Digital Democracy in Pakistan: opportunities and Challenges

Outline

(1) Introduction;

Thesis statement directly answer to your essay topic

Thesis Statements

Although digital democracy, as a new political reality, has significant positive implications for Pakistan and its Society; however, there are some concerning challenges associated with it

(2) Opportunities

(a) Digital Democracy enhances political participation and political Consciousness among the people

(b) Digital Democracy challenges dynastic politics in the Country as the voters became politically aware citizens

(c) Right to freedom of expression and information prevails in digital democracy

(d) People can explore more democratic options while voting due to enhanced awareness in a digital world

(e) Quick accountability of the officals has become possible due to digital platforms in a digital era

(f) Digital democracy improves governance

(g) Digital democracy enhances transparency in the country

(3) Challenges

(a) Digital democracy results in polarization and division in the society

(b) Spread of faked and fabricated information will be frequent due to immense freedom on Social Platforms

(c) Growing trend of Censorship challenges digital democracy

(d) Leakage of Citizens' personal information is a great concern in a digital world (significant data breach occured in NADRA's server, compromising the data of approximately 2.7 million Pakistanis)

(4) Conclusion

"Internet Can be the most powerful weapon for democracy when citizen use it to hold power to account"

Former US president Barak Obama

In Pakistan democracy has always been facing ups and downs, witnessing either direct military rules for most of its years of existence or hybrid rule where undemocratic forces has a greater say in governance and foreign policy. However, technological advancement is greatly shaping the nature of democracy in Pakistan. Internet and Social media tools are imparting political conciousness among the citizens as they get more exposed to the democracies and democratic institutions of other countries. Likewise, digitalization is also helping in break traditional political approach where votes were only given

based on cultural and dynastic identities.
For instance, according to Gallup Pakistan's
report on 2024 elections, there has been
increase of 16% of in number of representatives
in assemblies who do not have any dynastic
roots, so this is a very crucial develo-
pment for democracy in Pakistan. Furthermore,
in the digital era of democracy, right to freedom
of speech and expression has greatly prev-
ialled as people can outrightly express their
pleasure and displeasure on governance
decisions, thus, making officials more and
more accountable for their acts. As a result
of accountability of the elected and non-elected
officials, the governance can improve as fear
of public back lash and accountability will
compel the authorities to work in public
welfare direction. Although digital democracy
as a new political reality, has significant
positive outcomes for Pakistan and its society,
however, there are some concerning challe-
nges associated with it. For instance,
unlimited exposure to unfiltered information
can lead to radicalization, anger and

outrage against one another and one another's another's beliefs and ideology which ultimately lead to polarization and division in a society. Apart from this, in a digital democracy, spread of faked and fabricated information is also more likely as people can share and disseminate information without any restrictions. Citing spread of fake information as reason, government censorship has been a growing trend in the modern era. Censorship is a great challenge for democracy as it compromises the right to freedom of speech which is one of the key principles of democracy. Last but not the least, the leakage of public data is also a major concern in the digital world as cases of data breach are frequent as recently public dates were leaked from a server of NADRA. Thus, the digital democracy has certain opportunities and challenges, so to harness the full potential of digital democracy, its challenges need to be addressed.

Internet and social media platforms have been major sources of enhancing political consciousness and political participation. The more people get exposed to democracies and democratic institution and political movement, it creates awareness and resultantly people more actively participate in the political process. According to a **Transparency International's report of 2023**, that concluded that the advent of technology and social media websites, the status of democracy has significantly improved due to public turnout increase, Thus, digital technology and social media platform contribute to enhance public awareness and political participation.

As internet and digital platforms enhance political awareness, they will affect the dynastic politics of Pakistani society where on voting was only a simple process to vote for the some people time and again due to their cultural and dynastic background like Sharif, Zardari or Bhutto families. Now, as everyone is getting aware polit

ically and know the importance of their vote in deciding their future, so they are changing the traditional trends. For instance a **Gallup pakistan Report of 2024 Election** suggests that 16% increase was seen in the number of representatives in assemblies who do not have dynastic family background clearly showing the gradual shift due to digital democracy.

Furthermore, one of the very key essence of democracy is freedom of expression which advocates that everyone should have the right to say whatever that person want and should be allowed to agree or disagree on anything without fearing persecution or detention. So in a digital democracy where everyone has access to internet and social media platforms, he or she can freely exercise their right to freedom of speech without and fear in a true democratic state.

As the digital tools enhance public awareness, encourage people to participate more and challenge tradition political

trends, then people get to explore more and more democratic opportunities to vote for the candidates who they think are worthy of voting and can work for public welfare. Therefore, digital democracy will help the people to vote for their real representatives rather than those whom previously people voted for mainly due to their cultural and dynastic influence.

Similarly, as people get to vote for their own representatives, then their representative also consider themselves accountable to those who voted for them. In case the representatives take a public unfriendly decision, then people can criticize them and compel them to recorrect their actions thus, digital democracy also helps in prevailing accountability of the elected as well as the unelected officals.

When officals are accountable and they have to act in accordance with the publi demand, then this will

lead to improvement in public welfare and governance. In case of any failure, the officials an face back lash and face accountability institutions, then it will be hardly possible that those in position of authority let any governance failure happened. So, digital democracy will also improve the governance in the country.

Transparency, as another important principle of democracy, is upheld in a digital democracy. In a society where political consciousness is high, public representatives are elected through regular voting, so it is very obvious that those in the power corridors will have to report everything to the public and share information related to projects and decision which directly concern the public at large. Thus, transparency is upheld in a digital democracy.

Like opportunities, there are challenges associated with digital democracy in pakistan.

Digital democracy advocates uninterrupted and unfiltered information some time resulting in spread of hate speech and t about a community and political group fuelling hatred among groups and lead to polarization and division in the society. as witnessed in Pakistani society and some European societies like Britain. Therefore, one of thee very first criticism and challenge that digital democracy faces is the polarization of the society.

As said above, immense freedom on the flow of information in a society leads to spread of falsed and fabricated information which sometimes causes panic and public outrage. So unfiltered flow of information can be very dangerous for the very peace and stability of the state and society, thus, digital freedom can be problematic for the country as advocated by digital democracy.

As mentioned in the above paragraph, free flow of information can be

dangerous for the peace and stability of a State and society, therefore, modern states are choosing censorship over free flow of information. Though it is a topic of debate whether it is good to censor or not but in modern time one of the key pressing challenges that digital democracy faces is growing trends of state censorship, like Pakistan has enacted laws like **PECA Act 2016** to check on the flow of information and punish the violators accordingly. Thus, Censorship is a challenge to free flow of information and ~~totally~~ digital democracy

Last but not the least, in the modern day democracies one of the main problem is of the leakage of public personal data of stored in government servers. For example, recently a NADRA Server breach ~~~~ resulted in the leakage of 2.7 million people's personal data, including their phone numbers bank details etc. so it is a challenge that modern states and democracies face.

In Conclusion, technological advancement has greatly influenced and shaped the nature of democracy in Pakistan by making people more aware, the officials more accountable. It also contributed in derooting dynastic trends, though they still exists, but have been challenged. Therefore, it can be concluded that digital democracy has wonderfully transformed Pakistan's democracy and there are possitive outcomes in future; however, there are also challenges mentioned above which need to be address to fully harness the true potentials of digital democracy.