

## Digitalization, Information & Society, Digital Citizenship

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### 1. Digital Divides & Disparities

#### □ What is the **Digital Divide**?

- The gap between people who have access to digital technology and those who don't.
- Affects various aspects of life such as education, healthcare, and work opportunities.
- Globally, **3.7 billion people remain unconnected**.

#### □ Pakistan's Digital Divide:

- Only **33% of the population** has internet access.
- **Rural areas** (55% of the population) have less than **8% internet usage**.
- Significant gender gap:
  - **38% of men own mobile phones** compared to only **19% of women**.
  - Women are **20% less likely** to use mobile internet than men.

The image outlines the **Three Levels of the Digital Divide**, summarizing them as follows:

#### 1. **Access Divide:**

- **Definition:** Inequality in accessing digital technologies (e.g., internet and devices).
- **Causes:** Socioeconomic factors, geographic location, and lack of infrastructure.
- **Impact:** Excludes people from opportunities in education, work, and healthcare.
- **Example:** A rural village without broadband access prevents students from attending online classes.

#### 2. **Usage Divide:**

- **Definition:** Gap in digital skills and the ability to use technology effectively.
- **Causes:** Education level, age, language barriers, and experience with technology.
- **Impact:** Limits productivity and learning despite access to technology.
- **Example:** An elderly person uses a smartphone only for calls, while a young professional uses it for banking.

#### 3. **Quality of Use/Empowerment Divide:**

- **Definition:** Variation in how people use technology for personal and societal growth.
- **Causes:** Differences in how technology is applied for development and civic engagement.
- **Impact:** Restricts potential for economic growth, education, and active participation.
- **Example:** A business using digital marketing grows globally, while another uses basic communication only.

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### Causes of the Digital Divide:

#### 1. Lack of Infrastructure:

Limited broadband or fiber-optic networks in many areas.

- Accessing a website requires a computer/ smartphone and an internet connection
- In the U.S., 5.6% of the population lacks broadband access, with higher rates in rural areas.
- fifteen to sixteen million (30 percent) lack broadband internet access

#### 2. Digital Literacy:

- Knowing how to use technology safely and effectively is essential.
- what information is safe to share online
- Requires education on recognizing misinformation and using digital tools.

#### 3. Institutional Support:

- Governments must invest in technology, fund broadband access, and prioritize digital education.

#### □ Efforts to Bridge the Divide:

- **European Union:** Lowered communication costs, created broadband funds, and enhanced consumer digital privacy. E.g digital agenda for Europe 2010.
- **Republic of Korea:** Integrated technology in education and invested in ICT infrastructure to promote digital literacy. ROK promotes digital literacy from an early age to help close the digital divide.
- **Global Gender Gap:** Mobile ownership for women in lower-income countries increased from 47% in 2017 to 57% now, though Pakistan lags significantly.

#### • Mobile Ownership & Internet Access:

- Mobile devices provide critical tools for safety, information, and work.
- Women in LMICs are 8% less likely to own a mobile phone and 20% less likely to use mobile internet than men.
- In Pakistan, only 38% of women own a mobile phone compared to higher rates for men.

#### • Pakistan-Specific Statistics:

- Only 28.14% of the population has broadband internet access, worsening gender disparity.

#### • Rural Areas:

- Financial inclusion is similarly unequal, with only 3.3% of women making online transactions and less than 5% having access to bank accounts.

- **Solutions:**

- Bridging the gender gap requires addressing barriers to ICT infrastructure and improving digital skills.
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## 2. Social Media, Community Mobilization & Public Discourse

- **Role of Social Media:**

- Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram enable direct communication between political actors and citizens.
  - Acts as a tool for **political communication**, allowing real-time engagement.
  - Channel to engage with youth
  - **Redefining Political Engagement:**
    - Young citizens use social media to express political preferences outside traditional methods like voting.
    - Examples:
      - **Arab Spring:** Social media fueled protests and political movements.
      - **Occupy Wall Street:** Mobilized global protests on economic inequality.
  - **Political Potential:**
    - Social media amplifies voices and organizes protests.
    - Coordinates actions beyond traditional political structures.
  - **Challenges on Social Media:**
    1. **Confirmation Bias:**
      - Algorithms reinforce existing beliefs by showing content that aligns with user preferences.
      - natural for people to surround themselves with others of like mind
      - Creates echo chambers, making it harder to encounter opposing views.
    2. **Misinformation and Fake News:**
      - Social media often spreads unverified stories or conspiracy theories, memes.
      - Users must verify information before accepting it as true.
  - **Future of Social Media in Politics:**
    - Proposals for internet voting could increase participation and make social media more influential in shaping opinions.
    - Virtual town halls and social media polling, rallies will likely become more common.
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## Key Takeaways

### 1. Digital Divide:

- A significant barrier to equitable development, especially in Pakistan, where gender and rural gaps are pronounced.
- Bridging this divide requires investment in infrastructure, digital education, and inclusive policies.

### 2. Social Media's Dual Role:

- A powerful tool for political engagement and mobilization.
- Also a source of challenges like misinformation and echo chambers.

### 3. Global Implications:

- As digital technology continues to evolve, addressing disparities and responsibly leveraging social media are key to fostering an inclusive and informed society.