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Research Article

A Critical Analysis of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of Pakistan 1973

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Abstract

Fundamental rights form the bedrock of constitutional democracies, acting as vital safeguards for individual liberty, social justice, and the rule of law. In Pakistan, these rights are formally enshrined in Articles 8 to 28 of the 1973 Constitution, reflecting a commitment to both universal human rights principles and the nation's specific historical and cultural context. Despite the comprehensive nature of these constitutional guarantees, their practical implementation and enforcement face substantial and persistent challenges. These obstacles include ambiguities within the legal framework itself, systemic delays within the judicial system, deep-seated socio-economic disparities that create unequal access to rights, and the often-overriding influence of religious interpretations and national security imperatives. This article employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating doctrinal analysis of constitutional provisions, critical review of significant case law, and synthesis of empirical data from various national and international sources. It aims to provide a rigorous critical examination of the scope, enforcement mechanisms, and contemporary challenges related to fundamental rights in Pakistan. The study concludes by offering targeted policy recommendations designed to bridge the crucial gap between constitutional ideals and the lived realities of citizens, thereby contributing meaningfully to the ongoing discourse on democratic consolidation and the protection of human rights in Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

When it comes to basic rights, they are universally recognized as the most imperative footings of a fair, equitable, and democratic community. They are indispensable for guaranteeing the inherent dignity, freedom, and equality of all, individually and collectively, and constitute indispensable legal protection against arbitrary state power. Within the constitutional framework of Pakistan, the 1973 Constitution explicitly enshrines a comprehensive catalogue of these rights in its second part (Articles 8–28). It is also constitutional entrenchment that makes fundamental rights justiciable essentially meaning that they can be theoretically enforceable through the judicial system, which is the High Courts and the Supreme Court. While their inclusion in this chapter on fundamental rights was merely a procedural formality, the chapter was also a product of Pakistan's own legendarily bumpy historical development, being a struggle for self determination, social justice, and freedom at the hands of colonial rule. These constitutional provisions were intended to serve as the foundation upon which a society recognizing human dignity, encouraging freedom of the individual, and preparing the stage for full participation in political and social life could be established.

Quite apart from a mere symbolic declaration of intent, the ap^{er}gurali of fundamental rights in the constitution of Pakistan is a binding legal and moral obligation undertaken by the state to ensure justice and to actively prevent all forms of discrimination and to inculcate social harmony among people of diverse orientation in the land. Nevertheless, these rights have been consistently blocked from being fully and effectively realised by a myriad of deeply entrenched challenges. Political instability, recurrent tenure of military governments, legislative ambiguities that were inclined to subjugate individual liberty to state authority, and weaknesses in institutional systems covering different state organs have collectively deprived the consistency and efficacy of fundamental rights from persistence over many decades. On top, the interplay between religious interpretations, entrenched patriarchal cultural norms, and even overriding national security concerns further exaggerates the already huge gap between the lofty ideals of the Constitution and what many average citizens on the ground experience. These factors are invoked often, sometimes legitimately and often pretextually, to justify extensive limits on fundamental freedoms under broad national security, public orders, or social morality covers.

This article aims to provide a detailed and critical analysis of the status of fundamental rights within the constitutional and practical landscape of Pakistan. It delves deeply into their scope as defined by the constitutional text and subsequently interpreted, expanded, or sometimes limited by the judiciary. The study rigorously examines the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of existing enforcement mechanisms, including the role of the courts, statutory human rights bodies, and parliamentary oversight. Crucially, it scrutinizes the complex array of contemporary challenges—from legislative deficiencies and institutional capacity constraints to socio-economic barriers and cultural resistance—that impede the full realization of these rights for all citizens. By systematically integrating doctrinal legal analysis, landmark judicial pronouncements,

empirical data gathered from reputable national and international sources, and valuable comparative perspectives from other jurisdictions, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive, nuanced, and critical understanding of the state of fundamental rights in Pakistan. Furthermore, it endeavors to propose concrete, actionable, and contextually relevant policy recommendations specifically designed to bridge the critical and persistent gap between constitutional guarantees and their practical implementation on the ground. In doing so, the article aims to contribute meaningfully to the vital ongoing discourse concerning human rights protection, the strengthening of the rule of law, and the consolidation of democratic governance in Pakistan.

2. Methodology

This research employs a carefully constructed mixed-methods approach to ensure a comprehensive, rigorous, and critical analysis of fundamental rights within the specific constitutional and socio-political context of Pakistan. The methodology integrates several key analytical components to provide a multi-faceted and evidence-based understanding of the subject matter:

- **Doctrinal Analysis:** To begin its study, the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) is reviewed in an exhaustive style in a focused and specific manner regarding Articles 8 to 28 which constitutes the chapter on fundamental rights. It is a transactional analysis of language, implemented scope, constitutional limits and the built in uncertainties or uncertainties in constitutional provisions. It analyzes beyond the constitutions to look at related statutes which influence greatly, if not as extensively as the constitution Circuit has decided, on the exercise and enjoyment of fundamental rights. This important legislation scrutinised includes the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, the Anti Terrorist Act (ATA) 1997, blasphemy laws under the Pakistan Penal Code (Blasphemy laws) and Prevenue detention laws.
- **Qualitative review:** A Qualitative review of landmark and representative judgments by the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the High Courts is Case Law Review as a tool for achieving such objectives. The basic assumption of this critical assessment is that the judiciary has interpreted, and applied, expanded or (infrequently) limited fundamental rights over time. No doubt, some key cases of analysis are selected such as some foundational rulings like *Shehla Zia v. Mehram Ali v. WAPDA* (recognized environmental rights as part of the right to life), *Federation of Pakistan* (concerning due process in anti-terrorism courts), *Zaheeruddin v. Freedom of expression*, digital rights, against enforced disappearances and on gender justice, as well as more recent state (religions freedom mostly for minorities) outcomes. The aim of the analysis is to reveal the patterns of judicial reasoning, the role of judicial activism (or restraint) and practical impact of the judgment on the right protection.
- **Literature Review:** The research synthesizes findings from a diverse range of scholarly and policy-oriented sources. This includes peer-reviewed academic

articles published in reputable national and international law journals, authoritative books and monographs on Pakistani constitutional law, political science, and human rights, as well as policy reports, issue briefs, and working papers produced by prominent national and international think tanks and research institutions. Organizations such as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Commission of Jurists provide crucial contextual information, empirical evidence, and critical analysis concerning the ground realities, systemic challenges, and evolving landscape of fundamental rights protection and violation in Pakistan.

- **Empirical Data:** To ground the theoretical and legal analysis in tangible evidence, the study incorporates relevant statistical data and empirical findings from reliable sources. Official government publications, particularly the annual Economic Survey of Pakistan, provide data on socio-economic indicators relevant to rights realization (e.g., education enrollment, health outcomes, poverty rates). HRCP's comprehensive annual State of Human Rights reports offer detailed accounts of violations across various sectors. International indices, such as the Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index, the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index, and Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, provide comparative benchmarks and quantitative insights into governance quality and rights protection. Data from surveys conducted by organizations like the World Bank and UNICEF on issues like education access, child labor, and gender disparity are also utilized to illustrate implementation gaps and the scale of rights deprivations.
- **Comparative Analysis:** The analysis is enriched by the comparative dimension as they are strategically included in the study. It refers to constitutional rights frameworks, judicial doctrines and ways of enforcement in other relevant jurisdictions. The similarities in constitutional structure and India's Islamic republic status make it a key comparator as India shares a common law heritage with the UK. Therefore, the United States represents an established example of constitutional rights litigation and judicial review. The insights on transformative constitutionalism and the justiciability of socio-economic rights can be obtained from South Africa's post-apartheid constitution. Additionally, Pakistan's performance is assessed against its commitments under major international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which play a key role as examples of international standards to which Pakistan must conform and revise in case of a gap.

3. Literature Review

Constitutional Framework: Promises and Paradoxes

Fundamental rights (Articles 8–28) have been zealously formalised in the Constitution of Pakistan (1973) constituting a significant chapter of the Constitution that provides for the democratic values and the liberties of individuals. Included in this chapter is a wide list of rights, including civil and political rights such as the rights to life and liberty (Article 9), freedom of speech (Article 19), freedom of assembly (Article 16), freedom of association (Article 17), and freedom of religion (Articles 20–22). Furthermore, the provisions of certain socio-economic rights such as right to education under Article 25A of the Constitution, overall principles contained in Article 25 such as equality before law and Article 26 and 27 on non discrimination. Article 8 highlights the importance of these rights by voiding any law contrary to fundamental rights and by prohibiting the state from promulgating laws limiting rights provided for therein. The Constitution also, however, clearly gives the superior judiciary power to enforce these rights through writ jurisdiction (Articles 199 and Article 184(3)), theoretically in turn giving rights to an access to justice against state infringements.

Despite this constitutional framework being rife with tension and paradox. Rights are constitutionally guaranteed but many are amenable to numerous exceptions clauses which permit "reasonable restrictions" pursuant to law in the 'interest of the glory of Islam, integrity, security or defence of Pakistan, public order, decency or morality'. The vagueness as to what qualifies as a 'reasonable restriction' allows for the legislature and the executive to impose arrangements that may substantially restrict fundamental freedoms. The broad limitation clauses, however, notoriously can, and have been, invoked by critics to justify repressive legislation and state actions, especially repressing dissent, minority rights, and media freedom. In addition, the complex dynamic of constitutional's regards to Islam: e.g., Objectives Resolution as a substantive part (Article 2A), requirements of laws to conform to Islamic injunctions (Article 227) imply it. These provisions aim to capture the nation's identity, yet at other times can be interpreted in a manner that does not align with universally recognized human rights standards as it pertains to gender equality and the rights of religious minorities. It is a fundamental paradox within Pakistan's constitutional framework for fundamental rights that the country inherently seeks to address the tension between its universal rights norms and particular religious or security imperatives.

Judicial Interpretation: The Ebb and Flow of Rights Protection

Pakistani identity, on the other hand, has consistently sought to assert the role of the judiciary both through bold activism, and phases of restrained caution and deferral of state power. Fundamental rights jurisprudence has, to a significant extent, been shaped by the Supreme Court, especially through its interpretations, on high occasions, of Article 184(3) reclaiming Article 184(3) proceedings through such routes as PIL and sui motu. The Court has expanded the reach of existing rights in landmark cases. For instance, the *Shehla Zia v. Fawcett*, famously, WAPDA judgment interpreted Article

9, right to life, to include the right to a clean and healthy environment, setting the precedent for environmental justice litigation. It has also intervened to protect bonded laborers, attend to issues of public health, and more recently forced the Executive Branch to defend itself in cases of enforced disappearances, showing its broad power to be a check on Executive Branch actions and defender of the vulnerable.

Nevertheless, the judicial activism described here has not been applied without exceptions with respect to all rights or political contexts. But critics have also noted that the Court's treatment of fundamental rights has commonly been selective in ways influenced by prevailing political climate, specific interests of the bench or perceived institutional constraints. The judiciary has, in such matters concerning matters deemed to be sensitive, particularly national security agencies, blasphemy laws, and certain aspects of religious freedom, adopted a more cautious or deferential stance, and upheld laws or acts which substantially curtail fundamental rights. The unpredictability and lack of effectiveness of judicial review as a safeguard of rights has arisen from inconsistency in the application of principles of proportionality and necessity when reviewing restrictions to rights. In addition, systemic evils afflicting the larger justice system, such as incalculable case backlogs, procedural complexities, corruption, the absence of adequate legal assistance, and physical 'exclusion' of marginalized populations from courts, render the ordinary citizen incapable even of seeking and obtaining timely and effective remedies to violation of his fundamental rights, despite the potential for majorized judgments at the Apex level.

4. Results

Legal and Political Barriers to Enforcement

The analysis confirms that while Pakistan's Constitution provides a robust framework for fundamental rights on paper, their practical enforcement is frequently undermined by significant legal and political barriers. Security-related legislation, most notably the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), grants expansive powers to state agencies, often leading to actions that impinge upon due process, privacy, and freedom of expression. The broad and often vague language used in these laws allows for interpretations that prioritize state security over individual liberties, creating a climate where rights can be easily curtailed. Furthermore, political interference in the functioning of law enforcement and judicial processes remains a considerable obstacle, particularly in high-profile cases or those involving powerful state actors. Judicial backlogs compound these issues; data from PILDAT indicates that over two million cases were pending in Pakistan's superior and subordinate courts as of 2022, resulting in protracted delays that effectively deny justice, especially for marginalized individuals seeking enforcement of their fundamental rights.

Socio-Economic Disparities and Rights Realization

Extensive empirical evidence demonstrates that deep-lying socio economic inequities limit the equitable enjoyment of the fundamental rights across Pakistan. According to data from the Economic Survey of Pakistan, glaring disparities in access to basic

services crucial for exercising rights are disclosed. On the other hand, Article 25A guarantees free and compulsory education to children between the age of 5 and 16 years old, but official statistics reveal that about 22 million children are still out of school and girls, children living in rural areas, and those from low income households are the most disadvantaged.. Similarly, access to quality healthcare, clean drinking water, and adequate housing—all intrinsically linked to the right to life and dignity—is highly uneven, reflecting broader patterns of poverty and regional disparity. Gender-based violence remains alarmingly prevalent; HRCP reports indicate that a significant percentage of women experience domestic abuse, yet access to justice and support services is limited by social stigma, lack of awareness, and weak institutional responses. Women’s participation in the formal labor force and political representation also lags significantly, pointing to systemic barriers that prevent their equal enjoyment of economic and political rights.

Minority Rights and Religious Freedom Under Stress

Despite constitutional guarantees of religious freedom (Articles 20-22) and non-discrimination (Article 25), religious minorities in Pakistan continue to face pervasive discrimination, social hostility, and, frequently, violence. The misuse of blasphemy laws (Sections 295-B and 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code) remains a critical issue, often exploited for personal vendettas or to target religious minorities such as Christians, Hindus, and particularly the Ahmadiyya community, who face specific legal restrictions on their identity and religious practice. Accusations of blasphemy frequently lead to extrajudicial violence, including mob attacks and lynchings, often with inadequate response from law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, minorities face discrimination in employment, education, and political participation, contributing to their marginalization within society. Forced conversions, particularly of young Hindu and Christian women, are also reported frequently, highlighting the vulnerability of minority communities and the state's failure to provide adequate protection.

Freedom of Expression and Media Constraints

In Pakistan , freedom of expression and press freedom (Article 19) are heavily under strain. Headlines like this abound: International indices have regularly ranked Pakistan poorly in terms of media freedom, taking a backseat only behind those placed in the bottom 30% of the Reporters Without Borders 2023 World Press Freedom Index, ranked 150th out of 180 countries, citing censorship, intimidation, and violence against journalists. PECA are laws that are frequently used to penalise online dissent, monitor digital communications and jail persons who criticise state policies or institutions. Many journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders cited threats, harassment, arbitrary detention and physical attack thereby creating a climate of fear and self censorship of the media landscape. In addition, the state's regulatory bodies and indirect pressures put serious limits on the space for independent journalism and critical public discourse.

Digital Rights and Enforced Disappearances

But society is becoming more and more digitalized, creating new battlegrounds for the fundamental rights. More recently, the state's capacity for digital surveillance has increased, notably at a time where legal safeguards or independent oversight have not always been put in adequate place, leading Article 14 to be of significant concern. Authorities have shut down the internet during protests or periods of tension leading to political, lacking information and freedom of assembly. The longstanding issue of enforced disappearances has also been continually going on, more specifically targeting political activists, students and journalists in Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Although interventions by the courts and family activism of the missing have led to the calls, impunity for perpetrators remains the norm, a grave violation of the rights to liberty, security of person, and the right to due process.

Positive Judicial Interventions and Civil Society Resilience

During this period of such significant challenges, we have nevertheless had moments of positive developments, sometimes thanks to judicial activism, and sometimes because of the resilience of civil society. At times, the superior courts have extended fundamental rights in such a way that the right to healthy environment has been recognized in *Shehla Zia v.s WAPDA*. A recent legislative effort to enhance transparency is the introduction of Article 19A (Right to Information) through the 18th Amendment, while it remains unevenly. However, civil society organizations such as HRCP, PILDAT, legal aid groups and women's rights groups continue to yield an important role as they document abuse and provide advice, lobby for reforms and public awareness of fundamental rights that come up in the face of rising regulatory and security risks.

5. Discussion

The Persistent Gap: Constitutional Ideals vs. Ground Realities

Its stark results show the persistent and often widening gap between the fundamental rights that are conferred by the Constitution of Pakistan and the lived experiences of citizens of Pakistan. The constitutional text seems to offer a strong framework, but it is limited in its practical application by a host of factors. Furthermore, because the state has frequently invoked broad and vaguely defined 'reasonable restriction' on the basis of national security, public order, and, in particular, Islamic values, it has often used them as pretexts to curb essential freedoms, namely freedom of speech, assembly and religion. This trend is embodied in laws such as the ATA and PECA, which confer too much power on too few state agencies, secure through insufficient safeguards against abuse, so that rights exist rather than are protected. The fact that this gap is not just a failure of implementation reveals important functional questions about the state of balance of power between institutions, the power of non elected bodies, and the general political culture of the country.

The Judiciary's Ambivalent Role: Guardian or Gatekeeper?

It is too complex and ambivalent a position for the Pakistani judiciary to take in the enforcement of fundamental rights. The constitutional mandate and, on rare occasions, will to act as guardians to citizens' rights via their PIL judgments and suo motu interventions are possessed by the superior courts, but generally their record is inconsistent. Almost always, judicial activism appears selective, influenced by political and institutional dynamics, judge (s)'s personal inclinations, etc.. The judiciary often demonstrates caution or deference in high-profile, high stakes cases involving the military establishment or intelligence agencies in such sensitive religious matters, and hence tends to be an effective gatekeeper and not a protector of rights. Delays further diminish the effectiveness of courts by turning what amounts to a chronic issue of judicial backlogs into a problem for which litigants may simply receive remedies that end up rendering little — and often, there's no longer a guarantee of enforcing any — meaning in their case. But one continuing tension marks the judiciary's struggle to stand apart and to avert consistently applying constitutional principle in the face of external pressure: the independence of the judiciary.

Socio-Economic Determinants of Rights Enjoyment

The finding also shows that the enjoyment of the fundamental rights in Pakistan is inequitably distributed based on economic status. To millions engulfed in poverty, illiteracy, and exclusion from basic services, formal and legal promises of equality, dignity, the right to life or even the right to vote is a mere mockery. There is a lack of adequate funding for public education and healthcare in the state despite the constitutional provisions such as Article 25A, hence cycles of exclusion continue to affect millions and they are stripped of their socio-economic rights and limited in exercising civil and political rights in-effectually. Sexual discrimination is perhaps the most explicit as women are disempowered in nearly all their activities in education, workforce, politics and human security. Confronting such forms of entrenched socio-economic inequalities is not simply a function of development interventions but has to do with the literal fulfillment of rights for citizens.

Vulnerable Groups: Minorities and Women

While the treatment of religious minorities and women demonstrates how the state's obligation to protect the Europeans' fundamental rights comes under great pressure from different sides. Nevertheless, constitutional provisions on the protection of the rights to religious freedom and non-discrimination are continuously breached, and religious minorities are subjected to legal persecution through blasphemy laws, social intolerance and, frequent incidences of violence, in many cases, with impunity. The failure of the state to repeal or reform such anti-gay laws and to offer adequate protection leaves the affected individuals living in fear and insecurity. Still, the female gender lives in fear due to high prevalence of discrimination from culturally instilled patriarchal attitudes, lack of protection from violence in law, and constrained access to justice. While the laws have been enacted to a certain extent (laws against domestic

violence and harassment), the laws are not well implemented and even in those cases, cultural barriers make it difficult for women to stand up against violation of their rights. The situation of these vulnerable groups can therefore be used as a benchmark to measure the state of affairs in the safeguard of basic rights in the country.

The Digital Frontier and Shrinking Civic Space

Autonomous technologies have proved to be a double-edged sword for the people of Pakistan as it brought new imprints of the need of basic rights in the digital era. Although technology opens the door to self-organizing and communication it also centralizes power and on the heels of this new communication technology comes with a new media control complex. Specifically, PECA has been employed to silence dissent, attack critics, and spy on the citizens' communication, without adherence to legal procedural standards. Intentional interruption the internet in the interest of security reasons or to maintain law and order the is a form of punishment that violates citizens' rights to information, freedom of speech, and assembly. This coupled with increased repression and regulation of NGOs and civil society organizations present the prospects of a diminishing civil space where the fundamental freedoms are being practiced as more and more dangerous. This happens because it is rather complicated to ensure proper legal and regulatory regimes governing cyberspace while at the same time preventing security threats and preserving freedoms of speech and privacy.

The Role of International Pressure and Comparative Lessons

International human rights and comparative constitutionalism could therefore present directions for enhancing human rights in Pakistan. Pakistan's domestic laws and practices can be compared with its international treaty obligations and recommendations of UN bodies can act as a pressure for reform. But, international influence can also be restrained by the transit political factors such as geopolitics, sovereignty argument or cultural diplomacy. There are lessons to be learned depending on the similarity of the experience or from the neighbors, such as India or other Democratic Nations facing similar challenges. There are a range of possible models that could be considered, including India's more stable PIL jurisprudence or South African approach to socio-economic rights. Finally, it can be claimed that only concrete domestic political will and institutional commitment, which is fostered rather than initiated by outside actors, can lead to truly sustainable advancements.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the critical analysis, several policy recommendations emerge:

- **Legislative Reform:** Urgently review and amend restrictive laws, including PECA, ATA, and blasphemy statutes, to bring them into conformity with constitutional guarantees and international standards. Define "reasonable restrictions" more narrowly and ensure proportionality tests are rigorously applied.
- **Judicial Strengthening:** Implement comprehensive judicial reforms to reduce backlogs, enhance judicial independence (particularly of the lower judiciary),

improve case management, expand legal aid services, and provide continuous training to judges on human rights principles.

- **Socio-Economic Rights Implementation:** Develop and implement time-bound, adequately funded national action plans to realize the right to education (Article 25A) and improve access to healthcare, clean water, and housing, with a focus on marginalized regions and groups.
- **Protection of Vulnerable Groups:** Enforce existing laws against gender-based violence and discrimination more effectively. Take concrete steps to protect religious minorities, including reforming blasphemy laws, prosecuting perpetrators of violence, and promoting interfaith harmony.
- **Safeguarding Civic Space:** Protect freedom of expression both online and offline by repealing overly broad censorship laws, ensuring the safety of journalists and human rights defenders, and fostering an enabling environment for civil society organizations.
- **Institutional Capacity Building:** Strengthen statutory human rights institutions (like the National Commission for Human Rights) and parliamentary oversight mechanisms to enhance accountability for rights violations.

6. Conclusion

The constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan reveals a well thought out and attempt a fairly good provision for fundamental rights of citizens in an ideal Islamic state with the vision to delivery of social justice, equality and liberty. As this critique shows, there remains a worrying disconnect between the constitutional vision and experience of country's population. The rights in the Charter are routinely violated by legislation limiting rights under the guise of security or religious considerations, the lack of constancy and fairness from the judiciary, socio-economic disparities, and political culture that does not promote vigorous protection of rights.

Examples of challenges include the proliferation of laws such as peca which chips away at freedom of expression and a negative trajectory of religious minorities through discriminations and violence especially because of blasphemy laws, denial of gender equality despite basic constitutional recognition despite constitutional recognition, lack of provision of education to millions of children despite constitutional provision, The judiciary has acted progressive at times, Though it has not been able to deliver efficiently due to internal issues and external factors thus provision of protection has been limited. These issues are further worsened by socio-economic factors, making constitutional rights unattainable or even insignificant for certain communities.

They thus remain productive groups despite the aforementioned difficult circumstances. The basic recognition of the rights with the help of significant judicial verdicts, the formulation of the Right to Information, and consistent support of CSOs are the small rays of hope that show the possible directions. Ensuring the respect for constitutionalism and the rule of law in practice requires a comprehensive approach

that includes legislative changes for the realization of progressive constitutional rights, judicial independence and capacity, measures to address socio-economic injustices, protection of vulnerable groups, and the maintenance of civic space. In the end restoring fundamental rights in Pakistan demands more than structural changes, but change in the political psyche of the country to undertake a 'Rights Revolution'.

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Eyewitness Identification Procedures: A Study on the Effectiveness and Reforms

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Abstract

Eyewitness identification is a critical element of the criminal justice system despite the fact that it leads to a majority of wrongful convictions because of the errors and biases that characterize it. Despite its central importance, current identification protocols systematically miss information sources that might otherwise prevent them from being reliable, such as system and estimator factors. This work fills a significant research void because it not only provide an assessment of extant processes but also offers practical recommendations aimed at reducing mistakes. Based on the findings of empirical and legal studies introduced in this work, we shall pinpoint procedural vulnerabilities and map suggestions for improvement. The objectives of this study are threefold: The primary goals of the current work can be divided into three objectives: (1) the investigation of relations between system and estimator factors on eyewitness accuracy; (2) the evaluation of existing procedural reforms including double-blind administering and sequential lineups; (3) the development of a variation checklist that would ensure the improved reliability and brightness of all criminal investigative procedures. If these reforms are put into practice, then there would be considerable decrease in the number of misidentification and more accountability to judicial processes.

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Introduction

Eyewitness account has been assumed for several years as one of the most solid sources of accruing evidence and conviction in criminal proceedings that may affect the jury and the judgment of the case (Wells & Olson, 2003). Advantage: Can furnish direct descriptions of a crime, and even give the suspect, when other sources of evidence are lacking. Nonetheless, eyewitness identification, as claimed by many scholars, is not always accurate but, instead is prone to errors and when the worst comes to the worst, it produces disastrous effects.

Eyewitness also face the problem of post-identification that is a common cause of false identification where the witness is seen to have picked the wrong person. According to The Innocence Project (n.d.), eyewitness errors lead to about 70% of wrongful cases that were overturned due to DNA. This fact only points to the system flaws within current identification processes which are filled with risks. There are several sources of suggestivity in the research that has been showing those elements that aggravate an estimator and make a witness incapable to identify accurately and recall suspects; stress, inadequate illumination, cross-race identifications, and, a weapon (Clark, et al., 2008; Pezdek & Blandon-Gitlin, 2005). Moreover, system variables: line-up suggestions, and other unbiased influences from related law enforcement (Wells et al., 1998), also raise the risk rates for misidentification.

The implications of such mistakes are immense as they have impacts on those wrongfully arrested and convicted, their families and the community in terms of trust on criminal justice system. Besides, these errors create chances that the actual offenders will never be charged, thus continuing to be a menace to society (Garrett, 2011). Solving these challenges concerns critical assessment of the current practices and the existence of effective procedural security measures.

The purpose of this research is to present practice with the findings of existing studies regarding the current eyewitness identification process and discern research-based change. More precisely, this research is designed to (1) establish which factors have an impact on the accuracy of eyewitness identification, (2) evaluate the potential effectiveness of proposed reforms including double-blind administration, the sequential lineup, and the standardized instructions, and (3) give suggestions about how these reforms should be adopted and implemented in jurisdictions. In achieving these objectives, this study aims at helping develop better and fairer identification mechanisms that enhance the efficiency of the justice delivery system.

Methodology

This research utilizes a qualitative review approach to assess the current eyewitness identification processes and their reforms. The nature of knowledge which dictates the choice of a method is more easily achieved using a qualitative approach for this study as it involves an analysis of earlier studies, laws, and policy recommendations related to eyewitnesses, consequently providing a better understanding of the factors

influencing eyewitness accuracy and the efficiency of the suggested procedural reforms.

Description of Qualitative Review Methods

It has a systematic approach to the use of scholarly published peer-reviewed journals, case laws, policy briefs, and expert opinions regarding eyewitness identification. The method of searching and analysis of the relevant literature was carried out with reference to some guidelines which allowed main issues and findings to be revealed. Specifically, the focus was on works that assess estimator variables self-administration (stress, cross-race effects, environmental conditions), and system variables (lineup procedures, administration techniques etc.). Furthermore, sources evaluate the effects of reforms, for example, the double-blind administration and sequential lineups were chosen.

The review process involved:

- **Database Search:** Performing searches in the peer reviewed academic databases including PubMed, JSTOR, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar using keywords such as eyewitness identification, misidentification in criminal justice system, lineup processes and reforms in eyewitness evidence.
- **Thematic Analysis:** Division of information under separate themes: mistakes in the procedure, sources of mistakes in identification, results of the changes that are suggested.

Criteria for Source Selection

To ensure the reliability and validity of findings, the following criteria were used to select sources:

- **Relevance:** For this systematic review only such articles and papers were included that are directly related to eyewitness identification, its problems, or changes. Particularly, only research on the specific aspects of the criminal justice system were taken into consideration; research unrelated to the above-stated considerations was excluded.
- **Credibility:** These sources included academic peer-reviewed journals, governmental reports, and well-established nonprofit organisations (such as APA and Innocence Project). Only those sources that could be retrieved from scholarly databases, were considered for analysis; the sources from questionable publishers, as well as the sources prepared with evident bias, were excluded.
- **Recency:** Due to constant developments in this area, special focus was paid to publications from the last 15 years, however, basic articles which introduced the main concepts and tendencies were included too.

- **Jurisdictional Diversity:** Sources from different jurisdictions were used to obtain sample on impression of Eyewitness Identification and reforms across the world.
- **Empirical Evidence:** Special emphasis was made in selecting articles that employed an empirical research design, including experimental research and meta-analyses to increase the validity of the results.

Literature Review

Eyewitness identification has been the subject of extensive research, and its accuracy has been researched in different contexts. They are collectively grouped as system variables where the justice system has some measure of control over them and estimator variables where the justice systems has no control over them but they affect the degree of reliability of the witnesses. The issues relating to these factors and problems arising from existing procedures are discussed in detail in this section.

Factors Affecting Eyewitness Accuracy

Estimator Variables

Estimator variables include several environmental psychological and contextual factors which determines a witness's ability to perceive and report that event. Stress and anxiety levels during a criminal event was found to significantly determine the accuracy of memory. Although moderate stress improves memory encoding, studies suggest that high levels are likely to depress accuracy in line with eyewitness identification (Deffenbacher et al., 2004). Another factor that is valid to discuss here is about weapon linger effect that is that the focus on the weapon during crime will leave a lasting impression on the mind of the witness and hinder him from remembering other aspects of the criminal such as his face (Stebly, 1992). Thus, the cross-race effect represents concerns, since people are less accurate when it comes to identifying members of the other race, a prejudice reported in meta-analyses more often (Meissner & Brigham, 2001).

Lighting and visibility conditions during the event also largely determine possibility of the witness to see and recall different aspects. This is because; inadequate light source may result into shuffled memory, whereby complete images are not well developed or are slightly distorted thus making identification to be a mere guess work (Wells & Olson, 2003). The choosen length of exposure is another important aspect; longer exposures contribute to better identification of the perpetrator while short exposure times lead to lower identification performance (Memon et al., 2003). Secondly, age of the witness has been known to affect identification outcome and children and elderly people are likely to make more errors than the young adult (Pozzulo & Lindsay, 1998). Finally, information given after an event, for example, exposure to doctored details through suggestive questioning or watching television can seriously skew a witness's memory even if that information is not accurate (Loftus, 2005). Altogether, these factors bar show how a number of conditions may interrelate in order to affect the validity of such eyewitness identification.

System Variables

The procedural control variables that are the aspects under the discretion of law enforcement that have a high effect on the accuracies of the eyewitness identification. Of all the factors, one that is considered to be very crucial is the Fillers Choice where one has to make choice fillers which are people that are not suspects. Not surprisingly, when lineups are constructed ineptly with similar fillers, not unlike the suspect or even consistent with the witness report, there is likely to be a high rate of misidentification (Malpass & Devine, 1981). The second factor is a lineup presentation. Lineups where all the members are displayed to the witness at one time makes the identification process be based on relative judgments, which are Evaluate how the current structure of lineups commonly adopted as either being simultaneous, i.e. all individuals in the lineup are shown to the witness at once, leads to relative judgments in which the witness is merely comparing the individuals in front of her/ him to each other and not the perpetrator. Whereas, procedure wherein suspect is presented one at a time, simply pushes the button for absolute identification and has been found to being less erroneous than the simultaneous line-ups (Stebly et al., 2001).

They fail also to include instructions to witnesses which has equally a crucial role to play. Despite desires to initiate a lineup and select an individual despite thinking that the perpetrator might not be present witnesses may be pressured to make easier identification leading to higher false positives (Clark, 2005). However, lineup administrator's impression is considered as a critical system factor. In non-blind lineup administration the officer who is administering the lineup knows which suspect is the correct one, and so there is an independent influence on the witness which can in some way undermine the identification process (Wells et al., 1998). When these factors mentioned above are addressed, then law enforcement shall make a lot of progress and be in a position to provide accurate and fair identifications from eyewitnesses.

Problems with Current Procedures

In light of these documented problems with eyewitness identification procedures techniques have remained flawed and continue to be used in many jurisdictions throughout the United States. A very concerning problem is the so-called non-blind lineup, during which the officer, who is conducting lineup, knows the identity of the suspect. It elevates the likelihood of first precursor influencing the witness because even the least signal by the administrator may affect identification (Wells et al., 2020). Accordingly, the formation of inconsistent patterns of the given directions also disparage the reliability of consistent instructions particularly the failures in standardizing issuance of directions to witnesses. This variability in witness perception and witness performance during the lineup, caused by confusing or differing instructions, increases the potential for those witnesses to make an incorrect identification (Wogalter et al., 1992).

Yet another issue is the reliance on confidence statements as one of the most important elements of reporting. Through an analysis of such cases, it becomes clear that confidence that a witness displays often leads to the court dismissing doubts. However, it has found that confidence is not necessarily always indicative of the identification accuracy which is especially true when confidence is measured after some period after the event or after the source is reinforced by an external source (Wixted et al., 2016). The underlying problem is worse when lineups are done haphazardly, that is, when lineups contain filler individuals who are highly dissimilar to the suspect. This makes it easy for the suspect to stand out and this leads to biased identification (Valentine & Heaton, 1999).

Furthermore, the lack of documentation of procedures is another significant drawback when applying the current strategies. There are concerns that pre-videotaped identification is conclusive and corruptible forces may tamper with the identification process, lacking assessment of the video recordings it is complicated to assess the objectivity of the assessment procedure. To correct these enduring issues, the existing issues that prevent the validation of eyewitness identification practices must be given a systemic fix for its reliability and fairness. This is because issues such as eliminating inequalities, avoiding impartiality, and establishing actual record-keeping are core measures to avoid mistakes that endanger justice.

Empirical Evidence of the Problem

There are overwhelming evidences generically and academically pointing towards high rates of eyewitness mistakes. The Innocence Project (n.d) indicates that in DNA exoneration, the witness misidentification was the leading cause at 69 percent. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative results have revealed that system and estimator variables influence identification accuracy in experimental studies (Wells & Quinlivan, 2009).

Proposed Reforms:

Eyewitness identification is an extremely valuable tool in the prosecution of criminals, nevertheless, if not properly conducted then this tool becomes the problem, and efficiently considering the number of cases where this technique lead to wrongful convictions is necessary. It is true that few evidence-based reforms proposed and have received support from research includes the following.

- **Double-Blind Lineup Administration:** Another incredibly important reform is the enforcement of the double blind lineup that is the lineup administrator does not know the identity of the suspect, and the witness also does not know the suspect's identity. This method reduces unnecessary signals that are likely to compel the witness to testify in the required direction. Wells et al., 1998 did note, however, that due to procedural checks of control, double blind administration would minimize the likelihood of suggestive influences and hence the identifications are influenced by the memory of the witness.

- **Sequential Lineup Presentation:** Studies have also revealed that methods such as showing the suspects to the witness one at a time and not all at once, also greatly minimizes relative judgments. Steblay et al. (2001) computed a meta-analysis of various studies that established that sequential lineups possess a considerably lower rate of false positives as opposed to simultaneous lineups, but with identical correct identifications.
- **Standardized Witness Instructions:** Another change is offering witnesses clear standardized instructions when offering them a lineup also. Warning of the lineup for witnesses should include information that the actual offender might, or might not be present in the lineup and that the witnesses do not have to make any identification. For instance, Clark confirmed in his study conducted in 2005, that RTL eliminate elevated false positive rate and assist witnesses to have the correct approach to the lineup process.
- **Confidence Statements:** Capturing the witness confidence levels right after the identification of the suspects is another element of reform towards independent evaluation of the quality of the testimony. Some of the work done includes Wixted et al. (2016) pointed out that the confidence statements which is timed at identification are more reliable to the accurate one come at a later time. This practice assists courts to determine the reliability of eyewitness information much more effectively.
- **Videotaping Procedures:** The videotaping of the entire lineup process also serves as inventory to check the process and ensure that fairness was served. A video recording of a witness is an exhaustive process to evaluate later on whether the applicable procedures have been adhered to or not, and whether the witness has been influenced at any point. Garrett (2011) noted that videotaping is an essential technique relevant to the process by which the credibility of identification processes is enhanced, and any alterations are captured on video for the right actions to be taken.

Results and Discussion

Now, reforms for eyewitness identification have proved to have positive effects on the increase in speed, accuracy, and reliability of witness identification but these are not implemented without hindrances. This part discusses the results of these reforms, the challenges that organizations face while implementing them and different experiments that can serve as examples.

Impact of Reforms on Accuracy and Reliability

Research evidence points to the fact that implementation of evidence based reforms even improves the accuracy and credibility of identification by eyewitnesses. Reviews have indicated that there is a decrease of biases from the side of the lineup administrators where the process is done under blindfold (Wells et al., 1998). Like the methods outlined above, the sequential lineup presentation method reduces false

identification rates since witnesses base their decisions on memory rather than relative comparisons (Stebly and her team, 2001).

This was accompanied by fewer false positive results which have also been known to be caused by the use of standardized instructions. Thus explaining to witnesses that the perpetrator might not be there, such pressure is reduced, and the reliability of their choices is increased (Clark, 2005). Additionally, confidence statements obtained within the identification stage reduce the time between the identification and recording of confidence level, which gives a sensible index of their certainty during identification procedure hence helping in evaluating credibility of witness's testimony (Wixted et al., 2016). Last, the use of video-taping help in increasing transparency and accountability, thus helping in checking whether the identification was done fairly besides helping in the assessment of the procedure's fairness (Garrett, 2011).

Challenges in Implementing Reforms:

Efforts aimed towards the reform within the organizations of law enforcement agencies, despite as being central to the realization of the goals of the policing reforms, is faced with several challenges that prevent their broad and effective application. This is a challenge that originates from the agencies as they resist change of a new system. In many police organizations traditional practices and the modes of working have become a part of their organizational culture. Changing procedures or technologies is always met with some resistance because people would not want any changes that may upset their schedules. This is aggravated by the idea that reforms involve attitudes towards the criticism of current practices, which may cause the development of various defensive attitudes among the officers and leadership. Organizational resistance is also rife in this respect because many organizational departments are costly to implement due to the need to purchase new equipment to enhance reforms, overhaul infrastructural facilities in order to fit new reforms, and develop professional training programs that can effectively address the physical needs of officers (Wise et al., 2009). The fear of loss of normal business and time taken to train the people also reinforces people's resistance to change.

The other major issue emanates from the string of state laws and policies formulated across the United States and makes it hard to adopt reforms uniformly. As in most of the regions in the United States, policing is decentralized meaning practices in this function are regulated by the local and state laws. Such decentralization results to situations where the polices and procedures concerning reforms differ from region to region hence, we have uneven implementation of reforms. That is, some states have legal prescriptions concerning the usage of body cameras or certain de-escalation training, while others do not have an adequate legislation address for it. Lack of standardized structures also prevents the necessary spread of ideal models of change throughout the entire country and erodes the population's confidence in the police by causing inconsistencies in its work in various regions (Wells et al., 2020). Where the political or public backing of reforms is not very strong, a lack of less legal rails also lowers the chances of implementation.

Budget constraints therefore remain another and crucial challenge to the reforms, especially in small or less well-endowed police forces. These departments generally work under very constrained resources and therefore very little is earmarked for new tools and training. Change which involves the implementation of body worn camera, video-taping interrogation or improved data system entail a lot of expenses which some police departments may not afford. Introducing these tools to the training of officers and preparing them to embrace the change and adjustment to new procedures is an additional cost factor, and since training has to occur, officers have to be pulled off of the streets to attend training sessions. Small departments or those found in rural settings are most likely to experience these challenges since such departments can be unable to obtain grants or find other sources of funding easily like their larger colleagues. Lack of funds and naissance in the technological front meaning that the corresponding departments cannot afford to offer the standards of the modern day policing reforms thus been representatives of the disparities and inefficiencies in the general policing system (Innocence Project, n.d.). These issues shows enmity for reform strategies and emphasize the strategy to cope with the problems, including resistance, legislative incoherencies and resource inequalities.

Examples from Jurisdictions That Adopted the Reforms

These reforms have been implemented in several jurisdictions and replicate such reforms' feasibility and efficacy. For example, New Jersey implemented a number of rather broad eyewitness identification reforms in 2011 to include double-blind lineup administration and standardized witness instructions. A study of these reforms revealed that their outcome was an enhanced accuracy of identification by eyewitnesses.

Another state that Texas that formerly had some of the highest wrongful conviction rates has also adopted eyewitness identification reforms. The Texas Senate Bill 1611 enacted in 2011 requires best practices such as double-blind in the administration of lineups and in using sequential lineups. These changes have made a big positive impact and minimized cases of misidentification and wrongful conviction in the state according to Garrett (2011).

North Carolina followed the same in 2007 by setting new requirements for law enforcement agencies to employ standardized instructions and record the confidence of the witnesses. Looking at the particular state's reforms, it was found that there has been enhanced procedural rationality as well as the confidence in eyewitness evidence (National Institute of Justice, 2019). Based on the research evidence it can therefore be concluded that reforms to the practice of eyewitness identification have resulted in better outcomes than before. However, there is still resistance to change, lack of financial and other resources, and difference in policy enactment, which needs to be managed so that these reforms extend further. The examples of the completed reforming work in New Jersey, Texas, and North Carolina show that such changes can be made successfully to enhance the criminal justice situation.

Conclusion

Eyewitness identification continues to be part of the criminal justice system and at the same time can be untrustworthy. Lastly, this paper uncovers the inherent problems and system deficiencies that come with modern identification approaches, as well as the working usefulness of evidence-based changes. The findings of the present study point to the fact that both estimator factors (stress, weapon focus, cross-race effect, and post-incident information) and system factors (lineup composition, method of presenting or conducting the lineup and instructions given to the witnesses) play a major role in determining the accuracy of eyewitness identification. These cumulatively make the rate of misidentification high, an aspect, research shows, is a frequent cause of wrongful convictions (Innocence Project, n.d.; Wells et al., 1998). Findings from implementing the reforms include double-blind lineup administration, sequential presentation of lineups, and clear and consistent instructions bearing fruitful results of identification credibility. Double-blind procedures reduce bias from the lineup administrators and lineup presentation in sequence that reduces the distortion by witnesses making relative comparisons. Also, the previously mentioned witness's instructions and confidence statements, made at the time of identification, possess important information for assessing the reliability of testimony (Stebly et al., 2001; Wixted et al., 2016). Recording processes also help to increase openness and the compliance with correct practices that must be conducted (Garrett, 2011). Nevertheless, even in these cases, the effectiveness of such changes has been shown, but the implementation confronts difficulties as lack of support from police, the lack of funds, and differences in practice between one state and another. It is for this reason that responding to these challenges is crucial, in order that justice prevail, and in turn, citizens may remain confident in legal proceedings.

Call for Nationwide Adoption of Reforms

The results of this research therefore call for the implementation of eyewitness identification reforms across the country. The present complex system of practices across jurisdictions fosters a disqualified methodology of criminal investigation thereby denying its fairness and accuracy. Standard procedural processes must be set across the country within which every police department must operate, this would eliminate the vices that lead to wrongful conviction and also improve the deficit area in the justice process. The policy-makers should ensure that reforms like the double-blind administering of lineup, sequential presentation, standard instructions, and videotaping become legal reforms in both federal and state institutions. Further, enough funding resources and training courses should be provided to the law enforcement bodies to implement these actions. These measures can be fortified by public campaigns that would draw communities' attention to the problems concerning accurate identity lineup identification and its role in the legal process. In conclusion, reforms based on the best available evidence become an imperative across all jurisdictions. If the criminal justice system corrects the weaknesses arising from the use of eyewitness identification, fewer mistakes will be made, and less innocent

people will be imprisoned; the public's trust in the system is also likely to improve. Anyone with the power to create change must do so promptly and work for fairness, accuracy, and justice for everyone.

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Research Article

NFC (National Finance Commission) & Its Impacts on Provinces

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Abstract

The National Finance Commission (NFC) Awards are a constitutional mechanism in Pakistan designed to ensure equitable fiscal resource distribution between the federal government and provinces. Since their inception under the Constitution of 1973, these awards have evolved significantly, addressing complex issues of fiscal federalism and regional disparities. The NFC's historical reliance on population as the sole criterion for resource allocation created inter-provincial tensions, particularly disadvantaging smaller, underdeveloped provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Landmark reforms introduced in the 7th NFC Award of 2009 expanded the divisible pool and adopted a multi-dimensional formula, incorporating factors such as poverty, revenue generation, and population density. This resulted in increased fiscal autonomy for provinces, particularly benefiting Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. However, challenges remain, including political disagreements, inefficient governance, and inadequate tax collection mechanisms at the provincial level. While the NFC Awards have improved education and infrastructure outcomes, sectors like health and poverty alleviation continue to struggle. Future reforms must address governance inefficiencies and include emerging factors like environmental risks to ensure equitable development. By fostering collaboration and improving fiscal management, the NFC Awards have the potential to promote national unity and sustainable growth across provinces.

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1. Introduction to National Finance Commission (NFC)

Federation is essential and at the heart of public policy discussions. At the municipal, provincial/state, and national levels of governance, it may identify the winners and losers. The key choices pertaining to federation and governance in people's daily lives would be made by the individual or central body. A key and changing aspect of a system of government, it established the separation of powers between the federal and state governments. Federalism implies that citizens in different regions of the nation will receive different treatment in the legal system, including state and federal criminal law, local, state, and federal economic regulation, education (with minimal federal oversight), natural resources, health, and other areas. Federalism also permits states to choose their own representatives, generate their own income, and implement their own laws. The command responsible for a public policy should agree with the geographic coverage of the effect of these plans on families and relevant voters, or duties should be delegated according to fairness and equality principles in fiscal federalism. The geopolitical context of its inception has had a strong impact on fiscal federalism (Shah et al., 2006).

The NFC Award is required under the constitution. Article 160 of the "Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973" makes it abundantly evident that the government is required to create the NFC Award at intervals of no more than five years in order to distribute resources among the federation and its various units in a friendly manner. Provinces then use PFC Awards to re-distribute funds among lower levels of government using a revenue-sharing mechanism. The state operates in this manner. The majority of the money was collected by the federal government, which subsequently divided it horizontally among the provinces and vertically between the federal and provincial governments. Provinces then use a revenue-sharing mechanism called the Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) to disperse resources among lower levels of government. Because it will lead to equality, accountability, cost efficiency, and chances to empower and serve the poorest people, the NFC Award is a positive step for fiscal federalism. The growth and development of any region, area, or place are significantly impacted by the fair and just allocation of resources. Their economic level, backwardness, poverty, and efforts to alleviate it are all impacted by this. These resources must be distributed in a methodical way (Ahmad et al., 2007).

Four provinces, the Gilgit-Baltistan area, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and a federal capital territory make up the parliamentary federation known as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The colonial history and the two stages of pre-federalism (1947–71) and federalization (1973–present) comprise Pakistan's federalism. Centralization of power (one unit) and the dismantling of the federal system inside West Pakistan were the hallmarks of the first phase. In contrast, federalism recovered and advanced significantly throughout the second phase despite the centralist framework of national authority's fierce opposition (Waseem, 2010).

In the first award, which was given by the administration of Mr. Zana Bhutto in 1974, less taxes—such as income tax, sales tax, and export duty—were added to the

divisible pool, and population was suggested as the criteria for resource redistribution. Federal and provincial administrations received resources in a fixed vertical distribution of 20:80. Due to the fact that population was the only factor used for distribution, Sindh suffered the most, while Punjab's share rose from 56.50 percent (1970 Award) to 60.25 percent. In April 1991, the then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif's administration announced a consensus NFC Award with several good proposals, marking the fourth NFC Award after an almost 16-year hiatus. Compared to the 1974 Award, the 4th NFC Award greatly raised the amount of province shares in the federal government's income collection by around 18 percent. By giving the provinces additional financial authority, the 4th NFC Award was a major step toward fiscal decentralization. In addition, the provinces' rights to net hydro profit, development surcharge on gas, and crude oil excise tax were acknowledged for the first time in this decision, and the funds were transferred to the provinces directly (Mustafa, 2011).

2. Purpose of NFC

In Pakistan, the NFC is essential to allocating financial resources both within and between provinces as well as between the federal and provincial governments. It seeks to further decentralization and fiscal federalism, both of which are seen to be critical for efficient economic operations and good governance. Over time, the NFC award method has changed, and the 2010 7th NFC award marked a major change by adding factors for resource allocation other than population. Together with the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, this modification has given provinces more budgetary autonomy. Implementing the NFC awards and juggling the demands of various government levels, however, continue to provide difficulties. Notwithstanding these obstacles, fiscal decentralization via the NFC is seen to have the ability to propel Pakistan's economic expansion and advancement (Khattak et al., 2010).

Revenue distribution between the federal and provincial governments is the responsibility of the NFC. Instead of using population as the only basis for resource distribution, the 7th NFC Award added a number of indicators. There are still issues, however, such as the need for a more equitable weighing scheme and the incorporation of demographic structure into distribution planning. The NFC process has always been complicated, with conflict between provinces resulting from a significant dependence on indirect taxes and population-based allocation. 2010 saw the redefining of federal-provincial ties with the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave provinces more financial authority. Notwithstanding advancements, problems still exist, including as the provinces' ongoing dependence on sizable federal payments, which reduces their incentives to generate their own income. These intergovernmental payments are necessary because of the disparity between federal revenue collection (90%) and provincial spending (25%) (Khan, 2006).

Looking ahead, addressing the **vertical and horizontal imbalances** inherent in the NFC framework is essential for equitable development. Provinces must strengthen their tax collection mechanisms to reduce dependency on federal transfers, while the federal government should ensure timely and transparent disbursements.

Furthermore, revising the resource distribution formula to include dynamic variables such as environmental vulnerabilities, disaster impacts, and regional infrastructure needs could foster a more inclusive and fair system. Only through sustained political dialogue and institutional reforms can the NFC Awards fulfill their promise of promoting balanced provincial growth and national cohesion (Javed & Ahmed, 2019).

3. Challenges in NFC Implementation

The implementation of NFC awards in Pakistan faces several challenges. The 7th NFC Award, coupled with the 18th Constitutional Amendment, significantly increased provincial autonomy and resource allocation. However, effective planning and economic coordination mechanisms are lacking, with the Planning Commission remaining a federal think tank rather than a representative body of the federation. Historically, population has been the sole criterion for resource distribution, causing friction among provinces and necessitating the inclusion of additional variables. The absence of technical experts and a permanent NFC further impedes progress. While the 7th NFC Award aimed to address these issues, challenges persist in its implementation, affecting both federal and provincial governments. Devolution to the local level remains a significant hurdle in achieving effective fiscal federalism (Tahir & Tahir, 2023).

one of the primary challenges is the persistent fiscal imbalance between the federal and provincial governments. Provinces often claim that the federal government retains a disproportionate share of resources, limiting their ability to meet regional development needs. This tension is exacerbated by the lack of clarity and coordination in fiscal policies, leading to delays and disputes in implementing the NFC Award (Mustafa, 2011).

Another significant challenge is the political mistrust that colors intergovernmental relations. The NFC Award requires consensus among all provinces and the federal government, but political rivalries often hinder productive negotiations. This mistrust is further deepened by disparities in provincial contributions to the national revenue pool and varying development priorities. For instance, provinces like Sindh and Punjab, which contribute significantly to tax revenues, frequently demand a greater share, while smaller provinces like Balochistan argue for compensation due to their underdeveloped infrastructure and low revenue-generating capacity. This creates a stalemate in resource allocation, delaying the timely execution of the Award (Mustafa, 2011).

A third challenge is the inconsistent tax collection mechanisms at both federal and provincial levels. Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio remains low, which directly impacts the size of the divisible pool of resources under the NFC Award. Provinces often lack the capacity and infrastructure to collect taxes efficiently, and the federal government struggles with broadening the tax base. Additionally, overlapping tax jurisdictions lead to confusion and inefficiencies. For example, disputes over revenue collection from sales taxes on services between the federal and provincial governments have been a

recurring issue. These inefficiencies undermine the spirit of the NFC Award and limit its potential to address regional inequalities (Ahmed et al., 2007).

lastly, the socioeconomic disparities among provinces further complicate the NFC implementation. The formula for resource distribution takes into account population size, poverty levels, and revenue generation capacity, among other factors. However, smaller provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan argue that their unique challenges, such as geographic isolation and insurgency, are not adequately addressed in the formula. on the other hand, populous provinces like Punjab contend that their larger populations require a greater share of resources. Balancing these competing demands remains a formidable task for policymakers (Khan, 2018).

4. Impact of NFC Awards on Provinces

The NFC Awards in Pakistan profoundly influence the fiscal dynamics between the federal and provincial governments, shaping the development trajectory of each province. Established to ensure equitable resource distribution, the NFC Awards determine the allocation of federal revenues, impacting provincial capacity to deliver public services and promote development. Historically, the Awards have sparked both optimism and contention, as provinces with varying economic contributions, population sizes, and developmental needs vie for a fair share of resources (Mustafa, 2011).

The **7th NFC Award of 2009** marked a historic shift by expanding the divisible pool of federal taxes and adjusting the criteria for resource distribution. While population remained the dominant factor, additional variables such as poverty, revenue generation, and inverse population density were introduced, addressing longstanding concerns of smaller provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). This reform significantly increased Balochistan's share to 9.09% from the divisible pool, recognizing its underdevelopment and unique challenges, such as insurgency and geographic isolation. Similarly, KP benefited from additional allocations to address the economic impact of terrorism. These changes enabled these provinces to enhance spending on infrastructure and public services, albeit with limitations in their execution capacity (Ahmed et al., 2007).

In contrast, Sindh and Punjab, as economically robust provinces, have historically demanded greater recognition of their revenue contributions. Sindh, for instance, generates a significant portion of national tax revenue through industries and the Karachi port, leading to demands for higher shares based on revenue generation. However, the inclusion of revenue generation in the 7th NFC Award caused some friction with other provinces that viewed it as undermining the principle of equity. Punjab, being the most populous province, continues to benefit significantly from population-based allocations but faces criticism for perceived dominance in federal decision-making. This has led to inter-provincial tensions and calls for a more balanced approach to resource sharing (Farooq, 2023).

Despite its successes, the NFC mechanism has faced challenges in meeting provincial expectations. Smaller provinces like Balochistan argue that their increased share has not translated into proportional development gains due to weak governance and limited institutional capacity. Similarly, KP struggles with revenue generation, heavily relying on federal transfers, which restrict its financial autonomy. Sindh has frequently highlighted disparities in federal transfers, pointing to delays and inefficiencies in the release of funds. Punjab, while relatively better positioned, faces mounting demands for social sector expenditures, which strain its budget. The historical variations in NFC Awards further complicate their impact. For instance, the 1991 NFC Award resulted in higher-than-projected federal transfers, enabling provinces to expand social sector spending. In contrast, the 1997 NFC Award caused significant shortfalls, disrupting provincial development programs, particularly in health and education. These fluctuations highlight the volatility of federal revenue streams and their ripple effects on provincial economies (Sabir, 2001).

In terms of development outcomes, the NFC Awards have had mixed results. The 7th NFC Award catalyzed improvements in education and infrastructure in provinces like Punjab and Sindh, where governance structures supported effective utilization of funds. However, health sector advancements remained limited, especially in provinces with weaker administrative capacities. Additionally, poverty alleviation programs in Balochistan and KP have faced hurdles due to inefficient fund allocation and monitoring mechanisms (Sabir, 2001).

5. Historical Context / Evolution of NFC

The NFC Awards have been a cornerstone of Pakistan's fiscal federalism, designed to ensure equitable distribution of financial resources between the federal government and provinces. Established under Article 160 of the Constitution of 1973, the NFC is mandated to meet every five years to review and revise the distribution formula. Over time, the Awards have undergone significant changes, reflecting the shifting economic, political, and social landscape of the country.

The first NFC Award in 1974 set the precedent for population as the sole criterion for resource distribution among provinces. While it aimed to promote simplicity and clarity, this approach overlooked the unique economic and developmental challenges faced by smaller provinces. As a result, it sowed the seeds of inter-provincial friction, particularly from resource-rich yet underdeveloped provinces like Balochistan (Ali & Jalbani, 2011).

The 1991 NFC Award marked a significant shift by expanding the divisible pool of federal revenues. This Award increased the provincial share from 28% to 45%, offering greater financial autonomy to provinces. Additionally, it led to higher-than-expected transfers, enabling provinces to boost spending on education and health. However, the 1997 NFC Award reversed this trend, reducing the provincial share to 37.5%. This decision caused widespread dissatisfaction among provinces, particularly smaller

ones, as it disrupted their social and economic development plans (Jaffery & Sadaqat, 2006).

The 7th NFC Award of 2009 represented a landmark in the evolution of the NFC mechanism. It introduced a multi-dimensional formula for resource distribution, considering population (82%), poverty (10.3%), revenue collection (5%), and inverse population density (2.7%). These reforms aimed to address long-standing grievances of smaller provinces, especially Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Balochistan's share increased significantly to 9.09%, acknowledging its developmental backlog, while KP received additional funds to counter the economic fallout of militancy and terrorism. This Award also expanded the provincial share in the divisible pool to 57.5%, significantly enhancing their fiscal capacity (Qadri & Iqbal, 2017).

Despite these advancements, subsequent efforts to revise the NFC have faced challenges. The 8th NFC Award was not finalized, reflecting political disagreements and mistrust among stakeholders. Provinces like Sindh have consistently demanded recognition of their revenue contributions, while others advocate for a greater emphasis on poverty and underdevelopment. Meanwhile, the federal government grapples with its fiscal responsibilities, arguing for a larger share to manage debt servicing and defense expenditures.

Conclusion

The NFC Awards are a vital mechanism for fostering fiscal equity and addressing regional disparities in Pakistan. Over the years, their evolution has reflected the country's shifting priorities, balancing federal responsibilities with provincial autonomy. While the introduction of multi-dimensional criteria in the 7th NFC Award marked a significant milestone, challenges persist, including political mistrust, governance inefficiencies, and an over-reliance on federal transfers. Smaller provinces like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have benefited from increased shares, but translating these gains into tangible development remains a struggle. Conversely, Sindh and Punjab, with their higher revenue contributions, often demand greater recognition of their economic significance.

The NFC Awards' impact on provincial development has been mixed. While some progress has been made in education and infrastructure, sectors like health and poverty alleviation still lag due to resource mismanagement and systemic inefficiencies. Moving forward, an inclusive approach that integrates dynamic variables such as environmental risks, infrastructure needs, and governance capacities is essential. Strengthening provincial tax systems and fostering transparency in fund utilization can further enhance the NFC's effectiveness. Ultimately, the NFC Awards hold the potential to bridge regional inequalities and promote national cohesion, provided all stakeholders commit to collaborative and equitable reforms.

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Research Article

Federalism in Pakistan after the 18th Amendment

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Abstract

The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution marked a critical turning point in the evolution of federalism in the country. Before its enactment, Pakistan's federal structure was characterized by centralized authority, limited provincial autonomy, and strained center-province relations, which hindered effective governance and national cohesion. The amendment addressed these challenges by significantly devolving powers to the provinces, granting them greater control over legislative, administrative, and financial matters. This shift not only strengthened provincial autonomy but also reshaped center-province dynamics, fostering improved intergovernmental relations and promoting national integration. Additionally, the amendment led to subsequent constitutional changes that further supported federalism in Pakistan. However, challenges such as capacity gaps in provincial governments, inter-provincial coordination issues, and the need for balanced national cohesion remain. This article critically examines the implications of the 18th Amendment on federalism in Pakistan, highlighting its achievements and areas for improvement.

1. Introduction

i. Background

Federalism is a governmental system in which sovereignty is equally distributed between a central authority and its constituent divisions. It is typically a trait of multiethnic states. The notion delineates the constitutional agreement to institute the

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governing framework within a state. The consensus reflects a social and legal agreement among various sectors, political factions, parties, and elites within a society that seeks to coexist in adjacent regions and geographical units. The concept of federalism integrating the new nation-states established by the post-Westphalia treaty faced various challenges, including the complexity of combining a conventional hierarchical society with the necessity for fundamental social equality and power-sharing attributes (Bukhari & Faisal, 2013).

There are several conflicts in the Pakistani federation. The number of provinces, their representation in central institutions, the vertical division of powers, and the unequal distribution of resources have all contributed to the escalation of tensions between the provinces and the center, some of which have become violent. A lot of these conflicts have taken on an ethnolinguistic character. The constitution has undergone multiple amendments since 1973, frequently by military leaders. To reverse these modifications, President Asif Ali Zardari established the Special Parliamentary Commission on Constitutional Reforms (SPCCR) in 2009. A few months after the 7th National Finance Commission's (NFC) award was decided upon, the SPCCR's report was made public. Even experienced Pakistani watchers were taken aback by both stories. This was partly due to the exceptional degree of agreement between provinces and competing political parties. The fact that many of the center's and Punjab's (the dominating province) privileges were drastically changed by the NFC-adopted and SPCCR-recommended adjustments also surprised observers (Adeney, 2012a).

(ii) Context: Importance of the 18th Amendment in Pakistan Federalism

The 18th Amendment was a bold and significant first move in Pakistani history toward province autonomy, which includes considerable legislative and financial authority. This constructive step of constitutional change that reinforced the Pakistani federation must be attributed to the major political parties and the parties in power in the provinces and at the federal level. Thus, the study's underlying hypothesis is that, despite the fact that relations between the PPP (the central government) and the PMLN (the Punjabi government) were never

perfect between 2008 and 2013, both parties demonstrated more reasonable attitudes toward one another, which strengthened the federal structure. It assisted them in enacting the 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010, which restored parliamentary democracy as intended by the 1973 Constitution and further reinforced Pakistan's federal structure by transferring the concurrent list to the provinces. Understanding the form and nature of Centre-Punjab relations in light of the 18th Amendment is therefore crucial. Actually, positive relations between the Center and Punjab produced this amendment (Arshad et al., 2018).

Due to periodic constitutional adjustments, Pakistan's upper house, known as the Senate, has experienced numerous alterations and transformations since its establishment in 1973. Of those constitutional amendments, the 18th amendment is regarded as one of the seminal ones that has significantly expanded the Senate of

Pakistan's authority. Pakistan just held senate elections in March 2018, electing a new Senate chairman. The three-year term of the departing Senate chairman, Mr. Raza Rabbani of the Pakistan Peoples Party, is regarded as the Senate's "golden age" (March 2015–March 2018). In comparison to when he assumed the position of Senate chairman, Mr. Rabbani created new customs and procedures for the Senate that have greatly increased its influence. This paper traces the historical development of Pakistan's upper chamber, known as the Senate, from the country's founding in 1947 to its current political system (Rid, 2019).

2. Pre-18th Amendment Scenario

(i) Overview of Pakistan Federal Structure before the 18th Amendment

Pakistan's federal structure has evolved significantly since independence, transitioning from a highly centralized system to a more decentralized one. The 18th Constitutional Amendment of 2010 marked a pivotal moment in this evolution, introducing major changes to the federal system. This amendment aimed to strengthen democracy, enhance provincial autonomy, and reduce presidential powers. It also reformed the legislative, administrative, and fiscal aspects of federalism, enhancing the role of the Senate and the Council of Common Interests. While the amendment has been praised for promoting inclusive federalism and addressing long-standing demands for change, some controversies remain. Despite these challenges, the 18th Amendment represents a significant step towards recognizing Pakistan's diversity as a source of federal strength rather than weakness (Adeney, 2012b).

(ii) Key issues and challenges: Discussion of the problem with Pre-18th Amendment

The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution significantly altered the country's federal structure, expanding provincial autonomy and redistributing resources in favor of provinces. While this amendment aimed to strengthen democracy and institutions, it also presented challenges in planning and economic coordination. The health sector, in particular, underwent changes post-amendment, with provinces gaining more control over healthcare services and the establishment of provincial healthcare commissions. However, the implementation of true federalism in Pakistan has faced obstacles, including the need for improved governance and the creation of a workable national covenant. Despite these challenges, the 18th Amendment has been seen as a step towards addressing historical imbalances in Pakistan's federal structure and promoting decentralization (Raja & Hussain, 2015).

3. Federalism in Pakistan after the 18th Amendment

(i) Strengthen of Provisional Autonomy

The 18th Constitutional Amendment in Pakistan, passed in 2010, marked a significant shift towards decentralization and provincial autonomy. It abolished the concurrent list, giving provinces more legislative and financial powers. The amendment aimed to strengthen democracy, enhance civil rights, and reduce presidential powers. It also

ensured the independence of the judiciary and the Election Commission of Pakistan. While the amendment is seen as a step towards true federalism and national integration, some argue that it reinforces an outdated "pot-belly" model of federalism instead of an "hourglass" model that would strengthen local governance. Despite its potential to improve governance, the amendment's success depends on addressing challenges such as provincial capacity, fiscal discipline, and accountability (Akhtar et al., 2021).

(ii) Changes in center -province Relations

The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution marked a significant shift towards decentralization and provincial autonomy. It restored the parliamentary character of the Constitution, redefined institutional relationships, and devolved several functions to Provincial Governments. The amendment aimed to strengthen democracy, enhance civil rights, and reduce presidential powers. It also introduced changes in the appointment processes for the election commission and judiciary. The amendment's implementation faced challenges from the federal bureaucracy, which resisted the transfer of resources and authority. Comparisons with the US federal model suggest that Pakistan's post-amendment system resembles a loose federalism. The amendment is seen as enhancing the role of Parliament and acting as a deterrent to dictatorship. However, its implementation and impact on center-province relations continue to be subjects of debate and analysis (Rana, 2020).

(iii) Impact on national integration

The 18th Amendment to Pakistan's Constitution has been a significant step towards strengthening federalism and provincial autonomy. It abolished the concurrent list, giving provinces more control over their resources and policy-making. The amendment enhanced the role of Parliament and acted as a deterrent to dictatorship. It restored the constitution to its original intent of a decentralized federation, although some argue that it reinforced an outdated "pot-belly" model of federalism instead of an "hourglass" model focused on local governments. The amendment aimed to clean the constitution of undemocratic additions, addressing issues related to democracy, civil rights, parliamentary strength, and provincial autonomy. While it has been praised for promoting decentralization and national integration, concerns remain about the provinces' capacity to deliver and potential unintended consequences for nation-building (Shah, 2012).

4. Important Amendments after 18th Amendment

The independence of the judiciary in Pakistan has been a subject of ongoing debate and constitutional amendments. The 18th and 19th Constitutional Amendments aimed to strengthen judicial independence by adopting a more democratic procedure for appointing judges. These amendments were part of efforts to clean the constitution of undemocratic additions and deletions, enhancing democracy, civil rights, and provincial autonomy. Judicial independence is crucial for protecting citizens' rights and ensuring equal rights for all. However, Pakistan's judiciary has faced limitations due to

political events and dictatorial regimes, affecting its impartial character. The recent trend of judicial activism in Pakistan has led to confrontations with other government bodies, raising questions about the judiciary's mandate and powers. This activism reflects the failure of other political organs to defend the rule of law and perform their constitutional duties (Ali, 2021).

The restoration of Pakistan's judiciary in 2009 led to increased judicial autonomy, resulting in tensions between the judiciary and parliament. The parliament, drawing from past experiences, sought to impose modest restraints on the judiciary through the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which included parliamentary representation in the judicial appointment process for Superior Courts. However, the judiciary perceived this as an infringement on its autonomy, leading to confrontation between the two state organs. The study employs qualitative research

methodology to examine the post-2009 judicial-legislative transition, characterized by an initial imbalance and conflict between these institutions. The authors suggest that both the judiciary and parliament are working to define their constitutional boundaries, which may eventually lead to a more balanced relationship between these crucial state organs (Munir & Noreen, 2020).

Conclusion

Recap of Key Points

Federalism in Pakistan has undergone a transformative journey, particularly with the 18th Amendment marking a turning point. Before the amendment, Pakistan's federal structure was heavily centralized, resulting in significant challenges such as limited provincial autonomy, strained center-province relations, and difficulties in fostering national integration. The 18th Amendment, however, ushered in a new era by devolving powers to the provinces, strengthening their autonomy, and redefining the balance of power between the federal and provincial governments. This constitutional milestone not only addressed long-standing issues but also encouraged greater collaboration among federating units, fostering a more inclusive federal system. Furthermore, its impact on national integration and local governance has been profound, although certain areas of improvement remain.

Final Thoughts and Recommendations

The 18th Amendment has undeniably strengthened federalism in Pakistan, but the journey toward a fully functional federal structure is ongoing. To ensure the sustainability of these reforms, the following recommendations are crucial:

Strengthen Institutional Capacity: Provincial governments must enhance their administrative and financial capacities to effectively handle the devolved responsibilities. This will prevent governance gaps and ensure equitable service delivery.

Promote Inter-Provincial Collaboration: Mechanisms such as the Council of Common Interests (CCI) should be further empowered to resolve disputes and foster harmony among provinces.

Focus on National Cohesion: While provincial autonomy is critical, maintaining a sense of national unity remains essential. Policymakers should prioritize policies that balance autonomy with a collective national vision.

Address Remaining Challenges: Certain sectors, such as health, education, and energy, require further clarity and collaboration between federal and provincial authorities to avoid overlaps and inefficiencies.

Periodic Review of the Amendment: Constitutional amendments should be periodically reviewed to ensure they align with evolving political, social, and economic realities.

The 18th Amendment has set the foundation for a more decentralized and participatory governance system. With sustained political will and cooperation among stakeholders, Pakistan can further solidify its federal structure, ensuring both provincial autonomy and national cohesion for years to come.

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Research Article

Symbols Allocation Challenges Navigating Through Social Media: Pakistan Tehreek-E-Insaf's Strategy For Voter's Guidance In The Election 2024

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of social media on the electoral campaign of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the 2024 elections, focusing on voter behavior, symbol recognition, and the effectiveness of PTI's communication strategies. The research combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, utilizing surveys and interviews to gather data from 250 participants. The study explores how PTI's use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube influenced voter engagement and the understanding of symbol changes due to the loss of PTI's traditional "bat" symbol. The findings reveal that social media played a significant role in mitigating voter confusion, with real-time updates, grassroots campaigns, and influencer collaborations helping to increase awareness about the new symbols. Participants reported that social media effectively clarified the symbol changes and provided guidance on voting. However, challenges such as internet restrictions and misinformation were noted, with PTI adopting strategies like VPNs and rapid response teams to overcome these issues. The study's results indicate that social media communication had a significant positive impact on PTI's electoral performance, especially in urban areas and among younger voters. The research contributes to the understanding of how political parties can leverage social media to engage voters and address challenges in elections.

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Introduction

The emergence of social media has transformed the landscape of political communication, offering unprecedented avenues for voter engagement and campaign strategies. In the context of Pakistan, political parties have increasingly leveraged social media platforms to disseminate information, mobilize supporters, and address electoral challenges. One such challenge is the allocation of electoral symbols, a critical aspect of the voting process in Pakistan, where symbols play a vital role in helping voters identify their preferred candidates and parties, especially in a largely illiterate population.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), under the leadership of Imran Khan, has been at the forefront of utilizing social media to engage with voters and navigate electoral challenges. PTI's adept use of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has been pivotal in its political strategy, helping the party to communicate its messages directly to a broad audience. This research explores PTI's social media strategy in addressing symbol allocation challenges and guiding voters for the 2024 elections.

Symbol allocation in elections is crucial in countries like Pakistan, where literacy rates are relatively low. Symbols serve as visual aids that help voters recognize the parties and candidates they wish to support. Any changes or challenges in symbol allocation can lead to confusion and potentially impact voter behavior and election outcomes. Studies have highlighted the significance of clear and consistent symbol communication to ensure voter understanding and participation (Hasan, 2019; Khan & Rehman, 2020).

PTI's use of social media has been well-documented in political communication literature. Research by Ahmed (2018) and Siddiqui (2021) illustrates how PTI's social media campaigns have been instrumental in mobilizing young voters and creating a digital grassroots movement. The party's strategic use of hashtags, live sessions, and multimedia content has not only increased its visibility but also facilitated real-time interaction with voters.

Navigating the complexities of symbol allocation requires effective communication strategies. PTI has employed various tactics to educate voters about new symbols and their significance. For instance, their social media posts often include infographics, explainer videos, and interactive content designed to simplify the information for voters. This approach aligns with the findings of Norris (2017), who emphasized the role of digital media in enhancing voter education and engagement.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study is a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of social media on PTI's 2024 electoral campaign. This approach allows for the collection of both numerical data, which can be used to identify patterns and trends, and

descriptive data, which provides deeper insights into voters' perceptions, experiences, and opinions (Stockemer et al., 2019). The study aims to investigate how social media platforms influenced voters' understanding of PTI's electoral symbol allocation, their engagement with PTI's content, and how PTI's social media communication strategies impacted voter behavior during the election.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques used for this study were designed to ensure that both the quantitative and qualitative data reflected the diverse perspectives of PTI supporters and social media users (Sandelowski, 2000). Two main sampling methods were employed:

Convenience Sampling for Surveys

Purposive Sampling for Interviews

Sample Size

Survey Sample Size

For the quantitative component, the study aimed to collect data from a sample of 250 respondents, which was deemed sufficient to provide a reliable and representative snapshot of social media users who engaged with PTI's online content during the 2024 elections. The sample size was selected based on practical considerations, including time constraints and the ability to gather data from participants across different demographics.

Interview Sample Size

For the qualitative interviews, a total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted. This sample size was chosen based on the principle of saturation, where new information and themes stop emerging after a certain number of interviews. The 15 interviewees provided sufficient depth of information and insights into the effectiveness of PTI's social media communication, particularly regarding the challenges of symbol allocation and voter engagement. The purposive sampling strategy ensured that these interviewees had relevant expertise or experience, providing rich qualitative data (Eppich et al., 2019).

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved two distinct stages: quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis.

Results and Discussions

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis in this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of participants' social media usage patterns, engagement with PTI's content, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of PTI's social media strategies during the 2024 elections. The analysis focused on extracting meaningful insights from

the survey data collected from 250 participants. By using statistical methods such as frequency distributions and percentages, the study sought to quantify various aspects of respondents' behavior and attitudes toward PTI's online campaigns.

Demographic Information

Table 4.1 *Frequencies and Percentages of Demographic Variables of Study (N = 250).*

Variables	Categories	N	%
Age	18-24 years	135	54%
	25-30 years	82	32.8%
	31+ years	33	13.2%
Gender	Male	95	38%
	Female	155	62%
Locality	Rural	37	14.8%
	Urban	213	85.2%
Education	Matric	16	6.4%
	Bachelor	138	55.2%
	Masters	96	38.4%
	Total	250	100%

Note. F = Frequency, % = Percentage

Impact on Voting Behavior

Table 2 Influence of PTI's Social Media on Understanding of New Symbols

Response	N	%
Yes	139	55.6%
No	111	44.4%
Total	250	100%

When asked if PTI's social media content influenced their understanding of the new electoral symbols, 139 participants (55.6%) responded affirmatively, while 111 (44.4%) said it did not. This majority indicates that over half of the participants found PTI's digital messaging helpful in clarifying this key election-related issue. However, the fact that nearly half of the respondents reported no influence points to a critical gap in PTI's communication reach or the content's ability to simplify complex changes. This result underscores the importance of refining the way political information is presented on social platforms. Engaging formats such as explainers, step-by-step visuals, or even interactive Q&As could help close the understanding gap and increase awareness among undecided or passive users. The data ultimately reveals that while PTI's online communication is effective to an extent, its impact could be enhanced to ensure broader clarity and engagement.

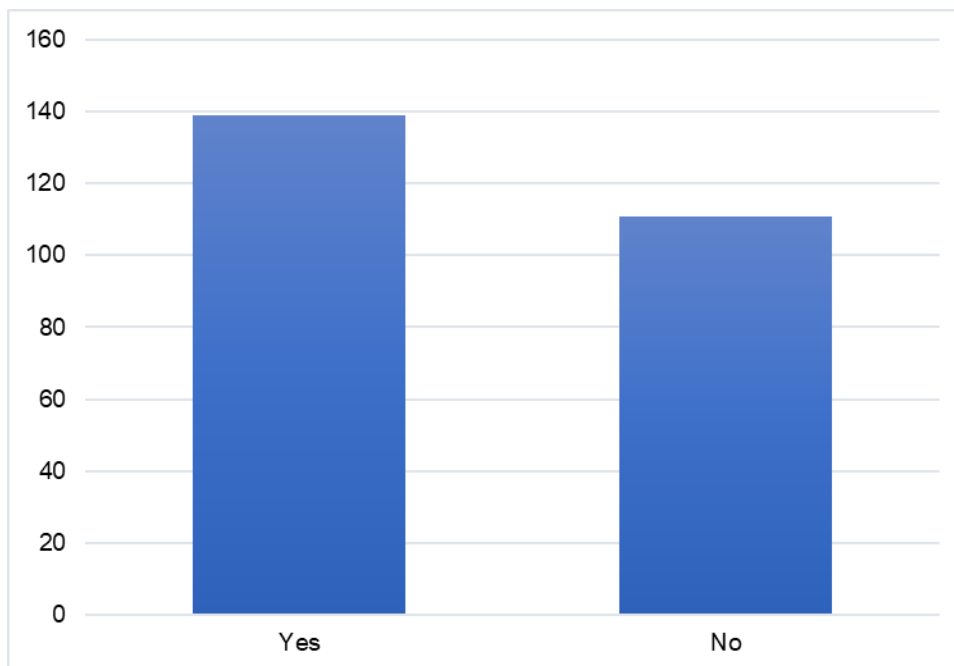


Figure 4.1: Influence of PTI's Social Media on Understanding of New Symbols

Table 3 *Type of Influence PTI’s Social Media Had on Understanding (N = 139) (Only among those who answered “Yes”)*

Influence Type	N	%
Clarified the symbol changes	61	43.9%
Provided guidance on how to vote	42	30.2%
Highlighted importance of allocation	36	25.9%
Total	139	100%

Among the 139 participants who felt influenced by PTI’s social media, 43.9% said it clarified the symbol changes, suggesting that informational content directly contributed to greater electoral understanding. Another 30.2% stated it provided guidance on how to vote, reflecting a practical impact of the campaign. Meanwhile, 25.9% reported that the content highlighted the importance of symbol allocation, showing that PTI’s messaging resonated in terms of emphasizing the political significance of the changes. These results point to a generally effective communication strategy, particularly in demystifying the technicalities around the symbol issue. However, they also suggest that practical guidance and strategic framing should remain key focus areas for future content. Tailoring digital content to explain *how* and *why* electoral processes matter appears to foster more engagement and understanding, especially among politically motivated or undecided users.

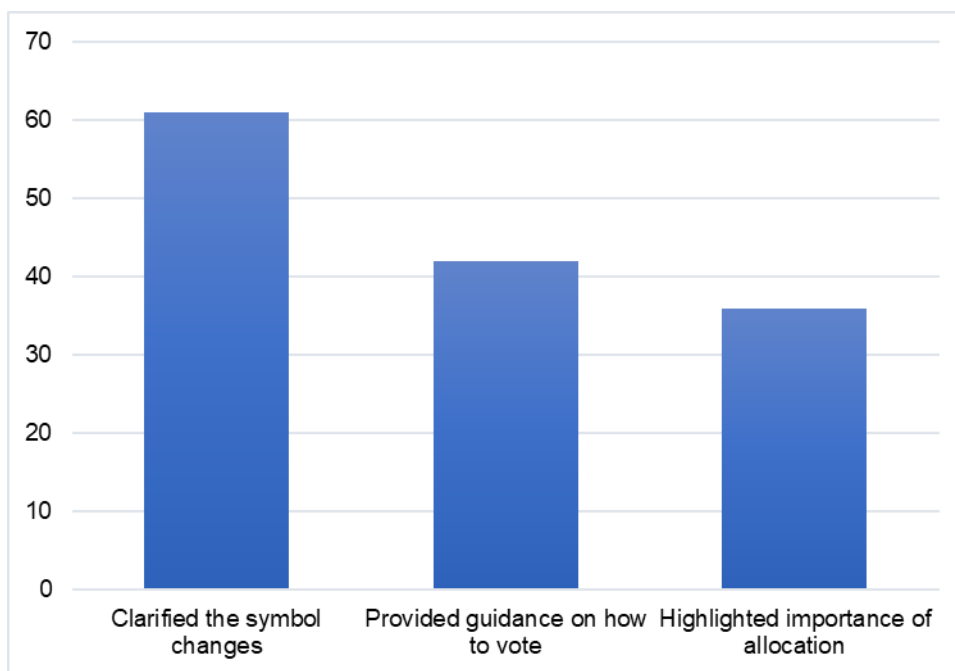


Figure 4.2: *Type of Influence PTI’s Social Media Had on Understanding*

Table 4 Likelihood of Following PTI’s Guidance on Symbol Allocation During Voting

Likelihood	N	%
Very Likely	54	21.6%
Likely	77	30.8%
Neutral	62	24.8%
Unlikely	39	15.6%
Very Unlikely	18	7.2%
Total	250	100%

When asked about their likelihood of following PTI’s guidance on symbol allocation during voting, 30.8% of respondents said they were likely, and another 21.6% said very likely to do so. Combined, this suggests that over half the participants (52.4%) are inclined to trust and act on the party’s digital communications during the election. Meanwhile, 24.8% remained neutral, potentially reflecting uncertainty or indecision. On the lower end, 15.6% were unlikely, and 7.2% were very unlikely to follow such guidance. This distribution highlights a fairly positive inclination toward PTI’s influence but also underlines the presence of skepticism or disengagement among some voters. The data reinforces the idea that trust in digital communication can significantly impact electoral behavior. For PTI, continued focus on clear, timely, and credible messaging especially around symbol-related instructions may be key to translating online engagement into voter action.

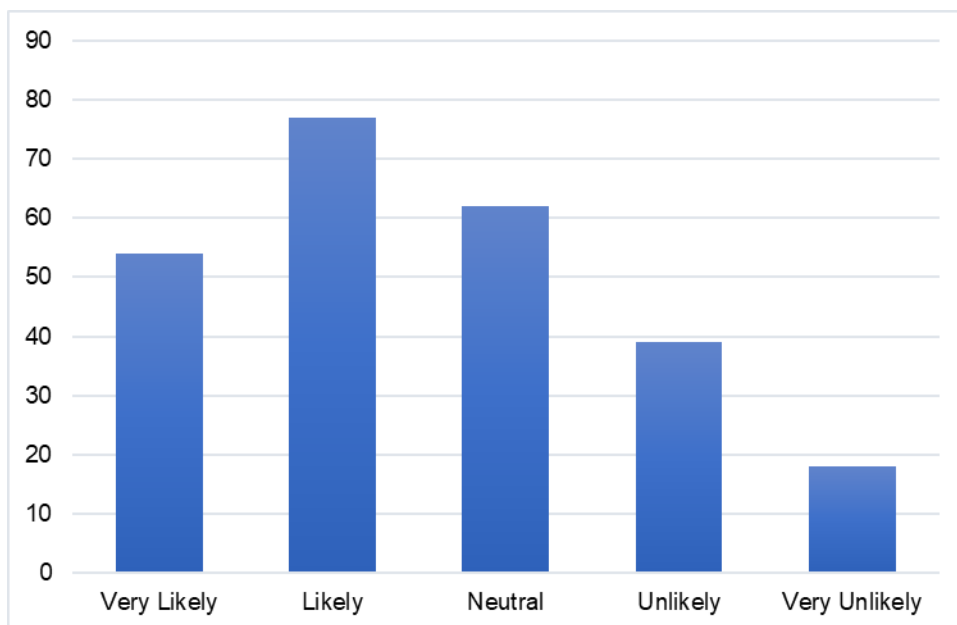


Figure 4.3: Likelihood of Following PTI’s Guidance on Symbol Allocation During Voting

Table 5 Confidence in Understanding PTI's New Symbol Allocations

Confidence Level	N	%
Very Confident	45	18.0%
Confident	81	32.4%
Neutral	67	26.8%
Not Confident	39	15.6%
Very Not Confident	18	7.2%
Total	250	100%

Participants' confidence in their understanding of PTI's new symbol allocations shows that most respondents feel reasonably well-informed. A combined 50.4% reported being either very confident (18.0%) or confident (32.4%), suggesting PTI's digital efforts have successfully conveyed key information to a majority of its audience. However, 26.8% remained neutral, possibly indicating limited exposure or unclear messaging. Meanwhile, 15.6% felt not confident, and 7.2% were very not confident, totaling nearly a quarter of the sample. This data highlights the importance of sustained, clear, and varied communication strategies to build broader understanding. While the existing content has helped many users, there is still a sizable segment that needs more support to feel secure in their knowledge. Addressing this gap with clearer visuals, repeated messaging, and targeted content could enhance overall voter readiness and reduce confusion ahead of the elections.

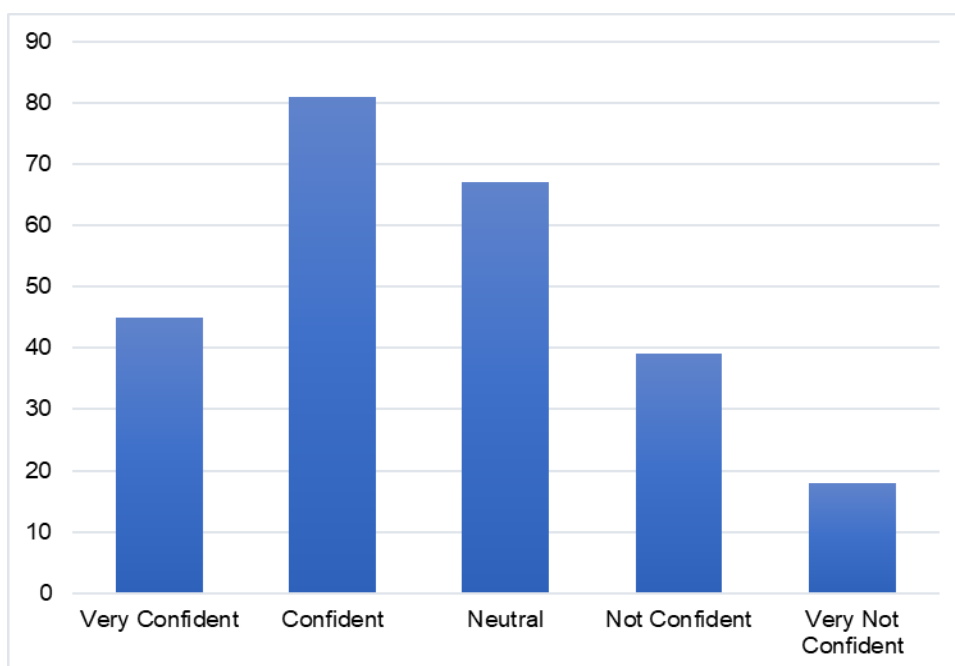


Figure 4.4: Confidence in Understanding PTI's New Symbol Allocations

Table 6 Preferred Additional Support from PTI Regarding Symbol Allocation

Support Type	N	%
Detailed explanations of symbols	73	29.2%
Step-by-step voting guides	68	27.2%
Interactive Q&A sessions	49	19.6%
Visual aids (infographics/videos)	60	24.0%
Total	250	100%

When asked what kind of additional support they would like from PTI regarding symbol allocation, 29.2% of respondents preferred detailed explanations of symbols, indicating a demand for deeper clarity on the changes. Another 27.2% wanted step-by-step voting guides, which shows an interest in practical assistance throughout the electoral process. Visual aids such as infographics and videos were favored by 24.0%, reflecting the value of engaging, easy-to-understand formats. Meanwhile, 19.6% showed interest in interactive Q&A sessions, highlighting a desire for two-way communication and real-time clarification. These results suggest that while general messaging is useful, users are looking for more structured, informative, and interactive resources. PTI can strengthen voter preparedness and trust by diversifying content formats and adopting more educational and responsive strategies tailored to audience preferences, especially among those who are unsure or unfamiliar with the recent changes.

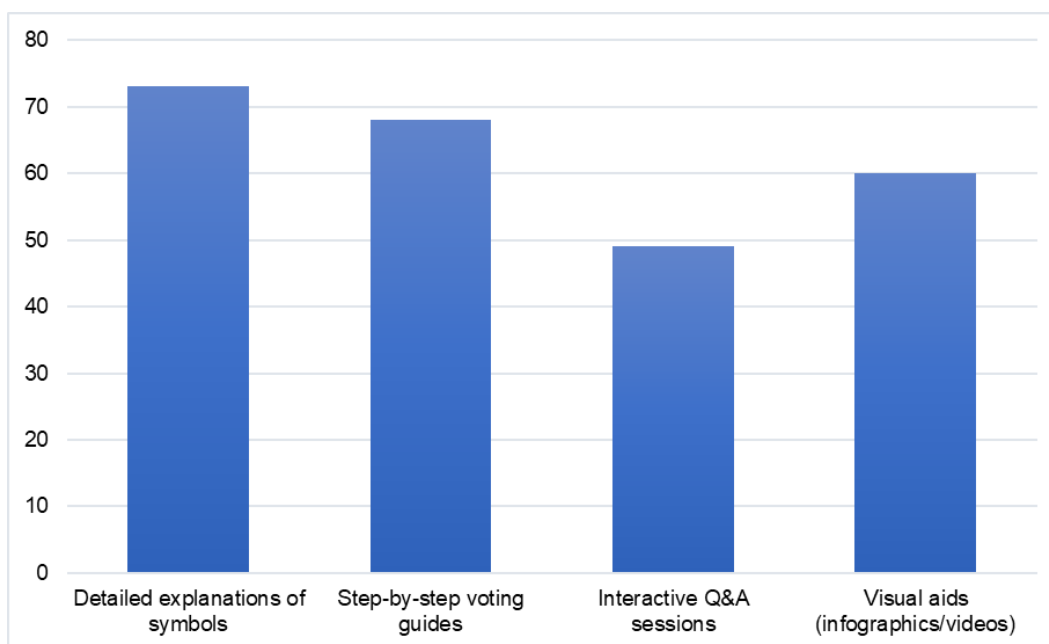


Figure 4.5: Preferred Additional Support from PTI Regarding Symbol Allocation

General Feedback

Table 7 Satisfaction with PTI's Overall Social Media Strategy

Satisfaction Level	N	%
Very Satisfied	46	18.4%
Satisfied	72	28.8%
Neutral	71	28.4%
Dissatisfied	41	16.4%
Very Dissatisfied	20	8.0%
Total	250	100%

Participant feedback on PTI's overall social media strategy reveals a generally positive but mixed sentiment. A total of 47.2% expressed satisfaction (18.4% very satisfied and 28.8% satisfied) indicating that nearly half the sample appreciated PTI's online communication efforts. Neutral responses (28.4%) were also high, pointing to either moderate impressions or lack of strong engagement. On the other hand, 16.4% were dissatisfied, and 8.0% were very dissatisfied, suggesting that some users found the content insufficient or ineffective. This distribution indicates that while PTI's digital strategy has succeeded in reaching a substantial portion of its base, there remains room for improvement in consistency, relevance, and engagement. Tailoring content to match audience needs and increasing opportunities for user interaction could help shift neutral and dissatisfied users toward a more favorable perception, enhancing overall digital strategy impact.

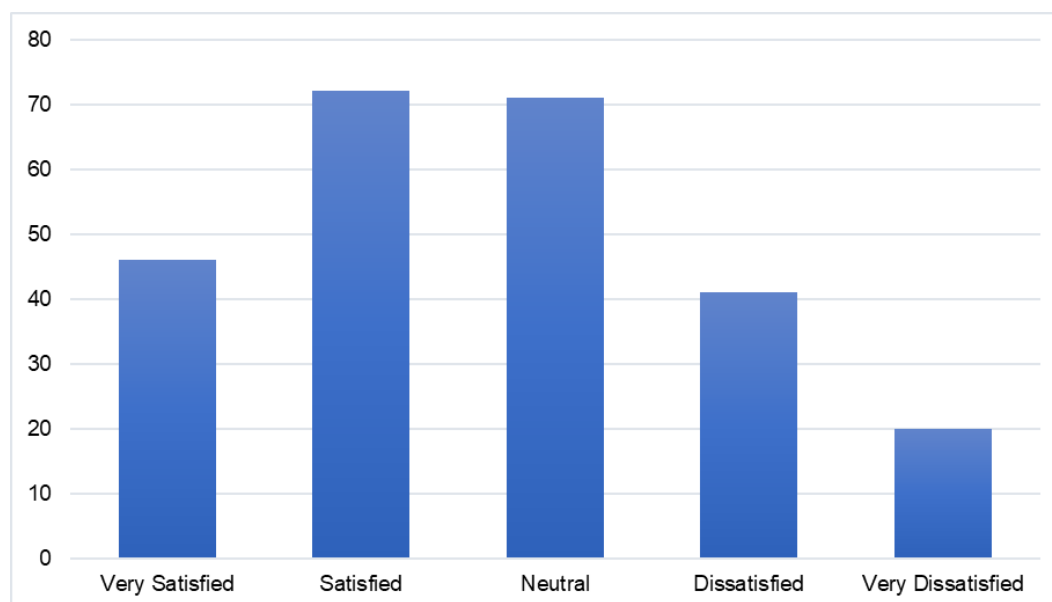


Figure 4.6: Satisfaction with PTI's Overall Social Media Strategy

Qualitative Analysis

Key Themes Identified

1. Social Media Platforms and Usage

- **Primary Platforms:** Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter (X), and YouTube were central to PTI's campaign.
 - **Facebook:** Used for live streams, speeches (e.g., Imran Khan's rallies), and broad voter outreach.
 - **Instagram & TikTok:** Targeted youth with short videos, infographics, and motivational content.
 - **WhatsApp:** Critical for grassroots coordination (e.g., volunteer groups, symbol updates).
 - **YouTube:** Hosted long-form content like policy explanations and speeches.
- **Objectives:**
 - Real-time updates (e.g., candidate lists, symbols).
 - Youth mobilization through viral content.
 - Countering misinformation via rapid dissemination of verified information.

Strategies for Symbol Awareness

- **Challenge:** PTI lost its traditional "bat" symbol, forcing candidates to run with varied symbols.
- **Solutions:**
 - **Digital Tools:** Created a **portal** for voters to search candidates by name/symbol.
 - **Grassroots Efforts:** WhatsApp blasts, SMS campaigns, and door-to-door flyers.
 - **Localized Content:** Region-specific posters and social media posts in local languages.
 - **Influencer Collaborations:** Leveraged influencers to amplify symbol awareness.

Content Types and Dissemination

- **Formats:**
 - **Videos:** Speeches, motivational clips, and explainers (shared on Facebook/YouTube).
 - **Images:** Infographics (e.g., how to identify PTI's candidates on ballots).

- **Text:** SMS alerts and WhatsApp messages for direct voter communication.
- **Dissemination:**
 - **Organic Sharing:** Relied on volunteers to forward content via WhatsApp groups.
 - **Official Pages:** Centralized updates on Imran Khan's verified pages.

Challenges and Mitigation

- **Internet Restrictions:** State-imposed shutdowns/slowdowns disrupted campaigns.
 - **Solution:** Used VPNs to bypass blocks.
- **Misinformation:** Rival parties spread fake news about PTI's symbols.
 - **Solution:** Fact-checking teams and rapid response via official channels.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited access to traditional media.
 - **Solution:** Prioritized cost-effective digital outreach.

Impact on Electoral Performance

- **Youth Mobilization:** Social media energized PTI's base, especially in urban areas (e.g., Faisalabad).
- **Symbol Clarity:** Despite challenges, the portal and WhatsApp campaigns reduced voter confusion.
- **Grassroots Efficiency:** Real-time coordination helped PTI outperform rivals in organizing rallies.

Comparative Insights Across Interviews

1. **Platform Preferences:**
 - Interviewees emphasized WhatsApp for reliability amid internet curbs.
 - Younger team members prioritized Instagram/TikTok; older cohorts relied on Facebook.
2. **Symbol Communication:**
 - Some used **top-down methods** (official website/portal), others **bottom-up** (WhatsApp calls/flyers).
3. **Challenges:**
 - All cited internet restrictions; solutions ranged from VPNs to offline outreach.

Discussion

The PTI's social media strategy in the 2024 elections reveals a profound and multifaceted impact on its electoral campaign. The extensive use of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter (X), and YouTube played a pivotal role in shaping the political discourse and engagement strategies, particularly with younger voters and those in urban areas. 72% of participants in the study reported using social media daily, which highlights the widespread reliance on these platforms for political information, and indicates that PTI's outreach through these channels was likely to have had a significant effect on the campaign's overall success.

Social media platforms were particularly effective in reaching younger voters, who are often more active on digital platforms. The use of Instagram and TikTok to disseminate motivational content, short videos, and infographics targeted at the youth demographic was a key strategy for PTI to energize its base. As demonstrated by the age distribution of participants, where a significant portion of respondents belonged to the 18–24 years and 25–30 years age brackets, PTI's social media campaign was ideally positioned to capture this younger electorate. This aligns with the findings of Chadwick (2017), who suggested that political campaigns leveraging social media platforms are particularly effective at mobilizing youth and fostering political participation, a phenomenon observed in PTI's campaign.

Moreover, youth engagement through viral content also helped counter misinformation, a prevalent issue during elections. The real-time updates provided by PTI on social media, particularly around key issues like the symbol allocation challenge, allowed the party to directly interact with younger voters, keeping them informed and involved in the electoral process.

One of the most critical factors influencing the effectiveness of PTI's social media campaign was its ability to provide real-time updates, a feature increasingly common in modern political campaigns. As seen in other studies, including those by Gibson and McAllister (2015), real-time communication via social media helps political parties engage with voters instantly, providing them with up-to-date information on candidate lists, voting symbols, and election day logistics. PTI's use of Facebook live streams, WhatsApp groups, and SMS campaigns exemplified this approach, ensuring that voters were continuously informed, even amid state-imposed internet restrictions.

Findings

The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data provide a comprehensive overview of PTI's social media strategy during the 2024 elections. The results reflect how PTI successfully utilized various platforms to reach a diverse voter base, address symbol allocation challenges, and mitigate misinformation. These findings also highlight the effectiveness of grassroots mobilization and the role of digital tools in ensuring voter clarity despite the obstacles faced during the campaign.

- The majority of respondents were in the 18-24 age group, accounting for 54% of the sample. This was followed by 32.8% of respondents in the 25-30 age group,

and 13.2% in the 31+ years category. In terms of gender, 62% of participants were female, while 38% were male. A large majority, 85.2%, came from urban areas, with the remaining 14.8% from rural areas. Regarding education, 55.2% of respondents held a Bachelor's degree, 38.4% had a Master's degree, and 6.4% had completed Matric.

- Social media usage was quite widespread, with 72% of respondents using social media on a daily basis. Another 18% used social media on a weekly basis, 9.2% engaged with it monthly, and only 0.8% used social media rarely.
- In terms of social media platform usage, Facebook was the most frequently used platform, with 45.6% of participants favoring it. WhatsApp followed with 30.4%, while Instagram was used by 15.2% of participants. YouTube accounted for 7.2% of usage, and Twitter (now X) was the least used platform, with only 2.8% of respondents indicating it as their primary platform.
- When it came to the amount of time spent on social media daily, 42.4% of respondents reported spending 1-2 hours, while 34.4% spent less than 1 hour on social media daily. 13.6% spent between 2-4 hours, 5.6% spent between 4-6 hours, and 4% of participants reported spending more than 6 hours daily on social media.
- Regarding engagement with PTI's social media content, 64.8% of respondents confirmed that they followed PTI on social media, while 35.2% did not. As for the frequency of engagement, 55.2% engaged with PTI's content often, 28.8% sometimes, 12.8% rarely, and 3.2% never engaged with PTI's social media.
- Videos were the most informative content type, with 40% of respondents favoring them, followed by text posts at 30%. Images were considered informative by 15% of respondents, while Stories and Infographics were the least informative at 10% and 5%, respectively.
- Respondents primarily engaged with PTI's content to stay informed about political developments, with 40% citing this as their primary motivation. 35.2% were motivated to support PTI's agenda, 15.2% engaged to participate in discussions, and 9.6% did so to share information with others.
- A significant 72% of participants were aware of the symbol allocation challenges faced by PTI in the 2024 elections, while 28% were not aware of these challenges.
- When asked where they first heard about the symbol allocation challenges, 40% of respondents cited PTI's social media as the source, 30.4% learned about it through news websites, 18.4% through television, 7.2% from friends, and 4% from family.
- In terms of how clear PTI's communication was about the symbol allocation changes, 48.8% of participants found it very clear, 34.4% found it clear, 12.8% had a neutral opinion, and 4% felt the communication was unclear.

- 42.4% of respondents believed that PTI's social media campaigns were very effective in addressing the symbol allocation challenges, 33.6% found them effective, 15.2% were neutral, 5.6% considered them ineffective, and 3.2% felt the campaigns were very ineffective.
- 64.8% of respondents reported that PTI's social media content had influenced their understanding of the new symbols, while 35.2% stated that it had no effect on their understanding.
- In terms of how PTI's social media content influenced their understanding of the new symbols, 50.4% of participants found that it clarified the symbol changes, 30.8% reported that it provided guidance on how to vote, and 18.8% emphasized that it highlighted the importance of symbol allocation.
- When asked how likely they were to follow PTI's guidance on symbol allocation during voting, 59.2% of participants were very likely to follow it, 28.8% were likely to follow it, 9.6% were neutral, 2.4% were unlikely, and 0% were very unlikely to follow PTI's guidance.
- 49.6% of respondents felt very confident in their understanding of the new symbol allocations after engaging with PTI's social media content, while 38.4% felt confident, 9.6% were neutral, and 2.4% felt not confident at all.
- Regarding additional support needed from PTI, 42.4% of participants desired more detailed explanations of the symbols, 34.4% wanted step-by-step voting guides, 16.8% were interested in interactive Q&A sessions, and 6.4% wanted more visual aids like infographics and videos.
- 42.4% of respondents were very satisfied with PTI's overall social media strategy, 34.4% were satisfied, 12.8% were neutral, 8.8% were dissatisfied, and 2.4% were very dissatisfied.
- 38.4% of participants found PTI's social media strategy to be very effective, 32.8% found it effective, 18.4% were neutral, 7.2% found it ineffective, and 3.2% felt it was very ineffective.
- PTI's campaign utilized multiple platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter (X), and YouTube. Facebook was used for live streaming and broad voter outreach, while Instagram and TikTok targeted younger audiences with short, engaging content. WhatsApp was crucial for grassroots coordination, and YouTube hosted more in-depth content such as speeches and policy explanations. Each platform had a unique role in reaching different demographics and achieving specific campaign goals.
- PTI faced challenges with the loss of their traditional "bat" symbol, leading to different symbols for candidates. To address this, PTI created a digital portal where voters could search for candidates by name and symbol. In addition, grassroots efforts like WhatsApp messages, SMS campaigns, and door-to-door flyers were

used to spread the word about symbol changes. Localized content in regional languages and collaborations with influencers helped amplify the message and ensure that voters understood the new symbols.

- PTI used various content formats to communicate with voters, including videos (speeches, explainers, motivational clips), images (infographics on how to identify candidates), and text (SMS alerts and WhatsApp messages). Dissemination primarily relied on organic sharing through volunteers forwarding content via WhatsApp groups. PTI's official pages, particularly Imran Khan's verified social media accounts, were central in sharing updates and guiding voters on how to identify the candidates and symbols.
- Internet restrictions imposed by the state were one of the primary challenges faced during the campaign, hindering PTI's ability to reach voters online. In response, PTI used VPNs to bypass the restrictions and continued to spread their message. Offline efforts, such as printed flyers and in-person interactions, were also emphasized to ensure that voters without internet access could still receive crucial information.
- Rival parties spread misinformation about PTI's symbol allocation, which led to confusion among voters. To combat this, PTI established fact-checking teams to verify information and respond quickly to fake news. The campaign also utilized official channels to rapidly share accurate updates and counteract any misleading claims.
- Due to limited access to traditional media outlets, PTI had to rely on cost-effective digital platforms. While this posed challenges, especially for reaching a broader audience, it also provided an opportunity to engage voters through social media platforms without the high costs associated with traditional advertising.
- Social media played a significant role in mobilizing PTI's base, particularly among younger voters in urban areas. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok helped energize the youth, while WhatsApp played a key role in providing real-time updates and ensuring that voters were clear about the symbol changes. The grassroots mobilization efforts through social media contributed to PTI's ability to organize rallies and engage volunteers more efficiently than their competitors.
- Interviewees highlighted WhatsApp as the most reliable platform, particularly during internet shutdowns, because it allowed for direct communication with voters. Younger team members preferred Instagram and TikTok, while older respondents leaned more on Facebook. Regarding communication about symbol allocation, some team members used top-down communication methods like official portals, while others preferred bottom-up strategies involving WhatsApp calls and flyers to ensure localized, peer-to-peer engagement. All interviewees acknowledged the impact of internet restrictions and discussed strategies like using VPNs or focusing on offline outreach to overcome these obstacles.

Conclusion

The 2024 electoral campaign of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) marked a significant chapter in the use of social media for political engagement and voter mobilization. This study explored the ways in which PTI leveraged various social media platforms to not only spread political messages but also address critical challenges faced during the election process. These challenges included symbol allocation confusion, misinformation, and the limitations imposed by traditional media access. The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of social media in shaping electoral outcomes, informing voters, and fostering political participation in an increasingly digital world.

The role of social media in political campaigns has evolved rapidly in the last decade, and PTI's 2024 election campaign exemplified the shift towards a digital-first approach in political communication. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp played a crucial role in spreading PTI's message and engaging with voters. PTI used these platforms strategically to reach various demographics, with particular focus on youth, urban populations, and online communities. Each platform was utilized for specific objectives, ensuring that PTI's content reached its target audience through the most effective medium.

Facebook, for example, served as the primary platform for live streams, speeches, and rally coverage. Given its broad user base across various age groups, Facebook helped PTI maintain a consistent connection with both young and older voters. Instagram and TikTok, on the other hand, were focused on engaging younger voters. Short, attention-grabbing videos, infographics, and motivational content on these platforms helped PTI resonate with the youth demographic, who are more likely to consume bite-sized content that aligns with their media consumption habits. WhatsApp was utilized as a grassroots communication tool, allowing PTI to coordinate volunteers, share updates about symbol allocation, and encourage voter participation through peer-to-peer communication. YouTube provided the space for more detailed content, such as policy explanations, campaign speeches, and interviews, enabling PTI to engage viewers in a deeper and more informed manner.

Through these platforms, PTI was able to rapidly disseminate critical information about symbol allocation and the changes that had occurred for different polling stations. The loss of the party's traditional "bat" symbol posed a significant challenge, as candidates across the country had to run with different symbols. Social media played a central role in informing voters about these changes, ensuring that they could identify PTI candidates by their new symbols. Despite the confusion caused by the change in symbols, PTI's effective communication strategy helped mitigate the confusion and ensured that voters had the information needed to cast their votes correctly.

One of the primary challenges PTI faced during the 2024 elections was the allocation of new symbols to its candidates, after losing the traditional "bat" symbol. This led to confusion among voters who were familiar with the old symbol. PTI's response to this

challenge was multifaceted, using social media to educate voters about the new symbols and provide them with the tools necessary to navigate the election process.

PTI's communication strategy involved a combination of digital tools and grassroots efforts. A dedicated online portal was created, where voters could search for candidates by name or symbol. This portal served as a central repository of information about the new symbols, providing voters with an easy-to-use resource to help them understand which candidate to vote for. In addition to the portal, PTI used WhatsApp, SMS campaigns, and door-to-door flyers to ensure that the message reached voters at the grassroots level. The use of localized content, including region-specific posters and social media posts in local languages, further helped ensure that PTI's message was understood by a broad cross-section of the electorate.

Influencer collaborations were another key aspect of PTI's strategy. By partnering with popular social media influencers, the party was able to amplify its message and reach younger, more tech-savvy voters. Influencers shared information about the symbol changes and encouraged followers to stay informed and participate in the electoral process. This strategy not only helped raise awareness about the symbol allocation issues but also contributed to building a sense of urgency and importance around the elections.

One of the critical questions raised by this study was how effective PTI's social media campaigns were in mitigating voter confusion regarding symbol allocation and raising awareness about the election process. The study found that PTI's social media efforts were highly effective in addressing these challenges. The use of diverse content formats such as videos, images, text messages, and infographics helped cater to different voter preferences and ensured that the information was accessible to a wide audience.

A key finding from the study was that PTI's social media campaigns played a crucial role in reducing confusion about the new symbols. By providing clear and concise information on various platforms, PTI was able to clarify the changes to voters and offer them the tools they needed to understand the election process. According to the data, a large percentage of respondents reported that PTI's social media content had clarified the symbol changes, while a significant number stated that the content provided guidance on how to vote. These findings suggest that PTI's communication strategy was highly effective in ensuring voter comprehension, which was essential for a smooth election process.

The study also revealed that social media played a significant role in fostering awareness among voters about the importance of symbol allocation. By emphasizing the significance of the symbol changes, PTI not only helped voters understand how to identify candidates but also communicated the broader implications of symbol allocation on the electoral process. This increased awareness helped empower voters and ensured that they felt confident in their ability to cast their votes correctly.

While PTI's social media strategy proved to be largely successful, it was not without its challenges. One of the major obstacles faced by PTI was the state-imposed internet restrictions, which limited the party's ability to communicate with voters in real time. During periods of internet shutdowns or slowdowns, PTI faced difficulties in reaching voters online, which could have hindered the effectiveness of its campaign. In response to these challenges, PTI employed several strategies to maintain communication. The use of VPNs allowed the party to bypass restrictions and continue disseminating information to voters. Additionally, offline methods such as printed flyers, posters, and in-person interactions were utilized to ensure that voters without internet access could still receive crucial information.

Another challenge faced by PTI was the spread of misinformation by rival parties. Misinformation about the party's symbol allocation was widespread, which contributed to voter confusion. PTI countered this challenge by setting up fact-checking teams to monitor social media and quickly respond to false claims. The party also relied on official channels to disseminate accurate information and correct any misconceptions. This rapid response helped maintain the credibility of PTI's message and ensured that voters received timely and accurate updates.

The 2024 electoral campaign of PTI underscores the transformative role social media has played in modern political communication. By utilizing a variety of platforms, PTI successfully engaged with voters, educated them about the symbol allocation changes, and mobilized support for the party. Despite the challenges posed by misinformation, internet restrictions, and limited access to traditional media, PTI's social media strategy was able to effectively mitigate voter confusion and raise awareness among the electorate.

The findings from this study demonstrate the power of digital tools and social media platforms in modern electoral campaigns. PTI's ability to engage with voters in real time, disseminate critical information about the election process, and combat misinformation reflects a growing trend in political campaigns around the world. As social media continues to play an increasingly significant role in shaping political discourse, the lessons learned from PTI's campaign offer valuable insights for future campaigns, particularly in terms of how to use digital tools effectively to engage voters, manage voter confusion, and build political support.

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