital Activism. According to Earl and Kimport (2011) and Tufekci (2017), digital tools enable fast participation since they remove traditional barriers that normally obstruct involvement. The July Revolution in Bangladesh achieved its coordination goals and ongoing updates largely because of Facebook and WhatsApp platform use. Tufekci (2017), explains that digital activism faces surveillance and repression that became evident through Bangladesh's Digital Security Act (2018). According to scholars, this demonstrates why we should reject techno-utopianism. This duality—empowerment, and exposure—warrants more critical exploration, particularly about digital misinformation and psychological safety for international students. The internationalization of activism becomes more intricate because of additional factors. International student participation matches Bourdieu's (1986) concept of cultural capital investment because they bring elements such as protest background along with citizenship and risk assessments to activism. The absence of equal access and different privileges to voice opinions leads students in politically unstable regions such as Nigeria and Uganda to accept activism efforts when facing legal barriers

but students in stable or restricted political systems including Bhutan and Tanzania show less tolerance for activism. The scholarship provides no examination regarding how digital and legal boundaries influenced the selective creation of international solidarity.

2.1.1. Digital Activism and the Role of Internationalization in Social Movements

The July Revolution of Bangladesh represents a new social movement that employs digital activism through protest culture and serves as a tool for quick response mobilization. Digital activists use modern tools to translate digital activism into ‘connective action’ according to Ashcroft et al. (2018) since this form of activism allows people to unite across similar causes while remaining decentralized. Since the start of this phenomenon, Bangladeshi youth gained strength through their capability to organize rapidly and share awareness promptly while creating innovative methods to oppose authorities. Digital activism demonstrates both empowering and suppressing characteristics which became apparent during this period. Activists can utilize digital platforms for mobilization but face increased state monitoring alongside censorship and repression threats through these platforms. This framework seeks to establish how international students fueled the July Revolution to become a part of globalized protest movements.

2.1.2. Digital Activism: Mobilization and Vulnerability

Modern protest culture experienced a shift through digital activism because youth members can now quickly organize large groups and distribute news to one another. The authors Earl and Kimport (2011) explain that digital platforms introduce innovative protest techniques including

online petitions in addition to awareness campaigns and hacktivism which overcome traditional limitations of censorship and repression. Social participation during the July Revolution in Bangladesh intensified through digital media as Facebook and Twitter together with WhatsApp helped the protesters efficiently coordinate while distributing urgent news along with empowering sections of people to engage. According to Zeynep Tufekci (2017) in “Twitter and Tear Gas”, digital activism operates with two contradictory effects. Through empowerment tactics, activists face a higher chance of being monitored and suppressed by authorities. Fans of the 2018 Digital Security Act in Bangladesh confront severe criticism because they limit online dissent while apprehending activists and journalists for expressing their opinions. Digital activism produces two opposite effects which create a need to evaluate its dual role between raising activism levels and exposing activists to oppressive controls.

2.1.3. Digital Surveillance and Misinformation Filtering

The theory of digital activism finds limited application because of surveillance controls and misinformation blockade systems. According to Tufekci (2017), the growth of authoritarian states employing digital platforms produces an environment that obstructs all types of activism. The government enforces digital monitoring through the Digital Security Act to restrict internet activities within Bangladesh. The spread of fake information together with untrue narratives works to both discredit social movement's legitimate status and simultaneously reduce their effectiveness. The international press risked damage to the July Revolution campaign through false accounts of violence because these reports threatened to discredit the movement while insufficient reporting of grievances limited global support for its purposes. A more robust integration between

surveillance practices and misinformation dynamics needs to be established within theoretical frameworks because their successful and long-term development depends on the proper assessment of these factors.

2.1.4. Internationalization and Cultural Capital

International movement of social movements involves intricate variables about international participants and media interactions. International students experience psychological impacts in risk tolerance and political engagement through the application of Bourdieu's "cultural capital" framework. International students from privileged educational institutions can use their greater resource network capacity to access multiple social networks throughout the July Revolution. However, these individuals face additional challenges because their insecure legal standing might prevent them from joining public events for fear of retaliation. Social capital alongside other forms of disadvantaged positions creates both levels of dependence and participation characteristics for international members of domestic social movements. Local matters can become oversimplified when international media coverage intensifies them according to the observation made by Keck and Sikkink (1998). Social movements require critical evaluation at this moment because internationalization creates global stories that collide with local economic differences in political realms.

2.2 Research Gaps

2.2.1. Limited Exploration of International Actors in Local Movements

The investigation of how students from other countries contribute to nationwide movements such as the July Revolution in Bangladesh remains absent from existing academic work which details youth activism impacts on climate reform and governance. Youth occupy a dual position between their ability to bring change and their structural limitations according to Pickard (2022). The involvement of these students creates distinctive risk tolerance levels and differing mobilization methods because their actions stem from their cultural capital background combined with legal vulnerability (Bourdieu, 1986). Studies have neglected to establish how technological and legal restrictions allow or block transnational solidarity creation which results in a limited understanding of the combination between community-driven activism and connected protest actions.

2.2.2. Inadequate Critical Analysis of Digital Activism's Dual Nature

The work of Tufekci (2017) and Earl and Kimport (2011) examines how digital activism speeds up mobilization while making it exposed to state surveillance and repression as proven by the Digital Security Act in Bangladesh. Research on the effects of dual forces exposes activists to while providing them empowerment opportunities has not received a thorough discussion regarding their influence on the careers of activists. The academic research fails to address sufficient detail about how digital misinformation affects the way movements present their stories while creating obstacles for international students interested in participating. Research

should combine theories to evaluate how surveillance and misinformation will affect activist movements in both current and future stages of development.

2.2.3. Neglect of Media's Role in Shaping Transnational Perceptions

Research about media framing abilities to legitimize or marginalize movements primarily focuses on national frames although Gitlin (1980) and Cottle (2008) already explored this previously. Reportage about Bangladesh's July Revolution through international media turned comprehensive socio-political matters into basic human rights issues which potentially stripped local citizens of their control. The existing literature fails to examine how official media enterprises and worldwide platforms jointly or independently modify public perception which affects internal backing and external international actions. The need exists for academic research to examine how media depictions affect the build-up or degradation of transnational social connections.

2.2.4. Absence of Comparative Frameworks for Cultural Capital and Risk

International students show different levels of activism engagement based on their cultural capital as described by Bourdieu (1986) which demonstrates through the example of Nigerian student protests against Bhutanese student political inactivity. Scholarship has an empty space when it comes to analyzing how distinct historical, legal and socio-political backgrounds of different nations affect the risk calculation process and subsequent student participation levels. Research lacks an established framework for evaluating the conflicting perceptions that

international students exhibited regarding the July Revolution. Future research has to explain how cultural capital works together with geopolitical historical facts to sort transnational activism so scientists can gain understanding into global movement advantages and vulnerabilities and social connections.

Chapter 3

3.1. Theoretical Framework

3.1.1. Digital Activism

The July Revolution of Bangladesh shared identical characteristics with modern social movements through its utilization of digital activism which has reshaped protest culture grounds. Digital activism describes how social media joins forces to create connective action which brings people with shared interests together as an unorganized collective according to Ashcroft and his colleagues (2018). Such activism enabled Bangladesh youth to exploit the technology for unprecedented means of performing quick mobilizations and distributing information while defying authority like never before. Digital activism possesses both empowering and suppressing characteristics according to current trends especially through state monitoring and censorship of internet activism. This theoretical framework creates conditions to research how international students contribute while analyzing the consequences affecting digital activism during the July Revolution. Social networking technology has become an important component of global youth protest activities which includes Bangladesh along with other nations. Digital activists use social media for connective actions where they band together against shared goals as they build no formal organization structure according to Ashcroft et al. Online activism in Bangladesh enables youths to swiftly mobilize information which results in a democratic form of demonstration that authorities cannot easily assess. According to Earl and Kimport (2011), online protesters employ

modern strategies of objection that produce novel ways to demonstrate which include virtual petitioning and special 'hacktivism' alongside consciousness-raising capabilities. The theory of digital activism aligns best with Bangladesh because young people engage in social networks to advocate issues regarding road safety and environmental pollution and free speech protections. Castells (2015) explains how digital activism results in new state authority problems because authorities begin controlling social media platforms. A great deal of controversy arose from the Digital Security Act that Bangladesh passed in 2018 thus its use has targeted online dissenting views to demonstrate the dual nature of digital activism in dissent control.

Due to social networking technology global youth protest activities now include Bangladesh and other countries as participants. Ashcroft et al explain that digital activists unite through social media meant for connective actions to oppose common aims without creating formal organizational frameworks. The result is a democratic demonstration method that officials find challenging to evaluate. Earl and Kimport (2011) explain how online protesters use contemporary protest methods for creating new demonstration techniques that include virtual petitioning along with 'hacktivism' and consciousness-raising mechanisms. Young people in Bangladesh best adhere to the digital activism theory by using social networks to promote safety on the roads as well as environmental issues and free speech protection. The article by Castells (2015) demonstrates how state authorities face new challenges when activists use digital platforms since they begin managing social media services. The Digital Security Act of 2018 in Bangladesh sparked significant controversy while officers use this legislation to target dissenter opinions on digital platforms and show the dual characteristics of digital activism in controlling dissent. Young activists use digital activism as the main foundation of contemporary protest

movements because it enables them to bypass political involvement hurdles. The July Revolution in Bangladesh achieved its momentum through Facebook and Twitter and WhatsApp social media platforms which enabled activists to form networks for coordination and spread real-time information and improve their reach. Activists can escape censorship using digital activism elements including new protest strategies and awareness campaigning as well as hacktivism according to Earl and Kimport (2011). Social media became a vital tool for July Revolution activists to address dangerous issues concerning road safety and environmental pollution together with freedom of speech expressions. Youth activists succeeded in using online platforms in this manner. The decentralized organization of the movement didn't prevent its unified character as digital information distribution systems destroyed the state's ability to control what people learned. Internet activism poses both opportunities and dangers for state government control techniques. The power that digital networks grant activists becomes possible according to Castells (2015) through these networks but governments simultaneously acquire monitoring tools to suppress dissent. The Digital Security Act of 2018 receives extensive criticism because it serves to stifle online dissent throughout Bangladesh. The Act has led authorities to detain people who post online expressions while making other digital activists avoid participating because it punishes specific internet-based communication methods. This duality—empowerment versus repression—highlights the complex role of digital platforms in contemporary social movements.

International student participation during the July Revolution demonstrates that current social movements organize complicated international solidarity networks. Students determined to be 'boomerang actors' according to Keck and Sikkink (1998) utilized their position between Bangladesh and international networks to link the Dhaka protests to Nigerian students' domestic

antiauthoritarian movement. Through the lens of Tarrow (2005), the students use their cosmopolitan outlook to gather transnational resources that link Bangladeshi road safety actions to worldwide youth activism. Levitt (2001) describes in his theory on transnationalism that this solidarity exists but does not automatically materialize throughout the global community. The borders between reality and imagination become evident when students from Bhutan reject confrontation and Afghan students live under ràng rules (Levitt & Schiller 2004). Students represent international actors in these circumstances according to Keck and Sikkink's "accountability politics" yet face difficulty reducing their de-legitimacy status when foreign actors view them as organization interlopers. This framework enables a methodological investigation into three aspects of student networks and their connections to Bangladeshi protesters and overseas activists through WhatsApp groups. This analysis evaluates three factors: (1) network ties that united Ugandan students with Bangladeshi protesters and diaspora activists and (2) narrative alignment through which students converted localized demands into universal human rights discourses and (3) structural constraints which included the visa policy as a "filter mechanism" [Tarrow 2005] that limited participation.

3.1.2. The Role of Internationalization in Social Movements

Its internationalization, that is the participation of international actors and media, has been a subject of debate. By the same token, international support can aggrandize local issues produce global insight into local issues, and, hence increase pressure on the government to address its complaints. Alternatively, foreign actors' involvement can undermine a movement's credibility by attacking its authenticity and accusing it of having foreign interference and manipulation. The term

internationalization is referring to cross border communication that involves different nations (such as international students taking part in local protests, maintaining individual identities). Systemic integration that erodes borders (universal digital platforms to allow protest diffusion) is referred to as globalization. Internationalization here is about actors (students), while globalization constitutes the infrastructural aspect (social media's lack of borders). Second, the students, as internationalized actors, used the very globalized tools to affect their goals (Twitter, WhatsApp). The use of this term was clear in the tension seen in the July Revolution where the press and the presence of international students both influenced and shaped the movement and the reception of the movement's success. Tarrow (2005) defines transnational advocacy networks as an important link in bringing about local movements to global audiences, providing resources, and legitimizing the struggle that follows. In the case of the July Revolution, the international media coverage presented the movement as part of the wider context of democracy and human rights and received support from the international civil society. Yet, this framing of the movement also ran the risk of oversimplifying the movement's agenda down to an unambiguous narrative of oppression versus resistance. For example, international actors may often prioritise agenda issues that are resonateable across the globe and in so doing ignore local nuances and complexities as Keck and Sikkink (1998) attest. The way that international students were involved in the July Revolution contributed to providing further matters concerning internationalization. Some students sided with the movement, while others were reluctant to join because of worries about their legal status and being personally unsafe. The ambivalence in this attitude mirrors the difficulty that those from the international arena face when dealing with the domestic political landscape. Foreign actors can strengthen or complicate social movements depending on the situation and the nature of their relationship, as Della Porta and Tarrow (2005) point out.

3.1.3. Media Representation and Perception

Media representation is important because it helps determine how the public views social movements both domestically and abroad. For instance, differing priorities and narratives and divergent media coverage between local and international media meant that the case of the July Revolution was very different. The protests were reported on in domestic media, which are often constrained by state censorship, for socio-political grievances driving the protests, and for themes of democracy and human rights for international media. The foregoing divergence had an impact on how the movement was interpreted among various audiences that made it legitimate and supported it in different ways. Gitlin (1980) argues that media frames can make the difference between amplifying or marginalizing social movements in their choice of injected narratives. Exaggerated reports of violence and unrest in international media during the July Revolution risked robbing the protest of credibility in the international realm, yet underreporting of its grievances did not allow international observers to understand the movement's focus. This feature demonstrates the problem of social movements getting their intended representation across media platforms where state control of information continues.

More recently, recent scholarship has focused beyond traditional elites and movements, investigating the intersection of digital activism, internationalization, and media representation in social movements. Tufekci (2017) compels us to consider how digital platforms have altered the politics of an event such as a protest by leveraging their ability to initiate mobilization quickly, although this may be compromised by their capacity for increased surveillance or repression. The

types of work she does, and the approach she takes, highlight the significance of acknowledging the features of digital activism in authoritarian regimes in technological and political contexts. In the same respect, Bennett and Segerberg (2013) introduce the idea of 'connective action,' that personal communicative networks and contemporary social movements. The July Revolution in which social media allowed youth to organize to demand and amplify their demands independently of formal organizations also fits into their framework. Nevertheless, no centralized leadership; they note, can also leave movements fragile to be fragmented and taken over. Thörn (2007) seeks to understand the role of global networks and solidarity movements on local struggles in the context of internationalization. His point is that there is the promise as well as the danger of dependency and the problem of misrepresentation in leaning on international support for local campaigns. In the July Revolution, this tension was seen in international media coverage and foreign actors the continuation helped and complicated the movement. Finally, Cottle (2008) discusses more recent media representation studies, including those that examine the role of visual and narrative framing in shaping public perceptions of social movements. The importance of analyzing how narratives about the media are constructed and disseminated, regardless of the context, in which the state controls information is stressed in his work.

A case study of the July Revolution in Bangladesh is being presented to examine how digital activism, internationalization, and media representation have contributed to the understanding of modern situations of social movements. By using social media youth protesters were able to mobilize rapidly and set the information pass freely, challenging how traditional authority and control work. Nevertheless, the duality of digital activism (its possibility to both empower and spread) offers an indication of the complexity of its engagement in political struggles. International

students' involvement and the role of international media facilitate the dynamics of the movement and complicate the relations of local and global narratives. Although international support leads to a heightened awareness of local issues and global awareness of the movement, the very same support risks oversimplifying the movement's aims and erasing the participation of different regions. The representation of media for the movement both domestic and international is very important as it defines how the public sees the movement, as well as how much the movement is supported. Using recent academic insights and theoretical frameworks this analysis reveals the significance of industrializing social movements as a means to understand how digital activism, internationalization, and representation in the media come together in a meaningful way. With the world becoming more intertwined, these forms of dynamics will continue to define the direction in which political contentiousness unfolds, both in Bangladesh and broader scene.

3.1.4. Bourdieu's Analysis of International Students' Engagement

A critical framework of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (1986) helps explain the divergent engagement of international students in Bangladesh's July Revolution as they mediate their engagement by both embodied knowledge, skills and dispositions built up in their home country context. Students from Nigeria or Uganda, places where protest cultures are deeply entrenched, had the high cultural capital for activism even if they could not read Bangla: they are able to recognize the field of Bangladeshi protests as something familiar and 'transfer tactical knowledge' (e.g. using VPNs to circumvent censorship) from experience (expressed in interview phrases like 'We've done this before'). On the other hand, students of Bhutan, having been socialized in a culture which essentially prioritizes Gross National Happiness (GNH), did not have any cultural

capital of protest, i.e. they did not feel comfortable with protest, thought it to be 'chaotic' or 'un-Bhutanese' which they measured on surveys of their own being comfortable with dissent.

Similarly, digital activism revealed this disparity given that the Nepalese students used high digital capital (e.g. encrypted apps) to organize, whereas Tanzanian students were more vulnerable to misinformation due to low digital capital (i.e. forwarded WhatsApp messages), which we identified through discourse analysis of concept such as 'I heard from friend'. The tensions of symbolic capital borne out of international student participation included increased legitimacy for the movement as a global demand such as that of the Nigerian students, but risked delegitimization by authority figures framing the students of Nigerian nationalities as 'outside agitators;' a dynamic tracked through audit of the network of protest roles. Bourdieu's doxa explains different media receptions: one group of students who were high media literate dismissed other students' local media's state aligned narratives because they were already dismissed; the other group of students which came from stable nations (e.g. Bhutan) rejected global media's human rights framing as 'Western interference' which were related to their habitus. Finally, visa precarity (legal capital shortfalls), as well as wider structural inequalities, also stratified engagement: Afghan students shied away from protests ("I cannot risk deportation"), whereas Ugandan students gave protests under pseudonyms, covertly by anonymity in the anonymized social media posts. Following this theoretical foundation, this framework operationalizes Bourdieu through interview coding of habitus markers, surveying of prior protest experience and digital ethnography of mapping platform use in order to capital tiers, moving beyond theory to ground our understanding of how cultural capital hierarchies shaped transnational activism during the revolution.

Chapter 4

4.1. Research Design and Epistemological Stance

The research adopted an interpretivist epistemology for its qualitative design to understand how social constructs develop through lived experiences within specific contexts. Using this method researchers gathered detailed narrative information to understand how international students experienced the July Revolution in Bangladesh.

4.2. Data Collection

Research interviews were carried out semi-structured with depth from September through October 2024. Research interviews consisted of procedures that aimed to gather diverse subjective insights cultural reflections and contextual challenges faced by students at BRAC University. The research used interview guides to allow the interviewer to add supplementary questions depending on how participants responded to initial questions. The research interviews extended between 40 to 60 minutes for each participant who received assistance through translators for communication in their chosen language or English.

4.3. Sampling Strategy and Participant Demographics

Research participants were chosen through purposive sampling based on dual criteria that included studying at BRAC University during July Revolution and having different levels of involvement in or witnessing the events. The researcher adopted a method that achieved representation diversity based on nationality, gender, religious affiliation, and political involvement history. I conducted interviews with 15 participants hailing from seven countries namely Bhutan, Nepal, Uganda Nigeria Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Eight male and seven female

participants formed the total number of interviewees. The participants were aged between 19 years old to 26 years old. The research team utilized the point of data saturation to choose their sample size after eight new themes failed to appear in additional interviews.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

The BRAC University Ethics Review Committee approved the ethical aspects of this study. The research participants received written information followed by written consent before beginning their participation. The researcher ensured complete confidentiality through both name pseudonymization and removal of identifiable institutional and country-based data that might expose participants. The research participants received notice that joining the study exceeded any expectations and they could drop out at any time without facing penalties. The researcher built protective measures to create safe emotional interview spaces, particularly for people who displayed feelings of anxiety or fear following the July incidents.

4.5. Data Analysis

The research data underwent thematic coding analysis according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase methodology. The researchers performed manual verbatim transcription of all interviews before conducting coding to discover common patterns among the different datasets. The analysis procedure combined steps to generate initial codes and search for themes before reviewing the established themes to define them and name them before generating the final report. The research utilized both deductive and inductive methods where some analytical codes stem from participant accounts but others were derived from theoretical constructs (such as Bourdieu's cultural capital and Tarrow's transnational activism).

4.2. Data Sources

4.2.1. Primary Sources:

Interviews: In-depth, face-to-face interviews with Bangladeshi youth activists and with international students living in Bangladesh. Such interviews will offer a direct view of how the movements are understood and lived.

4.2.2 Secondary Sources:

Journal articles on youth movements and world views

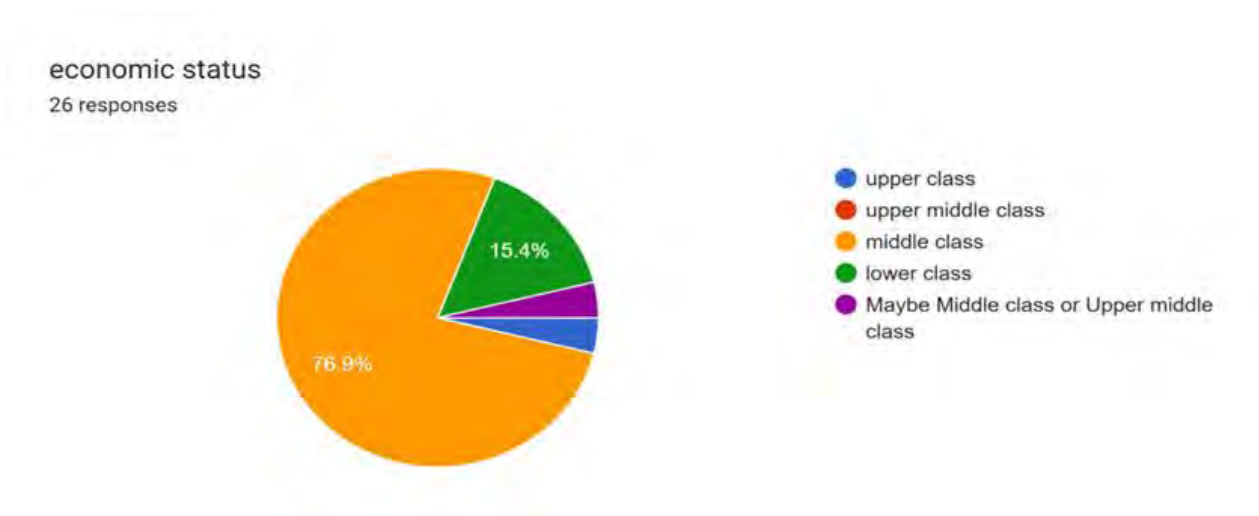
4.2.3 Data collection

4.2.4. Qualitative Methods:

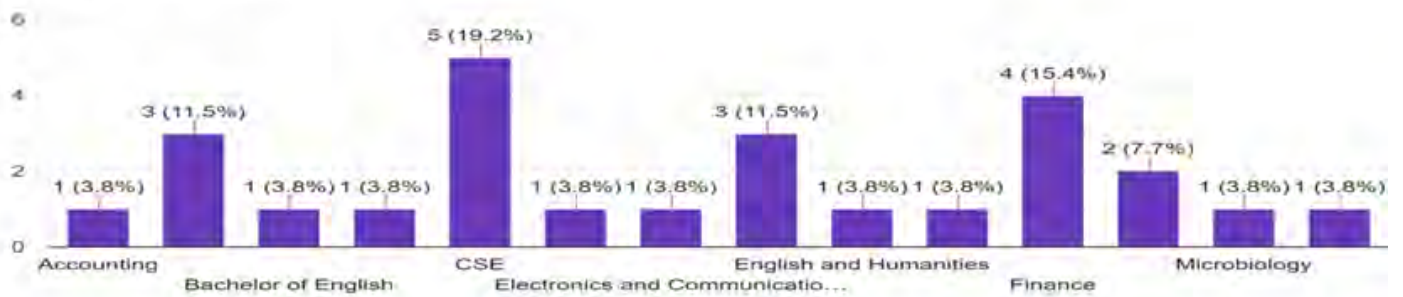
Students whose opinions can also provide different opinions by conducting interviews with international students.

Short ethnography

4.3. Demographics

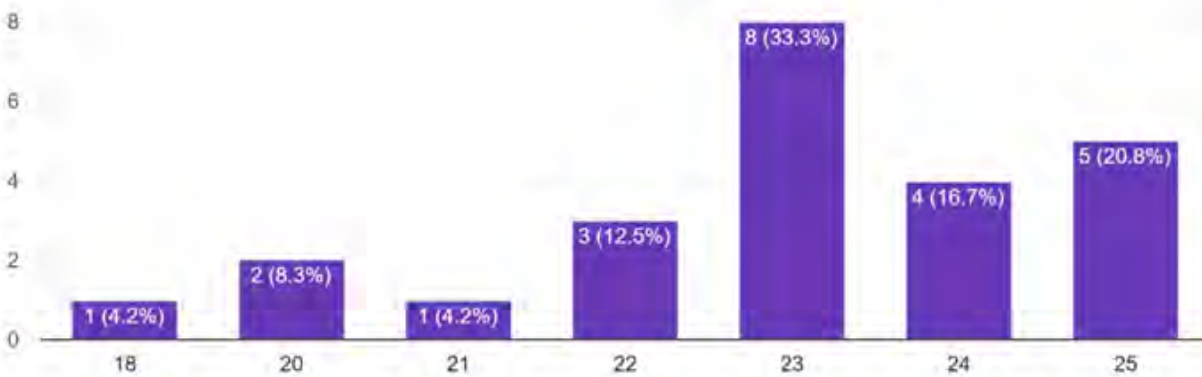


subject you majoring in
26 responses



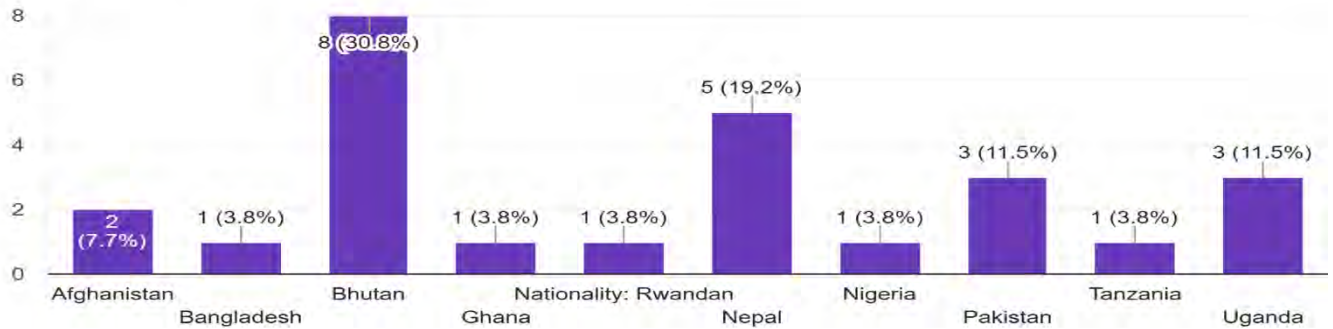
Age

24 responses



country you belong to

26 responses



Chapter 5

5.1. Findings and Analysis

International students during the July Revolution created a distinctive viewpoint to analyze political action dynamics and cultural interactions while demonstrating foreign educational experiences in host countries. Many local citizens as well as international residents in Bangladesh became focused on the July Revolution through their participation in demonstrations that triggered the movement's significance. His student body consisted of individuals who represented different cultural origins and political systems thus they carried diverse backgrounds affecting their participation in or avoidance of the movement. International students in Bangladesh become important indicators of political engagement dynamics since their actions reveal combined elements of cultural identity impact and diplomatic barriers when conducting political action within a foreign society.

5.1.1 The Role of International Students in the July Revolution

International students took various levels of engagement in the July Revolution as they actively joined forces with others or carefully watched from a distance. Students became involved based on the convergence of their background cultures with politics and their evaluations regarding protection status and academic workloads. International students based their choice between participation and non-participation based on their evaluation of possible benefits and potential dangers that came with political actions abroad. The students chose between actively supporting the movement while different individuals decided to stay detached from it due to academic responsibilities and personal safety concerns.

“The government of Bhutan initiated the evacuation of the students among them we also decided to leave the place since the insecurity level was too high for us. Coming from country where the rights to speak and freedom of speech is highly controlled including medias. I had no choice to agree to the concerned authority for they had informed parents back in country too.”

The Bhutanese students showed extreme caution because their upbringing focused on Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a system for peaceful governance. The students of Africa had an unaccustomed relationship with mass demonstrations against law enforcement because these forms of protest were unknown to them so the July Revolution surprised them with its aggressiveness. A strong cultural difference between Bhutanese students and the events caused them to maintain a safe distance from the protests while protecting their academic goals. Students from Tanzania showed hesitation to join protests in Bangladesh because they were used to having their public activities tightly regulated by government authorities which could threaten their study period in the country.

“Joining politics here could be risky for us since we can be deported as well we were controlled by the international office for the safety and were not allow to get out of the dorms yet being inside was also a different experience.”

Students from Nigeria and Uganda alongside other country students with experiences of youth activism and political unrest exhibited higher receptiveness toward the movement while participating in some cases. These students escaped government control and police brutality from their previous nations so they identified similar patterns during the July Revolution that connected them to the protest actions in Bangladesh. The participants among these students approached their decision with great thoughtfulness. Students felt great anxiety about visa status deportation threats and the unknown political system in Bangladesh so they restrained themselves from joining discussions or small campus events.

"I come from a place where dissent is tightly controlled, so seeing Bangladeshi youth stand up so boldly was eye-opening. The protests here reminded me of the struggles in my own country, but the intensity here was something I've never witnessed before. Having been into another place and having the same spirit of fighting for rights was bit encouraging yet the brutality seen was devastating."

Students from Nepal brought their background knowledge of persistent activism to their view of the July Revolution because they felt both compassionate understanding and prudence. Understanding the reasons behind the protest and backing its mission Nepali students carefully assessed the potential risks involved in joining demonstrations.

“Now a days I am wondering what democracy actually looks like and what freedom really is, i have seen democracy failed in a miserable way in my own place and has it been not more that people started demanding monarchy for controlling certain percent of political rights and others and i wonder how far could Bangladesh would face the difficulties and maintain the rights they did like before in other revolutions. The way they fought to change the system is as similar to us yet we are diverging from democracy and here they are seeking for it. ”

Many Nepali student participants viewed state brutality during the Bangladesh independence movement as well as the possibility of government violence and thus opted to remain at a distance from the demonstrations. Pakistani and Afghan students who were accustomed to political unrest and government control in their home countries reacted with shock when they observed the strength of the July Revolution. Missing essential services and reports about violent confrontations between protesters and police forces compelled these students to stay on the sidelines of the protests. These students learned during their time in their homeland countries to handle political disruption cautiously thus they transferred this method to Bangladesh where they put safety first along with their academic pursuits before joining any protest efforts.

“It is worst to see ourselves being confined inside I wish I was on roads with protesters too for i feel the suppress of the people by the authoritarian regimes, and I have no choice but to see people fight and witness them through some online medias and wish for betterment. ”

5.1.2. Sources of Information and the Role of Social Media

International students drew crucial information about the July Revolution from social media networks during this period. Through Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp students obtained up-to-the-minute protest information combined with eyewitness videos and storytelling about the demonstrations. International students tended to depend on digital resources for news updates since government-controlled traditional media outlets were deemed untrustworthy by them. Students kept updated about the developing events through fast information sharing on social media networks despite their struggles to adapt to that foreign political system.

“I don’t know how far the information’s were correct, however my parents were worried for they had some footages that were not to be eye witnessed as the ground reality inside the country and the media portals of the situations were different. Media outlets from Indian and international medias were much exaggerated and had some issues while communicating to family due to cut out of the internet accessibility.”

Nepalese Ugandan and Nigerian students placed strong emphasis on using independent news channels and alternative information sources. These students displayed caution toward official media because they lived through surveillance-controlled news systems in their original countries which made them depend entirely on social media networks for dependable factual information. Bhutanese and Tanzanian students began by paying attention to university official announcements until social media became their primary news source because traditional news outlets provided insufficient details during the expanding protests. While students depended on social media during the protests they encountered several negative effects. International students encountered difficulties when using digital platforms because these platforms simultaneously provided valid data but also distributed deceptive information. Through social media, users could obtain instant updates along with student support but ended up viewing multiple unverified reports and overly

exaggerated content. Students ended up enhancing their research and critical analysis abilities through their experience of verifying information during the tumultuous July Revolution.

“The hardest part to access to the information was due to the internet cut down and not having communication with family and updating them of the situations was much pressurizing. However, we had some domestic friends that were connected offline so we had some information’s about the situations. While internet was restored, we relayed in the social media and international media for the information’s along with the update from university.”

During the July Revolution, international students on social media acted like both an empowerment tool and a misinformation provider. Real-time updates, eyewitness accounts, solidarity: Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp platforms had it. However, they also presented students with misinformation that can be broken into three major groups: 1. These include stories designed by the state to discredit the protests through propaganda. 2. Clashes and Casualties: Overblown reports in terms of casualties and clashes are constantly shared by international media. 3. Altered or out-of-context visuals to cause fear or confusion called Modified Images and Videos. Nepalese and Ugandan students used alternative and independent sources to verify information and relied on the news channels to a great extent. In the field where traditional media could not always be relied on, they were forced to develop critical thinking skills to assess the flood of unverified reports. The technological tools employed for this experience reveal the significance of digital literacy in the practice of today’s activism

5.1.3. Cultural Identity and Perception of the Movement

International students used their cultural identities as one main factor that influenced their viewpoints regarding the July Revolution. Students' historical origins and life stories together with their ideological positions molded their way of understanding the July Revolution and their stance toward it. Bhutanese students observed the different peaceful governance models of their native country opposite to the high-risk political activism they encountered in Bangladesh. Their unfamiliarity with Bangladeshi culture made it harder for them to recognize protest drivers which resulted in their dual emotions toward the movement.

“We also had political instabilities and communal conflicts among each other at times yet, it wasn't as intense and the conflicts use to get settled in few days without use of weapons, it was worse that I saw own army killing citizens which was never expected and terrifying seeing armed people killing and shooting in mass.”

Nepali students, on the other hand, drew parallels between the July Revolution and the youth-led protests in their home country. Both groups identified mutual elements between their movements yet noted the level of confrontation along with how governments reacted as main dissimilarities. The Bangladesh protests reached tremendous levels of intensity while police suppression caused the movement to appear more aggressive and hazardous to Nepalese observers. Their safety concerns led them to observe instead of joining the protests since they sponsored the movement autonomously yet remained cautious about their protection. Students from Nigeria and Uganda experienced parallel experiences during both their domestic #EndSARS movements and the youth-led protests taking place in their home nations when they experienced the July Revolution. Students experienced solidarity with Bangladeshi protesters because they noticed similar fights

between their own government and police force and the Bangladeshi authorities. International student status restricted full movement participation because these students were well aware of potential political risks while residing abroad.

“No wonder we didn’t choose to participate for we were controlled by security and the ISO office for our safety concerns and the concerns by the embassies and home which never gave a chance to get out of the boundaries and get into roads.”

Students of Tanzania and Ghana took sympathy for the cause, mostly struck by the severity of the government’s response to the protests. Rather, protests in their home countries were either tightly controlled or permitted with certain limits, and the level of repression along with the disruption of essential services during the July Revolution exceeded what the French had experienced. They observed that this created similarity in their idea of the movement and hence thought that some parts of the Bangladeshi protests were admirable and some were worrisome. Although Pakistanis and Afghans are accustomed to political instability, the unrest in Bangladesh was a shock to them. Such absence of necessary services and clashes between protesters and law enforcement were particularly demoralizing, bearing out the fragility of the political and social fabric in a developing South Asian society. At that realization, Pakistani and Afghan students decided to try a cautious approach and be involved directly or not with the protests but continued watching carefully the events that were happening.

5.1.4. Challenges Faced by International Students

International students were subject to a variety of challenges that made them lukewarm towards the July Revolution; legal and safety constraints were one such problem, and cultural and academic pressures were another. Many students were afraid of losing their visa status or getting into disciplinary action from their universities and thus the students did not take part in the protests. The unfamiliarity with large-scale demonstrations and the potential political risks due to activism deter students of Bhutanese and Tanzania from fully participating in the movement

Supportive of the protests, Nepali students were bound to safety and the repercussions of being connected with the movement. Some could not forget the memories of state brutality back home and were intent on putting their well-being ahead of an active role. As with Nigerian and Ugandan students, willing to engage, they were restricted in their ability to do so by their status as foreign nationals, and by the dangerous acts of participating in political activism of any kind in a host country. In addition to many obstacles already faced by students nationwide, Pakistani and Afghan students had to cope with the unpredictable nature of government response and the possibility of policy changes that could affect their legal status. These students were afraid of being caught up in a politically unstable situation, and not having family support, and hence they were not able to fully engage with the protest. They contemplated staying far enough away for their well-being and safety, had they not relied on social media and peer discussions to determine what was occurring. International students are also faced with huge impediments due to cultural differences. Often based in both the cultural and historical context of Bangladesh, the use of local slogans and protest chants gave non-native speakers of local protest a barrier to understanding the nuances of the movement. The absence of a common tongue between the Western journalists and the local activists, as well as the activities of protesters, helped to serve as an additional hurdle to the

involvement of the Western journalists in the protests and the work of local activists and, consequently, to their role as observers rather than participants.

5.1.5. The Importance of Understanding International Students' Perspectives

A great insight into the July Revolution and its imprints can be realized if you understand the perspectives of international students. Framing political activism through the lenses of their unique experiences and cultural backgrounds gives them perspectives into how politics work, and understand the dynamics of political activism as well as the challenges of living in a foreign political terrain and the role of youth in driving social change. We can do this by investigating how international students related with, or distanced themselves from, the movement to understand how political participation should evolve in the context of a globalized world. International students provide a bridge between their home countries and the host countries in which they dwell, and their knowledge collected across borders broadens the discussion on political activism. On many occasions, their perspectives touch upon the necessity of paying attention to cross-cultural understanding and an idea of solidarity in tackling common challenges, from government repression, and police brutality to the struggle for democratic rights. If we listen to their voices, we have a chance to appreciate better how social movements are interdependent and how youth participate in the shaping of their societies for the future.

“Most difficult part of being abroad was not being able to reach home and not having proper communication with the families and relatives was hard. Moreover, having to stay inside the house for 24 hours without internet access and doing nothing apart from being in bed and wondering what family might be thinking was intensely difficult. Moreover, the half information and

incomplete stories around would make us wonder what would be next and how will it be better tomorrow.”

5.1.6. Instances of Active Solidarity

In contrast to the usual reticence exhibited by many international students, who had significant problems in participating in the July Revolution, there were occasional cases of transnational engagement in social movements that paralleled transnational exchange. These examples exemplify how the international students, despite their particular handicaps, managed to contribute to the movement and helped build up the movement's engine. Nigerian students, who were informed about the vibrant #EndSARS movement in their home country, were able to act as amplifiers of the voices of Bangladeshi protesters. They accessed huge social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, to ongoing sharing actual time updates, online campaigns organizing, and a global advocacy network to build awareness of the July Revolution. Moreover, this digital activism was not only important to help the movement but it created a feeling of transnational solidarity, covering cultural and spatial borders.

This demonstrates the capacity of digital platforms to facilitate international student participation in social movements, even in remotely located regions like Nigeria. Despite access to the Internet being legal in the prisons, not everyone has access to a cellmate, and communication inside prison is restricted by physical and legal walls that most prisoners can never break. Yet, these students, some behind bars, were able to contribute meaningfully to the movement, through leveraging their

experiences and networks. Such efforts attest to digital activism's ambit to straddle borders and foster a global community of solidarity that encompasses people from different fields of backgrounds coming together to pursue common course of action. Like the students, independent students of political unrest and youth-led protests in their home country of Uganda in the form of protests also demonstrated active solidarity towards the July Revolution. These people used social media to share flesh and blood of what is occurring with them, document police brutality, and get their networks involved on their behalf. In addition to giving good visibility to the movement, these actions also underscored the solidarity between youth struggles all over the world. The closest that the Marchers in Uganda drew with their experiences could be paralleled to the July Revolution, which in turn enabled Ugandan students to put in place the movement into a larger framework of global activism, shared purpose, and solidarity.

Active solidarity acts of these international students contradict the story that international students generally were passive spectators of the July Revolution. What emerged instead were the creative and resourceful ways by which students used their constraints to help move the movement. Some examples include such things as digital activism, transnational networking, or symbolic gestures of solidarity that reflect the fact that participation in social movements doesn't have to be physical; the participation can be in the form of advocacy, in the raising of awareness, or the form of moral support.

5..1.7. Deeper Analysis of Misinformation Patterns

Social media was a double-edged sword for international students when fulfilling its role in the July Revolution. Digital platforms facilitated real-time information and served as the medium by

which students could still engage in the movement, however, they simultaneously exposed students to conflicting information that made it difficult to understand the protests. The July Revolution saw many forms of misinformation, including state-sponsored propaganda, exaggerated reports of violence and images that were manipulated. The distortions of these patterns of misinformation also distorted the scope of reality about the protests and confused and frightened international students into misreading and making decisions about what was happening with the people's proclamations.

State-sponsored propaganda is one way that misinformation is spread to influence the public; it condemns the protesters and helps provide a reason for why the government is responding. For instance, international students were exposed to videos and pictures of protesters that fabricated them as the perpetrators of violence, being agents destabilizing the public order instead of instigators/promoters of social change. Pro-goal media had disseminated these accounts through the government-controlled media and amplified it further in pro-government social media accounts, distorting the picture of the protests. This propaganda was for the students unaware of the political background of Bangladesh, thus they found it difficult to understand the actual nature of the movement and the purpose of the protesters. Exaggeration of violence and casualties was another common form of misinformation. Reports inflated the number of deaths and injuries during the protests even as some of the students saw graphic images meant to fan fear and outrage. These reports might have been done to call attention to the exact way of seriousness of the situation but also made these reports could sensationalize the protests and negate their credibility. These exaggerated reports were especially unsettling for international students, already taking pains to

worry about safety and stability, and further increased their reluctance to become engaged with the movement.

Misinformation was another big source of misinformation from Morphed images and Videos during the July Revolution. Especially some students see edited or taken out-of-context footage to misunderstand the protests. Faced with the rise of the July Revolution, videos of unrelated violent incidents were sometimes published as having happened during it and implicated that the protests were more violent and out of control than they were. Further to that, these manipulated images also skewed the reality of the movement from how it was and scattered suspicion and ambiguity to international students who were trying to understand the situation. Given the challenges of navigating digital activism in the age of information overload, the prevalence of misinformation during the July Revolution is the best illustration of the inherent limits of the reach that such methodological practices can achieve. The core task for the students was filtering and validating the information for the international students who relied on social media to get updates on the protests. However, most of the students had developed strategies to check the accuracy of the information encountered including checking multiple sources with cross-referencing, consulting trusted networks, and using independent news outlets. The above work emphasizes media literacy critical for digital activism and calls for a discussion of tools and resources that can aid people in grading the extended online information.

5.1.8. The Risk Perception

The series of cultural dimensions proposed by Geert Hofstede is used to explain how different international students responded to the July Revolution. Hofstede's framework which includes dimensions such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance, proves to not only be useful but also provides a framework to understand how cultural backgrounds lead to individuals seeing risk differently and to how much they will be willing to meet that risk to become politically active.

One of these factors, power distance, or the extent to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect unequal distribution of power, had a prominent contribution in the understanding of how international students would react to the July Revolution. As one might expect, students from cultural with high power distance such as Bhutan and Tanzania were more likely to see police repression and government authority as normal and acceptable. The cultural conditioning had driven their decision to abstain from the protests because they were likely to accept the status quo more and prioritize their safety and stability. Bhutanese students, made in a culture of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and peaceful governance, discovered the demanding nature of the protests contrary to their cultural values and therefore separated from the motion.

On the other hand, students from cultures with power distance who are somewhat lower, for instance from Nigeria and Uganda, were more likely to protest against authority. Because these students were used to having had to stand up for the same kinds of movements and political unrest that the Brazilian youth protesters were demonstrating against in their own countries, they were more willing to call into question the legitimacy of the actions of the government and to support

the protesters' cause. Later cultural background of July Revolution as the right struggle of social justice and necessary, shaped their perception of the Revolution. The influence of cultural dimensions is clearly seen in the willingness to challenge authority and take risks, and to do so implies a willingness to be seen as an activist.

The July Revolution also had the role of influencing international students' solutions to the July Revolution because of uncertainty avoidance, which refers to how far members of a culture are threatened by situations that are ambiguous or unknown. Finally, the results indicate that students from cultures that exhibit high uncertainty avoidance, such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, would give greater importance to safety and stability than to participation in the protests. In Bangladesh, these students had been used to political instability but were surprised by the level of unrest, and for the risk they did not want to take, they leaned towards their academic pursuit. The background of their cultural, which emphasized their belief in order and predictability influenced the decision to be on the sidelines of the movement.

However, students from cultures with lower uncertainty avoidance than Nigeria and Uganda were more willing to take risks and join the protests. These students, who has seen similar challenges in their home countries, had been nurtured to deal with the ambiguity and uncertainty, which was why they were more able to embrace the movement despite the risks. It is their cultural background of resilience and adaptation that defined their understanding of the July Revolution as an opportunity to change things, rather than as an attack on the stability of the society. The cultural background affects international students' perception of risk, and their propensity to be politically

active or not. This study contributes an elaborated understanding of how cultural dimensions, such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance, influence activists' choice of action in the worldliest, by examining the influence of cultural dimensions.

The experiences of international students in Bangladesh during the July Revolution shows the political and cultural territory where their perpendicular experience of terrorist violence, their commitment to legal protection geared to the protection of social movements, and the mediation via an intermediation of social media, all come together creating new political engagements. Many students faced such vast challenges that prevented their presence, but some students were very active in terms of being in solidarity with each other across borders. The role of social media, as both a source of empowerment and misinformation, underscores the challenges of navigating digital activism in an era of information overload. Ultimately, the comparison of risk perception based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions provides valuable insights to the underlying influence of culture on the choice of activism. The complexities of political activism, the difficulties in a foreign political environment, and its potential for global solidarity on the same challenges. These findings are the basis for the need to develop cross-cultural understanding, critical media literacy, inclusive environment that allows international students to meaningfully engage in social movements. The lessons of international students during the July Revolution provide invaluable lessons for youth activists, policymakers, and scholars interested in learning about youth activism in the world and how cultural identity seems to drive change.

5.1.9. Variations by Nationality, Prior Activism Exposure, Gender, and Class Status

Engagement in the July Revolution was not uniform among international students, however; national origin, preexisting exposure to activism, gender and socioeconomic status all made for differences. Virtues of the campaign were more relevant to students who had histories of political unrest (Nigerian, Ugandan, Nepalese) because they understood the dynamics of protest but less relevant to students from politically restrictive countries (Bhutanese, Tanzanians) who were wired in fear of the establishment. However, students who had been physically active in movements like #EndSARS or Nepal's pro-democracy protests were more likely to show solidarity for activism, even where activism was only expressed but not participated in, despite engagement with the #IStandWith campaign impacting every Mizzou student. Risk perception was also influenced by gender, as female students often frequently found themselves more hindered by concerns about safety and institutional restrictions. Furthermore, the ability to move and have access to resources was also influenced by class status; the wealthier students had the ability to rely on private networks for safety updates while the rest relied on university directives or social media. Together these intersecting factors emphasize the intricate intersection of identity, experience and constraints of structural dimensions that influence international student's political engagement.

5.1.10 Fear, trust and solidarity

Fear and Agency

The July Revolution showed how the anxiety and magneticity have been mutually in the background of the lives of international students in Bangladesh. However, many of the students

faced a decision of whether or not to participate, especially as they sympathized with the movement's goals but were worried about how much their safety, or possible legal repercussions, and their academic stability would be jeopardized. Fear of government retaliation was a major deterrent for the many students from countries with very strict political controls — like Bhutan, Tanzania and Pakistan. It would be for them to not participate in their protests abroad because they were brought up in an environment in which there is so much suppression of dissent. This hesitation is expressed by a Bhutanese student when he states that 'coming from a country where freedom of speech is highly controlled, I had no choice but to comply with authorities.' Coupled with this fear was the risk of deportation or visa cancellations, as well as disciplinary actions imposed by the universities. But fear did not completely take away agency. For instance, some students from Nigeria and Uganda were among those who had had earlier experience in youth led movements such as #EndSARS, who managed to find ways to engage despite risks. Digital activism became their agency in two forms: real time updating, documenting police brutality and amplifying protesters' voices on social media. The fear and agency indicate how political socialization in home countries affects risk assessment abroad. Some students withdrew due to safety reason but some others used alternative form of exercise while demonstrating that political participation not necessarily has to be physical, it can also be informational and symbolic.

Digital Trust and Risk

The role for social media during the July Revolution became a dual one, first an important information source and second, as a means of misinformation. Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp proved to be especially relied upon as international students looked at traditional media as biased or censored. But, of course, there were risks to it. The first type of misinformation students interacted with consisted of state-sponsored propaganda damaged the protesters, the second type

exaggerated the violence reports, and the last, which manipulated out of context images and videos. “They exaggerated things in media and it was difficult to tell what is true and what is a fiction,” said a Nigerian student. Necessity to verify information makes students develop critical media literacy skills. He read many cross-referenced news from independent sources, and consulted professional peer networks, who waited for official university announcements before believing viral claims. What this shows is there is a paradox to digital activism — that social media gives voice to the oppressed, but can also spread disinformation that can meme the playing field and spread fear actions. Balancing trust in digital platforms with doubt about unverified content was something international students had to do, something that is becoming more and more important in today’s politically volatile world.

Solidarity and Detachment

Responses to the July Revolution varied from active solidarity to cautious detachment in relation to the cultural and political backgrounds of the international students. The fact that they are from countries with histories like that of Nepal or Nigeria, with people from those countries expressing strong solidarity with Bangladeshi demonstrators and drawing parallels with struggles in their own countries, comes as no surprise. When I think about that, it reminded me of our own movements, and they are still trying to get democracy. That is a Nepali student reflecting. In this digital advocacy, what these students did was to raise global awareness of their work through their platforms. On the other hand, students from politically restrictive countries such as Bhutan and Tanzania avoided participation in order to ensure personal safety over participation. “There is the risk of politics here,” said a Tanzanian student, where “joining politics could be risk as we were confined to dorms for safety.” It was not indifference, but a way of distancing from the ground which they were unaccustomed to mass protests and what might happen to them if they were

noticed. Notably, even detached students participated indirectly, through observation, dialogue and sharing of information within their networks. The voices they uphold describe solidarity in transnational movements as a spectrum between vocal activism and silent support. This is important in understanding how global youth engage with political unrest in foreign settings.

5.1.11. Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

The July Revolution has some important lessons to teach to international students, local activists to policymakers. For international students, that movement was a reminder to value both personal safety and wishing to engage in social change. Furthermore, during a time when everything is on social media and digital, it also pointed out that critical thinking is important, as well as crisscross-reference formation. The role of local activists during the July Revolution reminds us of how foreign nationals manage to engage (or not) in the politics of activism. This allows local activists to create stronger connections to local students and build global solidarity of their movement through more involvement, by providing clear information about the risks and rewards of participation and fostering an inclusive environment.

The International students during the July Revolution are of Importance for policymakers because they show the necessity of policies that safeguard the rights and well-being of foreign nationals in situations of political unrest. Helping international students feel safe and supported means keeping host countries in an environment where they will encourage cross-cultural exchange and mutual understanding in a just and equitable society. The analysis of the role and understanding of the international students during the July Revolution contributes to the understanding of the complexities of political activism, identity, and the problems of navigating the foreign political

environment. What their experiences teach us is important to learn to cultivate strong global solidarity and move social change forward; points to the interconnecting of youth movements and how gathering and action can dictate the road we are driving down.

Chapter 6

6.1.1. Further Studies on the Role of International Students in Youth Movements

Additionally, there is a wealth of ripe academic territory in analyzing the 2024 youth uprising in Bangladesh, particularly the July Revolution. This study has already brought some useful information about students' views and experiences at the protests, and there are several other directions for future investigation. It focuses on the long-term impact of international students' participation in these areas, the digital activism in transnational solidarity, cultural identity, and political engagement, and compares the youth movements in different socio-political contexts.

6.1.2. Long-Term Impact of International Students' Involvement

Finally, since international students' engagement, or lack of engagement, can influence their personal development on the one hand, and on movements in which they are involved, on the other hand, it is another area for further study. It could start to research how those experiences in the July Revolution influenced their political consciousness, their activism, and their career trajectory. Take, for example, did the fact that of watching the protests spur them to be more politically active in their home countries? Was it an influence in shaping their academic focus or career goals of any kind, specifically focused in the areas of advanced education in social justice, human rights, or politics? If one followed the life paths of international students globally after graduation, this would offer important information about how exposure to youth movements in host countries influences their later involvement in activism all over the world.

6.1.3. Digital Activism and Transnational Solidarity

Another area that has been neglected for further research is the role of digital activism in forming transnational solidarity. Overall, this study revealed the two-sided role of social media as a facilitator of empowerment and as a risk, however, future studies may explore to what extent international students use digital platforms to engage in a global movement. For instance, how do they cope with the problems of misinformation and the state's supervision in cyberspace when taking part in online activism? However, how do they use their social media for exposure to amplify local struggles fought in their host countries to a global audience? It could also explore how digital literacy helps international students to be critical users of online content and productively engage with transnational advocacy networks.

6.1.4. Cultural Identity and Political Engagement

Another underexplored area is the intersection of cultural identity and political engagement. Future studies could determine the impact of cultural background of international students on how their perceptions of and responses to youth movements in their host countries change. For instance, what do students from politically repressed countries as in Bhutan or Tanzania make of the high-risk activism they witness in Bangladesh? On the contrary, what are the experiences of students coming from countries that have a better milieu of strong protesters like Nigeria or Nepal in comparison to Bangladesh? A better understanding of these dynamics might help explain how cultural identity influences political participation and alliance building across borders.

6.2.1. Comparative Analysis of Youth Movements

Such a comparative analysis of youth movements in different socio-political contexts might also be of some value. For instance, how do the strategies, problems, and results of youth activism in Bangladesh differ from other countries, namely India, Pakistan, and South Africa? Historical, cultural, as well as institutional factors may shape the trajectories of youth movements in such studies. This research also could look at how international students' experiences in one country affect how they perceive activism in another offering a more detailed understanding of their cross-country involvement in youth rebellion.

6.2.2. Policy Implications for Host Countries

Finally, additional studies may look into the policy implication of international students' involvement in local activism. For one, how are host countries such as Bangladesh supposed to make international student experiences feel inclusive, which leads to students working on issues of the host country without compromising the safety and well-being of those students? What can be done to ensure foreign national's rights are protected during times of political instability? One can address these questions to formulate frameworks to balance international students' contributions to local movements against the exigencies of protecting their legal and personal safety.

It is certainly worthwhile for more academic inquiry to be done related to the role of international students in youth movements. Researchers analyzing the long-term consequences of their involvement, the function of digital activism, the meeting of cultural identity and political involvement, and the comparison of youth movements are in a position to provide a more comprehensive picture of the character of global activism. They are not only a means to enrich academic discourse but also contribute to the development of practical insights for building multilateral friendships and even social change in a world we are getting closer and closer.

7.1. Conclusion

This research analyzed how BRAC University international students encountered and interpreted their position during the Bangladesh July Revolution when young people led political demonstrations. The research analyses previously collected narratives supplemented by digital participation data and cultural perspectives to validate that international students act both as observant translators and measured adapters and occasionally they exercise bravery when participating in political changes while maintaining zones of protection. Students engaged with activism at differing levels because their participation depended on cultural identity along with past activism experience and institutional barriers and safety considerations. The students who came from Nigeria and Uganda displayed stronger feelings of sympathy towards the protests alongside political alignment motivated by similar past oppression experiences yet students from

Bhutan together with Tanzania practiced careful avoidance due to unfamiliarity with politics and self-protection concerns. Students faced both advantages and disadvantages from digital activism according to the research findings. The study showed real-time information access and networked solidarity which students were able to use but it simultaneously exposed them to misinformation through digital means as well as surveillance and ethical issues with their online presence in unfamiliar circumstances.

The study breaks through local-global stereotypes about activism by examining how international students occupy transnational locations. The study demonstrates that international students effectively handle the combination of host and home connections which Tarrow (2005) labels as "rooted cosmopolitanism." Their movements were neither removed from politics nor detached from the situation because personal and structural factors and geopolitical factors shaped their actions and inactions. The study adds value to youth movement anthropology research by showing how political agency works across different borders. The author develops an analytical model for explaining how educational platforms which operate across boundaries function as spaces that produce both limiting factors and oppositional measures. The research demonstrates the delicate nature of international solidarity since it exists only when there is close cultural connection together with digital fluency and institutional support and legal safeguards. The research contains specific restrictions which need recognition. The research methodology utilized a majority of participants from BRAC University which might adversely affect the study's applicability to Bangladesh's entire international student demographic. The research approach depends heavily on qualitative interviews together with discourse analysis although these methods would yield better findings if combined with digital ethnography and policy-based analysis of institutional responses.

Future researchers should examine institutional environments throughout various Bangladeshi universities and explore how gender and social class influence political involvement while studying the political activities of international graduates after their return. The creation of protective measures that defend international students' rights for personal security and communication freedom should be prioritized through policymakers and university partnerships. These networks can also establish frameworks for students to develop civic education. The July Revolution provides critical knowledge about Bangladesh's Gen Z activism and it simultaneously demonstrates global social dynamics between networked youth populations with varied circumstances. Students coming from outside of the domestic realm who typically remain absent from public crises need to be acknowledged as essential participants in global movements for justice and democratic advancement.

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