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"Digital Freedom and Digital Responsibility: A New Challenge for Pakistani Society"

Outline:

1. Introduction:

In Pakistan, digital ~~responsibility~~ freedom has come without digital responsibility creating social, political and economic havoc. However, by addressing such challenges through potential reforms, Pakistan society can be made digitally responsible.

2. An insight into digital freedom and digital responsibility in Pakistani context.

3. Challenges created by digital freedom without digital responsibility in Pakistan:

i- Irresponsible use of social media resulting in propagation of misinformation and disinformation.

Case in point: Misinformation regarding vaccines in COVID-19.

ii- Digital platforms are used as tools of political manipulation and propaganda.

iii- Hate speech propagated online is leading to religious extremism.

Case in point: Shia vs. Sunni narratives.

iv- Digital platforms foster ethnic and cultural intolerance due to unregulated content.

v- Terrorist networks used encrypted channels for hiring, recruitment and functioning.

Case in point: ISIS-K used digital platforms.

vi)- Online shopping platforms usually scam people and gain money.

vii- The propagation of violent content in form of gaming targets youth to spread violence.

vi) Case in point: An 18 year old Pub-G player killed 3 family members in Sialkot.

viii)- The use of abusive language by youth is increasing due to social media culture.

4- The Way Forward:

i- Government needs to introduce digital literacy initiatives.

Case in point: Estonia's digital literacy programs.

ii- Government needs to introduce civic educat-ion in curriculum to navigate online inform-

ation critically.

iii- Government needs to introduce online content
monitoring to end extremism

iv- Government needs to ban social media usage
below age 16 to protect young minds from
violent and abusive content.

Case in point: Australia banned social media
usage for people below aged 16.

v- Government needs to regulate digital platforms
to end terrorist activities through international
cooperation.

5 **Conclusion** :

The aforementioned reforms need to be
adopted in order to inculcate digital
responsibility in Pakistani society.

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In Pakistani society, digital freedom has come without digital responsibility creating a havoc in society in all socio-political sectors. Social media has become a channel to spread misinformation and disinformation due to its irresponsible use. It is evident from the propagation of misinformation during COVID-19 regarding vaccination and death toll. Moreover, digital platforms are used as tools for political manipulation and propaganda, creating public distrust in government bodies. Religious extremism is another challenge facing Pakistani society. It is due to hate speech propagation through online platforms. Such unregulated digital platforms also foster ethnic and cultural intolerance, disrupting social cohesion. Furthermore, terrorist

networks and organizations like ISIS-K operating in Pakistan's tribal areas have gained prominence in post-globalization age. These organizations are transnational in nature, working through encrypted digital platforms. In economic domain, online shopping applications are prominently becoming scamming networks to make more money. Digital freedom without digital responsibility has negatively affected youth in Pakistan. By constant exposure to violent content online especially through gaming, youth is indulging more in violence. Similarly, social media has normalized the use of abusive language. Hence, abusive language and culture has be-come normalized for youth. Therefore, potential reforms need to be introduced in order to inculcate a sense of digital responsibility in society and

to make it a better place to live in.

With the technological advancements and globalization, Pakistani society, like the rest of the world, has transformed into a digital society. People of all ages enjoy the freedom to acess digital platforms. However, this digital freedom has come without digital responsibility, resulting in multiple challenges. People are free to express their opinions, share content of all sorts without regulation. This has disrupted the social harmony of the society, resulting in spread of hated, violence and extremism. Digital responsibility inculcates in individuals the sense to differentiate between wrong and right information. Therefore, the lack of inculcation of individual and governmental level digital responsibi-

lity initiatives render society prey to unhealthy content online. The essay discusses various challenges associated with digital freedom without digital responsibility.

Misinformation and disinformation propagates through irresponsible use of social media. Due to the non-regulation of social media platforms, information without validation spreads quickly. The spread of such misinformation and disinformation is not only limited to personal content, but also political and social domains. Therefore, it results in distrust, fear, panic and hatred in society. A research indicates that the spread of misinformation during COVID-19 regarding vaccination and death toll led to outbreak of public fear. Many social media platforms tweeted about

an unusual number of deaths due to the virus, which created fear in public. Moreover, fake content and false information regarding vaccines made people avoid vaccination. It, therefore, resulted in more rapid spread of virus. Similarly, false political claims also make people subject to manipulation.

In Pakistan, digital platforms are used as tools for political propaganda. Social media echo chambers and information bubbles lead to public consent manufacturing. In this way, politically biased narratives distort political culture and enable demagogues to assume power roles. Such propagandist policies lead to public distrust in government policies. It undermines democratic culture, weakening rule of law.