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Research Proposal

On

Exploring Cyberbullying on Facebook: A qualitative Case study of Female Politicians in Bangladesh

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Title:

Exploring Cyberbullying on Facebook: A qualitative Case study of Female Politicians in Bangladesh

Introduction

Social media has become the world's most rapid communication tool in the last few decades. It has brought people together all around the world. Due to social media's rapid expansion, women are especially at risk for cyberbullying, which includes online harassment and threats [1]. They are being harassed on social media platforms and messaging apps constantly [2]. With the rise of Digital Bangladesh, cyberbullying has become a common issue for Bangladeshi young women, students who are leading them to anxiety and depression [3], [4]. However, studies on Bangladeshi female politicians remain underexplored. Thus, this study aims at Bangladeshi female politician who experienced social media harassment and threats that affect their mental well-being.

Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the Cyberbullying on Facebook faced by the female politician in Bangladesh. Thus, the following questions will be answered.

1) How do Bangladeshi female politicians experience sexual harassment through cyberbullying on Facebook?
2) What strategies do they adopt to deal with this incident?
3) In what ways does cyberbullying affect their mental health and political participation?

Literature Review

The notion of Cyberbullying has been defined as an act of making a statement about someone to harass, intimidate on social media and forum posts, and threatening private direct messages [2], [5], [6]. Studies across countries have widely investigated the diverse context of cyberbullying. For instance, lack of lac of literacy, resources, and a legal framework, household women are facing cyberbullying [1]. Cultural limitation forces a victim to report cyberbullying-led psychological trauma [7]. The ideal definition of a beautiful body, such as a slim, white, tall body, stereotypes dominate social media against women, showing patriarchal power relations to be maintained as women as objects [6]. Globally, cyberbullying against women highlights the gender hierarchy, social structure, and legal weakness.

In Bangladesh, cyberbullying has experienced rapid growth over the internet and social media. A report published by Cybercrime Awareness Foundation (CAF) in 2023 shows that 52.21% of people filed online cases against cyberbullying in the year 2022. Among them, 40% victims suffered mental health issues reported by the Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development (BIID) [8]. Female students face social media harassment through intimate image sharing, character assassinations, threats on social media, especially in posts, message apps, etc [2]. These experiences have negative impacts upon the victims, including anger, fear of attending courses, stress, humiliation, and self-guilt [4]. Similarly, female entrepreneurs encounter inappropriate comments, messages, trolling, roasting and memes without consent [9]. However, given the severity of the crime and its consequences, cyberbullying must be stopped as soon as possible because it has a major negative effect on mental health [9]. Supporting that, cyberbullying has a strong correlation with major depressive disorder

(MDD). A study among 4,984 Bangladeshi adolescents found that those who are the victims of cyberbullying have suffered MDD four times more than others [11].

Women who are in politics are also facing cyberbullying, anxiety and depression. During the Zimbabwean election, female politicians have been subjected to sexism online [12]. In a study of 'the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, and the murder of Jo Cox' it has been revealed that, women who are in politics are harassed because, firstly, 'the costing of doing politics', secondly, 'tolerating mistreatment due to individuals' and thirdly 'normalizing women's exclusion from political participation'. Such harassment causes silent women in politics and creates a barrier to participating in democracy [13].

Research around the globe highlighted the nature, impact, and patriarchal dimension of cyberbullying, where most of the victims are investigated students, adolescents, and general female users. Most of the study is heavily based on a quantitative survey, discourse-based analyses, which leaves a gap in understanding the experience of cyberbullying against women politicians [2], [3], [7]. In particular, there is a limited number of studies that have been conducted on the Bangladeshi perspective. Addressing the gap requires a comprehensive qualitative study to understand what kind of sexual harassment through cyberbullying in Facebook, particularly among Bangladeshi female politicians. This study will also explore the effects of cyberbullying on their mental well-being, which remains underexplored in the current literature.

Methodology

This study attempts to find out the effects of cyberbullying on Bangladeshi female politicians. To address this gap, the present study will adopt a qualitative case study approach and observation methods to gain in-depth analysis from the participants.

Selecting the participants

The participants of the study will be.
- a) Bangladeshi female politicians who have mass engagement on Facebook.
- b) Must be willing to participate in the interview to share their experiences.

Procedure of Data Collection

Data will be collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Before collecting data, the researcher will randomly choose the female politicians' Facebook profiles and observe their posts to identify whether they are being harassed. Researcher also observe their actions to check how they react. Around 8-12 female Bangladeshi politicians will be selected based on the random sampling techniques. During data collection, if the researcher finds the saturation points of repetitive interview themes, the researcher must stop [14]. For the interview questions, the researcher will follow the Interview protocol refinement framework to set the alignment of interview questions with the research questions [15].

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is widely recognised as a significant qualitative data analysis approach [16]. Thus, the researcher will adopt thematic analysis to analyse the interview data using six steps of its theme generation features.

Ethical Consideration

To maintain ethics, researchers will make sure to get consent from the participants before collecting the data. All the participants will be assured that their privacy will be protected, to honour this commitment researcher will use pseudonyms for everyone who participates in this study.

Expected Outcomes

The findings are expected to provide a detailed understanding of the specific form of harassment that Bangladeshi female politicians faced on Facebook social media. it will provide in-depth information on how these incidents affect their mental health and participation in politics. The researcher will also reveal what strategies female politicians employed to deal with social media. Findings are expected to fill the gap in Bangladeshi contexts. It will also help the policymakers

Potential Problems

The target participants of the studies are Bangladeshi female politicians who have experienced Facebook cyberbullying. As the nature of data is sensitive, they may not fully disclose their experiences. Besides, there a small sample sizes and a focus on specifically Facebook users. Nevertheless, the study will balance these limitations through the depth of the qualitative insights and its focus on the underexplored population of female politicians in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

This study aims to explore the sexual harassment-based cyberbullying among Bangladeshi female politicians. It will offer valuable insights about how they experience and overcome the harassment in the Bangladeshi context. Findings are expected to help policymakers and the Facebook platform raise awareness programs and improve the safety measures for female politicians.

Timeline

This study will take 10 months, with the following timeline:

Phase 1 (1 month): Developing the literature review.
Phase 2 (2-3 months): Refining the research methodology, preparing interview questions, and contacting participants.
Phase 3 (3-5 months): Data collection and coding them.
Phase 4 (5-8 months): Analysing data and presenting the findings.
Phase 5 (8-10 months): Drafting the article and submission of the final report.

Post Program Plan

After completing the study, the findings will be published in an academic journal. As this research will also offer the victims' mental health conditions and strategies to overcome

strategies, so it will help various government organisations and lawmakers to understand the current situation of cyberbullying. In addition, for further investigations to find any possible gap, this study will remain open to anyone.

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