Trolling as a Disruptive Tool for Human Rights Violations: An Exploration of the Challenges Faced by Performance Artists

Vibha Sharma[1], Fatema Sultana[2], Sohaib Alam[3], Sameena Banu[3]

[1] Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh, India

[2] Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology, Gazipur, Bangladesh

[3] Department of English, College of Sciences and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Alkharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Sohaib Alam, Department of English, College of Sciences and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Alkharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Abstract

The proliferation of online platforms and digital tools has introduced both opportunities and challenges for individuals, particularly within the realm of social media. While platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc. have served as avenues for cultural, social, economic, educational, state-run, and political discourse, they have also facilitated the emergence of paranoiac phenomena, such as trolling. This paper delves into the portrayal of trolling as a disruptive technological tool and cultural phenomenon in Bangladesh, specifically targeting TV actors, theatre performers, and local rural artists. The study highlights the pervasive use of trolling as a means to harass, criticize, and intimidate artists online. It reveals how trolling not only violates the human rights of these artists but also undermines their creativity, credibility, and sense of belonging within society. For methodological justification, it has employed a mixed-method research approach incorporating questionnaire surveys administered to 38 participants, interviews with two aspiring artists, three theatre artists, and three students studying theatre and performance studies, and analysis of social media comments. The paper unravelled that trolling is used exclusively as an online harassment tool to embarrass performance artists in Bangladesh. It underscores the detrimental impact of trolling, leading to psychological distress, depression, and alienation among targeted artists. In response to these challenges, the paper offers recommendations aimed at empowering artists to confront and combat online harassment, thereby safeguarding their well-being and fostering a more supportive digital environment conducive to artistic expression and innovation.

Keywords: Social media, Trolling, Performance Artists, Psychological paranoia, Human Rights Violation

1. Introduction

According to the 2015 Australian Actors' Well-being Study, performers are twice as likely to experience depression as the general population. They are highly vulnerable to anxiety and despair because of the nature of their work, which requires too much mental and physical effort. (Taylor, 2017). They are prone to emotional derangement because the way they extend effort gains nothing at last rather than criticism and online nuisance. One of the Bangladeshi actresses in her interviews regarding social media trolling exposed that cyberbullying puts life-threatening psychological pressure on them. She further delineated that the slang and abusive comments of the people demotivate and make them down to proceed onwards. She simply suggests that if they do not like their art and work, please better to let it go or avoid it rather than criticize bitterly.

Further, she instigates that the tollers can do so probably because they may not have some important tasks to accomplish in hand, and therefore, they have these poorer pathological solaces by posting these inflammatory remarks. She finally requests not to comment sternly as it appears as a remark on their identity (Bangladeshi Actor Prova Interview, 2021). Besides, it has recently been experienced that one of the teachers, who also engaged in cultural activities at a college in Bangladesh, whose age is nearly forty-five, married a boy two times younger than the teacher. They were in a good and friendly relationship. To validate their identity and relationship, they got married and finally tried to settle down, going against the long-established trend and culture of patriarchy and tradition. Unfortunately, the so-called society and social media made them victims through their contra-normative behaviour and comments. They were put as talk topics on social media at that time. It created discontentment and disillusionment among the contributors and readers. As a result, the intense psychological stress and trauma from society and family made the teacher commit suicide. The news came under the heading "Unable to Cope with Social Shaming," which indicates the ugly nature and brutality of trolling and online harassment (The Daily Star, 2022).

Therefore, the new online trend of trolling makes both artists and ordinary people victims with its harsh, abusive, offensive, low-credible comments and false accusations. Similar is the case for performance artists of Bangladesh who suffer extreme mental pressure because of cyberbullying through offensive and provocative commentaries and annotations (Sharma et al., 2024). Therefore, researchers and practitioners worldwide attempted to delineate the breadth and length of trolling on different issues in varied contexts. Bangladesh is also no exception in considering the topic of trolling that misguides and wrongly judges media and theatre performers.

The advent, rapid growth, and development of information and communication technology across the globe have made people overwhelmingly accustomed to the virtual means of life. It has indisputably opened the door to sharing thoughts and opinions among content creators and the audience (Morjica, 2018). Therefore, most humans nest on the new normal trend of online platforms and social media to project their ideological thoughts, views, prospects, natures, outlooks, knowledge, and perspectives. Hence, social media like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok play a crucial role in postulating their trajectories online. It has thus undoubtedly privileged individuals to gather and disseminate information on various sorts. However, though it has specific benefits, most people nowadays tend to misuse these social cybernetic platforms by spreading disinformation, disrupting civil discourse, and sewing discord among different communities (Carley, 2020, Alam & Ahmad, 2020). These new norms of cybernetic expression have drastically transformed the way of thinking processes and regimes. Above and beyond, it has substantially made people passive, objective, and disoriented in their outlook and exposure (Hannan, 2018). Resultantly, it has tremendously influenced the nature and logic of public discourse due to the new expansion and restructuring of social media.

Some of the technologies used in social media to undermine civil society and advance competitive or commercial goals include bots, cyborgs, trolls, sock-puppets, deep fakes, and memes (Carley, 2020). These days, trolling has become a communal podium for online users to claim and harass anyone without any prior conscience. It has been exposed as the most problematic and commonplace form of antisocial online behaviour plaguing social media (Paakki et al., 2021). It plays a dominant and significant role in criticizing and poking a country's politics, economy, and even legislation employing naïve and incoherent comments where people hide their true nature (Donath, 1999).

However, it is primarily acknowledged as a display playground where people post comments via online communication to criticize, target, provoke, harass, and menace others (Bishop, 2014). Further, it has been demarcated as a new-fangled form of expressing opinions to taunt and target opponents on online social media. Likewise, it disrupts online conversations and creates enmity among individuals and groups (Badawy et al., 2018; Monakhov, 2020; Zannettou et al., 2019b). Similarly, Hardaker (2010) outlines that the real intention of trolling is to create hostility and commotion and exacerbate conflicts among individuals and groups for their own sake.

Nevertheless, unfortunately, it encourages retaliatory, paranoid behaviours, such as vile accusations meant to hurt and offend, get under someone else's skin, identify one's weak spot, and then forcefully prick it to cause the most psychological harm. Though there is no logicality in trolling others on social media, human beings embodying volatile personalities thrive on social media to have psychological nourishment by abusing others (Alam & Haque, 2020). Thus, troll, a tool on social media, works as a breeding ground for maladjusted sociopaths.

Today, every piece of discourse concerning education, politics, science, engineering, arts, culture, theatre, performance, entertainment, literature, and international affairs, in one way or another way has nested its roots online and is under the ongoing threat of online trolling. Similarly, art, culture, and performance artists are also under constant threat of trolling because of their projection, transmission, and celebration of experiences and knowledge in straightforward ways (Alam et al., 2021).

Moreover, because of the black hole trolling on social media, performance artists are now in a more substantial existential threat and crisis to project their inner exquisiteness and truth of reality. Though their primary aim is to designate an intense form of intellectual and psychological sustenance and entertainment through the portrayal of delicacy and creativity, people willingly or unwillingly get in touch with the nature of trolling to belittle the designated artists (Ahmad, Alam & Kaur, 2022). Therefore, the artistic activities of the performers are about to meet their dead ends at the cost of the inner translucence and shrewdness of the online trollers. It essentially thus puts the artists in a conflux of psychological quandaries and crises that derange their creativity and efficacy. Besides, depression and anxiety are dramatically exacerbated by social media trolling, and all sorts of people, including artists, face its grim reality. Likewise, it hurts persons or artists and can cause post-traumatic stress disorder, demotivation, and an increased risk of suicide (Zynch et al., 2019). Thus, the social and emotional well-being of an individual or artist is austerely affected by the harmful imposition and implication of online social media trolling (Rachamalla, 2021).

However, the hostility and dangers faced by performance artists and human rights campaigners have been intensified due to the development of ultra-nationalistic populist leaders and armies of vicious social media trolls who ultimately violate the rights of humans (Bouckaert, 2017). Accordingly, the best resistance against becoming a victim of cyberbullying or trolling can be constructive peer engagement. Furthermore, targets of trolling could have recourse under laws addressing criminal intimidation, sexual harassment, defamation, voyeurism, internet stalking, and obscene content. The burden, however, falls on the target when legal action is taken (Mishra, 2021).

Subsequently, researchers and practitioners concentrate on this new drift of online social media to shed light on its effects on society, how it misguides and prejudices people, how it creates anarchy in society both online and later offline, how it politicizes culture, state, economy, and education, how it is shaping new online dictionary and language, etc. Forthrightly, there is a relative dearth of literature and relevant studies on the issues and effects of social media, trolling, and its activity worldwide (Carley, 2020, Ferrara et al., 2020, Broniatowski et al., 2018; Shao et al., 2018; Uyheng & Carley, 2021a; Zannettou et al., 2019a). Inopportunely, it has been found that no such study yet has been conducted on the effect of trolling on the performance and theatre artists of Bangladesh and how it violates their existential crisis and human rights and puts psychological stress focus on their work.

Therefore, to address the gap, this study posits the use of online trolling as a provocative tool that ultimately violates the human rights of the select performance artists of Bangladesh to live and excel in the world of art and beauty.

2. Related Theory and Literature

The subsequent sections of the study examine the nature and portrayal of art and culture, earlier studies on the studied phenomena (trolling), challenges faced by performance artists, the research questions, and lastly the theoretical frameworks used here (common grounding theory from psycholinguistics, Grice's conversation framework, and finally, Gardener's category of trolling).

2.1 Nature and Portrayal of Art and Culture

Since the dawn of civilization, art and culture have been highly associated with the elite class. Their primary aim is to make people intrinsically enamoured and resourceful through their exposition of creativity. Fortunately, the enunciation and expansion of information and communication technology and globalization have bridged the gap between antiquity (royalty) and modernity (the masses). Therefore, people of all classes have a platform to share and access their essentiality through performance on social media. It has been outlined as a sanctification ground for constant and a good source of information and inspiration (Paul, 2017). The idea that audience comments will increase the quality of theatre and art, and media was greeted with enthusiasm earlier.

Similarly, People who experience schadenfreude (a German word that means the person who derives pleasure from seeing the misfortune of others) frequently view trolling as a kind of communication that enhances rather than obstructs online discourse. This viewpoint prevents them from giving thought to how their words or deeds might influence others on the other side of the screen. They view trolling works not as detrimental but as a way to facilitate conversation (Seeman, 2021). However, today, this prospect has drastically been transformed from naturality to obscurity because of its disequilibrium and low-credible information (Eberwein, 2020). As everyone, as a human being, has the right to express thoughts and opinions, they put comments online on whatever they want to do so, willingly or unwillingly (Alam & Ahmad, 2020). It is how trolling justifies discrete comments on art and culture.

2.2 The Inception and Nature of Trolling

The enunciation of trolling in the online phase claims that trolling has set its steps first in the darker corner of the internet. Primarily, it found its way out in the comment segments of various popular posts. Therefore, anonymous users epitomize it by posting unusual, deliberate, cruel, and callous comments to hurt, threaten, harass, offend, shock, and propagate discord toward others and opponents. Under the veil of anonymity and fake profiles, people unleash their worst possible instincts, inner sadisms, and irrational hatred. To post like this online is thus an act of mental derangement that gives them nothing but an immense wild pleasure to see others under acute psychological stress. It is enacted both alone and in groups where the harassers seek their prey to make them victims through their inner severity and brutality. Therefore, the sort of anonymity in social media gives them unaccountability privileges, making them desperate to proceed with high hands.

Though earlier anonymity was a prime criterion in trolling, it has now been normalized and is no longer necessary. Nowadays, people openly thrive on others with their bullshit comments and aggravations. They do not even dare to hide their profile and identity; instead, they feel more confident to formulate abusive comments about others they both know and do not know. Therefore, the trend and atmosphere in society have changed drastically, and it has emerged as a new normal trend where prevails only hyperemotional settings, visceral actions and reactions, and paranoid instincts (Weigel, 2013). All these effects of trolling in the cyber world ultimately curtail the spread of truth, humanity, and stability. Notwithstanding, it sometimes made people feel shocked and stranded as grotesque lies, obnoxiousness, brazen shades of human immaturity, and incivility remain there.

2.3 Nature of Discourse in Trolling

Generally, the very nature of the virtual mode of discourse, mainly trolling, portrays dazzling and enchanting content, which is mostly very brief in length and sometimes takes less cognitive ability to accept and process. Moreover, these modes of online routes embody fragmented information, fleeting categories of images, and rapid transition of data from one sort to another and the next. Henceforward, the online modes of countenance and treatment have been refabricated and reinvented based on their brevity, fragmentation, and attention span. Largely, discourses and contents in social media trolls are effortlessly peppered with bright, colourful, exotic, vulgar, offensive, and sometimes witty lines that are disseminated virtually to thousands of people within a second. Therefore, it has been demarcated by many scholars that these cyber modes of discourse operation in troll are fully equipped with shallow, unethical, uncritical, and, finally, unchallenging kinds of mental association where persist only passivity and minimal unit of thought (Hannan, 2018).

2.4 Trolling as a Harassment Tool

Trolling on social media has evolved as a popular source of entertainment and a new kind of disruptive tool to harass a selected community or person worldwide because of its unaccountability nature and easy access to social media platforms. In a similar vein, it has been exasperatedly accepted as a contemporary trend where a particular group of people trolls the opponents using speech, photos, videos, and cartoons collected from different social media, including news channels, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, LinkedIn, etc.

The intention lying underneath trolling is to humiliate people, especially actors, media personnel, performance artists, politicians, business people, sports people, and others. The purpose is sought after by making offensive, aggressive, provocative, vulgar, digressive, and idiosyncratic comments on different social media platforms. The expressions used in trolling are directed towards a particular person or community that ultimately violates the human rights of the person or community. More importantly, the comments and trolling targeted at a person or community create astute and negative psychological impressions on the minds of the victims.

2.5 Trolling and Human Rights Violation

Targets who are the subject of trolling suffer severe psychological, emotional, and physical harm as human beings (Mishra, 2021). Therefore, to ensure justice, human rights need to be justified. Human rights are the rights that everyone possesses, regardless of gender, colour, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other distinction. Human rights include a wide range of rights, such as the freedom from slavery and torture, the right to lifecycle and freedom, the freedom of speech, and the right to a job and an education, among many more. They also represent the dignity and worth of people. Therefore, to preserve human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, has led to the recognition of human rights on a global scale (United Nations).

Social repercussions may result from violating human rights through discrimination or mistreatment. Hence, the Human Rights Council's mandate states that it must "help to the prevention of human rights breaches and immediately address human rights emergencies via conversation and cooperation" (United Nations). The acts relating to criminal intimidation, sexual harassment, defamation, voyeurism, online stalking, and obscene content can be treated as part of trolling, and violating human rights. Different countries try to safeguard the targets of trolling by employing the Penal Code. Likewise, to combat cyberbullies and trolls, the Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") is used in conjunction with several Code provisions, though both trolling and bullying are not defined in the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Mishra, 2021).

Consistently cyberbullying and online character assassination have recently become severe trends, especially towards women, performance artists, and people related to this field in Bangladesh. It has been heightened by the instances in which some internet users frequently mistreat victims and suspects (Mahmud, 2020). Different rights advocates and online monitoring agencies further report numerous examples of aggressive online campaigns where people are ridiculed for their gender, dress, posture, and way of life, in addition to more critical problems being overlooked. Therefore, proper monitoring and prompt assurance of the Penal Code depending on the crime and Legal Acts of Human Rights can be a way to lessen this new online social threat.

However, trolling can significantly harm individuals involved in theatre, jeopardizing their mental and physical well-being and infringing upon their rights and freedoms.

2.6 Challenges of the Performance Artists

The works upon which the artists keep them alive are all about expressing themselves in different ways to represent society's reality, truth, and essentiality. However, the process of expressing itself is a challenging task. Being into the character is not just to 'put on' and 'take off' the roles; playing the role of a character is a complex procedure that the artists cannot separate from their own lives (Taylor, 2017). Therefore, depending on the nature of their work, the performers hold different perspectives on life, beauty, passion, reality, creativity, perspectives, imagination, and depth. Additionally, as they possess varied personality types, they embody different mental and emotional characteristics than ordinary people (The Squire Foundation, 2021b).

The relative scholarship over a couple of years has outlined that those working in the art sector are highly vulnerable and tend to face acute mental trauma, stress, depression, and anxiety (Taylor, 2017). The reasons behind their mental stage degradation have been exposed as the nature of their work, the pressure of work, long hours of work, low salary, job insecurity, acceptance, acknowledgement, humiliation, and insult both offline and online.

Henceforward, it has been found that many suffer from performance anxiety resulting in high psychological strain due to work-related pressure like low allowance and job insecurity. In addition, they have to struggle to run a challenging and profitable program to entice new subscriptions. Sometimes, they have to embrace new encounters because they have to justify new strategies and ways of art (wakemanconsulting, 2017). All these issues contribute succinctly to the inner derangement of the artists. However, the study attempts to look into the challenges Bangladeshi performer artists face due to trolling in terms of the personal, social, economic, and social dignity that they encounter.

2.7 Instances of Previous Work on Trolling

Jakubowicz (2017) in his article discusses the exponential growth of trolling, race, and hate speech on the Internet in an Australian context, which has surpassed the capacity of traditional institutions to contain it. He argues that addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach involving state intervention, economic restructuring, and civil society engagement at both global and local levels. However, he tries to acknowledge the significant challenge posed by neoliberalism and democratic freedoms, especially if the fundamental drivers of the Internet's business model, especially trolling, remain unchanged. As well, Hannan (2018) in the paper titled "Trolling ourselves to death? Social media and post-truth Politics" argues that the driver of our post-truth world lies in social media rather than traditional journalism, highlighting how trolling has become mainstream and is influencing politics and legislation. He suggests that society is not merely amusing itself to death, as Neil Postman proposed, but rather trolling itself to death, indicating a more insidious and destructive influence of social media on political discourse and societal norms.

Alternatively, Vega et al. (2018) propose a novel categorization framework for trolling behaviour in online interactions, considering both the perspectives of the trolls and the responders. Their framework encompasses four aspects: the troll's intention and intention disclosure, as well as the responder's interpretation of the troll's intention and their response strategy. The authors provide a dataset of Reddit conversations involving suspected trolls and other users, annotating them according to this categorization. Finally, they discuss challenges in classifying certain cases along with potential solutions. In a similar vein, Paakki et al. (2021) investigated how skilled trolls disrupt

online discussions by exploiting users' desire for common grounding which leads to polarized and degenerative conversations. By analyzing data and identifying three key trolling-like behaviours - ignoring, mismatching, and challenging - the authors in their research paper demonstrate how these asymmetric response strategies undermine typical turn-taking expectations and hinder clarification efforts. Ultimately, the study sheds light on the detrimental impact of trolling on social media interactions and the challenges it poses to establishing mutual understanding and closure in online discourse.

The study by Cook et al. (2021) examines the impact of trolling across culturally distinct groups by simulating online interactions in a controlled environment. Results reveal differences in emotional responses and behavioural intentions towards trolls among participants from Pakistan, Taiwan, and the Netherlands. Lastly, it adheres that both online and offline cultural contexts influence individuals' reactions to trolling and they highlighted the need for further research into computer-mediated communication and online aggression. Like Hannan (2018), Eberwein (2020) explores the phenomenon of dysfunctional user comments on journalistic websites, which often include hate speech and trolling. Through problem-centered interviews with users who regularly post negative comments, it reveals that these individuals are diverse in their backgrounds and motivations, often driven by a strong political or ideological devotion rather than mere trolling. Thus, the study offers a nuanced typology of online commenters and advocates strategies for fostering constructive user participation amidst the challenges of the post-truth era.

It has been found from the previous literature that a lot of studies have been conducted in different parts of the world on trolling in terms of political ecology, societal norms, the discourse of trolling, the effects of trolling on cultural and ethnic groups, etc., but no such study has been investigated on the performance artists and trolling, especially in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, to address the research gap, this paper primarily aims to locate the effect of trolling on select Bangladeshi performance artists and the challenges they encounter in their lives as a tool of human rights violation.

2.8 Research Questions

To determine the astute challenges experienced by the Bangladeshi select performance and theatre artists due to trolling, this research paper attempts to focus on the following research questions.

1. How does trolling evolve as a digital online hazard and culture in Bangladesh?

2. How does it pose a threat to TV artists, theatre performers, and local artists?

3. How does trolling violate their rights as Humans?

2.9 Theories Applied in this Study

2.9.1 Hardaker's Classification of Trolling

Earlier, trolling was viewed as a form of entertainment by many performers who pursued it through anonymity and pseudonymity (Shachaf & Hara, 2010). Therefore, the older form of trolling was not detrimental and malicious (Cruz et al., 2018; Kirman et al., 2012; Sanfilippo et al., 2018). However, the recent innovation and motivation of trolling have been drastically changed as it has stepped its aim from entertainment to degenerative harassment. Therefore, as the nature of trolling has changed, Hardaker (2010) outlined trolling based on its effects on online communities and the styles or strategies of trolling (2013). Hardaker's research established six trolling categories, namely digression, hypo (criticism), antipathy, endangering, shocking, and aggression. They cover both overt, easily observable, and covert, hidden or non-obvious, styles. People react differently to both forms of online aggression. The first five categories of them are covert and the last one is of an overt type.

The overt forms of aggression, like insults, also called flaming (O'Sullivan & Flanagin, 2003), are aversive in general and pose a threat to one's self-esteem and reputation. That is why people respond and react with embarrassment and anger towards this form of trolling ((Liu et al., 2018). Similarly, the covert form, the non-verbal way of aggression, like ostracism, is equally and sometimes more aversive as it threatens one's fundamental needs, self-esteem, and sense of belongingness, existence, and recognition (Williams, 2009, as cited in Cook et al., 2021).

2.9.2 Common Grounding Theory

Common Grounding Theory, stemming from psycholinguistics, elucidates ordinary social interaction by emphasizing the collective process through which participants strive to reach a shared understanding of intentions (Clark & Brennan, 1991). It posits that every statement in discourse must be grounded to sustain common understanding. However, trolling disrupts this process, prolonging regressive encounters and creating communication breakdowns by voicing unjustified or irrelevant comments. Thus, trolling impedes the attainment of shared grounding, making communication with troll-like counterparts more arduous than with others.

2.9.3 Grice's Conversation Analysis Theory

Grice's Conversation Analysis Theory underscores the importance of cooperative principles in interpersonal and online interactions. It emphasizes the resolution of misunderstandings through conversational repair and explanation requests. This theory, aligned with the Gricean cooperative principle, delineates four maxims for effective communication: quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. However, trolls contravene these maxims by intentionally disrupting discourse. Consequently, the study focuses on assessing whether online trolling targeting Bangladesh's performance artists adheres to or violates Gricean principles of conversation analysis.

Thus, the article primarily intends to focus on the Bangladeshi context and how the artists and individuals related to art sectors are sufficed

by online trolling mode. It also considers the category of trolling based on Hadaker's research and looks for generally what types of trolling are perpetrated mainly by the performance artists of Bangladesh. Furthermore, it considers the common grounding theory of psycholinguistics to investigate whether online trolling maintains it or not. Finally, last but not least, it assorts Grice's cooperative principles to explore whether they follow them or not. Moreover, if they are not, the types of maxims that are usually violated to troll the performance artists.

3. Methodology of the Study

This segment of the research presents the methodology applied in this study. This includes population and sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Population and Sampling

The target population for this study is those related to Bangladesh's artistic, theatrical, and performance platforms. Therefore, fifty people associated with Bangladesh's art and performing scene are encompassed as samples. Among them, fifteen were from the "Bangladesh Shipakala Academy, Meherpur." Similarly, the other twenty were from the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka. Additionally, five samples were preferred from the aspiring actors who are connected to the theatre and modelling industries of Bangladesh. The final ten were chosen from the students majoring in theatre and performance studies from Janhangeernagar University and the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. All the samples were chosen randomly. Therefore, to maintain the research's validity and authenticity, the samples are carefully selected from various sources. Though 50 participants were chosen as the sample of this research, lastly 38 of them responded positively with complete data. Additionally, two aspiring models who were scheduled online in advance for interview data about their thoughts on trolling and how it affected them. As well three students studying Theatre and Performance Studies and three persons related to Bangladesh ShilpaKala Academy were also asked both online and offline about their attitude toward trolling and how it violates human rights.

Moreover, a set of Facebook comments is also analyzed based on Hardaker's theory of trolling category to look into what types of trolling are generally used in Bangladesh to victimize the artists. Besides, the theory of Grice's conversation analysis and common grounding is also considered to dissect the nature of trolling in Bangladesh.

3.2 Research Instruments for Data Collection

The study used a mixed-method research approach employing quantitative data, a questionnaire survey, and qualitative data, interviews. For quantitative data, a survey questionnaire is prepared using Google Forms, and the data is collected online. As the research participants reside in different regions of Bangladesh, the researchers used an online tool, Google Forms, to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire includes ten items that embody the theme of the inception of online trolling in Bangladesh, how it creates problems for Bangladeshi performance artists, and how it sometimes violates their rights as human beings. Similarly, a total of eight performance artists were interviewed to collect qualitative data. For this, the designated stakeholders prepared a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. They opined online, and their responses were recorded for further evaluation. The interview questions also included the theme of the three research questions: trolling as a new online tool, its effects on the artists, and its impact on human rights violations. Moreover, some random Facebook comments categorized as trolling were scrutinized depending on the theories applied in this study.

3.3 Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the research data, first of all, the online questionnaire responses and recorded audio clips of the artists are documented and collected for evaluation. Only MS Excel software is utilized for additional embellishment because Google Forms is used to collect the survey data. The data was then presented using relative frequencies and percentages of the participants' perceptions of trolling and its effects on them. Similarly, for interview data, the recorded audio is first heard and later transcribed into texts. Lastly, Facebook comments on trolling targeting Bangladeshi media and performance artists are investigated depending on the six trolling categories proposed by Hardaker. Additionally, those comments are substantiated whether they follow the common grounding norms and Grice's conversation analysis prospects.

4. Findings and Discussions

This section of the research presents the findings of the survey questionnaire and interview data of the designated participants.

4.1 Answer to Research Question 1: How Does Trolling Evolve as a Digital Online Hazard and Culture in Bangladesh?

Figure 1 demonstrates the participants' view on the ways trolling becomes a digital social media tool for harassment in the context of Bangladesh. The data is analyzed employing a frequency analysis procedure. The majority of the participants, 63%, opined that the people of Bangladesh are in the habit of trolling because of the lack of proper education, cultural values, and ethics. During interviews, several participants expressed how the lack of proper education led people to seek validation and attention through negative online interactions; thus, contributing to the perpetuation of trolling culture. Two artists (one theatre student and one performance artist from Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy) revealed in the interviews that the current generation is entirely devoid of the true essence of real education. They do not even adequately know what values and norms to be nurtured as a human being to upright their standpoint. Therefore, the new generation engrosses themselves in the degenerated version of social media tools like trolling to have fun and to victimize others without any proper intention. As well, another theatre student exposed that "A common trend among trolls in Bangladesh is their frustration stemming from the inadequacy of quality education and educational resources. It pushes them towards online platforms to vent their

grievances. So, I think individuals without access to quality education often feel marginalized and voiceless in society. So, they try to resort to trolling as a means of exerting power and control in online spaces."
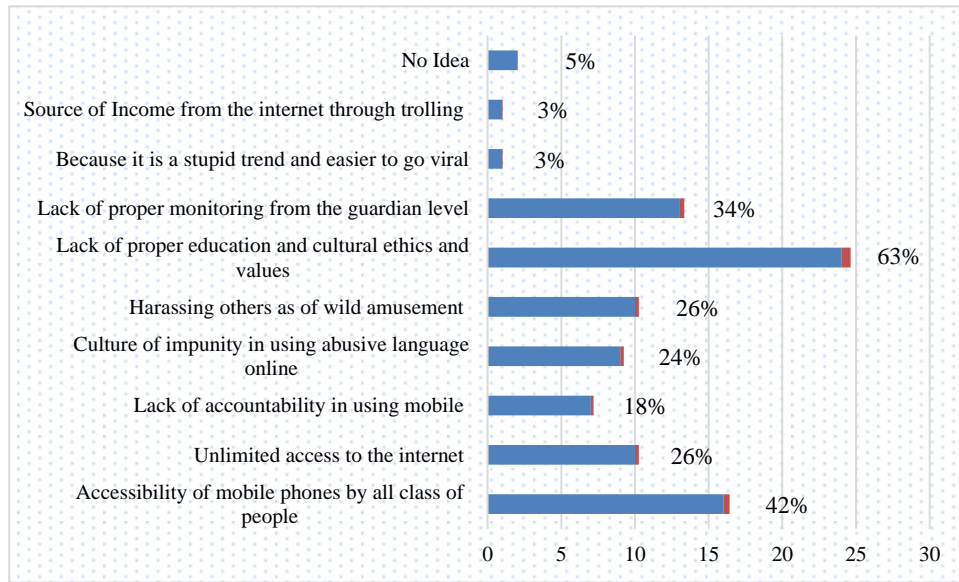

Figure 1. The way trolling evolved as a digital hazard in Bangladesh

Similarly, 42% of the participants exposed that trolling becomes prominent in Bangladesh because mobile phones are simply accessible to all sections of people, and 26% posit that the accessibility of the internet made it possible to be on the platform of social media trolling. Likewise, 18% opined that there is a lack of accountability in using mobile which also contributes to the commencement of trolling. One aspiring model and three artists while giving interviews delineated that about 99.9% of the people of Bangladesh now use Android mobiles regardless of class. Besides spending a minimum amount, they get unlimited internet access. So, they use it aimlessly and whimsically to scorn and torture others whenever they are on an online social media platform. Moreover, we, the performance artists, are the worst sufferers of this, as whatever we do, whether good or bad, we face bitter negativity from the common mass of Bangladesh. One of the artists said, "As a theatre artist in Bangladesh, I have witnessed firsthand how the proliferation of mobile phones and internet access has fueled trolling behaviour and undermines our creative expression and personal well-being. Access to mobile phones and the internet has become a double-edged sword in Bangladesh. While it has empowered us with connectivity, it has also exposed us to trolling and cyberbullying. I have seen that the convenience of mobile phones and internet access has unfortunately amplified trolling activities in Bangladesh. It posed significant challenges for theatre artists who are targeted and harassed online."

Besides, the lack of proper monitoring from the guardian level is also, to some extent, responsible for the evolution of trolling, and 34% of the respondents opined in favour of this statement. In a similar vein, when abusive language is used in online social media, no such actions are appropriately taken to stop it. Therefore, the culture of impunity in abusing language (24% agreed positively) to get wild amusement (26% agreed) is also responsible for trolling. Alternatively, a meagre amount of the samples, only 3%, outlined that trolling sometimes helps to get viral and income online. One artist related to Bangladesh ShilpaKala Academy outlined in his interview that "some people want to highlight their own as a critic. Roasting or trolling is now trending, some people think. Many of them have their own trolling channel where they make many people as the victim of trolling, and by making it viral, they earn from the internet. I think it also has a very harmful impact." Therefore, people stick to these deteriorating social media platforms and tools.
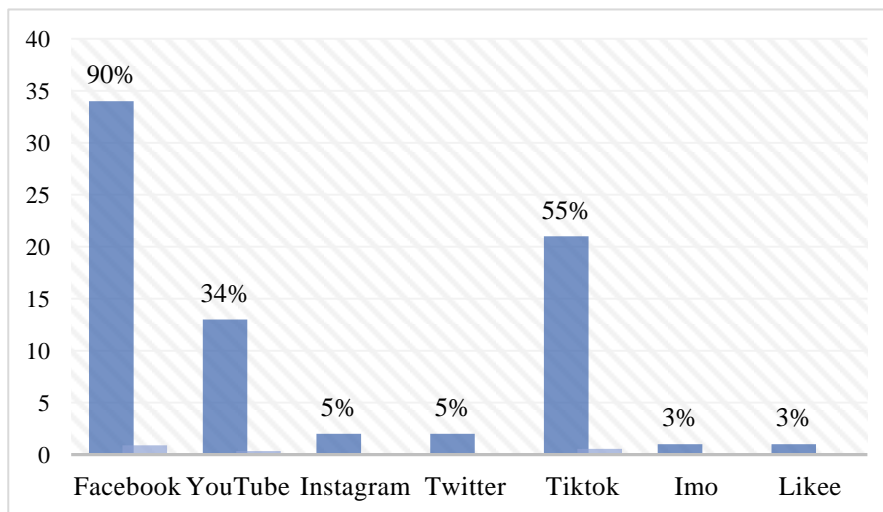
Figure 2. The Social Media Platforms used to troll the designated victims in Bangladesh

The respondents were asked to consent to the questionnaire on the social media platforms generally used in Bangladesh for trolling. Figure 2 reveals the frequencies of the participants' opinions on the platforms used to troll and victimize others. First, 90% of the samples opined that Facebook is the prime source of it. Secondly, 55% of the artists uncovered that TikTok is used adequately for this purpose. Thirdly, YouTube channel is used for trolling, and 34% of the samples responded so. Besides, 5% offered that Instagram and Twitter serve as the source of trolling.

Finally, 3% said Imo and Likee apps are responsible for trolling ground. All the participants, eight in number, opined in the interview that in the pretext of Bangladesh, Facebook is used widely by all classes of people. They all expose, show, and comment mainly on Facebook as a social media engagement. Therefore, it is used wholeheartedly for all types of social rendezvous through posting pictures, comments, and videos. Also, nowadays, TikTok has been revealed as the most popular platform for trolling through short videos. Significantly, the teenager is the sole bearer of this platform to troll and post abusive and abhorrent elements.

Figure 3 outlines the participants' responses based on frequency analysis of the tactics generally used to troll in Bangladesh. Here, 66% of samples agreed that abusive comments on Facebook, depending on the nature of status and incidents, are the prevalent tactics to harass, intimidate, and troll others. Similarly, hate speech is another tactic to attack others in Bangladesh, and 47% of the participants opined that people used speech full of abhorrence and hatred to mimic and insult others. Five participants delivered in the interview data that we sometimes cannot perceive and accept the hatred posted in the comments section. That is why occasionally, we avoid those kinds of Facebook statuses, comments, groups, or pages. One artist exposed during the interview session that "As a performer, I have encountered some truly hurtful remarks on Facebook. It is disheartening to see how easily some degenerated Bangladeshi people resort to insults and harassment behind the veil of anonymity. I have also seen that how abusive comments on Facebook drive talented artists away from the theatre scene. It is really toxic for us that kills creativity and demoralizes performers." Similarly, 42% said that pictures edited negatively are one of the tactics used in trolling. Alternatively, 5% remained neutral as they did not provide such clues though 3% exposed that making degenerated video clips is also another way used for trolling.
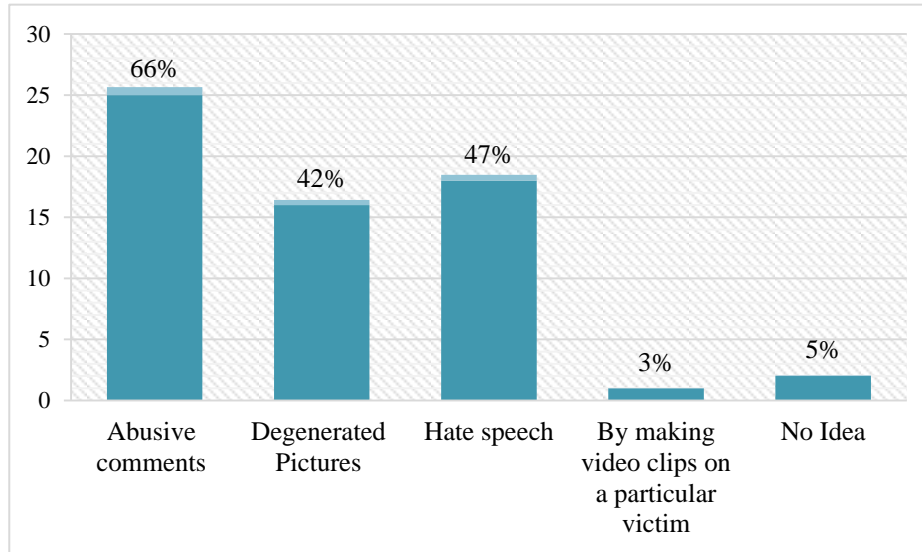
Figure 3. The common tactics generally used in trolling

4.2 Answer to Research Question 2: How Does Trolling Pose a Threat to TV Artists, Theatre Performers, and Local Artists?

Figure 4 Projects the frequency level of the artists' perception of how trolling threatens their personal development. It has been found that negative comments and trolling put theatre artists under extreme psychological stress. Therefore, 58% of the samples portray that trolling threatens their personal embellishment by creating extreme mental pressure that ultimately brings anxiety and frustration to them. One of the models interviewed opined "Once I was so depressed that I could not think of being normal because people spread some of my pictures on social media with an edit. It became viral within the blink of an eye, and people thought it was real. It complicated my life to proceed forward for a longer period. Even I could not concentrate on my work properly and became demotivated to be engaged in theatrical programs." 42% of artists posit that demotivation because of trolling hampers their personal development as an artist. It ultimately lessens their self-esteem and self-worth, making them indifferent toward self and work.
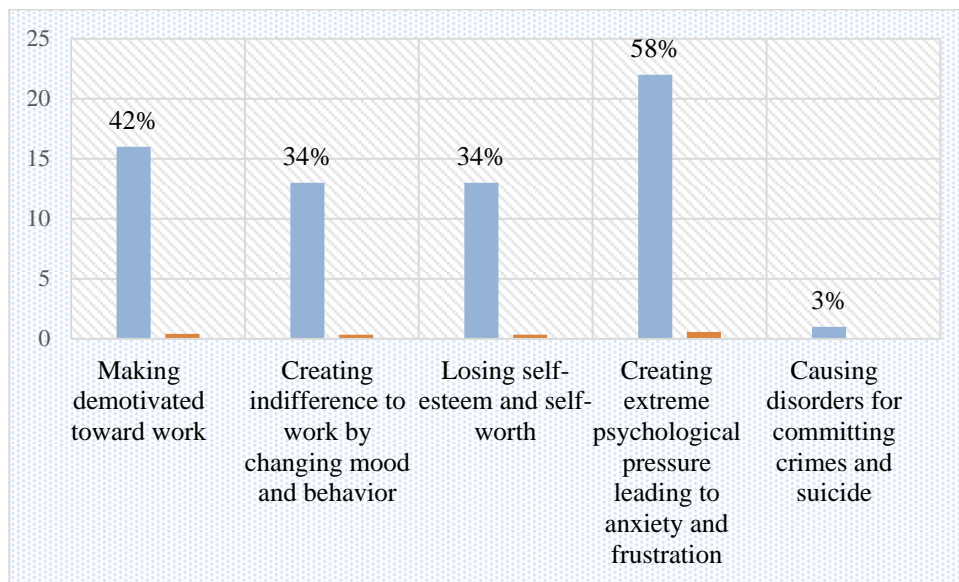

Figure 4. The ways in how trolling threatens the personal development of the artists

It also changes their mood and behaviour sometimes. 34% of the samples stated so. One of the participants in the interview said "A few days ago, my career was not going as before. I became the victim of trolling online and it led me quite down. The constant trolling made me indifferent towards my theatre work. Usually, I used to pour my heart and soul into every performance, but now I find myself feeling apathetic. It seems to me like, what is the point when there is always someone ready to tear you down?" Moreover, 3% of the samples say that it often lets them forward to committing crimes and suicides.
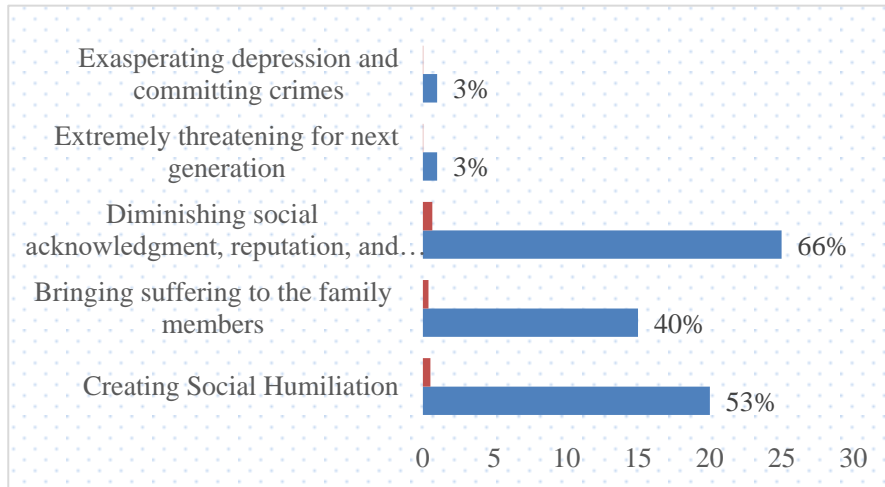
Figure 5. The ways in which trolling threatens the artists socially

Figure 5 reveals the percentage of the opinions of the performance artists on how trolling threatens them socially. 66% agreed it lessens their social acknowledgement, reputation, and dignity. The interview data also say so, and they opined that it decreases their social status. Sometimes it creates social humiliation, and 53% of the participants agreed with this statement. One of the artists exposed that "Trolling stripped away the sense of pride and honour once felt as performers. Instead of celebrating achievements, we find ourselves defending against baseless attacks on our character and work. We are put to the worst criticism because of trolling. People look scorchingly at us whenever we go outside, which genuinely embarrasses us to move freely in society." The artists often became more socially alienated because their family members also suffered. 40% of the samples agreed that trolling brings suffering to their family members. Alternatively, 3% opined that it leads them to depression and may even instigate them to commit crimes. Therefore, they agreed that trolling is reasonably harmful to the next generation.
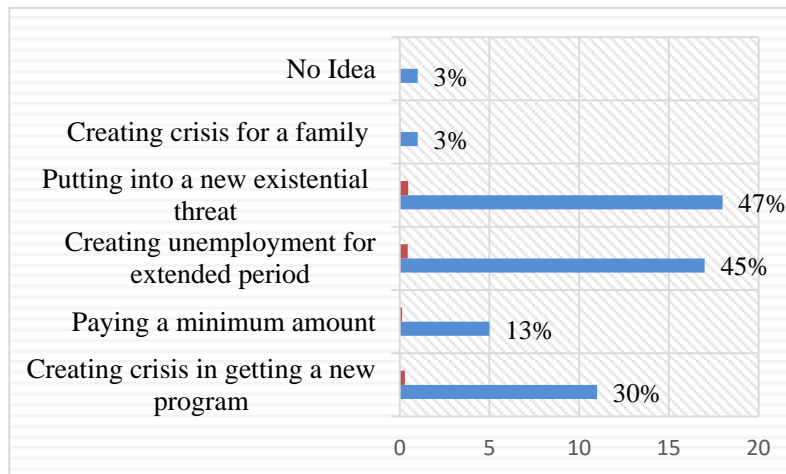

Figure 6. The ways in which trolling threatens the artists economically

Figure 6 portrays the artists' perception of how trolling affects them economically. 47% of them reveal that it put them into a new existential threat. While conducting interviews, five artists said that an artist's life and career are very much challenging. It appears that we did outstanding work with hard work and labour, but the output sometimes became zero. We work keeping in mind the perceptions and choices of the mass people; still, it does not always go right as it is very unpredictable. Therefore, it happens that we are in a very stable condition, and the very moment later, it may be unstable, and we may not have any work at hand. Therefore, it creates temporal unemployment for them, and 45% agreed so. One theatre student portrayed her views in this regard as "The existential threat posed by trolling in Bangladesh extends beyond mere online harassment, as it undermines the very essence of artistic expression and the fundamental rights of individuals to pursue their creative passions without fear of reprisal or censorship. In my opinion, the unemployment rates among theatre professionals in Bangladesh have surged due to the detrimental impact of trolling as it pushes many talented individuals out of the industry and into financial hardship."

Moreover, as they face bitterness in trolling, it becomes hard for them to get new programs. The reason is that the concerned authority presupposes that the public would not accept it (as already been trolled), and their investment would go into a fiasco. It puts them into an economic crisis, and families also suffer from it.

4.3 Answer to Research Question 3: How Does Trolling Violate Their Rights as Humans?
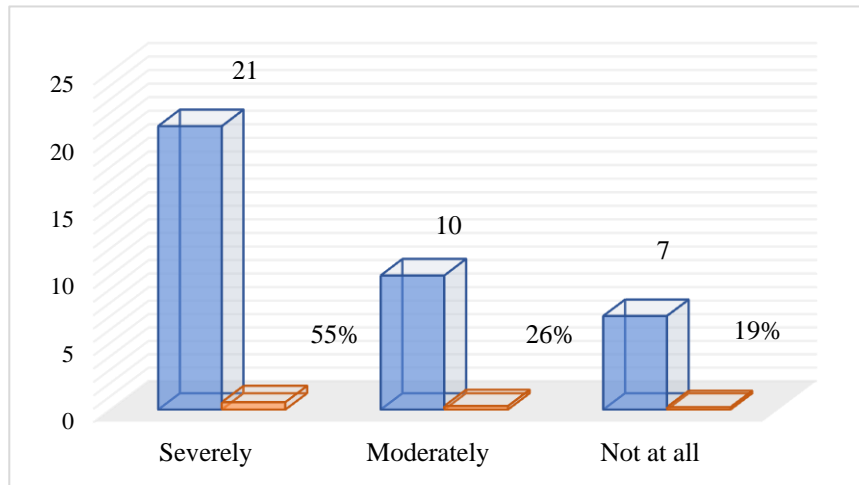

Figure 7. The ways trolling violates the right to freedom of expression of the Artists

The questionnaire gave the samples options to delineate their discernment of how trolling violates human rights. Figure 7 is the projection of their perception in percentage.

Here, 55% of the performance artists divulge that trolling disabled people their freedom of expression. One artist exposed that "The talk becomes fabricated whenever we say something on social media, and people ridicule us bitterly. Hence, we even feel embarrassed to discuss what we want to express." It happens with so many artists in this field. Thus, she projects her notion about violating freedom of expression. Besides, 26% feel that it hampers them moderately.

Figure 8 deploys the artists' perception of how trolling violates their freedom of privacy. 63% of them agreed that it hampered them severely, and 26% said it affected them moderately. A meagre number, only 11%, of them, stated it violated their privacy, not at all.
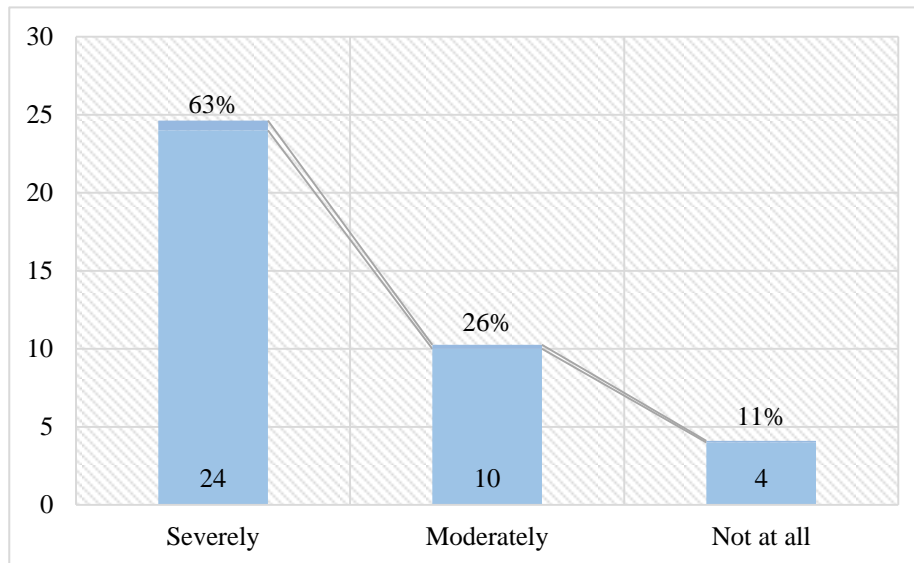

Figure 8. The extent trolling violates the right to privacy of the Artists

One of the local theatre artists deployed that "Privacy is essential for us as performance artists in Bangladesh to explore sensitive and controversial topics without fear of reprisal. It is a matter of regret that trolling breaks this privacy. It also forces us to censor our art or risk facing online harassment and abuse. It is a constant battle between expressing ourselves and protecting our well-being. We are sometimes on a whim about what to do and not to do."
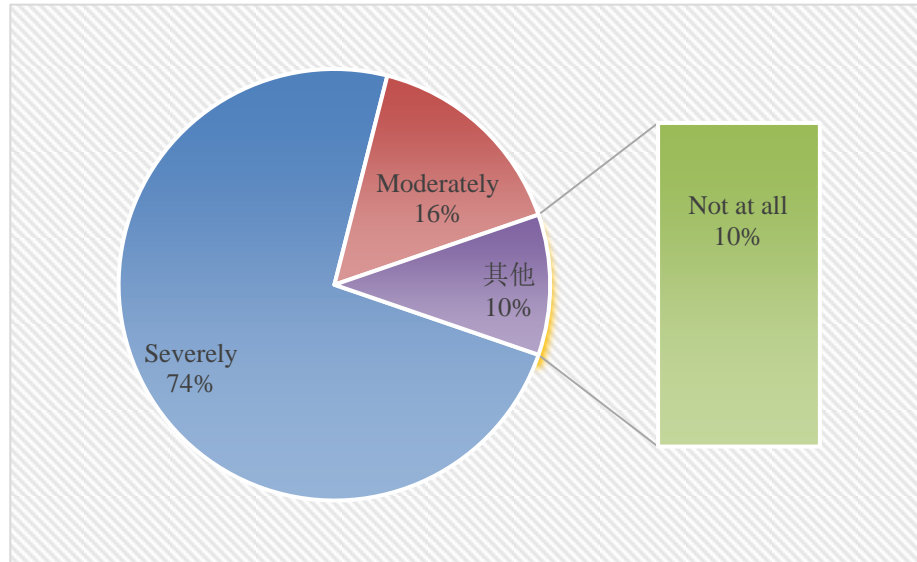
Figure 9. The extent trolling violates the right to life, freedom, and sanctuary of the Artists

Figure 9 is about the artists' observation of how trolling violates their human rights regarding the right to life, freedom, and sanctuary. Here, the majority percent, 74%, agreed that it hampered their rights severely in terms of privacy, freedom of expression, and to be free from discrimination. Trolling involves bullying, harassment, and cyberstalking, which cause severe emotional distress and harm to the performance artists of Bangladesh. One of the aspiring models stated as "Trolling is not just harmless fun; rather it is a direct attack on our right to life as performance artists in Bangladesh. When trolls target us with threats and harassment online, it creates a hostile environment that weakens our safety both online and offline." Again one of the students from the theatre field uttered that "As a Bangladeshi aspiring performance artist, I would like to say that, our work often challenges societal norms and pushes boundaries. In these situations, trolling not only hinders our creative expression but also puts our lives at risk. Every hateful comment or threat is a reminder that our freedom to express ourselves comes with the constant fear of violence." Besides, 16% of the samples opined moderately and 10% not at all for the severity range regarding the violation of human rights.
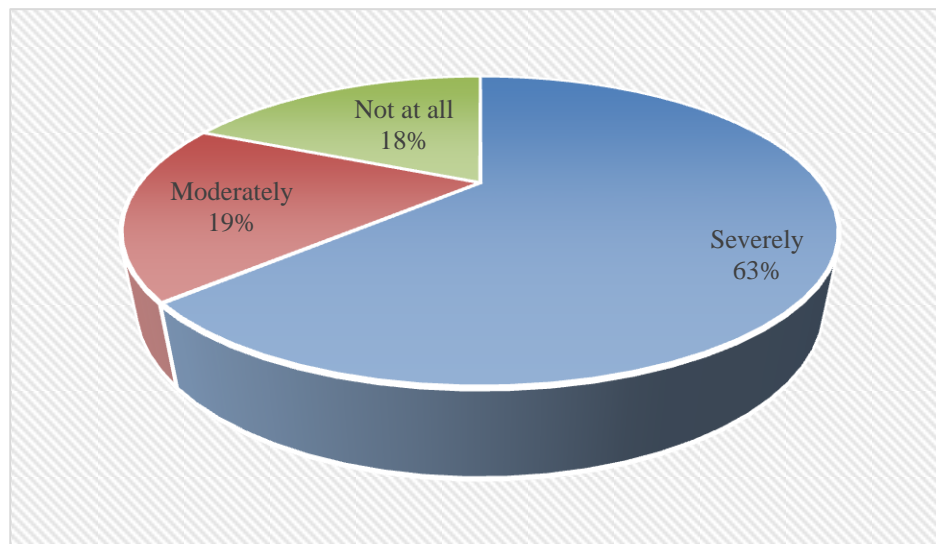

Figure 10. The extent trolling violates the right to liberty from torture, inhuman, degrading treatment, and punishment of the Artists

Figure 10 summarizes the artists' insight on how trolling violates a person's right to liberty from torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. 63% of the participants opined that trolling violates the right to liberty from torture and inhuman treatment. One artist in the interview evoked that "Trolling may seem harmless to some, but for us as performance artists in Bangladesh, it is a form of psychological torture. The relentless barrage of hateful comments and online harassment can make us feel unsafe in our own spaces. I think it is a violation of our basic human rights to express ourselves freely without fear of persecution." Similarly, another participant

promulgated that "Trolling does not really just target our art. It targets us as individuals. The anonymity of the internet encourages people to say things they would never dare to say in person. It is a form of cyberbullying that leaves scars that are visible but are deeply felt. Thus, it is visible that our right to be treated with dignity and respect is crushed upon in today's digital realm." Moreover, 19% of the samples opined that it affects them moderately, and 18% not at all regarding this statement.

5. Overall Discussions and Findings

This segment of the research study explains the findings generated from the Facebook comments identified as trolling which targeted the performance artists of Bangladesh. The Facebook comments are dissected according to Hardaker's classification of trolling types to discern which type of trolling predominantly targets theatre and media artists in Bangladesh. However, it presents the comprehensive findings derived from both the survey questionnaires, interviews, and Facebook comments. The findings are outlined as follows.

5.1 Findings from the Comments of Trolling Based on Hardaker's Theory

Category	Example of Comments	Background or context
Digression: It entails persuading other people to deviate from the subject by spamming, putting (off-topic) content in the conversation thread, or bringing up side issues.	a. "Shame, shame, shame they are two fools." b. "Be in a home as a wife to preserve your honour." c. She looks like an aged woman, like the heroine of her mother's age. Her body is not in shape. d. "Do not forget the Almighty for the greed of money." e. "When this type of bad people will leave this country, she is making the film on her own family life." f. "It seems like only you have become the mother on this earth. No one else has become the mother."	The troll comments are directed at an actor and an actress from Bangladesh, who is also a married couple. (Ananta and Borsha) [a, b] Directed to one of the Bangladeshi actresses. (Dighi) [c] Directed to one of the Bangladeshi actresses. (Pori Moni) [d, e, f]
(Hypo) Criticism: A (hypo) critical troll typically criticizes people overly for minor formalities like punctuation, possibly while making spelling errors and other similar errors in the posts they are criticizing.	a. "Such an illiterate heroine, from where they come." b. "At first learns Bengali and then comes to learn English." c. "I sincerely suggest (Jalil and Borsha) start their English lesson from class 5".	Directed to one of the Bangladeshi actresses for her wrong pronunciations in a conversation [a,b,c]
Antipathy: In antipathy trolling, the troll subtly manipulates others to evoke emotional reactions, establishing a delicate or adversarial atmosphere to exploit.	a. "Characterless females are for characterless males." b. "She will have 500 marriages." c. "Do not do acting, please, if you cannot do that." d. You have done so many things. You should think about what will happen after your death".	Directed to one of the famous actresses of Bangladesh on her divorce news [a,b] Directed to one of the models and actresses of Bangladesh. (Naila Nayem) [c,d]
Shocking: Shock trolling is defined as blogging about taboo or delicate matters, including religion, death, or touchy human rights concerns.	a. "I thought that you were Muslim; I have got such a shock." b. "Brother, be a Muslim; I cannot accept that you are a Hindu."	Directed to a famous actor in Bangladesh who has shared a photo with her mother [a,b]
Aggression: The "Aggress" category entails purposefully and blatantly inciting others to hit back through aggressiveness (such as by using offensive language or name-calling).	a. "Why the media has an attraction for the people who have bad characters." b. "Do not give the news of the whore (Prostitute) anymore."	Directed to one of the famous actresses of Bangladesh who was talking at a press conference.

The set of Facebook comments is considered here for analyzing the nature and category of trolling. It has been outlined that digression, (Hypo) criticism, antipathy, shocking, and aggression types trolls are more or less used by the instigator to target the artists. On the other hand, the endangering types of trolling are less common in the context of Bangladesh. Besides, it has been found that most of the comments are fragmented, disconnected, and isolated, with no mutual understanding and sharing. Therefore, the nature of the common grounding theory appears violated in the targeted comments. Simultaneously, Grice's theory of quality, quantity, manner, and relevance are also violated in the comments.'[]\b

The study revealed that the persons related to and affiliated with the art sectors in Bangladesh are the utmost sufferers of social media trolling. The degenerated generation, their relapsed approach toward culture and values, their sense of delight, sense of bitter kind of entertainment, lack of proper educational ethics, proper monitoring from the authorities and guardian, unaccountability in using mobile

phones, the incessant access to the internet and android mobile, the trend of going viral within a blink of an eye, the prospect of earning money through the internet, the culture of impunity regarding online harassment, and finally the approach of not being involved in qualitative work let the unobstructed and unchallenged prevalence of trolling as a harassment tool in Bangladesh. To inflict others, chiefly Facebook and TikTok are used as online platforms. Besides, Imo, Likee, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram are used on fewer accounts for this purpose to harass the performance artists. The abusive comments, pictures, and short videos are explored as ways to down the artists psychologically, socially, and economically. The interview data revealed that artists became distracted from their vision because of trolling, putting them into intense anxiety, depression, frustration, and trauma. As a result, they suffer from personal development, social dignity, and economic crisis. These collaboratively contribute to the violations of the human rights of the artists in terms of privacy, freedom, life, expression, and liberty. The questionnaire data proved their rights were severely violated, and most participants agreed so.

6. Recommended suggestions for fighting against trolling

Combating trolling can be a challenging task, but here are a few suggestions and recommendations for the performance artists to deal with it:

- **Reporting and Blocking:** If the trolling becomes too much, the performer can report and block the individual causing the harassment. Most social media platforms have strict policies against online harassment and take action when they receive reports.

- **Engaging in Positive Interactions:** Performers can choose to focus on positive interactions and engage with their audience in a positive way. Responding to comments positively and acknowledging their support can help reduce the impact of trolling. One cannot control how people respond, but it can be controlled by how one will respond to their behaviour (Carrie, 2019).

- **Staying Confident and Professional:** Trolling often undermines the performer's confidence and creates doubt in their abilities. Instead, the performer can stay confident and professional, ignoring the negativity and focusing on their craft. It is better to remember that artists have to accept this reality at some point; they may face a troll. Therefore, it is better to figure out how they want to handle it (Carrie, 2019).

- **Getting Support:** Performers can reach out to friends, family, and colleagues for support when facing online harassment. Having a support system can help in reducing the impact of trolling and provide a sense of comfort.

- **Taking a Break:** If the trolling becomes too much to handle, the performers can take a break from social media and allow themselves time to heal. Then, they can return when they are ready and engage with their audience positively.

7. Conclusion

This paper underlooks an introspective investigation of online trolling from the perspective of its use and inception in Bangladesh, the online platform that is extensively used for trolling, and the ways and tactics of trolling. Further, it has tried to look for the challenges faced by the performance artists of Bangladesh in terms of their personal, social, and economic aspects. The study reported that trolling sometimes appears as a source of entertainment to many, but the reality is different for the artists related to the performance field. It explored that many of the artists become depressed and frustrated for it, which brings intense psychological pressure for them to bear with. Therefore, their self-development, creativity, genuineness, and artistic concept face a drastic negative challenge to proceeding forward. All these bring them social shame, and they are endangered by their reputation, name, and fame. They even outlined that their family has to suffer the bearings of trolling.

Notwithstanding, it creates an existential crisis for them to survive well in society. As a result, the research outlines that human rights are questioned on whether they are secured for them.

The study reveals that this adverse effect of trolling badly disrupts their privacy, security, freedom of life, and expression. Similarly, some sets of comments from Facebook are analyzed based on Hardaker's theory, and it has been found that almost all types of trolling are prevalent in Bangladesh, targeting the artists except the endangering ones. Besides, Grice's conversational theory and common grounding theory are used as a theory to analyze the nature and characteristics of trolling. The results present that they violate all the maxims and theories as they are discrete. Finally, some suggestions are put forward to fight against this contra-normative culture of online trolling faced by the artists. Though much scholarship has been deployed regarding the nature of trolling and its effect, no such study has been directed in the context of Bangladesh in quest of seeking the challenges faced by the performance artists and how it implies the violation of their rights. Therefore, this study can be a new ground to look into with a new prospect toward the performance artists regarding the ways they face trolling.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Informed consent

Obtained.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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