



Research article

Role of Media on Political Participation of Youth: A Study on Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh

Md. Rabiul Islam Sani, Sara Monami Hossain*, Mamunor Rashid and Nishat Tarannum

Mass Communication and Journalism Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

Media has been playing a pivotal role in Bangladesh's political sphere since its emergence. Politics also has a significant impact on media. So, the relationship between media and politics is a crucial focus for study. With the advancement of media, the trends of information flow have changed significantly. Consequently, politicians use media to convey their messages to potential voters and to achieve their goals. In this continuity, the study explores the media's role in youth's political participation. By purposive sampling, Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh has been selected. Data have been collected from 31 Wards in Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh to examine the objectives. The theoretical frameworks of this study are based on political participation theories and media effect theories. Here, 124 in-depth interviews were conducted with the participants, selected by convenience sampling as part of the primary data collection process. The study's findings reveal that 80% of youths must actively participate in politics due to their lack of interest. This is primarily attributed to the perception that the current political environment is unfavorable. The study also found minimal media influence in encouraging youths in politics. However, data shows that 79% think that media has the power to influence people and society. Apart from that, the responses about media were predominantly negative, with youths mentioning concerns about biased news dissemination by Bangladeshi media outlets.

ARTICLE INFO

Article timeline:

Date of Submission

15 January, 2024

Date of Acceptance:

24 September, 2024

Article available online:

07 October, 2024

Keywords:

Media

Political Participation

Youth

KCC

Khulna

Bangladesh

Introduction

The media is an essential aspect of our lives, influencing society through its connectivity and ability to shape individual perspectives, ultimately leading to various social movements anticipating forthcoming changes (IMOFF, 2020). It acts as a reflection of our society, revealing its inner workings and formation. In the present day, it has emerged as the voice that represents our collective sentiments (Sing & Pandey, 2017). Furthermore, the media plays a significant role in driving societal transition in an interconnected world. As a result, recent years have witnessed rapid changes across various domains, primarily influenced by the immeasurable impact of media (Paul & Rai, 2021). Besides, its utilization of biased narratives and sensationalism has intensively impacted our societal thoughts and intricate processes of selecting our leaders (Taylor, 2004). It also plays a crucial role in politics, fostering people's engagement in the party and voter registration, campaigns, elections, and electorate management (Sanyaolu et al., 2017).

On the other hand, politics is a multidimensional aspect of human interactions present in various domains of life, encompassing not only government and public administration but also education, sport, business, health care, and personal relations. It can be distinguished from economic, social, affective, and artistic aspects (Van der Eijk, 2019). Media and politics are interconnected in an intrinsic relationship where they depend on each other for mutual growth and influence (Enli, 2017). So, there is no doubt that political parties worldwide are interconnected and actively engaged with their followers, supporters and potential voters through various media platforms (Diou et al., 2018).

Moreover, the media manipulates public opinion by presenting exclusive government information. Instant updates through the media make it easier to shape public perception. However, agenda-setting and the media's selective portrayal of issues influence public perceptions of government and politics (UKEssays, 2018). However, active political participation is crucial for individuals and

*Corresponding author: saramonami@gmail.com

society as it empowers people to contribute to decision-making processes and drive positive changes actively. By voicing their opinions and holding leaders accountable, engaged participants foster stability and cultivate a sense of legitimacy within the political system (Tayie, 2014).

With their creative skills and innovative ideas, youth often accelerate significant political changes and the transitions of undemocratic governments (Mengistu, 2017). Although young people have also been components of other political and social movements worldwide, they were vital in important events in Bangladesh, such as the language movement in 1952, the 1960s movement on education policy, and the independence struggle in 1971. Also, the protest against the dictatorship in 1990 is one of the major events in the history of Bangladesh (Jackman, 2021). Again, in 2024 a student-led movement for quota reform soon turned into a widespread uprising calling for the overthrow of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year regime ("Timeline of student protests", 2024). Their involvement in politics enhances leadership skills and benefits politicians with their ideas and initiatives (ESCAP, 2002, cited in Allam, Hassan, Azni, & Kamis, 2012).

Political participation refers to consistent engagement with any political party, where various political activities are undertaken by participants to influence the decisions of the government and to select political leaders. Such activities include voting in elections, attending political campaigns, participating in protests, attending political meetings, etc. Thus, political participation allows youth to voice societal concerns and influence government decisions, expressing their opinions and concerns (Verba et al., 1995). Most importantly, among the over 120 million electorates, nearly 15 million are first-time voters, in addition to the 10 million youth voters (Chowdhury and Rahman, 2024). So, the active participation of youths in politics can drive innovation and bring significant changes in political systems (Farthing, 2010).

Therefore, the study enhances an understanding of how various media platforms influence youths' political participation in Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh. By providing insights into youth's political participation, their perception of media, and its influence on them, the study can inform media practitioners and political leaders on effective strategies to encourage youth participation in politics in the country. Additionally, the results of this study will create opportunities for further study on the media and political participation of youths, offering a valuable reference to the academic literature. Ultimately, the study aims to make the youths politically empowered and active, strengthening the democratic process in Khulna City Corporation and other similar contexts.

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to find out the media's role in the political participation of the youth of Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh.

The specific objectives of the study allow to run it in a focused direction which are given below.

- To explore the trend of political participation of youths

- To examine the reason behind using various media
- To identify the connection between political engagement and the media

Literature Review

In this digital age, the media's influence has exceeded traditional boundaries. Studies on the role of media in political participation have become one of the most critical topics in communication studies. This dynamic is especially pertinent in the Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh, where a significant portion of the population is young and increasingly engaged with traditional and digital media platforms.

Media and Political Participation:

Media is considered a crucial tool in influencing people in political engagement (Hague et al., 2019). Norris (2000) mentions that media can bridge people to the political system and enhance greater participation. There is no doubt that political parties worldwide are interconnected and actively engaged with their followers, supporters, and potential voters through various media platforms (Diou et al., 2018). In this era of technological expansion, the role of media has expanded, with different social media platforms offering new opportunities for political participation and mobilization (Boulianne, 2015).

On the other hand, media scholars have stated that media can profoundly influence youth political participation. While it was initially believed that media's extensive influence played an essential role in youth political participation, evidence indicates that excessive media influence can lead to reduced political participation among youths (Allam et al., 2012).

Youth engagement with social media:

Loader et al. (2014) indicate that various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are often crucial for engaging youths in political activities. These platforms share information with young people to foster political expression and activism. Similarly, Vitak et al. (2011) propose that these social media platforms empower young people to express their thoughts, generate support, and engage in online activism for political purposes.

Impact of digital media:

Based on a social media study, Omotayo and Folorunso (2020) stated that the youth extensively utilized social media for participating in politics, with Facebook being the most popular medium. As such, most youth use social media platforms to participate in political advocacy, campaigns, discussions, joining interest groups, communicating with politicians, and other political activities.

Christensen (2011) investigated the impact of the Internet on political participation. The study explored a positive harmonization between new media and youth participation in politics, especially the increasing number of internet and blog users. It also emphasized that the new media makes people aware of political issues, even motivating them to engage in real-life political activities.

Role of Traditional and Digital Media in Bangladesh:

Gulshan (2023) noted that the media plays a robust and influential role in building political awareness among

people. Most of the participants in this study depend heavily on the media as their primary source of political information. Additionally, they believe that the media significantly contributed to enhance political awareness among people from 2005 to 2012. However, government control and political pressures can occasionally hinder their ability to perform their duties effectively.

In this regard, Tamanna (2018) stated that today's youths are more than numb or unconventionally engaged in mainstream politics due to the unfavorable political environment. Even current states demonstrate that the political participation of younger generations is becoming debased on that of older citizens. This diminishing youth participation in politics threatens leadership quality and puts it at risk to tomorrow's democracy.

Here, in the political scenario of Bangladesh, digital media has emerged as a dynamic communication tool mainly since the late 2000s. This transition can be attributed to the perceived limitations of traditional media compared to digital media in serving people's interests entirely. Moreover, political engagement in cyberspace has begun shaping Bangladesh's politics. Consequently, the 2010s witnessed a wave in social movements and mass mobilizations, with social media platforms playing a pivotal role. Notable events include the Shahbag Movement in 2013, the No VAT on Education Protest in 2015, the Quota Reform Movement in 2018, and the Road Safety Movement in 2018. Also, 2024 again saw the Quota Reform Movement which led to the Anti-government Movement after many students and people were attacked and killed by the government-backed student wing and law enforcement ("Timeline of student protests", 2024). These instances highlight the rising influence of social media in the political sphere of Bangladesh (Al-Zaman, 2020).

Similarly, Mahmud & Amin (2017) conducted a study among students at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh to investigate the correlation between the use of social networking websites and political participation. They explored how widespread social media use has broadened the global communication scenario. Consequently, it has significantly influenced the creation of a political environment that plays a pivotal role in raising socio-political awareness, shaping people's opinions, fostering political knowledge, and encouraging active participation in politics in diverse ways. As a result, social media plays a significant role in engaging its users in politics and empowering them with insights into political matters.

Comparative studies in different contexts:

In India, the media has emerged as the leading platform for political parties to conduct debates, campaigning, and discussion. It also plays a significant role in alluring youths to participate actively in politics and strengthening the Indian political system. The study further highlights the influential role of media in enhancing the youth's participation in politics (Mir & Mir, 2022).

Again, Diou et al. (2018) examined the integration of youth, political participation, and media in Khairpur City, Sindh, Pakistan, from 2010 to 2015. They revealed that youths utilize media for their purposes: to disseminate political information and to heighten political awareness. The study further demonstrated that media serves as a

connecting force among the masses, though some also utilize it for entertainment.

Moreover, both traditional and new media can influence people's political participation. IN, 2010, Budek also conducted a study on the impact of social media in the time of the USA Presidential Election of Barack Obama (Budek, 2010). The study comparatively examined the impact of both traditional and new media on voter engagement. The study revealed that, for decades, traditional media, such as radio and television, have been inevitable sources of political news and information during American elections. They also remained highly influential in political campaigns even during modern times. Significantly, traditional media proved its effectiveness compared to new media, such as Facebook and Twitter, in directing voter participation, despite the significant roles of these platforms during the 2008 U.S. presidential election (Budek, 2010).

Furthermore, Wojcieszak & Smith (2014) surveyed 2,800 young Iranians. This study revealed that 89% of the respondents primarily relied on the Internet for getting news and information, whereas 70% followed television. Additionally, 49% referred family and friends, while 42% of the participants mentioned print media as their primary sources of information. On the other hand, 17% of the respondents reported utilizing Twitter as an initial platform for political discussions. The study underscored new media's significant role in encouraging political engagement.

Research Gap:

There are substantial studies on traditional media, social media, and political participation globally, and some studies are available in Bangladesh. Still, more focused studies need to be on the role of media in youth political participation in Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh. Thus, previous and existing studies often focus on specific media platforms instead of combining various forms of media like newspapers, television, radio, and social media. Therefore, the role of mass media in the political participation of youths in the unique socio-political context still needs to be explored.

Theoretical framework

Political Participation Theories:

According to the Civic Culture Theory, a country's political culture affects people's participation in politics. Almond & Verba (1963) clarify that a participant political culture (a political culture) involves citizens actively in the political process, which is vital to the stability of democracy. Therefore, this theory is relevant to understanding and identifying the political situation and practices of Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh. On the other hand, the Civic Voluntarism Model outlines several factors influencing citizens' political participation, such as time, money, political interest, and involvement in politics. This model helps explain the media's responsibility as they engage people in politics by informing and motivating them (Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). Thus, political participation theories provide deeper insight into how and why the media engages people in politics; they even help frame how media might influence youth political participation.

Media Effects Theory:

Media theory explains how the influencing power of media affects people and how much people are influenced accordingly. As such, agenda-setting theory states, "media doesn't tell people what to think, but rather what to think about." By disseminating specific issues, the media can create a public agenda and influence what topics are important to people (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Similarly, agenda-setting theory provides insight into how the media in a particular area, like Khulna City Corporation, creates a public agenda for political issues that contribute to their political participation.

Besides, the Uses and Gratifications Theory explores that the media does not always play a strong role in influencing people; sometimes, media users seek specific media according to their needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). This theory might help to understand different media consumption patterns among the youth of Khulna City Corporation, as well as whether they consume only political news or other content from the media.

Overall, the Two-Step Flow Theory provides a new dimension to the discussion of the media's indirect influence and the role of opinion leaders in this study. Before the media's message is transmitted directly to its followers, it is mediated by opinion leaders who interpret the message in their own way. This contrasts with the media's direct influence, offering that personal influencing power plays a crucial role in the communication system (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

Materials and Methods**Research Design:**

The study adopts a qualitative method. By using this method, the data have been collected from youths aged 18 to 35 years from Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh. Here, Khulna City Corporation was selected purposively. Khulna City Corporation is one of the major divisional city corporations in Bangladesh. In that case, the role of mass media in the political participation of youth in Khulna City Corporation can play a role in understanding the political context of Bangladesh. Then, the in-depth interview (IDI) has been used as the primary method to collect data. This method is used to identify the informant's attitude, perceptions, and actions in a short time. Subsequently, the convenience sampling method was used to select interviewee participants for this study.

Nature of the Study:

The study is exploratory, and a qualitative approach has been followed to carry it out. Thus, the study aims to explore how the media influences the youth of Khulna City Corporation in their political participation. As Matthews and Ross (2010) explained, exploratory research mainly focuses on people's thoughts about the study topic and how they express their views.

Research Method:

The semi-structured, in-depth interview method was used to collect data based on the study's objectives. An in-depth interview is a qualitative research method to explore a respondent's viewpoint and a deep insight into a particular issue (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

It conveys the individual's personal experience, perspectives, and reactions. Each interview was conducted for 25-30 minutes, and 26 questions were asked of them. All the interviews were conducted in Bengali language without any interruptions. To ensure data accuracy and eliminate bias, we exercised prudence throughout the interviews, following the principle of unconditional acceptance.

Population and Sampling:

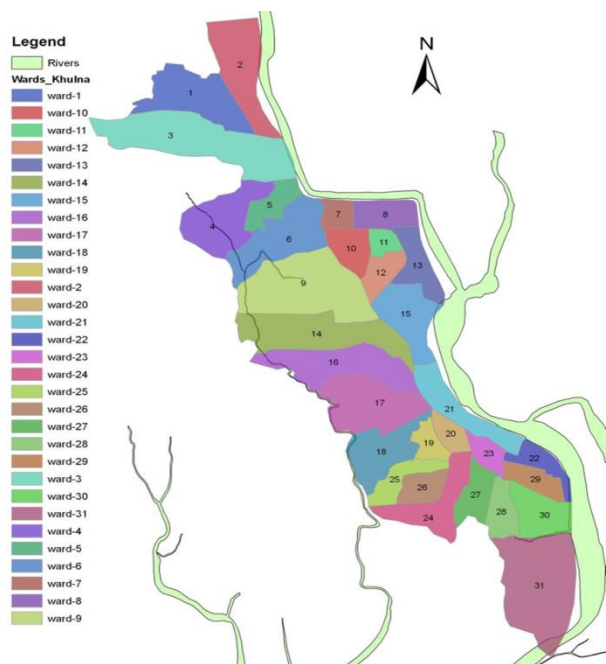
The study has focused on the political participation of youth in Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh, mainly targeting individuals between the ages of 18 and 35. As the exact population of these ages was not determined, to ensure comprehensive coverage, to reduce selection bias (Marshall et al., 2013), to enhance the robustness of the findings (Yin, 2016), to facilitate analysis, and to represent the overall population, four individuals from each Ward of Khulna City Corporation were selected that makes 124 respondents in total. Here, convenience sampling of the non-probability sampling method was used to select interviewees. Non-probability sampling is used primarily to get more specific and deep insight from more knowledgeable and experienced people rather than generalized information from a large population (Patton, 2002). Consequently, the interview was conducted with people eager to give information and were easy to access, supporting the convenience sampling technique (Etikan et al., 2016).

Study Area:

The selection of a study area is an essential part of conducting a study. In some cases, it must be significant to specify a selected area due to the limitation of studying with a large area. Therefore, Khulna City Corporation of Bangladesh has been chosen as the area of this study. Khulna is the third largest city in Bangladesh, which is surrounded by the Bhairab and Rupsha Rivers, officially known as the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) (Haque et al. 2019, as cited in Haque et al., 2020; Fattah et al., 2019). It covers an area of 45.65 sq km, with a population of nearly 1.5 million. There are 31 Wards under this city corporation (KCC, 2023). Accordingly, the primary data have been collected from these 31 Wards to represent the whole area of Khulna City Corporation.

Data Collection and Analysis:

Following data collection, irrational codes were eliminated, inconsistencies were decreased, and ambiguities were resolved by processing the raw data. The data were collected using an interview form. Questions were written in Bengali. Data processing continued through transcription and translation. Then, the data were manually inputted into Microsoft Word and then into Microsoft Excel. First of all, a codebook was created in Excel. Then, a data-sheet and other sheets were formed for each question. This includes coding the data, categorizing them into themes, and interpreting the findings using graphs and tables.



Source: Hossain et al., 2014

Figure 1. Khulna City Corporation Wards Boundary

Results

In this section, the findings from the in-depth interviews that were conducted in Bangla, where each participant was asked questions, have been presented. Subsequently, the answers obtained from the participants were transcribed into a written form and transformed into English. Besides, the in-depth interviews examined some critical points, including youths' political participation, the media's role, and the relationship between politics and media.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (N%)
Gender	Male	101 (81.45%)
	Female	23 (18.54%)
Age	18 - 24	92 (74.19%)
	25 - 35	32 (25.81%)
Occupation	Student	95 (76.61%)
	Housewife	4 (3.23%)
	Job Holder	6 (4.84%)
	Business	11 (8.87%)
	Labour	3 (2.42%)
	Unemployed	5 (4.03%)

Political Participation of Youth:

Among the 124 respondents, only 20% (25) of youths are directly involved in politics, while the remaining 80% (99) abstain from actively participation in politics. A male respondent (23) from Ward No. 20 shared that he participated in some contemporary movements, such as the Quota Reform Movement and the Road Safety Movement. Still, he did not participate in any traditional political

activities. He especially mentioned that he is not politically ignorant despite not being politically involved.

A female respondent (21) from Ward No. 3 said, "Due to the unsuitable state of Bangladesh's politics, I am not involved in any political activities".

Another male respondent (20) from Ward No. 27 expressed that his family members have been involved in politics, which helps him to engage in politics. Another female respondent (22) from Ward No. 25 also replied that she is not engaged in political activities, attributing this to Bangladesh's unfavourable political environment.

Many individuals here have participated in various political campaigns and protests once or twice, but later, they did not get involved in any political activities. That is why they consider themselves passive in political participation. A male respondent (23) from Ward No. 21 mentioned, "I once participated in the election campaign of a political candidate, although I had no engagement with any political party before and have not joined any party since then."

Table 2: Profile of Politically Engaged Youths

Gender	Age	Occupation	Percentage (N%)
Male	18 - 24	Student	16 (64%)
		Student	4 (16%)
	25- 35	Business	3 (12%)
		Job Holder	1 (4%)
Female	18 - 24	Student	1 (4%)

Pushing Factors to Engage in Politics:

After asking the question, "Who plays the most important role in engaging you in politics?" to the 25 politically involved respondents, only 20% (five individuals) of them attributed it to the media, 36% (9) mentioned their family, 28% (7) attributed it to their friend circle, and 12% (3) to their educational institution.

A male respondent (22) from Ward No.22 claimed that he was inspired by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his daughter, Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, to participate actively in politics. Another male respondent (22) from Ward No. 5 replied, "Educational institutions helped me get involved in politics. It helped me to know deeply about the glorious chapter of our politics, which helped me to get engaged in politics."

Another male respondent (24) from Ward No. 24 shared that because of the influence of his family, he is engaged in politics. Another male respondent (25) from Ward No. 21 emphasized that his engagement in politics is made possible because of the influence of his friend circle. Some of his friends are actively engaged in politics, so they encouraged him to join politics. One more male respondent (19) from Ward No. 9 stated that his intent to be involved in politics is to be engaged in good practice in Bangladeshi politics.

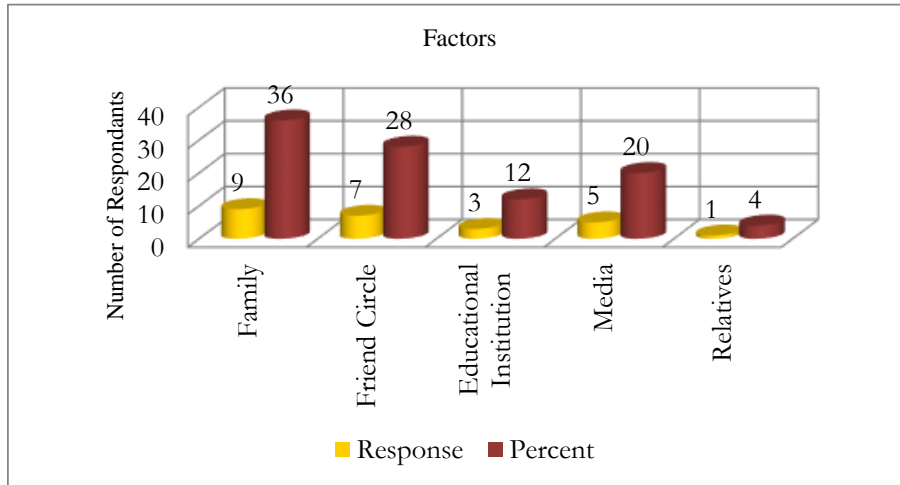


Figure 2. Pushing Factors to Engage in Politics

The Factors Contributing to Disinterest in Politics:

The findings have already indicated that 80% (99) of the 124 respondents do not actively participate in politics. Among the 99 (80%) respondents, 33 expressed that they are not actively engaged in politics because of the unfavorable state of Bangladeshi politics, 21 do not like politics, 10 mentioned political restlessness, seven mentioned a lack of time, 2 claimed the lack of democracy in Bangladeshi politics, five prioritized their studies, and six have no interest in politics at all.

A female respondent (20) from Ward No. 5 shared, “I do not like Bangladeshi politics. Here, people’s opinion has no value, even which party makes the government; they prioritize their parties over all else.” A male respondent (24) from Ward No. 7 expressed, “In the present day, there

is no good practice in Bangladeshi politics. So, due to the unrest in the political sphere, I am not interested in it.”

Another male respondent (23) from Ward No. 20 mentioned, “I have an interest in politics, but I think it needs to be changed from these traditional practices because good practice is absent in this political sphere. That is why I am not actively involved in it.”

Similarly, one more male respondent (23) from Ward No. 27 remarked, “The majority of the political leaders have no essential knowledge. They are always busy with their struggles to get power. They prioritize their party over all else instead of contributing in the public sphere.”

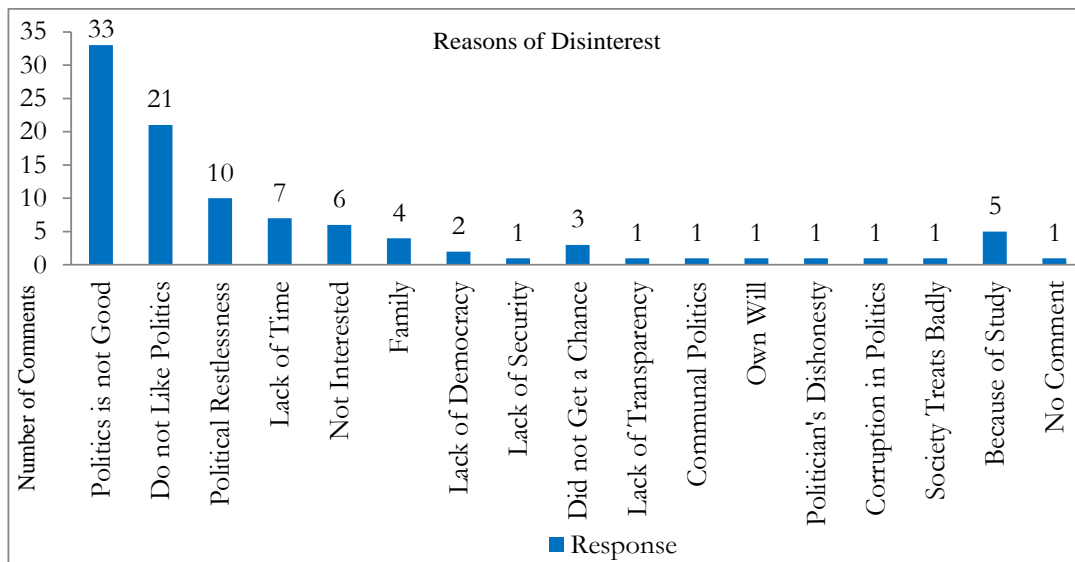


Figure 3. Factors of Disinterestedness in Politics

Participation in Political Voting:

In response to a question about voting participation, 54% (67) of the 124 respondents replied 'Yes', indicating that they did vote, while the remaining respondents replied 'No', indicating that they did not participate.

A female respondent (23) from Ward No. 27 expressed, “It is my democratic right, and I just exercised it.” Conversely, a male respondent (22) from Ward No. 18 stated, “Due to the adverse political landscape, my parents forbade me to participate in voting.”

Another male respondent (22) from Ward No. 15 shared, *"I have never voted because I do not like politics."* Another male respondent (19) from Ward No. 9 mentioned, *"I have not had the opportunity yet, though I am actively involved in politics."*

Table 3: Participation in Political Voting

Politically Involvement	Yes	No
Politically Involved	17 (13.71%)	08 (6.45%)
Others	50 (40.32%)	49 (39.52%)

Political Awareness:

In response to a question about political awareness, 85% (105) of the total respondents replied 'Yes', they are aware of politics, while the remaining 15% (19) replied they are just politically ignorant.

A male respondent (21) from Ward No.19 mentioned, *"I am politically aware. That is why I am actively involved in politics."* Another male respondent (23) from Ward No. 31 replied, *"Despite being politically aware, I am not actively involved in politics. I think there is a lack of transparency, attributing to my non-involvement in politics."*

A female respondent (22) from Ward No. 25 claimed that she is politically engaged and analyzing contemporary political issues but has yet to engage directly in political politics. Similarly, one more male Respondent (24) from Ward No. 9 replied, *"I always try to observe the present scenario of politics, even its problems, but not directly involved. Bangladeshi political practices have failed to entice me."*

Table 4: Political Awareness

Politically Involvement	Yes	No
Politically Involved	25 (20.16%)	00 (00%)
Others	80 (64.52%)	19 (15.32%)

Comments about Media:

In response to another question about the media, 26 respondents mentioned that the media are not neutral, whereas 24 respondents were satisfied with the media's performance. Additionally, 12 respondents replied that the media supports the government, for the government controls six respondents' media, another five individuals mentioned that the press partly reveals the truth, and another five said the media disseminates one-sided or partial news.

A male respondent (25) from Ward No. 2 commented, *"The media can both help and harm people by disseminating provocative news."* A female respondent (20) from Ward No. 5 also commented on the media; according to her point of view, Bangladeshi media like Bangladesh Television (BTV) does not publish any anti-government news, even accurate information.

Similarly, another male respondent (23) from Ward No. 20 commented, *"Bangladeshi media are not neutral in this sense that they disseminate information by keeping in mind their ownership and control."*

Another female respondent (22) from Ward No. 29 replied, *"Media disseminates one-sided news, which means they are biased. For this reason, I do not believe any political news from the media."* From the standpoint of another male respondent (34) from Ward No. 28, *"The media in Bangladesh are not neutral in covering news. They are always in favour of the government."* Another male respondent (24) from Ward No. 8 mentioned that Bangladeshi media are dynamic, but sometimes they abstain from disseminating anti-government news.

One more male respondent (25) from Ward No. 10 referred to the fact that Bangladeshi media are far behind the international press regarding the quality of their news. Another female respondent (23) from Ward No. 18 highlighted that the media cannot publish information on various issues due to different laws. Similarly, one more female respondent (21) from Ward No. 11 stated that Bangladeshi media outlets try to disseminate news neutrally. However, in some cases, due to various laws and regulations, their news flow is lost.

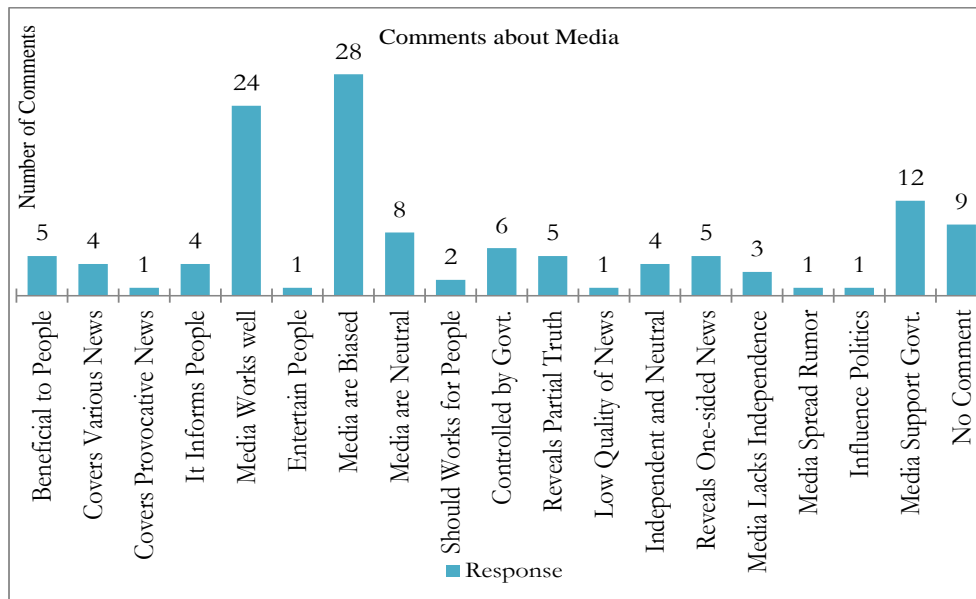


Figure 4. Comments about Media

Influencing Power of Media:

When asked about the influence of mass media, 79% (98) of the total respondents confirmed that the media has the power to influence people and society. On the other hand, 21% (26) of the respondents replied with a 'No'; they think the media does not influence society.

A male respondent (23) from Ward No. 21 replied, "Media has many influences. Examples include, sometimes, they spread rumors that affect society."

Another male respondent (30) from Ward No. 25 agreed, "The Media has much influence on people's political perception. Even they can manipulate people in all spheres of society."

Similarly, a female respondent (19) from Ward No. 12 mentioned, "Of course, the media has the power to influence people. People can stay updated on

contemporary political issues through the media, which leads to an effect."

Another male respondent (24) from Ward No. 7 highlighted, "The Media publish news on various contemporary issues that create an impact. As a result of the media coverage of the road safety movement, media effects were directly observed."

Another female respondent (20) from Ward No. 05 explained that "the media reveal the stories behind the story that enable people to know about the story."

One more female respondent (23) from Ward No. 7 replied, "Media have both positive and negative impacts, but the negative impacts take place more than the positive ones. Generally, media abstain from disseminating anti-government news, which creates a negative impact."

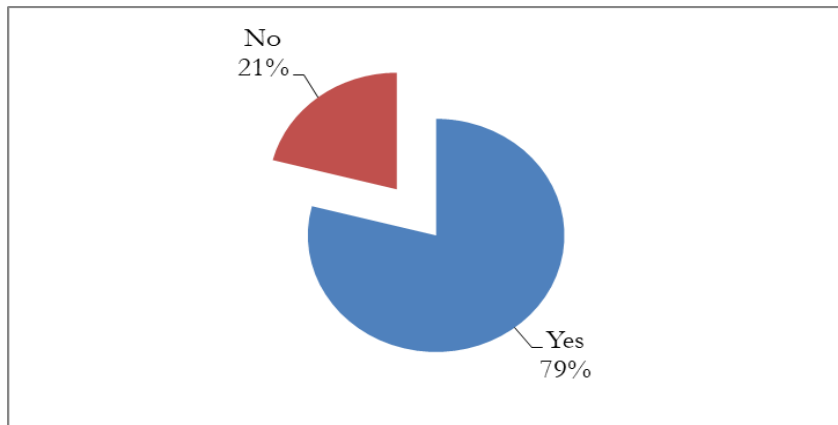


Figure 5. Influence of Mass Media

Ways of Getting Political News:

Responding to a question about how to get political news, the respondents indicated different media types as their primary source of information. Among the total respondents, 38 use social media, whereas 30 individuals watch television, seven read newspapers, six follow online news portals, and nine use both social media and television as their primary source of political news. On the other hand, 15 respondents utilize television, social media, and newspapers together for news.

A male respondent (23) from Ward No. 21 stated, "Usually, I rely on social media to get random

information, but for political news, I utilize both television and social media. Television gives us accurate information, and social media justifies the news source."

Another male respondent (21) cited, "Although I utilize television, newspaper, and social media for random purposes, I particularly rely on newspapers for getting political news."

However, another female respondent (22) from Ward No. 18 expressed, "Nowadays, social media platforms are popular with everyone, including myself. To stay updated regularly, social media platforms have no alternative today."

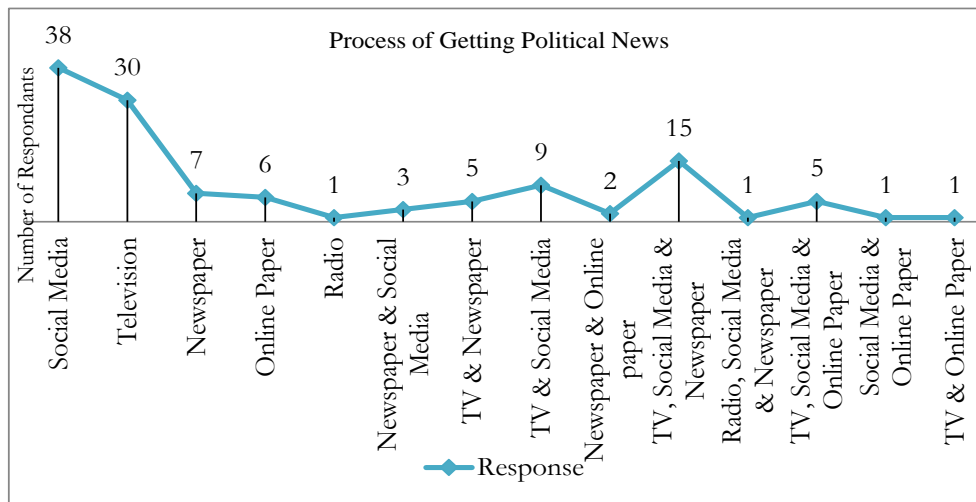


Figure 6. Ways of Getting Political News

Credibility of Media in Political Coverage:

After asking about the credibility of media in political coverage and the media's power to influence people in politics, only 15 respondents believed that the media has the power and is exercising it. On the other hand, 81 respondents mentioned that the media has lost its credibility with people; as a result, they cannot tempt people into politics with their content. However, the remaining 28 respondents needed clarification about it.

A male respondent (30) from Ward No. 31 cited, "Regarding political news coverage, the media exaggerates more. Thereby conscious individuals avoid

such information; as a result, people are not inspired to politics."

A female respondent (22) from Ward No. 29 also mentioned, "Usually, the media covers one-sided news by supporting the ruling political party. Consequently, it makes me skeptical about its contents."

Another male respondent (27) from Ward No. 27 cited, "Not all media are alike. Some media, however, are trying to maintain their credibility, and people trust them relatively, especially for obtaining political news."

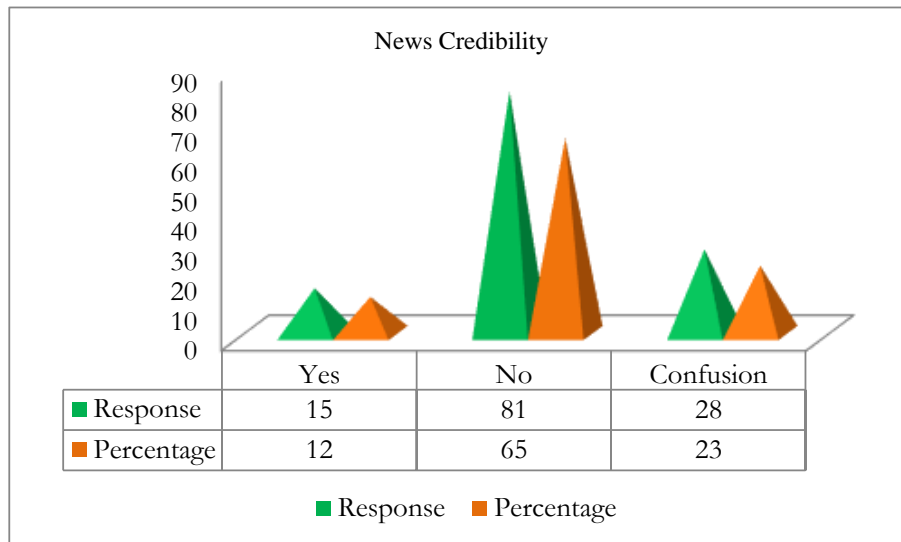


Figure 7. Credibility of Political News

Relationship between Media and Politics:

After being asked, "Is there any relationship between media and politics?" 75% (93) of the respondents expressed a positive response. They perceived a strong relationship between media and politics. Conversely, 5% (6) of the respondents think there is no relationship between media and politics. However, 20% (25) of the respondents give no comments on this question.

A male respondent (19) from Ward No. 9 expressed, "I think there is indeed a significant relationship between media and politics, as the media try to conceal the government's flaws."

Another male respondent (18) from Ward No. 9 replied, "Of course! There is a relationship between media and politics, as politics often control the media."

Another male respondent (23) from Ward No. 21 claimed, "Media accelerates political movement through covering that event; in this sense, active political parties need media."

A female respondent (22) from Ward No. 29 cited her argument that, generally, politicians try to handle media to convey their message to people. Sometimes, they also want to be highlighted by getting media coverage.

Another male respondent (23) from Ward No. 27 mentioned that the media is crucial in exposing many things politicians may try to conceal. One more male respondent (22) from Ward No.18 replied, "Publishing news on different political issues through media creates some kind of pressure and even a sense of accountability."

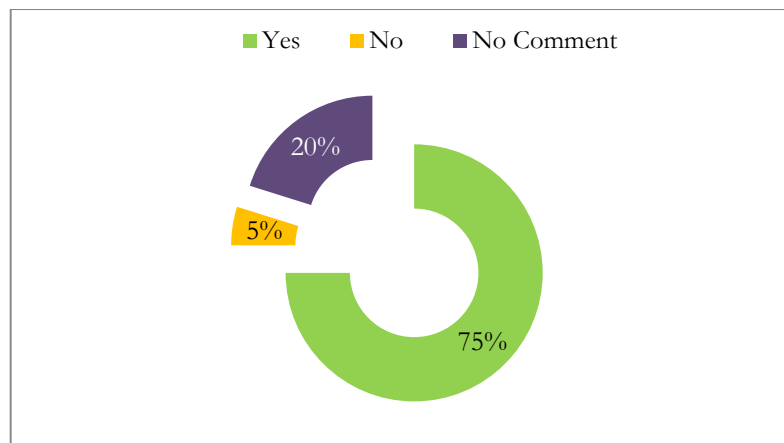


Figure 8. Relationship between Media and Politics

Role of Media in Engaging Youths in Politics:

After asking the question “What type of role did the media play in pushing you into politics?” to the respondents who are actively involved in politics, 20% (five individuals) of the 25 politically involved respondents acknowledged that the media play a vital role in engaging individuals in politics. Even the media also played an important role in involving them in politics. On the other hand, 64% (16 individuals) of the respondents refused the influence of media in this portion. Notably, 16% (four individuals) of the respondents commented as should have on this question.

A male respondent (19) from Ward No. 30 commented, *“The media provides me with different political news that helps me to know deeply about politics. Thus, the media has played a significant role in inspiring me to get engaged in politics.”*

Another male respondent (20) from Ward No. 26 expressed, *“The Media influenced me in politics by providing news updates and information on contemporary political issues. Besides, with the help of the media, I watched political speeches by prominent political figures like Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and local political figures.”*

Another respondent (21) from Ward No. 19 also shared, *“I learned the political history of Bangladesh through media. They also allowed me to know the context of our liberation war. All these together, I am getting engaged in politics.”*

A female respondent (23) from Ward No. 18 shared a different perspective; she replied, *“Although I am actively involved in politics, media did not play a role in it. Rather, my family inspired me and influenced the decision.”*

Discussion and Conclusion

The active participation of youth in politics can be a vital force to expedite a transformative change within the political sphere of Bangladesh. It can also facilitate a favourable transformation in the existing political system (Tamanna, 2018). Nelson Mandela once stated, “Young people should become an active part of nation-building, reconciliation, reconstruction and development” (Mokwena, 2007). In this continuity, substantial youth participation is evident when profoundly delving into the most significant movements in Bangladesh, which leads to a victory and transformative change. Instances include the inevitable contributions of youths during the language movement in 1952, the independence war of Bangladesh in 1971, the movement against autocratic rule in 1991, the Shahbag movement in 2013, the quota reform movement in 2018, and the road safety movement in 2018. Once more in 2024, the government-backed student wing and law enforcement brutalized and killed numerous students and individuals, sparking the Quota Reform Movement and the Anti-Government Movement (“Timeline of student protests”, 2024)

However, this study shows that despite being politically aware (84%), about 54% of youths are not interested in politics. Furthermore, they discussed government-owned media's political coverage and how biased other media outlets are. Of the total respondents, 65% think that political news presented in the media is not credible. Yet, 79% of respondents confirmed that the

media has the power to influence people and society. The data shows that the press could not play an influential role in luring them into politics. It can be analyzed more deeply through the uses and gratifications theory. Here, all the participants use different media types for other purposes and their needs. Therefore, in this case, the media could not significantly tempt them into politics. It relates to the civic culture theory, where people use media to get political information. Still, lack of credibility and bias are given reasons for disinterest in politics, which is one of the socio-political natures of media.

On the contrary, the limited number of young people actively engaged in politics is not only influenced by the media; other factors have also been observed to play a role. In this circumstance, the media has played a significant role in some young people's involvement in politics, as the way its powerful influence is stated in the Hypodermic needle theory. Similarly, prior studies have found that the media can profoundly influence young people's political involvement. Even young people are dependent on the media to get political news. They participate in various political protests and other political activities using social media.

On the other hand, in most cases, youths get involved in politics through the influence of opinion leaders instead of the media's direct impact. According to Hazel Gaudet, Bernard Berelson, and Paul Lazarsfeld's two-step flow theory, family, friend circles, relatives, and educational institutions have lured them into the role of opinion leaders.

The study's findings also focused on some points where several important questions have arisen about Bangladesh's current political landscape and the ethical responsibility of the media. According to the data, the absence of neutral news coverage may prevent the media from tempting the youths of Khulna City Corporation, which could lead to active political participation.

So it is crucial to find out these issues promptly. Otherwise, it could impact this continued diminishing of youth participation in politics. In this situation, politicians should take steps to let the youth be involved in politics, as they are crucial in the leadership circle. They can use their observations to contribute to developing media strategies to accelerate youth political participation. Community organizations can also use the findings of this study to take many initiatives locally. NGOs and other civil society organizations can design awareness programs to inform the youth about the importance of political participation. Additionally, the media should perform their responsibilities neutrally and adopt a progressive approach effectively, such as reforming existing policies in terms of their political programs that will specifically inform youths as they get earnestly involved in politics. Otherwise, this diminishing youth participation in politics threatens leadership quality and puts it at risk to tomorrow's democracy (Tamanna, 2018).

To determine the role of media in youth political participation, interviews were conducted with youths whose political background was unknown, but interviewing youths directly involved in politics might have added a new dimension to this study. Here,

politicians could be questioned about their responsibilities. Similarly, to know the policy and strategy of the media, their programs could be analyzed, as well as the interviews of the journalists responsible for the Political beat. Moreover, data could have been collected from a larger area using mixed methods; otherwise, the results obtained in this study may have differed with other socio-cultural contexts. These study limitations may open up new opportunities for further research and serve as guidelines for any future study on this topic.

Acknowledgment

We want to express our deepest gratitude to those who gave us their valuable time, answered our questions, and helped us to reach other respondents. We would also like to extend our heartiest appreciation to all individuals who contributed to the completion of this study. Words cannot express our gratitude to anonymous journal reviewers and the handling editor, for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

Conflict of Interest

None of the authors present any conflict of interest.

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