

The Role of Digital Media in Shaping Youth Awareness of the Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study explores the role of digital media in shaping youth awareness and advocacy for the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. Results show that digital media, namely social media channels (e.g., Facebook, YouTube), significantly help increase youth awareness around the topic, whereas videos and infographics are precision tools for generating empathy. But the potential of digital media is constrained by challenges such as, but not limited to, misinformation, political sensitivity, and fragmented narratives. Despite these challenges, the study shows young people actively using a digital media platform to raise awareness of and advocate for the Rohingya crisis. Therefore, we found the study highlights that social change can take place via digital media.

Keywords: *Digital Media, Rohingya Crisis, Bangladeshi Youth, Social Media Advocacy, Youth Awareness*

Introduction

The Rohingya crisis is now one of the world's largest humanitarian challenges, with nearly a million of Rohingya fleeing violence in Myanmar to Bangladesh. This has placed a considerable strain on Bangladesh's resources and posed challenges to healthcare, education, and social integration, but the country has demonstrated generosity in providing refuge (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). Transitioning from these humanitarian challenges, digital media has emerged as a vital lens through which the crisis is examined and understood. While traditional media offers broad coverage of the unfolding crisis, digital media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping youth awareness and advocacy in Bangladesh. Social

media and video-sharing websites provide real-time updates and diverse perspectives, enabling young people to engage actively with the crisis. These platforms not only facilitate rapid information sharing but also foster spaces for dialogue and activism—thereby directly influencing how youth perceive, respond to, and mobilize around the Rohingya crisis. The youngest generation is most engaged with the digital connects and a force for consciousness and activism. In Bangladesh, especially among the youth, social media literacy is high, leading to discussion of social issues among peers and influence (Das, 2020). Studying how they respond and interact with the crisis via digital media is essential to effective communication in this crisis

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(Anderson, 2020). However, with the spread of misinformation, online information accessed by young people becomes problematic, especially since a fair number of young people may lack the skills to evaluate the veracity of information found online (Pennycook et al., 2020).

Research Questions

Given the widespread use of digital media, it is essential to determine which platforms and content types are most effective in shaping informed awareness. This study, therefore, aims to answer the following research questions:

- a) Which digital media platforms do Bangladeshi youth primarily use to access information about the Rohingya crisis?
- b) What types of digital content are most effective in raising awareness about the humanitarian aspects of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh?
- c) How do young people assess the credibility of digital sources when learning about the Rohingya crisis?
- d) To what extent does digital media shape youth perceptions and engagement with discussions on the Rohingya crisis?

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two media and communication theories: Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Framing Theory. Katz et al. (1973) explain that individuals actively select media to fulfill the need to be informed and engaged, which assists in deciphering why Bangladeshi youth consume specific content on the Rohingya crisis. The Framing Theory, in contrast, investigates how media highlights specific aspects of an issue to shape perceptions (Entman, 1993). It helps us use a method to examine how digital platforms frame the crisis, particularly via emotional content such as videos and infographics, which ultimately can shape youth empathy and advocacy. Collectively these theories provide a framework to understand youth engagement around humanitarian issues. In this study, Uses and Gratifications Theory guided the analysis of youth media preferences and motivations, while Framing Theory was used to

examine how different types of digital content influence their perceptions and emotional responses to the crisis.

Methodology

A descriptive cross-sectional design was used to examine the impact of digital media on youth awareness of the Rohingya crisis. The target population included Bangladeshi youth aged 18–30 who actively use digital media, with a sample of 400 respondents selected through non-probability purposive sampling based on their active use of digital media platforms. The targeted platforms were the online groups and forums related to Rohingya crisis, social activism, humanitarian issues, and youth engagement to ensure the sample included individuals likely to have encountered and engaged with relevant digital content. A questionnaire was distributed through social media and youth networks. The questionnaire comprised a combination of structured and semi-structured questions relating to demographic details, digital media engagement, content preferences, and interaction with the Rohingya crisis. Pretesting with 20 participants ensured the clarity of the questions. Quantitative data were examined with SPSS and Excel, and demographics and depreciation were summarized with descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation). Cross-tabulations and correlation analyses were conducted to explore relationships between the use of the platforms and awareness of the crisis. Qualitative responses from open-ended questions were thematically analyzed to deepen the understanding of the findings.

Findings

The study found that Bangladeshi youth awareness and advocacy of the Rohingya crisis is centrally orientated around digital media. Facebook, YouTube and Instagram have been widely used to spread information, where Facebook is the main source for wide information sharing along with advocacy. All types of visual content, including videos and infographics, showed the most engagement with users, and more emotional appeals were effective in building empathy. But the study also found major issues

with content credibility, as many respondents reported difficulties in verifying the accuracy of digital media sources. The spread of misinformation, biased framing, and lack of transparency in content creation were identified as key concerns affecting trust in the information presented. At the same time, misinformation, political sensitivity and fragmented narratives were identified with as key problems blocking trust in digital media, as they created confusion, skepticism, and divided public perception about the crisis. Misinformation spread or misleading claims and political sensitivity influenced how the crisis was portrayed, and fragmented narratives led to incomplete or one-sided information, making it challenging for youth to develop a well-informed understanding of the Rohingya crisis. Despite these worries, the respondents mostly utilized digital media to raise awareness and promote the Rohingya crisis, with social media posts serving as a primary tool for sharing information, expressing opinions, and mobilizing support. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter were frequently used to spread updates, engage in discussions, and amplify humanitarian concerns. Findings highlight the fact that beyond the power of digital media as a tool for mobilizing public opinion, it comes with the need for increased efforts to ensure the availability of accurate, trusted information and the improvement of digital media literacy.

Discussion

By analyzing the platforms used, content consumed, credibility barriers, and influence on advocacy efforts, the study explored the role of digital media in shaping awareness of the Rohingya crises among Bangladeshi youth. The statistics indicate the monopoly of Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram as the means for information and advocacy. Audiovisual content like documentaries, short films, and infographics becomes the most transparent movement medium in terms of meaningful engagement of the youth. But it might also be that these platforms are able to spread information more broadly, more quickly, and can facilitate people's compassion and support. But issues such as misinformation and political persuasion and fragmented narratives,

provided individuals with significant problems - underscoring the need for bactericidal literacy and fact-checking efforts.

Because of this, digital media is one of the most important places for raising awareness and for lower-barrier advocacy work such as sharing posts or videos. These online actions are frequently dismissed as "slacktivism" but add to a more significant, cumulative effect. The study also found that even though a sizable proportion (approximately 70%) of youth are engaging in online forms of advocacy, only a more minor, select portion will participate in offline practices such as protests or volunteering, suggesting that digital forms of media can positively influence more robust forms of activism. The result indicates that digital platforms play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, their effectiveness depends on the accuracy of shared information and how individuals critically engage with it, and that advocacy campaigns should also emphasize issues of credibility as well as what we decide to do in the real world with our online efforts. Creating in-depth, localized, and balanced content requires collaboration among NGOs, media organizations, and content creators. To sum up, even if digital media has extensive potential of awareness and mobilizing action for humanitarian causes, it necessitates strategic enhancement of its impact concerning credibility, media literacy and incorporation with offline activities to generate significant, durable change.

Conclusion

This study investigates how digital media affects Bangladeshi youth's awareness of the Rohingya crisis by examining their platform usage, the effectiveness of different types of content, and their trust in digital sources. The research seeks to provide insights into advocacy strategies and contribute to discussions on the role of digital media in responding to humanitarian crises.

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