

Manipulated Minds: Political and Social Factors Enabling Deepfake Impact in Pakistan

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Abstract: This research evaluates the political and socioeconomic factors that allow deepfake technology growth and spread within Pakistan by analyzing their effects on public vulnerability to digital disinformation. The increasing availability of deepfakes transforms information reception methods as well as the methods politicians use to frame narratives, since deepfakes now appear realistic. The analysis requires attention to three main elements: insufficient digital literacy, political and ethnic rivalry, and online media habits that support the spread of biased content through social media echo chambers. Deepfake content finds success in the politically segregated cultural climate of Pakistan, which confuses viewers between genuine and fake elements and information versus deliberate distortion. The research explains that deepfakes have a strong impact because of the combination of technological advances and existing societal weaknesses and political distrust. This paper asserts that enhanced media literacy, along with institutional safeguards and better public awareness, will serve as key elements for fighting deepfake deception that affects Pakistan's democratic communication methods.

Key Words: False Propaganda, Social Image, Political Stance, Fake News, Misuse of Technology, Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

Deepfake technology emerged from an environment that integrates tightly with the social and political structures of affected communities. Political organizations, together with social players, utilize deepfake technology in Pakistan to manipulate public opinion while performing propaganda schemes for their agenda, because the nation shows deep political rifts and evolving media usage patterns. The analysis explores how political and socioeconomic elements affect deepfake content production and distribution throughout Pakistan, along with how these factors make the country more vulnerable to online deception.

The political atmosphere of Pakistan features strong partisan competition and election tampering allegations, together with centuries of media-generated misinformation. These characteristics within Pakistan's political environment facilitate deepfake usage for damaging political opponents while manipulating public opinion and determining election results. Deepfake technology functions as an effective false information transmission mechanism, which assists in maintaining existing biases and producing public opinion changes because political and ethnic groups increasingly separate from each other. The goals of different media organizations as well as political entities, together with foreign powers, are advanced through deepfake technology, which leads to a spread of false information and diminishing trust in reliable information sources (Saeed et al, 2024).

Deepfake technology is influenced by Pakistan's social environment, particularly in how information spreads and how people interact with media content. The fast spread of unverified content throughout Pakistani social media

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platforms exists due to the country's high dependence on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and TikTok. A customer base with limited computer knowledge, particularly in rural communities, faces higher risks of believing false deepfake content that they distribute. Social media echo chambers become a worsening factor because they continue to deliver information that matches users' existing beliefs when they decrease their skepticism toward information validity (Rafique et al., [2023](#)).

Social and political dynamics work together within this examination to analyze deepfake technology as both influence and consequence for Pakistan's social issues. Plans to minimize deepfake effects, together with public online disinformation resistance, can be developed through understanding what causes these phenomena to occur and expand.

The current incorporation of Artificial Intelligence in deepfake technology to produce videos that bear the natural appearances of real people poses numerous challenges to privacy. New technology, as it rises, is followed by several ethical and legal questions that should be studied in detail to secure individuals' rights (Jimoh, [2024](#)). Deepfake technology applies machine learning algorithms to replace or change the voices and faces of people in images and movies. This technology is growing rapidly, and it can post highly realistic and realistic fake information. If, for some reason or another, personal data is changed without authorization, it can be used to generate very misleading information. This poses a serious threat to people's privacy and can lead to political intolerance. The increasing popularity of deepfakes creates a threat of reducing the level of trust in public discussions and news sources. Furthermore, loss of confidence between people and institutions may be a consequence of efficiency in distinguishing real and fake news as technology progresses. Deepfakes can be used as a tool for propaganda and threatening individuals. It is extremely detrimental to the privacy and safety of politicians and individuals to spread fake news or foment a riot (Ramluckan, [2024](#)).

This raises different moral and legal questions about the rights of individuals. There seems to be a likelihood that deepfakes pose some challenges that the existing set of rules and regulations cannot effectively deal with, thereby stressing the need for more effective rules that can help protect people's privacy in the age of advanced technology. The use of deepfakes has a highly negative impact on the lives of people; fake material and manipulated media can lead to misunderstandings, quarrels, and even parting. In the case of privacy rights preservation and defending against threats, one must address deepfake technology. Lastly, it is possible to state that deepfakes' impact on privacy is significant and that the legal and ethical issues are crucial. Preventative measures towards privacy and measures against deep fake technology must be adopted through policies (Ziemblicki, [2023](#)).

Deepfake technology thrives in contexts where political and social processes create the perfect environment for the technology's impact. Deepfakes in Pakistan are affected by social media trends, political and ethnic divisions, habits in media consumption, and susceptibility to fake news. To understand why the object is deepfakes can be so destructive in the nation's sociopolitical matrix, this chapter discusses the factors.

Literature Review

Deepfake attacks, as opposed to other privacy violations, are as close as one can get to identity theft because they undermine one's received conception of self. When doppelgängers are used to harm the victims, they tend to feel like there is little they can do to change or stop it, and this is what threatens their dignity and right to privacy.

Deepfakes belong to what can be called the 'crisis of authenticity' in the media, when the actual credible messages of legitimate sources have a hard time being more prominent due to the abundance of fakes. Especially inadvisable are situations such as totalitarian regimes being in place, or else freedom of speech is in danger. Deepfakes tend to chill political speech when they are used to portray dissidents or otherwise manipulate the public, since they force people and organizations to justify their actions or assert their innocence (Suyoung, [2020](#)).

The advent of deepfake recording, another form of media control, took the world by surprise. The rampant use of this innovation for extortion, fraud, and abuse has created additional risks rather than an open door for various partners. In any case, little is known about the anti-generative organizations used to control the recordings by Deepfake.

Looking at the social development of the innovation hypothesis, we investigate the transformation of the implicit motivations behind the deep fake. At the moment, there is a greater amount of scepticism than confidence about the plausible uses of this invention (Kwok & Koh, [2020](#)).

The challenges that legislators face while trying to regulate deepfake technology. She argues that since deepfakes are currently possible, laws governing defamation, fraud, and harassment no longer suffice since they were designed for handling text 'clearly' false or deceptive. The nature of deepfakes does not allow for victims to differentiate the real from the fake; thus, legal strategies have to be developed for producers to be taken to court for justice for the victims. On this, they agree, though Rowley insists in his paper that the acceptable uses of AI in satire, comedy, and the arts should not be over-regulated (Meskys et al., [2019](#)).

The victims' psychological and emotional responses to deepfake attacks. They found out from the experiences of women on the internet that they are subjected to severe trauma and social stigmatisation, especially when they are involved in non-consensual deepfake pornography. These deepfakes that are created have the effect of harassing the public when they are displayed on social media, and, in some cases, the victims are forced to lose their jobs or even change their groups. Murphy and Cooper also note that a lot of victims suffer from worsening mental health disorders due to the unknown likelihood of deepfake's appearance online (Debroy & Hemmige, [2024](#)).

Deepfakes bring up the moral issues that technology businesses must address since they are the biggest drivers of the existence of deepfake content. Even as AI techniques are being developed for deepfake detection, he noted that they are not foolproof, and that malicious information often goes viral before it is flagged as fake. That is why, as we have already mentioned, Galperin points out that cooperation in combating deep fakes between IT companies, governments, and civil society should be intensified. Such collaborations should encompass determining better user conduct rules, enhancing the detection algorithms, and supporting anyone who wants to report and get compensation (Romero Moreno, [2024](#)).

However, we currently have vast literature in the area, and yet, there exist outstanding significant flaws in researching the impacts of deepfake technology on human rights. Still, a significant number of publications are devoted to invasions of privacy, political manipulation, and psychological impact on victims, and there are very few huge legal remedies that encompass deepfake technology around the world. As seen, there is still a scarcity of studies on legal aspects in cross-border contexts, including those related to the prevention of the spread of deepfakes globally. Moreover, existing literature regards the psychological and emotional effects of the victims, especially of the female sexual assault victims and other minorities, as needing more focus on the long-term psychological recovery of the victims as well as potential support systems. While it has been discussed, more needs to be done to understand the roles of technological corporations, specifically in refining the functionality of the existing detection systems and their responsibility to end the use of deepfake technology. Last but not least, although the impact of deepfakes on the right to free speech in autocratic countries has been studied, more so, one doesn't adequately understand how these manipulations influence the opinions of people in democratic countries. Closing these gaps, one can strengthen his defence against the continually evolving risks originating from deepfake technology.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the social and political conditions that make Pakistani society vulnerable to deepfake influence.
2. To analyse how media consumption habits contribute to the acceptance and spread of manipulated digital content.
3. To understand how social media echo chambers shape public susceptibility to deepfake-driven misinformation.

Research Questions

1. How social and political conditions make Pakistani society vulnerable to deepfake influence.
2. How media consumption habits contribute to the acceptance and spread of manipulated digital content?
3. How social media echo chambers shape public susceptibility to deepfake-driven misinformation.

Material and Method

Through qualitative research, the article analyzes political and social variables which affect deepfake technology propagation across Pakistan. Research data stemmed from academic literature analysis and media reporting and policy documentation, and digital content analysis of deepfakes. Thematic analysis helps the researchers identify patterns regarding political conduct and media use, and societal responses to artificial content modifications.

Media Consumption Patterns in Pakistan

Television and newspapers are a part of the media. Super-fast-growing media is in the form of social sites, along with television and newspapers, which form the media in Pakistan. A following increase in millions of Pakistanis turn to websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube for news, which has tremendously enhanced the pace and dispersion of information. But at the same time, it has become easier to disseminate fake news, including deepfake information, into public debate. Social media often does not include such conventional features as gatekeeping or editorial control. Short, attractive texts and content with as many pictures and/or videos as possible are shared by people; therefore, fake edited photographs or videos pass through the Internet quickly and often. For example, deepfakes may be utilized to create specific conflicts, which are prejudiced according to the audience, in political speeches or rallies. This tendency is further amplified by the fact that many a user has a low level of digital literacy; they are not able to distinguish modified content and therefore are more likely to accept deepfakes and pass them on (Meskys, [2019](#)).

The media consumption that existed in the last two decades in Pakistani society was comparatively entirely different, where people used to get the state media, especially the print and electronic media, whereas now it has switched from private media channels and social media networks. Developing this structure of a technologically advanced civilization has brought out opportunities for information control and dissemination.

The Role of Private News Channels

Despite the lead to sensationalism and the inclination of several media houses to provide political bias in their broadcasts, private news sources in Pakistan were liberal in terms of expression. Using these inclinations, deepfakes can enhance the described storylines with fake content and, at the same time, enhance their chances of being recognized by the audience.

Viral Culture

In Pakistan, people go crazy, knowingly looking for 'viral' material more often than worrying about ethics. The creators of leisure or sarcastic deepfakes fail to predict social and political consequences, getting into a disinformation zone. In social networks where it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a cheat and an ordinary joke, a scammer can post a fake video with a public figure on the side of a single agenda.

Political and Ethnic Divisions and Deepfake Influence

Another cause of friction, and a characteristic feature of Pakistan, is its ethnic and political pluralism. Political parties are often ethno-regional, and there are many political and ethnic factors well-rooted in Pakistan that Deep fakes can leverage to amplify the extent of the resulting inflection. Linked tensions will be amplified, for example, by a deepfake video in which a political leader from one ethnic. There are large formations such as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) that are continuously in conflict in the political field of Pakistan. When ethnicity forms an antagonist relationship with region, then such adversarial conditions get fostered where deepfakes can thrive (Citron, [2019](#)).

Ethnic Sensitivities

Pakistani ethnic groups such as Pashtun, Baloch, Sindhi, Punjabi, and others are well interlinked in the Pakistani political framework. The system's deepfakes that go after these identities bear the danger of angering discontent and prodding anxiety and hostility, particularly in regions where ethnic grievances have been neglected in the past.

Cross-Border Influences

It also navigates in a rather unfavorable geopolitical environment of the South Asia region and its relations with neighbors. Actor-adversarial regimes still can use deepfakes for the harm of igniting rebellion within the nation or disrupting an election or categories of the political system (Henry, [2019](#)). Another layer of files is the current political environment in Pakistan and its relations with its neighbors. Thus, in adversarial regimes, deepfake videos can be employed as a tool with which to create internal conflict or party-political disturbances and electoral interferences.

Public Susceptibility to Digital Misinformation

Fake news sharing over social media is not very rare in Pakistan, but deep fake is a new start due to the real-sounding voice. Several factors influence Pakistani public susceptibility to deception, especially deepfakes:

Religious and Cultural Influences

Fake news sharing over social media is not very rare in Pakistan, but deep fake is a new start due to the real-sounding face and voice. And the sad part is that people are sharing it sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally, despite knowing the fact that it can harm someone's image and spreading fake news and things is haram in our religion.

Lack of Fact-Checking Culture

You know, fact-checking organizations are still relatively new in Pakistan. So, even though most people can easily recognize when a video is fake, many people can fall for deepfakes since they are not aware of the available tools for verifying resources and websites that may guarantee the material (Fallis, [2021](#)). Keeping in mind the fact that it is very important to verify the fact that the information that people are receiving can be deceiving and not truthful.

Generational Divide

As the older generations can easily fail to discern fake information but immediately believe in what they see on the Internet, young IT-oriented individuals may already have an increased experience in the field of digital manipulation. So, there is a generational divide in society that usually leads to the spread of fake information easily and effectively.

Low Digital Literacy

This reality suggests that as more people are, for example, unable to critically analyze materials on the Internet, they will believe that they are dealing with deepfakes. People are not that literate, so they don't even bother to investigate the fact that the content they are viewing can be fake. It is very common for people to believe that whatever they are viewing on the internet is true and close to reality (Agarwal et al., [2019](#)).

Emotional Engagement

The goal of deepfakes is to stir people's emotions to the bitter extreme of fear or rage. Since these are emotions, people accept them and pass this information without criticism and analysis. Through leveraging these very weaknesses, deepfakes place wrong assumptions in the minds of people. It matters not if, after several weeks of circulation, an image of the said candidate is proved to be a fake; it may well have influenced the vote or stirred protest demonstrations. There could be a very strong shift in public sentiment because someone with influence, like a cleric, endorsing a political party through Photoshop or other image-editing techniques and posting the altered image on social networking sites, a something that could easily go viral, especially in rural areas or where literacy levels are low (Ramluckan, [2024](#)).

Political Divides and Vulnerability to Disinformation

Due to clear political polarity in the country, Pakistan is more vulnerable to disinformation initiatives. In the last year, political party supporters tend to be cliquish and only get information that affirms their beliefs while rejecting any negative impression regarding their political party. Deepfakes further augment this environment by showing fake content holding bias in their depiction. For instance, a supporter of a political party can easily forward a fake video of a leader of an opposing party and does not have to confirm it is fake (Westerlund, [2019](#)). Because one side sees the other as dishonest

and concerned that it has been left in the propaganda, this cycle helps to deepen the division in society. The final impact of this is the polarization of society, where party loyalty prevails over the truth. The political polarization crisis in Pakistan also leads to the tendency to accept only the existing political point of view, and such material, even if it is false (Suyoung, [2020](#)).

Election Campaigns

Deepfake technology can be applied widely during election campaigns; to bring about changes in voters' perceptions, to merely challenge the competitors, or even to rig the election results and thus, bring more people to doubt the fairness of the democratic process. Such choices can take the form of a deepfake video of the candidate taking a bribe or being involved in any unlawful act that would sway voters' decisions, even if later exposed as fake.

Influence of Social Media Echo Chambers

In Pakistan, one gets trapped in self-sustaining bubbles, and most of the content seen on these social media sites is in harmony with one's belief systems. Since algorithms focused on optimizing the interaction tend to prioritize the information that users are already likely to find appealing, this causes the problem. Deepfakes are created to be shocking and viral and as such thrive in these types of environments. Because people in echo chambers are likely to consume and proliferate deepfake content given that like-minded people do the same, it is not analyzed.

A deepfake video with the use of some political figure might spread actively based on some narrow circle with enhanced prejudiced and mistrustful feelings. This echo chamber effect goes on and contributes more to increasing intolerance of political opinion and making the division more successful as it continues to deny people a chance to engage with different opinions and deepfake technologies become more rampant. In Pakistan social media platforms are gradually becoming the platforms of echo chambers and individual's previous engagements are favored by the algorithms (Ray, [2021](#)).

Reinforcement of Biases

In doing so, deepfakes can solidify existing bias within these ideological 'bubbles' and completely ensure the consumer only ever gets information that aligns with their political or worldview. This can lead to wrong and misleading beliefs that can further damage the image of the political party's members.

Group Polarization

Another deleterious characteristic of echo chambers is the phenomenon where in a group the beliefs become gradually more polarized. Deepfakes play a role in the fast-moving process by adding more credibility to a fake story (Ghous et al., [2023](#)).

A deepfake aimed at a highly ranked political personality can be designed to circulate solely within the context of a party's activists, whose hostility towards the leader will only increase when they are isolated from either moderate or dissenting opinions.

Conclusion

Deepfake technology is more effective in Pakistan mainly because of several social and political factors. Due to deepfakes being deceptive and provocative in an orientation affected by social media bubble, political and ethical division, viewing habits, and gullibility to misinformation. Therefore, there is a need to make a correct strategy to address these issues involving critical thinking, digital literacy, as well as cross-cutting communication to teach and reconcile. The deepfake disrupting technology can only be countered by enhancing Pakistan's defensive capabilities if the causes of susceptibility are addressed (Haider, [2024](#)).

Deepfake technology spreads in Pakistan according to social and political factors, while gradually affecting how people evaluate political messages and matters of disinformation and public opinions. Deepfake content distribution and perception in nations characterized by deep political divisions depend on several key elements, starting from how

citizens consume media through to their differing political beliefs and social media networking. The elements produce an atmosphere where man-made content functions simultaneously as political propaganda and drives political polarization further apart.

Media consumption patterns of the public represent the most influential force shaping deepfakes' growth patterns. Nearly all of the population consumes news primarily from Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp social media services, which rapidly disseminate unverified content throughout the public. Traditional newspapers, along with television broadcasters, choose sensational news stories to boost ratings, and this practice often results in the accidental expansion of false information. A lack of control in deepfake dissemination allows political manipulation through fragile political opinions since people typically get their news from determined ideological groups, which raises their acceptance of deepfake content that aligns with their original beliefs and deepens political division (Imran, & Maqsood, [2025](#)).

The influence of deepfakes grows stronger because of the existing political and ethnic disputes in Pakistan. The political atmosphere of the nation shows strong loyalty to both leaders and parties, which leads to negative sentiment toward opposing factions. Using deepfake films, producers create negative images of political figures for their voter bases while creating fictional contentious statements and phoney scandals. The existing tensions between ethnic groups in countries showing high ethnic diversity provide deepfakes with a perfect opportunity to create more unrest. Politicians, together with political organizations use altered content to reinforce their arguments, yet this practice confuses average citizens in disentangling factual information from fiction accordingly.

Deepfake technology finds its success by exploiting digital disinformation vulnerabilities among public viewers. A considerable number of Pakistani internet users fail to develop essential thinking abilities needed for online content analysis, thus reflecting less-than-average digital literacy knowledge. The creation of deepfake videos takes advantage of human susceptibility through realistic false video production to deceive viewers. The distribution of manipulated information specifically alters election outcomes as well as protest developments alongside policy debates, which negatively impacts both political concepts and democratic system stability. The uncontrolled circulation of false information causes people to lose trust in media outlets and democratic institutions and institutions making citizens more susceptible to controlling influences.

So, deepfake media propagation becomes worse due to how social media platforms create isolated echo chambers for users. The absence of conflicting views enables individuals to become more receptive to sharing and embracing content that attacks different groups through deepfakes since they only encounter information that approves their political stance. Political organizations together with activist groups exploit this phenomenon to sway public views through fake information delivery on social media platforms. Deepfake information acts proactively to foster social polarization and modify voting patterns and make political choices instead of being content that exists passively within political speech.

The political along with social elements of Pakistan exist within deepfake technology's considerable sphere of influence. Social media echo chambers and political and ethnic differences together with media consumption patterns as well as public susceptibility to false content enable the expansion of deepfake technology. The spread of manipulated media harm becomes especially difficult to contain because false information rapidly circulates through society before controlling public discussions about political debates. Multiple strategies must combine to counter these problems as well as decrease deepfake technology's destructive effects on Pakistan's political and social stability through both informational education programs and new legislation and verification initiatives.

Recommendations

The initiation of media literacy instruction should be spearheaded by government organizations, non-profit entities, and educational institutions to train individuals, especially young people, in identifying deceptive content and verifying digital information before sharing. The development of explicit legislation to control deepfake production and distribution needs to be achieved while maintaining expressive rights because political deepfake abuse requires appropriate penalties. Digital platforms combined with tech developers should implement detection systems together with



watermarks which identify artificial content automatically for flagging purposes. The public needs protection from polarising misinformation, but this can happen through efforts to reduce ethnic and political divisions through civic education and inclusive political discourse. People need to expand their news consumption beyond isolated spheres to avoid ideological segregation from information echo chambers, which reinforce deepfake content narratives.

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