



## Uses of Facebook to Accelerate Violence and its Impact in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

Facebook is the most imperative medium to get information in Bangladesh. Besides, providing copious constructive vicissitudes in the society Facebook cannot be evaded its encumbrance to accelerate violence through posts. Due to Facebook posts several kinds of delinquency are happening frequently in this South Asian country. The main motto of this article is to find how users use Facebook to accelerate violence in the society. It is found in most of the cases people react without checking the facts of the post. This research paper is made with an aim to show how the users of Facebook are accelerating violence through publishing news in the society and how it is creating violence or panic among the netizens. This study has been done through studying different cases that have had a great impact in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Facebook; Bangladesh; Violence; Accelerate

### Introduction

Bangladesh is an independent country in the South Asia Region. After achieving its independence from Pakistan in 1971 after a nine months long war Bangladesh has succeeded in outstanding development in many sectors. Bangladesh is one of the fastest-growing countries of internet users in Asia, with government data showing more than 50 percent of its population actively use the medium [1]. Among the social media sites Facebook is the most prevalent in Bangladesh. A total of 3.54 crore people use Facebook in Bangladesh which accounted for 20.9 percent of its entire population. Among the user's 72.6 percent are men and 27.4 percent are women [2].

People use Facebook for diverse purposes in Bangladesh. Among the users most of them use Facebook for getting and sharing information, social communication, online marketing and studying purposes. It is very rare to find people having an android phone without a Facebook account. According to the Global Digital Statshot of Q2 report of 2017 Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh had been ranked second in terms of having the most active Facebook users in the world [3]. But the matter of

compunction that in Bangladesh the netizens not only use Facebook for virtuous purposes but also to propagate fake news for triggering hatred in the society. As a result, plentiful odium crimes are happening repeatedly in this South Asian country.

Almost 57 percent of women using Facebook have to face online harassment and it is the biggest number of all social networking sites [4].

Sometimes, women have to face a new form of domestic violence, closing the social media account, because of cyberstalking or harassment in social media [5]. Not only women, online harassment is a common phenomenon for almost everybody whether he or she is an adult or university student or child. Facebook is used by gangs as a communicating platform [6]. Militant groups also practice Facebook to run their illicit activities across the country.

It is now a great distress for Bangladesh to tackle rumor publishing through Facebook. Last couple of years a lot of unsolicited violence has been triggered by Facebook posts. Some terrible incidents occurred for fake news published by the Facebook users. The government has taken steps to control hate speech publishing through social media but most of the time the administration has shown their abortive role to control the hate crime in the country.

### Literature Review

More than seven lakh people fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh, India and other countries amid a military crackdown and ethnic violence. The United States investigated what ensued in Myanmar. The investigation team found that Facebook was used by the zealots to spread hatred against the Rohingya Muslims. Reuters found more than 1,000 examples of posts, comments and pornographic images attacking the Rohingya and other Muslims on Facebook [7].

The zealots used Facebook to prolong violence in Sri Lanka. The 2014 anti-Muslim riot in Sri Lanka caused a great bearing on the people in the towns of Aluthgama, Beruwala and Dharga Town in Kalutara District. The Sinhalese Buddhists attacked Muslims and their property. Four people were killed and 80 injured. Around 10,000 people including 8,000 Muslims

were displaced by the riots. Sri Lanka had accused Facebook for instigating anti Muslim mob violence [8].

India also passed through a big catastrophe after the BJP led party came to power. India is a Hindu majority country. Some activists claimed that the Muslims had faced a surge in attacks since the BJP took power. In Assam, around two million people are threatened with statelessness as a result of government measures aimed at removing infiltrators from India. Hate speech targeted at minorities in the northeastern Indian state of Assam is spreading almost unabated through Facebook at the same time as the Indian government is stripping nearly 2 million people there of citizenship, according to a report [9].

Facebook has an extensive role to propagate fake news or hate speech and violence in Europe. People set up pages or groups for interesting things like Sports, beauty, health. After getting more followers or members they transmit the page into their own benefits. A large number of suspect groups and Facebook pages operating across France, Germany, Italy, the UK, Poland and Spain to spread hate speech. Most were either spreading fake news or using false pages and profiles to artificially boost the content of parties or sites they supported, in violation of Facebook's rules [10].

Social media sites have become hubs for the proliferation of white-supremacist propaganda in the United State. White-supremacist groups use social media as a tool to distribute their message, where they can incubate their hate online and allow it to spread. But when their rhetoric reaches certain people, the online messages can turn into real-life violence [11].

In Germany a correlation was found between anti-refugee Facebook posts by the far-right Alternative for Germany party and attacks on refugees. Anti-refugee sentiment on Facebook predicts crimes against refugees in otherwise similar municipalities with higher social media usage [12].

## Methodology

This study is driven by following the qualitative method to find how the users use Facebook to create violence, panic and trouble among the mass people in Bangladesh. The information has been taken from secondary sources to run this study. Different cases have been studied to find out the actual scenery and how Facebook is related to accelerate violence. A number of books, articles, journals, videos, and newspapers were consulted from both print and online sources. Based on an in-depth study and analytical approach the study sets to examine Uses of Facebook to accelerate violence in Bangladesh

## Violence through Facebook post in Bangladesh

Facebook is common to all in Bangladesh to publish news and views in Bangladesh. Sometimes traditional media escape some important news to get off extra disturbance. In this case in Bangladesh Facebook plays a great role to let the public acquaint with different sensory news. Sometimes Facebook posts also assistance people to get equitable justice and

objective information. But some time users use Facebook to propagate ill doing. Abundant violence was happened in Bangladesh triggered by Facebook post. Among quite a number of incidents six incidents will be discussed where the incidents were terrible and the loss were tremendous.

### Padma bridge rumor

Padma Bridge is the biggest bridge across the Padma River in Bangladesh. Padma Bridge which is under erection will be the largest bridge in Bangladesh. It will connect two districts Louhajang, Munshiganj to Shariatpur district which helps linking the south-west of the country. Rumor spread out over Facebook that human heads and blood are obligatory to build the Padma Bridge. Security personnel had arrested eight people for spreading rumors. The rumor caused a big negative impact on human security in Bangladesh. Eight people have been killed in vigilante lynching in Bangladesh, sparked by rumors on Facebook of children being kidnapped and sacrificed as offerings for the construction of a mega-bridge [13]. More than 30 other people have been attacked in connection with the rumors.

### Borhanuddin attacked

Borhanuddin is an Upazila of Bhola District in the Division of Barisal, Bangladesh. It is 22 km far from the district area. A Facebook post of a Hindu youth became the subject of huge chaos in that area. Four people were killed and more than a hundred others injured on October, 20, 2019 in this Upazila as religious zealots clashed with police over a hate message which spread through Facebook and its messenger. Seemingly designed to hurt religious sentiment, screenshots of the conversation went viral among Facebook users and the person at the center of the storm went to Borhanuddin Police Station that night and filed a general diary saying his Facebook account had been hacked [14]. The people of the upazila held a rally under the 'Tawhidi Muslim Janata' banner. The platform demanded punishment of the youth. The agitating fanatics torched a house and vandalized 12 more belonging to the Hindu community.

### Abrar killed

Abrar killing is a big incident in the history of Bangladesh. BUET is the most renowned engineering institution in Bangladesh. Abrar Fahad, a second-year student of electrical and electronic engineering department of Bangladesh University of Engineering Technology (BUET) was killed on October 7, 2019, over his Facebook post. In his post he criticized an agreement made by the government of Bangladesh on water sharing with India. That Facebook had been seen by the Bangladesh Chhatra League, student wing of the ruling party Bangladesh Awami League. Abrar Fahad was summoned by the Chhatra League cadres to Room No 2011 of Sher-e-Bangla Hall of BUET. The cadres brutally tortured Abrar till midnight. Police recovered Abrar's body at the ground floor of Sher-e-Bangla Hall. Abrar was pronounced dead around 3 am by a BUET Medical Officer. An autopsy report has

confirmed that Abrar Fahad was beaten to death by blunt objects [15].

### Ramu violence

Ramu is an Upazila of the southern district of Cox's Bazar in the division of Chittagong of Bangladesh. In 2012 the local mob torched and vandalized a village of Buddhists in Cox's Bazaar's Ramu Upazila on 29 midnight which was one of the worst religious attacks in Bangladesh triggered by a Facebook post allegedly defaming the Quran. A fake Facebook user, using a pseudonym, posted a burning Quran image on Uttam Kumar Barua's Facebook wall. Reacted by the post, a group of arsonists put a reaction at the Buddhist temple. Fanatics set fire to at least six Buddhist temples and nearly 20 homes and ransacked and smashed more than a hundred others until 3.00 am in the attack. The violence later spread to Ukhia Upazila and Patiya Upazila in Chittagong District where Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples were targeted for attacks [16]. Eighteen pagodas were damaged and about 50 houses burnt down in six hours of madness by Muslim zealots [17].

The Facebook page with an anti-Islam picture that provoked the rampage was photoshopped. A group had taken a screenshot of Uttam Kumar Barua's Facebook profile page, cut out the address of anti-Islam website "Insult allah" and pasted it on the address bar visible in the image. Once the fabrication was done, it looked like "Insult allah" has shared the anti-Islam image with Uttam and 26 others [17]. Eighteen cases filed with three police stations in Cox's Bazar following the attacks [18].

### Rangpur violence

Rangpur is a divisional district in the northern part of Bangladesh. The mob attacked the Hindu families in Sadar Upazila in November, 2017. The incident took place at Horkoli Thakurpara village triggered by a Facebook post. The bigots had set fire to at least 30 Hindu houses of the village. They also looted and vandalised a good number of houses in that village. One person was killed and around 30 people, including law enforcers, were injured in the clash [19]. A Facebook triggered out that Titu Roy, originally from Thakurpara put up a Facebook post defaming Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). A section of fanatics from six to seven neighboring villages, including Paglapeer, Mominpur and Horiakuthi, were brought together and attacked the Hindu village. Titu Roy was also arrested under the Blasphemy law on November 24, 2017 from Nilfamari, a northern district of Bangladesh [20].

### Nasirnagar

Nabinagar is an Upazila of Brahmanbaria District in the Division of Chittagong, Bangladesh. Feral attacks took place in this upazila on the minority in 2016. The bigots in Nasirnagar organized a protest program against a Facebook post of the Hindu community on October 30. The rally was organised by the local Islamist groups Ahle Sunnat WalJamaat and Hefazat-e-Islam through announcements from local mosques [21]. The post included an image posted by Rasraj Das, of the Hindu god Shiva appearing at a Muslim holy site in the Saudi city of

Mecca [22]. Rasraj Das had apologised to the Muslims saying that his account had been hacked. Around 15 Hindu temples were vandalized and 200 Hindu houses were ransacked and looted in the mayhem [23].

Two temples in Madhabpur in the neighboring Habiganj district were also attacked following the Nasiragar incident [24]. The attacks sparked lethal phobia to the Hindu community of that area. Most of them left the area to save themselves from the brutal attacks. Six Hindu families had left the country after the attacks [21]. Around 100 people including women were injured in the attacks.

It was later exposed that Awami league leader Faruk Mia, the District Union President of Nasiragar had some problem with the local Fishermen Union leader Rasaraj Das. As per Faruk's estimation, Rasaraj did not help Faruk at the time of last election of the Union bodies [25].

### Comilla violence

Comilla is a district of Chittagong division in Bangladesh. The district has 17 upazila. Homna is an Upazila of Comilla. A violence was sparked on April 27, 2014, following a Facebook post at Bakhsitarampur village in Homna. The zealots attacked the Hindu community. At least 28 houses of Hindus were ransacked in the attack prompted by rumors that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had been defamed in Facebook posts by some Hindus. Hundreds of people from Panchkipta village swooped up Hindu families alleging that two Hindu youths posted ignominious comments on Facebook about the Prophet. A call was made from the loudspeakers at Jamia Arabia Islami Emdadul Ulum Madrasa at Rampur village near Baghsitarampur to launch the attack on Hindus [26].

In a state of panic, the Hindus fled their homes. The police had detained Utshab Das and Srinibas Das to verify the incident. During the interrogation they had denied posting any such remark. Total 11 people were arrested for their alleged involvement in the attack.

### Pabna violence

Pabna is a district of Rajshahi division in Bangladesh. A village named Bonogram in Santhiapur, about 40 kilometres from Pabna town was attacked by the fanatics over a Facebook post. The zealots claimed that Rajib Saha son of Babul Saha had maligned Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) on Facebook. Though Rajib denied the slander. Hundreds of people stormed Babul Saha's house in Bonogram. Unable to find his son, the mob got hold of Babul and took him to the bazaar. There, he was warned that he and his son would be tried for "defaming the prophet [27]. The bigots completely ravaged at least 26 houses of the minority people in the episode. The law enforcers also came under attack by the agitating zealots. Later the fanatics failed to provide legal information regarding the Facebook post.

## Analysis and Discussion

Facebook is the most common social media in Bangladesh. Most of the cases the people of Bangladesh reacted directly after getting information from Facebook. They are not concerned to verify the fact. Like magic bullet theory to some extent the content of Facebook directly hits the brain of the users. According to the theory the media (magic gun) fired the message directly into the audience's brain. The audience receives the message without considering the good and bad side of the message. The message causes the instant reaction from the audience's mind without any judgment.

Here the users play passive roles. In most of the cases it is found that the Facebook users react regarding a post without cross checking. Same incident happened in Bhola, Ramu, Nasirnagar and Padma Bridge cases. Different classes of people use Facebook in Bangladesh. Even the educated people also most of the time share fake news in their timeline. As a result, a lot of unexpected incidents happen in this South Asian country. Which causes uncountable losses. Except for the Abrar incident all were fake posts or misused by others for personal interest or conflict. In Bhola's incident the Facebook account was hacked. Police later detained three people for alleged hacking [28].

For the Padma Bridge rumor was spread out that human heads will be needed to construct the Bridge. The rumor spread out through Social media basically through Facebook posts. Eight people were killed in vigilante lynching sparked by rumors on Facebook. In the Ramu incident, from the reports and articles it is clear that the incident was triggered intentionally. The accused was framed by someone by being tagged in a fake Facebook image. In Nasirnagar someone used Facebook to get revenge regarding personal issues. He opened a Facebook account in the name of another person and posted something questionable, which ignited the people. Most of the cases in Bangladesh People use social media to spread hate speech as people in Bangladesh react on Facebook posts without cross checking. The zealots and the culprits take the opportunity to accelerate violence and hate speech in the society. So, Facebook has a great dominance to create dismay and violence in Bangladesh.

## Conclusion

Different classes of people in Bangladesh use Facebook. Among the users most of them do not have any vast knowledge about how to make the proper uses of Facebook. Even people share the posts without checking the facts. When it becomes viral it puts a great impact in the society. In this case studies it is found that most of the posts were fake and people reacted on it directly as a result many of life loses. It is also found that the people use Facebook to take revenge on their opponent. Sometimes it is noticed that the political parties also spread nonsense to create anarchy among the mass people. Another thing is noticed in most of the cases the minority become the victim. So as a tool Social media has a great impact to accelerate violence in Bangladesh.

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