



The Presence of Local Leaders of Alamdanga on Social Media and the Influence on Public Opinion during Election: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of local leaders over social media on the public opinion during election time at Alamdanga in Chuadanga District. Today, social media has become one of the most vital instruments for political participation, information sharing, and opinion building. This study aims to find out the nature of local leader using social media at Alamdanga during the election and how social media activities are related to the formation of public opinion. This research follows a qualitative approach. The present study adopts descriptive design to explore the pattern of using social media of local leaders and public in general. Here, 100 respondents were selected for the study and purposive sampling method was used. The data were obtained by conducting in-depth interviews with the stakeholders at Alamdanga. The findings of the study reveal that a large proportion of leaders (76.67%) strongly agreed that social media is an effective tool for political campaigning. Most respondents (62.86%) felt that local leaders influenced voters on social media platforms. About 91.43% did agree that social media has impacted their decisions. It is concluded that local leaders can be able to control the public opinion by social media. Hence, social media has proven itself to be a successful weapon in the local politics during the time of elections.

Keywords: *Social Media, Local Leaders, Public Opinion, Election Campaign, Alamdanga, Facebook, Voter Influence, Political Participation, Political Awareness, Social Media Influence*

Introduction

Nowadays, social media is not limited to just leisure and entertainment. It is currently being used as one of the means of political propaganda (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018). Social media has become one of the most effective channels for political participation and opinion formation in the era of digital communication (Valenzuela et al., 2012). Politicians throughout the world

are depending more and more on social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter (X) to interact with the public, spread campaign messaging, and voting behaviour (Kreiss, 2016). The environment of communication, which has been present in Bangladesh since independence, has also changed in Bangladesh as it is a country with a rapidly expanding internet and social media user base (Hoque, 2025). Political campaigns in Bangladesh have historically focused on demonstrations, posters, and in-person meetings with huge gatherings, but social media has proved to give political leaders a quicker, more expansive and engaging way to connect with their voters in recent years (Al-Zaman & Sayeed, 2020). Even though the number of studies conducted on social media platforms' impact on national politics is increasing rapidly, most of it still focuses on major political parties and their leaders during general elections (Bhuiyan, 2024). The function of local political leaders, who frequently play a critical role in forming political attitudes at the grassroots level, has received far less attention. Local leaders serve as a bridge between the general public and higher political echelons, and their impact on public sentiment, especially in smaller communities and constituencies, can have a big impact on election results (Graham & Avery, 2013). Alamdanga Upazila can be described as an important place for this type of research. Local leaders in Alamdanga use social media such as Facebook and Twitter (X) to campaign their political agenda while also highlighting their ideology and development activities. By using these platforms, they communicate with voters during elections to mobilize public support for them in the elections. Yet, we still do not know how much these social media campaigns and online activities influence public opinion during elections. This research seeks to complete the missing information by looking at the digital tracks of community heads in Alamdanga because social media is used by these figures to change how common people think and how they discuss government. It has been observed that community heads use social media to attract people who vote for them. The existence and power which community heads and social campaigners have on social media will be examined by this research team to understand the situation. Because, the study focuses on specific context. It highlights how local leaders use social media to conduct political activities, attract the public to them, connect with them, and influence public opinion. The present research results provide valuable insights into influencing public opinion or changing political campaigning systems during local elections in the modern era. So, social media isn't just where people centre themselves on friends and family. It also has a lot of potential influence on citizens' perceptions. But the truth is, we do know much about what politicians do at the national and international level- when it comes to social media and how they use it, that is- but not much about how they use it on a local level. But that's a problem because local leaders know the people the most and what they say and do on social media can really impact politics and influence the people's choice in who they vote for. Local leaders are very important in linking the government to the people particularly at Alamdanga. They can communicate directly with others and share their corresponding ideas and plans through social network and receive feedback from the social network users. This can be very persuasive when it comes to opinions and actions, particularly regarding voting. Still, details remain unclear on how figures such as those at Alamdanga actually employ social platforms to rally support or shift viewpoints. Little insight exists into the ways digital networks influence political messaging at community levels across Bangladesh. This gap clouds any clear view of how online interaction might be reshaping democratic engagement nationwide. Without stronger evidence, assessing real effects feels more like guessing than analysis. Hence, this study aims to explore about the role of the leaders on social media and its influence on people thinking and actions, thereby fulfilling the above gap.

Research Objectives:

1. To examine the presence of local leaders on social media at Alamdanga in Chuadanga local and actions affect public perception during elections.
2. To analyze how local leaders at Alamdanga used social media as one of the means to attract people during the elections.

3. To determine the trends and scope of Alamdanga local leaders' usage of social media.
4. Evaluating the role of social media in shaping public political opinion at Alamdanga.

Literature Review:

Al-Zaman and Sayeed (2020) digital media has changed political communication in Bangladesh by making it more interactive, participative, and pluralistic rather than the one-way, elite-driven process it was under conventional media. Movements like Shahbagh (2013) and Road Safety (2018) are made possible by the direct engagement of political leaders, activists, and ordinary individuals using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs. By enabling common people to challenge authority, disseminate knowledge, and shape policy, digital media promotes greater democracy and pluralism.

Hoque (2025) over the past decade, social media has significantly transformed communication, politics, and social activism in Bangladesh. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become central to youth life, providing spaces for information, entertainment, and activism. In politics, social media enables direct engagement between citizens and politicians, influences elections, and raises political awareness, though it also faces challenges like misinformation and online propaganda.

Roy (2023) shows that how online activism and digitalization have transformed civic politics in Bangladesh. Social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, as well as the quick growth of internet usage, have given regular people- especially young people- new opportunities to engage in politics outside of areas dominated by the elite. Movements such as Road Safety (2018), No VAT (2015), and Shahbagh (2013) demonstrate how internet platforms facilitate mobilisation, magnify complaints, and influence group action.

Anwar (2021) social media transforms activism by making it possible for small movements to be coordinated, mobilised, and awareness rose quickly. He notes that local players can turn personal complaints into group political goals through internet channels, which lower entry hurdles for leadership and frequently circumvent traditional party institutions.

Chowdhury (2022) social media is now rival to traditional media in shaping public opinion. He believes that if local 4 leaders are skilled at digital storytelling and emotional presentation; they can quickly shape public opinion and develop into public leaders. Facebook is particular acts as a reflection of society, and has become an important battlefield for leaders to exert influence.

Cobis and Cangara (2023) in the digital age, social media has become an important political arena. The study shows that among Indonesia's young voters, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok are increasingly being used for political organization, communication, and campaigning. However, this has also brought challenges such as polarization, misinformation, and political manipulation, which may threaten democracy. Overall, the research indicates that while social media enhances young people's political participation and democratic engagement, greater regulation, accountability, and trust are needed to prevent misuse and safeguard democratic values.

Graham and Avery (2013) this study examines how local governments in the United States use social media to maintain citizen engagement, communication, and transparency. Social media use was closely associated with authorities' views of its significance, whereas adoption was not significantly impacted by age or citizen expectations. Opportunities for democratic engagement are limited because, despite the fact that many governments permit comments and discussion, communication is still mostly one-way. The results imply that municipal

governments continue to underutilise social media. The study suggests more deliberate, interactive, and dialogic use of these digital technologies to increase accountability, transparency, and public trust.

Wasswa (2013) this study analyzes the impact of social media on the Kenyan presidential election campaign. Through surveys, interviews, and focus groups with Nairobi's urban youth, the study discovered that Facebook and Twitter were often used in campaigns for information sharing, supporter mobilisation, issue debate, and funding. Young voters' support for candidates was strengthened and political engagement grew as a result of social media's ability to facilitate upward communication and direct interactions between citizens and candidates.

Dias, et al (2025) this study looks at how municipal administrations in Portugal and Peru used social media between 2007 and 2018 in relation to elections. Utilising data from 308 Portuguese 5 municipalities and 43 Lima districts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, the authors implemented a non-linear optimisation model grounded in Diffusion of Innovation Theory. Elections directly boost adoption, according to the findings, which demonstrate that adoption first followed a normal curve before sharply increasing once new administrations took power. The findings were consistent between the two nations, demonstrating that ballots cause adoption to occur in "waves." The paper makes three contributions: methodologically, by employing non-linear fitting techniques, theoretically, by putting forth a novel adoption model, and practically, by emphasising elections as chances for governments to incorporate new communication technologies and improve citizen involvement.

Njoku and Wilcox (2025) this study investigates how social media influenced voters' perceptions of the 2023 Rivers State, Nigeria, presidential election. The research was conducted based on Framing theory and Public Realm theory and used survey design on 400 selected respondents. This research based on Framing Theory and Public Sphere Theory, and analyzing data from 371 respondents, it is found that modern platforms like Facebook and Twitter are playing an important role in political propaganda, raising public awareness, and sharing election-related information. The results shows that social media is leading to greater political awareness among young voters because it creates opportunities for direct communication between candidates and voters.

Research Methodology

The qualitative and descriptive methods have been used to accomplish the study. The purposive sampling technique was used in this study. The respondents consisted of voters from various social, educational, and occupational backgrounds at Alamdanga Upazila. The study comprised of 100 respondents. Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in conducting this research. In-depth interviews with structured and semi-structured questionnaires were employed to gather primary data. Furthermore, local leaders' political posts on social media (Facebook and YouTube) were analysed during the election period. The content analysis was carried out on the nature of political messages, political strategies, public engagement patterns, and posts that got more public response. Secondary data sources included books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research papers, newspapers, online databases, government reports, and social media and election campaign publications. To analysis the data descriptive statistical methods such as percentages, pie charts, graphs, and tables were used. In addition, thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data.

Theoretical Framework

The current paper relies on the following two major communication theories including the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Agenda-Setting Theory in order to analyze the role of social media in the communication of local leaders at Alamdanga Upazila and the influence

of this factor on public opinions during elections. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973), audiences use media actively to fulfil certain needs such as information needs, sociability needs, personal identity, and discussion participation. Unlike traditional theories that view audiences as passive receivers of information, this theory highlights their active search of media that will correspond to their goals and intentions. In the context of the present study, Alamdanga residents use social media in order to get politically oriented information, control the activities of local leaders, take part in political discussions, and remain involved in politics. On the other hand, local leaders try to satisfy information and emotional needs of their audience using different political messages, development-related news, and information related to social services. In addition, according to McCombs and Shaw's Agenda-Setting Theory, media do not tell people what to think directly. However, media heavily affect the selection of objects people think about because media highlight them constantly. In this regard, the discussed theory is very important in the context of the present research, since local leaders of Alamdanga disseminate information related to election constantly in the form of messages concerning development of the area, political successes, social welfare and criticism of opposition. In such a way, social media become an effective tool for political communication and the formation of people's perception and opinion during elections.

Result and Discussion:

The research was performed at Alamdanga Upazila to identify how social media is being used for modern political communication and how public opinion is created, using data from 100 individuals (local political leaders, public officials, and citizens). Based on the demographic data of the participants, 32% of respondents fell into the age category of 41-50 years; the next largest group was ages 31-40 (22%); followed by age 51-60 (19%). Comparatively, the lowest levels of participation occurred for those 61-70 and 71-80 years of age, implying a more active level of engagement from mature adults in making political and social media-related conversations. These findings indicate that mature adults represent the largest concentration of politically conscious and socially connected individuals within the study area. Among males and females, results indicate that males (93%) comprised by far the largest percentage of participants, therefore, reflective of the social and cultural realities of political participation in rural and semi-urban Bangladesh, where there is a far greater level of male participation in political activity and the public sphere than females. As per the educational level of the respondents, it is concluded that a significant percentage of them had moderate education level. The highest percentage (30%) was among the educational qualification of respondents with less than SSC followed by those who passed SSC (24%). In contrast 16% were graduates and 13% had post graduate qualifications. The results showed that political communication via social media among the study group is able to be reached by more people with various education levels, but the people with lower education level seemed to be more involved in local political communication. When examining the occupational structure, it was found that the businessmen were the largest group among the respondents (35%), followed by those engaged in Agriculture (32%). The employees made up 19% of the sample and other respondents were in other professions 14%. The presence of business people and agricultural workers indicates the socio-economic fabric of the area as trade and agriculture are key livelihoods.

The findings show that Facebook is the leader social media site for the respondents. 99% of respondents reported using Facebook, one percent reported using YouTube and none reported using Twitter, TikTok or other. This means that Facebook is the leading platform for political communication, public engagement and information sharing in Alamdanga Upazila. No other platforms were used to a significant degree, which emphasizes that digital political interaction was situated in the study area. The study also explored the amount of time local

leaders spend on social media. The largest percentage (30%) said they spent 2-3 hours a day on social media sites. Fewer people indicated that they spent less than 1 hour, 1-2 hours, 3-4 hours, or over 4 hours online. The results indicate the moderate level of participation of local politicians with social media and the awareness about the role of social media as a new communication tool for public engagement and political visibility. In terms of political posting, almost half of the local leaders (46.67%) reported that they post once a day and the rest post two or three times a day on social media. Only a few leaders posted 4 times per day and none reported to posting more than 5 times per day. This proves that the local leaders opt for online political activity in control and moderate manner instead of excessive posting. This can be an indication that they perceive how to keep their audience engaged while not overloading them. The study also determined what content on social media is most popular among the public. When asked about the highest engagement of the public, 53.33% of local leaders responded that written posts achieved the most engagement, followed by speech videos and live videos. The result is of particular importance as it indicates that viewers in the study area are more interested in textual and informational-type political communication than in audiovisual communication. Written posts is seen as more accessible, sharable and understood by local social media users. Examining the content posted by local leaders shows that 46.67% of the content was political and 46.67% was content provided for social services. By comparison, personal activities and other topics accounted for just a fraction of the online posts. This is an indication that local leaders are mainly employing social media as a tool to promote their political agenda and sharing messages about public well-being, rather than to promote themselves. A large proportion of leaders (76.67%) strongly agreed that social media is an effective tool for political campaigning, while the rest of the leaders partially agreed. More particularly, none of the respondents disagreed with this statement. The political actors' agreement stresses the growing pertinence of digital platforms for local politics communication. Social media is emerging as an important medium of communication with the public, including promoting political agendas and maintaining a public presence. The study also explored the attitude towards the influence of social media in elections on public opinion. The majority of local leaders (53.33%) said that they thought that social media has a major influence on public opinion; while others thought it has moderate or partial influence. There was one respondent who said that social media has no role. The findings show that the political leaders in Alamdanga have been aware of the increasing capability of social media to influence the political narratives and perceptions of the populace. In terms of public engagement, the analysis shows that local leaders' political messages had high reach. About 95.71% of the respondents said that they often see and/or follow local political leaders on the internet. This indicates that, social media is now playing a significant role in the ways that citizens are informed about politics and are involved in local political activities. Also significant was how active local leaders were with social media, according to public perception. Almost half of all respondents (48.57%) said local leaders were "very active" online, with some saying they were "somewhat active" and others that they were "moderately" or "not at all" active online. None of the respondents said that their local leaders were "totally inactive" on social media. This illustrates greater digital exposure and regular attempts to communicate with people by local politicians. The study also investigated the potential for local leaders to use social media to influence voters. Most respondents (62.86%) felt that local leaders influenced voters on social media platforms, with 34.29% saying they can do this to some extent. A very small minority did say they felt no such influence. The results indicate social media are a major tool for political messaging and voter engagement for local politics. Many, however, (91.43%) did agree that social media has impacted their decisions, but that they have never voted based on information they got exclusively from social media. Just 8.57% said that they were influenced by content on social media that affected their vote. This suggests that, despite the significance of social media in political awareness and opinion formation, factors like personal experiences, community

influence, reputation of the candidate, and direct political influence still have a strong effect on the votes cast in rural Bangladesh. The findings of this study generally reveal that social media platform especially Facebook has become a prominent place of communication, public engagement and opinion formation in Alamdanga Upazila. The importance of digital political communication is increasingly understood by both the leaders and citizens. But although social media plays a significant role in people's awareness and political engagement, its direct impact on electoral outcomes is rather modest. The results reflect the changing dynamics of the relationship between digital media and the politics of the grassroots in Bangladesh and indicate that social media is not displacing traditional political communication techniques, but is supplementing them.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that the local leaders of Alamdanga must share accurate information, reliable information and information that is well presented on social media to increase the trust of the people and to engage them. Based on the finding from the research, written posts should be posted by leaders so that it can get the most public response, it is good for them to make elegant, informative and tasteful posts reflecting honesty and responsibility. While the majority of respondents from the general public said that they followed or saw the posts of local leaders regularly, no one should rely exclusively on information they found on social media and should always seek out several sources of information they could trust. Besides, nearly all the figureheads who joined in this study agreed that today's social media campaigns have significant impact upon public opinions and reactions. Thus, people in charge should exercise great care and behave morally when employing online tech, they should refrain from spreading misinformation (false news) or deceptive statements that could create confusion, outrage or social unrest among people.

Conclusion

This research aimed at exploring the role local leaders play in shaping public opinion in the run up to elections through social media platforms or traditional propaganda tools. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that social media is quite influential in elections to influence public opinion. In this modern world, a vast majority of the general populace are on social media and rely on social media for much political information. The results of the study show that most respondents confirmed that they see more posts on social media during elections. This modern campaign on social media by the local leaders of Alamdanga during the election has been an important factor in influencing the people's decisions. The results of this study indicate that the use of social media as a tool for communication is growing on a national scale as well as local scale, especially in local politics. Social media is a great way for local folks to obtain political information. And the study notes that, according to most respondents, the people are greatly influenced by this modern campaign on social media by local leaders at Alamdanga. Among the 30 local leaders in Alamdanga who responded, most of them believe that their modern campaign on social media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. A majority (48.57%) of the 70 general public respondents said that local leaders of Alamdanga are very active on social media while 21.43% said they are somewhat active and 30% said they are not very active. No one expressed the opinion that the local leaders of Alamdanga were not active at all on social media. The majority of 76.67% of the 30 leaders who responded to the survey had a view that social media is an effective political propaganda media. 23.33% of leaders gave a partial view of opinion on this question. No one expressed the opinion that social media is not an effective political propaganda medium. Of the 70 respondents, 80% of the general public said that social media is beneficial to leaders' popularity, while 20% of respondents had mixed views on the issue. No one expressed the opinion that social media does not help increase the popularity of local leaders. And no respondent was unsure about this. And out of the 70 general public

respondents, 95.71% of them view or follow local leaders' posts on social media. In this regard, the opinions of 70 respondents, general public and 30 local leaders of Alamdanga was analyzed, it is observed that during the election in Alamdanga local leaders can influence the general public opinion in the social media. This study is limited to a specific area, Alamdanga Upazila, but the results give some valuable insight into the use of social media for political purposes. Further study on this aspect is desirable to help understand such problem at various District/Division or National level in the future.

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