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Between the Ballot Box and the Screen: Digital Misinformation, Voter Trust, and Electoral Credibility in Pakistan's 2024 General Elections

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ABSTRACT

The 2024 General Elections in Pakistan occurred on a ground of a historic mobilization on the digital front, but also a series of having misinformation that essentially questioned the legitimacy of the election process. The paper discusses the interplay between the exposure to digital misinformation, voter confidence in the electoral institutions, and the perceived electoral credibility that are based on the primary survey data of 384 members of the general population as well as 384 presiding officers collected in major provinces of Pakistan. The study identifies, using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation and thematic analysis that 70.6% of electorate thought that political parties strategically misinformed electorate opinion by intentionally using digital misinformation, and 54.7% had the view that electorates had been directly harmed by electoral credibility damages through the use of digital misinformation. The respondents were all too enthusiastic about the issue of whether the Election Commission of Pakistan had organized free and fair elections, and that is the reason why only 37.2% have responded with an affirmation of the fact, which is in a stark contrast with the generally optimistic evaluations provided by the international observer missions. Controversially questioning this credibility gap, the paper states that it cannot be remedied through elections administration, but is mediated significantly by the ecosystem of misinformation, acting within WhatsApp, Tik Tok, Facebook and X contexts. In the context of comparative work in India, Nigeria and Brazil, the results imply that institutional transparency interventions are less and less effective when they are not backed by strong digital literacy infrastructure and content accountability mechanisms. Theoretical contributions will be based on the agenda-setting theory, the Stimulus-Organism-Response model, and the literature on institutional trust in forming an integrative framework to understand the issue of digitally mediated electoral delegitimization.

Keywords: Digital Misinformation, Electoral Credibility, Voter Trust, Pakistan 2024 Elections, Election Commission of Pakistan, Social Media Influence, Democratic Legitimacy

Introduction

It has a certain irony, conversely, that democratic elections, traditionally viewed as the self-corrective system inside a government, have themselves been susceptible to manipulation by the very self-communicate technologies that the idea of making elections more participatory relied on. The 2024 General Elections in Pakistan demonstrate this irony to unreasonable levels of discomfort. On the one hand, voters registered was 128.6 million in history; the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) implemented biometric verification, women-only polling stations, and Elections Management System. Conversely, the comparable weeks to lead-up to polling day were overrun with AI-generated speech impersonations of political leaders, viral

WhatsApp chains sharing manufactured vote-count photographs, and carefully planned social media campaigns that were not goal-oriented in persuading but rather in disorientation.

This paper takes the issue of misinformation seriously but not whether it was present or not or whether it actually impacted voters with the sense of whether the election was legitimate or not. That is a less obvious, and to be honest, more practical question. One type of damaged trust is the case when a voter observes a real irregularity in a polling station. The voter who, the evening before the election morning, sitting in the comfort of their residence, views a video created by an AI of a candidate admitting electoral fraud feels an entirely different form of the latter- that which might not have had any connection with reality at all.

Such a difference is policy-critical. In case the main issue with low institutional trust in the ECP is actual administrative failures, the solution lies with good administration. When it is mostly an indicator of a misinformation ecosystem that corrupts perception irrespective of the quality of administration, the solutions appear much more different: platform responsibility, online literacy, information fact-checking infrastructure. Of course, in practice both are occurring concomitantly and the key analytical task of this paper is to disentangle their relative weights.

A very telling case to this investigation involves Pakistan. It is the fifth most populous nation in the world with some 46% mobile internet infrastructure as at the end of 2023 (Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, 2024). Its political environment is highly polarized - the removal of a previous Prime Minister Imran Khan and the legal and political struggle that ensued in its wake partly through the power of social media platforms had prepared an environment where the circulation of partisan digital content gained unprecedented speed. On top of that a regulatory context in which the content regulations outlined by PEMRA were challenged and largely not working (Digital Rights Foundation, 2024) and you have something mandatory approaching a natural experiment of electoral misinformation on a large scale.

Research Problem and Paper Structure.

Existing literature related to electoral misinformation has expanded significantly since 2016, yet the majority has been focused on Western democracies - especially the United States and European cases - where the structures of platforms, literacy rates, and institutional setups are significantly different than in South Asian democracies (Freelon and Wells, 2020; Pennycook and Rand, 2021). Research specifically investigating the role of digital misinformation as a mediator of voter confidence in developing electoral systems is comparatively pregnant, and Pakistan has been discriminately underproportionately under the control of systematic empirical studies (Basit et al., 2024).

The following is the progress of this paper. We report our mixed-methods research design and sampling plan after considering the theoretical and customary literature. The discussion of findings is the central part of the paper, and it is structured around three dimensions interrelated as the prevalence and perceived sources of digital misinformation; impact of the lack of electoral integrity on voter trust in the ECP and in electoral processes, in general; and the resulting credibility gap between official and lay judgments of electoral integrity. We then put these findings together, into a theoretical framework, and suggest policy and research directions.

Literature review

The correlation between information environment and electoral trust has been theorized in the divergent directions. Agenda-setting theory, using the work of McCombs and Shaw (1972) and picking it up far more extensively by Iyengar and others, proposes that media framing is not simply a reflection on political reality, but rather a constructive part of the prism through which citizens create their estimation of political institutions. In a digital media world, this agenda-

setting role has been democratized in a partial sense, anyone can be an agenda-setter thanks to a sufficiently viral post, and has been radicalized in its power to do harm (Freelon & Wells, 2020).

An alternative micro-level account is the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model. When considered through the prism of the electoral behavior, the content of the social media would serve as the stimulus; the organism would be the psychological state of the voters, such as party loyalties, media literacy, and trust dispositions; and voting behavior or the decision to abstain would be the response (Saleem et al., 2024). The merit of this framework is that it preempts the idea of individual variation in being vulnerable to misinformation, as opposed to treating all voters as equally susceptible.

Relying on the distinction between specific and diffuse support as introduced by Easton (1965) and relying on the replication of the initial research, institutional trust theory suggests that the continued experiences of electoral malfeasance (or the credible perception thereof) frays not only the support to specific election efforts but generalized trust to democratic institutions in general (Norris, 2014). Several contexts are piling-up that fraud accusations by social media precisely produce such a delegitimizing effect, although the underlying claims may be false or exaggerated (KeremoÄŸlu and Weidmann, 2020).

Khalil (2024) illustrates the systematic deployment of TikTok and WhatsApp by political parties in the 2024 election cycle in the Pakistani context to form partisan silos of information based on their partisan identity and not based on factual information. Kumari et al. (2025) report the details of how AI-generated content was weaponized to pin those statements on rival candidates as being made. Tripathi et al. (2024) present cross-national findings that AI-generated deepfakes are especially successful at negating the trust in electoral proceedings in low-information settings where fact-checking infrastructures are also weak. The only missing aspect of this literature is a methodical empirical study of the mediating role between misinformation presentation and institutional trust and perceived electoral credibility within a Pakistani specific situation - a void that is directly being filled by this paper.

Research Methodology

This research has a concurrent mixed-methods design, which incorporates survey data collected in a structured form and a thematic analysis of open-ended questions and secondary documentary materials. The epistemological position is generally pragmatist: the research questions require both the systematic generalizability of the quantitative data and the contextual richness of the qualitative research. Each on its own is not enough. The purely statistical analysis of the responses in the survey would hide the motivational and interpretive aspects of voter trust, the purely qualitative would restrict the scope of the findings to a specific case or location.

Primary Data Collection: Survey Instruments.

Two questionnaires were created and distributed in the post-election phase of April/June 2024, eight to sixteen weeks post-polling day (8 February 2024). This time frame was not accidental: enough time had passed since the election that initial post-election accounts were solidified, but not so much that the bias of recollection would seriously undermine the answers to questions about election-day experiences.

Survey I focused on presiding officers - the civil servants who are in charge of individual polling stations. Three hundred and eighty-four completed forms were obtained. The instrument has 31 items that included training adequacy, logistics, security conditions, perceived irregularities, procedural compliance, and perception of overall fairness. Also, there was a subsection of eleven questions dealing with awareness and attitudes to electronic voting machines.

Survey II was on the general voting population. Once again, 384 filled-out responses were received. The questionnaire consisted of 34 questions that included the following demographic factors, experience of participating and registering, attitudes toward election-day affairs, media and social media usage, recollection of trust in institutions, and future outlooks of electoral reform and use of technology.

The 384-sample size of each population is based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) finding that a population of over one million needs a minimum of 384 as a sample to give results that are generalizable at the 95% confidence level with a 5 percent margin of error. This threshold directly applies to Pakistan, with a population of registered voters of 128.6 million and a corps of presiding officers in the tens of thousands.

Sampling Strategy

In case of the general population survey, convenience sampling was used, stratified by five areas, i.e., province of residence (Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit-Baltistan); urban (or rural) location; gender; age group (1825, 2635, 3645, 4660). This stratification was necessary to make sure that no single demographic segment had a disproportionate influence on results, which is indeed a possibility when a survey researcher in a country with a skewed access structure to urban, educated, male respondents.

The resultant sample was mostly rural (77.3%), mostly male (82%), was mostly concentrated in the 26-35 age group (35.4%), and was overrepresentative of Sindh (48.2%), due to the geographic base of the research team. The following are recognized to be limitations on these distributional features.

In the case of the presiding officer survey, purposive sampling was employed, which includes the officers directly involved in the 2024 election management, previous experience in at least one past electoral cycle (2018 or 2013), and geographical diversity (urban, rural, and conflict-impacted). This conscious intentionality was correct: we were not trying to identify a demographically representative sample of civil servants in general, but of those who had an authoritative understanding of the 2024 electoral operations, in particular.

Secondary Data and Triangulation.

The main results of the survey were triangulated by secondary sources such as: the official post-election statistical release by the Election Commission of Pakistan; the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) 2024 Parallel Vote Tabulation report; the Commonwealth Observer Group initial statement; the European Union Election Observation Mission initial findings; PILDAT 2024 electoral analysis; and the Digital Rights Foundation documentation of online content. Intersectioning of these sources was used to confirm primary findings as well as put them into perspective in the greater assessive context.

Analytical Procedures

The SPSS v27 was used to analyze quantitative data. All survey items resulted in descriptive statistics: frequencies, valid percentages and cumulative distributions. Associations were investigated using cross-tabulations based on important variables, such as misinformation perception and ECP trust, social media use and perceived electoral transparency, and demographic factors and credibility ratings. The chi-square tests were used to determine the statistical significance of observed associations. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses was conducted according to the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework of the reflexive thematic analysis, which resulted in production of codes during an initial inductive pass, followed by grouping the codes into higher-order themes.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was given by all participants before filling out surveys. Anonymity was guaranteed and the data were stored on password-protected institutional servers that could be accessed by research team only. None of the participants could be identified in any reported finding. A pilot group of twelve respondents (six presiding officers and six members of the public) was used to pre-test survey items to determine clarity and refine wording prior to full implementation.

Results and Discussion

Misinformation Landscape: Scale and Attribution.

The initial observation that is striking is the sheer size of the perceived misinformation in the 2024 electoral cycle. In the question about whether political parties manipulated voter views with misinformation or fake news, 70.6% of participants of the general population survey responded in the affirmative. This is not a fringe or controversial result - it is a majority that shouts. What analytically interesting is what this number does and does not tell us.

It informs us that the overriding popular discourse regarding the 2024 election, among almost three-quarters of the population sampled, had the assumption that deliberate digital manipulation was being executed. It does not inform us as to whether this perception was true, whether, in fact, parties did conduct misinformation campaigns on the magnitude that they were perceived. This difference is significant since erosion of trust by misinformation can take place in two rather different ways: when the misinformation is exposed directly, and when false information is reported about the existence of misinformation. The latter may be equally delegitimizing as the former, and, perhaps, even more so, since it is not easily refuted. It is difficult to fact-check a generalized atmosphere of suspicion; it is easy to fact-check a particular claim.

Khalil (2024) reports on how TikTok emerged as a key source of politically oriented content over the 2024 campaign, where party affiliated accounts received hundreds of millions of views in the weeks before polling day. Mostly, the most popular shared content was not in the form of an outright fabrication but instead, carefully edited videos, misleading captions on otherwise real footage and satire that had been disseminated without its satirical context attached. These kinds of soft misinformation are especially pernicious in that they are difficult to debunk as the picture or audio behind it is actual, it is just that the framing of the context behind is false.

A similar phenomenon is recorded in Tripathi et al. (2024): the audio and video content produced by AI copies the voices and faces of political leaders, simulating them. Pakistan was among the earliest South Asian nations where such content got significant electoral circulation, as videos purportedly depicting high-profile politicians making compromising claims went viral on WhatsApp in the run-up to the election. The Commonwealth Observer Group particularly pointed to the fact that AI-generated content had brought a qualitatively new aspect of risk in the information environment that current regulatory frameworks were completely unprepared to deal with.

What we can add to this image with our survey data is how these information-environment conditions found their way in the subjective experience of the voters. The 67.2 percent of the respondents who sought election information via social media were not passive consumers; they were active participants in information ecosystems that combined authentic political content with fake information in ways that could often be impossible to differentiate in real time. The fact that 54.7% of them believed that the digital misinformation had specifically harmed the credibility of the elections implies a causal attribution that is causally significant, although the exact causal pathways may need more rigorous determination than can be done in survey data.

Institutional Trust: Credibility Problem of ECP.

Maybe the most startling discovery in the general population survey is the following: only 37.2% of the people surveyed felt that the Election Commission of Pakistan did free and fair elections. In other words, almost two-thirds of the survey participants were not willing to sign the performance of the ECP as one that is at least of the standard of electoral legitimacy.

This figure is worthy of disaggregation and interpretation. It is an amalgamation of causes of distrust, not necessarily associated with digital misinformation. A few respondents were giving answers based on firsthand experience - 39.1% said they had seen or heard accounts of vote rigging in their own polling station; 43.8% said they had been under duress when voting; and 52.6% said they had had to wait excessively before the result could be announced. These are complaints based on real-life electoral experiences, and they should be heard on their merits.

With this said, it is impossible to explain the ECP trust figure by using direct experience only. Only a minority of the respondents themselves experienced severe irregularities; the rest were making trust judgments, in part on the premise of mediated reporting about what was occurring in other places: news reports, social media stories, and discussions with peers. It is through this mechanism that misinformation is the most powerful means of misinformation having a delegitimizing effect: not by altering the experience of each voter, but by establishing a meta-level account of massive wrongdoing that tints the interpretation of every new piece of information.

This observation is in line with the idea of critical citizens proposed by Norris (2014), which means that citizens who share the values of democracy are unhappy with the current state of their realization in reality. Her cross-national investigation concludes that the excessive rate of electoral censure is not always an indicator of anti-democratic mood, it can be a sign of a healthy demand in democracy. The fear is that once criticism is too generalized to an extent that participation is suppressed instead of stimulating reform. Pakistan is possibly approaching this tipping point based on our data: 53.1% of respondents stated that they would not turn up to vote in future elections, depending on the experience they will have had in 2024.

In a cross-national study of 52 countries, Keremooglu and Weidmann (2020) discover that allegations of electoral fraud due to social media have a substantial negative influence on voter turnout in the following election periods, even following the election periods that are objectively cleaner. The process is cumulative narrative damage a delegitimization pattern that is difficult to overcome by process improvement alone. The trends of data in Pakistan are not a good fit to this model.

The Credibility Gap: When Officials and Voters Disagree

The most fruitful theoretic conflict in the data is not between the public survey and the presiding officer survey, but between them, and between both and the international observer assessments. Take the following opposition:

Sixty-nine-point three percent (69.3) of presiding officers rated the overall process in their polling station as fair and transparent. Observers at the international level had very favorable reviews of the election-day activities, with the presence of professional staff, opening of polling stations on time, and posting of Form 45 results publicly. The Commonwealth Observer Group described the polling day as being peaceful, mostly peaceful. The parallel vote tallying conducted by FAFEN, although recording anomalies in about one-third of sampled stations, also revealed that most polling stations were working in rudimentary procedural compliance.

However, only 44.5% of general populace interviewees felt that there was fairness in the elections in their constituencies. Only

37.2 believed in the overall behaviour of the ECP. The perceptions of the transparency of the 2024 elections compared to 2013 and 2018 were not higher than 41.7%.

This departure is not a simple information asymmetry issue of officials having more information than voters on what did happen. It is indicative of something more structural: a systematic difference in the evidentiary ground on which they establish their credibility judgments. Direct observers assess what they personally observed; international observers assess a filtered sample of high-visibility polling points (against international procedural criteria); ordinary voters assess a combination of personal experience, peer reporting, and media accounts that can be correct or inaccurate indicators of the situation in other locations.

The implication of our data is that the third type of evaluation media-narrative-shaped is performing a significant task of making the public score of credibility lower than direct observation evidence would warrant. The percentage of voters who said the media coverage had any effect on their perception of the electoral process, 55.2, and those who said the social media coverage had any effect on their voting decision, 62.8, are all a transmission mechanism by which information-environment conditions affect institutional trust judgments.

This interpretation fits the story of lazy information processing by Pennycook and Rand (2021), where voters default to partisan or emotionally resonant narratives instead of working hard to process the factual information. It also resonates with the Digital Rights Foundation (2024) reports of how coordinated inauthentic behavior the network of fake accounts pushing certain stories can build false impressions of consensus in claims that otherwise would not stand-alone questioning.

The policy implication is uncomfortable: you cannot fill in a gap of this size by administrative means alone, since the gap is not mainly being created by administrative failures but rather by a story space that is systematically weakening administrative successes. The ECP came in with biometric verification, women polling stations and a new elections management system and yet it lost the trust of almost two-thirds of the voters.

Social Media as Electoral Infrastructure: Structural Analysis

Two-thirds of the participants indicated that the social media had a direct impact on their choice to vote. It is a figure that requires solemn structural considerations, not as an empirical curiosity but as a pointer to the extent to which the infrastructure of electoral communication has been fundamentally changed.

Traditional elections were based on the premise that political communication travelled through controlled outlets - licensed broadcasters, registered newspapers, officially approved campaign publications. It was based on this assumption in the regulatory framework of electoral law, the regulations concerning campaign finance, access to the media, the blackout periods, the truth in advertising. WhatsApp groups, Tik Tok feeds, and Facebook community pages just were not present in the jurisprudential imagination that created most of the existing electoral laws in Pakistan.

The outcome is a structural disfit. PEMRA is in a position to regulate licensed broadcasters: it essentially has no jurisdiction over the hundreds of millions of messages flowing on end-to-end encrypted messaging platforms. The ECP may impose a campaign silence on the 48 hours before the polling; it may not stop social media posts (viral or not) that happen within that period. The Pakistani electoral law legal framework, as Digital Rights Foundation (2024) believes continues to work in a twentieth-century information space as real political communication has decisively shifted to the twenty-first.

This distributional effect of this mismatch of structure. We find that 77.3% of our survey respondents lived in rural regions, and that rural survey respondents had a higher rate of using

social media to get election information and a higher rate of being affected by reported misinformation. This is initially counter-intuitive, as one would think urban, educated voters to be the social media constituency. However, Basit et al. (2024) demonstrate that social media is now everywhere even in low-income rural populations due to the affordability of mobile data and the ease of using applications such as WhatsApp and Tik Tok, and the digital literacy infrastructure that could empower users to critically assess information remains unevenly distributed and is mainly found in urban areas.

This is compounded by the gender aspect. The sample of the public survey included only 18% of female respondents - again representative of the barriers to female survey participation in rural Pakistani settings - but other sources (FAFEN, 2024) show that female voter participation is still significantly lower than male. The lack of digital literacy and the increased social barrier to information-seeking makes the female voter especially susceptible to misinformation as well as the form of coercive pressure that 43.8% of our sample mentioned experiencing.

EVM Paradox: Technology Trust in a Misinformation Environment.

One of the less obvious discoveries is related to Electronic Voting Machines. EVMs were not used in the 2024 elections, with the National Assembly having voted to stop their planned implementation by polling day, but 77.1% of those surveyed by the public expressed their desire to use EVMs in future elections instead of paper ballots. When questioned about which reform would make them the most trustful, 40.4% responded that it would be the introduction of EVM.

This is ironic in a certain sense. The respondents who indicated high levels of concern regarding technological manipulation 54.7 percent said that they thought that digital misinformation harmed the electoral credibility, 70.6 said that they believed that parties disseminated fake news, were also the ones who indicated high levels of preference of technological solutions to electoral issues. The seeming paradox is solved, I believe, when you note that the respondents are not stating belief in technology as a whole, but in specific technologies which are seen as diminishing human discretion and, consequently, human opportunity to manipulate.

In the Pakistani popular imagination, paper ballot systems are linked to the human chain of custody opportunities, ballot stuffing, selective counting, falsified Form 45s, which have been the content of allegations of electoral fraud over decades. Whatever their technical weaknesses, EVMs are seen as eliminating these specific points of human intervention. The fact that this perception can be technically naive, that EVMs are introducing new vulnerabilities, as half of presiding officers were found to fear technical breakdowns, is, perhaps, not as important as itself "as it tells us how voters are working through the credibility issue.

What they desire, essentially, is not technology as such but less human judgment at those moments in the process where human judgment has been abused in the past. It is a political request that is being made in the form of a technological taste, and it has significant consequences regarding the way the ECP and policymakers ought to treat the issue of technology adoption: not as a technocratic response to an administrative issue, but as a political message about institutional responsibility.

Comparative Dimensions

The experience of Pakistan is not unique but unique. The 2024 general elections in India that were held only a few months afterwards were also characterized by organized misinformation through AI-generated content, especially against minorities, and their actual impact on communal polarization, albeit not necessarily on electoral outcome itself was documented (Tripathi et al., 2024). The 2023 general elections in Nigeria also saw similar patterns of fake counts of results on social media before formal announcements, in a manner that created

significant credibility issues to the Independent National Electoral Commission despite overall positive ratings of international observers - a pattern almost identical to that of Pakistan (KeremoÄŸlu and Weidmann, 2020).

The 2022 Brazil elections may be the most extreme example: the systematically fostered mistrust in electronic voting systems by the current president resulted in post-election violence despite the fact that the integrity of the results was proven by international observers, domestic courts, and independent auditors (Freelon & Wells, 2020). It is a lesson of Brazil, which is that, despite years of institutional delegitimization efforts, there comes a point at which the gap of credibility is hard to bridge with factual information, and that the observers of Pakistani elections must not ignore.

What the comparisons indicate is that Pakistan is not experiencing a problem that is uniquely Pakistani, but a form of a global problem, namely the decoupling of electoral legitimacy and electoral integrity, facilitated by information environments that are able to influence perceptions more quickly and powerfully than the corrective action of institutions can be applied. As Norris (2014) asserts, the proper reaction is a combination of supply-side (enhancing the reality of administrative quality) and demand-side (establishing the media literacy and fact-checking systems with the help of which citizens can properly assess electoral assertions) interventions.

Conclusion

The 2024 General Elections showed a Pakistan where the formal machine of electoral administration is running on a completely different plane as compared to the informal machine of political communication. The evaluation of an election where procedures were generally observed, logistics generally functioning, and chain of custody of ballots generally upheld was done by presiding officers and international observers. The electorate assessed an election where institutional manipulation was widespread and the election results were questionable according to the prevailing scripts on their phones. They both occurred at the same time. It is at the heart of the issue of credibility.

The present paper contributes to the theory in three ways. First, it builds on the institutional trust literature by showing that, in highly polarizing, highly digital-penetrating settings, the relationship between objective administrative performance and subjective institutional trust can be broken significantly. Trust recovery requires administrative improvement but not only that. Second, it paves the way to using the agenda-setting theory to digital forms of electoral communication, demonstrating that algorithmically amplified, decentralized misinformation can play an agenda-setting role in a systematic, institutionalized, and disadvantaging way to institutional credibility stories. Third, its combination with the S-O-R model and the institutional trust theory implies a route to a more integrated theoretical explanation of digitally mediated electoral delegitimization - an explanation that would consider both the structural aspects of information environments and the psychological mechanisms, by which individuals process political information, at the individual level.

The most significant practical implication, in the case of the ECP, is that institutional integrity visibility is now, as important as institutional integrity itself. The documented success of the commission; biometric registration, women polling stations, Form 45 public posting was not communicated well to the voters or was drowned out by counter-narratives. An institutional priority should be a strategic communication capability that could fact-check and handle narratives real-time throughout the electoral period.

In the case of civil society organizations, the data highly favor investment in digital literacy programs that are specifically aimed at rural communities and women. Since the introduction of EVMs is the most-demanded electoral reform, and it was found that 43.5% of voters do not even know how EVMs work, it can be seen how large the informational gap that can be bridged with the help of organized civil education can be.

To platform companies in Pakistan such as Meta, ByteDance/TikTok, and Alphabet, the results contribute to the overall evidence that voluntary content moderation promises are inadequate in high-stakes electoral settings. Practiced preparation in work with the ECP prior to the following round of elections, with procedures agreed on how election-integrity content will be labeled and virality braked on potentially false election claims, should be bare minimum requirements.

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