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Countering Fake News in Pakistan: Challenges Faced by Newsrooms and Regulators

Abstract

The scourge of 'Fake News' continues to plague our information environment; governments worldwide are taking various steps to counter this. Since the General Elections 2016 in the US, traditional news organizations have written widely on Fake News Reporting & Even Worldwide a debate started to make strategies to counter fake news after that Many Countries adopted legislative measures to handle this including Pakistan, Recent Researchers have investigated damages of Fake News in the Society but they lack reasons What Challenges Newsroom and Regulators face in Countering Fake news in Pakistan. Therefore, this Research aims to study the Issues and Hurdles faced by Newsrooms and Regulators in Pakistan that led to the failure of Combating fake news in the Country. The Study Uses the Mix Method, Content based on Fake News from Pakistan's Top 4 News Channels Geo News ARY, BOL, and Samma will be Analyzed Comprehensively for the Period of Six Months, and then in-depth interviews with the Director News of all the All Channels, Director General Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, Representative of PTA and 4 Victims of the Fake News damages will be conducted. The Study will conclude with the Challenges faced by Newsroom and Regulatory Authorities with Suggestions on how to combat fake News in Pakistan.

Keywords: Fake News, Newsroom, Damages of Fake News, Regulatory Authority and Challenges of Fake News

1. Introduction

False information refers to news, stories, or stories created to mislead or deceive readers. Usually, the purpose of creating these stories is to influence people's opinions, promote political agenda, or cause confusion, and it is usually a profitable business for online publishers. With the rapid development of big data and information communication technology, fake news spread through social media poses a destructive threat to society's sustainable development impeding social smooth running and progress (Yuan et al., 2023). Fake news intentionally misleads people into accepting untrue ideas that are spread to further particular agendas, which hurts both individuals and society. The spread of false information presents serious problems for businesses and brands. It is possible to purposefully mislead consumers with fake news that propagates an untrue viewpoint or opinion about a brand, product, or organization (Talwar et al., 2020).

Many Scholars associate misleading information with manipulation, irony, deception and Propaganda (Tandoc Jr et al., 2018) and Rumours which do not create from the real news report, humour unlikely to be false, Political false statement, stories that are slanted but not explicitly false (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Disinformation campaigns often occur in political contexts, where state actors create disinformation campaigns for political gain. Due to its widespread distribution on social media, this disinformation campaign attracted media notice. Following the targeting, there was eventually assault and

discriminatory treatment directed towards community members (Muhammed T & Mathew, 2022). This issue is particularly fraught during elections and the conception of democracy as a human right.

Fake news can have dangerous consequences; this was true even in ancient times when, without print or electronic media, a lie could only spread through word of mouth. The Spread of false Information is often used to confuse or discredit mainstream media or Political Opponents but can ignite social tensions and riots (Waweru Muigai, 2019). Sharing fake news damage their reputation because others may no longer believe them. This happens because fake news goes against the principles of journalism, which is fact-checking and telling the truth. According to Altay (2022) researchers found that even sharing fake news stories can damage a person's reputation more than sharing true stories. People are aware of this and many will not share fake news unless they are paid because they know how hurtful it could be to others seeing it.

According to Dru Menaker (2022) significant majority of journalists (76%) are frequently confronted with disinformation, which must be dealt with in a variety of ways, such as confirming, explaining, or exposing disinformation. They claim right-wing conspiracy theorists and government officials, candidates, or political organizations major sources of disinformation. Journalists also note that they are exposed to disinformation from a variety of other sources. The media views voters as the prime target for disinformation, but journalists of colour are aware of campaigns forms designed to entice ethnic or racial minorities, and poor communities (Jeanna Sybert, 2022). The prevalence of disinformation has increased hostility towards the media, experiencing public hostility. They feel it is important to be vigilant about limiting personal data online. The experience of paying for disinformation has led to changes in journalists' behaviour. They provide broad context in their stories. Media is increasingly conscious of transparency, responsible digital citizenship and restoring trust among audiences. Journalists express concerns about the impact on audience confidence, the increased difficulty in obtaining information, and the length of time needed to complete stories. Journalists, especially those involved in stories that injustice violations face digital harassment such as bullying, hate speech and doxing (Adnan Rehmat & Waqas Naeem, 2023).

The legitimacy of a TV channel or newspaper depends on the authenticity of its news, and once the reputation of any media house is tarnished for repeatedly publishing fake news, people will stop watching the channel or reading the newspaper. It is risk of ruining one's reputation and losing business that is a real deterrence against publication of news and to stop the dissemination of information as Powers given to Regulators are also Questionable.

Fake news is rampant and spreading fast these days. its distribution. Misinformation about a person, organization and country is a socially emergent abuse. The media publishes fake news. Facebook and Twitter are the leading social media platforms And Twitter has over 330 million users, making it a well-established and powerful social network. media platforms (Scheufele & Krause, 2019). Fake news poses a serious threat to news authenticity. Social networks and people's trust too. Fake news may contain misleading information (i.e., spread false claims, unknowingly sender's cognitive state) and confusion (again sending a false statement, only now actively by the sender). Many scientists associate misleading information with manipulation, ridicule, deception and propaganda. The definition of fake news refers to several terms that are closely related to it. Fraudulent news: unintentional journalistic errors, conspiracy theories, rumours something that doesn't match actual news reports, a humorous lie, is unlikely to be a political lie. Statements and stories that are indirect but not demonstrably false (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

A large body of research work and efforts have been focused on detecting fake news and building online fact-check systems in order to debunk fake news as soon as possible. Despite the existence of these systems, fake news is still wildly shared by online users. In the current media landscape of Pakistan, the spread of fake news poses a serious threat to the integrity of information and the overall welfare of society. Despite increased efforts to curb the spread of misinformation, challenges remain, hampering the implementation of effective preventive measures. This study examines the challenges of combating fake news in Pakistan, examining its impact on public perception, social cohesion and democratic processes and the focus is on understanding how harmful fake news is to Pakistani society. It explores newsrooms'

strategies for filtering content and preventing the spread of fake news, which is necessary for targeted interventions. The study evaluates the effectiveness of PEMRA in preventing fake news on news channels in Pakistan. With these findings, the study aims to offer fact-checked recommendations that provide a comprehensive approach to mitigating the negative impacts of fake news in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

- To get to Know Challenges of curbing fake news in Pakistan
- To Present Fact Check based Suggestions driven from the Interviews to counter fake news in Pakistan

Research Questions

- What Steps Newsroom take in Filtration of Content to avoid fake news?
- To What Extent PEMRA is successful in Countering Fake news in Pakistani News Channels?

Significance

This study significantly advances academic knowledge by scrutinizing the challenges associated with combating fake news, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of the complex dynamics involved in mitigating misinformation. The study, based on recommendations based on fact-checking findings from insightful interviews, aims to provide valuable information on effective strategies to combat fake news. This can not only benefit academia, but also contribute to the development of excellence in media and communication studies. The study also advances media literacy research by shedding light on the steps newsrooms take in filtering content and assessing the effectiveness of PEMRA. These ideas are useful for discussing issues in media education, journalistic practice, and the legal framework. By examining the social impact of fake news in Pakistan, the study fills a critical knowledge gap, providing academics with a solid basis for discussions about the broader impact of disinformation on public perception, social cohesion and democratic processes. The research findings on the effectiveness of PEMRA in combating fake news have direct policy implications. This encourages collaboration between scientists and policymakers to improve regulatory frameworks, creating an environment that effectively mitigates the harmful effects of misinformation.

Literature Review

Narwal (2018) highlights that fake news in the digital age spans multiple categories, including politics, subversion, finance, and entertainment, and often has overlapping motivations. Its influence is amplified through the Internet platform, which has low publishing costs, wide distribution and rapid dissemination, which promotes interaction and exchange of content between different groups and artificial intelligence agents that are automatically distributed; The term “fake news” has also been used to discredit opposing views. Fake news becomes a national security problem when it undermines social foundations such as social cohesion, government institutions and peace.

Haseeb Ur Rehman (2020) looks into how often fake news is on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter in Pakistani society as well as politics. It was discovered that fake news about the military, economy, politics, foreign relations, and religion got more shares and likes than fake news about other subjects. These articles gained attention even after they were exposed as fraudulent, demonstrating the impact of populism and cult following on Pakistani online social media consumers. The results corroborate previous research on the frequency, appeal, and dissemination of fake news in the West.

Kishwar and Zafar (2023) highlighted the alarming rise of fake news in Pakistan over the last decade. Their project aims to create a comprehensive database to detect fake news in Pakistan using various fact-checked news APIs. They used five machine learning methods (including Naive Bayes, KNN, logistic regression, SVM and decision trees) and two deep learning methods (CNN and LSTM) with GloVe and BERT embeddings. The LSTM model with the implementation of GloVe turned out to be the most effective. Additionally, the study examined misclassified samples based on human judgment.

Muhammad Hamza Tariq (2018) highlights the role of the Internet in exacerbating the problem of fake news, especially on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. These platforms have changed the way information is shared and made it more accessible. Fake news, which falls under the categories of misinformation and disinformation, can cause significant harm, with the latter harm being caused intentionally. Research shows that it has indirect negative effects on people, leading to violence and

hostility, affecting democracy, the economy and business. Given Pakistan's growing dependence on the Internet, the report aims to understand why people believe and share news, and propose policy options to combat disinformation based on criteria of effectiveness, fairness, social protection, freedom and security. Muhammad Jamil (2021) discussed that the global newsroom settings have changed as a result of the advent of mobile journalism, which gives journalists new opportunities to interact with viewers. Conventional media outlets create news content that reflects the structural shifts in the journalism business for handheld devices and applications. Ghana and Pakistan, two countries with quite distinct cultural backgrounds, are not an exception. On the other hand, questions have been raised regarding how mobile journalism may contribute to the spread of false information. This study examines how mobile journalism is changing news creation and spreading fake news in these nations using the ideas of convergence between the media and social responsibility. In addition to providing a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, the study employs qualitative techniques including document inspection and in-depth interviews.

Dhiman (2023) show that young people, especially those growing up in the digital age, can be badly impacted by being exposed to false information and fake news. False information can now spread more easily thanks to social media and online news sources, which has an impact on young people's decision-making, civic engagement, attitudes, and actions. Education professionals, parents, legislators, and other stakeholders need to pay attention to this issue. Young people may make educated choices that promote their well-being and the health of society by being helped to navigate the complicated world of information by being encouraged to think critically, be media literate, and practice responsible digital citizenship.

Ur-Rahman & Riaz (2020) Investigative that journalism has a key role in revealing concealed concerns within society. Investigative reporting in Pakistan is examined in this study, with particular attention on intra-, extra-, and within-media components. The findings demonstrate how media content is influenced by organizational sources of information, pressure groups, individual prejudices, employment risks, and financial limitations. According to the study, Pakistani journalism can accomplish its goals by addressing or reducing these issues, which will improve its capacity to reveal unreported stories.

Jahangir, R (2020) studied of Pakistani journalists found that while most information is checked before publication, fewer than one in five have received fact-checking training. Most people assume that formal fact-checking is the responsibility of news organization editorial staff. WhatsApp is considered the least reliable source of information for Pakistani journalists. Factors such as publicity, censorship, ratings races, time pressures, erosion of trust in the media and lack of resources make news outlets vulnerable to the spread of misinformation, according to a survey and interviews with 10 journalists in editorial positions.

Shahid (2020) Shahid, Ibrahim and Ullah (2020) found this in Mardan and Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan. The journalist gave an interview about this research generally understands "fake news" as information that is not true but with different content 16 Combating disinformation in Pakistan its procedural meaning (for example, statements rejected by the source, etc.) and it is not classified information that is theoretically false, false or incorrect. Local reporter thinks social media is a major source of disinformation and believes that sometimes "fake news" created for political or profit motives. Respondents also believed that it was harmful to society.

Research Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the entire process of rhetorical communication in popular political parties and journalists to shape political views, construct narratives, and establish popular agendas among people. As suggested by Sargeant (2012) qualitative research methods provide the best research design for in-depth exploration, understanding, and interpretation of social phenomena, so the researcher plans to use qualitative research method in this study. The sampling method used in this experiment was non-probability sampling. Not- Probability sampling is conducted using estimation techniques and is widely used Subjective research. Non-probability sampling is generally useful for exploration purposes. Research, such as pilot studies (the review is applied to a smaller sample than before) fixed instance size). It is used in experiments where there are time or cost constraints. It is

impossible to draw a random sample (Sharma, G., 2017). The study required a well-designed questionnaire to collect data, so a list of open-ended questions was developed and used to collect data in the form of face-to-face interviews with respondents. The methods employed by journalists who give interviews and use questionnaires to get information. To assess these tactics, the review and affectivity of each have also been examined. when formulating the questions. Each research question was thoroughly addressed with interview questions, and the replies from respondents were analysed and evaluated in the following chapter.

The conclusions drawn from participant interviews are provided in the next chapter, chapter four. The chapter also included a thematic analysis of the study's findings, which was followed by a discussion, suggestions for the future, and an outline of the study's limitations.

Data Analysis

Based on interviews with 10 key informants, the following challenges were identified regarding the challenges faced by Pakistani media channel's newsrooms.

Lack of comprehension among journalists

The media development interviewee said the effectiveness of Fake News responses involving journalists in Pakistan was limited due to the lack of conceptual understanding of misinformation among the journalist community. "I feel there is still unfortunately a lack of understanding about what misinformation is. A lack of understanding (of misinformation) exists in news consumers obviously, but it is also evident among news producers," the interviewee said. "Even senior journalists perhaps do not differentiate between analysis, opinion, facts, and information, and this also colors their own perceptions of Fake News." The interviewee said this assessment was based on the observation that when asked to quote examples of Fake News, journalists often shared instances that were simply opinions with which they did not agree. The interviewee believed Pakistan's polarized media industry and partisan news culture was to blame for it, and this polarization was leading journalists to make value judgments about opinions without looking at the core facts. The lack of comprehension also has a potential impact on policy solutions. Journalists have been a major interest group in the steps to counter Fake News in Pakistan. Therefore, research and policy consultations on online content regulation also rely on input from journalists. According to the interviewee, journalists who do not have a proper understanding of Fake News might propose or endorse problematic solutions such as legislation to curb Fake News through arbitrary removal of online content. Given Pakistan's history of controlling access to information, it is reasonable to think that such laws could be abused to endanger the legitimate online freedom of expression of citizens. The journalist interviewee agreed that Pakistani journalists still struggled with their own digital media literacy and since even the big media organizations do not have robust internal fact-checking systems, the vulnerability of journalists to mis- and dis-information has increased over time. One fact-checker interviewee spoke plainly regarding mainstream media practices. "The reporters (in Pakistani newsrooms) are not trained to think critically about information," the interviewee said. "They are told to file stories, and file them before everyone else. Editors do not care about fact-checking." This apparent indifference among journalists and news outlets might be due to structural and financial reasons.

Lack of transparency

In fact checking The journalist interviewee said transparency of methodology is a basic requirement for fact-checking and fact-checkers need to make it clear. The established fact-checking organizations, Soch Fact Check and AFP Pakistan Fact Check, clearly mention their methodology and offer a corrections or complaints mechanism in accordance with IFCN guidelines. However, the smaller voluntary initiatives have so far not fulfilled these best practices. "The biggest thing missing from the smaller fact-checking initiatives in Pakistan is transparency, which is not to blame them because it's a matter of resources too," the journalist said. "Some of the Twitter-based fact-checking accounts have not laid down their methodology." One of the fact-checkers interviewed for the study said credibility is needed for fact-checking organizations for people to take them seriously. The journalist said credibility leads to trust, which is essential in fact-checking. The fact-checkers' bias might show without a transparent methodology, making it difficult for the public to trust them, the journalist interviewee said. Moreover, in Pakistan, the language of the fact-checks can also reduce their effectiveness.

Language barriers

Usually the target audiences of some Fake News responses such as fact-checking are Internet users or the general public. The impact of existing fact-checking initiatives in Pakistan might be affected by the language they use to publish, according to the journalist interviewee. “The biggest challenge is language,” the interviewee said. “A lot of the initiatives address English media or English-speaking audiences, but Urdu is of course a big language for the audience in Pakistan and there is a short-coming in terms of countering Fake News in local languages.” The journalist interviewee said some of the fact-checking initiatives are posting in Urdu, but their output is not at a scale that could compare to the reach of local languages. In comparison, several fact-checking organizations in India now publish their checks in Hindi and other local languages. Apart from the financial and technical issues, some fact-checkers are also facing online abuse due to their work.

Political backlash

One fact-checker said they retain anonymity when publishing their checks because online trolls target them for political fact-checks. “When we check things being mis-represented by a political party, then we get reaction from its supporters,” the fact-checker said. “When we look at the profiles of the troll accounts, most of these accounts mention political party affiliations in their bios or photos.” The other fact-checker said their organization usually does not fact-check what the politicians say if it is rhetoric. “Unless (the politicians) speak about history, science, geography, economy – anything that can have a tangible factual inaccuracy, we do not pick the claim for fact-checking,” the second fact-checker interviewee said. “During election times, however, we do fact-check the websites (and manifestos) of political parties for factual inaccuracies.”

Monetization hindrances

Fake News responses do not operate in a vacuum, according to the interview respondents. Rather, the existing means of monetizing digital and broadcast news content influence the efficacy of the journalism-related Fake News responses. The journalist interviewee said that many Pakistani journalists have migrated to YouTube to set-up their online news channels and develop their personal journalism brands. There is a lot of sensationalism in their content on YouTube, according to the interviewee, because monetization works that way. The content views go down apparently if they do not sensationalize their videos. “If you don’t sensationalize, then your views might get reduced,” the interviewee said. “So they might spread false information (to get more views) because they have to monetize the content.” The media development interviewee agreed with this sentiment but in relation to mainstream broadcast and digital news. “A lot of the misinformation that seeps into the news media is juicy and it works for their (financial) benefit in terms of getting them viewership,” the interviewee said. “Whatever (the media) people are doing is selling, (even if it involves misinformation) and they think it is OK to remain in the same state.” For mainstream news organizations, it might be a “willingness issue” more than a “capacity issue”, according to the media development interviewee, who pointed out that it does not take extensive resources to develop and enforce a fact-checking policy for the big mainstream news outlets who can also afford to buy subscriptions to popular verification tools, most of which are free anyway. These observations are supported by the discussion by Nizamani (2019). In this context, the interviewee said the effectiveness of fact-checking training interventions becomes linked with the motivations of the individual journalists who attend the training. “Participants use the learning from the training according to their own levels of motivation. They cannot influence the policies and practices regarding verification and fact-checking inside the newsrooms,” the media development interviewee said. Beyond training, Fake News responses that deal with monitoring and fact-checking in Pakistan face their own set of challenges.

Sustainability of Fake News

Responses One fact-checker interviewee said sustainability was the biggest hurdle in the way of running a fact-checking organization in the country. “Fact-checking needs to pay for itself, (but) since it’s not a media platform where you can get ads and stuff, so you have to think about a business model,” the interviewee said. Several people have started voluntary fact-checking accounts on Pakistani Twitter as passion projects in the past. But it is difficult to sustain these beyond two to three months, the interviewee said, adding that “unless it is sustainable, it will be linked with individual effort and when the people

move on, the fact-checking initiative will collapse.” The media development interviewee also agreed that volunteer-based fact-checking initiatives struggle with sustainability and reach. “(The approach) with volunteer efforts is that we will do whatever we possibly can and beyond that, we’ll think about it later,” the interviewee said. Essential questions about the intended audience and intended impact of the fact checks get ignored in this approach, according to the media development interviewee. The journalist interviewee pointed out two other constraints affecting independent factchecking initiatives: lack of transparency and the publishing language of checks.

Recommendation & Conclusion

Fact-checking collaboration

Fact-checking services may also benefit from cross sectoral collaborations in Pakistan. Collaboration with news organizations: Many news organizations in Pakistan, especially the independent journalism startups, might not be capable of setting up their own fact-checking units because of resource constraints. Therefore, established fact-checking services can collaborate with news organizations to jointly publish checks or provide a news wire-like service. This will help factcheckers reach a wider audience.

Collaboration with civil society

First Check in India facilitates collaboration among journalists, medical professionals, and technologists to fact-check medical misinformation. Pakistani fact-checking services can also similarly collaborate with professional groups and civil society organizations to focus on checking specific themes of disinformation messages. The 2022 floods in Pakistan have also attracted online disinformation connected with natural disasters. With the newfound emphasis of the government to embrace narratives of climate change in the wake of the floods, an opportunity exists for fact-checkers and media to collaborate with civil society organizations to dispel disinformation that relies on climate change denialism. General elections in Pakistan are scheduled for 2023 and it is expected that the electoral process will be mired in political disinformation. The elections offer an opportunity for collaboration between media, fact-check organizations, and civil society organizations working on monitoring elections and electoral campaigns.

Collaboration with youth and academia

New and existing fact-checker organizations should explore collaboration with youth groups and universities, especially mass communication departments or journalism schools, for conducting orientation sessions for students, recruiting tech-savvy young people as fact-checkers, and setting up research labs at academic institutions on disinformation and fact-checking trends. This form of collaboration can address the gap in disinformation understanding among journalists by helping journalism students who are the future of the news industry to learn about disinformation concepts.

Training recommendations

These recommendations are about the capacity building of journalists to understand and counter disinformation.

Training areas: The capacity building of journalists should focus on developing conceptual clarity, improving familiarity with disinformation trends, and effectively investigating disinformation campaigns.

Improving the understanding of disinformation and fact-checking:

Based on the primary research done for this study, Pakistani journalists might still be struggling with the basic concepts of disinformation and are also interested in getting more fact-checking training. Special orientation sessions should be conducted with journalists, unions, press clubs, and news organizations to educate a critical mass of journalists about disinformation concepts, its types, local examples, motivations for spreading disinformation, and ideal policy responses to the menace of disinformation. These sessions can be followed up with technical training on fact-checking tools and practices.

Providing learning about social media manipulation

Advanced training on the way social media trends, especially on Twitter, are manipulated through organized disinformation campaigns or influence operations can help journalists better investigate the spread of disinformation and the actors behind the disinformation spread. 2.1.3 Writing a disinformation investigation professionally: Media development and journalism support organizations should conduct training sessions for Pakistani journalists to write effective disinformation investigative stories. As indicated by the study’s findings, journalists might struggle to write if no smoking gun evidence is found

or might not adequately be able to explain a complex investigation for layperson readers. Such training workshops could benefit from using case studies based on fact-checks already done by locally operating factchecking services, such as AFP Pakistan Fact Check and Soch Fact Check, and investigative disinformation story guides, such as Rappler's Shark Tank technique or BuzzFeed's disinformation network investigations.

Conclusion

In examining the challenges faced by newsrooms and regulators in Pakistan when countering fake news, the insights gathered from interviews with key informants shed light on critical issues that demand immediate attention. The identified challenges can be categorized into several key areas: lack of comprehension among journalists, lack of transparency in fact-checking, language barriers, political backlash, monetization hindrances, and sustainability of fake news responses.

The first significant challenge highlighted is the lack of comprehension among journalists. It is evident that a dearth of understanding about misinformation persists within the journalistic community, possibly exacerbated by the polarized media landscape in Pakistan. Senior journalists may struggle to differentiate between opinions, analysis, facts, and misinformation, impacting their ability to effectively combat fake news. This lack of comprehension also extends to proposed policy solutions, potentially leading to ill-conceived measures that could restrict online freedom of expression.

The lack of transparency in fact-checking emerged as another noteworthy challenge. While established fact-checking organizations follow international best practices, smaller voluntary initiatives often lack transparency due to resource constraints. The credibility of fact-checkers is crucial for public trust, and without transparent methodologies, biases may be perceived, undermining the effectiveness of fact-checking efforts.

Language barriers pose a substantial challenge, as many fact-checking initiatives primarily address English-speaking audiences, neglecting the vast Urdu-speaking population in Pakistan. The impact of fact-checks is limited by linguistic disparities, and efforts to counter fake news need to expand their reach in local languages.

Political backlash against fact-checkers, particularly when scrutinizing political claims, underscores the risks associated with this crucial task. Trolls and online abuse further hinder fact-checkers' ability to operate freely and independently, highlighting the need for protective measures.

The role of monetization hindrances in influencing journalistic practices is concerning. Journalists, driven by the need for views and sensational content, may inadvertently contribute to the spread of misinformation to maintain audience engagement. This issue extends to mainstream news organizations, where financial considerations may take precedence over the ethical imperative to combat fake news.

The sustainability of fake news responses emerges as a common thread, with volunteer-based fact-checking initiatives facing challenges in maintaining their efforts beyond short periods. A lack of transparency and reliance on individual efforts contribute to the vulnerability of these initiatives.

In light of these challenges, the research suggests several recommendations. Collaborations across sectors, including partnerships with news organizations, civil society, youth, and academia, can enhance the impact of fact-checking efforts. These collaborations can address resource constraints, expand reach, and foster a more comprehensive approach to countering misinformation.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of training initiatives. Journalists should receive specialized training on conceptual clarity, disinformation trends, and effective investigative techniques. Learning about social media manipulation and professional writing of disinformation investigations can equip journalists with the skills needed to navigate the evolving landscape of fake news.

In conclusion, countering fake news in Pakistan necessitates a multifaceted approach. Addressing challenges in comprehension, transparency, language, political backlash, monetization, and sustainability requires coordinated efforts from newsrooms, fact-checking organizations, regulators, and other stakeholders. By implementing the proposed recommendations, the media landscape in Pakistan can become more resilient in the face of misinformation, fostering a culture of accurate reporting and responsible journalism.

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