

**PERFORMATIVE ACTIVISM IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: ANALYSIS OF ONLINE
AND OFFLINE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of

**MASTERS OF ARTS IN
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY**



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2023-2025

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “**Performative Activism in Social Movements: Analysis of Online and Offline social Movements**” being submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the award of degree of **Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology**, submitted in the **Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences (TSLAS), Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala** is bonafied work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Vandana Singh, assistant professor, Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and that no part of this project has been submitted for the award of any other degree.



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This is to certify that the above statement made by the student concerned is correct and true to the best of my knowledge.



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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled, , “**Performative Activism in Social Movements: Analysis of Online and Offline social Movements**” being submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the award of degree of **Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology**, submitted in the **Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences (TSLAS), Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala** is an authentic record of my own carried out under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Vandana Singh, professor, Thapar School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and refers other researcher's work which are duly listed in the reference section.

The matter embodied in this thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any other degree of this or any other university.

Date: May 2025

Place: Patiala



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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to examine the performative activism in social movements by analysing online and offline factors of social movements. The comparative case study approach and qualitative research design are used to investigate three contemporary movements- The Free Palestine Movement (2021-2023), The Farmers Protest (2020-present), and the RG KAR Medical College Case, Kolkata (2024). The study was conducted in two phases. In phase 1, online posts on social media and data from newspapers and e-newspapers were gathered for all three cases, while in phase 2, the farmers' protest was the main focus and data were collected by interviewing individuals who participated in the protest both online and offline. To fully understand the concept of how digital engagements influence real-world protest outcomes, Thematic and Sentimental analysis was done along with theoretical lenses such as Social Identity Theory, Collective Action frameworks, framing theory, and Goffman's dramaturgy concept.

The results and findings of both phases revealed that strong collective identity, cultural solidarity, physical presence, long-term commitment, willingness to make sacrifices and risk-taking are very important for the success of the movement. All these were seen in farmers' protest, in comparison to it, RG KAR Case and Free Palestine movement are characterized by viral posts, trending hashtags which were successful in grabbing the attention but failed to mobilise people on ground for the long run. The role of mainstream media is also controversial and criticised in spreading fake news and setting up false narratives, which leads the protestors to rely on online or digital platforms to share the real on-ground coverage and reality to the world.

The hybrid factor of the protest allows it to sustain momentum for a long time; social media served as a bridge between the protestors, supporters and other individuals. The framing of

mainstream media is also mitigated by the social media platforms where protestors made their own official accounts. Besides physical hardships, strategic blocking and internet shutdown, unity, solidarity, and genuine commitment are the factors that bring success to the movement. These insights can help future movements to avoid the hurdles and trend-driven participation, as well as ensure that digital allyship/activism serves effective on-ground action.

Keywords- solidarity, activism, performative activism, unity, sustainability, collective identity, farmers, protest.

Chapter-1

Introduction

1.1 What is Activism?

Activism is defined as collective efforts individuals make to change society by challenging social, political, economic or environmental reforms made by governing authorities. According to Chon and Park(2020), activism is a collective action of like-minded people to bring about change in society, policy, law, or an organisation in relation to a controversial argument or issue. Activism can be done through online participation and offline mobilisation. Online activism includes protests, sit-ins, marches, and boycotts, while online activism is totally based on social media and the internet, for example, hashtags, posting pictures and videos on issues, changing profile pictures, and social media gestures like ‘clicktivism’ and ‘slacktivism’. For movements, both online and offline activism create a bridge from mobilising the public in support of the success of the movement by building community bonds and shaping new norms (Greijdanus et al., 2020).

1.2 What is Performative Activism?

The digitalised era even made social movements digitalised, it amplifies the voices of individuals and mobilises support for global causes, but also induced a negative phenomenon called Performative Activism. Individuals participate in movements only for the desire to maintain a positive self-image, rather than a deep ideological stance (Schumann & Klein, 2015). According to Jackson et al. (2020) and Freelon et al. (2016), the performative factor of any social movement dilutes its depth of solidarity and can risk turning advocacy into mere trend-following. In evaluating online responses to global

issues, understanding the interplay between authentic digital empathy and performative activism is very critical.

1.3 Motivation Behind Participation:

There are several reasons for people to join the social movements. The main motives are collective identity and a sense of grievance or discrimination. Psychologically, social identity and sense of collective identity or togetherness play a crucial role, which drives individuals to take part in social movements on the basis of group interests or sense of belonging to the in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The personal and strategic motivations also contribute to being a part of any movement, such as moral fulfilment, helping others for self-satisfaction, peer pressure, social recognition, empathy, and instant gratification. According to Dr. Maja Kutlaca (2022), individuals perform performative activism only for their personal benefits, such as the number of likes on their posts, an increase in followers, and for their social status. Additionally, some people express solidarity on their social media through posts and by changing their profile pictures only to avoid being criticised for not being updated with the trends (Kukoricza, 2024).

1.4 Global Movements

Over the past decade, we have seen several movements that sparked trends online and raised issues globally. The very first is the #MeToo movement (2017-present), which spread all over social media after a tweet by American actress Alyssa Milano, empowering the survivors of sexual violence, mainly in the entertainment industry. This also exemplifies the power of social media in amplifying personal stories to seek justice, in-depth interviews with the survivors or victims revealed their participation on basis of collective action against rape culture. Another big social movement that spread like fire on social media is Black Lives Matter (BLM), which was the case of police brutality against black people in the United States of America, surveys found that 70% of

participants were adolescents and teenagers aged between 11-15, who engaged through TV, social media, or attending demonstrations, experiencing anger and hope for justice. In 2019, Greta Thunberg, an environmental activist, first started a solitary movement to protect the environment by skipping schools on Friday, later she started using hashtag #FridaysForFuture, which was reposted and liked by celebrities (Leonardo DiCaprio) and other politicians which structured the movement online and gained 1.4 million youngsters in 128 countries to walk out of classes in protest. Another global movement that caught the attention of people was the Palestine movement (2021), Gen-Z engagement on social media platforms spread the hashtags #FreePalestine, #AllEyesOnGaza helped to organise in-person protests all over the world.

1.5 Movements in India

India has witnessed several movements where social media platforms played a crucial role in amplifying public outrage, demanding justice, and mobilising support for several issues. The movements that changed the scenario of performative activism by achieving success are like the Farmers' Protest forced government to take back the black three laws which were implemented, #Nirbhaya movement amplify outrage in whole country and successful in demand of stricter rape laws and #MeToo movement resulted in exposing organisational sexual exploitation and led to resignations and exposed sexual assaulters particularly in entertainment industry. On the other side, there are a few movements- #FreePalestine, #RGKarMedicalCollege, #JusticeForShushantSinghRajput gained rapid momentum across social media platforms but remain merely a trend-following. Despite being merely a trend, all these movements revealed the power of social media.

1.6 Role of Mainstream Media

Activism is also influenced by mainstream media. Media channels choose what news they cover and show to shape the perception of people and frame protests or movements.

Protesters or activists often criticise mainstream media or channels for building false narratives, spreading fake news about protesters or protest sites (Bacallao-Pino, 2015). To mitigate this, many movements create their own accounts or channels on social media. For example, in farmers' protests, farmer leaders created their own official pages on social media platforms and also launched their magazine called 'The Trolley Times' to build autonomous visibility and challenge false narratives of mainstream media.

1.7 Theoretical Frameworks:

1.7.1 Collective Action & Group Identity:

(i) Social Identity Theory (SIT) of intergroup behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 2004):

According to SIT by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, an individual has a significant portion of their self-concept from their social groups, profession, race, nationality and religion. Similarly, in farmers' protests, how group identity shaped farmers' collective behaviour and their strategies to achieve their shared goals of opposing the three farm laws to save their livelihood. The key concepts of SIT which helped in understanding group identity and collective action in farmers' protest are:

- Social Categorisation: Explains that individuals classify themselves and others into social groups based on race, gender, nationality, or religion. Farmers categorised themselves based on shared profession and grievances against the new agricultural laws. This further helps create a collective identity and distinguishes farmers from policymakers, who the media perceived as an out-group.
- Social identification: Individuals adopt a group's norms, values and behaviours and identify as group members. In the farmers' protest, farmers identified themselves as members of the farming community, which was emotionally important, and with the success of the protest, they enhanced their self-esteem.

- Social Comparison: Comparison of their group with other groups. The comparison of the in-group (farmers' group) with the out-group (government, media, corporate entities) strengthens solidarity among farmers, increases in-group favouritism, and intensifies their opposition to out-groups.
- In-group and Out-group dynamics: In-group refers to the group to which an individual belongs, and Out-group refers to the group individuals do not identify with. Farmers' natural inclination toward other farmers from different states or countries perceives their in-group positively. In contrast, they see out-groups (the government officials, specifically the Modi government and corporations) as threats to their identity, agriculture, livelihood, and future generations. This dynamic played a critical role in mobilising the collective action and helped to sustain the protest for over a year.
- Positive Distinctiveness: refers to the desire for positive self-esteem that motivates one's in-group to be positively different from the relevant out-group. The desire for positive distinctiveness of farmers as they wanted to highlight their unique contribution to society, emphasise their role as food providers (Anndatas), motivated their efforts to be perceived as an important and respected group, which is distinct from the out-group they are opposing.

(ii) Collective Action Theory (Olson, 1965)

Mancur Olson, in his book 'The Logic of Collective Action' (1965), examines why individuals participate in collective movements without fearing personal costs. He argues that individuals in large groups get benefits without actively participating or contributing, which he refers to as the free-rider problem (pp. 20-22). In the context of farmers' protest, individuals who did not actively contribute benefit from the policy change after the protest's success. Farmers' shared grievances, specifically economic insecurity and livelihood, were a

strong unifying force to sustain the protest for over a year, as Olson explained that individuals are less likely to act unless selective or potent incentives exist (pp. 5-52). Collective Action Theory reveals that group size determines the success and sustainability of collective action or movement. Farmers' Protest showed a counter-narrative on Olson's explanation that large groups often face difficulty organising and mobilising due to weaker interpersonal connections and responsibility (pp. 53-65), because farmers' protest had a strong sense of community, cultural background and shared goal, which helped in coordinated action. It contributes to understanding the underlying motivations to participate in the protest and the psychological and structural mechanisms that allow sustainable participation on a massive scale or globally.

1.7.2 Performance, Media and Visibility:

(i) Dramaturgy Theory (Goffman, 1959)

The Dramaturgy Theory by Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* explains that social interactions are theatrical performances where individuals manage how others perceive them by playing roles to align with the audience. Goffman introduced impression management, which means how others see you (pp. 8-20), contributes to understanding legitimate and morally correct symbolic gestures used by protestors, such as mass sit-ins (*Dharnas*), leading to peaceful roadblocks. Another concept used in Dramaturgy theory is role-playing, which suggests that people play roles to shape their audience's perception (pp.22-45). In farmers' protests, protestors play the roles of victims of injustice, peaceful citizens fighting for their rights and protectors of the agricultural sector and rural identity. Lastly, the front-stage (public and media appearances) and back-stage (planning, coordination) behaviour (pp.78-106) explained how protestors take their actions for strategic impact and policy change.

(ii) Goffman's Framing Theory (1974)

Another theory by Goffman examines the role of media and activists in framing issues to influence public understanding and action (pp.21-28). Protestors framed the farmers' protest as the fight for justice, survival of livelihood and fundamental rights; the government framed it as a reshaping of farming in India; however, international media framed it as rural distress, and internal media framed the farmers as separatists, anti-social and terrorists. This framing fueled the movement and made it a global matter as farmers' protests got domestic and international support, and farmers used framing or misinformation to define unjust laws, connecting their grievances with broader issues of fairness and economic inequality.

1.7.3 Political Challenges and Movement Sustainability:

(i) Political Opportunity Structures (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly)

Political and structural factors that allowed endurance and visibility are required to understand the dynamics of farmers' protests. Political Opportunity Structures or Political Opportunity Theory by Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow examines the collective mobilisation. Tilly (1978) initially revealed that the success and failure of the protests depend upon the kind of political opportunities or threats present at that time. Tilly further argues that external political contexts such as open or democratic political systems, support from the elite class- celebrities, influencers, organisations and politicians, and political vulnerability- all influence collective action (1978, pp.70-95). Farmers' protest sustained and became successful because of all these factors, as the protest got support from international celebrities, influencers, the international government and other social organizations. Furthermore, McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow repression and dismissal by government authorities can unintentionally contribute to strengthening the movements by increasing their symbolic power and public sympathy (2001, pp. 49-71), which happens in

farmers' protest, barricading protestors, water cannons at Delhi borders helped farmers to gain public sympathy which leads to strengthening movement.

(ii) Social Movement Theory (McAdam, 1999)

This theory focuses on internal dynamics such as the importance of organisation, strategic framing and resource mobilisation (pp. 36-59). The Farmers' Unions understand these dynamics and they played a crucial role in coordinating the protest through speeches, informational videos, mobilised resources like organising community kitchens (*Langars*), medical camps, and media outreach. Protestors gain traction among urban allies and the diaspora by strategically framing laws as threats to livelihood, rural autonomy and future generations.

1.8 Case Studies:

1.8.1 The Farmers Protest

The Farmers' Protest 2020 is the most spectacular and peaceful protest that stands out in Indian history, began around August 2020 and is still running on the ground level. The protest started because of three controversial agricultural laws, or black farm laws- (i) the Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance & Farm Services Act, (ii) Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, (iii) Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act. The protest quickly gained traction among farmers, particularly those from Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh. The farmers of India perceived these laws as a direct threat to the Minimum Support Price (MSP) system, and left farmers vulnerable to exploitation by large corporations.

The farmers of northern India, mainly from Punjab, have deep cultural connections and an agricultural background for hundreds of years. They began the movement in late 2020 not only to change the laws but to protect their identity, livelihood and food for future

generations, after a few months when the trend went viral, farmers from other states of India, like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan and from south India also participated in the protest. The protest stands out from months to years only because of its dual nature of activism, online platforms play an essential role in strengthening the movement. Support from Punjabi singer, notably Diljit Dosanjh (known globally), influencers, other celebrities, human rights organisations, and many hashtags—#WESTANDWITHFARMERS, #NOFARMERSNOFOOD, #FARMERSPROTEST2020 went viral globally, which helped the protest to make its presence felt outside India. Simultaneously, farmers from Punjab and Haryana had been sitting on the borders of Delhi for almost a year. This also led to this protest going offline, showing farmers' courage, determination and ability to face adversity, recover from it, and even thrive. The farmers did not even care about extreme weather conditions, police barricades, water cannons, logistical challenges, and hunger. As we all know Punjab is known for its communal spirit, langars (community kitchens) and helping nature, which was also seen in this protest, as during the protest there were langars of not only food but for medicines, and all basic needs on the protest sites, and the farmers get funds from Punjabi NRIs, who helped or contributed in the protest financially.

1.8.2 The RG KAR Medical College Case, Kolkata:

The RG Kar Medical College murder case in Kolkata started in August 2024. This case sparked with the viral photos of the victim on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, seeking justice for the victim and her family. The trend goes to peak with numerous hashtags, people changing their profile pictures out of anger or rage and demanding justice from the government. The movement was online for a few months. At the start, the doctors of the whole country were on strike, but then it faded, due to a failure in mobilising people around the country. However, offline protests are still going

on only in Kolkata, as strikes around the country were halted by government notices, and the trend faded because of a lack of long-term engagement and commitment. This makes it the case where we can analyse how social media users engage in protest when their personal benefits or commitments are not available.

1.8.3 The Free Palestine movement

There were many debatable movements around the world, one of which is the Free Palestine movement. This movement witnessed heightened visibility and momentum throughout the globe through social media platforms; the movement sparked when social media platforms were flooded with videos, posts, hashtags, infographics related to attacks and bombings in Gaza in 2020 and an escalation in 2023. There were numerous digital campaigns organised around the world, individuals shared, liked and commented on posts, changed their profile pictures with the infographic #AllEyesOnGaza, which also fuels the debates around performative activism, because many individuals posted all these without any contextual understanding and long-term commitment. In India, the trend flows for 3-4 months, then starts fading, as many post under peer pressure, and fear of being perceived as not empathetic and indifferent.

1.9 The Present Study:

This study, with its particular focus on the **Farmers' Protest**, because data collection was accessible for this case, aims to explore the importance of online platforms and offline activism in mobilising individuals for the success and sustainability of the protest. By analysing the psychological, emotional, cultural, regional, and societal dimensions of the protest, this research seeks to uncover how online activism influences offline participation, how individuals perceive their involvement in these movements, and whether their online engagement contributing in mobilising resources to reach the goals of their movement.

The interactions and interviews with farmers who are part of this protest physically revealed that the success of this peaceful protest lies not only online but also on the ground level. Many of the farmers' emotions, solidarity, sacrifices and determination helped this protest to succeed, which questions the role of performative activism versus genuine commitment and contribution.

The Indian farmers' protest emerged as one of the most prolonged and resilient social movements in recent Indian history. While earlier research—including a prior study by the researcher on performative activism—covered case studies like the RG Kar Medical College protest and the Free Palestine movement, there remains a lack of focused academic inquiry into why the farmers' protest, specifically, endured for over a year despite problematic conditions. Another reason for main focus on farmers' protest was data collection accessibility.

Following are the Objectives of the study:

- To examine the role of social media trends and hashtags in mobilising support and spreading awareness, and how these trends contributed to the protest's success.
- To understand the role of social media platforms in helping build a sense of community among farmers and the difficulties the protest faced in remaining visible online over time.
- To understand lessons other movements in future will learn from Farmers' Protest.
- To examine the personal and cultural or religious motivations, due to which individual participated in the protest.

On the basis of objectives following research questions are emerged:

- Do online and offline activism both yield equal, sustainable outcomes together?
- What are the psychological factors or motivations that influence the participants to be a part of the movement, be it online or offline?
- How does the Farmers' Protest set an example that the contribution of both online and offline activism is important in the sustainability and success of the protest?
- What is the long-term impact of online activism as compared to offline activism on societal change or policymaking?
- Why do some movements sustain offline engagement while others decline after online trends fade?
- What is the role of digital platforms and mainstream media in the protests?

1.10 Rationale:

The primary aim of this study is to examine why the farmers' protest lasted such an extended period. In doing so, it builds on previous research on performative activism in social movements, which included case studies on the farmers' protest, the RG Kar Medical College case, and the Free Palestine movement. The longevity of farmers' protests raises crucial questions; the key elements that contributed to the sustainability of Farmers' protests are being answered with the help of this research, by analysing both psychological and socio-political aspects. This study also helps to examine activism's psychological, emotional, and social dimensions in this digital era.

This study narrows its scope to this singular movement to explore the psychological, social, and structural factors contributing to its sustainability. By applying a theoretical framework that includes Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), Dramaturgy Theory (Goffman,

1959), and Social Desirability Bias (Fisher, 1993), along with Framing Analysis (Goffman, 1974), Collective Action Theory (Olson, 1965), Grievance Theory (McAdam, 1999), Political Opportunity Structures (McAdam, Tilly & Tarrow, 2001), and Social Movement Theory (Tarrow, 1998), the study investigates both the internal motivations of participants and the external conditions that shaped the protest's trajectory. The multi-theoretical analysis helped to integrate psychological insight and socio-political structures, which is important to address the gap in the literature.

Chapter 2

Review Of Literature

In this chapter, the focus will be on existing studies examining performative activism and allyship, cancel culture, slacktivism and clicktivism, and motivations for participation in the social movements.

2.1 Performative activism and Allyship:

Recent research works in social psychology have begun to define performative activism or allyship as an act of supporting an issue, with visibility often carrying little cost or effect on the issue itself. In other words, performative activism is an act of supporting a movement for one's own personal motives without being genuinely empathetic to the cause; this act can have a negative impact on the movement itself (Kutlaca & Radke, 2023). According to Kultaca & Radke (2023), performative activism is an easy and costless action that does not challenge the status quo and is primarily motivated by the desire to acquire personal benefits. The type of act is acknowledged publicly but often criticised when compared to tangible actions, such as sharing a solidarity post without donating or showing up to a cause only when it's trending. Kutlaca & Radke further suggest several motives behind these performative acts, such as social status, moral self-enhancement by supporting a trending issue without knowing its contextual meaning, just to bolster their reputation as "good" or "in-the-know".

The qualitative interviews done by Salena Keys-Kukoricza (2023) state that fear of being indifferent to society, outdated, and peer pressure is another key driver behind people supporting a trending issue. Marrisa Traversa et al. (2023) define performative activism as a need to signal virtue, which leads to superficial commitments. Further, they argued

that the nature of performative activism to shift focus from real issues to celebrities, influencers and diluting messages can be harmful for the real motives of the movement.

The empirical findings on performative activism are an emerging trend. Keys-Kukoricza (2023) reviewed cases like Black Lives Matter, where celebrities showed their support by posting black squares, and examined the potential negative impact on marginalised groups when fake allyship dominates discourse. The performative activism can undermine the collective goals, but it validates the social image or identity of the individual. This theoretical framework was first introduced by Kutlaca & Radke (2023).

2.2 Cancel Culture:

Travers, M., et al., 2023, defined cancel culture as publicly calling out individuals often on social media platforms for offensive behaviour, speech or action. On the other side, activism mostly targets government policies, systematic or social issues, and cancel culture targets particular issues and can be seen as a collective protest. For example, individuals calling out American police for their brutality against black people in the Black Lives Matter movement. Cancel culture often emerges as negative because of popular discourse. The studies in socio-psychological research have shed light on cancel culture's group-level effects or impact, It is also witnessed that even minor exposure to cancel culture can increase collective validation among the harmed group (Traversa et al., 2023). Traversa, Tian, and Wright (2023) suggest that cancel culture works as a collective boycott of people. In their study, the participants read about a discriminatory incident, followed by online "cancellation" of the perpetrator, reported higher intentions of individuals to engage in collective action, led by a sense of group empowerment. However, Romano (2020) and Beecham (2021) criticised cancel culture as they said it gives birth to 'us vs. them' thinking. If we look from a psychological point of

view, cancel culture may serve as a symbolic protest and a group-affirming ritual, where individuals feel they are part of a group and feel secure to raise their voice against the issue.

2.3 Clicktivism in Slacktivism

Slacktivism is a very little effort to support an issue, particularly a political issue, whether online or offline, similar to performative activism. The term for online slacktivism is 'clicktivism'. Christensen (2011) defined it as actions on the internet which has very limited or no impact in the real world, but only provide a 'feel-good' factor to the individual doing it. For example, liking or sharing a post, using hashtags, signing online petitions without making a genuine effort, just only to create a social image in the vicinity. Morozov (2011) argued that psychologically slacktivism reflects apathy. he further states that people who only do these minimal efforts might think that they have done a great or enough job for society, and unknowingly avoid deeper involvement in the movement or issue.

The empirical research on slacktivism reveals that it leads to weakening the movement. Christensen (2011) found that online or digital campaigns replace offline participation as individuals think that they are doing enough online and feel no need to participate in offline campaigns. Additionally, Greijdanus et al. (2020) suggest that there is an interplay between online and offline activism, and both are positively correlated according to empirical evidence. They further argued that digital activism and offline or traditional activism both are linked but separate, online activism contributes to mobilising individuals offline, in this case, slacktivism is harmless 'clicktivism' because it motivates people to take more substantive action. For example, in farmers' protests, farmers claim that online hashtags, tweets and posts helped the protest in mobilising human and financial resources, and their voice reached globally because of that and helps in their goal of backing up the three black laws.

2.4 Role of Social and Mainstream Media in Activism:

Social media or mainstream media both are the bridges between people and protestors, from the platforms like TV, newspapers, and digital platforms citizens get updated about the protests. According to scholars, viewing media engagement is an arena of activism, with its own strategies and psychological impacts. Bacallao-Pino (2015) states that social media platforms challenge the mainstream media system, as protestors create their own official pages and provide accurate coverage which mainstream media fails to provide. As seen in the Farmers' protest, the media coverage was mixed, with protestors claiming that mainstream media showed them as terrorists and offenders. The research by Bacallao-Pino (2015) revealed that media framing can shape the psychological perspective of individuals and influence them about the legitimacy of the movement, urgency, and affect their willingness to join that movement, which is way harmful to the protest.

2.5 Motivation Behind Participation: Difference in Online and Offline Motivation:

According to Greijdanus et al. (2020), individuals often have the same motivation to join any movement, be it online or offline; the online actions always complement the traditional face-to-face protests. However, there is a difference between online and offline activism; offline activism comes with a greater personal cost, such as time, travel, and risk, despite the fact that the sense of collective identity and empowerment motivates individuals to protest offline and mobilise for justice. In contrast, online participants have no personal risk; they are motivated by personal values or desire for social connection and sometimes instant gratification. According to survey research (Yale, 2021), many adolescents engage in activities through family influence and media influence. From a psychological viewpoint, there are many motivational factors, such as moral outrage, empathy, collective identity, and sense of belongingness, that contribute to being a part of a social movement. Intra-personal factors like peer pressure, influencer or celebrity endorsement are mostly seen in online participation rather than offline.

2.6 Research Gap

The research on activism is very extensive, much of it is more historically focused on offline protests or political participation rather than comparing online and offline movements. Only recently scholars have begun studying performative activism and its psychological underpinnings. Existing literature provides definitions and theoretical frameworks such as Kutrlaca & Radke (2023); Keys-Kukoricza (2023), but empirical studies are limited. We lack quantitative data on what proportion of activism is performative, and how it correlated with personality, social identity and further engagement. The feedback loops between performative acts and authentic engagement remains underexplored. Similarly research on cancel culture's psychological effects is very new concept. Travers et al., (2023) started it by linking cancellation to sense of collective validation. Yet more work is needed on how cancel culture influence bystanders, movement credibility, and activists' sense of efficacy.

The online and offline interplay invites further critical inquiry, there is still debate around the slacktivism hypothesis (Christensen, 2011; Greijdanus et al., 2020). Existing evidence suggests positive links between online and offline action, but some gaps remain: for example, cross-cultural studies are few. Most research is Western-centric, yet modes of online engagement vary globally, in India, where smartphone use and social media have boomed alongside traditional social structures, hybrid forms of activism may follow different patterns. The Farmers' Protest suggests one model, but how do others (student, environmental) compare in terms of online-offline balance?

Media effects also warrant more work. We know media framing matters, but exactly how does mainstream media portrayal (positive vs. negative) affect participant psychology, morale, or recruitment? Conversely, how does the flood of online information (mis/disinformation, viral content) psychologically burden activists? Scholars have noted the

stress of constant exposure to injustice online, but systematic studies are few. For example, Hammer et al. (2022) found that heavy engagement with BLM content was linked to increased anxiety and trauma symptoms, but this raises new questions about digital coping strategies among activists. Across topics, there is a need to integrate classic social-psychological theory with modern digital contexts. Do existing models of collective action centred on identity, efficacy, injustice apply equally in online settings, or do we need new constructs? The performative aspect, for instance, touches on impression management (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) and social influence (Cialdini, 2001) in ways traditional activism theory did not consider. Finally, the literature is often isolated by disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and communication. A comprehensive psychological approach that links motivation, identity, and well-being to both online and offline activism remains a gap.

To summarise the traditional theories like Social Identity Theory and Collective Action Models provide a solid base for understanding activism. However, the phenomena of performative activism, cancel culture, and digital mobilisation introduce new dynamics that are only beginning to be theorised and studied. In this research we aim to address these gaps by applying psychological theory to online vs. offline activism, examining how motivations, including status and social pressure, play out in each domain, and considering cultural contexts, both global and specifically Indian, to give a comprehensive picture of modern social movements.

Chapter-3

Methodology

This study adopted a **constructivist paradigm**, aligning with the interpretive qualitative tradition. Constructivism assumes that social reality is co-constructed by participants and researchers, and that the researcher's goal is to interpret the meanings individuals hold. In this spirit, the researcher acknowledged multiple perspectives on the movements and aimed to understand participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The overall design was a two-phase sequential qualitative study.

In Phase 1, secondary data (social media posts and news headlines) were collected and analyzed to identify emerging themes. These findings then informed **Phase 2**, in which semi-structured interviews with farmers were conducted. This exploratory sequence allowed the results of the first phase to “build to” deeper insights in the second, ensuring continuity of inquiry. As Punch (2000) notes, research design “structures the investigation to obtain answers to research questions” and here the sequential design systematically linked the two phases.

Research Questions:

The study was guided by specific research questions focused on online vs. offline activism, motivations for participation, and the sustainability of movements. For example, *do online and offline activism yield equally sustainable outcomes? What psychological factors motivate participants to join movements? How can movements sustain engagement once online trends fade?* These questions (see **Appendix A** for the full list) were derived from the study's objectives – examining the prolonged Farmers' Protest and its digital solidarity with other movements. Aligning methods with questions, Phase 1 aimed to capture broad discourse on three movements (#FarmersProtest, RG Kar case, #FreePalestine) while Phase 2 focused on in-depth accounts from farmers themselves.

Sampling (Purposive Sampling).

Phase 1

- A purposive (criterion-based) sampling strategy was used, approximately 700–1000 social media posts and news headlines (combined) were scraped, specifically targeting content about the three movements from their beginnings through October 2024.
- Platforms included Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook for diverse outreach.
- Only public posts or headlines mentioning the movements were included to focus on relevant discourse.

Phase 2

- To ensure diverse perspectives ten farmers participated in the Farmers' Protest were recruited from different villages of Punjab, India and aged between 18-50.
- Participants were purposively chosen based on their direct involvement be it online participation or offline participation in the protest and their willingness to speak.
- The relatively small interview sample reflected practical constraints (safety concerns and limited access) but was sufficient for qualitative depth.
- This sampling ensured that all participants had first-hand experience relevant to the research objectives.

Procedures for Data Collection:

In Phase 1

- Social media data were collected via keyword searches e.g. **hashtags** like #FarmersProtest, #FreePalestine and scraping tools like Twitter Scraper.
- News headlines and articles were gathered from major outlets referencing the movements.
- Data were stored securely and anonymized before analysis.

In Phase 2

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the ten farmers.
- Then, an interview guide was done covering topics such as *identity and motivation, social media use, perceptions of the protest, and challenges faced*.
- Interviews took place in familiar settings (homes, farms, or over the phone) to ensure comfort, each session lasted about 30–45 minutes and was conducted in Punjabi, the participants' native language.
- All interviews were audio-recorded with consent. Recordings were then transcribed verbatim; translations into English were performed using Google Translate and reviewed by the researcher for accuracy.
- Tools such as mobile audio recorders and note-taking supplements were used to ensure data quality.
- Overall, Phase 1 yielded a large textual dataset (posts and headlines), and Phase 2 yielded richly detailed narratives.

The study followed ethical guidelines for qualitative research.

- For social media data, only publicly available posts were used, and no personal identifiers were reported.
- Quotations from posts have been anonymised to protect privacy.
- For interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw, and that interviews would be recorded.
- Confidentiality was maintained for participants' names and age; a few participants had no issue with sharing their names and age.

- Audio files and transcripts are securely saved and accessible only to the research team.
- These steps ensured respectful, responsible conduct throughout the study.

Data Analysis:

The data collected from social media posts, news headlines in phase 1 and interview transcripts from phase 2 were analysed using a combination of thematic analysis for both phases and sentiment analysis for phase 1 only. For qualitative research, thematic analysis was used to reveal underlying patterns in interview data, whereas for social media content and newspaper content, thematic and sentimental analyses were used. The combination of these ensured a thorough interpretation of qualitative data.

Thematic analysis was done according to Braun & Clark's (2006) six-phase framework, as follows:

- All social media posts, newspaper content and interview transcripts were read to become familiar with the data.
- Initial codes were generated by tagging meaningful segments, post-texts, and news headlines.
- After generating initial codes, they were collated into potential themes by looking for broader patterns, for example, codes like solidarity, belonging, and coming under one theme, Collective Identity.
- Themes were reviewed again to ensure that they are reflecting the data accurately.
- Each and every theme was clearly defined and named with descriptive labels.
- At last, these themes were linked into the cohesive narrative in the writing-up phase

The analysis for both phases was manual. For phase 1, Excel was used to organise post-text and news headlines; different sheets were assigned for data from all three case studies, and post-text and news headlines were also organised into separate Excel sheets. However, for phase 2, Qualcoder software was used to organise the themes and codes.

The data analysis combined systematic coding procedures with theoretical insights to yield a rigorous and well-grounded set of findings. Throughout the analysis, psychological and social theories contribute to the interpretation, the theories helped in understanding the codes and interpreting the data more efficiently and easily. During the coding process, the theoretical framework helped to make sense of patterns and provided an understanding of the importance of themes.

Chapter-4 Results

In the results and findings chapter, the results are organised by phase and by themes. Phase 1 results and findings from social media and news data are presented first, followed by data from phase 2, which is farmers' interviews. Key themes are illustrated with sample quotes, tables and figures that are well presented for clarity and understanding.

4.1 Phase 1

Sentiment analysis and thematic analysis were done for phase 1 as follows:

4.1.1 Sentiment Analysis:

The offline data collected from news archives or e-newspapers exhibited predominant negative and neutral sentiments. The count of negative expressions is 37.5 % for all coded data, and neutral sentiments are recorded for 36.4%. However, 15.9 % infrequent sentiments or mixed sentiments were seen, the combination of both neutral-negative and neutral-positive, 5.7% and 4.5%, respectively. These results are summarised in Figure 1. Pie chart for offline sentiment distribution. It revealed many protestors voiced feelings of anger, frustration over lack of progress, for instance, in the statement: '*how many incidents happened like this before, but no change*'. The neutral statements in offline data involved factual updates about the protests' logistics, stats, organisation of events, and call for mobilisation. The statements that show positive sentiments and expressions like solidarity and a sense of belonging appeared to be 15.9 % (see Figure 1).

Sentiments Offline

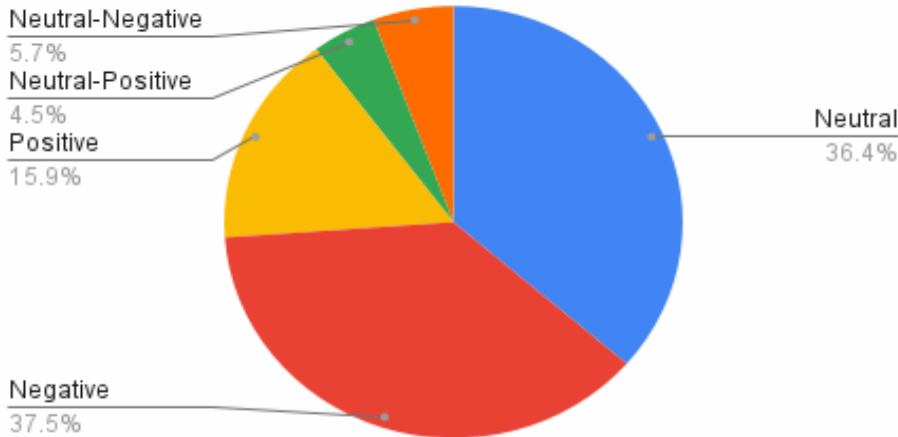


Figure 1. Offline sentiments distribution.

Figure 2 shows online sentiments that emerged after analysing posts from different digital media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. It showed more positive sentiments, i.e., 46.8%, as compared to offline data, 23.4 % of online data revealed neutral but critical tones like “Another day, another victim. The numbers keep rising- when will this end ?”. Offline data showed less negative tones with only 15.6%, 9.1% neutral posts and 5.2% posts were neutral-positive.

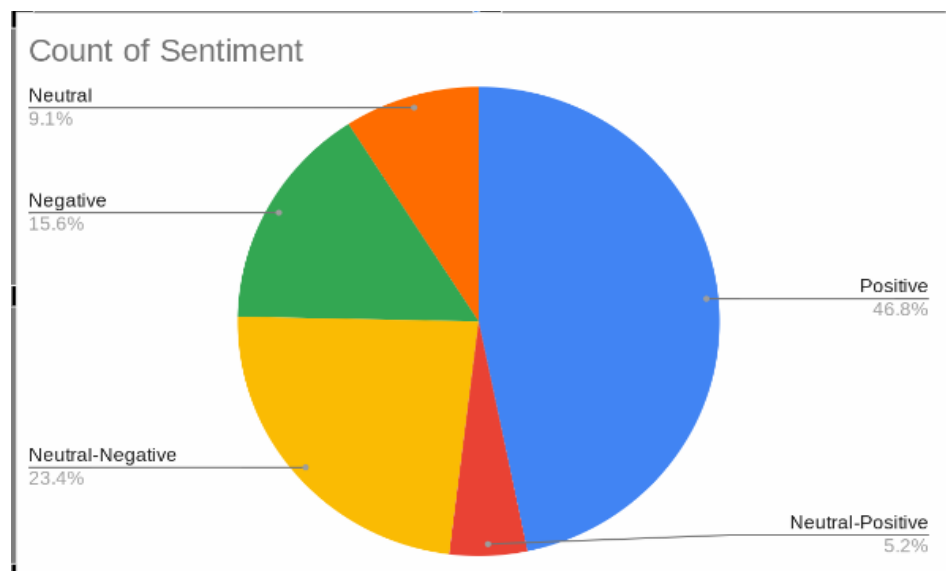


Figure 2. Online sentiments distribution

Overall, the online data revealed a more positive emotional tone as compared to offline news headlines; this difference aligns with the findings of Tsvetkov et al. that social media activism often foregrounds optimistic and hopeful texts, and they found that positivity and hope were prevalent in pro-movement posts/tweets. In the online and offline data, users frequently used uplifting language as well as solidarity hashtags, but print media used more overt expressions of anger and concern, which directly reflect urgency and blame institutions. This suggests that online activism tends to amplify more positive emotions and encourage individuals to engage more, however, offline activism provides space for direct emotional letting out.

Patterns of Trend Duration:

Figure 3,4 & 5 reveals social media trends of three cases. Figure 3 reveals the short and episodic trend of Free Palestine movement in India with rapid spike during May 2024, unfortunately followed by sharp decline in June and remained constant. The Figure 4. Shows the RG KAR Medical college movement, that also sparked at peaking during the starting of the case, followed by zigzag pattern before it started declining as case gets older. On the other side, Farmers Protest showed more sustained trend trajectory, and maintain visibility across several months, though movement started in late 2020s but still running on ground despite decreasing online, Figure 5.

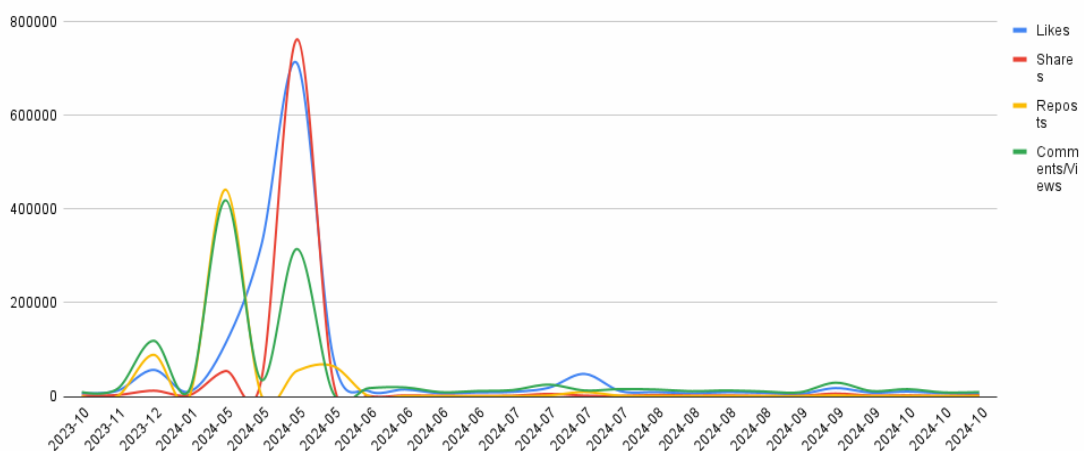


Figure 3. shows online trend duration of Free Palestine Movement in India.

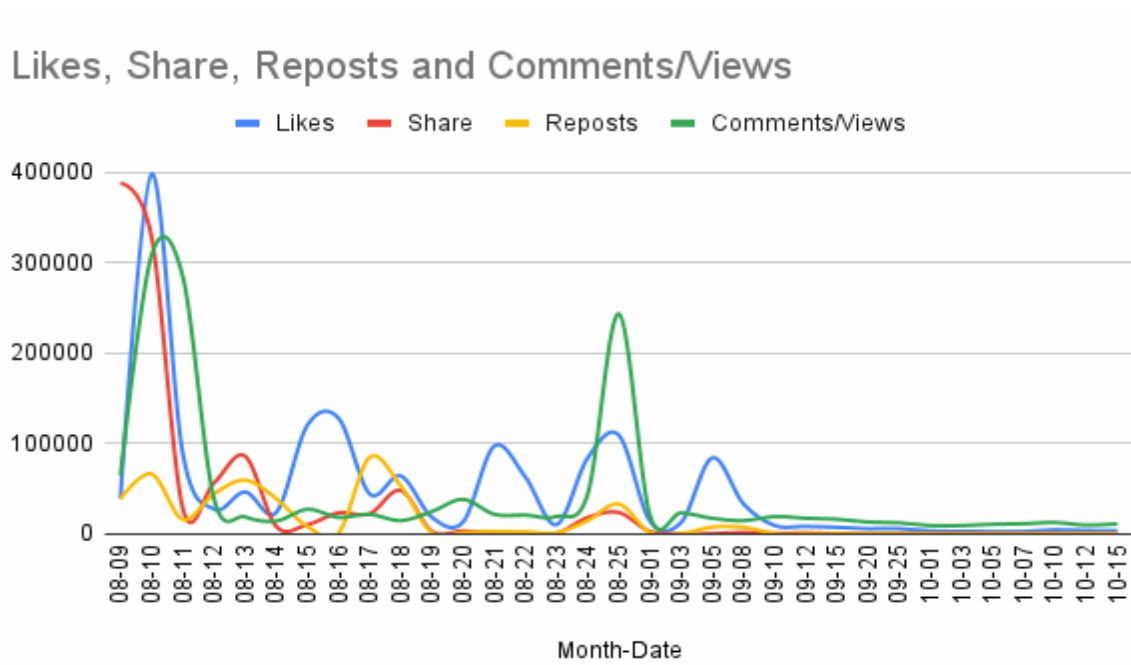


Figure 4. shows the online trend duration of the RG KAR Medical College case, Kolkata

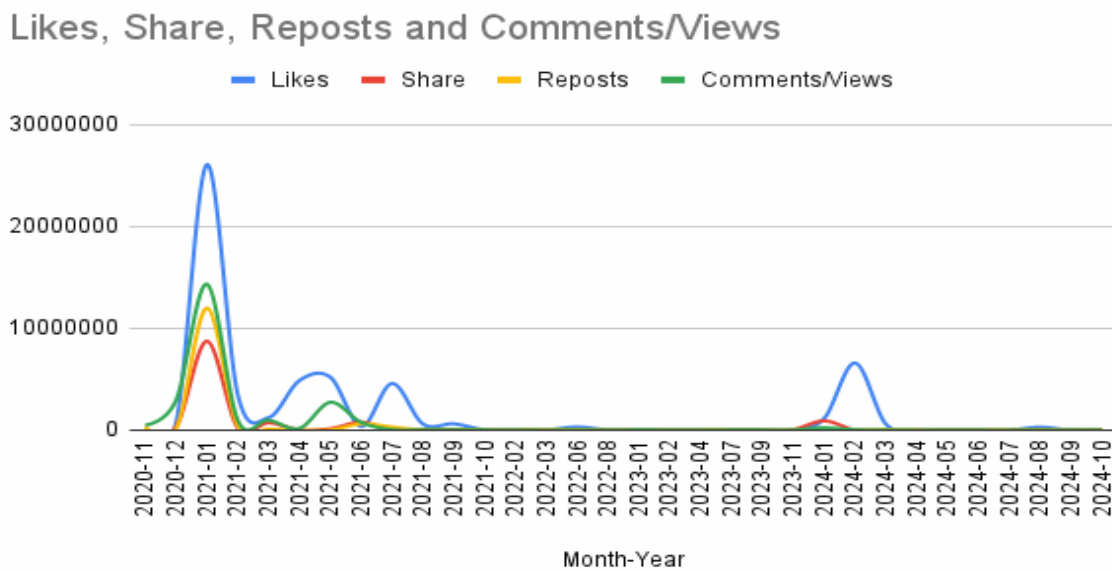


Figure 5. shows online trends duration of Farmers Protest over 4 years.

4.1.2 Thematic Analysis:

Thematic analysis was done for both online and offline data collected in phase 1, which revealed various themes in the online data (Table 1 summarises the 9 themes that emerged in online digital media data). The news headlines collected from print media and e-newspapers revealed 6 themes shown in Table 2.

Psychological Themes from Online Data:

Collective Identity and Solidarity- Collective identity and solidarity lead to a sense of unity among the protestors or activists. The online users frequently post infographics with written slogans, use hashtags to show they are connected to the movement or feel like an in-group. The posts like *'we stand united for a just cause. # AllEyesOnGaza'*, *'#WeStandWithfarmers'* illustrate that digital symbols and messages create a sense of belonging and collective identity among participants.

Empathy and Compassion- Sharing the sufferings of victims and empathising with them is another theme that emerges from one data point, which shows the humanitarian instinct of the users. The content filled with empathy and compassion, such as *'Remembering the sufferings of those in Rafah'* demonstrates the compassionate and emotional language used by the users or online activists, along with the text emotional picture of destruction evokes empathy towards the victims, which compell others to like, share or comment the post due to empathetic instinct.

Fear of Global Apathy and Silence- The fear of issues being ignored, activism often expresses the need for urgency to raise awareness among other people. This urgency of amplifying others to raise their voices, online activists tried to preempt the fear of indifference, which highlights the driving concern without widespread action. The posts with text *'do not let this go unnoticed, must share the story'* compel other users to contribute to the movement, and get their attention easily towards the issues.

Moral Outrage and Injustice Sensitivity- Another psychological theme that emerged from the data is insensitivity towards justice and moral outrage. The moral outrage motivates the individuals to appeal in an emotional tone and use confrontational language to highlight the systematic failures or social issues and make a direct call out to the authorities. On the other side, the posts written with anger and indignation at perceived unfairness show their demand for action against the injustice that has happened. For example, *'#NoFarmersNoFood, No more silence, we can not accept this injustice'*

Media Distrust- Mainstream media is the bridge between activism and other people, but distrust in media emerges from the online data from social media. Media distrust code reflects scepticism about mainstream media news coverage and the spreading of false narratives. The posts with media often seem to claim that mainstream media is not showing the truth of protest sites, 'media won't show this, but we will', along with the videos of on-ground coverage. The activists created their own social media accounts to fill the informational gaps that the media failed to show.

Powelessness and Empowerment- When the movement reaches its peak on digital media and then declines due to certain reasons, activists start feeling helpless and doubt the progress of the movement, which often leads to low digital engagement. There are many posts that convey an oscillation between feeling helpless and empowered. This also reveals that online activism that started with confident slogans and voices, often exposed to vulnerability and despair when challenges persist.

Psychological Distance Reduction- Putting personal relevance and breaking down the issue to reduce psychological distances, as posting infographics in accessible language with emotional appeal. This theme emerges in global issues, where online users localise the topic and try to relate it to the individuals. For example, in the farmers' protest, online activists

linked farmers with the whole world by posting hashtags like #NoFarmersNoFood, farmers are our ancestors, *and we do not get food if there were no farmers*. Additionally, only one user explained the complex three black laws related to farmers' protests in infographics, followed by emotional appeals.

Righteous Anger and Call for Justice- Understanding moral duty and demanding accountability with anger, this theme involves posts with unacceptable writings and reflects principled anger rooted in moral duty. Tweets like *'this is unacceptable, why are we still waiting for justice'* are a succinct expression of outrage and demand for action, hoping justice will be served.

Social Influence and Celebrity Endorsement- Public figures such as celebrities, influencers, and social activists play a crucial role in online activism. Too much online content included reposts or mentions of celebrity supporters. Tweets and stories of celebrities on digital platforms are widely shared and commented on. Online protestors sway public opinion by illustrating the post or tweet of a celebrity and draw media attention, which underlines the persuasive power of prominent voices in digital activism.

Table 1. Summary of themes

Theme	Definition	Example
Collective Identity and Solidarity	Sense of unity and elonging through shared hashtags, symbols	Use of #AllEyesOnGaza to unite global support
Empathy and Compassion	Emotional connections to others' sufferings generate support	<i>'Remembering the sufferings of those in Rafah'</i>

Fear of Global Apathy and Silence	Urgency to act, due to fear of the issue being ignored	<i>'Do not let this go unnoticed, must share this story'</i>
Moral Outrage and Injustice Sensitivity	Anger at unfairness, motivating action	<i>'No more silence, we can not accept this'</i>
Media Distrust	Doubting mainstream media for setting false narratives, creating their own official protest pages to share information	<i>'media won't show this, but we will'</i>
Powerlessness and Empowerment	Doubting own collective action, simultaneously hoping for action	Posts that are shared start of protests leave with comments like 'no one cares'
Psychological Distance Reduction	Simplifying and localising the issues to make them relatable and urgent	Infographics with personal stories that break down complex policies.
Righteous Anger and Out for Justice	Call Demand for accountability with moral anger	<i>'This is unacceptable. Why are we still waiting for justice?'</i>
Social Influence and Celebrity Endorsement	Support from celebrities increases the reach of the issue	A tweet from an American celebrity, Rehana, takes the farmers' protest globally

Psychological Themes from Offline Data

Community and Emotional Connections- The offline activism allows activists to foster deeper interpersonal connections through in-person events such as candlelight marches, mass sit-ins, rallies, communal mourning; these all strengthen group cohesion. These face-to-face interactions build a sense of community, trust and empathy among the protestors, which sometimes online activism fails to serve. Offline protestors shared their stories about how holding a vigil allows them to feel the community's shared grief, which strengthens the movement and motivates individuals to mobilise together again in urgency.

Localised Focus- The problem or issue in offline activism is that it is limited to local regions and to specific community issues. The most prominent example of this theme is the RG KAR Medical College case, Kolkata, which targeted the incident in local happenings, unlike global online campaigns, the concerns of this case were deeply rooted in immediate settings and concerns. The localised nature of the RG KAR case made it highly relevant to those who were directly and indirectly involved with it. In this, all headlines in newspapers were about the interviewees who spoke about workplace violence and the demand for justice and amendments in policies.

Personal Investment and Authenticity- The requirements of offline activism are substantial effort and time, which result in genuine support and efforts. The willingness of supporters to sacrifice their time, money, and comfort leads offline activism towards authenticity and reduces the factor of performative activism, unlike online activism. For example, in the farmers' protest, protestors organised mass sit-ins on the borders of Delhi for months to a year, which made the protest successful and a great example of personal investment and authenticity of the movement.

Risks and Sacrifices- Online activism often faces personal risks and sacrifices, which is not common in online activism. Personal dangers, newspapers filled with headlines of mass

arrests, blocking protestors with water canons, barricades, etc, these types of risks are very often in offline or on-ground activism.

Solidarity in Physical Presence- Offline protests often show solidarity and a sense of unity. The physical presence on the protest sites generates a sense of belonging to a group and shared purpose. Large in-person gatherings or mass gatherings like the farmers' protest created a vivid display of collective commitment and highlighted the symbolic and emotional power of gathering together.

Sustained Engagement- Long-term commitment is needed for sustained engagement, which is present in offline activism. The sustained and continuous involvement reflects deep dedication to the issue, which makes offline activism different from a one-time event and online activism. For example, Farmers’ protests and the Free Palestine movement demonstrate continued over weeks, months, and years, with protestors camping out and organising daily marches or rallies.

Table 2. Summary of offline themes

Theme	Definition	Example
Community and Emotional Connections	In-person interactions often form deep emotional bonds	Mass sit-ins, candlelight marches or vigils, rallies where people mourn together and strengthen communal ties
Localised Focus	Limited attention only on a particular region, community or specific issue	Protest at the local institution addressing workplace violence in that community
Personal investment and	Genuine commitment through long-term involvement	Volunteers organising fundraisers, local rallies, for example, in

authenticity		farmers' protests, NRIS organise fundraisers.
Risks	and Personal dangers like arrests,	Protestors were arrested during
Sacrifices	injuries are accepted for the cause	farmers' protest and were even blocked with water cannons and barricades
Solidarity	in In-person gatherings conveyed	Doctors all over India marching,
physical presence	unity and strength	holding signs and chanting slogans in RG KAR Medical College case, Kolkata
Sustained	Long-term commitment and	In free Palestine protests,
Engagement	planning over an extended period	individuals do weeks-long protests with evolving tactics.

4.1.2 Comparative Analysis: Online vs. Offline Activism

The comparison of Online and Offline is shown in Table 3. According to the analysis, online activism is defined as high global reach, trend-driven engagement and low participation risk as compared with offline activism, which is more localised, high in personal risk and needs sustained and continuous commitment. **Reach** is defined as the spread of the movement. Online movements spread fast and in every corner of the world through social media hashtags and posts, but offline protests are limited only to a particular region and to those who can attend them physically, for example, the RG KAR case, which was limited only to Kolkata. **Visibility** is amplified through viral content and hashtags in online engagemnets, but offline activism is visible to those who are physically present. Next is **Engagement depth**, which is high in offline activism because face-to-face interactions foster deeper solidarity as compared

with online interactions, which are more superficial and driven by algorithms. **Risk** is lower and no risk in offline activism because individuals are posting by sitting in their comfort zones, while online activists or protestors are prone to a high risk of personal harm and arrests. **Motivations and Drives** are also different in both types of activism, online users seek instant gratification or feedback such as likes, shares, comments and react only to trending events sometimes without even knowing the actual cause of the issue, however, offline motivations are based on solidarity, personal connection, and willingness to sacrifice. Lastly, **Media dependence**, which is high in online activism as messages and information are spread through media platforms, offline activism is less dependent on media; it requires media to spread information faster, but can operate independently of digital platforms as it relies on community networks and in-person mobilisations.

Table 3. Comparison of online and offline activism

Aspect	Online Activism	Offline Activism
Reach	<i>Global reach through social media platforms</i>	<i>Limited to local regions and specific participants who participate physically</i>
Visibility	<i>Amplified through hashtags and viral sharing</i>	<i>Visible only to those who are physically present on protest sites</i>
Engagement depth	<i>Heightened by algorithmic feeds and viral content</i>	<i>Deeper due to face-to-face interactions</i>
Time Commitment	<i>Episodic and trend-driven</i>	<i>Sustained long term involvement</i>
Risk	<i>Low risk because of anonymity</i>	<i>High at risk of physical harms and arrests</i>

Motivation and drives	<i>Instant gratification and Solidarity, willingness to feedback</i>	<i>Solidarity, willingness to sacrifice and personal connections</i>
Media dependence	<i>Relies heavily on social media platforms</i>	<i>Works independently, less reliant on media</i>

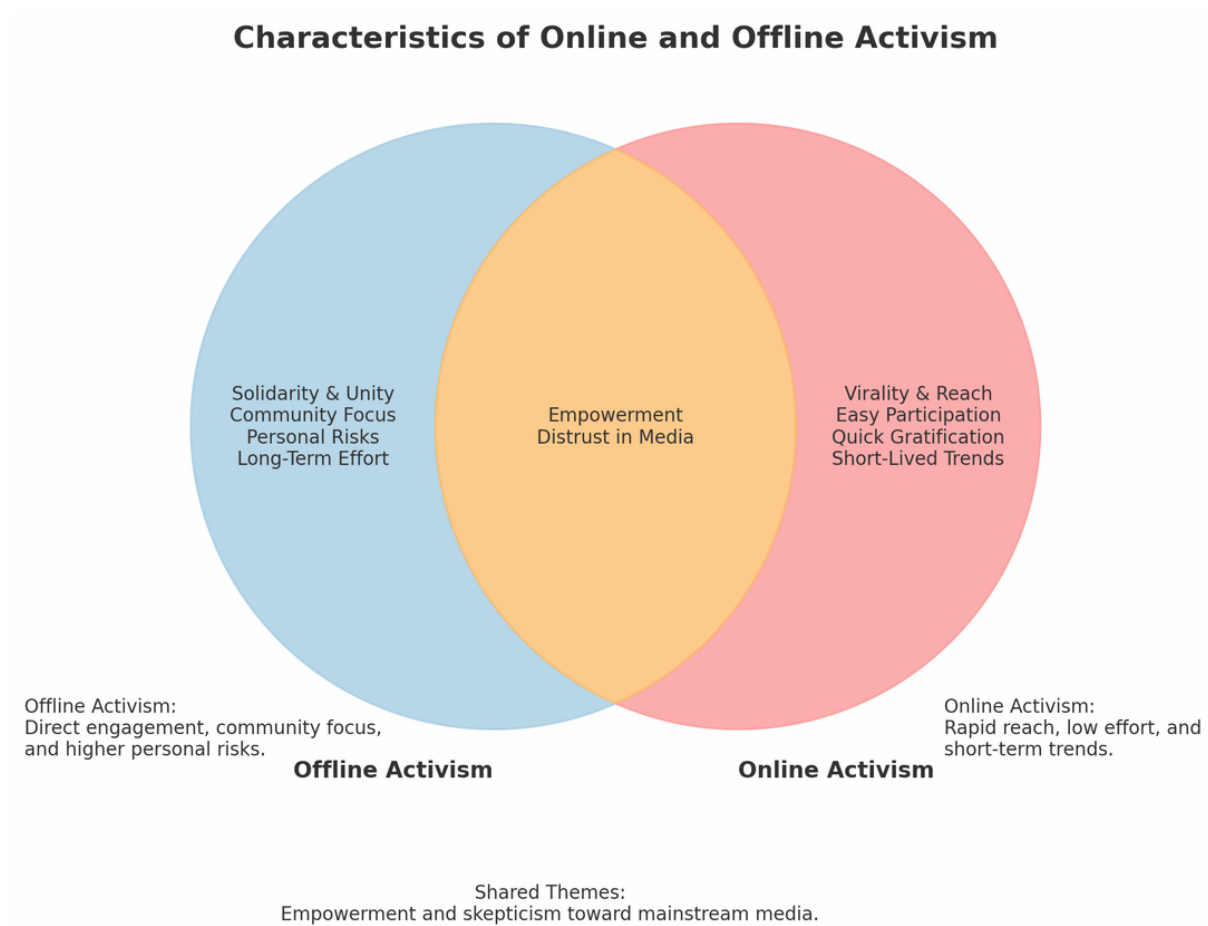


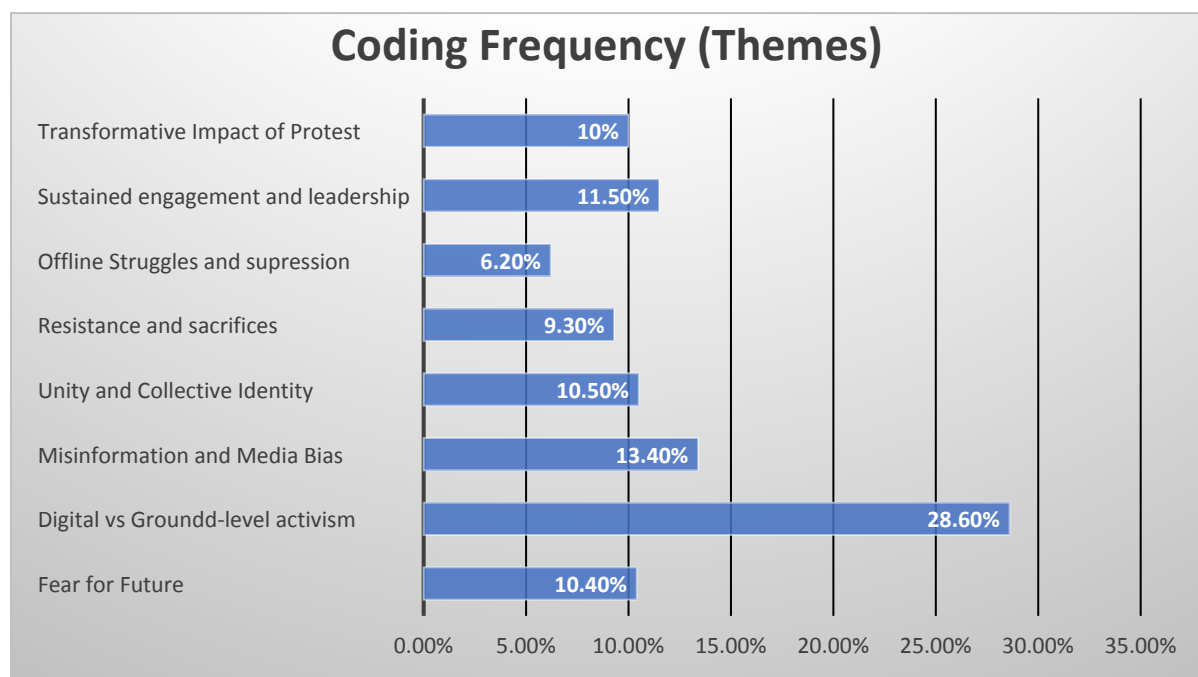
Figure 6. A pie chart showing characteristics of activism, which is compared in Table 3.

Overall, online activism is characterised by broader but shallower engagement, it is driven by visibility, which reveals performative support. In contrast, offline activism involves fewer but committed people who are willing to make sacrifices and take risks. From this we can

understand that successful movements need online activism for broader reach and offline activism is needed for sustainability.

4.2 Phase 2

In phase 2, interviews with farmers were analysed thematically only, and revealed 8 themes and 31 codes. The thematic analysis revealed nine broad categories that reflect emotional, psychological, social and technological dimensions of participation in the Farmers’ Protest. These codes/themes emerged across interviews and highlight both internal motivational and external challenges. The total of 31 codes grouped in 8 Themes, Digital activism vs Ground-Level activism, which is the most frequently coded theme, and Offline struggles and suppression is the least coded theme, but still significant.



Graph No. 1 Coding Frequency/ Theme Frequency

Theme frequency according to Graphs Nos . 1 and 2 :

- 1. Fear for Future-** coded with 29 references, suggests deep-rooted emotional and generational motivation behind protest involvement. The codes under this theme are:

Fear for future generation, where participants talked about their fear for their children's future in their own country and loss of livelihood, prompting a generational call to action, additionally the interviewees were more concerned about their future generation, and feared that their children would inherit a corporatised agriculture system with no space for small-scale farmers. This reflects injustice and concern for their children's future, motivating civic engagement.

- 'the governments that have strangled the farmers, our coming children and our races and crops that they destroyed, which seemed to us, we also our cows, children, who had to eat and drink here',
- 'we also understood the personal feeling because when our generation was no longer there, our children were no more....'

Loss of farming culture participants reflected their fear of losing their rural, agricultural identity and land to corporations. This reflects their cultural trauma and collective anxiety as their cultural identities were threatened, because of their fear that mechanisation and corporate control would destroy their way of life and their only occupation, farming.

- The reason for this is that our MSP and other things that are destroying agriculture and the fields are being destroyed',
- 'We can also say a personal feeling. One, we live in villages and are associated with agriculture. And one, let's assume that as we wanted to hear, our agriculture is also at risk. The three bills implemented by the government will be a threat to the farmers and it will be more expensive to privatize them. Accordingly, our own opinion is that if agriculture comes, it is a profitable business. It should be saved by big companies or Anything comes from them, it is kept away from them, agriculture is allowed to remain agriculture.'

Economic threat was another code that emerged from the data, where their fear of losing their livelihood and inflation, which leads to increased debt, poor market price or MSP and the main threat of deregulated markets under new farm laws that were imposed by the government. This economic tragedy generated extensive anxiety and protest mobilisation, also resonating with the deprivation theory that perceived injustice drives collective action.

- 'The wheat that I now get for 40-50 rupees per kg, the government did not know that the person was supposed to get 100 rupees, so even before the inflation increased they stood with the farmers.'
- 'go outside Punjab and Haryana and see. Here in UP and Bihar, the farmers used to go and get their crops for two months every month, they would not be happy with the traders who do not pay the government's price. So no one is paying any price and what price is it getting, sisters, how much did you pay for your moong, and no one is getting it for your maize...'

2. Digital Activism vs Ground Level Activism- the most frequently coded theme with 79 references. The sub-themes included are:

Online and offline awareness, which reflects that online platforms and ground-level efforts raise awareness among people about the reasons why farmers are protesting and help to mobilise support. This reflects a hybrid model of activism, where movements integrate both online and offline tactics for the sustainability and mobilisation of the protest. According to interviewees, offline protests gave authenticity or legitimacy, while online platforms made the protest global, and visibility helps mobilisation.

- 'Online, just as we did the good speeches of the leaders through Facebook, to the people aware of these laws, the meetings that have been held offline here, we

have been giving information to all the people by putting them on social media and giving messages through WhatsApp through the group'

- 'We are going from village to village to create awareness. Our organizations are with us, many wise people, mothers and sisters from the villages are supporting us a lot.'

Power of hashtags revealed how hashtags were useful in getting global support and making the farmers' protest a trending topic. The hashtags serve as a powerful mobilisation tool which helps protests get global attention, visibility and solidarity. This helps in shaping collective identity and discourse with the help of symbols.

- 'It was a good thing for the protest, with it, a voice with the hashtag, like we used to talk about Twitter, hashtags work on Twitter and the hashtag got a lot of publicity and support, it was used for our farmers' movement and a lot of people used this hashtag on vehicles online, so those who were there were online platforms and offline platforms too, on vehicles, meaning buses, cars, trucks, jeeps, wherever they came, people used them, it helped in raising a good voice.'
- 'The hashtag was also run by the people who were run, it was good, the protest that became
- internationally famous with them, there was a lot of difference for him or there was a lot of difference in the people associated with him...'

Global NRI support coded for references where participants talked about the contribution of NRI, be it financial support, moral support or psychological support. Many stated that Nris in countries like Canada, America raised awareness, legitimacy, and solidarity, which was critical for maintaining the high morale of protestors. The diasporic networks helped in amplifying local struggles internationally.

- 'The movement went ahead with them because those who were sitting outside us, watched the videos, shared them, they connected, they helped, in any way, they helped, they also knew that they joined the movement'
- 'Canada, America, people who were sad, those who stood up for agriculture, they wanted to make a positive impression, but they themselves could not physically reach, so many reached, but some who could not reach due to any reason, and the support they gave online spread awareness among the people to a great extent'

International awareness code revealed the awareness and global reach of the protest and support from celebrities and influencers. Participants reveal that support from American celebrity Rihanna and others like Greta Thunberg, international press BBC helped pressurising the local authorities. This highlights that local resistance and global human rights advocacy are interlinked.

- 'This thing is being pushed by the farmers and it has received support from many different corners of the world, from big stars, big singers.'
- 'somewhere or the other because if we talk about the world wide, the governments of other
- countries also used to raise the voice of the farmers to a large extent, like let's talk about a singer, I don't remember now, he also spoke in favor of the protest, even Punjabi singers and wrestlers who, let's say, came from a farming background, were associated with it to a large extent and they made this thing effective to a large extent.'
- 'such strong people like Rehana, such a big singer from another country, if it was not for digital media or social media, now where would they have known, outside people also gave full support to us, we had to give our own.'

- They have come from outside to do news, the BBC have come from outside to do news,

Physical presence refers to on-ground participation and physical presence at protest sites. Besides online outreach, participants said that physical presence is also an important factor that is required for real-world change. Being on-ground means genuine commitment and willingness to make sacrifices, which deepens emotional and political commitment.

- 'we also went to the ground level. We went to every protest and even went to Delhi, we went to Delhi every week'
- 'See, when the flag was hoisted on January 26, I was present there on behalf of Deep Sidhu. We were working there on the Tikri border, we were working there, and our family members who were in the dock, the media also put this picture there very big, killing, and it happened there, the people were arrested.'

Role of online platforms- Online platforms helped the farmers' protest reach its goals, and the contribution of social media to the publicity of the protest. Sending and receiving information was easy because of the internet, and social media platforms, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, made a great contribution to the protest, used for real-time updates and emotional solidarity, and emphasised personalised engagement over centralised leadership.

- 'If social media had not supported us together, but if these successful names had been there, then the three demands that the Modi government had accepted would not have been accepted.'
- 'it is easy to post anywhere, to give any information, and now we are sitting in Delhi, to send any information from Delhi, we can send it from right to left, we can come and go and with the internet, we can post from there, it saves time, yes,

and the post, whatever information you give, goes ahead quickly among the people'

3. Misinformation and Media Bias:

Negative media portrayal. In this, participants talked about the false narratives that are being set by mainstream media of the country; they were tagged as terrorists, Khalistanis by the mainstream media or what they called 'Godi media'. Such narratives or portrayals hurt morale and misrepresent their peaceful intentions, align with agenda-setting theory and propaganda models, which reflect that media can shape public perception through selective media framing.

- 'the Indian media was quite anti-farmers and spoke the language of the government. Some people who heard the farmers' protest from their news were also calling it wrong, but somewhere, their online activism To a large extent, the narrative that was being created had an impact on the people, who made it wrong and changed their views to a positive one, but we cannot change the fundamentalists under any circumstances.'
- 'It has happened many times, now the channels that come, as we say, the news channel is right, some of the right is Punjab, which the news channel of Punjab will show in Punjab, and the channels which will show us in other states, they showed us very wrong, they showed us very wrong, take the issue of January 26, tractor march 26 January 2021 There they showed us very wrong, we used to go peacefully, we also used to serve langar. We were taking out our rally, telling people about the fight for our rights, and we were gathering our support. So the rest of the people who come online, the media person showed very wrong, that farmers are making a lot of noise, they are making a fuss, right, these terrorists are promoting this terrorism, they deliberately just took us towards us. We were

connected to Khalistanis and wanted to take the protest in another direction to mean that it was not for the rights but the Khalistanis who are fighting.'

Spread of Fake News, many fake news stories were also spread throughout the protest, including deliberate misinformation like fake videos, AI-generated photos, and false narratives, which were a common concern for the protestors. The attention of many protestors shifted from their main goal towards stopping all these false things, which showed confusion among protestors and fear among supporters. The long-term effects of repeated misinformation shaped the beliefs of people. A few supporters started to step back, and for a few media channels, it backfired after people saw the reality through social media, but this took the movement a little back and weakened it.

- If 100% of the people went, out of them, 70 were real and 30 were fake, they backed down. Even the 70% real ones don't know that the fake ones created an atmosphere of fear inside them. Why did they back down? That's because in reality, we are also human beings, we also feel scared, Because of that, look, many started thinking, he backed down, why am I going, I also backed down, Because of that, the movement was going a little behind, it made a big difference with him
- The rumours that the media is spreading lies.

Media Bias vs Ground Reality is another code that emerged from the data. Participants noted that there is a big difference between what the media shows and what is in the ground reality. The distorted news started undermining the trust that people have in farmers. This happens because of visibility, online users will only see what the media is showing them, because ground reality is only visible to those who are physically present at the protest site. This factor of movement makes it a little weaker, but consequently, many intellectuals created their own farmer pages to warn people about fake and real.

- we saw online, it happens on the ground, we came and saw it on the ground, it is nothing. You say that many people spread wrong things, that's why we created the pages of our farmers' union. Okay, those pages would have been created by intellectuals, you will see this, you will believe in them, the posts we will post, intellectuals will tell us by talking, that is what is happening, those who are separate pages are created, yes, nowadays you are also educated, you will also know that there are fakes, people believe in them after seeing their posts, that is why they say, you get complete information about anything you see on social media.
- There was a lot of difference between them who used to show on social media, there was no online conversation, sometimes at the ground level, they used to know the truth at the ground level. There is a lot of propaganda going on in the media

Distrust in mainstream media vs Online media, after the spread of fake news and media bias, people and protestors shifted to relying on platforms like social media, where individuals believe they have more control over narratives. The mainstream media, as claimed by protestors, were only with the government and corporations; they were doing nothing to help the protestors, not helping them to reach their voice to the world.

- There were also fake pages on social media. As if their agents used to do bad propaganda in the media under the patronage of our media people, on social media, all those who were associated with agriculture were showing the truth.
- The media, you know, only works according to its strength. The government of the BJP has sided with them, even online. These government agents who were left behind used to talk about them; they used to beat them up.
- In fact, even if the voice went to every corner of India, it used to go through social media. She used to go online at all because the media or print media TV channel

was the government's pony, which the government used to say or the corporates used to say, it was the channel of these corporates, all of them went in favour of the farmers

4. Unity and Collective Identity:

Sense of Community is only created when individuals participate physically in the protest at the protest sites, participants in the farmers' protest expressed a strong sense of togetherness or belonging among fellow participants and supporters across various regions and backgrounds. The social identity theory truly aligns here, as group identification enhances cohesion and motivation. Similarly, group identity related to farms, food makes people feel in-group, and they show their support to the protest, which resulted in a great motivation factor among activists.

- when the procedure took place, when it came to know that the people of Bihar, UP are also getting government procurement going on in Punjab, but we are not running, there was a huge crowd from UP. Along with this, people from Bihar also came from Gujarat, people from Rajasthan also came out on their own with large gatherings,
- Traders walked with us. Shopkeepers walked with us. Employees walked with us. But because the government said that the media was different, it didn't happen. But they supported us a lot.
- I can tell you a little bit about how we connected everyone, even those who were just working, even those who came and stood with the farmers, only when they became farmers will you get this pure food, the government doesn't know how everything will be adulterated, nowadays everything is being sold fake and the farmers who used to have their own milk and rations, now they grown everything like vegetables and when all this goes under the hands of the government and

private companies or corporates, then we won't get fresh food. I mean, it was a matter of bread, it was a matter of our own food, and every person felt that sense of belonging, so everyone else came and joined.

Sense of Collective identity is being built during the protest that outshines caste, religion, and regional divides. Farmers of the whole country found a common cause and fought together, which reflects the collective identity theory in social movements. The protest started from Punjab and Haryana, but farmers from every corner of India supported the protest.

- Punjab raised its voice, this law was implemented in UP first, right? Farmers from UP are dying today, if you look at their implementation, they have seen it, it is being implemented in Punjab as well, they have raised their voice, that is why they are going and protesting, everyone from UP and Haryana came, even the farmers were in danger, they all supported us, how did they know that...
- This protest means a sense of community, they connected us, now we know where and what is happening, because of social media which connected us and this protest, you know, farmers are all the same, by using social media we got connected, like let's say there was only one teacher; yes, whether he was from Punjab or from any other school, there was only one teacher in the whole world, yes, what was the job of a teacher, to teach a child, what was the job of a mason, to make something, yes,
- Right, yes, the job of a farmer was to grow crops, that is why they connected with the community of farmers, while the rest of the people with other platforms were connected because they also knew this bread. We are talking about crops. If there is a crop, then only will we get food because you can survive without clothes,

without a house. You cannot survive without food; that is why other communities also joined us.

Role of Youth and Women- Today's generation, or we can say the youth of the country, plays a crucial role in any movement. Nowadays, youth are more digitalised than ever, in this protest, youngsters were seen as both online activists and ground volunteers. The energy, emotional investment, and digital fluency were keys to the sustainability of the movement. Youth helped the protest digitally and took it a step further, closer to success. Women also helped in the protest, they stood with the protestors and also participated in mass sit-ins, rallies, etc.

- Some, like new journalist boys, who were YouTubers and others also supported a lot. They also created pages for them. They supported the people, who were other people who did not know about the movement, and they changed the ideology of the people, how they changed the idea of the movement about the farmers. Now, like going from village to village, putting up more posts, pamphlets, posters, dharnas, etc., some went to their religious places in October and campaigned, made announcements, and campaigned on the internet too. This is all done by youngsters, our boys....
- So many sisters, mothers, and old women came with us while walking
- Let's say the unity of the farmers' union among the states. The enthusiasm of the youth. The elderly, women and children all participated in it. Even online, it broke down, but they never let it go. They did not back down.

5. Resistance and Sacrifices

Protest as a moral duty and a legacy- The participants in the farmers' protest were mostly farmers or belonged to an agricultural background, due to which

they claim that they are protesting because of a moral duty and a legacy that they inherited from their ancestors to protect their land and dignity. Few of which stated that it was a matter of their bread and butter, so saving their food was their moral duty. The collective moral responsibility increased persistence, which leads to continuity of the protests and aligns with social contract theory.

- The responsibility was to understand because it was a matter of our lands, secondly, to fight because we were associated with the background of protectors of agriculture and land. It was about our food, it was about our bread.
- The time tax of the British used to be taken from the farmers, they are now suppressing the land directly to some extent, there are talks to come of these corporates has become very fast, so whenever the rights of the people will be robbed, then the number of Protests or Protests that will come
- We supported the farmers' movement because our ancestors were farmers, and we are also farmers. We joined because of this, because it was a fight for our rights, we needed to join, so we protested...

Sacrifices and Martyrdoms- The farmers' protest is the biggest protest ever in the Indian history, which was peaceful from protestors sides as claimed by interviewees, but authorities created many problematic situations which cause deaths, martyrdoms of farmers. This factor revealed the seriousness of the movement and protestors, despite facing deaths of fellow participants, they didn't step back, instead took the movement closer to winning.

- yes it has become stronger when we have set out on a journey then we will not back down. Sacrifices were made, and martyrdoms were made. yes, where did we go? Then a lot happened
- There are 800 of our farmers who have also been martyred. I said that the sons of the mother, the father of the five children, were martyred there, and that was a great success in that movement begun...

Strength of Rural Community- Some movements have grassroots in their community, similar to what was seen in the farmers' protest. The protest was grounded in the village networks, community, and kinship bonds, which resulted in the continuous momentum of the movement. The village downtown and Gurudwaras (*Gurughars*) was a place for organising practices, and from where villagers marched together for mass sit-ins on the Delhi borders.

- People gather in village downtowns, announcements would be made in the Guru-Ghar, greetings would be sent, and rallies would be held. We did all the work together, duties were assigned.
- When online was decreasing, we were not okay with it. At the ground level, people protested in the villages adjacent to their land. They brought more awareness among the people. People went from house to house. Children, mothers and sisters went with us. They would also connect with protestors.
- The internet was banned there, right up to midnight, half of the people used to sit, then the people change duty with them, and they used to go to their village, our duties were imposed, some people used to travel every day, who used to convey our news in the morning and evening. Online, we

used to deliver news to our families because the internet was only available on certain days.

Psychological Strength- The participants stated that they were mentally strong as well while protesting. According to interviewees, mental strength or psychological strength/health is very important to be a part of the movement, because physical protests are not only physically tiring but mentally too. The psychological endurance of farmers or protestors made the farmers protest to sustain for the long term, Participants revealed emotional burnout did not stop them from showing unwavering commitment.

- Look, you also know that to achieve anything, it is necessary to have patience; the more patience you have inside, the stronger you will be outside, just like you should have the courage to do any work. Now, many others spend two days, or one day, on protest sites and then get on with their work. This means that you have to leave your work, home, and everything, and then you will move forward from the protest. This protest is not a trivial matter, as we say, we have staged a sit-in, let's go and protest, tell the government, this is not how it should be done, for this individual need to do a kind of devotion, it is not a matter of whether your protest will be successful or not, **you have to be psychologically strong, you have to be strong in mind, heart and body....**
- Look, we are the food providers, whether it is wheat or rice, it takes us six months from growing a crop to harvesting it. We can be patient in that. This was a fight for our rights in the crop. How could we back down in

this? We can be patient for six months. This was a year after all. If the government did not give us rights, we would not move for five years. That is why we have the courage within us. We can do this from the beginning.

If you are mentally strong, you can fight.

6. Offline Struggles and Suppression

Internet Blockout Issues- Throughout the farmers' protest, news of internet shutdowns during key moments of the protest has been seen. The internet shutdowns disrupted the communication as well as the spreading of critical information, which also raised concerns over the violation of communication rights in India, and authorities were called out and criticised by other governments of the world. Interviewees claim that even mobile networks are also blocked with jammers on the protest sites, which totally isolates the protest sites from the outside world.

- Like after January 26, they kept doing it for four to five days, they stopped the internet, there was no mobile network range, they stopped the electricity, there was no water. There were many problems, sisters, not one problem, there were thousands of problems.
- Those services that were stopped, it did not happen once by the government, there were jammers installed there during the protest, internet services were stopped, the government adopted everything in hand that in some way this movement failed, and people went back and these lands for the corporates, which became easier to suppress, then the government had faced all these strategies backfires them, the patience of the people won.
- a mobile service, they used to shut down, there was an internet shutdown, we could not link with others

Strategic Blocking- Along with the internet shutdown, protestors also face strategic blocking from the government to halt the protest. Interviewees revealed that the government used water cannons, barricades, and nails on the roads of the Delhi border vicinity; participants called this deliberate suppression by the local and central government.

- All services were stopped during the protest; they put up barricades and nails, threw tear gas shells at farmers. Many have died and been injured, even now they are still killing, they have been doing it since before
- Internet services, let's say it was the policy of one government to stop it from going online, but on the other hand, it was a farmer's torture, tear gas shells, beating farmers, and putting up road barricades. The government did its best to chase away farmers somehow, but that was the unity of the farmers; let's say it was one God. Grace was being bestowed, as it was happening, and automatically, things were being aligned. People tried to break it and twist it
- They did a lot of barricades, water cannons, they even put more of their men in place, and you don't know they prepared 100 men to create a nuisance, and everything was stopped. They tried their best to stop the farmers and somehow stopped the internet services. The government was so afraid that our videos would not go viral outside...

Physical Hardships- According to protest theories, physical suffering became a tool for resistance and solidarity. a similar pattern was seen in farmers' protests. Protesters endured police violence, extreme weather conditions like extreme cold and summer heat, lack of sanitation, blackouts at protest sites, water scarcity, etc. All these physical hardships underscore their resilience and commitment.

- Our dharnas have been torn down, or we have been crushed by the police and government, or the Modi government has forced us.
- after January 26, they kept doing it for four to five days, they stopped the internet, there was no range, they stopped the electricity, there was no water. There were many problems, sisters, not one problem, there were thousands of problems we also endured cold weather.

7. Sustained Engagement and Leadership

Emotional connection to the Land- Most of the participants of the protest had an agricultural background, due to which they shared a deep emotional and ancestral connection with the land. This revealed that the protest was not only for political or social issues, but also for personal issues.

- We can also say a personal feeling. One, we live in villages and are associated with agriculture. And others, let's assume that, as we hear, our agriculture is also at risk. The three bills implemented by the government will be a threat to the farmers and it will be more expensive to privatize them. Accordingly, our own opinion is that if agriculture comes, it is a profitable business. It should be saved by big companies or Anything comes from them, it is kept away from them, agriculture is allowed to remain agriculture.
- their main motive for saving agriculture. These emotions of all of them, the struggle of the farmers, and how helpful it was that this movement lasted for such a long time. They were emotionally connected. Everyone had hope.
- We supported the farmers' movement because our ancestors were farmers, and we are also farmers. we joined because of this, because it was a fight for our rights, we needed to join, so we protested

Distrust in Government is another issue that was emerged in farmers' protest, as participants expressed growing disillusionment with political leaders and policies that were imposed. The distrust in government results in self-organizing and protesting. The protesters blamed government, when authorities tried to stop the farmers to come Delhi, because it was protests one of the agenda to go to Delhi and talk to central government directly. The protest was direct fight with governing authorities.

- they blocked all the other SIMs that were working, the government should have known this, it is not your right to shut down the internet during the protest, it means that many people in the government were wrong, who were hiding, if the government was right, why would it shut down the SIM, we also went to fight peacefully, there were no sticks, we did not have any weapons to attack the government, we went peacefully, we were just want to talk to them, they used to push us like this
- Look, the government used to hold meetings, in the midst of the meetings, they used to chant their old allegations, they used to speak in favor of the corporates, they used to say good things when it stopped to some extent in corona, then the government with the leaders, when India was closed again, then the truth that kept coming was that they had to be implemented from the movement

Organisational strength and Leadership Trust- Throughout the protest, strong trust or faith was seen in the decentralised leadership of farmer unions. The leaders systematically organised rallies, mass sit-ins and protests; they maintained transparency and clarity of demands and held meetings from time to time. These things kept the protest sustained and brought success.

- The main reason for the organizations would have said that the leaders gave full guard and the farmers, every citizen of every village, every town of every city

supported them to save the future to come by standing shoulder to shoulder so that it lasted for a long time

- there all the good arrangements for money, food and drink started to be made. More people from the community also joined in. And the results of these online trends of their protest were so helpful. We got a lot of help
- When the Modi government at the Centre brought these bills to give the agricultural sector in the hands of the corporates, which we call the farm laws, the organizations for that, the Bharatiya Kisan Union Ekta Ugrahan took out a march at the Lehra toll plaza and started protesting.

Role of Religion and Cultural Background- The movement from the start was rooted in its cultural and religious ties; the cultural pride and values among the community of Sikhs (who were the main protestors) played a motivational role during this protest. The protest was seen as religious, and the values of the Sikh community to organise community kitchens or langars and their spirit or blood of warriors were also seen in the protest.

- This is the land of our ten Gurus, which is Punjab, even if you take the old history, whenever there was a war anywhere, Punjab also used to turn it around.
- it was not only for one religion, it was for the entire Punjab, let's say, the entire community

8. Transformative Impact of the Protest

Civic Empowerment- The movement showed an example of civic importance, as, according to the participants, the individuals who are politically inactive took part in the movement actively. Everyone became conscious politically during the protest, which was a great support and help for the movement.

- Look at the online trends that were going on, some people used to say that the farmers have been sold out or something, but in the end, the results that came out were positive, and the government had to bow down to it
- Shopkeepers also supported the movement. The movement reached its peak. Those who knew and understood that everything was closed. Even though we were going to continue, those people also supported us. Sisters, the movement did not reach its peak with the farmers alone. Everyone understood that we all needed each other. That is why it continued offline.

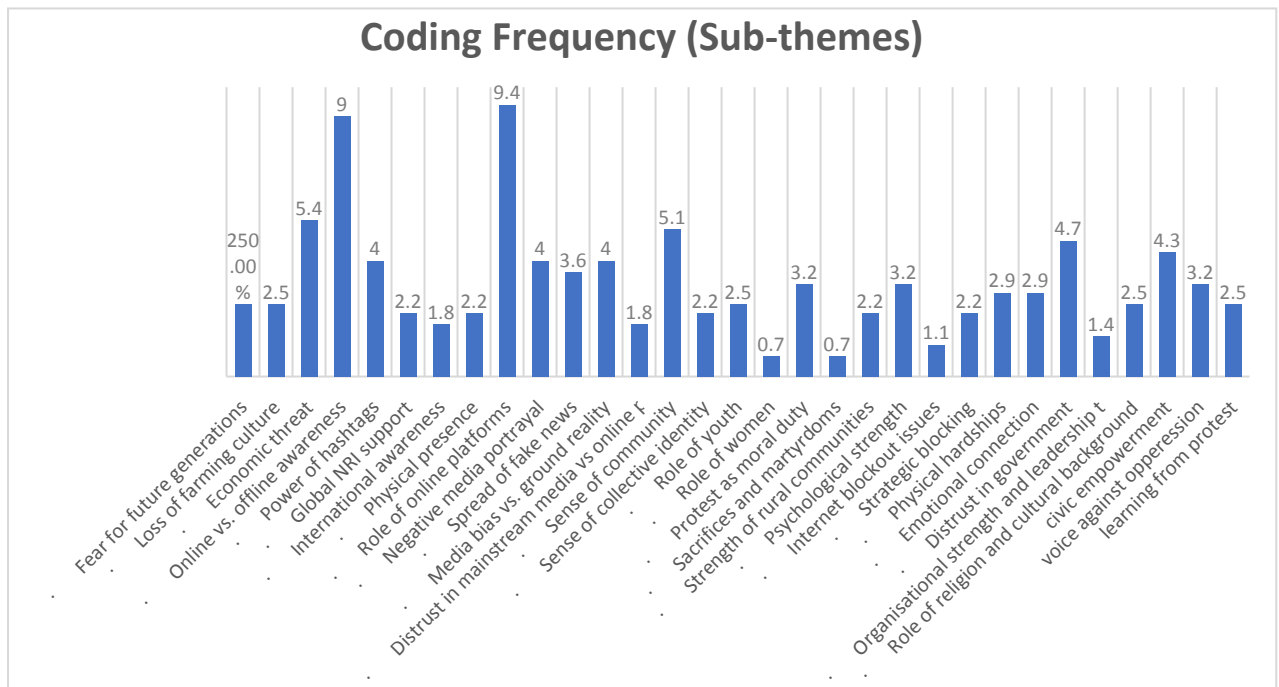
Voice against Oppression- the movement has seen oppression by the government through police brutality, but farmers protest against the systematic injustice not only for the policies imposed. The protest sites became a place for shared grievances beyond farming, other communities also learned to stand against the oppression and injustice.

- The second was the reason for the rights of our farmers, so we, online and offline, people connected with us and stayed very connected with us, the online and ground level, you will get to learn everything from the farmers, before which the
- The Hindu community has never held dharnas in the markets, never lectured, never raised their voice against anyone. After learning from the farmers' movement, today every section fights for their rights, stands up for their rights and holds dharnas. If they were tortured, they would raise their voice and give it only from the sit-ins of the farmers' organisation

Learning from the protest- The protestors in interviews shared that the protest became a big lesson for people, the protest sites became educational sites for individuals, where they learn to stand for their rights, solidarity, negotiation, unity and sense of belonging and one community. The future movement also learned a

lesson that unity, solidarity, patience, risk taking and commitment are the factor which bring movement to success

- after learning from the farmers' movement. Today every section fights for their rights, stands up for their rights and holds dharnas. If they were tortured, they would raise their voice and give it only from the sit-ins of the farmers' organisation.
- Let's say the movements in the future will come in the future. If you keep it up and give some time, then you will be successful somewhere or the other. That is, the government will not have to give up its stubborn attitude, then we will also have to become stubborn somewhere or the other.
- Being stubborn is a good thing for something good, according to me.....



Graph No. 2 Coding Frequency of subthemes.

Summary Table for the Themes:

Themes	Sub-Themes	Frequenc	Description
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Fear for Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear for future generations • Loss of farming culture • Economic threat 	10.4%	Concerns about livelihood for future generations, children, agriculture and financial insecurity due to new policies (3 laws)
Digital vs Ground-level activism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online vs. offline awareness • Power of hashtags • Global NRI support • International awareness • Physical presence • Role of online platforms 	28.6%	Contribution of a hybrid model of activism in mobilisation, global outreach, awareness and authenticity or legitimacy of protest
Misinformation and Media Bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative media portrayal • Spread of fake news • Media bias vs. ground reality • Distrust in mainstream media 	13.4%	Concerns about mislabels and misinformation spread by mainstream media. Dependency on social media platforms for authentic and real-world narratives

	vs	online	
		platforms	
Unity and Collective Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community • Sense of collective identity • Role of youth • Role of women 	10.5%	The protest was not only for one community or region, but also for the sense of community and collective identity that protesters have built so far.
Resistance and sacrifices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protest as moral duty • Sacrifices and martyrdoms • Strength of rural communities • Psychological strength 	9.3%	Women and youngsters actively participated in the protest, raising awareness among people about the movement and other roles that they played in contributing to the protest.
Offline Struggles and Suppression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet blockout issues • Strategic blocking • Physical hardships 	6.2%	Endurance of strategic blocking, barricades, internet shutdowns, physical hardships state suppression
Sustained engagement and leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional connection • Distrust in 	11.5%	Strong emotional bonds with land and cultural background, religious values that contributed to the success of the protest

			government	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational strength and leadership trust 	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of religion and cultural background 	
Transformative Impact of Protest		10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic empowerment • Voice against oppression • Learning from the protest 	The farmers' protest served as an educational site and an awakening or inspiration factor for future participation and protest culture.

Table No. 4: Summary table for themes and sub-themes.

Chapter 5 Discussions

The findings from the data of both phases highlight the interplay between online and offline activism, providing insight into performative and substantive aspects of modern movements.

The **Phase 1** data showed how online narratives created a broad awareness and sense of community around each issue, such as emotional appeals and hashtags. The **Phase 2** interviews then revealed how these digital narratives were interpreted and acted upon by individuals with a stake in the movement. By comparing phases, several key points emerge:

Firstly, **social identity** was central in both phases. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) idea that group membership fosters solidarity resonated with collective identity (online theme) by shared hashtags and 'we' language. Farmers explicitly described themselves as part of an in-group of agriculture and farming. This identity motivated participation, as one noted, "We feed the nation" became a rallying self-image. Thus, Social Identity Theory helps explain why participants remained engaged even at great cost—group cohesion and a sense of belonging drove commitment.

Secondly, **Goffman's dramaturgy** evidently supports the concept of how participants manage their "performances" on stage versus backstage. Many farmers carefully crafted their public image, e.g. through charismatic statements online or disciplined nonviolent protest, while privately engaging in intense planning and resolve. The duality of protestors underscores Goffman's idea that every activist role has an audience and a preparatory side, when one interviewee described intentionally smiling for media cameras even when tired, illustrating front-stage versus backstage effort. Online posts can also be seen as "performances" of activism for some users and farmers themselves, posting a message was akin to playing the role of a protester in the public digital arena.

Thirdly, the data reflect classic **collective action dynamics**. Olson (1965) argued that large groups face free-rider problems, but our findings suggest other forces overcame this. Farmers cited shared grievances, economic insecurity, injustice and selective incentives like pride in activism, community respect that spurred action. For example, collective singing and community meals ‘*langars*’ (Phase 2) functioned as social rewards, may have mitigated free-riding, showing that a strong group culture can sustain participation. The digital connectivity and shared identity provided the link for collective action, for example in farmers’ protest which was largest dispersed group remained cohesive.

Fourthly, **framing processes** shaped both public perception and participants’ motivations. Protesters framed their cause as a moral struggle for survival and justice, “fight for our rights”, while opponents framed it negatively as “obstruction”. Linking the Farmers’ Protest to the global fight for food security allowed international audiences to empathise, and influenced engagements because it aligns with their values. The data suggest that activists’ ability to control or reshape the frame, e.g. by emphasising peaceful methods or fundamental rights, was crucial to sustaining support, which aligns with Goffman’s concept that framing how issues are presented can mobilise or demobilise audiences.

In terms of **implications**, the study offers insights for activism and social media engagement. While critics warn that online activism can be superficial (slacktivism), our findings indicate that online gestures can complement, rather than replace, offline action. For example, empathic posts helped maintain morale and visibility, but farmers emphasized that real world change required physical protest and negotiation, besides this social media successfully drew global attention, recruited moral support, and maintained pressure, and the movements might benefit from integrating digital strategies with on-the-ground organising, ensuring that online momentum feeds sustained collective action.

The results highlight key factors for sustainability of movement, which include strong group identity, clear grievance narratives, and strategic framing. The longevity of the Farmers' Protest seems linked to a resilient sense of community (both offline encampments and online networks) and an adaptive use of media. Psychological theory suggests that once individuals see themselves as part of a cause (Social Identity), they are likely to remain involved (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Simultaneously, the interplay of negative emotions like anger with demand of justice and positive emotions such as hope, and solidarity keep participants motivated, and fostering genuine identity formation and carefully managing emotional messaging or text is implied by these insights.

To summarise this, the two-phase study revealed that online and offline activism are mutually reinforcing and interlinked with each other. On one side offline activism or participation provides sustainability, sense of unity and depth, which is important for success of any movement, on the other side online platforms created spaces for emotional expression and global solidarity. By viewing the Farmers' Protest through theories of social identity, collective action, dramaturgy, and framing, we see how psychological mechanisms underlie the public spectacle of social movements. These findings contribute to understanding performative activism: even if some online acts are symbolic, they become meaningful when embedded in committed networks. Future movements may learn from this model of blending empathetic digital advocacy with grounded community action to achieve sustainable social change.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, Implications, Limitations and Scope for Future Research.

6.1 Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis of the study reveals that in the digital age, to make a social movement successful, both online networking and sustained offline action are required. The prime example of this is The Farmers' Protest, where strong collective identity, deep emotional ties with their livelihood and fear for the future created an in-group solidarity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The physical presence, genuine commitment and social identity, along with social media's contribution in sharing mass information, updates about the protest frame the narrative of three farm laws vs future security and food systematically. The social identity theory aligns here perfectly, which states that group identification boosts self-esteem and commitment. Similarly, collective action helps in overcoming free-rider problems by perceiving threats to the livelihood of farmers. Trusted leaders, NRI support, and funds helped in mobilising resources.

The RG KAR case and the Free Palestine movement were both trend-driven in India and showed performative activism. In both cases, high visibility, quickly accepted hashtags, viral videos, and emotional photos grab the attention of people but fail in mobilising people for the long term. The motivators like cultural backgrounds, ancestral legacy, fear for the future, economic threat, loss of livelihood, etc., create a sense of belonging and unity, which leads the movement towards success. The patience, enduring physical hardships, mental breakdowns, police brutality, and a distrusted government all these factors motivated the farmers to not step back. These factors are lessons for future movements that, with solidarity, long-term commitment, patience and unity, any movement can achieve success. Lastly, hybrid activism, which includes both online mobilisation, awareness and offline presence, solidarity is a winning factor for the social movements.

6.2 Implications

- **Hybrid Activism:** The hybrid activism, which includes a combination of online and offline activism, is the key concept of the study to mobilise support, spread awareness and create real-world change. The hybrid activism challenges the previous assumptions that online activism is shallow, as it recognises that both digital and on-ground activism are interlinked and can amplify each other. In this digital era where online activism can be used to start and gain momentum for the movement through hashtags, viral posts and infographics, on the other hand, offline activism can keep people in the group and provide a sense of belonging, which sustains the movement. Additionally, offline protests can not spread awareness, mobilise resources and spread information; similarly, without offline action, online virality can fade quickly. Group identity, collective actions and controlling online framing can all be achieved with the help of hybrid activism to make a movement successful.
- **Practical Implications:** For the systematic success of the movement with low risk factors, activists should not only rely on trend-based visibility, but also organise campaigns like local meetings, fundraising programs, etc., which could be helpful to take the movement further.
- **Digital Literacy:** The farmers' protest seems to distrust the mainstream media and then opt for digital platforms to show the reality. But many of the protestors are digitally illiterate, or in other words, not familiar with how to use digital space for activism to bring out real change. So digital literacy is another implication that can influence movement to narrate their real stories, struggles and appeal support without dependency on mainstream media

6.3 Limitations

Sample size- The sample size of the study was relatively small, which may not capture the full diversity of perspectives of the studied movements despite in-depth

interviews. The limitation is a localised area and a focus on local movement, resulting in a small sample size.

Regional Focus- The phase 2 of the study focused only on the regional area protest; the farmers' protest started in Punjab, and the cultural, political, and linguistic factors limit the applicability of findings to other regions and across borders.

Generalisation: The farmer's protest had a socio-political context, which is different from other movements like the RG KAR case and the Free Palestine case. Due to which the findings of the study may not be applicable to movements with different contexts and can not be generalised to student protests and environmental campaigns.

Self-Report Bias: The study gathered and analysed qualitative data, specifically interviews and social media posts, which may exhibit social desirability bias, like overstating their actions, which is a big limitation in the study.

6.4 Future Directions

- Future studies should conduct longitudinal studies on how participating in a movement can affect their mental health, identity and solidarity over time.
- The effect of misinformation and framing of mainstream media should also be analysed in future studies to understand how it impacts the movement, the mental health of participants and how successful it is in shaping the perception of people.
- The study is regionally driven; to mitigate this, in future research, researchers could examine hybrid activism in cross-cultural movements like the Free Palestine movement.
- Quantitative research could be done for a deeper understanding of performative vs genuine participation.

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Appendix A (Interview Questions)

1. What personal experiences or beliefs made you want to join the farmers' protest?

ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਨਿੱਜੀ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਨੇ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਕਿਸਾਨ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਣ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਕੀਤਾ?

2. Did you feel a sense of duty or connection that pushed you to participate? Why?

ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕੋਈ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰੀ ਜਾਂ ਕਨੈਕਸ਼ਨ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਹੋਇਆ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਹਿੱਸਾ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰੇਰਿਤ ਕੀਤਾ? ਕਿਉਂ?

3. Was your cultural or regional background a big reason for your involvement?

ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰਕ ਜਾਂ ਖੇਤਰੀ ਪਿਛੋਕੜ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਣ ਦਾ ਮੁੱਖ ਕਾਰਨ ਸੀ?

4. How helpful do you think online activism was in spreading awareness about the farmers' protest?

ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਖਿਆਲ ਵਿੱਚ, ਕਿਸਾਨ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਬਾਰੇ ਜਾਗਰੂਕਤਾ ਫੈਲਾਉਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਸਹਿਮਤੀ ਕਿੰਨੀ ਮਦਦਗਾਰ ਸੀ?

5. Did you feel that online platforms shared the farmers' voices in a true and fair way? Why or why not?

ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਿ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਪਲੇਟਫਾਰਮਾਂ ਨੇ ਕਿਸਾਨਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਚਾਈ ਅਤੇ ਇਨਸਾਫ ਨਾਲ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕੀਤਾ? ਕਿਉਂ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਉਂ ਨਹੀਂ?

6. How important were hashtags like #FarmersProtest in getting people to notice and support the cause?

#FarmersProtest ਵਰਗੇ ਹੈਸ਼ਟੈਗ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਖਿੱਚਣ ਅਤੇ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਿੰਨੇ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਸਨ?

7. What things did you do online to support the protest, like posting, sharing, or commenting?

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਪ੍ਰਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਲਈ ਕੀ ਕੀ ਕੰਮ ਕੀਤੇ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੋਸਟਾਂ ਸਾਂਝੀਆਂ ਕਰਨਾ, ਕਮੈਂਟ ਕਰਨਾ ਆਦਿ?

8. How did you manage both online activities and being present at the protest in person?

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਸਰਗਰਮੀ ਅਤੇ ਜਮੀਂਦਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਦਰਸ਼ਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹੋਣ ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਸੰਭਾਲਿਆ?

9. Did you ever feel that what happened online didn't match the reality of the protest?

ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਦੇ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਹੋਇਆ ਕਿ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਕਿਰਿਆਕਲਾਪ ਹਕੀਕਤ ਨਾਲ ਮੇਲ ਨਹੀਂ ਖਾਂਦਾ ਸੀ?

10. Do you think online activism helped change how the media and people thought about the protest? Why or why not?

ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਸਹਿਮਤੀ ਨੇ ਮੀਡੀਆ ਅਤੇ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਦੇ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਬਦਲਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਕੀਤੀ? ਕਿਉਂ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਉਂ ਨਹੀਂ?

11. Did you see any link between online trends and the outcomes of the protest?

ਕੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਰੁਝਾਨਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਦੇ ਨਤੀਜਿਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਸਬੰਧ ਵੇਖਿਆ?

12. In your view, did the protest reach its goals, both online and in person?

ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਖਿਆਲ ਵਿੱਚ, ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਨੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਟੀਚੇ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਅਤੇ ਜਮੀਂਦਾਰ ਪੱਧਰ ਤੇ ਪੂਰੇ ਕੀਤੇ?

13. Did you see people or groups showing support just to look good, rather than being truly involved? How did this affect the movement?

ਕੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਕਿ ਕੁਝ ਲੋਕ ਜਾਂ ਸਮੂਹ ਸਿਰਫ ਆਪਣੀ ਚਮਕ ਵੇਖਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਸਹਿਮਤੀ ਜਤਾਉਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਬਜਾਏ ਕਿ ਅਸਲ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਦੇ? ਇਸ ਦਾ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਉੱਤੇ ਕੀ ਅਸਰ ਪਿਆ?

14. How can you tell if someone's online support is real or just for show?

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਪਤਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਹੋ ਕਿ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਸੱਚਾ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਸਿਰਫ ਦਿਖਾਵੇ ਲਈ ਹੈ?

15. Do you think performative activism made the movement weaker or stronger?

ਕੀ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕੀਤਾ ਕਿ ਪ੍ਰਦਰਸ਼ਨਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਰਿਆਵਾਂ ਨੇ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਨੂੰ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਂ ਕਮਜ਼ੋਰ?

16. How did online activism help farmers and supporters connect with each other across different regions?

ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਪਲੇਟਫਾਰਮਾਂ ਕਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਵੱਖ-ਵੱਖ ਖੇਤਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਕਿਸਾਨਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਰਥਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜੁੜਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦਗਾਰ ਸਾਬਿਤ ਹੋਏ?

17. Did online platforms help create a stronger sense of community? If yes, how?

ਕੀ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਪਲੇਟਫਾਰਮਾਂ ਨੇ ਕਮਿਊਨਿਟੀ ਦੀ ਭਾਵਨਾ ਪੈਦਾ ਕੀਤੀ? ਜੇ ਹਾਂ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਵੇਂ?

18. How important were shared emotions and struggles in keeping the movement alive over time?

ਸਾਂਝੇ ਜਜ਼ਬਾਤ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਗਰਾਮ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਨੂੰ ਲੰਮੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਤੱਕ ਜਿਊਂਦਾ ਰੱਖਣ ਲਈ ਕਿੰਨੇ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਸਨ?

19. What challenges did the protest face in staying popular and visible online as time went on?

ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਨੂੰ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਤੌਰ ਤੇ ਦਿੱਖਣ ਯੋਗ ਬਣਾਈ ਰੱਖਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਹੜੀਆਂ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲਾਂ ਆਈਆਂ?

20. How did you or others make sure the protests on the ground stayed strong, even when online attention faded?

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਜਾਂ ਹੋਰ ਲੋਕ ਇਹ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਯਕੀਨੀ ਬਣਾਉਂਦੇ ਸਨ ਕਿ ਜਦੋਂ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਧਿਆਨ ਘਟਦਾ ਸੀ, ਤਾਂ ਜ਼ਮੀਨੀ ਪ੍ਰਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਮਜ਼ਬੂਤ ਰਹੇ?

21. What do you think are the most important things to keep a movement active for a long time, both online and offline?

ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਮਤਾਬਕ, ਇੱਕ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਨੂੰ ਲੰਮੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਤੱਕ ਸਰਗਰਮ ਰੱਖਣ ਲਈ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਮਹੱਤਵਪੂਰਨ ਗੱਲਾਂ ਕੀ ਹਨ, ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਅਤੇ ਆਫਲਾਈਨ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਤੌਰ 'ਤੇ?

22. Looking back, do you think the protest would have been as successful without online activism? Why or why not?

ਪਿਛਲੇ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀਕੋਣ ਤੋਂ ਵੇਖਦੇ ਹੋਏ, ਕੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਲੱਗਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਸਹਿਮਤੀ ਦੇ ਬਿਨਾਂ ਵੀ ਇਤਨਾ ਸਫਲ ਹੁੰਦਾ? ਕਿਉਂ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਉਂ ਨਹੀਂ?

23. What lessons can future movements learn from the farmers' protest about using both online and offline efforts?

ਕਿਸਾਨ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਤੋਂ ਭਵਿੱਖ ਦੇ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਕੀ ਸਿਖ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਨ, ਜੋ ਕਿ ਆਨਲਾਈਨ ਅਤੇ ਆਫਲਾਈਨ ਯਤਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਕੱਠਾ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ?

24. How do you think digital platforms will play a role in social movements in the future?

ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਭਵਿੱਖ ਵਿਚ ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਅੰਦੋਲਨ ਵਿਚ ਡਿਜੀਟਲ ਪਲੇਟਫਾਰਮਾਂ ਦੀ ਕੀ ਭੂਮਿਕਾ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ?