

Balancing National Security with Freedom of Expression in The Era of Media Warfare & Information Operations in Pakistan: A Comparative Study with UK

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ABSTRACT

Digital media propagation spread media warfare information which presents major threats to both National Security and public trust. Rising threat of cyber influence campaigns and false information and propaganda exists as a major problem for Pakistan alongside other nations. This study identifies establishment of an inclusive National Strategy for Combating Disinformation and Media Warfare by Law Enforcement Agencies. Strategy implements legal structures with technological progress and intelligence data collection and public education initiatives to stop dissemination of deceptive information. Multiple approach strategies should include developing new policies while implementing time-sensitive monitoring systems with cross-agency teamwork alongside digital literacy training programs. Paper deeply explores enforcement responsibilities of LEAs regarding cyber laws together with their capabilities to destroy misinformation networks through AI-based detection systems. Effective responses require cooperation schemes with social media platforms together with media watchdogs as well as international cyber security organizations to establish operational effectiveness. Implementation of this strategy will boost Pakistan's national security while building public trust in institutions and improving national resistance against hybrid warfare tactics. Research paper ends with proposed recommendations that include creating legislation along with training programs and ethical guidelines to fight disinformation within framework of free speech and democratic principles.

Keywords: *Disinformation, Media Warfare, Law Enforcement Agencies, Cyber security, Hybrid Warfare, Digital Literacy, National Security, Misinformation, Social Media Regulations*

INTRODUCTION

National strategies must be developed in Pakistan to fight disinformation and media warfare because misinformation poses threats to national security and both social harmony and democratic processes. This strategy under law enforcement protection needs to implement multiple strategies that unite legal structures with technological progress while educating public and developing international partnerships. Time-sensitive information monitoring combined with fact-checking programs and strict regulatory measures serve as important national requirements for Pakistan to fight fake news proliferation on digital platforms. Law enforcement agencies fulfil essential functions in cyber law enforcement through source identification and propaganda network dismantling to prevent destabilization of country. Prevention of media warfare impact can be achieved by developing media literacy in citizens alongside advancing ethical journalism

standards. A national plan supported by legislative backing and technological advancements will both shield Pakistan's information system and build trust in authentic news sources.¹

Background and Context

Disinformation and media warfare in Pakistan have grown into substantial threats which affect national security and public perception as well as political stability. Digital platforms and social media expanded at high speed to enable mass distribution of false narratives and manipulated content which internal and external actors with interests produce. Misinformation campaigns attack political speech along with religious and ethnic areas which produces social disruption while reducing public faith in institutions. Image of Pakistan has suffered due to foreign entities and hostile actors who use media warfare to create false information about critical matters including governance and human rights alongside military activities.²

Disinformation presents an intense threat to Pakistan's security and public image because it damages institutional trust and social unity along with national stability. Internal and external actors conduct orchestrated misinformation campaigns that create disruptive narratives for stirring unrest and intensifying ethnic and sectarian conflicts as well as damaging state institutions especially military and judiciary. Campaigns distribute false information concerning counterterrorism initiatives as well as economic strategies and diplomatic activities to shape public sentiment and produce unfavourable government action perceptions. Quickly spreading unverified news that travels unrestricted on social media platforms during digital era makes readers struggle to separate actual facts from propaganda content. Spread of fake news creates both governance difficulties and challenges credibility of media sources which people trust.³

Enforcement of media-related threats in Pakistan depends on law enforcement agencies which identify and counter misinformation campaigns that attack national security and public stability. These agencies need to actively pursue fake news and propaganda alongside cyber threats that aim to change public perception while destabilizing institutions since digital platforms have become main information sources. Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) along with Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and other security agencies work together to execute cyber laws through network dismantlement and legal prosecutions against people or groups participating in media warfare. Law enforcement agencies focus their efforts on improving digital surveillance and fact-checking technology and intelligence exchange platforms to detect illegal misinformation before it culminates. Law enforcement agencies defend nation from media threats by using technology together with legal enforcement and strategic policy development to protect national values and public safety from detrimental consequences of disinformation.⁴

Problem Statement

Rising problem of disinformation and media warfare in Pakistan endangers both national security along with social peace and institutional trustworthiness. Quick expansion of digital platforms permits destructive entities both inside and outside country to distribute false information which they use to reshape public

¹ Sajjad Hussain and others, 'Role of Media in Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan: How to Convert Challenges into Opportunities' (2023) 11(3) Journal of South Asian Studies

² Muhammad Imran, Jannat Rashid, and Jannat Naseeb, 'Strategic Communication in Countering Disinformation Campaigns in Pakistan' (2024) 8(2) Pakistan Social Sciences Review

³ Ahmed Raza Khan, Muhammad Manzoor Elahi, and Shehar Bano, '(Re-)building Social Cohesion vis-à-vis Strategic Communication: A Pathway for Pakistan's National Strategy' (2022) 3(3) Journal of Development and Social Sciences

⁴ Haseeb Ur Rehman, Shabir Hussain, and Dureshshwar, 'Social Media, Democracy and Fake News in Pakistan: An Analysis' (2020) 5(1) Global Political Review

beliefs and weaken governmental stability. Nation does not have an organized national plan to efficiently combat these threats through systematic and coordinated methods although it maintains existing cyber laws and regulatory bodies. Task of enforcing legal disinformation measures on law enforcement agencies is constrained by their technological deficiencies and insufficient policy structure and public partnership systems. Lack of a systematic framework that joins legal enforcement with technological progress and media literacy training and intelligence analysis makes Pakistan exposed to propaganda and cyber attacks and societal conflicts. Development of a national strategy under law enforcement protection requires immediate attention because it must simultaneously build surveillance capabilities and enhance legal frameworks and promote public awareness and inter-agency information sharing to combat disinformation and media warfare successfully.⁵

Research Objectives

- To analyze the current disinformation landscape in Pakistan
- To evaluate the role of law enforcement agencies in media regulation
- To propose a national strategy for combating media warfare

Research Questions

- What are the key sources and drivers of disinformation in Pakistan?
- How effective are current legal and institutional frameworks?
- What role should law enforcement agencies play in countering media warfare?
- What best practices can be adopted from global models?

Theoretical Framework

Concepts and Definitions

False information exists in two forms as disinformation and misinformation which show different purposes and effects. People create disinformation purposefully for purposes of deception along with public manipulation and achieving both political and economic and ideological objectives. Societies face destabilization along with institutional distrust while receiving misinformation through weaponized falsified information applied in cyber operations and propaganda campaigns and media warfare. False information that someone unintentionally shares qualifies as misinformation. Spread of false information occurs accidentally through mistaken interpretations and incomplete fact-checking alongside human mistakes although it contributes to major confusion that perpetuates misinformation. Unintentional misinformation poses same level of danger as disinformation despite its purposeful nature to deceive people. National security and governance stability alongside social unity face critical risks because of these threats so it becomes essential to establish methods for uncovering false information and rectifying it through education about media and fact-checking and regulatory controls.⁶

⁵ Muhammad Noaman Yousaf and others, 'Combating Fake News and Propaganda: Policy Approaches for Safeguarding Media Integrity and Public Trust in Pakistan' (2024) 2(4) Advance Social Science Archive Journal

Media warfare together with psychological operations (PsyOps) serves as an intentional method to transform how people view things and affect choices regarding national security along with creating adversary weaknesses. State and non-state actors use this tactic to damage adversaries and start social disturbances and undermine institutional trust. Psychological operations (PsyOps) represent a collection of strategic approaches which target audience emotions and attitudes and behaviors by military and political organizations. Operations utilize psychological manipulation together with fear tactics and misinformation to change public opinions toward achieving their strategic goals. Media warfare and PsyOps serve complementary purposes by controlling narratives which occurs during war times as well as elections along with crisis management situations. Hostile entities in Pakistan have used these tactics to spread propaganda which has resulted in weakening trust between citizens and their government and security forces. Information protection needs a strong national plan which unifies legal instruments with media education and intelligence capacity to defend information integrity and national security.⁷

Digital propaganda along with fake news functions as strong instruments in current information settings for both shaping public opinion and altering political discourse and society destabilization. Digital propaganda exists as an intentional method of deploying online platforms and social media networks and digital content to distribute biased false or misleading information with political or ideological or geopolitical objectives. Various state and non-state entities leverage this tool as their main method to modify public views while leading public conversations and damaging their opponents. Practice of spreading deliberately false or highly altered news content passes as genuine news reports to achieve personal or political or financial gain constitutes fake news. Fast dissemination of false information across social media creates a dangerous environment which hurts democratic structures and national security alongside social unity. Digital propaganda and fake news operate in Pakistan as weapons against society which divide nation while destroying trust in governance and controlling elections. Several approaches must be implemented at once to confront these challenges including media literacy education programs together with fact-checking systems and strict regulatory monitoring systems to protect genuine information and safe public discussions from manipulation.⁸

Relevant Theories

Information Warfare Theory adopts information as an operational weapon to steer changes in individual and collective perceptions and decision systems of all nations including organizations and people. Strategic concept includes several warfare elements which include disinformation alongside cyber warfare and psychological operations (PsyOps) and media manipulation and digital propaganda for political or military or economic targets. Framework establishes that information control enables modification of public attitudes while changing enemy military approaches while diminishing adversaries through non-combat methods. Rise of advanced digital technology has elevated information warfare through social media combined with AI and cyber tools which generate false information to produce widespread disarray. Pakistani population faces hostile tactics of information warfare which manipulate facts to discredit institutions and create social divisions throughout nation. Protecting Pakistan's information domains and

⁶ Mahnoor Anwar, Hafiz Muhammad Sheraz, and Hina Shahid, 'Weaponizing Social Media in Pakistan: Analyzing the Multifaceted Connections of Technological Determinism and Information Warfare' (2023) 6(4) Asian Journal of International Peace & Security

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Zainab Ahmed, 'Strategic Communication in Pakistan: Synergizing a Policy Framework for National Security' (2024) 3(1) Journal of Public Policy Practitioners

national safety needs a strategic plan which unites cyber protection protocols with media regulatory measures together with security forces operations alongside public education programs.⁹

Under Media Framing Theory media organizations steer public understanding through their information selection process using emphasized details yet omitting crucial details from story. According to this theory manner in which news receives its framing structure determines how audiences understand both events and issues together with people. Media framing serves as a tool that helps shape national discourse because it guides public opinion while reinforcing ideological positions while creating new narratives for political and social and economic contexts. News industry in Pakistan uses media framing to create national narratives but news organizations often present biased perspectives because they follow political alignments or outside agendas that affect public opinion. Media framing serves two purposes including social issue promotion and misinformation distribution through propaganda and disinformation along with polarizing perspectives which cause division. Knowledge about media framing techniques creates foundation for ethical journalism practices and helps people recognize deceptive information which jeopardizes both social peace and national security.¹⁰

External elements including media along with social interactions and authority figures influence how people develop their beliefs and attitudes and carry out their behaviors according to Social Influence and Persuasion Models. People adopt new opinions or shift existing ones through identifiable mechanisms that operate without them fully understanding extent of influence. Practice of media warfare together with disinformation requires strategic utilization of persuasion tactics to manage public awareness and to transmit propaganda and establish particular narratives. Two popular theories regarding persuasion called Cialdini's Principles of Persuasion and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) find regular use in digital propaganda and psychological operations. Hostile actors in Pakistan make use of these models to manipulate public views through deceitful social media content alongside prejudiced news coverage which breaks institutional trust. Preventing such threats demands improved media literacy education and enhanced critical thinking skills as well as fact-checking capabilities to help citizens resist manipulative persuasion techniques.¹¹

The Landscape of Disinformation in Pakistan

Key Actors and Stakeholders

Spread of deceptive information in Pakistan happens through both international and local sources which work to damage national security and political stability and social cohesion in country. Disinformation coming from foreign sources mainly originates from hostile states combined with intelligence agencies and interest groups who seek to influence global perceptions of Pakistan while supporting domestic conflicts and undermining state institutions. Pakistan's governance together with military operations and human rights situation faces falsified narratives through cyber propaganda combined with fake news and social media bots spread by these actors who shape international discussions. Domestic sources which comprise political parties and media outlets and pressure groups and individuals use misinformation to attain personal or ideological ambitions. News manipulation through political disinformation serves multiple goals that include directing public opinions and damaging opponents while steering election-based debates.¹²

⁹ Farhatullah Babar, 'Pakistan's Parliament Passes Bill with Sweeping Controls on Social Media' (2025) Associated Press News

¹⁰ Afzal Butt, 'Pakistani Journalism Body Criticises New Law Regulating Social Media' (2025) Reuters

¹¹ 'Pakistan Authorities Tighten Grip on Power with Controversial Legal Changes' (2024) The Wall Street Journal

¹² How Pakistan's Military is Taking Over Its Economy' (2025) Financial Times

Shaping of narratives along with disinformation spread in Pakistan primarily results from political groups as well as extremist elements and digital influencers who promote their individual agendas. Provincial political parties spread untrue information together with unverified propaganda in order to damage political rivals and adjust public awareness signatures while dominating voting platforms. Social media platforms serve as primary grounds for political parties that use troll farms in combination with fake profiles plus carefully planned coordinated efforts to promote their official messages as they silence oppositional opinions. Through digital platforms extremist movements spread corrupted beliefs of religion alongside violent messages that seek new members. Extremist groups exploit false information to establish divisions between religious groups and weaken state control of society and cause social disturbances. Influence of digital influencers consists of journalists and bloggers and social media personalities who determine how people view things. Digital influencers who operate platforms between them either purposefully or accidentally push false information and sensationalized stories or biased propaganda to gain political positions or financial rewards or personal fame.¹³

Social media systems function as main conduits for quick false narrative transmission within Pakistan while simultaneously offering platforms that spread misinformation and disinformation. Political groups together with extremist elements and foreign actors use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok and WhatsApp to manipulate public opinion through spread of propaganda while inciting unrest. Widespread distribution system in social media lets unverified fake news and altered images alongside deep fakes and conspiracy theories spread to numerous users in a brief period. Age-ranking algorithms increase visibility of sensational content which makes disinformation control an almost impossible goal. Social media presents a significant weakness to Pakistan's information ecosystem because there are both weak regulatory systems and insufficient user digital literacy. The resolution of this challenge needs better content moderation technology alongside official fact-checking systems along with educational efforts to build digital literacy skills for users who want to prevent dangerous false information from spreading across platforms.¹⁴

Methods and Channels of Dissemination

Social media platforms function as Pakistan's main information hub and communication platform and influence tool which directs public perception and political conversations as well as social relationships. People use Facebook Twitter YouTube TikTok and WhatsApp platforms extensively to obtain news and participate in activism and digital marketing activities. Platforms enable open communication but they remain exposed to deceptive content and virtual abuse and deliberate misrepresentation together with propaganda sourcing. Political entities together with extremist groups and foreign political actors abuse these platforms to distribute false information which they use to control public emotions and trigger social disruptions. Active processing algorithms on social media networks promote eye-catching content which may discard truth to obtain user participation metrics. Introduction of content moderation and fact-checking by tech companies has not solved difficulties in managing digital content effectively. Effective digital policies combined with media literacy programs and joint governmental and social media company and civil society partnerships will establish a safer more reliable information system for Pakistan.¹⁵

Fake news websites along with online blogs serve as major platforms for misinformation and disinformation in Pakistan because they distribute false political and ideological content for financial and partisan purposes. These websites and blogs create sensationalized misleading or completely fabricated stories to attract public

¹³ Nighat Dad, 'She Escaped an Abusive Marriage—Now She Helps Women Battle Cyber Harassment' (2024) Wired

¹⁴ Nighat Dad, 'She Escaped an Abusive Marriage—Now She Helps Women Battle Cyber Harassment' (2024) Wired

¹⁵ Pakistani Journalists Protest after Senate Passes Bill Allowing Control over Social Media Content' (2025) Associated Press News

attention at expense of credible news sources and creating confusion and distrust. These platforms maintain anonymous operations and create fake profiles which make it complicated to determine their source points. Public discourse and national transparency become targets of manipulation by political groups as well as extremist elements together with foreign actors who use these websites to create false perceptions and alter real information. Online advertising money comes primarily from sensationalized headlines together with modified images and fabricated conspiracy theories. Rapid spread of fake news through social media occurs due to unverified sharing of misleading articles and blog posts. To control fake news websites and their influences governments need enhanced regulatory frameworks and active fact-checkers and digital education for citizens to understand real news from fabricated content.¹⁶

State along with non-state actors function as major forces that use different media platforms to manipulate narratives within Pakistan while they direct public opinion and dictate discourse and advance their strategic goals. Government agencies and intelligence services from both domestic and foreign territories routinely conduct information warfare together with propaganda and cyber operations to manipulate worldwide and national perception. Actors work to spread positive stories and silence oppositional arguments together with practicing media management of their outlets and using networking to mobilize their campaigns online. Non-state entities including political groups alongside extremist organizations and corporate entities together with foreign interest groups utilize digital platforms to distribute disinformation fantasies and divisive communications for destabilizing institutions or election manipulation and instigating civil turmoil. Actors employ troll armies together with fake news websites and bot networks to supercharge their messages with help of social media influencers until they distort public perception. Deep fake technology available today along with artificial intelligence creates new difficulties for people to identify truthful content because it appears artificial. Rising information security threat demands a national strategy from Pakistan that must include media oversight and cyber protection alongside public education initiatives to defend its information systems.¹⁷

Effects of Disinformation on National Security and Society

Public opinion in Pakistan shows substantial growth of polarization and radicalization due to disinformation and propaganda alongside media manipulation which produces intense societal rifts and extremist beliefs. Social media along with false news production and prejudiced reporting allows political parties and ideological groups and foreign actors to strengthen existing divisions by turning public discussions into a competitive field of colliding arguments. Through calculated manipulation people form entrenched mentalities that push them into opposing camps while declaring opposing opinions as illegitimate and hostile. Hate speech along with misinformation gradually radicalizes individuals who belong to vulnerable groups until they become susceptible to extremist views and sect-based violence and political instabilities. People become more hostile toward opposing viewpoints because their usage of echo chambers and algorithmically created content leads them to stay away from different perspectives. Such trends simultaneously harm national unity and create problems for police services and administrative structures. New initiatives for media literacy and strengthened content moderation system and dialogue-based methods must be used to combat divisive rhetoric and improve critical thinking across public conversations.¹⁸

¹⁶ 'Pakistan's Social Media Regulations and Their Impact on Freedom of Expression' (2025) Journal of Media Studies

¹⁷ 'Countering Online Disinformation: Lessons from Pakistan's Legal Framework' (2024) Asian Journal of Communication

¹⁸ 'Media Literacy Initiatives in Pakistan: Combating Fake News through Education' (2023) Pakistan Journal of Education

Spread of false information actively damages public confidence in Pakistani institutions which results in decreased credibility among government institutions and military forces along with judiciary and media organizations. Through social media and fake news websites and political campaigns false narratives along with conspiracy theories and manipulated information generate distrust among Pakistani citizens. People who encounter persistent misinformation regarding corruption along with electoral fraud and human rights abuses and security failures tend to develop distrust of official statements and refuse legitimate policies. Loss of public trust creates difficulties for institutions to execute their mandates because they lose government authority which undermines their ability to enforce policies or maintain control of social incidents or prevent crises. People's increasing doubt about traditional news platforms leads them to accept unexamined information that worsens misinformation problem. Public confidence restoration demands openness combined with institutional proactive communication and independent fact-checking alongside programs that implement stronger regulations to confront falsified information and protect institutional reliability.¹⁹

Problem of disinformation directly affects Pakistan's electoral processes and governance while controlling voter decisions and constructing political messages that harm democratic foundations. Election periods feature broad-scale application of manipulative fake news and propaganda as political parties alongside external actors aim to deceive voters while hurting their challengers and spreading uncertainties. Social networks function as fields of combat which host troll agricultural operations and bot operations in addition to paid promoter networks to broadcast misleading information targeting candidates and their performance or election's rules and outcomes. Distortions created by disinformation spread wrong impressions to citizens and trigger voter suppression and electoral violence as well as credibility crises for elections. Spread of disinformation through polarization ends up harming national stability because governments lose their ability to make strategic decisions. Pakistani democracy requires strong digital regulations together with transparent election monitoring and fact-checking mechanisms and public awareness programs against false information for maintaining fair democratic elections and governance.²⁰

Role of Law Enforcement Agencies in Combating Disinformation

Existing Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) from 2016 stands as main regulatory legislation to address cyber offences throughout Pakistan while controlling disinformation alongside cyber harassment and hate speech and digital fraud. PECA gives law enforcement authority to Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to pursue individuals who distribute fake news or propaganda or harmful content which endangers national security or public order or individual image. PECA establishes regulations for investigating and prosecuting crimes that include unauthorized system access and identity theft along with cyber terrorism and internet defamation cases. PECA faces criticism because it might enable authorities to control free speech and silence dissenting voices through unclear definitions along with questionable application methods. Transparency and judiciary control together with fundamental rights protection ensure that Pakistan maintains security while preserving digital liberties although PECA remains vital for fighting cybercrimes and disinformation. Pakistani Electronic Crimes Act will become more effective against cyber threats when it receives stronger guidance and enforcement tools alongside broad public information programs.²¹

¹⁹ The Role of Civil Society in Addressing Disinformation in Pakistan' (2022) Journal of Civil Society

²⁰ Evaluating Pakistan's Cybercrime Laws in the Context of Disinformation' (2024) International Journal of Cyber Law

²¹ The Impact of Social Media Regulations on Journalism in Pakistan' (2025) Journalism Studies

Federal Investigation Agency through its Cyber Crime Wing (CCW) functions as a critical force in Pakistan to fight both disinformation alongside cybercrimes and digital security threats. Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) through Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 investigates all incidents of fake news and online harassment and cyber fraud and identity theft and hacking and extremist content distribution. Cyber Crime Wing (CCW) operates as a division which specializes in monitoring disinformation campaigns along with propaganda networks and harmful digital activities that endanger national security as well as public order. Advanced forensic tools together with artificial intelligence together with cyber surveillance provide FIA with capabilities to discover people who distribute wrong information and hate speech or engage in coordinated misinformation campaigns on social media/digital platforms. Agency works together with international cyber security organizations and social media companies and governmental departments to control and restrict digital space misuse and manage online content. If FIA is intending to stop cyber threats it must follow democratic procedure rules while keeping privacy protected while using transparent judicial procedures for selection and using improved digital literacy to defend civil rights.²²

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) functions as main regulator of electronic and broadcast media through its efforts to promote responsible journalism while fighting disinformation spread in Pakistan. PEMRA functions as media enforcement body which oversees television channels and radio stations alongside digital broadcasting to stop spread of false information and hateful speech and violent propaganda that threatens national unity. Authority exercises its power to grant licenses while watching content and enforcing fines and broadcasting rights suspensions or revocations against media outlets that breach ethical or legal standards. PEMRA actively addresses media manipulation together with political bias and sensationalism to establish factual reporting and public trust in journalism during present times. Organization's enforcement practices frequently trigger public discussions about news industry freedoms and content restrictions and questions surrounding its fair implementation processes which has produced demands for increased openness combined with fair regulation rules and political separation. Establishment of updated media policies alongside fact-checking organization partnerships and public awareness initiatives will enable PEMRA to fulfill its role more effectively toward creating an accountable and reliable media landscape in Pakistan.²³

Challenges Faced by Law Enforcement Agencies

Insufficient technological capabilities and specialized knowledge create major obstacles for Pakistan's efforts to stop disinformation and cyber threats effectively. Country faces difficulties combat FIA's Cyber Crime Wing and PEMRA along with other government institutions face outdated equipment along with insufficient funding and not enough professionals who can handle sophisticated threats from deep fakes as well as bot-propaganda and artificial intelligence algorithms producing fake information. Effective coordinated disinformation campaign detection and response becomes difficult because absence of complete data-sharing platforms (systems and real-time monitoring capacity). Online manipulation becomes more challenging because social media platforms together with digital ecosystems remain faster at their evolution than current regulation and enforcement mechanisms. Elimination of control system weaknesses must include investments in progressive technologies together with educational programs that build capabilities and bilateral cyber security relationships between state and private security entities to boost Pakistan's instantaneous capabilities for digital threat detection and response.²⁴

²² Disinformation and Electoral Integrity in Pakistan: Challenges and Responses' (2023) Electoral Studies

²³ Legal Challenges in Prosecuting Disinformation Cases in Pakistan' (2024) Pakistan Law Review

²⁴ The Effectiveness of Fact-Checking Organizations in Pakistan' (2022) Asian Journal of Journalism

Pakistan faces an essential dilemma in managing freedom of speech against security needs when fighting disinformation and media warfare. Security demands that false information should be addressed yet governments must avoid implementing stringent censorship because doing so violates free expression and endangers independent media and dissenting political opinions. Government controls flow of fake news and hate speech and extremist content using implementation of Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) and PEMRA regulations yet these laws frequently receive criticism for suppressing opposition voices while placing restrictions on press freedom. Correct implementation of anti-disinformation frameworks must include well-defined laws that are overseen by courts along with transparent enforcement monitoring to stop censorship. Pakistan needs a digital and media environment which combines regulatory control with openness because this combination preserves democratic values while maintaining public trust.²⁵

Government of Pakistan needs to establish collaborative relationships between domestic institutions and international partners to successfully fight disinformation and cyber threats and media warfare. Fight against fake news together with propaganda and digital manipulation necessitates multiple agencies including FIA's Cyber Crime Wing as well as PEMRA and PTA regulatory bodies and intelligence agencies working with judicial support. Improved communication systems between government bodies together with data-sharing protocols and standardized policies allow Pakistan to detect and respond properly to disinformation operations swiftly. Fight against international misinformation requires partnerships between Pakistan and cyber security firms and tech companies including Facebook Twitter and Google and international organizations to battle misinformation and foreign influence operations. Pakistan should adopt international excellence models combined with AI detection systems while benefiting from capacity-enhancing initiatives in order to strengthen its digital administration and boost cyber protection capabilities. Pakistan can achieve both cyber security and global regulatory alignment by developing diplomatic partnerships and international cyber security forum participation and joint strategy development with global partners to create a secure information ecosystem.²⁶

Case Studies of Law Enforcement Interventions

National security, media freedom and digital governance face complex challenges in Pakistan because of its successful and unsuccessful attempts to regulate disinformation. Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 combined with FIA's Cyber Crime Wing has successfully allowed authorities to track down and prosecute people who spread false information as well as those who distribute hate speech and extremist propaganda. PEMRA and PTA together with other regulatory bodies implement content moderation policies and media guidelines that penalise TV channels and social media users who create misinformation through their platforms. Multiple failed efforts to regulate misinformation have occurred because laws remain unclear and law enforcement actions are selective while censorship remains a concern. PECA Ordinance 2022 faced strong criticism because its amendments allowed authorities to suppress political dissent by targeting journalists which resulted in legal disputes and public opposition. Future development of Pakistan requires a visible legal framework which both protects people from wrong information while respecting free communication and keeping away from government manipulation.²⁷

²⁵ 'Government Strategies for Countering Online Extremism and Disinformation in Pakistan' (2023) Terrorism and Political Violence

²⁶ Public Perception of Disinformation and Trust in Media in Pakistan' (2024) International Journal of Public Opinion Research

²⁷ 'The Role of Traditional Media in Combating Online Disinformation in Pakistan' (2023) Media, War & Conflict

Developing a National Strategy to Counter Disinformation

Legal and Policy Recommendations

Effective combat of disinformation and digital threats and cybercrime alongside fundamental rights protection in Pakistan requires strong enforcement of PECA along with its related cyber laws. Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016 enables legal measures against fake news together with online harassment and identity theft and cyber terrorism but its enforcement faces issues because of ambiguous language and inconsistent implementation and fears about political abuse. PECA requires amendments which must create precise legal terms and better investigative processes combined with an independent judiciary to stop possible misuse. Enforcement capabilities for cyber laws will increase through training law enforcement personnel and technological tool development support and cooperation with global cyber security entities.. A modernized cyber law system should protect national security while preserving democratic values and privacy rights and press freedom to build an accountable digital environment for Pakistan.²⁸

Effective disinformation prevention and online extremism and cyber threat combat requires Pakistan to enhance its digital platform regulatory frameworks which support both freedom of expression and digital rights. PEMRA and PTA manage digital content oversight yet their enforcement determines are usually positioned behind events and don't have uniform processes or get affected by political forces. Establishment of clear and enforceable policies must happen to make social media platforms and fake news websites and digital influencers responsible for disseminating false information. Local content moderation policies and misinformation detection capabilities can be improved through partnerships between Pakistan and major tech giants such as Facebook Twitter YouTube and TikTok. Any digital laws should protect freedom of press alongside public information access alongside democratic discussion but also protect national security and social peace.²⁹

Digital content moderation guidelines at a national level serve as a vital tool to control false information alongside hate speech and extremist propaganda but preserve Pakistani freedom of speech and democratic principles. Content regulation conducted by PEMRA PTA and FIA's Cyber Crime Wing operates without standard procedures and clear enforcement protocols that result in irregular application and censorship worries. Nation needs official guidelines to establish social media platform and news website and digital influencer content moderation procedures which eliminate misinformation as well as violence promoting content and defamation without inhibiting dissent activities. Guidelines need development through joint work between media organizations and legal experts and tech companies and civil society to achieve fair rights-based enforcement. A digital content policy built upon transparency and legal accountability and accountability will simultaneously defend national security and public order while developing Pakistan's digital information environment to be more responsible and trustworthy.³⁰

Institutional and Technological Interventions

A National Disinformation Monitoring Unit should be developed to identify false narratives and propaganda and digital manipulation which threaten Pakistan's national security and democratic processes as well as social harmony. Multi-agency framework of this unit includes FIA's Cyber Crime Wing together

²⁸ Analyzing the Spread of Disinformation during Pakistan's General Elections' (2024) Electoral Politics

²⁹ Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Digital Literacy in Pakistan' (2025) Journal of Digital Media & Policy

³⁰ The Intersection of Freedom of Speech and Disinformation Laws in Pakistan' (2023) Human Rights Law Review

with PEMRA and PTA as regulatory bodies alongside intelligence agencies and media experts to create a data-based coordinated approach for fighting disinformation. Unit requires transparent legal and ethical procedures to operate which must protect freedom of speech and press freedom and political dissent from infringement. A properly organized disinformation monitoring unit will establish Pakistan as a society that is both resilient and informed while allowing immediate responses to misinformation campaigns that respect democratic principles and national security.³¹

Detection of fake news through AI-based systems requires enhancement for Pakistan to effectively identify and analyze and fight disinformation within its fast-changing digital realm. Fact-checkers using traditional methods cannot sufficiently deal with massive quantity and fast pace at which false information circulates through social media as well as news websites and messaging channels. AI algorithms inspect combination of key indicators together with origin points to signal false information which allows law enforcement and media regulators and fact-checkers to intervene rapidly. effective implementation of AI-based systems depends on Pakistan implementing an improvement in digital infrastructure while conducting expert training in cyber security and forming partnerships with international technology companies to ensure accurate and ethical system deployment. AI-driven detection mechanisms have a fundamental role to play in developing digital resilience which will protect public discourse and counter media warfare across Pakistan.³²

Strong alliances between social media companies represent a fundamental requirement for Pakistan to fight disinformation along with digital propaganda and cyber threats effectively. key role Facebook Twitter YouTube and TikTok play in spreading factual and false information supports need for close collaboration between law enforcement agencies and PEMRA PTA along with fact-checking organizations with these companies. Formal partnerships should enable Pakistan to gain instant content moderation help and AI-based misinformation detection capabilities along with improved reporting systems for combating fake news and extremist content. High-tech cooperation should follow established legal circumstances and complete privacy protection for users while utilizing international guidelines to stop dangerous content without obstructing appropriate free speech. Establishment of better social media firm partnerships along with improved digital policies and media literacy education programs will build a digital space that decreases online manipulation threats and media war risks in Pakistan.³³

Public Awareness and Media Literacy Programs

Schools and universities must establish digital literacy initiatives because they train students to assess online information critically and detect false information while learning responsible digital practices. Educational curricula that include digital literacy programs will enable students to learn both critical assessment of information and manifestation of algorithms in content recognition and evaluation of trustworthy sources. A partnership between educational institutions and government agencies and media organizations and tech companies will help implement complete programs that adapt to changing digital threats. Younger generation's acquisition of knowledge about accurate content identification along with proper tools will

³¹ 'Social Media Platforms' Role and Responsibility in Curbing Disinformation in Pakistan' (2024) Journal of Information Technology & Politics

³² 'Impact of Disinformation on Pakistan's National Security: A Legal Perspective' (2023) National Security Journal

³³ 'Developing Counter-Disinformation Policies: A Comparative Analysis of Pakistan and Other Nations' (2024) Comparative Politics

enable Pakistan to build stronger protection against media warfare and secure democratic values and responsible digital citizenship.³⁴

Public awareness campaigns about responsible media consumption should be launched because they teach citizens about risks of disinformation and fake news and media manipulation across Pakistan. Social polarization and institutional distrust along with panic develops when people unknowingly disseminate misleading information. A nation-wide promotion using television and radio along with social media and community outreach programs should teach people to verify information accurately while developing their ability to think critically and enhance media literate capabilities. Widespread access to effective disinformation campaigns can be ensured by operational collaboration between government and media groups along with fact-checkers and digital platform companies. Public engagement in source verification and bias analysis of information alongside false information reporting helps minimize dangerous narrative spread. A properly organized public awareness initiative both fights against false information and media conflicts while it builds stronger democratic principles and Pakistani national unity.³⁵

Fact-checking organizations together with independent media watchdogs should receive encouragement to ensure transparency alongside accountability and accuracy within Pakistan's information environment. Government together with media organizations and civil society should back fact-checking efforts through financial backing as well as legal safeguards and teaming up platforms for their operations. Combination of fact-checkers with tech companies and academic institutions through partnerships will provide greater access to AI verification systems along with analysis methods and worldwide best practices. Independence and non-partisanship and adherence to ethical standards should be strictly maintained for these initiatives. Fact-checking networks need strengthening because such enhancement will fight disinformation while creating trust in legitimate journalism and Pakistan's democratic institutions.³⁶

Strengthening Law Enforcement's Capacity

Effective examination and prevention of cybercrime along with disinformation and online dangers in Pakistan requires proper digital forensic analysis training for law enforcement officers. FIA Cyber Crime Wing together with other law enforcement agencies requires modern expertise to extract digital data and track digital activities while analyzing deepfakes and identifying collective misinformation operations because digital platforms serve as primary distribution channels for fake news and extremist content and cyber warfare. Training of specialists must include instruction about AI-forensic systems alongside block chain analysis and encrypted detection and social media tracking to advance their crime investigation abilities. Development of cutting-edge training courses and forensic testing labs depends on international joint efforts between cyber security specialists and technology businesses along with academic organizations.³⁷

³⁴ 'The Psychology of Fake News: Understanding Disinformation Consumption in Pakistan' (2023) *Journal of Applied Psychology*

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Sajjad Hussain and others, 'Role of Media in Hybrid Warfare in Pakistan: How to Convert Challenges into Opportunities' (2023) 11(3) *Journal of South Asian Studies*

³⁷ Muhammad Imran, Jannat Rashid, and Jannat Naseeb, 'Strategic Communication in Countering Disinformation Campaigns in Pakistan' (2024) 8(2) *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*

Ability of Pakistan to fight disinformation and cyber threats and media warfare worldwide depends on strengthening its intelligence-sharing systems with international organizations. International agencies alongside cyber security firms and regulatory bodies need to work together with Pakistan as disinformation campaigns and cyber attacks commonly start from outside national borders. Country should forge official alliances with Interpol and UN and chief cyber security organizations to receive instant threat alert information together with cutting-edge forensic technology and practical guidance against digital disinformation and fake content dissemination. Enhanced international information sharing between border jurisdictions will boost Pakistan's digital defenses while developing better response protocols to build stronger digital systems nationwide.³⁸

Pakistan needs to establish quick-response teams to combat cyber threats and media warfare because these defenses protect country's digital domain from deceptive content and digital assaults and coordinated propaganda. Specialized teams operating under FIA's Cyber Crime Wing, intelligence agencies and PEMRA and PTA regulatory bodies should receive AI-driven monitoring tools combined with digital forensic expertise and real-time threat analysis capabilities. Their main function should be to identify and examine misinformation surges and deep fake material while they also handle hacking schemes and online operations that endanger national defense alongside social harmony. Efficiency of tracking and countering emerging threats will be strengthened by social media company partnership together with cyber security experts and members of international intelligence networks. Teams must perform ongoing training and possess modern technology and work under a legally clear framework for security protection and privacy and free speech protections. A properly designed cyber rapid response framework enables Pakistan to develop stronger digital defenses against cyber warfare and defend public belief in information while reducing threats from malicious actors present in online spaces.³⁹

CONCLUSION

A national strategy under law enforcement protection which targets disinformation and media warfare in Pakistan represents a critical requirement to secure security and social unity and democratic principles in digital society. To develop a complete solution government needs to enhance PECA laws and boost regulatory controls and improve intelligence collaboration methods and deploy AI-based information detection systems across national security platforms. FIA's Cyber Crime Wing and PEMRA must join forces with social media platforms and fact-checking organizations and international cyber security bodies for conducting a balanced and transparent digital threat fight. People must support awareness programs alongside literacy efforts about digital media and maintain independent oversight groups that detect misinformation. These elements combine to form a society with fact-recognition skills against propaganda. Methods to maintain national security should be implemented while preserving free speech rights and political free expression and democratic rules. Pakistan can achieve a future of secure and trustworthy information by developing ethical strategies through public and media stakeholder cooperation with government institutions.

³⁸ Ahmed Raza Khan, Muhammad Manzoor Elahi, and Shehar Bano, '(Re-)building Social Cohesion vis-à-vis Strategic Communication: A Pathway for Pakistan's National Strategy' (2022) 3(3) Journal of Development and Social Sciences

³⁹ Haseeb Ur Rehman, Shabir Hussain, and Durrshahwar, 'Social Media, Democracy and Fake News in Pakistan: An Analysis' (2020) 5(1) Global Political Review

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