Algorithmic Bias in Activism: How Social Media Shapes Crisis Movements in South Asia

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Abstract. In recent years, social media has become a crucial platform for crisis-driven activism, enabling rapid information sharing and collective mobilization during critical moments. While these platforms provide spaces for public participation, the algorithms operating behind them often determine which voices gain visibility and which remain overlooked. This study examines how algorithmic bias influences crisis-driven activism in South Asian countries, particularly Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh, where digital movements increasingly shape political, social, and humanitarian discussions. To explore public perceptions, a survey was conducted using Google Forms to collect primary data from participants. The questionnaire investigated how individuals interact with activism-related content and how algorithmic filtering may influence their understanding of ongoing movements. Prior to distribution, the survey instrument was reviewed and tested by faculty members and senior students to ensure clarity and reliability. Preliminary findings suggest that algorithms tend to prioritize highly engaging or sensational content, which can distort activist messaging and limit the visibility of marginalized perspectives. These results highlight the complex role of algorithms in digital activism, demonstrating that they can both amplify and constrain activist efforts. The study therefore underscores the importance of greater algorithmic transparency to ensure that digital activism in South Asia remains fair, inclusive, and impactful during times of crisis.

Keywords: Algorithmic Bias, Activism, Crisis Movements, South Asia, Social Media.

1 Introduction

More than a decade after its rapid global expansion, social media has evolved from a space primarily used for personal expression into a powerful arena where political and social engagement frequently unfold. Platforms originally designed for casual interaction now serve multiple purposes, including public debate, activism, and collective resistance, alongside everyday conversations about entertainment, sports, and personal life. During periods of crisis, particularly in South Asia, these digital platforms play an important role in mobilizing communities and circulating

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information beyond the reach of traditional media outlets. As societies become increasingly dependent on such platforms, both the opportunities and risks associated with algorithm-driven systems are becoming more visible.

Behind the constant stream of online content are algorithmic systems that determine which posts are prioritized and which remain largely unseen. These algorithms influence how information spreads across networks and shape the visibility of different narratives. Although algorithms are often presented as neutral technological tools, their functioning is strongly influenced by platform objectives, data patterns, and predicted user engagement. Content that is emotionally charged, sensational, or capable of generating strong reactions is frequently promoted more aggressively than information intended to inform or educate. Such patterns contribute to what researchers describe as algorithmic bias, where certain voices gain greater visibility while others receive limited exposure. For activist movements, this dynamic means that public attention may depend less on the social importance of an issue and more on how effectively content aligns with engagement-driven algorithmic preferences. This study draws on perspectives from Resource Mobilization Theory and Framing Theory to better understand these dynamics in digital activism. Resource Mobilization Theory explains how social movements depend on the effective use of resources such as communication networks, visibility, and public attention in order to gain influence. In digital environments, algorithmic amplification can therefore function as an important resource that shapes the reach and success of activist campaigns. Framing Theory, on the other hand, focuses on how issues are presented in ways that influence public interpretation and engagement. Within social media platforms, algorithmic systems often promote emotionally framed or highly engaging content, which can affect how activist narratives are perceived and shared by online audiences. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a useful framework for examining how algorithmic visibility influences activism during moments of crisis.

In recent years, algorithmic bias has become an important topic in research on digital media and civic participation. The concept generally refers to systematic distortions that arise from model design, training data, or the economic incentives embedded within digital platforms. On social media, these biases influence which communities receive amplification and which are pushed to the margins of online discourse. As a result, activist movements may gain or lose public attention not solely because of the urgency of their cause, but also because of how their messages interact with algorithm-driven engagement mechanisms. These dynamics are particularly complex in the South Asian context, where cultural diversity, political tensions, and longstanding social inequalities shape public communication. Activist movements in the region often face structural barriers such as political pressure, misinformation, and limited institutional support. Algorithmic filtering can intensify these challenges by prioritizing divisive or emotionally provocative content over balanced or informative messages. For example, during periods of political unrest in Bangladesh, highly polarizing posts are often more likely to spread widely than nuanced discussions, potentially influencing public perception. Similarly, movements such as the protests against India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the Shaheen Bagh sit-in, and Sri Lanka's #GoHomeGota protests demonstrate how algorithmic amplification can elevate emotionally driven activism while comparatively reducing the visibility of more measured discourse. Despite the growing body of research on algorithmic bias,

much of the existing literature focuses primarily on Western contexts. The Global South, including South Asia, remains comparatively underrepresented in empirical studies. Differences in technological access, digital literacy, and regulatory environments mean that algorithmic influence may operate differently in this region. These conditions make South Asia an important setting for examining how platform design interacts with local social and political realities. While social media platforms create new opportunities for communication and collective action, they may also reinforce existing inequalities by shaping whose voices are amplified in digital spaces.

Given ongoing concerns about visibility, fairness, and representational diversity, it is important to understand how algorithmic systems affect the ability of activists to communicate during moments of crisis. This study investigates the role of algorithmic bias in shaping digital activism across Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka by examining users' perceptions of visibility, fairness, and the broader impact of algorithmic content distribution. Rather than focusing exclusively on the technical design of algorithms, the research centers on the lived experiences of users, including their awareness of algorithmic influence and their perceptions of how activist content is promoted or suppressed.

This research contributes perception-based empirical evidence from South Asia on how users experience algorithmic bias in crisis-driven digital activism. Drawing on survey responses collected from participants in Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, the study explores how algorithmic systems shape the reach, visibility, and engagement of activist messages during social and political crises. By emphasizing user perceptions rather than purely technical evaluations, the research highlights how platform structures influence civic participation and digital visibility within the Global South.

2 Literature Review

This section explores how algorithms shape the dynamics of activism and visibility in South Asia's digital landscape. By synthesizing theoretical insights and regional case studies, the review highlights how algorithmic systems both empower and constrain civic participation. The discussion is organized around four guiding research questions: how algorithms shape activists' movements, how they affect visibility, whether online activism faces distinct algorithmic challenges, and whether algorithms amplify certain voices while silencing others.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Resource Mobilization Theory and Framing Theory to understand how algorithmic systems influence digital activism.
Resource Mobilization Theory posits that social movements rely on access to resources such as information, networks, and public visibility to mobilize support. In

digital environments, algorithmic systems influence the distribution of these resources by determining which content reaches broader audiences. Consequently, algorithmic visibility functions as a crucial strategic resource for digital activism.
Framing Theory explains how activist messages attract attention in digital spaces. Social movements often employ emotional narratives and persuasive framing to mobilize public support. Social media algorithms, by promoting content that generates strong engagement or emotional reactions, amplify some narratives over others.

Together, these theoretical perspectives not only guide the interpretation of results but also informed the design of the survey, ensuring questions captured participants' perceptions of algorithmic influence, visibility, and engagement in South Asian digital activism.

2.2 Literature Selection

The literature for this study was selected based on its relevance to three major themes: digital activism, social media algorithms, and crisis movements in South Asia. Keywords such as "digital activism," "algorithmic bias," "social media influence," and "South Asian protests" were used to discover articles published between 2020 and 2025. Studies highlighting practical examples of activism in the Global South were prioritized to ensure alignment with the regional research context.

2.3 Algorithms and the Shaping of Activist Movements

Research indicates that algorithms increasingly guide how activism develops and operates in digital spaces. Pandey [12] observes that algorithmic systems determine which content becomes visible online, shaping how movements gain traction or fade from attention. These systems can reproduce patterns of discrimination by favoring specific content and users over others. Shahid, Elswah, and Vashistha [15] note that automated moderation and recommendation models may extend historical inequalities in low-resource or marginalized contexts, creating barriers for inclusive activism.
In South Asia, algorithms influence how activists organize and coordinate. Bari [2] highlights that social media platforms have allowed movements to grow rapidly by sharing information and mobilizing communities. However, Williams [17] emphasizes that this process is not neutral: algorithms subtly shape which issues are prioritized and what types of engagement are rewarded. Consequently, digital activism often reflects algorithmic logic rather than the grassroots realities it seeks to represent.

2.4 Algorithms and the Visibility of Activist Movements

Visibility is critical to influencing public discourse, and algorithms serve as the primary gatekeepers. Studies show that algorithmic architectures prioritize content that sustains engagement, often reinforcing sensational or polarizing material over deliberative or informational posts [3]. During Sri Lanka's Aragalaya protests, Hattotuwa [7] demonstrates that online visibility played a key role in amplifying dissent against government policies. Digital platforms enabled citizens to connect globally, even during internet shutdowns. Timberman [16] describes how Sri Lankans abroad extended the protest's visibility internationally, illustrating the global reach of algorithmic amplification when aligned with public sentiment. Similar patterns appeared in Nepal's 2025 protests, where Koirala [9] reports Generation Z activists used TikTok and Discord following government restrictions on major platforms. Reuters [18] highlights that these digital strategies sustained momentum until political change occurred. Yet, such cases reveal that visibility remains dependent on platform design, often outside activists' control.

2.5 Algorithmic Challenges in Online Activism

Digital activism faces ongoing challenges due to constant algorithmic changes. Neha et al. [11] show that activists must adapt continually to platform rule updates to maintain engagement and reach. Frequent changes in recommendation models can weaken movement coordination. Gajjala et al. [5] explain that these updates often favor large-scale or well-funded campaigns while limiting the exposure of local, community-based efforts. This imbalance reflects how platform algorithms reproduce digital hierarchies that mirror offline inequalities. David et al. [4] note that algorithmic amplification frequently promotes sensational or divisive content, undermining nuanced activism. As algorithms optimize for engagement metrics like likes or shares, they unintentionally privilege polarizing voices. Moroojo et al. [10] argue that this creates echo chambers, reducing deliberative discourse and affecting how activism is perceived and sustained. Collectively, these findings indicate that algorithmic control over visibility introduces structural challenges to equitable civic participation.

2.6 Amplification and Silencing through Algorithms

Algorithms not only amplify certain voices but also silence others, shaping public narratives of activism. Cambridge University Press [3] found that engagement-driven algorithms prioritize emotional or viral content, reducing visibility for educational or reflective activism. This effect is especially pronounced in South Asia, where rapid digitalization intersects with complex political environments. Pandey [12] observes that these systems, while intended to enhance engagement, reinforce visibility hierarchies that marginalize minority perspectives. In Bangladesh, Ahmed [1] reports that algorithmic radicalization during 2024 unrest amplified divisive narratives while limiting balanced reporting. David et al. [4] identify similar patterns in India, where

algorithmic discrimination favors dominant social groups and reduces representation for marginalized communities. These insights demonstrate that algorithms act as powerful mediators of political communication, determining whose activism gains public recognition. In summary, algorithms actively shape activism, influence its visibility, and control which narratives dominate. This underscores the urgent need for algorithmic transparency and accountability to ensure fair representation in South Asia's digital activism.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were collected through multiple-choice questions, while a single open-ended question provided qualitative insights into participants' opinions and recommendations. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how algorithmic bias influences social activism in South Asia. The survey was explicitly informed by Resource Mobilization Theory and Framing Theory. Resource Mobilization Theory guided the development of questions related to the perceived mobilization of digital resources, such as attention and engagement, within activist campaigns. Framing Theory, in turn, shaped questions addressing how participants interpret and respond to different types of activist content, particularly emotionally charged or informational posts. By linking survey design directly to these theoretical frameworks, the study ensures that the data collected can be interpreted in light of how algorithms influence visibility and engagement in digital activism.

3.2 Participants

A total of 150 participants from Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka contributed to the survey, encompassing a diverse range of age groups and professional backgrounds. This allowed the study to explore how algorithmic bias and online activism are perceived across various social and occupational contexts. There were no specific inclusion or exclusion criteria, making the survey accessible to all interested participants.

3.3 Instrument

A structured online survey comprising 19 questions was used to collect data. The questionnaire included one open-ended question, allowing respondents to provide additional information or recommendations alongside the multiple-choice items assessing their experiences and perspectives. The survey was designed and distributed using Google Forms.

To ensure clarity and reliability, the survey underwent a pilot test involving 17 participants, including six faculty members (one serving as the research mentor) and 11 senior students. Based on their feedback, several revisions were made to improve the survey's clarity and effectiveness, including:

- Simplifying complex questions for better understanding.
- Breaking down multi-part questions into concise, clear items.
- Converting certain questions into statement-based formats with adjusted response options.

3.4 Procedure

The finalized survey was distributed digitally through LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and Messenger. Attempts to reach Sri Lankan student unions via email were unsuccessful; however, academic members in Sri Lanka were invited by the research mentor. The survey remained open for approximately 20 days, providing adequate time to collect responses from all three target countries.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative responses were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to identify patterns and trends across participant demographics and survey answers. Open-ended responses were examined thematically to uncover recurring ideas and perceptions regarding algorithmic bias and digital activism. This combined approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both numerical trends and personal experiences.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation was entirely voluntary. Prior to completing the survey, participants were informed of the study's purpose and provided informed consent. They were assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used solely for research purposes. Only those who agreed to these terms proceeded with the survey.

4 Results

This section presents the quantitative findings from the survey that was analyzed using SPSS. The data were collected from participants in Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka to explore their experiences and perceptions of algorithmic bias in digital activism and crisis movements.

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

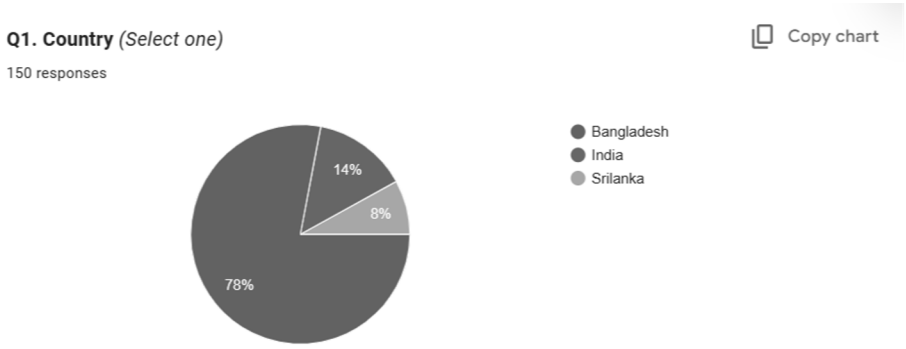

Fig. 1. Distribution of survey respondents

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
18–30 (students + early professionals)	137	91.3	91.3
31–40 (mid-career professionals/young adults)	11	7.3	98.7
41+	1	0.7	99.3
Below 18	1	0.7	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

A total of 150 participants completed the survey. The majority were from Bangladesh (78%), followed by India (14%) and Sri Lanka (8%). Although the study includes respondents from Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, the distribution of participants is uneven, with the majority coming from Bangladesh. This imbalance reflects the researchers' stronger academic and social networks within Bangladesh and the challenges of reaching respondents in other South Asian countries. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted primarily as reflecting perceptions within Bangladesh while still offering insights into broader regional dynamics. Despite the smaller number of respondents from India and Sri Lanka was relatively smaller, their responses reflected patterns similar to those observed among participants from Bangladesh regarding the influence of algorithms on activism visibility. This suggests that concerns surrounding algorithmic bias may not be limited to a single national context but could be shared across the broader South Asian region. Most respondents

were between 18–30 years old (91.3%) and identified as students (79.3%). Table 1 summarizes the demographic distribution of the sample.

Platform	Count (approx.)	Percentage (150 responses total)
Facebook	115	76.7%
Instagram	90	60.0%
YouTube	70	46.7%
Twitter (X)	15	10.0%
TikTok	12	8.0%
LinkedIn	6	4.0%
WhatsApp	5	3.3%
Pinterest/Reddit/ Discord/Snapchat/Telegram	1 each	0.7% each
None	1	0.7%

Table 2. Social Media Usage Patterns

Results indicate that Facebook (76.7%) and Instagram (60%) are the most frequently used social media platforms among participants, followed by YouTube (46.7%). Twitter (10%) and TikTok (8%) are less prominent but still contribute to online engagement. Platforms such as LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and smaller networks like Pinterest or Reddit represent minimal usage (under 5%). This shows that activist content in South Asia is mostly shared on Facebook and Instagram, which matches previous studies that say these platforms are the main ones used for digital organizing in the region.

Table 3. Perceptions of Algorithmic Bias

Response	Perceived Content Bias (%)	Censorship of Activist Posts (%)	Visibility Bias (Activism vs. Entertainment) (%)	Algorithmic Influence on Civic Response (%)
Strongly Agree	33.3	35.3	31.3	32.7
Agree	44.0	43.3	45.3	49.3

Neutral	18.7	16.7	16.7	18.0
Disagree	6.0	4.0	4.7	0.0
Strongly Disagree	0.0	0.7	2.0	0.0

Across all four questions about algorithmic bias, a strong majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with statements indicating that social media platforms influence the visibility of activism content. This agreement was consistently high, with 76.6% of respondents acknowledging visibility bias between activism and entertainment content. It reached a peak of 82.0%, reflecting strong perceptions of algorithmic influence on civic responses. In contrast, neutral responses remained much lower (about 16–18%), while disagreement was rare. Disagreement was notably absent on Algorithmic Influence on Civic Response, where no respondents registered a "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" response. These results illustrate a clear perception among users that algorithms have a significant impact on the information shown to them, supporting the hypothesis of widespread perceived algorithmic influence.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Content Bias	150	4.0667	.82468
Censorship of Activist Posts	150	4.0867	.85872
Visibility Bias (Activism vs. Entertainment)	150	4.0567	.75783
Algorithmic Influence on Civic Response	150	4.1467	.69886
Valid N (listwise)	100		

Fig. 2. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics demonstrate that participants were largely aware that algorithms create boundaries influencing user behavior in digital spaces. The highest mean score was observed for the statement indicating that algorithmic systems influence civic responses to crisis-related content ($M \approx 4.09$, $SD \approx 0.86$). This means the respondents strongly believed that Facebook's algorithm affects the way people interact with movements such as those related to crisis. People generally agreed that visibility bias is a serious underlying issue (Perceived Content Bias, $M \approx 4.07$, $SD \approx 0.82$). In other words, respondents agreed on the basis that activist content is often looked over because content that are not as boring nor not as profitable, take precedence over other content. The perceptions of users regarding entertainment as a preference vs activist content (Visibility Bias (Activism vs Entertainment), $M \approx 4.05$) have slightly

lower conscientiousness. Then issues around political or societal significance (Algorithmic Influence on Civic Response, M ≈ 4.14) suggest the most consensus amongst respondents.

4.2 Patterns of Online Activism Engagement

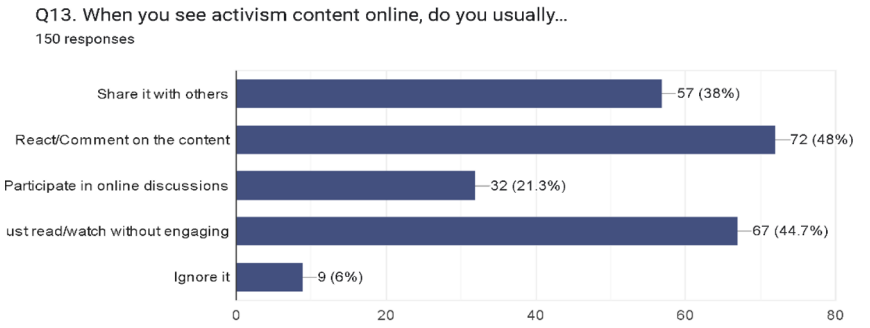

Fig. 3. Activism engagement

Approximately 38% of respondents reported actively sharing activism-related posts, while 48% primarily consume such content by only reading or watching without engaging. This suggests that passive consumption outweighs active participation.

4.3 Perceived Impact of Digital Activism

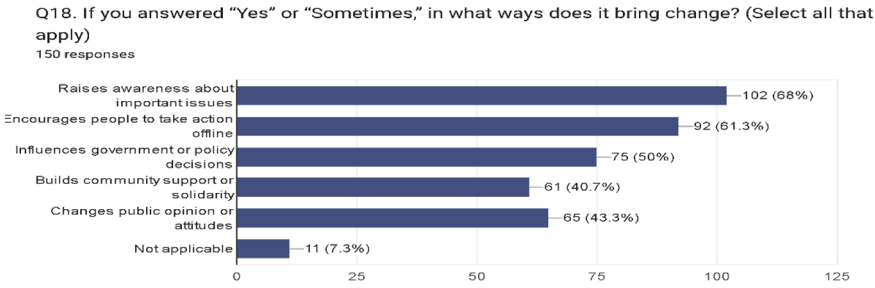

Fig. 4. Activism impact

The prevalent effects of digital activism echoed raising awareness about issues with 102 respondents or 68% who selected this option, demonstrating its strength is in informing the public about key issues. Following this was encouraging individuals to act in the offline world with 92 respondents (61.3%), which implies that social media participation can motivate individuals to engage in the real world. Influencing government, or policy was defined by 75 respondents (50%) showing that 50% of the

respondents indicated belief in advocacy for systematic changes to be achieved at least in part. In addition, 61 respondents (40.7%) chose building community support or solidarity, and 65 (43.3%) selected changing public attitudes or opinions. Only 11 respondents (7.3%) selected "Not applicable," meaning the majority of participants would agree that digital activism must be impactful in multiple ways.

5 Discussion

This section interprets the survey results from 150 respondents across Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, connecting them to the research questions, prior studies, and theoretical frameworks. The aim is to understand how algorithms shape online activism, influence visibility, create challenges, and amplify or silence voices in South Asia.

5.1 How Do Algorithms Shape Activists' Movements?

Survey responses indicate that social media algorithms exert a substantial influence on civic engagement and activist movements. A strong majority of respondents perceived that algorithmic systems shape how people respond to crisis-driven activism online. This suggests that algorithms are not neutral tools; they select which stories gain visibility while others remain largely unseen, favoring certain voices over others, consistent with Ahmed [1] and Moroojo et al. [10]. In digital spaces, where attention is a proxy for reach, these platforms act as invisible gatekeepers of activism.
Facebook and Instagram were reported as the most influential platforms for activism in South Asia. Even when activists employ strong messaging and community support, the algorithmic design of these platforms determines the extent of their content's reach. Algorithms tend to elevate posts that receive rapid engagement, effectively commercializing attention [5]. Consequently, engagement functions as a form of currency that movements must compete for to be noticed.
The findings are consistent with Resource Mobilization Theory, which suggests that social movements succeed by strategically deploying resources. In the digital context, algorithmic visibility represents a critical resource. Framing Theory further explains how messages aligning with emotionally charged narratives are more likely to be amplified. Together, these frameworks clarify how algorithms shape movement organization by directing attention toward content that fosters engagement, simultaneously providing opportunities for some movements while constraining others.

5.2 How Do Algorithms Affect the Visibility of Activist Movements?

Visibility emerged as a key concern in the survey. A large majority of participants indicated that activism-related posts are often overlooked by the intended audience. Because algorithms reward rapid engagement, content that does not immediately

attract interaction may fail to reach users effectively. Even politically or socially significant content can struggle to gain visibility without early engagement.

Cross-national patterns reveal additional complexity. While respondents largely believe online activism can contribute to offline change, limited visibility constrains its impact. Verification of content is another critical factor; participants reported that they rarely verify activism-related content before engagement, meaning emotionally amplified or sensationalized material spreads faster than verified content. These patterns align with Ahmed [1], who notes that emotionally charged content often crowds out less emotive yet more accurate posts.

Differences across countries were observed, with Bangladeshi respondents reporting more frequent censorship than those from India or Sri Lanka. Such discrepancies likely reflect variations in platform moderation policies, political pressures, and national digital environments, as noted by Saha [13]. It is important to recognize that algorithmic visibility does not function uniformly across regions.

5.3 Do Online Activism Face Unique Algorithmic Challenges?

Survey responses indicate that South Asian digital activism faces several algorithmic challenges, compounded by user behavior. A significant portion of respondents reported being passive consumers, with fewer actively sharing or creating content. This asymmetry reduces the likelihood of smaller or newer groups gaining traction. David et al. [4] highlight that movements with predominantly passive audiences encounter additional barriers from algorithms favoring continuous engagement.

Open-ended responses underscore these challenges. Participants highlighted government policies and content moderation as factors that increase bias, alongside the need for content validity and legitimacy. Several respondents emphasized the importance of transparent digital governance and the verification of information (Respondents 33, 88, 130). These insights illustrate the practical obstacles activists face in achieving visibility, particularly for small-scale or local campaigns.

5.4 Do Algorithms Amplify Certain Voices While Silencing Others?

Amplification and silencing were recurring themes in participants' responses. Many reported that well-known or popular voices receive disproportionate attention, while smaller or less recognized causes struggle to gain visibility. These patterns align with findings by Gajjala et al. [5], particularly in contexts such as the Shaheen Bagh movement.

Open-ended responses further confirmed perceptions of algorithmic favoritism. Participants stressed the need for awareness among users and for platforms to adopt more transparent moderation practices (Respondents 25, 63, 88, 129). The results suggest that algorithmic mechanisms can inadvertently suppress genuine activist messages while promoting sensationalized content. Overall, the survey indicates that local grassroots campaigns often reach a limited audience despite addressing urgent issues. Participants expressed a strong desire for fairness, transparency, and accountability in platform algorithms, echoing prior studies [1,4].

5.5 Regional Implications: South Asia's Algorithmic Landscape

Regional factors play a significant role in shaping algorithmic influence. South Asian activism relies heavily on a narrow set of platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, making movements particularly vulnerable to algorithmic bias. Cultural and linguistic moderation challenges further exacerbate these effects. Algorithms trained primarily on Western contexts may not accurately interpret local languages or culturally specific content, reducing the visibility of regional activism.
Survey respondents overwhelmingly supported greater algorithmic transparency, emphasizing the importance of understanding how platforms rank and moderate content. These findings highlight that activism in South Asia is shaped not only by platform design but also by cultural norms, political contexts, and technological constraints. The intersection of these factors determines whose voices are heard, which movements gain traction, and how online engagement translates into real-world impact.

6 Conclusion

This study examined how algorithmic bias influences digital movements and protest situations in South Asia. The findings suggest that although social media platforms play a critical role in mobilization and awareness building, algorithmic systems function as structural conditions that shape the online environments in which activism takes place. Rather than fully determining outcomes, these systems influence the visibility of activist content and affect how individuals attempt to capture attention, mobilize support, and communicate their messages.

One key observation from the research is that algorithmic systems often prioritize content that generates strong engagement. As a result, locally driven or community-based movements may struggle to gain visibility when their messages do not immediately produce high levels of interaction. This dynamic can reinforce existing socio-political inequalities, particularly in contexts where differences in access, influence, and social power already shape participation. Across the three countries examined in this study, digital activism remains heavily concentrated on major platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, making activist communication closely tied to the algorithmic structures and commercial priorities of these platforms.
Despite these challenges, digital activism continues to play an important role in raising awareness, shaping public attitudes, and encouraging youth participation in civic discussions. The findings therefore highlight the need for greater transparency and accountability in the design and operation of social media algorithms so that digital spaces can better support diverse voices, including those from marginalized communities. Strengthening digital literacy initiatives and encouraging collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, and technology companies may help create more equitable conditions for online participation and knowledge sharing.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

This study offers both practical and theoretical insights into how algorithmic bias interacts with digital activism in South Asia. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. Although data were collected from participants in Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka, the distribution of respondents was uneven, with the majority located in Bangladesh. This imbalance limits the ability to draw strong cross-national comparisons and should therefore be considered when interpreting the findings.

In addition, the study focuses on users' perceptions of algorithmic influence rather than the direct examination of algorithmic systems themselves. Future research could combine perception-based approaches with computational or machine-learning methods to analyze platform algorithms more directly. Longitudinal studies may also help explore how digital activism evolves over time and how activists adapt to changing platform environments.

Further research comparing digital activism across regions in the Global South and the Global North could provide deeper insights into whether algorithmic biases operate similarly across different political and cultural contexts. Such studies would contribute to a broader understanding of how technological systems interact with social structures and influence civic participation in diverse societies.

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