International Student Migration and Polymedia: The Use of Communication Media by Bangladeshi Students in Germany

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Abstract

Tertiary-level students from Bangladesh usually migrate to Germany for the purpose of higher studies. These international student migrants use communication media to maintain connections with family members and friends in Bangladesh and social networks with friends, classmates, and Bangladeshi community members in Germany. Drawing on the experiences of Bangladeshi student migrants in Germany and using polymedia theory, this paper investigates how the migrant students use the polymedia environment to maintain the transnational social networks and connections. This paper is based on qualitative data derived from 18 in-depth interviews with Bangladeshi migrant students in Germany. Findings suggest that using the polymedia environment, Bachelor migrant students receive emotional support from their family members back home, while Masters and PhD students are responsible for providing emotional and practical support to their left-behind families, relatives, and friends. Migrant students' media usage with families and friends living in Bangladesh is influenced by their marital status and gender as well as their familial and social structure in Bangladesh. Their use of communication media with the members of the Bangladeshi community and foreign classmates living in Germany is comparatively less frequent and more education-oriented.

Key Words: International student migration, polymedia, Bangladesh, Germany

Introduction

International student migrants are those who leave their country of origin and move to another country for the purpose of study (UNESCO, 2015). International student migration has become a significant global phenomenon in the last few decades. Over the last 20 years,

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the number of international students has grown significantly. The number of international students rose from 2 million to 5.3 million between 1998 and 2017, with an average annual growth rate of six percent (OECD, 2019). Tertiary-level or post-secondary students from the Global South (e.g., China and India) usually migrate to the countries of the Global North (e.g., the U.K., the U.S., and Canada) in order to access better education and research facilities. International student migration has received immense attention from migration and higher education researchers in recent times (Findlay, 2010; King & Raghuram, 2013). Previous studies have predominantly focused on how migration theories have analyzed student mobility (King & Raghuram, 2013; Raghuram, 2013), post-graduation decision-making among international students (Geddie, 2013; James, 2018; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013), comparative understanding of student visa policy (Grimm, 2019), the position of international students in the skilled migration program of Australia (Hawthorne, 2010; Robertson, 2011), intra-EU mobility of students (Baláž et al., 2017; Carlson, 2013; Van Mol, 2013, 2014; Wilken & Dahlberg, 2017), and inter-Asian educational mobility (Yang, 2018). However, there has been relatively little research on how international student migrants use diverse forms of communication media to maintain social and emotional connections with their home countries as well as in the destination country.

The globalization of communication media, on the one hand, and the transnational turn of migration studies, on the other hand, have intensified the research on the multidimensional usages and effects of different media by people on the move (Alencar et al., 2019; Holley et al., 2013; McAuliffe et al., 2017; Schaub, 2012; Vancea & Olivera, 2013; Zijlstra & Liempt, 2017). Intensive studies have been conducted on the use of smartphones and social media by regular migrants, irregular migrants, and refugees. Many studies have reported how the border guards in various receiving and transit countries scrutinize the communication tools of migrants as part of the securitization strategy to control irregular migration (Alencar et al., 2019; Gillespie et al., 2006).

There is also growing research on how migrants use different types of media and technologies for maintaining social relationships with families and friends back home; for instance, Peng (2016) and Collins (2009) study the communication media use of Chinese migrant students in Hong Kong and South Korean international students in New Zealand, respectively. Yet, the question of how international student migrants from the Global South living in the Global North use different communication media to maintain social relations with home and build connections abroad has remained under-researched. While living in different Global Northern countries, student migrants from Global Southern countries extensively use different communication media to keep pace with the modern education system and maintain social relationships with families and friends who have been left behind. To fill this research gap, this study investigates the use of communication media by international students from Bangladesh in Germany. The paper addresses the following questions: How do international student migrants use communication media with families, friends, and relatives at home? How do they use communication media to maintain relationships with foreign classmates as well as with members of the home-country community abroad?

The article is divided into four sections: The next section presents the theoretical issues related to media and international student migration, followed by a brief discussion on the migration of Bangladeshi students to Germany. After that, the method of this research is elaborated. Then, the findings and discussions are presented. The article ends with a concluding remark.

Theoretical Issues

The use of media communication has become an integral part in the process of migration. Migrants move from their place of origin and try to maintain relations with left-behind families and friends. Moreover, migrants must build and uphold social networks in their host society. The availability of telecommunication media and technologies is an advantage that enables them to maintain transnational relationships. In the past, migrants used to communicate via only a few media. At present, migrants can afford different media for the purpose of communication. In different places and with different people, they use different modes of media. They can choose a certain type of media on the basis of the content of the message. They also may prefer one type of media over another depending on the subject, object, and context of the communication. Media are now more user-oriented and users can select which media they prefer in a particular context (Madianou & Miller, 2012).

In order to understand the social implications of migrants' use of digital media in the context of transnational communication, Madianou and Miller (2012) propose the theory of polymedia. Polymedia emphasizes "the social, emotional and moral consequences of choosing between those different media" (p. 169). Drawing on experiences of Filipino and Caribbean transnational families, Madianou and Miller (2012) demonstrate that "polymedia is an emerging environment of communicative opportunities that functions as an 'integrated structure' within which each individual medium is defined in relational terms in the context of all other media" (p. 170). Therefore, "polymedia is not simply the environment; it is how users exploit these affordances in order to manage their emotions and their relationships" (p. 172). Madianou and Miller (2012) report many cases and implications of the migrants' use of polymedia, which can be further explored.

Different theoretical approaches have emerged from the study of international student migration. There are demand-side theories that explain international student migration to Western universities as a strategy used by middle-class families in the Global South to boost their social and cultural capital (Findlay, 2010; Findlay et al., 2012; Riaño et al., 2018). Supply-side theories, on the other hand, argue that powerful states of the Global North are the key players of global student flows, and international student migration happens because of their interest in controlling the global market through supplying highly educated people (Findlay, 2010; White, 2010). The global knowledge theory suggests that international students are economic agents, sources of income for the tertiary education sector, and instruments of building soft power (Budiharso & Tarman, 2020; King & Raghuram, 2013; Madge et al., 2014; Raghuram, 2013). Therefore, as global knowledge migrants, international students from the southern part of the world use updated information technologies to keep pace with the

modern education system to make them efficient, create and expand social networks in the host country, and maintain social relations with their families back home to avoid homesickness. There is growing research on the interplay between international student migration and media; this study contributes to the development of the literature in this field.
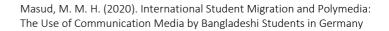
Drawing on the experiences of Bangladeshi student migrants in Germany, this paper investigates how Bangladeshi students in Germany use the polymedia environment to maintain social relationships with their families and friends whom they have left and with classmates and co-migrants in the host country.

Migration of Students from Bangladesh to Germany

Since the second half of the 1970s, Bangladeshi tertiary-level students have migrated abroad in search of a quality education and a better future (Ullah & Huque, 2019). The U.S., Australia, the U.K., and Canada have remained the most attractive study destinations for Bangladeshi students. In the last two decades, Malaysia has overtaken other countries and become the most desired destination for Bangladeshi students. Also, a significant increase in the number of Bangladeshi students abroad has been noticed. Between 2013 and 2017, the number of Bangladeshi outbound tertiary-level students increased from 37,235 in 2013 to 57,675 in 2017 (UNESCO, 2020). Out of 57,675 Bangladeshi students abroad, 2,311 were in Germany. The number of Bangladeshi students in German universities increased by 34 percent between 2017 and 2018 (Tithila & Joarder, 2019). As the recent UNESCO (2020) data shows, Germany has become the fifth-largest host country of Bangladeshi students worldwide after Malaysia, the U.S., Australia, and the U.K. German universities, partly due to their tuition-free policy, have gained popularity among Bangladeshi students.

Germany has become a key player in international education in recent years. According to UNESCO (2020) data, Germany has become the fourth-largest host country of international students worldwide, preceded by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The number of international students in Germany increased from 282,201 in 2013 to 374,583 in 2018 (Rao et al., 2020). Between 2007 and 2019, the number of English-taught Masters programs jumped from less than 100 to 1,268 (Trines, 2019). Despite being a non-English-speaking nation, 13 percent of all students in Germany are international students, while the rate is only 5.5 percent for all U.S. students (Trines, 2019). Germany's neighboring countries (e.g., Austria, France, and Italy) are the major student-sending countries, as are China, India, Russia, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. Like many other international student-receiving countries, Germany permits international graduates to stay 18 months to look for work.

However, due to linguistic and cultural differences between Germany and Bangladesh, Bangladeshi students face many complexities when they migrate to Germany for higher education purposes. In this context, it is significant to investigate how Bangladeshi students use communication media and maintain transnational relations.

Methods

In 2019, 18 Bangladeshi students from a university in Germany were selected for in-depth qualitative interviews. An in-depth interview is interactive and flexible in nature, which "permits the researcher to explore fully all the factors that underpin participants' answers: reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs" (Legard et al., 2003, p. 141). In-depth interviews were used to examine the media usage experiences from "the real experts" (Bilsborrow et al., 1984; King et al., 1998, p. 159). A semi-structured interview guide was used for data collection. The guide includes questions about the migration experiences, use of different media, and communication with family and friends at home and abroad. As a Bangladeshi student migrant in Germany, the researcher found it easy to make initial contact with a small group of Bangladeshi students, and through them he was able to "establish contacts with others" (Bryman, 2012, p. 716). During the interviews, some of the respondents eagerly shared their Facebook and Instagram profiles, messages, and video communication via Messenger, WhatsApp, and Imo with the researcher. By conducting interviews in the university cafe and student dormitories, the researcher observed the use of communication media by the participants (McHugh, 2000).

All in-depth interviews were conducted in Bangla. The interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewees. The interviews were transcribed. According to the patterns and trends observed, the thematic qualitative analysis was carried out. The information from the interviews was checked and cross-checked with observations to reach data triangulation. Data and information from various sources enabled the researcher to carry out "constant comparative analysis" (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 4). The real names of the respondents were replaced with pseudonyms.

Findings and Discussion

Marital status, duration of stay in Germany, sources of funding for education and living, internet costs, and gender of the respondents were considered influential factors of communication media usage. Therefore, questions about these aspects were included in the semi-structured questionnaire. Among the 18 respondents, 6 were studying Bachelors, 8 Masters, and 4 PhD when interviewed. Their age range was from 20 to 35. Four of the respondents were female. Fifteen of the interviewees had been in Germany for 2-5 years, while 3 of them had been for less than 2 years. All of them studied in tuition-free programs. Six of the Masters and PhD students were awarded different forms of monthly stipends. With the exception of one student, all of the Masters and PhD students studied their programs in the English language. Both German and English were the mediums of instruction for four Bachelor students; the rest studied only in English. Five of the respondents were married. Nearly all of them worked part-time to meet their living costs. All of the participants had family in Bangladesh, except for one who lived with her husband in Germany, and had left behind in-laws and families. Most of them were from middle- and upper-middle-class family backgrounds. Almost all of the respondents lived in student dormitories and private houses where affordable Internet fees were included in the house rent. In addition, the university

provided free Wi-Fi and Internet services. Some of them bought an internet package for 10 to 20 Euros per month. All of them owned a personal laptop and a modern mobile phone on which they used Facebook, Messenger, Imo, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and Skype. Therefore, the three preconditions for the emergence of polymedia were met: respondents had access to communication media; they were media literate; and media was available and affordable to them (Madianou & Miller, 2012, p. 171).

Media use with people in Bangladesh

Cycle of reciprocal care and responsibility in family

Family is the most important unit of caring and sharing in Bangladeshi culture. Parents usually take care and contribute to their children's welfare and development throughout their life, particularly when their children are young. As soon as young children become mature and income-earners, they start caring for their parents in exchange, mostly when their parents get older. This is a long-cherished cycle of reciprocal care and responsibility embedded in Bangladeshi familial tradition. Sending and supporting young children abroad for higher education is the family strategy to make them capable so that they can have enough monetary and psychological resources to take care of their parents in exchange. As soon as the migrant children become graduates, mature, and enter into jobs abroad, their parents expect emotional and material support from them.

This study found that Bachelor migrant students received support from their left-behind family members, while Masters and PhD level students were responsible for providing support to their families. Bachelor migrant students reported that their parents provided emotional support via telecommunication. They admitted that their parents were very careful with them and communicated with them often:

> I completed the higher secondary in Bangladesh. Then I migrated to Germany to study the Bachelor program. … I have never lived alone out of my family before coming here. This is why my parents are worried and phone me every time. Every day they ask similar types of questions: what I cook, what I eat, how is my sleep, is there any problem, etc. … I can see their faces via video call whenever I want, so I do not feel homesick. I can share my feelings with them from time to time. …Here the education system and lifestyle are different. They encourage and support me so that I can adjust to the changes. (Ahmad, male, 22, Bachelor)

As most Bachelor migrant students had few experiences of living outside the family and grew up with family in urban areas in Bangladesh, parents encouraged and supported them in regular audio and video calls via Messenger and Imo. This electronic communication helped them adjust to the new environment.

In contrast, Masters and PhD students were responsible for providing emotional support to their family members using modern information technologies. Masters and PhD students

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were older, more independent, mature, and experienced. Most of them received their undergraduate and graduate degrees from Bangladeshi public and private universities, were employed 1-3 years in different organizations, and lived apart from their family in Bangladesh for extended periods of time. Most of them knew how to cook, how to take care of themselves, and how to adjust to a new place. Instead of receiving care and emotional support from their families, they had to provide such support to their elderly and younger members of their families in Bangladesh. For example, Mohammad, who was married and had a left-behind family, reported:

> When my daughters cry I need to make video calls and console them. They are my fans. Sometimes my wife gets fed up with my daughters and I console her. … I lost my father, and my mother is old. I need to take care of her as far as I can over the phone. I tell her to take medicine regularly. I suggest that she walks and does exercise for a few minutes. (Mohammad, male, 33, PhD)

Masters and PhD students not only provided emotional support and care but also practical assistance to their families. Mohammad continued:

> I teach my daughters over the phone, you know, English and Bangla alphabets and numbers. I send links of educational videos to my wife so that she can show my daughters. …A few days ago, my wife was facing problems with replacing the battery of her laptop, then I made a video call and showed her how to do it. (Mohammad, male, 33, PhD)

In his study, Peng (2016) reported a mutual form of support and sharing between parents and migrant students. In contrast, this study shows that Bachelor students receive support from parents back home, while Masters and PhD level students are responsible to provide support to their parents. Transnational communication via modern media enables migrant students and their family members to continue the cycle of reciprocal care and responsibility.

Gender and marital status were found to be very important factors for maintaining communication with family via media. Compared to male students, female students received more care from their parents because they were concerned about the safety and adjustment in the new place. While single women respondents received support from their family, married women respondents had to maintain communication with both natal home and in-laws' house. Married women students received emotional support from their natal homes, but they were responsible for maintaining relations with in-laws. As described earlier, compared to single males, married male students were expected to keep connections via telecommunication with their families, particularly with children and elderly members.

Maintaining relations beyond family

Respondents considered their cousins, uncles, and aunts from both maternal and paternal sides close relatives and maintained telecommunication with them. Some of the migrant

students admitted that their relatives financed their migration costs. Students had to maintain communications with all members of *Bari*. In Bangladesh, *Bari* is a collection of families that live together in different houses in the same place for generations. Members of these families might have blood relations. As Syed (male, 25, Masters) shared, "After migrating to Germany, I created a Messenger group and added all my cousins, nephews, nieces, husbands, and wives of my cousins in the group. We chat with one another there." Students had high school, college, and university-wise Facebook and Messenger groups. They had daily chats with their friends and relatives in these groups and shared pictures, videos, and text messages. During leisure time, migrant students made group calls via Messenger and started electronic *adda*. According to Deb and Biswas (1996), "*adda* is a peculiar Bengali institution: agendaless discussions which are not idle gossip, not debate, not crib sessions, but all these and more."

In addition to the day-to-day communication, relatives and friends of the respondents contacted the migrant students for suggestions about visa processing, university selection, program selection, and blocked bank accounts. Mossammat (female, 24, Masters) stated, "I receive lots of text and voice messages, emails, and phone calls when someone who is known to me is applying for higher education in Germany. They contact me for processing visas, opening bank accounts, and booking flights." Student migrants were involved in research and higher study in Germany-related Facebook groups. They shared information and links in these groups. Moreover, modern telecommunication tools were also used for maintaining *prem*, a term referring to pre-marital love relations between boys and girls. Two male students admitted that they contacted their *premika* (female lover) over the phone more than once per day. They sent virtual flowers, kisses, and hugs along with the text and voice messages throughout the day.

While previous research on international migrant students' media communication (Peng, 2016) has mainly focused on media usage with their families, this research explores how migrant students use communication media beyond their familial relations. Most of the respondents reported that they maintained communication with people outside their families.

Media selection

In the polymedia environment, the selection of media among the available alternatives depends on the social relationships between the sender/caller and receiver/callee and the context of the communication (Madianou & Miller, 2012). For example, Chowdhury explained how he selected media among different alternatives when he communicated with his family back home:

> I usually make audio calls via Imo or Messenger for a long talk with my wife because if I make video calls, my children will see me and want to talk with me. If they start talking, my wife and I cannot continue talking anymore. This is why I make audio calls. …In the evening, I make video calls to see and talk with my children. My children are

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pithapithy (about the same age), they quarrel to take control over the mobile phone, this is why I make video calls on the laptop so that both of them can see me at the same time. …Also, I prefer a laptop because it is healthier, compared to a mobile for children. (Chowdhury, male, 32, PhD, married)

Huque stated how media usage varied based on the relations between caller and receiver:

Every weekend I talk with my mother, younger brother and his family. I make a long video call using Imo or Messenger. I see my mother, brother, and nephews. …It seems to me that my younger brother's wife feels shy when she talks with me over video calls because we have never talked like this so closely before. I am her *vasur* (husband's elder brother) and she feels *lojja* (shy) to talk with me over video calls. This is why I switch to audio calls when I talk with her. (Huque, male, 33, PhD, married)

Students reported that they talked over video calls for the first few minutes, and then switched to audio calls so that they could do other work simultaneously:

For the first few minutes, I make video calls. Then I switch to audio calls and connect my headphones and start cooking and talking together. I need to study and cook for myself. Also, I work part-time. I do not have enough time. … I do not have access to the Internet all day. For this reason, I record my speeches and send those via Messenger whenever I have access to Wi-Fi. … I prefer Imo when I need to call for a long time. It works better even if my family has a poor Internet connection. (Ullah, male, 27, Masters)

Migrant students considered several other aspects when they chose media. For example, they reported that without buying an Internet package, one person living in Bangladesh could send text messages via Messenger, which was not possible via any other media. As a consequence, they preferred using Messenger for communication. Moreover, Syeda explained how video calls were considered more valuable than audio calls in typical Bangladeshi culture:

If I have the capability to make video calls but I am making audio calls, then my family members/relatives/friends will not take it positively. If I make audio calls to one and then video calls to another at the same time, they will think I am giving more value to the latter. (Syeda, female, 21, Bachelor)

Syeda described how being a woman also influenced her decision of choosing media for communication:

I think Facebook and Messenger are secure enough to protect my data. As a Bangladeshi woman, I need to think about it. … I do not like Imo because it sends lots of unnecessary messages every day. … I like WhatsApp. I think it is more secure. I suggest my brother downloads this app. (Syeda, female, 21, Bachelor)

Moreover, media selection depends on the popularity of the media in a particular region. For example, Facebook, Messenger, and Imo are the most popular communication media in Bangladesh. Therefore, these were mainly used by migrant students and their parents, friends, and relatives. In contrast, Peng (2016) found that mainland Chinese students studying in Hong Kong used QQ and WeChat because of their popularity in mainland China.

Filtering information

Respondents reported that they did not communicate all messages, news, and information. Like Peng's (2016, p. 11) respondents, the interviewees of this study adopted the strategy of concealing bad news and spreading good news:

> When I cook something and it looks good then I send some pictures of the dish so that my parents think I am fine here. When something bad happens, I do not share it with my family. One day I cut my finger when I was cutting vegetables, another day I fell with my bicycle and I hurt myself. I did not share these stories. I share only good things. … Sometimes I need to do odd jobs, which I do not share. (Uddin, male, 20, Bachelor)

Male respondents reported that if they were in any pictures or videos with foreign female friends or classmates wearing short clothes, they refrained from sharing these pictures or videos with their families, friends, and relatives living in Bangladesh:

> I neither share this type of picture on Facebook nor send it to any of my family members, friends, and relatives. I would rather post it either on Twitter or Instagram. These two social networking sites are not widely used by Bangladeshis. So, no one will see. (Syed, male, 25, Masters)

In Bangladesh, women normally wear sari (a long piece of cloth wrapped around their waist, with one end draped over head or shoulder) or shalwar kameez (a three-part dress consisting of long loose trousers, a long tunic top, and a scarf) that covers the whole body (Hussein, 2018). Migrant students thought that most of their relatives would not perceive this type of picture in a positive manner. Female students also explained that they did not share any pictures in which a Western boy is seated beside her drinking beer or whisky. They argued that their families did not take these pictures positively. Thus, students' opinions showed that they not only concealed study-related problems but also cultural affairs (Peng, 2016).

Media use with people in Germany

Communication with Bangladeshi community

It is widely agreed that the possibility of face-to-face contact reduces peoples' intention to use media for communication (Madianou & Miller, 2012). However, the migrant students

used Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp for communication with their country people living in Germany. According to most of them, media use with Bangladeshis was purposeful. Mia explained how he used communication media with Bangladeshi friends:

> I send text messages via Messenger before going to the Indian/South Asian/Asian shops. We exchange voice and text messages to know what to buy from superstores, and how to cook. (Mia, male, 26, Masters)

Migrant students reported that there was a Facebook group for Bangladesh's current, former, and prospective students. This group had about 95,000 members. When they needed any information, they posted there, and within one or two minutes they received proper suggestions from the group. Many of them admitted that they posted part-time jobs, visa processing, blocked accounts, university programs, home visits, and flight-related messages in the group. In exchange, they shared information and links related to scholarships, visas, higher education, and living in Germany.

Most of the students reported that their communication with the Bangladeshi community in Germany was occasional. They created many Messenger groups to organize different national and international days, for example, International Mother Language Day, Independence Day, Victory Day, *Eid-ul-Fitr* (a Muslim festival of breaking the fast), *Eid-ul-Adha* (a Muslim festival of sacrifice), and *Pohela Boishakh* (first day of Bangla new year).

> We exchange greetings over phone calls or messages on our special days because there are no holidays for our national and religious festivals in Germany. What we usually do is organize parties later based on the situation of the community. We arrange surveys or polls on Facebook to take everyone's opinion in selecting a venue, date, and time. … During the observance, we generally gossip face-to-face. But, those who organize these occasions, they need to contact one another via Messenger or WhatsApp. After the program, we exchange our photos and videos. We upload those on Facebook and YouTube. (Begum, female, 23, Masters)

Migrant students admitted that they had different Facebook pages depending on the city (Bangladeshi Community in Hamburg) and occupation (Bangladeshi Architecture and Civil Engineering Students in Germany). Students also reported that they maintained educational institutions and home district-wise Messenger groups. The two main Bangladeshi political parties, Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party, had wings in Germany and maintained Facebook pages: Bangladesh Awami League Germany and Bangladesh Nationalist Party Germany. Most of the students were not interested in these pages.

Classmates

Respondents reported that they used a common WhatsApp group for study and social occasion-related messages with classmates. Topics of daily messages included deadlines for assignments, class schedules, assignment titles, references, etc. Sub-groups in WhatsApp

were created on the basis of study groups, courses, and trips. Begum (female, 23, Masters) stated, "When we go on an excursion in different places, we create different groups on WhatsApp." They reported that their foreign classmates used WhatsApp often (Hoffmann, 2017). Begum continued, "Sometimes I see 200 unread messages. Every time 'ting ting,' someone is writing something." Students claimed that they used WhatsApp for daily communication purposes and presented well-thought arguments on Facebook. They explained that they could read posts and comments on Facebook seriously, but on WhatsApp, everything went very rapidly because of the high number of messages. Students reported that their study-oriented group meetings were not discussed in-depth in WhatsApp groups; rather, they organized face-to-face in the university library and cafe. Moreover, migrant students wrote about their national days and cultural occasions in the WhatsApp group. Some of them had bitter experiences of sharing national histories in the group. Khan (male, 29, PhD) shared, "I wrote about the International Mother Language Day and the independence war of Bangladesh in our WhatsApp group. I have some classmates from the neighboring countries of Bangladesh. They did not take it positively." Students claimed that communication media use with foreign classmates depended on international relations. They also reported that the language of communication on WhatsApp and Facebook depended on the language of instruction of the semester or program they were studying.

Conclusion

This paper has examined how international student migrants use different types of communication media to maintain emotional and social relationships with their family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends back home. Also, it has investigated how they maintain social relations with migrants from their origin country, and how they create and continue academic communication with classmates in the destination country. Through exploring the media usage experiences of Bangladeshi students in Germany, the paper has analyzed the relations between media and migrants.

This study found that student migrants used different forms of media depending both on the relations with the receivers and on the social contexts (Madianou & Miller, 2012). While the senior student migrants were found giving emotional and material support to their parents, relatives, neighbors, and friends, junior students were found receiving emotional support from their parents in Bangladesh. By filtering information and selecting media, these student migrants also managed their relationships with family members living in the home country (Peng, 2016). Communication media usage helped them to maintain intimate relations with people beyond their families. Their experiences also showed that they were successful in actively managing the polymedia environment to keep occasional connections with the Bangladeshi community in Germany. Additionally, their stories demonstrated how they used media to maintain functional and educational relations with their classmates and foreign friends.

To conclude, this study expands the literature on polymedia and migration as it encompasses the discussion on how media can be used to connect peoples beyond families. This study

lacks the media use experiences of student migrants with the local German people. This can be an issue for further research.

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