

DIGITAL REPRESSION AND ONLINE RESISTANCE: NEW MEDIA IN MOBILIZING THE JULY 2024 UPRISING IN BANGLADESH

S M Imran HOSSAIN
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
imran_tfp@du.ac.bd
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3804-4079>

<i>Atıf</i>	Hossain, S. M. I. (2026) Digital Repression and Online Resistance: New Media in Mobilizing the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh, <i>Yeni Medya Elektronik Dergisi</i> , 10 (2), 370-401.
-------------	--

ABSTRACT

The article aims to explore the impact of new media on the July uprising in Bangladesh in 2024. A large-scale social reform movement in Bangladesh resulted in a political uprising that led to the removal from power of the regime on August 5, 2024. At the beginning, the movement was to reform the quota scheme for government jobs, but it later turned into a one-point demand protest against Sheikh Hasina's government. A significant part of the movement's acceleration was using social media like Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram as a means of communication. It was mostly students and youth age groups who initiated and participated in the protests, and they utilized social media to communicate meaningfully. Facebook Reels and YouTube video content showing alleged violence and excessive use of power by law enforcement. Due to the large population of internet users (141.05 million) in Bangladesh, this audio-visual content became sensational through social networking sites and influenced the larger audience in favor of the movement. Digital repression, like internet shutdowns, account suspension, and blocking Facebook pages are imposed by the government to suppress facts and prevent protestors from organizing online and being mobilized. The paper surveyed 398 respondents (n=398) and conducted five in-depth interviews. The paper examines the influence of new media and traditional media over the July uprising. The paper argues that the use of new media as catalyst for the July uprising in Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Digital Repression, Internet Shutdowns, New Media, Social Media Activism, July Uprising.*

DİJİTAL BASKI VE ÇEVİRİMİÇİ DİRENİŞ: BANGLADEŞ’TE TEMMUZ 2024 AYAKLANMASININ MOBİLİZE EDİLMESİNDE YENİ MEDYA

Makalenin amacı, 2024 yılında Bangladeş’te gerçekleşen Temmuz Ayaklanması üzerinde yeni medyanın etkisini incelemektir. Bangladeş’te büyük ölçekli bir toplumsal reform hareketi, 5 Ağustos 2024’te iktidardaki rejimin devrilmesiyle sonuçlanan bir siyasi ayaklanmaya dönüşmüştür. Hareket başlangıçta kamu istihdamında uygulanan kota sisteminin reforme edilmesi talebiyle ortaya çıkmış, ancak zamanla Şeyh Hasina hükümetine karşı tek talepli bir protesto hareketine evrilmiştir. Hareketin hız kazanmasında, Facebook, YouTube ve Telegram gibi sosyal medya platformlarının birer iletişim aracı olarak kullanılması önemli rol oynamıştır. Protestoları başlatan ve büyük ölçüde katılım sağlayan kesim öğrenciler ve gençler olmuş; bu gruplar sosyal medyayı anlamlı ve etkili bir iletişim aracı olarak kullanmıştır. Facebook Reels ve YouTube videoları, kolluk kuvvetleri ile iktidar partisi mensuplarının protestoculara yönelik şiddetini ve aşırı güç kullanımını ifşa ederek geniş kitlelere yaymıştır. Bangladeş’te internet kullanıcılarının sayısının yüksek olması (141,05 milyon), bu görsel-işitsel içeriklerin sosyal ağlar aracılığıyla hızla yayılmasına ve kamuoyunun büyük bir bölümünün hareket lehine etkilenmesine yol açmıştır.

Hükümet, protestocuların çevrim içi örgütlenmesini ve mobilize olmasını engellemek, gerçeklerin yayılmasını baskılamak amacıyla internet kesintileri, hesap askıya almaları ve Facebook sayfalarının engellenmesi gibi dijital baskı uygulamalarına başvurmuştur. Bu çalışma, 398 katılımcıyla (n=398) gerçekleştirilen bir anket ve beş derinlemesine görüşmeye dayanmaktadır. Makale, Temmuz Ayaklanması sürecinde yeni medya ile geleneksel medyanın etkilerini karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektedir. Çalışma, Bangladeş’teki Temmuz Ayaklanması’nda yeni medyanın bir katalizör işlevi gördüğünü savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Dijital Baskı, İnternet Kesintileri, Yeni Medya, Sosyal Medya Aktivizmi, Temmuz Ayaklanması.*

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites and other new media have grown in importance so quickly that they are being used as a tool for political and social movements (Joia and Soares, 2015). Social media, often known as new media, influences social movements in two ways. The first was expanding spaces of mobilization, which were lacking in traditional mobilization approaches, and speeding up recruiting, mobilization, communication, and information distribution (Wiest and Eltantawy, 011). Clark (2012) demonstrated that Facebook and Twitter can reach millions of people both inside and outside the country. Information spreads quickly, promoting validity and expansion, overriding mainstream media bias. Social movements can use this information to help them propagate a narrative that helps them gain sympathy and support. Borders (2009) described the rise of social media and networking, and their use for political communication. He described it as a platform with boundless potential and a new generation of communication.

Initially, the movement was to demand reasonable reform of the ‘Quota Scheme’ in government jobs. But social media, as a catalyst, accelerated the student protests into a political movement. Dhaka Tribune reported that the UN Fact-Finding Report shows that the July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh claimed the lives of almost 1,400 people. Police and the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) reported that over 11,700 persons were arrested and taken into custody. Children made up an alarming 12–13% of those slain (Dhaka Tribune, 12 Feb, 2025).

In order to understand how social media was used in the July uprising, we must understand the demographics of Bangladeshi internet users. According to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) reports, 141.05 million internet subscribers used the internet in July 2024, whereas 127.52 million used mobile internet. The same report shows that in the month of August 2024, total internet users were 140.50 million and mobile internet users were 126.97 million (BTRC Report, 2024). It is evident that millions of internet subscribers exist in Bangladesh, and a large portion of that was young people.

Research Questions:

1. What roles did the new media and traditional media play in the July Uprising?
2. How did digital content (Facebook Reels, hashtags, YouTube videos) affect public perception of the issue?
3. What difficulties did digital activists encounter during the protests?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The network society notion was first proposed by the sociologist Manuel Castells. According to Castells (2004), a network society is one in which information and communication technology, based on microelectronics, powers networks that make up its social structure. A collection of linked nodes is called a network. The place where a curve meets itself is called a node. A network is made up of nodes rather than a center. Different nodes may be more or less important to the network. By taking in more pertinent information and processing it more effectively, nodes become more significant to the network. A node's relative significance is determined by its capacity to support the objectives of the network rather than by its unique characteristics. Nonetheless, a network's performance depends on every node. Networks often reorganize themselves by removing some nodes and adding new ones when nodes become redundant or obsolete. Nodes only exist and serve as network components. The unit, not the node, is the network (Castells, 2004, p. 6).

According to Castells (2004), three key characteristics of networks that profited from the new technology environment—flexibility, scalability, and survivability—made networks the most effective organizational structure.

- **Flexibility:** networks can change their components while maintaining their objectives in response to shifting circumstances. They search for new connections by circumnavigating communication channel blockages.
- **Scalability:** they can change in size without causing too much trouble.
- **Survivability:** networks can withstand attacks on their nodes and codes because they are decentralized and can function in a variety of configurations. This is because the network's codes are stored in various nodes that can replicate the instructions and come up with new ways to carry them out. Therefore, the network can only be destroyed by physically destroying the connecting points (Castells, 2004, p. 6).

What, though, distinguishes this new information and communication technology system from earlier experiences? I suggest that there are essentially three key, distinguishing characteristics of the technologies at the core of the system that set this paradigm apart from earlier historical developments of information and communication technologies (like printing, the telegraph, or the analog telephone): Their capability to recombine based on digitization and recurring communication. Their capacity for self-expanding communication and processing in terms of speed, complexity, and volume. Their use of interactive, digital networking to distribute flexibility (Castells, 2004, p. 9).

METHODOLOGY

The impact of new media during the July uprising is the main purpose of the study. A triangulation research approach was used in this study to uncover the impact. Primary data was gathered using surveys and in-depth interviews (IDIs). Five in-depth interviews were carried out online utilizing Zoom to investigate respondents' detailed perceptions on new media and traditional media's role during the July 2024 uprising to get the necessary study data. The secondary data collected from daily newspapers, UN reports, academic papers, etc. The research population consists of active internet users in Bangladesh. Nearly 141.05 million internet subscribers used the internet in July 2024 (BTRC Report, 2024). As a research population, it is large. Snowball sampling and convenience sampling techniques are used simultaneously in this study. The snowball sampling method uses a few cases to encourage other cases to participate in the study, thus increasing the sample size (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). According to Erickson (1979), such approaches involve chains of relationships through which information or recommendations are received from one unit to another. Also, convenience sampling was used in the study, meaning the participants were selected because they were readily and easily available. Ackoff (1953) suggests that convenience sampling is the most popular sampling technique among students due to its affordability and ease.

A total of 398 respondents (N=398) in all took part in the survey to share their views and opinions about the July uprising and the function of both traditional and new media. In Bangladesh, the July uprising was held in different geographical locations. The questionnaire was sent via email, social media, and WhatsApp between June 15, 2025, and July 30, 2025, using Google Forms. All questions on the questionnaire were closed-ended. A questionnaire was distributed to the common network in various Facebook groups and pages of the anti-discrimination student movement after purposefully selecting respondents who actively participated in the July uprising. Google Forms was used to conduct the survey with structured questionnaires to get a diverse response from the respondents. An analysis of the quantitative data was conducted using SPSS 23. To analyze survey data, percentage and central tendency techniques were used, whereas to analyze in-depth interview data, thematic analysis was used to analyze detailed qualitative data.

The study prepared a flyer containing the QR code of the survey questionnaire and distributed it to the various July uprising first anniversary programs organized by different faculties of the University of Dhaka. For the researcher, this method made it easier to collect survey information from young people who

were involved in the July uprising. Furthermore, the sample was selected at random from students at various public and private universities, such as Dhaka University, North South University, University of Liberal Arts (ULAB), Canadian University of Bangladesh, State University of Bangladesh, and Green University. Moreover, a survey questionnaire was sent to practicing journalists and online activists. In-depth interviews were conducted with digital rights activists, academics, and fact checkers involved in the July movement to understand each participant's experience from their own perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study examines various relevant research about the influence of new media on political movements. However, Bangladeshi perspectives are not adequately documented. Nevertheless, there has been significant research in this field worldwide. Regarding the Arab Spring, Bayat (2015) identified social media as a catalyst for the revolution. The upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia have been dubbed the Facebook or Twitter revolutions due to the prominence of new media. Social networking apps undoubtedly achieved a crucial significance in the planning and promotion of movements. The role of new media became increasingly significant when traditional media came under control (Khondker, 2011).

By eschewing traditional media under government control, social media swiftly emerged as the movement's mainstay, allowing students to mobilize, organize, and exchange information. Even in the face of internet blockades and curfews, platforms like Facebook, X, and Telegram enabled quick communication, due to the use of VPNs and foreign media outlets' support. Students used this internet platform to directly voice their democratic demands around the world, forcing the government to immediately address their concerns and voices (Reuters Institute, n.d.; Kemp, 2024).

Bhuiyan (2011) described social media in his paper titled *Social Media and Its Effectiveness in the Political Reform Movement in Egypt* that social media is content that people produce and share online through websites that let users generate and share their own images, videos, and opinions. People can post stuff on social media to everyone or just a chosen group. Social media provides a means of simultaneous communication with multiple individuals. By enabling real-time communication, social media platforms help to foster democracy by providing a virtual space for individuals to share their opinions about politics, television, the government, and other topics of interest. Power can be transferred

to people through websites like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. They facilitate two-way communication between the public and individuals or small organizations. He shows that Egyptian demonstrators utilized YouTube to inform the world about what was happening and platforms like Twitter and Facebook to mobilize citizens on the streets. Social media was used by the opposition to the revolt to organize, communicate, and make their opinions heard (Meral & Meral, 2017, p. 1)

Reza and Bhuiyan (2025) argued that YouTube and Facebook videos had a key role in shaping public opinion during the uprising. Despite internet limitations enforced by the government, these digital initiatives mobilized support for the demonstrations and disseminated information through a range of online venues. Wider public support was raised as a result of the videos' portrayal of the injustices protesters endured and the severe government response (Reza & Bhuiyan, 2025, p. 225).

Additionally, Reza and Bhuiyan (2025) analyzed the role of traditional media in the July movement. In their analysis, they shows that the traditional media (Television, Newspaper, Radio, etc.) played a dual role in the July uprising. While some media channels backed the government's story, others like Jamuna TV and Channel 24 offered vital coverage of the events, emphasizing the brutality that protesters had to deal with (Reza & Bhuiyan, 2025, p. 225).

Moreover, the government controlled the media to create propaganda in favor of its narratives through its moderate correlation with media power. Mainstream media were used by the ruling party to hinder the free flow of information, resulting in limited coverage of the movement's grievances and actions (Reza & Bhuiyan, 2025, p. 234). Very few media outlets covered the news events objectively. It is a serious question about other media outlets' lack of objectivity and professionalism.

Hossain et al. (2025) conducted research on *'The Power of Social Media in Driving Political Change: A Case Study on Bangladesh's Regime Change in 2024'*. Research states that social networking sites were popular during the uprising. According to the research, social media was a catalyst in mobilizing protesters and constructing public perception regarding the issue. They found:

“The social media platforms were extremely helpful to erase the authoritarian government. The people were oppressed and getting injustice over the last 16 years under dictatorial government. Basically the social media plays vital roles during the anti-government protest like mobilizing millions of people

on street and it plays the function of bypassing media to bring whole people under one umbrella. Secondly, the research indicates that the celebrities were also played a crucial part during the protest by showing the strength and solidarity with students let movement.” (Hossain et al., 2025, p. 270)

The above-mentioned research found a pivotal role of social media in the uprising to mobilize and bypass the questionable role of traditional media. Moreover, this research discovered the significant role of celebrities in favor of the movement, which accelerates the solidarity and strength of the movement.

Anjum (2024) demonstrates that Social media was used by activists to plan activities and communicate quickly. Particularly useful platforms for disseminating information about protest locations and schedules were Facebook and Telegram. In order to coordinate their efforts and react swiftly to events on the ground, students formed groups.

Islam (2024) argued that by fostering a sense of unity among demonstrators, hashtags were crucial to the movement. They made it simpler for individuals to get information and participate in discussions by helping to classify posts about the protests. Public support was sparked by viral recordings of police brutality that brought attention to the horrible conditions demonstrators suffered. People were able to broadcast events as they happened thanks to live streaming, which gave them unbiased perspectives on the crisis that traditional media frequently missed.

INTERNET CRACKDOWN

During the July uprising in Bangladesh, the internet or cyberspace played a key role. The protestors communicated, mobilized, and accelerated the movement by using the internet and new media. Moreover, social media plays a precise role as a catalyst. From the government side, there was an internet crackdown during the uprising. From July 17 to August 5, 2024, Bangladeshi internet users encountered many issues. During this period internet was outright prohibited, cutting Bangladesh off from the world. For several days, numerous social media sites were blocked. The demonstrators claimed that the government purposefully blocked the internet to hinder their ability to organize, coordinate, and communicate (The Daily Star, 2024, August 13).

The lack of internet made it difficult for journalists to cover the movement, which led to less real-time coverage and a restricted flow of information to the public and the global community. The suspension was viewed as a breach of free expression and information access on a global scale. Surprisingly, on August 5th, 2024, the government ordered the immediate reopening of all internet services, including 2G, 3G, and 4G, at 2 pm that day after Sheikh Hasina resigned from her position as prime minister and fled the country (The Daily Star, 2024, August 13).

According to the Daily Star, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) statement prevailed that the government interrupted the internet to achieve its political objectives. The report also discovered that the former state minister repeatedly ordered BTRC to shut down telecommunication networks to serve the political interests of the previous regime (Hasan, 2024). It is clearly evident that the former regime fully tried to suppress the voice of the July uprising protestors by shutting down the internet and social media networks in Bangladesh during the July uprising.

Table 1.
Socio-Demographic Features of the Respondents (n=398)

Indicators	Percentage (%)	Frequency
Sex		
Male	248	62.3
Female	150	37.7
Age group		
18–24 Years	242	60.8
25–34 Years	100	25.1
35 and above	56	14.1
Place of Residence		
Urban	373	93.7
Rural	25	6.3
Occupation		
Employed	92	23.1
Student and Unemployed	306	76.9
Education Level		
HSC or below	43	10.8
Bachelor	263	66.1
Master’s and above	92	23.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

According to the collected survey data, Table 1 shows that 62.3 percent of the respondents are male, with a frequency of 248 (N=398), whereas 37.7% of respondents are female, with a frequency of 150 (N=398). Moreover, Table 2 presents the age of the respondents. There are a significant number of respondents from the 18-24 age group (N=398) with the highest percentage of 60.8. Nearly one fourth of the respondents are from the 25-34 age group, which accounts for 25.1 percent of the total responses. The respondents aged 35 and above are nearly 14.1 percent, with a frequency of 56 (N=398). Based on the survey results, Table 2 shows that a higher number of residents are from urban areas, with a percentage of 93.7 (N=398) and a frequency of 373. The other respondents are from rural areas, with percentages of 6.3 percent and a frequency of 25.

Table 2 also shows the respondents' educational attainment. With a frequency of 263 and 66.1 percent (N=398), a significant portion of respondents are bachelor's degree holders. However, with a proportion of 23.01 percent, master's degree and above ranks as the second-highest educational level among respondents. HSC or below is the educational level of 10.8% of the respondents. The respondents' occupations are also displayed in the bar above Table 2. With a frequency of 306 and a percentage of 76.9 percent, students and the unemployed make up the largest group of respondents (N=398). With a ratio of 23.1 percent, employed is the second largest occupation.

ROLE OF NEW MEDIA DURING UPRISING

Using new media as a medium to receive real-time updates was significant during the July uprising. In total, 398 respondents took part in the survey. The impact and trustworthiness of new media resistance were evaluated during the survey. Additionally, the specialized role of social media for organizing digital resistance activities in repressive contexts in July has been asked of both the respondents and the in-depth interviewees. The figure below shows the information on using new media as a medium to get updates about the July uprising.

Table 2.

Using New Media As a Medium To Get Updates About July Uprising

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	389	97.7
No	9	2.3
Total	398	100

Table 2 shows that most respondents (over 97.7%) followed July 2024 uprising-related updates through social media (Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter). Only 2.3 percent of the respondents said that they did not follow the July uprising via social media. A majority of the population, however, followed the uprising through new media, based on survey data.

Figure 1.

Reliable Social Media Platforms For Real-Time Updates During July Uprising

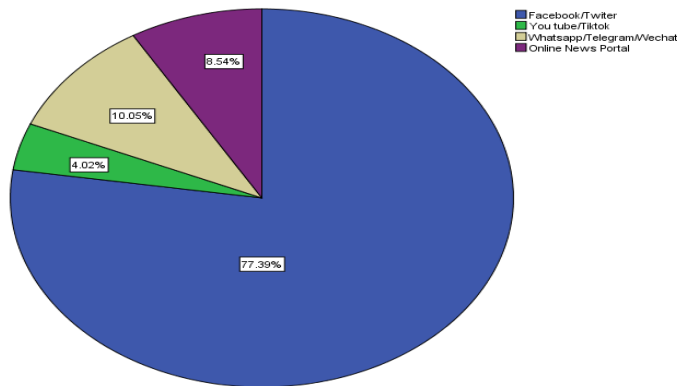


Figure 1 shows the use of different social media platforms for real-time updates on movement during the July uprising. This figure is the subdomain answer to research question 2 regarding the effect of the public perception of the issue through digital content (Facebook Reels, hashtags, and YouTube videos). Facebook and X play a dominant role in the information flow, as evidenced by the 77.4% of participants who reported using them for real-time updates. For real-time updates, 8.5% of respondents turned to online news

portals. During the July uprising, more than 10.1% of respondents said they relied on Telegram and WhatsApp for real-time updates.

Figure 2.

The Impact of Social Media Resistance

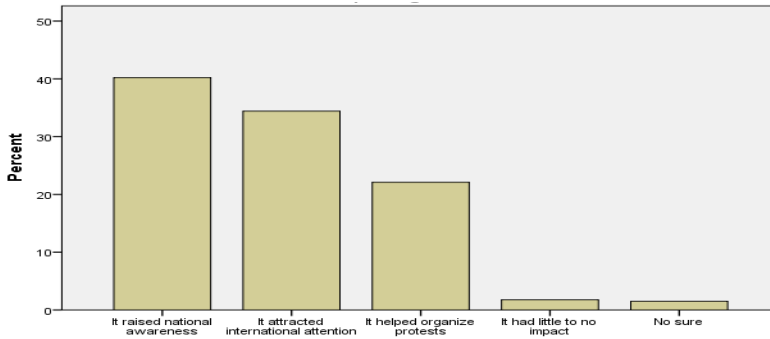


Figure 2 shows the impact of the social media resistance level. This figure indicates the perception of respondents regarding the level of significance of social media during the July Uprising. These answers cover research question 1, where the role of the new media in the July Uprising is evaluated. Significantly, 40.2% of participants believed that during the July uprising, social media resistance increased public consciousness. In a similar vein, almost one-third of the participants (about 34.4%) believe that social media opposition garnered global attention. Furthermore, 22.1 percent of those surveyed believe that protests were organized in part because of social media resistance.

Table 3.

The Trustworthiness of the Social Media Platforms for Real-time Updates During the July Uprising

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Trustworthy	239	60.1
Neutral	92	23.1
Not trustworthy	67	16.8

Total	398	100
-------	-----	-----

Table 3 shows the trustworthiness of the social media platforms for real-time updates among users during the July uprising. This figure also covers both research questions 1 and 2 regarding the role of new media and the effect of public perception on digital content, respectively. Significantly, 60.1 percent of respondents found the information shared through these social media was trustworthy during the uprising. On the other hand, 23.1 percent of respondents found that the information from these platforms was neutral. Only 16.8 percent of respondents declared that the information they find on these platforms is not trustworthy.

Table 4.

The Trustworthiness of the Social Media Platforms During the July Uprising With Different Variables

Variables	Trustworthy (%)	Neutral (%)	Not Trustworthy (%)	Total	<i>p</i> value
Sex					
Male	59.7	21.4	19.0	248	.268
Female	60.7	26.0	13.3	150	
Age group					
18–24 Years	54.0	22.0	13.2	242	.001
25–34 Years	53.0	31.0	16.0	100	
35 and above	55.4	10.7	33.9	56	
Places of Residence					
Urban	59.8	23.3	16.9	373	.908
Rural	64.0	20.0	16.0	25	
Occupation					
Employed	52.2	17.4	30.4	92	.000
	62.4	24.8	12.7	306	

Students and Unemployed					
Education Level					
HSC or below	55.8	30.2	14.0	43	
Bachelor	62.4	24.0	13.7	263	
Masters and above	55.4	17.4	27.2	92	.031

Table 4 shows the trustworthiness of the social media platforms during the July uprising with different variables. This table also covered both research questions 1 and 2 regarding the role of new media and the effect of public perception on digital content. Table 4 shows $p=0.031$ for the relationship between education levels and perceived trustworthiness. Those with a master's degree or above found social media information less trustworthy than those with a bachelor's degree or below. Table 4 also shows $p=.000$ for the relationship between employment and social media trustworthiness during the July uprising. Employed people perceived social media as less trustworthy than students and the unemployed. Table 4 also shows $p=.001$ for the relationship between social media trustworthiness among different age groups during the July uprising. The 35 and above age group finds social media less trustworthy than the 18-24 and 25-34 years age groups. Table 4 also shows $p=.268$ for the relationship between social media trustworthiness and sex. Males perceived social media as less trustworthy than females.

The respondents' perception of the trustworthiness of social media platforms is represented, taking into account sex, age, area of living, job occupation, and educational level (Table 4). P-values indicate that the group differences are significant. Neither the location nor the sex affects significantly how much trust there is. Older respondents (33.9%) were less trusting of information on social media, compared with younger ones. If we compare students/unemployed to employed, the employed were less trusting of others (30.4% vs 12.7%). Nor did those with more education (postgraduate qualification and above) trust in social

media during the uprising. Demographics affect the public perception of the dependability of these platforms.

Table 5.

Role of Social Media for Organizing Resistance in a Repressive Context In July Uprising

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes, social media played a crucial role in organizing and mobilizing the uprising	304	76.4
Yes, but its impact was limited due to government repression and censorship	58	14.6
Somewhat-social media helped raise awareness, but on-the-ground organization mattered more	32	8.0
No, social media did not play a significant role in the uprising	3	0.8
I am not sure/ I don't have enough information	1	0.3
Total	398	100

Table 5 indicates the feedback of the respondents regarding the role of social media for organizing resistance in repressive contexts in the July uprising. These responses also help the research to get the answer to research question 1, where the role of new media played in the July uprising is answered. Significantly, 76.4% of respondents consider that new media had a crucial impact in organizing and mobilizing the July uprising. In addition, 14.6 percent of respondents accept the impact of new media to mobilize the uprising, but they also think that its impact was limited due to government repression and censorship. Nearly 8 percent of respondents think that social media somewhat helped raise awareness of the uprising, but the on-the-ground organization mattered more.

Table 6.

Respondents Engagements of Digital Resistance Activities During the Uprising

Multiple Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Percentage of cases (%)*
Sharing protest-related posts and videos	289	30.8	72.8
Creating or joining encrypted groups	114	12.2	28.7
Using VPNs to bypass censorship	215	22.9	54.2
Participating in online campaigns/hashtags	181	19.3	45.6
Documenting or live-streaming protests	69	7.4	17.4
None	37	3.9	9.3
Other	32	3.4	8.1
Total	937	100	236.0

**Total exceeds 100% as respondents could select multiple options*

Table 6 shows the responses from respondents regarding their engagement in digital resistance activities during the uprising. Respondents were asked about their digital resistance techniques. Multiple response options were enabled, and this question covers research question 1, where the role of new media during the July uprising is the main concern. Table 6 shows that respondents participated actively in digital resistance activities during the July uprising. Social media networks were used to share protest-related posts and videos in more than 72.8% of cases. Additionally, in 28.7 percent of cases, respondents engaged in digital resistance by using encrypted protest-related social media groups. In addition, 54.2 percent of cases, respondents bypassed government digital repression with VPNs. Respondents participated in online campaigns/hashtags in over 45.6 percent of cases. In addition, 17.4% of case respondents documented live

streaming of the protest. In over 9.3 percent of cases, respondents did not participate in any of the above online activities. In nearly 8.1 percent of cases, respondents engaged in other activities not listed above.

DIGITAL REPRESSION PATTERN

The digital repression pattern was diverse and completely authoritarian during the July uprising. The government takes all necessary steps, including internet shutdown, account suspensions, blocking websites, blocking uprising-related Facebook groups, and slowing the internet. The target was to create impediments to spread movement-related real-time updates and stop being mobilized through social media. The figure below shows the digital repression pattern during the July 2024 uprising.

Figure 3.

Digital Repression Pattern During The July 2024 Uprising

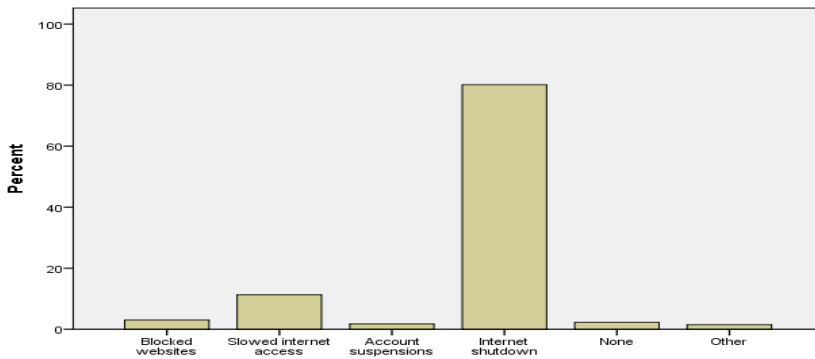


Figure 3 represents the digital repression scale and level during the July uprising. Respondents were asked about their experience with digital repression during the July uprising. Figure 3 covers the answer to research question 3, about the pattern of difficulties digital activists encounter during the protests. In Figure 3, the result shows that a majority of the respondents (over 80.2%) faced internet shutdown as a part of cyber censorship. However, 11.3 percent of respondents noticed slowed internet access during the July uprising. About 3% of the respondents experienced blocked websites during the July uprising as a form of cyber censorship. A comparatively small proportion of the respondents (over 1.8%) faced account suspensions during the July uprising.

Table 7.

Experience of Digital Repression Pattern With In Different Variables During The July 2024 Uprising

Variable s	Block ed Websi te (%)	Slow Intern et Acces s (%)	Account Suspensi ons (%)	Interne t Shutdo wn (%)	No ne (%)	Oth er (%)	Tot al	<i>p</i> val ue
Sex								
Male	2.8	11.7	1.6	79.4	3.2	1.2	248	.641
Female	3.3	10.7	2.0	81.3	0.7	2.0	150	
Age group								
18–24 Years	3.7	10.7	2.9	76.9	3.7	2.1	242	.116
25–34 Years	3.0	12.0	0.0	85.0	0.0	0.0	100	
35 and above	0.0	12.5	0.0	85.7	0.0	1.8	56	
Places of Residenc e								
Urban	3.2	11.8	1.6	80.2	2.1	1.1	373	.059
Rural	0.0	4.0	4.0	80.0	4.0	8.0	25	
Occupati on								
Employe d	1.1	9.8	2.2	87.0	0.0	0.0	92	.218
Students and	3.6	11.8	1.6	78.1	2.9	2.0	306	

Unemployed								
Education Level								
HSC or below	7.0	9.3	2.3	79.1	2.3	0.0	43	
Bachelor								.422
Masters	3.0	11.8	2.3	77.9	3.0	1.9	263	
and above	1.1	10.9	0.0	87.0	0.0	1.1	92	

Table 7 shows the experience of the respondents regarding digital repression patterns within different variables during the July 2024 uprising. It is important to analyze the experience of digital repression patterns and levels within different variables. Table 7 also covers the answer to research question 3, about the pattern of difficulties digital activists encounter during the protests. Table 7 shows $p = .059$ for the relationship between places of residence and experience of digital repression patterns. Urban people face more blocked websites and slow internet access than rural people. Table 7 also shows $p = .116$ for the relationship between age group and digital repression. The 35 and above age group faces fewer blocked websites than the 18-24 and 25-34 year age groups. Significantly, the 18-24 age group faces more account suspensions than others. Table 7 also shows $p = .422$ for the relationship between educational level and experience of digital repression pattern. Significantly, HSC or below education level respondents face website blocking more than other age groups.

Table 7 also indicates that certain age groups, including younger respondents, rural residents, and those with less education, may be more likely to experience internet-related disruptions. However, none of these demographic differences are statistically significant at the 5% level. Residence is the only exception, and it may suggest that urban and rural locations have different internet access experiences. The most common issue reported across all demographic categories was internet shutdowns.

TRADITIONAL MEDIA DURING UPRISING

Respondents' perception regarding the comparison between both traditional and new media during July is a pertinent research question of the study. Evaluating

the objectivity, biasness, and neutrality of traditional media during the July uprising is one of the prime concerns of the paper. The below figure has shown information of the function of traditional media during the July 2024 uprising.

Figure 4.

Role of Traditional Media (TV, newspapers, radio) During the July 2024 Uprising

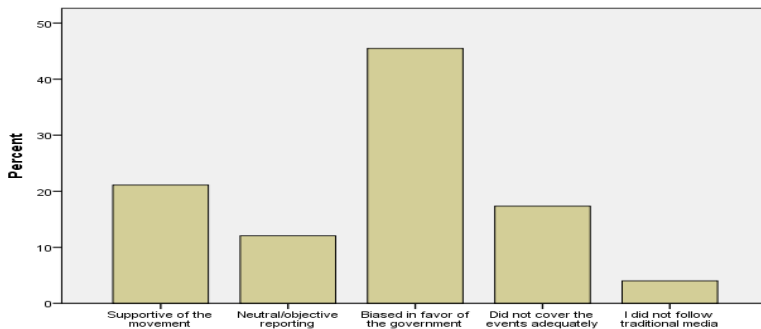


Figure 4 represents the role of traditional media during the July uprising. Respondents were asked about their evaluation of the role of traditional media during the uprising. This feedback from the respondents covers research question 1, where the role of traditional media during the uprising was the prime concern. The survey data in the figure 4 shows that nearly 45.5 percent of the respondents believe that the traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio) were biased in favor of the government during the July 2024 uprising. Additionally, one-fifth of the respondents (about 21.1%) believe that traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio) were supportive of the movement. Moreover, 17.3% of respondents think that traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio) did not cover the events adequately. Only 12.1 percent of respondents perceived that traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio) were either neutral or did objective reporting. A small number of respondents (nearly 4.3%) claimed that they do not follow traditional media (TV, newspapers, radio).

Figure 5

Compared to Social Media the Effectiveness of Traditional Media Covering the July Uprising

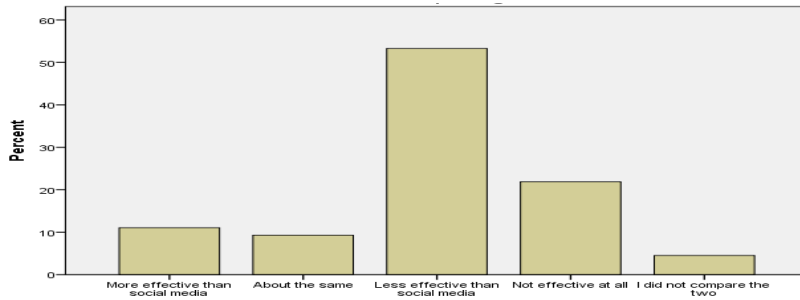


Figure 5 shows the comparison of effectiveness between social media and traditional media covering the July uprising. This feedback from the respondents also covers the answer to the research question 1, where the role of both new media and traditional media during the July uprising needs to be examined. The figure 5 shows that nearly half of the respondents (53.3%) believe that traditional media were less effective at covering the events of the July uprising in comparison with social media. Moreover, 21.9 percent of respondents agreed that traditional media were not effective at all in comparison with social media. A small percentage of people (about 11.1 percent) believe that traditional media were more effective than social media in covering the events of the July uprising. Only 9.3 percent of respondents think that both of the mediums are about the same regarding covering the July uprising events. 4.5% of respondents are not in the position to compare these two media regarding their coverage of the events of the July uprising.

Table 8.

Social Media and Traditional Media Coverage of the July Uprising As Perceived By Respondents

Variables	More Effective than Social media	About the same	Less effective than social media	Not effective at all	I don't compare two	Total	p value
Sex							
Male	12.5	8.5	54.4	20.2	4.4	248	.596
Female	8.7	10.7	51.3	24.7	4.7	150	

Age group							
18–24 Years	9.9	9.9	48.8	26.9	4.5	242	.149
25–34 Years	13	10	57	15	5.0	100	
35 and above	12.5	5.4	66.1	12.5	3.6	56	
Places of Residence							
Urban	9.1	9.4	54.7	22.5	4.3	373	.000
Rural	40	8.0	32	12	8.0	25	
Occupatio n							
Employed	15.2	4.3	60.9	15.2	4.3	92	
Students and Unemploy ed	9.8	10.8	51.0	23.9	4.6	306	.068
Education Level							
HSC or below	18.6	11.6	39.5	23.3	7.0	43	.226
Bachelor	10.6	9.9	51.3	23.6	4.6	263	
Masters and above	8.7	6.5	65.2	16.3	3.3	92	

Table 8 shows respondents’ perceptions about the credibility of new media and traditional media coverage of the July Uprising. Table 8 shows $p = .00$ for the

relationship between places of residence and the perception of social media and traditional media coverage of the July uprising. Rural people perceived traditional media as more effective than social media. Urban people perceive that traditional media is less effective than social media or not effective at all, compared to rural areas. Table 8 also shows $p = .068$ for the relationship between occupation and the perception of social media and traditional media coverage of the July uprising. Employed people found traditional media less effective than social media, compared to students and the unemployed. Table 8 also shows $p=.596$ for the relationship between the perception of social media and traditional media coverage of the July uprising. Males perceive a more positive approach and that traditional media was less effective than social media, more so than females. Compared to social media, only the place of residence had a statistically significant correlation ($p = .00$) with perceived effectiveness. Rural respondents rated traditional media as more effective than social media, while urban respondents rated it as about the same or less effective. A drastic difference was not evident in any of the other variables. In comparison to social media, higher education levels were associated with lower perception of effectiveness, while older age groups and those in employment had more positive views.

Table 9.

List of In-depth Interviewees

Interviewee Codes	Name	Designation	Organization
Interviewee-1	Md. Al-Amin Rakib	Academician	Bangladesh University of Professional (BUP)
Interviewee-2	Saeed Khan Shagor	July uprising activist & Filmmaker	

Interviewee-3	Minhaz Aman	Fact checker, Online Activist, research Lead & Co-founder	Activate Rights
Interviewee-4	Khandaker Tanvir Murad	Academician	Pathshala South Asian Media Institute
Interviewee-5	Shoeb Abdullah	Digital Rights Activist, Co-Founder	Activate Rights

FINDINGS FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

The study interviewed five digital rights activists to gather their active experience and profound expert opinion regarding the role in the July uprising. Interviewees were actively observing the July uprising from the perspective of digital rights activity. The qualitative data were divided into three basic themes based on the research questions. All interviews were coded initially and then categorized into broader themes. The three themes are the role of new media in the July uprising, the role of traditional media during the July uprising, and digital repression during the July uprising.

Role of New Media in the July Uprising

In an in-depth interview, Md. Al-Amin Rakib said, “New media was considered a driving force behind this movement. Due to jails, oppression, and tyranny that have persisted since the Awami era, opportunities for visible protest have been nearly nonexistent. The public chose the new media as a means of protest because of this.” He also added that since the Arab Spring, new media has become an influential tool in all the movements. Several social media platforms are used by the July uprising, including Facebook and Twitter. In particular, Twitter had a strong role in spreading news updates to international media outlets. During the July uprising, new media engaged people both at home and abroad. Significantly, the new media role was prominent to the July uprising

activists due to alleged government repression and the non-availability of in-person protests.

Khandaker Tanvir Murad said, “Digital activism had a significant role, and many of the people were not on the street, but they actively participated online. Digital activism also mobilized in-person protests. A good example can be the addition of red color to the Facebook profile picture campaign. Overnight, millions of people changed their profile picture and showed their solidarity with the uprising. After the internet shutdown, mobile text was important to communicate.”

Moreover, Md. Al-Amin Rakib said that on August 4, Asif Mahmud, one of the coordinators of the movement, announced the ‘March to Dhaka’ declaration through a Facebook post. But the traditional media did not report it. Using hashtags, the uprising has also reached a large number of people. Everyone’s profile photo was painted red as part of the protest, and everyone duplicated and shared the same post. Through international media, hashtags like #StepdownHasina, #ReverseBrainDrain, and #MarchForJustice became trending and gained popularity, and spread over the globe. Significantly, it is considered by the activists that traditional media allegedly do not intend to cover the movement's news and upcoming events purposefully. At the same time, with the use of social media platforms, the movement events and declaration of the upcoming events were being circulated through new media.

Role of traditional media during the July Uprising

Minhaz Aman said that since the ‘Nirapod Sarak’ movement in 2018, a completely non-political force was established that gave different opinions online and participated in different types of protests. Moreover, many of them participated in the July Movement. Since they collected their information and news from the new media and had nothing to do with traditional media like television and newspapers. Regarding the role of traditional media during the uprising, Md. Al-Amin Rakib said, "The role of traditional media was questionable. There were only reports of damage to buildings, but no reports of casualties.

Regarding the role of traditional media, Shoeb Abdullah said that the role of television was not in favor of the movement, although the newspaper provided objective news. But the role of social media was more important and significant.

I know many activists who have repeatedly said that they do not trust the traditional media. They want to use social media. The way the movement was mobilized, the function of the new media was the most pertinent. In Bangladesh, the widely used social media networks were Facebook and WhatsApp. Twitter (X) was widely used from outside the country, and a lot of people also used TikTok. Shoeb Abdullah also added that among the traditional media, television has worked grossly in favor of the government. One reason for this may be that it is easier for the government to control the television media. Another important factor is that television owners had a political bias.

Digital repression during the July Uprising

Addressing the digital repression during the July uprising, Saeed Khan Shagor said, ‘When the internet was completely shut down, the protestors who were close to the India-Bangladesh border used the Indian internet service to send updates and news of the uprising abroad. The expatriate Bangladeshis played an important role in this movement.’

Minhaz Aman said that there were several stages of internet shutdown. Many protesters used the Internet using a VPN during the shutdown, but when the Internet was blacked out, the Internet could not be used in any way. When the internet was completely shut down in Bangladesh, online influencers and political analysts from outside the country, especially Dhruv Rathee and Abhijit Banerjee, had a big role to play.

Md. Al-Amin Rakib added that during the uprising, Telegram played a very important role as a means of communication in the July Uprising. Many people had downloaded the VPN, and the backup group was already open. Shoeb Abdullah added that here, the protesters maintained contact through alternative communication methods.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study used convenience and snowball sampling strategies, which have methodological drawbacks. Furthermore, both sampling strategies are non-probability sampling methods. Most of the respondents came from uprising networks and groups that already existed, so the sample is mainly composed of people who actively participated in the uprising. Consequently, the results are less about the general population and more about those involved in the uprising.

This study does not aim to claim to provide a statistically representative survey of public opinion, but rather to provide an in-depth analysis of activist perspectives within a particular sociopolitical context. Furthermore, qualitative data were gathered from the in-depth interview from digital rights activists and academicians cum uprising activists. But due to lack of time constraints and availability, political scientists and traditional media editors were not interviewed in this study, which is a limitation of the study. Probability sampling strategies should be taken into account for upcoming studies in order to reduce selection bias and improve generalizability.

DISCUSSION

Castells's (2004) *The Network Society* provides an analytical lens for interpreting the July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh. Castells (2004) argued that a network society is characterized by a social structure powered by information and communication technology rooted in microelectronics. The July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh can be seen as a digitally networked social movement that later turned into a political movement. He argued that in a network society, the network is made up of nodes rather than a center. According to Castells (2004), three key characteristics of networks that profited from the new technology environment—flexibility, scalability, and survivability—made networks the most effective organizational structure.

Flexibility: Castells (2004) notes that networks can modify their components while keeping their purpose in response to shifting conditions. They search for new connections by circumnavigating communication channel blockages. In the July 2024 uprising, protestors tried to mobilize their movement events and manifesto through different social media platforms using the internet. Due to government repression and internet shutdown, activists used VPNs and other alternative internet access sources. Thus, VPNs become new connections circumnavigating communication channel blockages in the uprising.

Scalability: Castells (2004) argued that the network society can change size without much trouble. During the July 2024 uprising, protestors created several flagship Facebook groups and pages to communicate and mobilize a larger audience. In most cases, authorities allegedly blocked these Facebook pages and groups. However, new social media groups and pages quickly formed

again. Surprisingly, the number of group members grew rapidly. The scale of the network society was flexible and constantly changing as it adapted to new circumstances without much difficulty.

Survivability: Castells (2004) argued that networks can endure attacks on their nodes and codes because they are decentralized and operate in many configurations. In the July 2024 uprising, protestors used different encrypted messaging groups on networks. They used WhatsApp and Telegram to communicate with each other. The encrypted messaging was able to endure attacks on their nodes and codes due to their decentralized system.

The survey data shows that almost a hundred percent of the respondents followed the July 2024 uprising-related updates through social media (Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter). This is significant evidence of using new media as a means of communication during the July uprising. Significantly, more than three-fourths of the respondents used Facebook and X (Twitter); the second-largest respondent group (over 10.5 percent) relied on WhatsApp/Telegram. The interview data also show that new media is used as a medium of communication and to mobilize protesters.

Significantly, Facebook and X, formerly Twitter, were influential social media networks during the July uprising for real-time updates. The survey data analysis is evident that during the July uprising, social media resistance increased public consciousness, and social media opposition garnered global attention. Nearly forty percent of the respondents believe that during the July uprising, social media resistance increased public consciousness. Moreover, a significant number of respondents believe that social media opposition garnered global attention. Furthermore, a notable percentage of respondents also believe that protests were organized in part because of social media resistance.

The information found on social media during the uprising was not detected as trustworthy by many people. Sixty percent of respondents believed that the social media information was trustworthy. Among all the users of these platforms, only one-fourth found the information neutral. In spite of some differences of opinion, the information shared through social media was trustworthy.

New media for organizing resistance in repressive contexts during the July uprising are significantly solid and strong. More than seventy-seven percent of respondents consider that new media helped in organizing and mobilizing the July uprising. Significantly, it determined the impactful role of new media during the time of the July uprising. The engagements of digital resistance activities

during the uprising are highest, including sharing protest-related posts and videos in more than seventy-three percent of the cases. In half of the cases, respondents bypassed government digital repression with VPNs. VPN became one of the most popular gateways during the July uprising. Respondents participated in online campaigns/hashtags in over forty-six percent of cases.

During the July 2024 uprising, the government's digital repression pattern was significant. According to the survey data, more than eighty percent of respondents faced internet shutdown as part of digital repression. Traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio) were unable to publish and broadcast news of the uprising because of the government's stringent censorship or their unwillingness to accept the reality.

Almost half of the respondents think that during the July 2024 uprising, traditional media were biased in support of the government. The events were not sufficiently covered by the traditional media, which either reported objectively or in a neutral manner. The interview data also shows that the media lost their credibility with the public during the July uprising because of extensive government censorship and their self-reluctance to publish news that is against the government. New media, free from gatekeeping and censorship, disseminated unfiltered information at the same time and quickly gained popularity and trendiness. More than half of respondents believe traditional media were less effective at covering the July uprising than social media.

CONCLUSION

This paper reveals the dynamics of both new media and traditional media in the July uprising. A particular focus was placed on how new media were utilized to organize and mobilize protesters. Students and unemployed individuals account for 76.9% of the study sample, limiting the findings mainly to young, educated individuals. The study lacks a balanced representation of occupational and age groups. Due to this sample bias, the results may be generalized, which is more applicable to young generations than to the overall population. Survey data and in-depth interviews with activists revealed that new media were the indispensable medium in the July uprising. The findings suggest that Facebook and Twitter (X) were trending social media networks during the July uprising for real-time updates. During the July uprising, social media resistance increased public awareness, garnered global attention, and helped organize protests. A majority of the population considered social media platforms to be trustworthy during the uprising, despite some differences of opinion. In addition, most people believe

social media helps the protesters in organizing and mobilizing the July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh. The government engaged in digital repression through an internet blackout. During the uprising, the regime took repressive measures and disconnected Bangladesh from the rest of the world, making it difficult to get information out. It was found that traditional media (TV, newspapers, and radio) tended to favor the government during July 2024, failing to cover the events objectively and adequately. New media were more effective at covering the July uprising than traditional media. The study found that biased reporting aligned with the government's narrative and the dissemination of inadequate information by traditional media contributed to the possibility that new media could be a catalyst for the July Uprising in 2024.

REFERENCES

- Ackoff, R. L. (1953). *The design of social research*. University of Chicago Press.
- Anjum, S. (2024, August 12). From social media to the streets: How Bangladesh's Gen-Z movement overcame internet shutdowns to overthrow an autocrat. *Tech Policy Press*. <https://www.techpolicy.press/from-social-media-to-the-streets-how-bangladeshs-genz-movement-overcame-internet-shutdowns-to-overthrow-an-autocrat/>
- Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. (2025, March 19). *Internet subscriber*. <https://btrc.gov.bd/site/page/347df7fe-409f-451e-a415-65b109a207f5/>
- Bayat, A. (2015). Plebeians of the Arab Spring. *Current Anthropology*, 56(S11), S33–S43. <https://doi.org/10.1086/681523>
- bdnews24.com. (2024, December 30). 2024: The year of the 36-day July. <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/89209446561e>
- Bhuiyan, S. I. (2011, January 1). Social media and its effectiveness in the political reform movement in Egypt. *Figshare*. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/meme/vol1/iss1/3>
- Borders, B. (2009, June 2). A brief history of social media [Web log post]. <http://socialmediarockstar.com/history-of-social-media>
- Brewerton, P., & Millward, L. (2001). *Organizational research methods*. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209533>

Castells, M. (Eds.). (2004). *The Network Society*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Retrieved Nov 22, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781845421663>

Clark, E. (2012). *Social media & social movements: A qualitative study of Occupy Wall Street*.

Eltantawy, N., & Wiest, J. B. (2011). *Social media in the Egyptian revolution: Reconsidering resource mobilization theory*. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 1207–1224. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/1242/597>

Erickson, B. H. (1979). Some problems of inference from chain data. *Sociological Methodology*, 10, 276–303. <https://doi.org/10.2307/270774>

Hasan, M. (2024a, August 13). What you need to know about the internet crackdown in Bangladesh. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/what-you-need-know-about-internet-crackdown-bangladesh-3676346>

Hasan, M. (2024b, August 20). The Internet blackout had no legal basis. *The Daily Star*. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/internet-blackout-had-no-legal-basics-3681416>

Islam, S.-E.-R. (2024, September). Social media as a catalyst for mobilizing mass protests during the July movement in Bangladesh. <https://bipss.org.bd/pdf/September%20commentary%20Sirat.pdf>

Kemp, S. (2024). *Digital 2024: Bangladesh—DataReportal – Global digital insights*. DataReportal. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-bangladesh>

Khondker, H. H. (2011). Role of the new media in the Arab Spring. *Globalizations*, 8(5), 675–679. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2011.621287>

Md. Amran Hossain, Hasan, M. M., & Wasantha, N. (2025). The power of social media in driving political change: A case study on Bangladesh's regime change in 2024. *International Journal of Sociology and Law*, 2(1), 257–275. <https://doi.org/10.62951/ijsl.v2i1.405>

Meral, K. Z., & Meral, Y. (2017). The role of social media in Arab Spring. *Electronic Journal of New Media*, 5(1), 26–34. https://doi.org/10.17932/iau.ejnm.25480200.2021/ejnm_v5i1003

National Herald. (2024). Nearly 650 people killed in recent Bangladesh violence: UN report. <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/international/nearly-650-people-killed-in-recent-spate-of-violence-in-bangladesh-un-report>

Reza, S. A., & Bhuiyan, M. M. U. (2025). Analyzing the role of key stakeholders in the July uprising 2024 in Bangladesh: Actors and factors approach. *Journal of Political Science*, 25, 214–237. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v25i1.75783>

Soares, C. D. M., & Joia, L. A. (2015). The Influence of Social Media on Social Movements: An Exploratory Conceptual model. In *Lecture notes in computer science* (pp. 27–38). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22500-5_3

UN report: 1,400 people killed in July uprising. (2025, February 12). *Dhaka Tribune*. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/373524/un-report-1-400-people-killed-in-july-uprising>

Atıf İçin: Hossain, S. M. I. (2026) Digital Repression and Online Resistance: New Media in Mobilizing the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh, *Yeni Medya Elektronik Dergisi*, 10 (2), 370-401.