



## **Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media in Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

*Because of rapid developments in both computer and wireless technology, participating in electronic media is currently simpler than it has ever been before. The use of social media to obtain information is not only fascinating but also instructive, applicable, and within reach. The markets for smartphones, tablets, and wireless broadband connectivity have all witnessed tremendous growth in Pakistan in recent years. The broad adoption of social media platforms, in addition to the simplicity with which users may navigate those platforms, is responsible for this phenomenon. When individuals utilise social media, it brings up a lot of issues that need to be addressed, despite the fact that it's beneficial for the country. This research investigates the technology behind social media as well as the factors that contribute to the growing popularity of social media among Pakistani netizens (those who use the internet). In addition, the problems that have been caused by the use of social media in Pakistan are addressed in this research. These problems include cyberblackmail, cybercrime, security, ethics and identity protection*

*Keyword: Social Media, smartphone, broadband Connectivity, Pakistan*



## **Introduction**

E-media has become an essential information source in our everyday routines, and it is also being utilised to swiftly disseminate information to large groups of people. ICT in digital media has grown in popularity, use, and accessibility as a result of technological advancements and media outlets' increased reliance on it. For its speed, ease of access, and availability, the internet has revolutionised public communication. It's also become popular in a wide range of other contexts, including education, politics, business, marketing and the arts, as well as the media and news. Social media is one of the most current mediums for individuals to generate and distribute material in a visually appealing way, among others. Some instances of how various media have been utilised to affect people widely include Facebook, Myspace, Digg, and Twitter. More time is spent on online communities than on any other type of website by internet users. There was a 99 per cent rise in the amount of time spent on social media in the United States. Using social media to earn money and advance your profession is now as common as posting photos and videos. (Kuzma, 2010) Because of its reach and accessibility, social media accounts have become a need for many people these days. Facebook is an example of a social media platform that has grown to be a significant player in the social landscape in the twenty-first century. In the beginning, it was utilised for educational and entertaining reasons by those who had access to it. Most people have viewed it as a negative element because it was an effective propaganda tool. People make use of social media to disseminate false and misleading information, as well as unpleasant caricatures and images. With time, the number of users has grown exponentially and many people now have many accounts under different identities. However, numerous accounts may be used negatively, such as blackmailing others under the guise of emotions or spreading propaganda about one's philosophy and beliefs without disclosing one's genuine ID. Social networking services have a number of policy and privacy flaws, including the freedom to post images, information, and derogatory remarks about other people's religions, cultures, castes, and creeds, especially those of celebrities and politicians. The worst element of social media is that people post their caricatures, tales, and remarks on religious and political leaders. Due to the fact that major parties and their employees are now regularly posting propaganda against other parties on Facebook, the practice is no longer surprising. (Vij & James, 2014)



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Because of these propagandas, many of Facebook's users engage in nasty remarks and actions, as well as abuse the platform itself, resulting in social unrest and violence. Fake accounts of well-known celebrities, politicians, judges, and presidents of well-known organisations are at the top of the list when it comes to spreading one's views or fooling others. For this facility's long-term viability, this sort of activity poses a threat to its future. Forgery and misinterpretation might occur if the victims do not clarify their opinion, since there have been instances of inappropriate content being uploaded on their behalf. Interacting politely with others and protecting one's privacy is essential if one wants to effectively share and communicate information, however it is well-known that many people use social media to spread false information. The percentage of people using social media is depicted in the study. Pakistan has 4% of its population utilising social media, whereas Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Laos have even lower percentages. (Safdar, Javed & Amin, 2020)

## **Literature Review**

Facebook is a platform that, according to Dr Abdul Basit (2013), shows the inner habits of youth in front of the public. This indicates their attitude toward society and the job done by human nature, which has and might have positive or bad connotations at any given time. Curiosity and a sense of urgency are becoming habits among young people as a result of the passive knowledge sharing that occurs on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. There is no requirement for the information on a person to be verified before it is posted on social media. This is due to the fact that many groups develop and circulate fake news about their competitors. According to the findings of several academics, intolerance and sectarianism are the two most persistent tendencies.

Hassan's (2009) study made it simpler for young people to meet their socialisation, communication, and entertainment needs, which is significant when one considers the study's obvious effects on day-to-day living. Facebook, which has more users than any other social network, has emerged as the most popular and effective means of communication among younger people. Despite the fact that technology has made it simpler to meet new people and speak with them, there is still a significant requirement to be aware of and diligent about how you use it to publicise yourself and everything about you, whether through photographs, or videos, or other forms of media. According to Khan (2012), young adults between the ages of 15 and 25 are the demographic most likely to use social media for



recreational purposes. Students' gender affects the likelihood of their using social media for information gathering. Male students are more likely to do so than female students. The majority of bachelor's degree students use social media to pass the time during their free time

Teachers' online presence may be improved by using social media, according to Rahman, Batool, Saleem, and Takrim (2012). Educating programmes that are promoted and planned on social media and interaction sites will help bridge communication gaps, break down barriers and make it easier for students to meet their educational goals, just as they can do in today's modern world where they have almost constant access to phones, the internet and social media. According to Gilani's M.Phil. thesis (2014), the use of social media in Pakistan has been steadily rising over the past several years. The bulk of social media users in Pakistan is young people. Online conferencing and social media have significantly changed our understanding of Pakistan's socio-political development, which was formerly seen through traditional privileged and tribal groups.

Student spending on social media is a waste of time, according to the findings of Kamal (Tariq) and Tariq Ishtiq Nawab Idrees (2015). As a result of their nightly usage of social media, students are unable to rise early in the morning and miss their first lessons. Using social media excessively has a negative impact on a person's desire to learn. The findings also show that university students' instructional presentations are influenced by their exposure to the outside world. Researchers found that social media has a tremendous impact on their lack of enthusiasm for schoolwork since they spend much of their time talking and listening to music while neglecting and undervaluing academics. In today's world, social networking sites and mobile applications have become an integral part of our daily life. It may have both beneficial and bad consequences on our children and adolescents. Addiction to this tool is common among teenagers. A large percentage of the websites are also a source of vulgarity, which is the duty of the government as well as the Cyber Cell. A large majority of Pakistani political party members used social media during the 2013 election campaign to communicate and enlighten people about their party's political stances among their constituency. Other people are encouraged to vote by sending messages from their political party representatives. Most social networking sites in Pakistan are also devoted to informing and enlightening the public about current events and political concerns. Both the government of Pakistan and the country's political parties exploited new media expertise in this election, which was likely the first in Pakistani history. In the country,



there are still a number of websites dedicated to educating the general public about politics.

According to Batool and Akram (2014), social media has become an integral component of students' daily lives. If you don't believe the hype that social networking enhances confidence in yourself and improves self-image and allows you to make changes to your life, it has an unfavourable effect on your schooling, physical health (including anxiety and depression), and family relationships. There was also an increase in cyberbullying and internet information that increased the risk of identity theft. While some male students use social networking sites to damage others, female students used them for creative purposes such as sharing cuisine recipes, educating one another, and keeping up with the latest fashion trends. Social networking sites have a detrimental influence on students, yet they continue to use them anyhow because they believe that what they get outweighs what they lose. Adolescents were clearly shown to benefit and harm from social networking. How they utilise these social networking sites is entirely up to them. Among teenagers, Facebook has become a popular and widely utilised social networking platform, according to an MS thesis by Nasir (2011). It has been shown to be an important part of the day-to-day lives of children and adolescents. Because of its high degree of connectedness and useful services, it has proven to be an effective medium for socialising and pursuing goals. Posting, commenting, uploading videos, and chitchatting with friends and colleagues are among the most popular activities for most users. Because of Facebook's capable apps, its users' lives are made simpler and more comfortable, allowing them to more easily meet their many wants. According to Zia, Paracha, and Jan (2012), YouTube is extremely popular among Lahore's young. Many teenagers are also utilising YouTube for both amusement and informative reasons, according to one study. It is important for spectators to pay attention and utilise the internet carefully even if it is one of the most active media vehicles impacting the people. This shows that YouTube has become an important and necessary part of the everyday activities of adolescents. If adolescence goes beyond just viewing it for enjoyment in a few situations, it isn't surprising that parents and elders should keep an eye on their children. Even more, the study should be done on the impacts of these entertainment films, as well.

### **Social Media Platforms**

The technology behind social media platforms can give rise to new, more individualized versions of the internet. Because of their presence and growth, it is now possible to engage and communicate in new ways. These



new methods have been made possible as a result of their growth. Because of the potential for social media platforms to be used by a large number of people, commercial interests are lured to using them. There are a wide number of data sources accessible, each of which may shed light on a particular aspect of how social media is utilised in a particular setting. These categories are subdivided even further according to the many ways in which they might be utilised. The development of social media has occurred not only in terms of networking and entertainment but also in many other areas. People living in underdeveloped nations like Pakistan, for example, have rapidly increased their use of mobile technology and social media in recent years. Despite the fact that anywhere between 10 and 15 per cent of people in Pakistan are connected to the internet, less than 2 per cent of the country's citizens now have access to high-speed broadband internet. Various facts and data about people's actions and interests on social media were gleaned via polls and surveys of their accounts on various social media platforms. (Asur & Huberman, 2010)

Social media sites are becoming increasingly important in Pakistan as a source of news and information, and they are having an effect on journalism in a number of ways, both on individuals and on established media sources. It would appear that Facebook is the social networking site that gets brought up the most frequently. In addition, there is a large number of other networks that have a significant amount of notoriety in Pakistan. In Pakistan, public relations departments have started using social networking sites for advertising and marketing, rather of the more traditional media sources that were employed in the past. This is in place of the more traditional media channels. On social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, it is becoming increasingly standard practice to share information on various policies, projects, and strategies pertaining to the field of development. In Pakistan, the continual availability of residents on social media platforms, notably Facebook, has helped make it possible for the country's citizens to take part in social action. It's sad that it has both positive and negative effects on society as a whole, but it does. As a result of these issues, traditional media has reported a number of cultural transformations. The Pakistani people now have a deeper comprehension of their own government as a direct result of the proliferation of social media. The general population is starting to play a more substantial part in the solution of political problems and is getting more actively interested in these issues thanks to the help of social media. It is possible that utilising social media itself as a method for reaching the target audience would be beneficial for all types of social media. Other schools in Pakistan also provide degrees in media, and



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increasingly, they are including lessons on social media into their existing programmes as well. As a consequence of the ever-increasing popularity of social media, educational institutions in Pakistan are mulling the possibility of incorporating social media into their instructional programmes. (Kuzma, 2010)

### **Prospects of Social Media in Pakistan**

Social media has created a world in which everyone is connected to everyone else everywhere else. It has ingrained itself into the very fabric of our society through a myriad of different channels. The most advanced and cutting-edge method of communication is now available on the internet. As of the year 2014, there were more than 3 billion people all over the world who used the internet. There are now around 42 per cent of people throughout the world who have access to the Internet. (Vij & James, 2014) 5.9 billion searches are performed daily on Google by users throughout the world (Google Annual Search Statistics). On YouTube, which has more than 409 million active blogs (according to a live look at the activity throughout WordPress.com), more than a billion unique people watch 6 billion hours of video every single day (YouTube Press Room). According to the estimations provided by the World Bank, internet penetration in Pakistan achieved a new all-time high of 10.9 per cent in the year 2013. People in Pakistan have reaped significant benefits from using web 2.0 apps and social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The number of individuals who use the internet and participate in activities related to social media is growing along with the popularity of the internet itself. Pakistanis continue to utilise a variety of social media tools and materials, despite the difficulties the country is experiencing economically. According to the statistics, there is a distinct ranking system for the use of various social media platforms in Pakistan. (Safdar, Javed & Amin, 2020) Customers who utilise broadband internet connections have more than doubled over the past two years as a percentage of total internet users in the country. This nation's mobile phone market is the fifth largest in Asia as measured by total sales volume. According to the estimations provided by ISPAK in October 2014, the number of people using the internet in Pakistan was around 25 million. There are now 11.6 million people from Pakistan active on Facebook, from which you may pick (Annual Social Media Marketing Report 2014). There are 116 million individuals living in the United States, yet this service is utilised by just 25 million of those persons (about 35.5 per cent of the total population of 180 million is under the age of 14). That works out to a total of 21 per cent of the population that is



comprised of adults. Of course, this just accounts for the top 21 per cent of the overall population. Newspapers reached 50.3% of the population in Pakistan in 2004, which translates to 5% of the total average circulation of daily newspapers for every 1,000 persons. (Vij & James, 2014) This figure represents newspaper penetration in Pakistan. Although it is possible that it has developed greatly since then, there is little evidence to suggest that its development has been comparable to the fast spread of the internet. To put it another way, the Internet in Pakistan currently reaches a larger audience than traditional print media does. As a direct consequence of this, a significant number of people do not read at all; the majority of these individuals, who for their entertainment and leisure choose to use the internet and browse the web, do not read at all.

Internet connectivity has been available in Pakistan since the year 1990. According to statistics from 2013, Pakistan has 31 million people who use the internet, and 15 million of those people access the internet using their mobile devices. Even though the typical internet session is only five minutes long, eighty per cent of people who use the internet spend more than an hour a day doing so. More than three million people are now maintaining blogs in Pakistan. People from all across the world have joined the social networking website Facebook, which now has more than four million users. There are mobile phones in the hands of 60.4% of the population of the country. These numbers on the internet and social media, together with the modern technology that is available, have the potential to have a huge influence on Pakistan's future.

According to the statistics, more people in Pakistan are between the ages of 18 and 24 using Facebook than in any other country in the entire world. This is more than any other nation on the planet. The report presents a demographic analysis of the users that are broken down according to their gender. Females make up sixty per cent of Pakistan's Facebook users, while males make up forty per cent of the country's total. (Asur & Huberman, 2010)

### **Challenges of Social Media in Pakistan**

In today's world, everything revolves around social media. Only use it with extreme caution, and only do it in a way that won't endanger anyone's health. Pakistan, like other countries, is faced with a plethora of ethical and security-related concerns on social media. This is especially true in light of recent events. It is not possible for technology methods alone to provide the most effective protection against violent crime. It is necessary to have some kind of regulation and security in place in order to effectively deal with that.



Pieces of training on security awareness might possibly be used as a first-aid solution to this problem. Sessions devoted to raising awareness, on the other hand, are typically seen as an unneeded luxury rather than a necessary evil by those who attend them. Training in security awareness has to be regarded as a necessity in order to guarantee the safety of user data. Such training ought to be developed and made available to users in order to educate them on individual user duties, proper usage, and security and information protection. This is necessary in order to protect the confidentiality of information resources and systems as well as maintain their integrity and accessibility. (Safdar, Javed & Amin, 2020)

Cybercrime is becoming a major concern in the country these days. Websites have been hacked with the aim of forgery and financial fraud, according to reports of technological misuse. Cyberstalking is at the top of the list of crimes committed over the internet. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) receives more than 80% of the complaints it receives. A large number of the victims are young women who have been subjected to extortion, harassment, and blackmail. In most situations, the victim's family members are also harmed by these incidents. The majority of these occurrences are linked to Facebook and Twitter, while they also occur on other social media platforms. Additionally, the FIA came across instances in which fictitious and real photos, as well as contact information, including phone numbers, were posted on the prominent online classifieds website, OLX. com. (Asur & Huberman, 2010)

As long as social media has been, people have been using phoney IDs. With the aid of photo-editing software and high-quality printing, manufacturing a false ID has become a lot easier in recent years. False identification is a felony that has been dealt with differently in different nations; each country has its own fake ID laws, although the classification of the offence varies from state to state. As a result, Pakistan is one of the few nations where cyber laws are still in the pipeline.

In Pakistan, the number of people being targeted by fake social media accounts has risen significantly, resulting in a wide range of problems and concerns for the victims. Our Pakistani celebs have also been affected by this cyber-crime, which has practically targeted their bogus accounts. Our Pakistani celebrities appear to be dissatisfied as a result of the proliferation of bogus identification documents and social media profiles. Because some people distribute false information by creating fictitious fan sites and accounts for celebrities, the public is forced to deal with false reports about them. Almost every celebrity these days has a false Facebook profile or page



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through which rumours about them have been seen by a great number of people. A lot of celebrities have been known to be extremely irritated and weary by the proliferation of rumours and bogus messages about them via their fake IDs and social media profiles. Many more crimes are taking place as a result of cyber-crimes, and this is causing problems for the general public as well. FIA and the government of Pakistan are being asked to take action against cybercrimes that are causing problems in the lives of Pakistani celebrities because bogus IDs and phoney celebrity sites are harming their reputations. Cybercrime must be addressed by the government if it is to be eradicated. (Vij & James, 2014)

The Government of Pakistan is up against insurmountable obstacles when it comes to cultivating public interest through social media. The government needs to conduct the study, and the findings may assist them in coming up with some unique and imaginative strategies to access the resources that are not within its control. Utilization and involvement via social media with individuals, organisations, and institutions gives a tremendous deal of potential in terms of locating and mobilising these resources, provided that it is done effectively. Because maintaining national law and order in Pakistan is dependent on it, the government of Pakistan should place a high priority on building trust and social capital through the use of social media. In addition, the government may find it helpful to use social media in order to improve the trust of individuals through a direct connection. (Safdar, Javed & Amin, 2020)

## **Conclusion**

Pakistan is a growing nation that is seeing the emergence of a variety of media channels thanks to the internet. There has been a rise in the number of individuals using social media in Pakistan, which has led to an increase in the number of people who are concerned that someone may be using a false ID on the window of social media. This is a prospect side of social media, which is a positive aspect of social media. Many people in Pakistan believe that social media is one of the most influential platforms that have the potential to bring about a constructive social revolution. Interacting with residents and giving them the opportunity to share their issues and requirements may be beneficial to the government. Due to the political instability in the nation, there have been a few new difficulties that have arisen, all of which need to be solved in order to ensure that people may use social media platforms safely. In the future, the government needs to give consideration to previously ignored facts and situations that have the



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potential to contribute to the development of better and more secure socialisation with the general population. In addition, owners of social media platforms and industry experts could organise training for users of social media platforms, or essential identity requirements could be developed for users in order to address concerns regarding people's safety, privacy, and other factors that could affect their sense of well-being.

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