





5th January, 2022

PAKISTAN CORONAVIRUS CIVACTS CAMPAIGN (CCC)



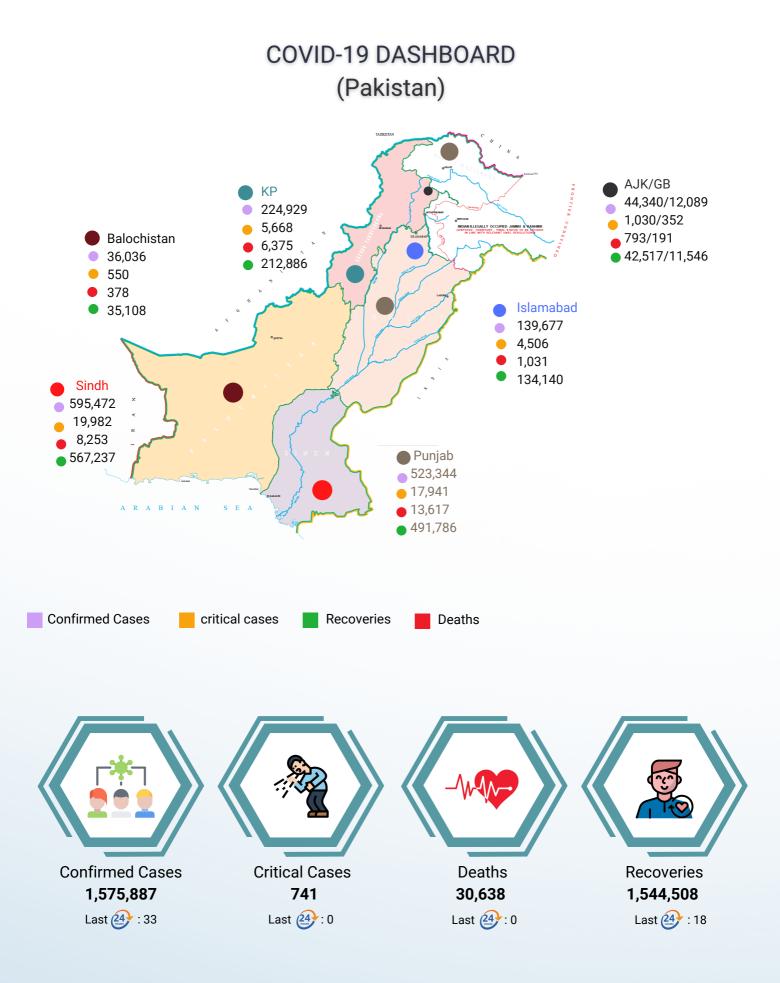
For over two years, Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC) supported by the Open Society Foundation (OSF debunked fake news, misinformation, and myths around COVID19.

The campaign now focuses on building healthy information ecosystems where we will lead and support efforts to stop the spread of fake news and misinformation in Pakistan in a broader manner. The focus of our work might not necessarily be around Covid 19, unless, of course, we face a new wave. We plan to tackle fake news around health emergencies (remember, polio is still a challenge in Pakistan and fake news is responsible for creating perennial vaccine hesitation), politics, sociocultural taboos, and other similar phenomena.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- COVID UPDATES.
- A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO DEAL WITH THE EFFECTS OF FAKE NEWS, MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION
- STEPS INVOLVED TO STOP THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS.





Viral message on COVID XBB variant is fake: Confirmed by NIH (National Institute of Health)

The National Institute of Health (NIH) has released a clarification that no new variant has been detected in Pakistan so far. In a declaration released the NIH stated that the rumors about the new Covid-19 variant were incorrect.

The variant reported in some areas is XBB, which is an old variant of Omicron and not the BF.7 variant, which is spreading in China, the NIH clarified. "No case of BF.7 has been detected in Pakistan so far".

But, the resurgence of the virus and the detection of new cases in Pakistan's two neighboring countries, India and China, remain a reason for the concern of the health authorities.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the XBB is a variant of the Omicron virus. As consistent with early proof, the XBB variant had a higher reinfection risk, as compared to other circulating Omicron sublineages.

Up to now, the BF.7 variant has been detected in numerous different nations around the world inclusive of India, the USA, the United Kingdom, and several European Countries such as Belgium, Germany, France, and Denmark. The BF.7 variant results in higher respiratory infection congestion in the higher parts of the chest, fever, sore throat, runny nostrils, and cough.

EXPERTS SUGGEST A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO DEAL WITH THE EFFECTS OF FAKE NEWS, MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Much like in the rest of the world, fake news and misinformation are now a significant threat to public discourse and democratic values in Pakistan. Online disinformation has created or amplified challenges regarding access to credible information, political polarization, manipulation of social media conversations, trust in the news media, health-related information, and hate speech. With an internet user base of around 8.5 million, the risks and impact of fake news and misinformation are exacerbated manifold.

With a focus on building a healthy information ecosystem, Accountability Lab Pakistan organized an awareness session on "The Effects of Fake News and Misinformation on Youth" at Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.

The discussion centered around the key drivers and impacts of fake news and disinformation on society, especially our youth, and the importance of media literacy amongst citizens. Discussions during the session also focused on effective strategies and tools to counter misinformation.







Source: Dawn,

It is the responsibility of the youth to help counter the misinformation that is having a devastating effect on the public.

Media communication students, in particular, have a better understanding of misinformation and disinformation and can play a vital role in helping others navigate misinformation.

Mr. Mateen Haider
Senior Anchor Person/Analyst GTV





The problem of fake news is as old as journalism itself ; with the accessibility of social media, the spread of fake news has become very common.

As responsible citizens, we should be able to understand and recognize search engines and verified sources. Only in this way, we will be able to access authentic information.

 Dr. Shazia Hashmat Assistant Prof. Communication and Media Studies FJWU

"Your every click pours money into the fake news industry.

It is important for academic institutions to provide students with a solid foundation and perspective on media and information literacy as part of the curriculum. Teachers must be well-trained in order to empower students with the necessary competencies to critically understand and assess information reported by all forms of media."

Dr. Zafar Iqbal Dean of the Social Sciences Department,International
Islamic University



WAYS TO HIT UPON MISINFORMATION

To combat misinformation, one must first learn how to spot it. Following are some of the ways to determine credibility of a piece of information.

MAKE SURE IT'S NOT A JOKE

There are satire websites that share sensational content for laughs. If something seems outlandish, determine whether the content is meant to inform or entertain.

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Does the website have a "Contact Us" or "About Us" page? Does it have a trusted domain, like ".edu" or ".gov?" What are the author's credentials, have they written anything else? What is their motivation for writing the piece? Consider who shared the information with you. Are they a reputable source (i.e., work in healthcare)?

READ BEYOND THE HEADLINES

Oftentimes headlines are sensational, crafted to grab your attention. Dig into the content itself, does the information support the claims? Did the author cherry pick data, or use information out of context? If so, raise a red flag.

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Review the date

REVIEW THE DATE

Sometimes people will share content that is several years old and may no longer be relevant. Ensure the information is recent and if it is not, think about how that may influence its credibility.

CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if, and how, your own beliefs may be affecting your judgment. Are you viewing the information objectively, or looking for how the information aligns or conflicts with your own perspective on an issue?

SOCIAL MEDIA FUELS THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION

The sheer extent of content that people are bombarded everyday through social media, contributes to the dispersal of misinformation. Social media platforms allow users the possibility to say something they need with very confined moderation. Bots and algorithms on websites also extend facts, regardless of incredibility. Sifting through these facts, pollution can be overwhelming and time-consuming. People can also hit the "share" button quickly without preventing them from recollecting the accuracy of the information they may be sharing.

ASK AN EXPERT

If you can't tell if something is true, ask an expert in the field, such as a doctor, other healthcare professional or scientist, or find someone who can point you in the right direction, like a librarian. Fact-checker websites can also be useful for disentangling fact from fiction.



HOW TO STOP FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.

READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks, What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

DO a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?

SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story?

CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevent to the current event.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too oldish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if you have your own beliefs could affect your judgement.

ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a factchecking site.

