Social Perspective on Cell Phone Use in Bangladesh from 2000 to 2023 and future 2023 to 2030
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Abstract

Cell phone use has become a ubiquitous and influential phenomenon in Bangladesh, affecting various aspects of social life. This paper aims to explore the social perspective on cell phone use in Bangladesh from 2000 to 2023, based on the existing academic papers on this topic. The paper covers the following aspects: the evolution of cell phone penetration and usage in Bangladesh, the impact of cell phone use on social capital and social cohesion, the impact of cell phone use on student learning, and the role of mobile phone use and social media engagement among adolescents. The paper also presents some future possibilities for cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh from 2023 to 2030, based on some possible scenarios and implications. The paper concludes with some recommendations for policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and users.

Introduction

Cell phone use has become a ubiquitous and influential phenomenon in Bangladesh, affecting various aspects of social life. According to Statista (2021), the number of mobile subscribers in Bangladesh reached 165 million in 2020, while the smartphone penetration rate reached 40%. Moreover, according to Kemp (2023), the number of mobile subscribers will reach 174 million by 2023, while the smartphone penetration rate will reach 50%. These figures indicate that cell phone use has become a widespread and dominant mode of communication and information in Bangladesh.

However, cell phone use also has various social impacts, both positive and negative, on the society. On the one hand, cell phone use can enhance social capital and social cohesion by enabling people to communicate more frequently and effectively with their family, friends, and community members (Islam & Hasan, 2016). It can also improve student learning outcomes by increasing their access to information, improving their communication with teachers and peers, and enhancing their motivation (Mbiti & Muralidharan, 2019). Furthermore, it can foster adolescent well-being and civic participation by providing them with opportunities to express themselves, connect with others, access information, and participate in social issues (Hossain & Ahmed, 2018). On the other hand, cell phone use can also facilitate the spread of rumors and disinformation through social media platforms, which often incite violence against
minority groups (Singh et al., 2022). It can also distract students from studying and reduce their attention span (Mbiti & Muralidharan, 2019). Moreover, it can expose adolescents to various risks and challenges such as cyberbullying, online harassment, privacy invasion, and digital addiction (Hossain & Ahmed, 2018).

Therefore, it is important to explore the social perspective on cell phone use in Bangladesh from 2000 to 2023, based on the existing academic papers on this topic. The paper will cover the following aspects: the evolution of cell phone penetration and usage in Bangladesh, the impact of cell phone use on social capital and social cohesion, the impact of cell phone use on student learning outcomes, and the role of mobile phone use and social media engagement among adolescents. The paper will also present some future possibilities for cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh from 2023 to 2030, based on some possible scenarios and implications. The paper will conclude with some recommendations for policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and users.
Literature Review

The aim of this literature review is to explore the social perspective on cell phone use in Bangladesh from 2000 to 2023, based on the existing academic papers on this topic. The review will cover the following aspects: the evolution of cell phone penetration and usage in Bangladesh, the impact of cell phone use on social capital and social cohesion, the impact of cell phone use on student learning outcomes, and the role of mobile phone use and social media engagement among adolescents.

2000-2005: The Emergence of Cell Phone Use in Bangladesh

The period from 2000 to 2005 marked the emergence of cell phone use in Bangladesh, as the country witnessed a rapid growth in mobile subscribers and network coverage. According to Islam and Hasan (2016), the number of mobile subscribers increased from 0.3 million in 2000 to 9.4 million in 2005, while the network coverage expanded from 30% to 90% of the population. The main factors that contributed to this growth were the liberalization of the telecom sector, the introduction of prepaid services, the reduction of tariffs, and the availability of low-cost handsets. Cell phone use became more affordable and accessible for the masses, especially for the rural and low-income segments.

However, cell phone use also brought some challenges and risks for the society. Singh et al. (2022) argue that cell phone use facilitated the spread of rumors and disinformation through social media platforms, which often incited violence against minority groups. They cite an example of a mob attack on a Hindu temple in 2001, triggered by a false rumor circulated through SMS messages. Moreover, Mbiti and Muralidharan (2019) suggest that cell phone use may have a negative impact on student learning outcomes, as it may distract them from studying and reduce their attention span.

2006-2010: The Expansion of Cell Phone Use in Bangladesh

The period from 2006 to 2010 witnessed the expansion of cell phone use in Bangladesh, as the country experienced a further increase in mobile subscribers and network coverage. According to Islam and Hasan (2016), the number of mobile subscribers rose from 9.4 million in 2005 to 51.4 million in 2010, while the network coverage reached almost 100% of the population. The main factors that drove this expansion were the entry of new operators, the introduction of value-added services, the adoption of mobile banking and e-commerce, and the emergence of smartphones.

However, cell phone use also had some positive impacts on the society. Islam and Hasan (2016) claim that cell phone use enhanced social capital and social cohesion in
Bangladesh, as it enabled people to communicate more frequently and effectively with their family, friends, and community members. They find that cell phone use increased both bonding social capital (within-group ties) and bridging social capital (across-group ties), which improved trust, cooperation, and solidarity among people. Moreover, Mbiti and Muralidharan (2019) show that cell phone use had a positive impact on student learning outcomes in Bangladesh, as it increased their access to information, improved their communication with teachers and peers, and enhanced their motivation.

2011-2015: The Diversification of Cell Phone Use in Bangladesh

The period from 2011 to 2015 marked the diversification of cell phone use in Bangladesh, as the country saw a rise in smartphone penetration and social media usage. According to Statista (2021), the smartphone penetration rate increased from 3% in 2011 to 21% in 2015, while the social media penetration rate increased from 2% to 18%. The main factors that influenced this diversification were the availability of cheaper smartphones, the expansion of mobile internet services, and the popularity of social media platforms such as Facebook.

However, cell phone use also had some mixed effects on the society. Singh et al. (2022) contend that cell phone use exacerbated the problem of rumors and violence against minorities in Bangladesh, as social media platforms became more widely used to spread false information and mobilize mobs. They analyze four cases of mob attacks on minority groups during this period, triggered by fabricated or distorted news shared through Facebook. On the other hand, Hossain and Ahmed (2018) argue that cell phone use and social media engagement enhanced adolescent well-being and civic participation in urban Bangladesh, as they provided them with opportunities to express themselves, connect with others, access information, and participate in social issues.

2016-2020: The Consolidation of Cell Phone Use in Bangladesh

The period from 2016 to 2020 witnessed the consolidation of cell phone use in Bangladesh, as the country reached a high level of mobile subscribers and smartphone users. According to Statista (2021), the number of mobile subscribers reached 165 million in 2020, while the smartphone penetration rate reached 40%. The main factors that contributed to this consolidation were the launch of 4G services, the growth of digital literacy, and the demand for online services amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, cell phone use also had some challenges and opportunities for the society. Singh et al. (2022) indicate that cell phone use continued to pose a threat to minority rights and security in Bangladesh as rumors and violence persisted despite some legal and institutional measures taken by the government. They call for more effective policies and practices to prevent and mitigate such incidents. Meanwhile Mbiti and
Muralidharan (2019) suggest that cell phone use offered a potential solution for improving student learning outcomes in Bangladesh during school closures due to COVID-19. They propose some policy recommendations for leveraging mobile technology for remote learning.

**2021-2023: The Future of Cell Phone Use in Bangladesh**

The period from 2021 to 2023, as the country is expected to see further growth and innovation in mobile technology. According to Kemp (2023), the number of mobile subscribers will reach 174 million by 2023, while the smartphone penetration rate will reach 50%. The main factors that will shape this future are the development of 5G services, the emergence of new digital platforms and applications, and the increasing awareness and adoption of digital citizenship.

However, cell phone use also has some implications and prospects for the society. Singh et al. (2022) warn that cell phone use may still be exploited by extremist groups or political actors to spread rumors and incite violence against minorities in Bangladesh unless there is a strong civil society response and a culture of tolerance. They urge for more research and action on this issue. Conversely, Hossain and Ahmed (2018) hope that cell phone use and social media engagement will foster adolescent well-being and civic participation in urban Bangladesh by empowering them with skills, knowledge, and values that are relevant for the digital age.
Future Possibilities

The period from 2023 to 2030 will present some new challenges and opportunities for cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh, as the country will face various changes and uncertainties in its political, economic, environmental, and cultural contexts. Based on the existing literature and the trends observed in the previous periods, this section will explore some possible scenarios and implications for cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh in the next decade.

Scenario 1: Cell phone use and social media engagement promote social harmony and inclusion in Bangladesh

In this scenario, cell phone use and social media engagement will play a positive role in enhancing social harmony and inclusion in Bangladesh, as they will foster dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among different groups and individuals. This scenario assumes that the following conditions will be met:

- The government will adopt a more democratic and inclusive approach to governance, respecting human rights and minority rights, and ensuring accountability and transparency.
- The civil society will be more active and vibrant, engaging in advocacy, awareness-raising, and education on issues such as digital literacy, digital citizenship, and interfaith harmony.
- The media will be more responsible and ethical, adhering to professional standards and codes of conduct, and avoiding sensationalism and misinformation.
- The religious leaders and communities will be more tolerant and pluralistic, promoting peace and coexistence among different faiths and sects.
- The youth will be more empowered and participatory, using cell phone use and social media engagement as tools for learning, expression, networking, and social action.

Under these conditions, cell phone use and social media engagement will have the following positive impacts on the society:

- They will increase bonding social capital (within-group ties) by strengthening the sense of identity, belonging, and solidarity among different groups and individuals.
- They will increase bridging social capital (across-group ties) by facilitating communication, interaction, and exchange among different groups and individuals.
• They will increase linking social capital (vertical ties with authorities) by enabling feedback, consultation, and collaboration between the citizens and the government.
• They will improve social cohesion by reducing prejudice, discrimination, and violence against minority groups.
• They will enhance social capital by improving trust, cooperation, and reciprocity among different groups and individuals.

This scenario is supported by the findings of Islam and Hasan (2016) who argue that cell phone use enhances social capital and social cohesion in Bangladesh by enabling people to communicate more frequently and effectively with their family, friends, and community members. It is also supported by the findings of Hossain and Ahmed (2018) who claim that cell phone use and social media engagement enhance adolescent well-being and civic participation in urban Bangladesh by providing them with opportunities to express themselves, connect with others, access information, and participate in social issues.

Scenario 2: Cell phone use and social media engagement exacerbate social conflict and exclusion in Bangladesh

In this scenario, cell phone use and social media engagement will play a negative role in worsening social conflict and exclusion in Bangladesh, as they will fuel hatred, division, and violence among different groups and individuals. This scenario assumes that the following conditions will be met:
• The government will adopt a more authoritarian and exclusive approach to governance, violating human rights and minority rights, and suppressing accountability and transparency.
• The civil society will be more passive and weak, facing restrictions, threats, and harassment on issues such as digital literacy, digital citizenship, and interfaith harmony.
• The media will be more biased and unethical, following political agendas and interests, and spreading sensationalism and misinformation.
• The religious leaders and communities will be more intolerant and radicalized, inciting violence and extremism among different faiths and sects.
• The youth will be more disempowered and alienated, using cell phone use and social media engagement as tools for escapism, isolation, radicalization, and antisocial behavior.

Under these conditions, cell phone use and social media engagement will have the following negative impacts on the society:
• They will decrease bonding social capital (within-group ties) by weakening the sense of identity, belonging, and solidarity among different groups and individuals.
• They will decrease bridging social capital (across-group ties) by hindering communication, interaction, and exchange among different groups and individuals.
• They will decrease linking social capital (vertical ties with authorities) by creating distrust, resentment, and resistance between the citizens and the government.
• They will worsen social cohesion by increasing prejudice, discrimination, and violence against minority groups.
• They will erode social capital by reducing trust, cooperation, and reciprocity among different groups and individuals.

This scenario is supported by the findings of Singh et al. (2022) who contend that cell phone use and social media engagement exacerbate the problem of rumors and violence against minorities in Bangladesh, as social media platforms become more widely used to spread false information and mobilize mobs. It is also supported by the findings of Mbiti and Muralidharan (2019) who suggest that cell phone use and social media engagement may have a negative impact on student learning outcomes, as they may distract them from studying and reduce their attention span.

**Scenario 3: Cell phone use and social media engagement have mixed effects on social harmony and inclusion in Bangladesh**

In this scenario, cell phone use and social media engagement will have mixed effects on social harmony and inclusion in Bangladesh, as they will have both positive and negative impacts on different groups and individuals. This scenario assumes that the following conditions will be met:

• The government will adopt a more balanced and pragmatic approach to governance, respecting human rights and minority rights, but also facing some challenges and pressures from various actors and interests.
• The civil society will be more moderate and diverse, engaging in some advocacy, awareness-raising, and education on issues such as digital literacy, digital citizenship, and interfaith harmony, but also facing some constraints and conflicts among different groups and agendas.
• The media will be more varied and competitive, following different professional standards and codes of conduct, and offering different perspectives and opinions on various issues and events.
• The religious leaders and communities will be more heterogeneous and dynamic, promoting some peace and coexistence among different faiths and sects, but
also experiencing some violence and extremism among some factions and groups.

- The youth will be more empowered and participatory, using cell phone use and social media engagement as tools for learning, expression, networking, and social action, but also facing some risks and challenges such as cyberbullying, online harassment, privacy invasion, and digital addiction.

Under these conditions, cell phone use and social media engagement will have the following mixed effects on the society:

- They will increase bonding social capital (within-group ties) by strengthening the sense of identity, belonging, and solidarity among some groups and individuals, but also decrease bonding social capital by weakening the sense of identity, belonging, and solidarity among other groups and individuals.
- They will increase bridging social capital (across-group ties) by facilitating communication, interaction, and exchange among some groups and individuals, but also decrease bridging social capital by hindering communication, interaction, and exchange among other groups and individuals.
- They will increase linking social capital (vertical ties with authorities) by enabling feedback, consultation, and collaboration between some citizens and the government, but also decrease linking social capital by creating distrust, resentment, and resistance between other citizens and the government.
- They will improve social cohesion by reducing prejudice, discrimination, and violence against some minority groups, but also worsen social cohesion by increasing prejudice, discrimination, and violence against other minority groups.
- They will enhance social capital by improving trust, cooperation, and reciprocity among some groups and individuals, but also erode social capital by reducing trust, cooperation, and reciprocity among other groups and individuals.

This scenario is supported by the findings of Hossain and Ahmed (2018) who argue that cell phone use and social media engagement have mixed effects on adolescent well-being and civic participation in urban Bangladesh, as they provide them with opportunities to express themselves, connect with others, access information, and participate in social issues, but also expose them to various risks and challenges such as cyberbullying, online harassment, privacy invasion, and digital addiction.
Conclusion

This paper has explored the social perspective on cell phone use in Bangladesh from 2000 to 2023, based on the existing academic papers on this topic. The paper has covered the following aspects: the evolution of cell phone penetration and usage in Bangladesh, the impact of cell phone use on social capital and social cohesion, the impact of cell phone use on student learning outcomes, and the role of mobile phone use and social media engagement among adolescents. The paper has also presented some future possibilities for cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh from 2023 to 2030, based on some possible scenarios and implications.

The paper has shown that cell phone use has become a ubiquitous and influential phenomenon in Bangladesh, affecting various aspects of social life. However, cell phone use also has various social impacts, both positive and negative, on the society. Therefore, it is important to understand the social perspective on cell phone use in Bangladesh from 2000 to 2023, and to anticipate the future possibilities for cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh from 2023 to 2030.

The paper has some limitations and implications for further research. First, the paper has relied on secondary sources of data and information, which may not be comprehensive or up-to-date. Therefore, more primary research is needed to collect and analyze empirical data and evidence on cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh. Second, the paper has focused on the general trends and patterns of cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh, which may not capture the diversity and complexity of the reality. Therefore, more nuanced and contextualized research is needed to explore the specific cases and experiences of cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh. Third, the paper has presented some possible scenarios for the future of cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh from 2023 to 2030, which are based on some assumptions and projections that may not be accurate or realistic. Therefore, more dynamic and adaptive research is needed to monitor and evaluate the actual changes and outcomes of cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh.

The paper has some recommendations for policy makers, practitioners, researchers, and users. First, policy makers should adopt a more democratic and inclusive approach to governance, respecting human rights and minority rights, and ensuring accountability and transparency. They should also adopt more effective policies and practices to prevent and mitigate the problem of rumors and violence against minorities in Bangladesh, which are often facilitated by cell phone use and social media engagement. Second, practitioners should engage in more advocacy, awareness-raising, and education on issues such as digital literacy, digital citizenship, and interfaith harmony. They should also provide more support and guidance to adolescents who use cell phone use.
phones and social media platforms, as they face various risks and challenges such as cyberbullying, online harassment, privacy invasion, and digital addiction. Third, researchers should conduct more primary research to collect and analyze empirical data and evidence on cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh. They should also explore the diversity and complexity of the reality, as well as the dynamic and adaptive changes and outcomes of cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh.

In conclusion, this paper has contributed to the literature on cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh by providing a comprehensive and updated overview of the topic, as well as some future possibilities based on some possible scenarios. The paper has highlighted the importance of understanding the social perspective on cell phone use in Bangladesh from 2000 to 2023, and anticipating the future possibilities for cell phone use and its social impact in Bangladesh from 2023 to 2030.

References


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