



**Partecipazione e Conflitto**

<https://ese-journals.unisalento.it/index.php/paco/>

ISSN: 1972-7623 (print version)

ISSN: 2035-6609 (electronic version)

PACO, Issue 19(2) 2026: 644-660

DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v19i2p644-660

Published 15 July, 2026

Work licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non commercial-Share alike 4.0 Italian License

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Protest Participation and Social Media Engagement of College Students: The case of July Uprising in Bangladesh

**Md Sanaul Haque Mondal**

*East West University, Bangladesh*

**ABSTRACT:** In July 2024, students from several universities in Bangladesh turned out to the streets to reform job quotas in government services. The government used excessive force to stop protest, leading to widespread violence in the country. Soon after the government's brutal actions, many people, including college students, took to the streets to demand justice for barbaric acts. This study examined Bangladeshi college students' protest participation and willingness to participate in future social movements. A survey was conducted with 125 college students after the July 2024 protest. Descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. All statistical analyses were done using SPSS (version 26). Most respondents were male (72%), with an average age of 18.31 years. Only 12.8% had personal income, and 71.2% were in Grade 12. About 66% were from a Bengali medium background, and 61.6% were science students. The study found that 77.6% participated in protests physically, while 91.2% were active on social media. Additionally, 90.4% expressed willingness to participate in future social movements. Regression analysis showed that age, sex, medium of instruction, faculties, and state repression significantly influence participation in the protest physically. On the other hand, kinship sentiment and state repression demonstrated a correlation with online protest participation. The willingness to participate in future social movements was found to be associated with social media engagement and the perceived well-being of the nation. These findings are very useful for researchers and policymakers to challenge the existing notion that youths are reluctant or have limited interest in social issues, civic engagement, and participation.

**KEYWORDS:** Social movement, Participation, Bangladesh, July uprising, Social media

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):** [mshaquem@gmail.com](mailto:mshaquem@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

Bangladesh is a country with a longstanding tradition of student protests (in Bengali *Chatro Andolon*). Students have played an important role in confronting authoritarian rule, from the 1952 Language Movement to the 1971 Liberation War, the return of democracy in 1990, and the 2024 July uprising. Even though social movements are often ignored when studying authoritarianism or considered having little effect on political changes, Bangladesh shows that these movements are crucial to the country's political history, mobilizing different societal groups around issues of injustice and reform to challenge regimes and facilitate substantial political change (Jackman, 2021).

In the last decade, Bangladesh has experienced several waves of students' protests. In 2018, the country saw two student-led movements: one focused on improved road safety and the other on quota reform in civil services (Ghosh, 2023; Jackman, 2021). These two events resulted in blockades of key streets, clashes between protesters, the police, and the ruling party's activists, and eventually a concession from the government.

The year 2024 was a challenging year for Bangladesh, attributed to the quota reform movement in the civil services. This movement originated with urban students in Dhaka, was sparked by issues of injustice, was catalyzed by unwise comments from ministers, and was mobilized through social media (e.g., Facebook) (Mondal, 2025). Although movements started at Dhaka University, the protest spread throughout the country, resulting in the formation of university- and college-level student committees across the country (Chowdhury, 2025). This movement found support from across the student body, the majority of whom did not have political affiliation. The mass protest was also called the July Uprising (Chowdhury, 2025; Mondal, 2025). Since the student-led movement united ordinary people in a fight for dignity, rights, and accountability, this campaign led to the dramatic fall of the prime minister. Through the brutal actions of armed forces, around 1400 protesters and civilians died, and over 11,700 were injured during the July Uprising (OHCHR, 2025). On the other hand, after the collapse of the government, violent protesters engaged in retaliatory violence, resulting in the deaths of 44 police officers, 3 Border Guards, 3 Ansar/Village Defense Party (VDP) members, and 2 Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) members (OHCHR, 2025).

Participation in student activism during schooling is important, as individuals engaged in such activities are more likely to engage in social issues in their adulthood (Hong-Dwyer, 2023). Young people are perceived as apolitical due to their limited engagement in formal political activities (Weiss, 2020). The emergence of the internet and social media has created a new platform for political mobilization (Reichert, 2021). The use of social media has become an important part of youth people's (born mid-1990s, age range 15 to 24 years) daily lives. Researchers around the world investigated the relationship between social media use and students' protest behavior (Andretta & Imperatore, 2025; Burean & Badescu, 2014; Chu, 2018; Lee et al., 2017; Marcaida, 2020; Reichert, 2021; Zhu et al., 2017) and motivation to join a protest (Song et al., 2023). However, academic literature on student protest, particularly youth, is limited. Several studies have indicated that social media can influence protest (Dodo & Mpofu, 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2017), yet very little is known about what motivates college students (grade 11 and 12) to participate in protest, especially when it comes to Bangladesh. The majority of the studies in Bangladesh focused on the university students. Until now none of the studies examine the motivation of Bangladeshi college students to participate in a protest (online and offline). It is important to note that the university students in 2024 were likely college students during the 2018 road safety movement in Bangladesh. Therefore, it will be an important contribution to the literature on what motivates college students to participate in a protest. Against this background, this study sought to fill the gap by examining the engagement of Bangladeshi college students in the July 2024 uprising (both online and offline) and the factors that motivate them to participate in it. Specifically, this study will answer the following three research questions: (i) what motivates college students to participate in the protest physically (offline) ?

(ii) what drives college students to participate in the protest via social media (online)? and (iii) what drives college students' willingness to participate in a future social movement?

The July uprising has had profound consequences and changed the political landscape of Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2025). Therefore, knowing more about protest participation among Bangladeshi students is imperative for researchers and policymakers.

### **1.1 Literature review**

Although student activism has historically played an important role in Bangladesh, it has received less attention in academia. The existing literature on student protests in Bangladesh has concentrated on the students' activism in the country's political struggles. Haque (2025) investigates the role of student-led nonviolent movements in Bangladesh from 1947 to 1971 that contributed to the country's path to independence in 1971. Ullah (2009) highlighted the historical background of student politics in Bangladesh from 1972 to 2002 and the role of students to the development of democracy in the country. Patwary (2011) examines the impact of student politics on the educational environment at the university.

The literature on students' activism through social media in Bangladesh is relatively new and expanding rapidly. For example, Kuttig & Suykens (2020) examines how student politicians of the country utilize Facebook to amplify their political performance and engage in political activities. Roy (2019) examines the relationship between online activism and mediated politics in Bangladesh, focusing on the 2013 Shahbag Movement. This event is a social media-driven youth protest providing an example of how online activism has emerged as a mode of political engagement among the youth in the country. Several studies were conducted in the post-Shahbag Movement. Ghosh (2023) and Jackman (2021) explore student-led Road Safety Protests in 2018 and Quota Reform Movement in 2018, highlighting the role of social media for mobilization and the success of these two movements outside of mainstreaming political parties.

While existing literature on the July uprising has focused on media framing during the protests (Arman et al., 2025; Rezvi et al., 2025), crisis management during the protest (Mahmud, 2025), motivation to the protest (Parvez, 2025) and the mental health of students (Mondal, 2025), comparatively little attention has been paid to understanding students' protest behavior and their engagement with social media.

Political participation is shaped by socio-economic factors. Sex differences in protest participation are mixed, with some studies finding female students are more likely to engage in social protest (Burean & Badescu, 2014), while others show no significant differences between males and females (Reichert, 2021; Theocharis, 2011). Parents education does not influence political participation (Burean & Badescu, 2014). Political trust (Mercea, 2012) and ideological orientation (Burean & Badescu, 2014) may also influence participation. Age positively correlates with political participation (Melo & Stockemer, 2014); however, youth apathy poses a risk to democratic legitimacy (Reichert, 2021; Tariq et al., 2022).

### **1.2 Conceptualizing collective action and student protest**

Political participation includes both conventional forms (involving participation in a political party) and unconventional forms (participation in marches and protests) (Burean & Badescu, 2014). According to Opp (Opp, 2009), a protest is a collective action by people to attain a certain objective by influencing decisions of a target.

Collective action is defined as any action taken on behalf of the group with the intention of improving the group's conditions (Wright et al., 1990). These actions may include participation in protest demonstrations or individualistic actions like signing a petition (Van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2012). Collective action behavior

challenges the status quo and seeks to disrupt the existing power structure (Chan et al., 2017). According to Gamson (1992), collective action frameworks include three components: injustice, agency, and identity. The injustice component is the belief that something is morally wrong or unfair, the agency component is the belief that collective action is possible and can achieve desirable outcomes, and the identity component is defining "we" versus "they" with different interests or values (Gamson, 1992). Later on Van Zomeren et al. (2008) integrated socio-psychological viewpoints on collective action, emphasizing subjective injustice, identity, and efficacy as determinants of collective action.

An identity component directly influences collective action and indirectly affects it through feelings of injustice and efficacy (Chan, 2017). Individuals categorize themselves based on their affiliations with various social groups, including race, gender, political party, and activist organization, which influence whether an individual joins or does not join in collective action (Chan, 2017; Gamson, 2013; Van Stekelenburg, 2013). Studies show anger plays a crucial role in addressing perceived injustices, driving protests, and fostering collective actions, as it serves as a response to disruptions (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009). Each of these components is essential but not sufficient for the formation of a collective action frame (Gamson, 2013).

Student protests constitute a form of collective action (Accornero, 2018). It encompasses various forms of activism, including rallies, street marches, slogans, boycotts, strikes, public speeches, sit-ins, banners, and posters (Haque, 2025). This study conceptualizes student protests as collective actions aimed at influencing authorities and government decisions through non-institutional channels. The July uprising is an example of collective action, where students participated in the protest to achieve their goal. Therefore, this study hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Identity, injustice, and efficacy positively influence students' participation in the protest physically.

The rise of social media has transformed political participation into the digital space, redefining it beyond traditional offline methods (Lilleker & Koc-Michalska, 2017; Marcaida, 2020). Therefore, conventional measures may fail to capture youth's engagement, which necessitates alternative assessment methods ( Chan, 2017; Chu, 2018; Theocharis, 2011; Weiss, 2020). The July 2024 uprising serves as an example of social media's role in organizing the protests, sharing news, and mobilizing support for the movements. In light of this information, the second hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Identity, injustice, and efficacy positively influence students' participation in the protest via social media.

Students' protests serve as a pivotal force in the struggle for political transformation in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi students have demonstrated their capacity to run the protest spontaneously and effectively. Since 1952, nonviolent collective action has emerged as a reliable mode of political struggle in Bangladesh (Haque, 2025). Therefore, the third hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Identity, injustice, efficacy, and past protest participation positively influence students' willingness to participate in future social movements.

## **2. Methods and materials**

### **2.1. Data collection**

This study employed an exploratory cross-sectional study design. The data were collected using Google Forms between August and September 2024. The survey respondents were college students who were enrolled in Grade 11 and Grade 12 at the time of the interview. Students enrolled in Grade 11 and Grade 12 in Bangladesh were eligible to participate in this study. Note that students enrolled in any university were not eligible to participate in this study.

The study used a snowball nonprobability sampling technique to collect data from the college students. At the very beginning three college students were contacted for the survey. They subsequently shared the link to the questionnaire among their peers, who then circulated the link among their peers. This method enabled the author to receive responses from 127 college students. Two of the 127 respondents declined to participate in the study, leading to their exclusion from the analysis. Finally, 125 valid responses were considered for this study.

The author acknowledged that the sample size of this study was small. During the planning of the study, it was expected to collect data from at least 380 respondents. However, it was difficult to recruit the required number of respondents due to the sensitive nature of the study. The data collection period was also extended twice and was closed after 30 September 2024 because later the study was completed, the less relevant the effect of the protest might become. The author was aware that a small sample size might create the challenges of the generalizability of the study findings. Jenkins and Quintana-Ascencio (2020) recommended that research based on regressions should use a minimum sample size of  $N \geq 25$  to ensure greater variance. This study has adequate samples to run the regression models.

The survey questionnaire was developed in Bengali and English. The validity of the questionnaire items was established via a pilot survey. The questionnaire had several sections: socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, participation in the protest (physically and on social media), motivation to join the protest, mental health measures, coping mechanisms, and willingness to participate in future social movements.

### **2.2. Data analysis**

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, principal component analysis (PCA), and multivariate regression analysis. To obtain general information regarding college students' participation in protests, the mean, standard deviation, and percentages of their sociodemographic characteristics were calculated.

Principal component analysis is used to decompose the original set of variables into a smaller number of linear combinations to produce principal components (Field, 2013; Saisana & Tarantola, 2002). A Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization to the component matrix was applied. The robustness of the model was checked using Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO) measures of sampling adequacy ( $>0.7$ ) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (significant at  $p < .05$ ). A component with an eigenvalue above 1.0 were extracted. To quantify the factors affecting college students' participation in the July uprising, binary logistic regression and multivariate linear regression were used. All statistical analyses were done using SPSS (version 26).

### **2.3. Measurements**

Following Lilleker & Koc-Michalska (2018), this study used two spheres of activity: (i) participated in the protest physically (offline) and (ii) participated in the protest via social media (online). Furthermore, the willingness to participate in future social movement was used to explore the commitment of the youth population toward their country to build a peaceful and equitable society.

**2.3.1. Offline (physical) protest participation:** Offline protest participation refers to participation in the July uprising physically, such as protests, demonstrations, gatherings, and long marches. Respondents were asked the statement, I attended the protest physically (1=physically participated in the protests, and 0=not physically participated in the protests) ( $M=0.776$ ,  $SD=0.419$ ). A total of 97 (77.0%) respondents participated in the protest physically (details of the summary statistics are in Annex 1).

**2.3.2. Online protest participation:** Online protest participation refers to participation in the July uprising via social media platforms, especially Facebook, by examining themselves by liking, sharing, and commenting on the protest-related posts. Online protest participation was measured via 5 statements (1=yes and 0=no): (i) I changed my Facebook profile picture to red (79.2%), (ii) I accepted invitations to join the protest via social media (74.4%), (iii) I invited my friends/family members to join the students' protest (73.6%), (iv) I shared news and photos of students' protests on social media (76%), and (v) I expressed my opinion on students' protests on social media (62.4%) (details of the summary statistics are in Annex 1). The Cronbach alpha value for these five measures was 0.844. Around 91.2% ( $n=114$ ) of respondents reported using at least one of the five statements related to participation in the protest online.

Then, PCA was used to create unitless online protest participation indices. PCA extracted a single component (eigenvalue  $> 1$ ) out of five social media engagement-related questions, which explained 62.15% variance in the data. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.839, demonstrating the data's strong suitability for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a significant result:  $X^2(10) = 255.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . The extracted factor was named as social media engagement. Social media engagement was identified as the dependent variable for analyzing students' online engagement.

**2.3.3. Protest intentions:** Protest intentions refer to the willingness of an individual to take part in a future social movement. Respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in the protest: would you like to participate in any peaceful social movement in the future? (1=yes and 0=no) ( $M=0.904$ ,  $SD=0.296$ ) (details of the summary statistics are in Annex 1).

**2.3.4. Motivation to join July 2024 protest:** Existing research suggested that state repression, such as mass killing, arrest, torture, harassment, torturing, and spying, can influence social mobilization (Davenport, 2007; Parvez, 2025). In this study, motivation to join the protest refers to the perceived efficacy and anger that influence respondents to participate in online and offline protests.

The indicators were selected based on the literature review and discussion with the college students. For the various motivations to join the protest, all the respondents were asked 10 statements to join the protest: (i) to restructure the quota system in government jobs (77.6%); (ii) my friends asked me to join the protest (28%); (iii) for the future of Bangladesh (86.4%); (iv) government tough stances against students and civilians (68.8%); (v) police violence against unarmed protesters and non-protesters (72%); (vi) shutdown internet and social media apps (60.8%); (vii) my friends and family members were injured during the protest (36.8%); (viii) my friends and family members died during the protest (16.8%); (ix) my parents encouraged me to join the

movement (29.6%), (x) inspired by the sacrifice of our heroes in 1952 and 1971 (61.6%) (details of the summary statistics are in Annex 1). The Cronbach alpha value for these ten measures was 0.796.

Principal component analysis was used to generate principal components on motivation to join the July uprising. PCA extracted three factors related to the motivation for joining the July uprising, accounting for 61.35% of the total variance in the dataset. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.773, signifying a substantial level of sampling adequacy for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a significant result:  $X^2(45) = 359.60, p < .001$ . After rotation, the first component explained 36.46% of the variance. The first component scored highly on variables such as police violence, government position, digital shutdown, legacy of heroes, and unequal job quota (Table 1). The first component was a reasonable representation of the state repression. The second component accounted for 13.66% of the variance. Parents' motivation, F&F injured, F&F died, and peer motivation were highly loaded on the second component and were classified as kinship sentiment. The third component explained 11.12% of the variance and was labelled as the well-being of nations. The extracted factor scores of three principal components were considered as motivation to join the protest.

**Table 1: Rotated component matrix**

Variables	Principal components		
	C1	C2	C3
Police violence against unarmed protesters and non-protesters [police violence]	.824		
Government tough stances against students and civilians [government position]	.797		
Shutdown internet and social media apps [digital shutdown]	.722		
Inspired by the sacrifice of our heroes in 1952 and 1971 [legacy of heroes]	.652		
To restructure the quota system in government jobs [unequal job quota]	.631		
My friends and family members died during the protest [F&F died]		.831	
My parents encouraged me to join the movement [parents' motivation]		.730	
My friends and family members were injured during the protest [F&F injured]		.700	
My friends asked me to join the protest [peer motivation]		.321	
For the future of Bangladesh [future of Bangladesh]			.765

**2.3.5. Sociodemographic characteristics:** The sociodemographic characteristics determine the identity of the protesters who introduce themselves as students by wearing student identity cards. The following sociodemographic variables were included in the models, which were chosen according to the literature review (Reichert, 2021), conceptualization of this study, and availability of the data: sex (male, female), age (in years), medium of instruction (Bengali medium and English medium), level of education (grade 11 and grade 12), and faculty (science and business) (details of the summary statistics are in Annex 1).

## 2.4. Ethical consideration

Respondents were informed about the objective of this study and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the data. They were also aware that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. Respondents were required to review the informed consent form electronically before entering the survey questionnaire by responding to the statement: "I fully understand the purpose of this study and freely consent to participate (Yes/No)." A "Yes" response indicated consent, allowing access to the main survey questions, whereas a "No" response indicated non-consent, resulting in dropout from the survey. The research adhered to the ethical principles established in the Helsinki Declaration.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

One hundred and twenty-five college students completed the survey (Table 2). Most respondents were male (72%, n=90). The respondents' average age was 18.31 years (SD=1.27, range: 15–21 years), and over half of the respondents (52.8%, n=66) were between 15 and 18 years. Only sixteen respondents (12.8%) had personal income. Eighty-nine respondents (71.2%) were from Grade 12. Slightly fewer than two-thirds of the respondents were from the Bengali medium (64%, n = 80). Over three-fifths (61.6%, n=77) of the respondents were science background students. The findings indicated that 77.6% of respondents participated in the protest physically and 91.2% were active on the social media platform. A total of 113 (90.4%) respondents were willing to participate in a future social movement.

**Table 2: Characteristics of survey respondents**

Variables	Total (%)	Physically participated	
		Frequency (%)	P value
Sex of respondents			
Male	90 (72)	79 (81.1)	0.154
Female	35 (28)	24 (68.6)	
Age (years), Mean ±SD	18.31±1.27	18.38±1.18	
15 to 18 years	66 (52.8)	49 (74.2)	0.394
19 to 21 years	59 (47.2)	48 (81.4)	
Medium of instructions			
Bengali (native)	80 (64)	55 (68.8)	0.001
English	45 (36)	42 (93.3)	
Level of education			
Grade 11	36 (28.8)	24 (66.7)	0.095
Grade 12	89 (71.2)	73 (82)	
Faculty			
Science	77 (61.6)	57 (74)	0.274
Business	48 (38.4)	40 (83.3)	

Source: Author, 2025

Note: *p* value determined by Fisher's exact test

#### 3.2. Factors affecting offline protest participation

Table 3 showed the factors affecting participation in offline protests. As the dependent variable (offline protest participation) was dichotomous (1=physically participated in the protests, and 0=not physically participated in the protests), a binary logistic regression analysis was used. The logistic regression model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(8) = 37.08$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The model explained 39.2% (Nagelkerke  $R^2$ ) of the variance on the offline protest participation and correctly classified 80% of cases. The analysis showed that offline protest participation was associated with sex, age, medium of instruction, faculty, and state repression. In this context, males were more likely to participate in the protest physically (OR=0.15, CI=0.04 to 0.54,  $p=0.004$ ). Students aged between 15 and 18 years were more likely to participate in the protest physically (OR=4.44, CI=1.14 to

17.23,  $p=0.031$ ). Students from Bengali medium were less likely to participate in the protest physically than their counterparts from English medium ( $OR=0.12$ ,  $CI=0.02$  to  $0.71$ ,  $p=0.019$ ). Similarly, students from a business faculty background were more likely to participate in the protest physically as compared to students from science faculty ( $OR=0.19$ ,  $CI=0.05$  to  $0.72$ ,  $p=0.015$ ). Furthermore, this study found a significant association between state repression and offline protest participation ( $OR=2.61$ ,  $CI=1.40$  to  $4.87$ ,  $p=0.003$ ).

**Table 3: Factors affecting offline protest participation**

Variables	B (S.E)	Exp(B) <sup>a</sup>
Sex of respondents (Female=1, Male=0)	-1.93** (0.67)	0.15 [0.04 to 0.54]
Age of respondents (15 to 18 years=1, 19 to 21 years=0)	1.49* (0.69)	4.44 [1.14 to 17.23]
Medium of instructions (1= Bengali medium, 0= English medium)	-2.10* (0.89)	.12 [0.02 to 0.71]
Level of education (Grade 12=1, Grade 11=0)	0.52 (0.62)	1.68 [.50 to 5.69]
Faculty (Science=1, Business =0)	-1.67* (0.68)	.19 [0.05 to 0.72]
State repression (continuous)	0.96** (0.32)	2.61 [1.40 to 4.87]
Kinship sentiment (continuous)	0.45 (0.33)	1.58 [0.82 to 3.03]
Well-being of nations (continuous)	-0.14 (0.24)	.87 [0.54 to 1.41]
Constant	3.66*** (1.11)	38.70
Nagelkerke R Square	0.392	

Source: Author, 2025 – Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, \* imply significance at 0.1%, 1%, and 5% levels, respectively

S.E: Standard errors; <sup>a</sup>95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) in parenthesis

**Table 4: Factors affecting online protest participation**

Variables	B (S.E.)	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	$\beta$
Sex of respondents (Female=1, Male=0)	0.20 (0.16)	-0.47 to 0.51	0.09
Age of respondents (15 to 18 years=1, 19 to 21 years=0)	-0.18 (0.18)	-0.12 to 0.53	0-.09
Medium of instructions (1= Bengali medium, 0= English medium)	0.20 (0.20)	-0.53 to 0.16	0.10
Level of education (Grade 12=1, Grade 11=0)	-0.23 (0.18)	-0.20 to 0.61	0-.10
Faculty (Science=1, Business =0)	0.08 (0.15)	-0.57 to 0.12	0.04
State repression (continuous)	0.68*** (0.08)	-0.21 to 0.37	0.68
Kinship sentiment (continuous)	0.23*** (0.07)	0.51 to 0.84	0.23
Well-being of nations (continuous)	0.10 (0.07)	0.09 to 0.36	0.10
Constant	0.02 (0.25)	-0.03 to 0.24	

Source: Author, 2025 – B=unstandardized coefficient; SE=standard error;  $\beta$ =standardized coefficient.

Table 4 summarized the results of the multivariate linear regression, in which students' online protest participation was regressed based on motivation to join the protest and the covariates. Since the dependent variable is continuous (online protest participation), multivariate linear regression was used to model the influence of explanatory variables on protest participation via social media. The model demonstrated a significant overall fit  $F(8, 116) = 14.00, p < 0.001$ , with an  $R^2$  of 0.492, indicating approximately 49.2% of the variance could be explained by the model. The results in Table 4 showed that higher levels of state repression were linked to social media engagement, meaning that as state repression goes up, social media engagement also goes up ( $\beta = 0.68, CI = -0.21$  to  $0.37, p < 0.001$ ). Similarly, the probability of using social media increases among students who sympathize with kinship sentiments ( $\beta = 0.23, CI = 0.51$  to  $0.84, p = 0.001$ ). However, sociodemographic characteristics were not significantly associated with social media engagement.

### 3.4. Factors affecting participation in a future social movement

**Table 5: Willingness to participate in future social movements**

Variables	B (S.E)	Exp(B) <sup>a</sup>
Sex of respondents (Female=1, Male=0)	.52 (1.18)	1.7 [0.2, 17.2]
Age of respondents (15 to 18 years=1, 19 to 21 years=0)	-.94 (1.17)	0.4 [0.04, 3.9]
Medium of instructions (1= Bengali medium, 0= English medium)	-1.39 (1.60)	0.3 [0.01, 5.7]
Level of education (Grade 12=1, Grade 11=0)	-.43 (.85)	0.6 [0.1, 3.4]
Faculty (Science=1, Business =0)	-.51 (.85)	0.6 [0.1, 3.2]
State repression (continuous)	-.11 (.56)	0.9 [0.3, 2.7]
Kinship sentiment (continuous)	-.72 (.42)	0.5 [0.2, 1.1]
Well-being of nations (continuous)	.80* (.32)	2.2 [1.2, 4.2]
Physical participation (Yes=1, no=0)	.94 (.97)	2.6 [0.4, 17.0]
Social media engagement (continuous)	1.13* (.50)	3.1 [1.2, 8.3]
Constant	4.70* (1.92)	109.82
Nagelkerke R Square	0.321	

Source: Author, 2025 – Note: \*\*\*, \*\*, \* imply significance at 0.1%, 1%, and 5% levels, respectively

S.E: Standard errors; <sup>a</sup>=95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) in parenthesis

Table 5 showed the results of the logistic regression model of the college students' willingness to participate in future social movements. The dependent variable is binary (1=willing to participate in a future social movement, and 0=not willing), and a binary logistic regression analysis was employed. The logistic regression model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(8) = 20.38, p = 0.009$ . The model explained 32.1% (Nagelkerke  $R^2$ ) of the variance on the willingness to participate in future social movements and correctly classified 90.4% of cases. It demonstrates how variables of identity, injustice, efficacy and past participation in the protest (online and offline) influenced college students' protest intentions. The results indicated that social media engagement (OR=2.2, CI=1.2 to 4.2,  $p = 0.013$ ) and motives for the wellbeing of the nations (OR=3.1, CI=1.2 to 4.2,  $p = 0.025$ ) had a positive association with the willingness to participate in future social movements. However,

none of the sociodemographic factors were associated with the willingness to participate in future social movements.

#### **4. Discussion**

Student activism has significantly influenced numerous social and political movements globally in the contemporary world system (Vaillant & Schwartz, 2019). This study examined college students' protest participation (offline and online) and their willingness to participate in future social movements. College students actively participated in the July uprising, both offline and online. This study showed that group identity had a positive effect on protest participation. The findings also revealed that perceived injustice and efficacy, which refers to state repression in this study, increased college students' sense of solidarity and group identity to participate in the protest. This is because people who perceive the ingroup as strong are more likely to experience anger and participate in protest (Van Stekelenburg, 2013).

Social networks serve as communication channels (Gamson, 1992) that equip individuals with the necessary resources to engage in protest (Klandermans et al., 2008). Social media-based campaigns have shown an effective role in mobilizing young people in the world (Tariq et al., 2022). This study's results suggested that college students were more active on social media during the protest. This is true because the rise of the internet and social media has created new opportunities for social mobilization (Reichert, 2021), especially for youth, who has grown up with technology and uses social media as a major tool in civic engagement (Hong-Dwyer, 2023). The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies that reported social media platforms, especially Facebook, were utilized by protesters during the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement to provide information, mobilize, and connect protesters (Chu, 2018; Zhu et al., 2017). The 2021 March for Our Lives organizers utilized social media to distribute agendas, promote awareness, and encourage participation, while protesters and supporters have physically gathered (March for Our Lives, 2025). In Bangladesh, social media, particularly Facebook, played a crucial role in both the road safety movement and the quota movement in 2018, enabling students to organize protests, share updates, and disseminate their demands (Jackman, 2021; Roy, 2019).

The findings of this study revealed that male respondents were more likely to participate in the protest physically. These findings are different from a previous study (Theocharis, 2011), which reported no gender difference regarding the offline protest participation. The findings of this study suggested that female students were more likely to engage in online forms of protest than offline. The findings are consistent with Burean & Badescu (2014), who reported that in Romania, female students were more likely to engage in social protests and online activism than males. Women in Bangladesh have historically participated in significant numbers in various movements, such as the Shahbag movement (2013), road safety protests (2018), and Rage Against Rape (2020). However, the participation of female students, their mothers, and female teachers in the July uprising reached unprecedented levels (Parvez, 2025; Sultan, 2024). The current study findings signify that women's participation in online activism helped reduce gender inequalities during the July uprising.

Age was positively and significantly associated with offline protest participation. Respondents in the 15- to 18-year-old age group were more inclined to participate in the offline protest in comparison to those in the 19- to 21-year-old age group. This may be because individuals over the age of 18 were preparing for the higher secondary or A-level examination at home, which influenced them to join the protest via social media instead of offline participation.

Burean & Badescu (2014) reported that online activism influences protesters in offline protest participation. The current study found that students from English-medium backgrounds were more physically engaged in the

protest than those from Bengali-medium backgrounds. This may be due to the fact that students from English-medium schools are more exposed to smartphones and the internet due to their higher socioeconomic background. The exposure to protest-related social media contents further motivated English-medium students to participate in the protest physically. This finding is novel in the context of Bangladesh and challenges the existing notion that only families with lower income participate in protest.

The current study found an association between state repression and protest participation both offline and online, which partially confirms the first and second hypotheses. The findings of this study are consistent with Parvez (2025), who found state repression motivated people to join the July uprising. Initially, college students were not involved in the movement, as the primary focus was on reforming the quota system in public services. But after the government began killing people without cause, college students took to the streets to defend their nation. These findings are in line with the results of other studies (Reichert, 2021), which found students were more likely to report protest participation if they were dissatisfied with the government's tough stances and injustice. In addition, kinship sentiments also influenced respondents to join protests via social media. This is due to the fact that people are more likely to join a social movement when they know their friends or acquaintances are already involved (Van Stekelenburg, 2013).

In relation to hypothesis 3, this study expected that identity, injustice, efficacy, and past protest involvement would motivate joining in future social movements. The findings revealed that social media engagement and the well-being of nations were significantly associated with the willingness to participate in future social movements. This finding aligned with the earlier studies that identified social media has the potential to enhance group identifications and motivate collective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Reichert, 2021).

*Limitations and future study:* This current study has some limitations. The sample size of this study was small. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized for the youth population. This study used an exploratory cross-sectional design, which evaluated variables at a single point, and therefore the examined relationships do not necessarily claim cause-and-effect relationships. A longitudinal study is necessary to understand how youth participation in the protest may affect their willingness to influence political decisions in the future. Students without access to mobile phone devices were excluded, potentially introducing selection bias, and snowball sampling may have introduced sampling bias. Students from *Madrasah* (religious base) did not participate in this study, potentially missing their voice in this study. Future studies may explore the variation in protest participation between students and non-students among youth people. Investigating the differences and similarities in social media usage between protesters and non-protesters will be of interest in future study. Examining parental strategies for motivating children's participation in the July uprising would be intriguing.

## 5. Conclusion

This study uses exploratory research design to understand the underlying behavioral characteristics that influence youth to participate in the July uprising. These findings explained that state repression encouraged college students to participate in both offline and online protests during the July uprising. The intention to participate in future peaceful protests was associated with the nation's well-being and the use of social media; however, this motivation has not been verified against the violent protest outbreaks in the country.

The findings of this study provide important theoretical and policy implications. First, this study contributes to political psychology scholarship by confirming the mechanisms of how state repression can stimulate social mobilization. This study found that extreme state repression fostered solidary and reinforced group identity among the students. Second, the findings ruled out the existing notion that youth are reluctant or have limited

interest in social issues, civic involvement, and participation. Third, the study findings provide evidence that social media has strong influence in mobilizing future social movements. Lastly, the proposed exploratory approach can be used to understand why people choose to participate or not attend a protest event.

These findings suggest the following policy implications. The advent of social media has transformed mobilization strategies. Activists can express their concerns to the administration, resulting in a non-hierarchical social mobilization with many voices. Therefore, this study suggests a provocative step in policymaking to promote the use of social media as a platform for citizen expression. Such an initiative will eliminate the perception of civic engagement uncertainty of youth and, consequently, will motivate them to take part in civic engagement activities. However, a regulatory mechanism is needed to prevent the dissemination of misinformation, hate speech, and inappropriate content, as there have been many reported instances of social media being used to encourage communal violence and attacks.

## REFERENCES

- Accornero, G. (2018). The revolution before the revolution Student protest and political process at the end of the Portuguese dictatorship. In C. Jian, M. Klimke, M. Kirasirova, M. Nolan, M. Young, & J. Waley-Cohen (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties Between Protest and Nation-Building*. Routledge.
- Andretta, M., & Imperatore, P. (2025). Youth Political Participation in Italy: The Case of the Student Movement for Palestine. *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, 18(2).
- Arman, Z. R., Ali, M. M., Uddin, J., Manik, D. I., Hyder, U., & Islam, T. (2025). Manufacturing Legitimacy: Media Ownership and the Framing of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh. *Journalism and Media*, 6(3), 148.
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739–768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661>
- Burean, T., & Badescu, G. (2014). Voices of discontent: Student protest participation in Romania. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 47(3–4), 385–397.
- Carver, C. S., & Harmon-Jones, E. (2009). Anger is an approach-related affect: Evidence and implications. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135(2), 183.
- Chan, M. (2017). Media Use and the Social Identity Model of Collective Action: Examining the Roles of Online Alternative News and Social Media News. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 94(3), 663–681. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699016638837>
- Chan, W. Y., Cattaneo, L. B., Mak, W. W. S., & Lin, W. (2017). From Moment to Movement: Empowerment and Resilience as a Framework for Collective Action in Hong Kong. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 59(1–2), 120–132. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12130>
- Chowdhury, N. S. (2025). The Return of Politics in Bangladesh. *Journal of Democracy*, 36(1), 65–78.
- Chu, D. S. (2018). Media Use and Protest Mobilization: A Case Study of Umbrella Movement Within Hong Kong Schools. *Social Media + Society*, 4(1), 2056305118763350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118763350>
- Davenport, C. (2007). State repression and political order. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 10(1), 1–23.
- Dodo, O., & Mpofu, B. (2019). Female Political Youth Activism. A Study of the Motivation in Seke. *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, 12(3).
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics*. Sage.
- Gamson, W. A. (1992). *Talking politics*. Cambridge university press.
- Gamson, W. A. (2013). Constructing social protest. In *Social movements and culture* (pp. 85–106). Routledge.
- Ghosh, S. C. (2023). Conceptualizing student movements in Bangladesh post-2013: A qualitative and comparative case study of the Quota Reform Movement and the Road Safety Movement. *Social Identities*, 29(6), 534–554. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2024.2320093>

- Haque, M. M. (2025). Civil Resistance and Student Activism in the Political Struggles of Bangladesh (1947-1971): Civil Resistance and Student Activism in the Political Struggles. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Humanities*, 70(1), 89–108.
- Hong-Dwyer, J. J. (2023). “We Can Change our Society”: Korean College Student Activists’ Motivations, Experiences, and Perceptions. *Journal of College Student Development*, 64(4), 470–484.
- Jackman, D. (2021). Students, movements, and the threat to authoritarianism in Bangladesh. *Contemporary South Asia*, 29(2), 181–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2020.1855113>
- Jenkins, D. G., & Quintana-Ascencio, P. F. (2020). A solution to minimum sample size for regressions. *PLoS One*, 15(2), e0229345.
- Klandermans, P. G., Van der Toorn, J., & Van Stekelenburg, J. (2008). Embeddedness and identity: Collective action participation among immigrants. *American Sociological Review*, 73, 992–1012.
- Kuttig, J., & Suykens, B. (2020). How to be visible in student politics: Performativity and the digital public space in Bangladesh. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 79(3), 707–738.
- Lee, F. L., Chan, M., & Chen, H.-T. (2020). Social media and protest attitudes during movement abeyance: A study of Hong Kong university students. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 20.
- Lee, F. L. F., Chen, H.-T., & Chan, M. (2017). Social media use and university students’ participation in a large-scale protest campaign: The case of Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(2), 457–469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.08.005>
- Lilleker, D. G., & Koc-Michalska, K. (2017). What Drives Political Participation? Motivations and Mobilization in a Digital Age. *Political Communication*, 34(1), 21–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1225235>
- Lilleker, D. G., & Koc-Michalska, K. (2018). What drives political participation? Motivations and mobilization in a digital age. In *Digital politics: Mobilization, engagement and participation* (pp. 21–43). Routledge.
- Mahmud, R. (2025). Crisis Management of the Anti-quota Student Movement in Bangladesh: Governance Capacity in Misery. *Journal of Developing Societies*, 0169796X251344338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X251344338>
- Marcaida, M. Y. (2020). Student Activism Offline and Online: A Mixed-Methods Study on College Students’ Protest Participation in the Philippines. *Philippine Social Sciences Review*, 72(1).
- Melo, D. F., & Stockemer, D. (2014). Age and political participation in Germany, France and the UK: A comparative analysis. *Comparative European Politics*, 12(1), 33–53. <https://doi.org/10.1057/cep.2012.31>
- Mercea, D. (2012). Digital prefigurative participation: The entwinement of online communication and offline participation in protest events. *New Media & Society*, 14(1), 153–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811429103>
- Mondal, M. S. H. (2025). The Mental Health Status of College Students in Bangladesh and Associated Factors. *Dr. Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Journal*, 7(1), 30–35.
- OHCHR. (2025). *Human Rights Violations and Abuses related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh*. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
- Opp, K.-D. (2009). *Theories of political protest and social movements: A multidisciplinary introduction, critique, and synthesis*. Routledge.
- Parvez, S. (2025). Why Did They Join?: Understanding the Protesters of Bangladesh’s July Uprising. *Journal of Bangladesh Studies*, 27(2), 179–200.
- Patwary, M. E. U. (2011). Recent trends of student politics of Bangladesh. *Society & Change*, 4(4), 67–78.
- Reichert, F. (2021). Collective protest and expressive action among university students in Hong Kong: Associations between offline and online forms of political participation. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 2, 608203.
- Rezvi, M. R., Hasan, Md. A., Islam, Z., & Ahmmmed, M. K. (2025). Mental Health Impacts on protestors and victims’ families of the July Movement-2024 in Bangladesh: Research Letter. *Mental Health: Global Challenges Journal*, 8(1), 102–111. <https://doi.org/10.56508/mhgcj.v8i1.243>

- Roy, R. K. (2019). Online Activism, Social Movements and Mediated Politics in Contemporary Bangladesh. *Society and Culture in South Asia*, 5(2), 193–215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2393861719836296>
- Saisana, M., & Tarantola, S. (2002). *State-of-the-art report on current methodologies and practices for composite indicator development*.
- Song, Z., Wu, J., Hu, H., & Song, X. (2023). Political Polarization and Relationship Dissolution on Social Media among Hong Kong Students during the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 11(2), 116–135.
- Sultan, M. (2024, August 27). Let's seize the opportunity to further gender equity in Bangladesh. *Institute of Development Studies*. <https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/lets-seize-the-opportunity-to-further-gender-equity-in-bangladesh/>
- Tariq, R., Zolkepli, I. A., & Ahmad, M. (2022). Political participation of young voters: Tracing direct and indirect effects of social media and political orientations. *Social Sciences*, 11(2), 81.
- Theocharis, Y. (2011). Young people, political participation and online postmaterialism in Greece. *New Media & Society*, 13(2), 203–223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810370733>
- Ullah, S. M. (2009). *Democracy in Bangladesh: Role of Student Politics (1972-2002)* [PhD Thesis, University of Rajshahi]. <http://rulrepository.ru.ac.bd/handle/123456789/958>
- Vaillant, G. G., & Schwartz, M. (2019). Student movements and the power of disruption. *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, 12(1), 112–121.
- Van Stekelenburg, J. (2013). The Political Psychology of Protest: Sacrificing for a Cause. *European Psychologist*, 18(4), 224–234. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000156>
- Van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(4), 504.
- Van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2012). On conviction's collective consequences: Integrating moral conviction with the social identity model of collective action. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 51(1), 52–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.2010.02000.x>
- Weiss, J. (2020). What is youth political participation? Literature review on youth political participation and political attitudes. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 2, 1.
- Wright, S. C., Taylor, D. M., & Moghaddam, F. M. (1990). Responding to membership in a disadvantaged group: From acceptance to collective protest. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(6), 994.
- Zhu, Q., Skoric, M., & Shen, F. (2017). I Shield Myself From Thee: Selective Avoidance on Social Media During Political Protests. *Political Communication*, 34(1), 112–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2016.1222471>

## Annex 1: Descriptive statistics of key variables used in this study

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Minimu m</b>	<b>Maximu m</b>	<b>Mea n</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b><i>Sociodemographic characteristics</i></b>				
Sex of respondents (Female=1, Male=0)	0.00	1.00	0.28	0.45
Age of respondents (in years)	15.00	21.00	18.31	1.27
Medium of instructions (1= Bengali medium, 0= English medium)	0.00	1.00	0.64	0.48
Level of education (Grade 12=1, Grade 11=0)	0.00	1.00	0.71	0.45
Faculty (Science=1, Business =0)	0.00	1.00	0.62	0.49
<b><i>Offline (physical) protest participation</i></b>				
Participated in the protest physically (offline) (1=physically participated, and 0=not physically participated)	0.00	1.00	0.78	0.42
<b><i>Online protest participation</i></b>				
I changed my Facebook profile picture to red (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.79	0.41
I accepted invitations to join the protest via social media (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.74	0.44
I invited my friends/family members to join the students' protest (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.74	0.44
I shared news and photos of students' protests on social media (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.76	0.43
I expressed my opinion on students' protests on social media (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.62	0.49
<b><i>Protest intentions</i></b>				
I would like to participate in any peaceful social movement in the future? (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.90	0.29
<b><i>Motivation to join in the protest</i></b>				
To restructure the quota system in government jobs (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.78	0.42
My friends asked me to join the protest (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.28	0.45
For the future of Bangladesh (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.86	0.34
Government tough stances against students and civilians	0.00	1.00	0.69	0.46

(1=yes and 0=no)				
Police violence against unarmed protesters and non-protesters (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.72	0.45
Shutdown internet and social media apps (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.61	0.49
My friends and family members were injured during the protest (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.37	0.48
My friends and family members died during the protest (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.17	0.37
My parents encouraged me to join the movement (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.29	0.46
Inspired by the sacrifice of our heroes in 1952 and 1971 (1=yes and 0=no)	0.00	1.00	0.62	0.49

---

#### **AUTHOR'S INFORMATION**

**Md. Sanaul Haque Mondal** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Relations at East West University, Bangladesh. His research focuses on public participation, disaster risk assessment, climate change adaptation, mental health, and gender issues. He holds a PhD from Tokyo Institute of Technology and has published widely on environmental vulnerability, population dynamics, community-based adaptation, public participation, and mental health.