Bulletin 31

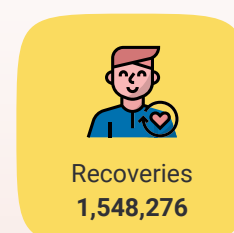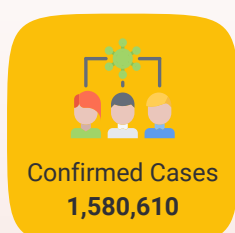## Pakistan Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC)

Preamble

For over two years, the Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC), supported by the Open Society Foundation (OSF), debunked fake news, misinformation, and myths around COVID-19. 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.
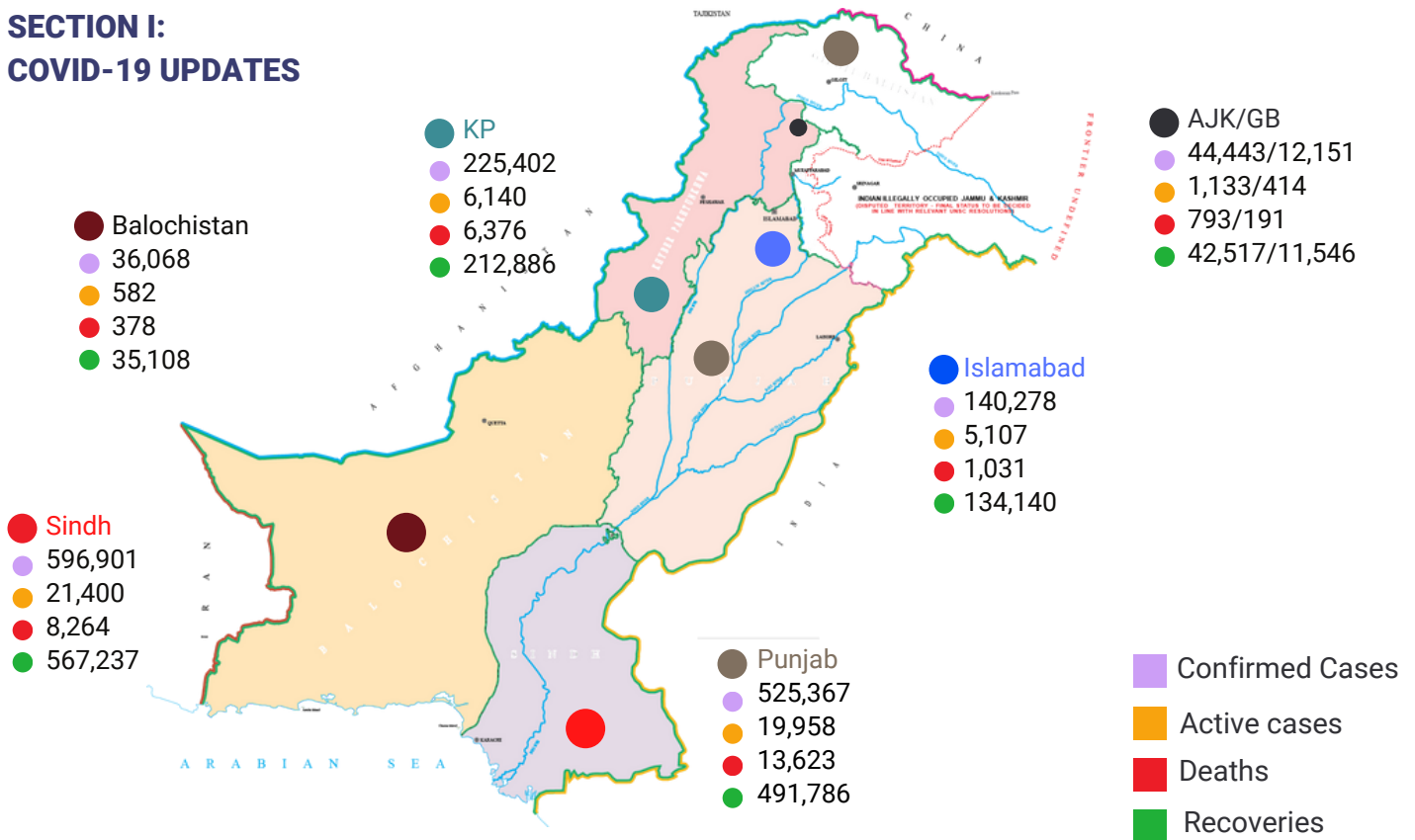
What's Inside

- Covid-19 Updates
- Coronavirus Cases on The Rise in KP Again
- Effects of Misinformation and Disinformation on Youth
- Steps Involved to Stop the Spread of Fake News

COVID-19 Dashboard (Pakistan)

Confirmed Cases
1,580,610

Active Cases
1,678

Deaths
30,656

Recoveries
1,548,276

SECTION I:
COVID-19 UPDATES

KP
- 225,402
- 6,140
- 6,376
- 212,886

Balochistan
- 36,068
- 582
- 378
- 35,108

Sindh
- 596,901
- 21,400
- 8,264
- 567,237

Punjab
- 525,367
- 19,958
- 13,623
- 491,786

Islamabad
- 140,278
- 5,107
- 1,031
- 134,140

AJK/GB
- 44,443/12,151
- 1,133/414
- 793/191
- 42,517/11,546

- Confirmed Cases
- Active cases
- Deaths
- Recoveries

Source : Government of Pakistan
Last updated on 17-Apr-2023 - 08:00 AM

SECTION II:
COVID-19 CASES ON THE RISE IN KP AGAIN

The number of Covid-19 cases has been on the rise in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa yet again as 12 new cases have been reported during the month of April, an official of the health department told The Express Tribune. The department stated that the infection caused thousands of deaths since it appeared in the province as a total 6,376 people have died in the pandemic, adding that Peshawar remained on top of the casualty list with almost 50 percent deaths. He noted that the overall number of Covid cases recorded thus far has reached 225,231.

"Nine people have recovered from Covid-19 in KP recently and with this, the total number of recovered persons reached 218,781. The number of people that died from coronavirus in Peshawar is 3,153."

Additionally, they said that new cases have been reported in Peshawar and with this the overall number of cases has jumped to 85,481 in the district. A total of 109 Corona tests were conducted in KP during the month of April, but the number of active cases in the province stands at 166.

After the pandemic swept throughout the country, the federal government launched a mass vaccination campaign with the assistance of foreign donors however rural Peshawar remained among the areas in which extreme resistance to vaccination changed witnessed despite all out-government efforts.
https://tribune.com.pk/story/2409357/covid-19-cases-on-the-rise-in-k-p-again

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PAKISTAN

EFFECTS OF MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION ON YOUTH

In the digital age, misinformation and disinformation have become increasingly prevalent, posing a significant threat to young people who are highly active on social media platforms. Misinformation refers to false or inaccurate information that is unintentionally spread, while disinformation is the intentional spread of false information with the aim of misleading people. The youth are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of misinformation and disinformation due to their limited life experience and lack of critical thinking skills.

In this article, we will examine the negative effects of misinformation and disinformation on young people's mental health, decision-making, trust in institutions, and susceptibility to propaganda. Furthermore, we will highlight the importance of media literacy and critical thinking skills in equipping young people to navigate the complex and often misleading information landscape.

Mental Health:

Misinformation and disinformation can have detrimental effects on young people's mental health. Young people may be exposed to misinformation and disinformation that is fear-inducing, such as conspiracy theories or false claims about natural disasters. Such exposure can lead to fear, anxiety, and stress, which may have long-term implications for young people's mental health (Blake, 2019). Additionally, exposure to misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms can contribute to feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and depression, especially if young people perceive the misinformation to be widespread or if they feel that they are unable to correct the false information (Pew Research Centre, 2018).

Decision-Making:

Misinformation and disinformation can lead young people to make poor decisions based on false information. For instance, they may make choices that put their health at risk or hurt their chances of success in school or in their career (Kornblum, 2018). Misinformation about health can lead young people to make decisions that may harm their physical and mental health, such as believing in anti-vaccine myths (Lewandowsky et al., 2013).

> Disinformation that is spread by certain organizations or individuals can also influence young people's decisions on social, political, or economic matters, potentially leading to negative outcomes (Pennycook & Rand, 2019).

Polarization and Radicalization:

Misinformation and disinformation can contribute to polarization and protests among young people, leading to a lack of empathy and understanding for those who hold different opinions. False information can reinforce existing biases and beliefs, leading young people to become more extreme in their views.

This can cause young people to become more polarized and less willing to engage in meaningful discussions with those who hold different opinions. Additionally, the spread of false information can contribute to rebellion, as young people become more susceptible to extremist ideologies and propaganda.

Trust in Institutions:

Misinformation and disinformation can erode trust in institutions such as governments, media, and scientific organizations, leading to a lack of faith in their ability to provide accurate information. Young people who are exposed to misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms may perceive this information to be more trustworthy than information from traditional sources, which can lead to a decline in trust in traditional institutions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This erosion of trust can be detrimental to society, as it can lead to a lack of social cohesion and hamper the ability of institutions to respond to crises.

Susceptibility to Propaganda:

Young people who are not well-informed are more susceptible to propaganda and manipulation by those with ulterior motives, leading to polarization and radicalization of their views and beliefs (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Disinformation campaigns may target young people, aiming to manipulate them to adopt certain views or engage in certain behaviors (McIntyre, 2019). The spread of misinformation and disinformation can contribute to a lack of empathy and understanding for those who hold different opinions, leading to division and conflict (Pennycook et al., 2019).

Importance of Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Skills:

To address the issue of misinformation and disinformation, it is crucial to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among young people. Media literacy skills enable young people to analyze and evaluate information critically, thereby enabling them to discern truth from falsehood (Livingstone, 2004).

By developing critical thinking skills, young people can learn to question the sources of information and assess the credibility of the information presented to them. This can help prevent them from being misled by false information and disinformation.

Educational institutions can play a crucial role in promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills among young people. By incorporating media literacy education into school curricula, young people can learn to identify and analyze misinformation and disinformation (Buckingham, 2017).

Additionally, parents and carers can help foster critical thinking skills by encouraging young people to ask questions, teaching them to seek out multiple sources of information, and discussing media content with them (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007).
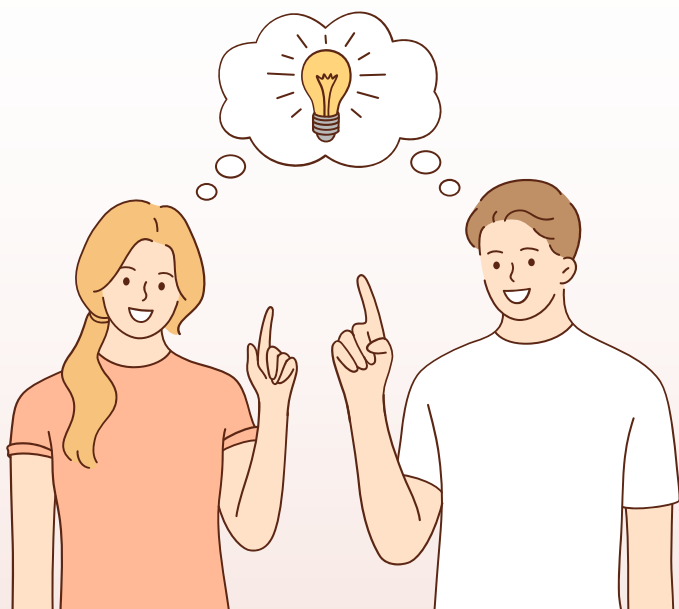
SECTION IV:

STEPS INVOLVED TO STOP THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS

Following are some effective steps that can be taken to stop the spread of fake news:

01

Educate Yourself:
Take the time to understand what fake news is, how it spreads, and the consequences it can have on individuals and society. Be aware of your own biases and try to approach news sources with a critical eye.

02

Verify the Source:
Verify the source of the news before sharing it with others. Check whether the source is reputable, trustworthy, and has a history of producing accurate news.
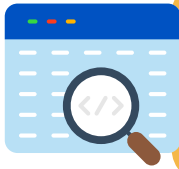
03

Check the Story:
Before sharing a story, verify its authenticity by checking other sources to see if the story is being reported by reputable news outlets. If a story seems too outrageous or sensational, it is worth taking a few minutes to check its authenticity.
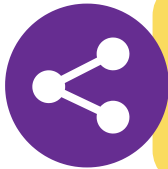
04

Don't Share Without Checking:
Resist the urge to share news stories immediately without verifying their accuracy. Sharing fake news only helps to spread it further and can cause harm to individuals and society.
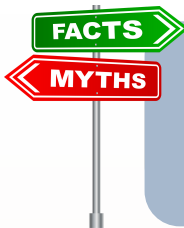
05

Use Fact-Checking Tools:
Utilize fact-checking tools to verify the accuracy of news stories.

06

Report Fake News:
Report fake news to the social media platforms, websites, or news outlets where it is being shared. Social media platforms have become major distribution channels for fake news, and they are beginning to take action to prevent the spread of false information.

07

Encourage Critical Thinking:
Encourage friends and family members to think critically about the news they consume and to verify its accuracy before sharing it with others. By following these steps, individuals can play a significant role in stopping the spread of fake news and promoting the sharing of accurate information.