

**UNIT 7****DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY****The Use of Digital Platforms for Civic Engagement:**

Digital Citizenship refers to the responsible use of technology and the internet by individuals, especially in relation to their role in society. Being a digital citizen means using digital platforms (like social media, websites, and apps) in ways that promote good behavior, ethical conduct, and respect for others. It also involves understanding the impact of online actions on society and engaging in positive activities that contribute to community development.

**Key Aspects of Digital Citizenship:**

- 1. Access to Information:** Digital citizens can access a wide range of information online, from educational resources to news updates. Responsible use means verifying information before sharing to prevent the spread of false information. In Pakistan, students use online platforms like YouTube or Khan Academy for learning. Sharing authentic educational content helps promote responsible learning.
- 2. Digital Etiquette:** This means behaving respectfully and kindly online, avoiding cyberbullying, and not engaging in harmful or abusive behavior. On platforms like Facebook or Twitter, people can voice their opinions but must do so respectfully without attacking others.
- 3. Digital Safety:** Digital citizens need to protect their personal information, use secure passwords, and be aware of online threats like scams or phishing attacks. In Pakistan, online banking users must be cautious about sharing their account details or passwords to avoid fraud.
- 4. Digital Rights and Responsibilities:** Users have the right to free speech online but must also respect others' rights, such as privacy and intellectual property. This means not stealing someone else's work or using it without permission. Content creators in Pakistan, such as YouTubers, must ensure they respect copyright laws when using music or videos in their work.
- 5. Participation in Civic Engagement:** Digital platforms allow people to engage in civic duties like voting, signing petitions, raising awareness, or participating in discussions on social and political issues.

**The Use of Digital Platforms for Civic Engagement:**

Digital platforms such as social media, websites, and mobile apps provide citizens a space to engage with their communities and governments, making civic participation more accessible and efficient. Here's how digital platforms help with civic engagement:

**1. Raising Awareness:** People can use digital platforms to raise awareness about important social, political, or environmental issues. In Pakistan, the Justice For Zainab campaign spread across social media, bringing attention to the issue of child abuse and leading to protests and changes in child protection laws.

**2. Online Petitions and Movements:** Digital platforms allow citizens to start or support petitions for causes they care about, pushing for changes in laws or policies. Platforms like Change.org allow Pakistanis to sign petitions, like those demanding government action on education or healthcare reforms.

**3. Voting Awareness Campaigns:** Social media and apps can be used to encourage people to register to vote and participate in elections. In the 2018 Pakistan General Elections, social media campaigns reminded people, especially young voters, to participate in the election process.

**4. E-Government Services:** Governments provide online services that allow citizens to file complaints, access services, or give feedback directly through websites or apps. The Pakistan Citizen Portal is an app where citizens can report issues like corruption, request services, or give feedback directly to government authorities.

**5. Community Building:** Digital platforms connect people who share common interests or concerns. They allow for discussions, collaborations, and efforts to solve local problems. In Pakistan, Facebook groups and Twitter communities unite people on issues such as urban development or helping in flood relief efforts.

**6. Political Discussions and Activism:** Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are used for political discussions, debates, and activism. This can involve discussing new laws, policies, or even organizing protests. During the 2022 political crisis in Pakistan, social media became a platform where people expressed their support or criticism of different political leaders.

**7. Online Learning for Civic Education:** Many platforms provide resources for citizens to learn about their rights and duties. Online learning helps them become more informed participants in society. Platforms like Coursera and EdX offer free courses on civics, human rights, and governance, making it easier for Pakistanis to learn about how they can contribute to their communities.

**a. Pakistan Citizen Portal:** This app allows citizens to directly interact with government officials, file complaints, request services, and suggest improvements for various public issues. It empowers people by making government access easier.

**b. Digital Campaigns:** Many social movements, like Me Too and Justice For Zainab, have been amplified through digital platforms in Pakistan, making the government and public aware of critical social issues.

- 6) Digital citizenship and the use of digital platforms for civic engagement have transformed how people participate in society. Through responsible use of technology, citizens can contribute to positive changes in their communities and even influence government policies.

## Cyber Ethics and Responsible Use of Social Media:

Cyber Ethics refers to the moral principles and rules that govern how people should behave when using technology, especially on the internet. It involves making sure that individuals act responsibly, respectfully, and legally while engaging online.

The internet provides a vast platform for communication, sharing information, and accessing services, but just like in the physical world, certain behaviors are expected to ensure safety, privacy, and fairness. Cyber ethics emphasizes the importance of treating others online with respect and using technology without causing harm. First here, we discuss the ethical violations then its guidelines to refrain from it.

### Kinds of Cyber Ethics Violations:

- 1) Hacking:** Breaking into someone's computer or online account without permission is illegal and unethical.
- 2) Plagiarism:** Using someone else's content without giving them credit, whether it's a blog post, image, or video.
- 3) Cyberbullying:** Sending harmful or threatening messages to someone over the internet, leading to mental or emotional harm.
- 4) Spreading Misinformation:** Sharing false news, especially without verifying it, can lead to panic, confusion, or even harm.
- 5) Identity Theft:** Stealing someone's personal information (like social security numbers, bank details, or passwords) and using it for fraudulent purposes. Someone hacks into a person's email account, retrieves personal data, and uses it to open a credit card in that person's name.
- 6) Phishing:** Sending fraudulent messages, usually through email, pretending to be a trusted organization to trick people into giving up personal information or clicking on harmful links. Receiving an email that looks like it's from your bank, asking you to confirm your account details, when it's actually a scam designed to steal your information.
- 7) Spamming:** Sending unsolicited messages or emails, usually advertisements, to a large number of people without their consent. Companies or individuals sending bulk promotional emails to random people, filling up their inboxes with unwanted content.

- 8) Trolling:** Deliberately provoking or upsetting others online by posting offensive, inflammatory, or hurtful comments just to elicit reactions. Posting rude or insensitive remarks on a public forum or social media platform, simply to anger or disturb others.
- 9) Copyright Infringement:** Using or distributing copyrighted materials (such as music, movies, or software) without proper permission from the owner. Downloading movies from illegal websites and sharing them with others without paying for them or getting permission from the creators.
- 10) Online Harassment:** Continuously targeting someone with offensive, threatening, or inappropriate behavior through messages, comments, or posts. Sending repeated threats or abusive messages to someone on social media, making them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- 11) Revenge Porn:** Sharing intimate images or videos of someone without their consent to embarrass or harm them. Posting personal photos or videos of an ex-partner on the internet to shame or hurt them after a breakup.
- 12) Data Breach:** Accessing or exposing a company's or individual's private data without permission, which can lead to financial loss or loss of privacy. A hacker breaking into a company's server and leaking customers' private data like credit card details or addresses.
- 13) Cyber Stalking:** Using the internet to harass or stalk someone by repeatedly sending them unwanted messages, watching their activities, or threatening them. Following someone's every online move, constantly messaging them, or sending intimidating messages, even after being asked to stop.
- 14) Doxxing:** Publicly sharing someone's private information (such as their home address, phone number, or workplace) without their consent, often with malicious intent. Posting someone's personal information on a social media platform, encouraging others to harass them.
- 15) Digital Piracy:** Illegally downloading or distributing copyrighted digital content, such as software, games, music, or movies, without paying for them. Downloading the latest video game from a file-sharing website instead of purchasing it legally from an authorized store.
- 16) Impersonation:** Pretending to be someone else online, especially to deceive others or gain access to their accounts or privileges. Creating a fake social media profile using someone else's photos and personal details to deceive their friends and family.
- 17) Child Exploitation:** Engaging in or distributing materials that exploit children in any form, including child pornography or grooming children for inappropriate reasons. Sharing or downloading illegal images or videos of children or using social media to manipulate a child into harmful situations.

1. **Privacy:** Respecting other people's personal information and data. This means not accessing or sharing private information without permission. Not hacking into someone's email or social media accounts to read their private messages.
2. **Accuracy:** Being honest and truthful when sharing information. This includes not spreading false information or engaging in deceptive practices. Verifying news before sharing it on social media to avoid spreading misinformation.
3. **Fairness:** Treating everyone equally and avoiding discrimination or harm. It also means giving credit where it's due, like in intellectual property or content creation. If you use someone's photo or article, give proper credit to the original creator and avoid plagiarism.
4. **Property:** Respecting the ownership of digital content, such as software, music, and videos. It's important to not steal or illegally download digital materials. Instead of pirating movies or software, purchase them legally.
5. **Responsibility:** Taking ownership of your online actions. Whether it's what you post or how you use digital services, you should be responsible for your conduct and its impact. If you make a harmful comment on social media, own up to it and apologize instead of deleting it to avoid accountability.
6. **Safety:** Protecting yourself and others from online dangers, including hacking, cyberbullying, and scams. This also includes creating strong passwords and not sharing personal information recklessly. Be cautious when interacting with strangers online and avoid sharing your location or sensitive data.

**Responsible Use of Social Media:** Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok allow people to communicate, share content, and engage with a global audience. However, with this wide reach comes the responsibility to use these platforms in ways that are ethical and safe for everyone.

### **Guidelines for Responsible Social Media Use:**

1. **Think Before You Post:** Consider the consequences of your post before sharing it. Will it hurt someone? Is it accurate? Could it damage your reputation or someone else's? Before posting a critical or negative comment, think about whether it's constructive or just hurtful.
2. **Avoid Cyberbullying:** Be mindful not to harass, embarrass, or threaten others online. Cyberbullying can have serious mental health effects on victims. Instead of making fun of someone's appearance or beliefs, engage in respectful discussions or refrain from commenting.
3. **Respect Different Opinions:** Social media often becomes a platform for debates and discussions. It's important to respect others' opinions, even if you disagree, and

not resort to personal attacks. If you disagree with someone on Twitter about politics, respond with your perspective calmly instead of insulting them.

**4. Verify Information:** Social media is a hotbed for fake news and misinformation. Before sharing news or information, ensure it comes from a reliable source. Check reputable news websites before reposting a claim about a major event.

**5. Respect Privacy:** Don't share someone else's private information (like phone numbers, addresses, or private conversations) without their consent. Posting a screenshot of a private chat without permission is a violation of that person's privacy.

**6. Avoid Harmful Content:** Don't create or share content that promotes violence, hate speech, discrimination, or illegal activities. Sharing videos that incite violence or promote illegal behavior, like hacking, is unethical and could have legal consequences.

**7. Give Credit:** When sharing content that isn't yours (such as images, quotes, or videos), always give credit to the original creator. If you post someone else's artwork on Instagram, tag them or mention their name.

**8. Be Mindful of Your Digital Footprint:** What you post online stays there forever, even if you delete it. Always be mindful that future employers, schools, or friends might see what you share. Avoid posting offensive or inappropriate photos, as they could affect your future job prospects.

**9. Use Strong Passwords:** Protect your accounts from hacking by using strong passwords and changing them regularly. Avoid using the same password for multiple accounts. Create complex passwords with a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols, and avoid easy-to-guess passwords like "password123."

**10. Avoid Addictive Behavior:** Social media can be addictive, leading to excessive screen time and neglecting real-life responsibilities. Limit your time on social media to maintain a healthy balance. Set time limits for using apps like Instagram or Facebook to avoid spending too much time scrolling.

## International Cyber Ethics:

Different countries and organizations emphasize the importance of ethical online behavior. Here are some key international guidelines:

### 1. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

This treaty emphasizes the right to freedom of expression, but also stresses the need for responsible communication that does not harm others' reputations or national security.

**2. The Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime:** This is the first international treaty focused on cybercrimes, such as hacking, identity theft, and

child pornography. It promotes cooperation between nations to combat online crimes.

**3. The United Nations Guidelines on Cybersecurity:** These guidelines focus on creating a safe and secure internet environment for all. They emphasize protecting individuals' privacy and promoting responsible use of technology.

**4. GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) in Europe:** The GDPR is a set of rules protecting individuals' privacy and personal data online. It applies to companies and organizations that handle data from European citizens and emphasizes ethical data management.

**5. The Netiquette Guidelines:** These are unwritten rules of etiquette for internet users, promoting respectful and responsible behavior in digital spaces worldwide.

## Digital Divides and Responsible (access, usage, socioeconomic, geographic, etc.) And their impacts on citizenship:

### Digital Divides and Their Impact on Citizenship:

The term Digital Divide refers to the gap between people who have easy access to digital technology (like the internet, computers, and smartphones) and those who do not. This divide exists due to various reasons, such as economic conditions, geographic location, education level, or even infrastructure development. Digital divides can limit opportunities for individuals to fully participate in the modern world, especially in areas like education, work, and civic engagement.

### Types of Digital Divides:

**1. Access Divide:** This refers to the difference between people who have access to the internet and digital devices and those who don't. In rural areas of Pakistan, many communities lack the infrastructure for reliable internet access, while urban areas enjoy high-speed internet.

**2. Usage Divide:** Even if people have access to the internet, there can be a gap in how effectively they use digital technology. Some may only use basic functions (like texting), while others use it for advanced purposes (like online learning, e-commerce, or civic engagement). A farmer who has internet access may only use his smartphone to make calls, while someone else uses the same technology to access online educational courses or participate in digital government services.

**3. Socioeconomic Divide:** Economic conditions play a huge role in the digital divide. People with lower incomes often cannot afford computers, smartphones, or a reliable internet connection, limiting their ability to access important online resources. Wealthy families in cities can afford multiple devices for education and work, while families in low-income areas may share one phone for all purposes.

**4. Geographic Divide:** People living in different geographic regions, especially rural vs. urban, experience digital divides due to unequal distribution of technological infrastructure. In developed countries, city areas usually have better internet connectivity, while remote areas or underdeveloped regions have little to no access to modern digital tools.

**5. Educational Divide:** This refers to differences in digital literacy—how well people can understand and use digital tools. Some may not know how to fully use the internet or a computer due to limited education or training. An older person who never learned to use computers might struggle with navigating online banking or government websites, while younger generations may easily handle digital tasks.

**6. Gender Divide:** In many parts of the world, there are differences in how men and women access and use digital technology. Cultural, social, or economic barriers may limit women's access to digital resources. In some regions of Pakistan, traditional gender roles may restrict women's use of the internet, either due to a lack of education or societal norms that discourage women from using digital platforms.

**7. Age Divide:** Age can also create a digital divide, as older generations may be less familiar with modern technology than younger ones. Younger people tend to adopt new technologies more easily, while older adults may struggle with basic digital tasks. In many countries, younger people frequently use smartphones and the internet for communication, education, and work. Meanwhile, older generations may find it hard to adapt to technology, making them feel disconnected from online resources or services like online banking or telemedicine.

**8. Disability Divide:** People with physical or cognitive disabilities may face challenges accessing and using digital technologies if those platforms are not designed to be inclusive. Accessibility features are often lacking, creating a barrier for individuals with disabilities. A person with visual impairments might struggle to navigate websites that are not equipped with screen reader compatibility, or a person with mobility impairments may find it hard to use devices without proper assistive technology.

**9. Cultural Divide:** Differences in language, cultural practices, or local content availability can create a divide in digital access. People from minority or indigenous groups may lack content that is relevant or available in their language or cultural context. In some regions, much of the content on the internet is available only in English or major global languages. This can alienate people in rural areas who speak local languages, preventing them from fully engaging with online information and services.

**10. Infrastructure Divide:** The quality and availability of the internet and related infrastructure, like electricity, play a significant role in who can access digital technology. In areas with unreliable infrastructure, even having a device might not

help if there's no electricity or internet connection. In some remote areas of Africa or South Asia, power outages and lack of reliable electricity make it difficult for people to charge their devices or stay online, further limiting their digital participation.

**11. Language Divide:** The internet is dominated by certain global languages, which creates a divide for people who do not speak those languages. Without content in their local or native language, people may find it difficult to access online resources or information. Many educational websites and online resources are available primarily in English, which creates a barrier for people in non-English-speaking countries like Pakistan, where many citizens speak Urdu or regional languages.

**12. Occupational Divide:** The type of work someone does can also affect how they interact with digital technology. White-collar professionals may have daily access to computers and the internet, while blue-collar workers or manual laborers might have limited interaction with digital tools. An office worker uses email, video conferencing, and digital documents every day, while a factory worker may have little need for or access to such tools during their work hours, limiting their familiarity with digital platforms.

**13. Content Divide:** This refers to the availability and relevance of online content. Some regions or groups may not have content tailored to their specific needs or interests, which can create a gap in meaningful digital engagement. A lack of local content in rural communities can make the internet less relevant to their daily lives, reducing their motivation to use it. For example, farmers in rural areas may not find enough agricultural content in their local languages to help them improve farming practices.

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## **Impacts of Digital Divides on Citizenship:**

Digital divides affect people's ability to fully engage in civic duties and responsibilities. Citizenship includes not only voting and obeying laws but also participating in discussions, staying informed, and accessing essential services. The digital divide limits these opportunities, leading to inequalities.

**1. Access to Information:** People who lack access to the internet are unable to stay updated with current news, government policies, or social issues. This makes it harder for them to make informed decisions as citizens. In countries like Pakistan, where the internet is a primary source of news, those without access are unaware of political developments, affecting their participation in elections.

**2. Participation in Democracy:** The internet allows citizens to engage with political discussions, join movements, or sign petitions. A digital divide restricts this participation, making it harder for marginalized communities to voice their concerns or demands. During election campaigns, citizens with internet access can

easily learn about candidates and their policies, while those without may not have enough information to make informed voting decisions.

**3. Access to Government Services:** Many government services are now available online, like applying for ID cards, birth certificates, or paying taxes. People without internet access face difficulties in completing these tasks, which can create frustration and delays. A person living in a remote village without internet may need to travel to a distant city just to apply for a passport, while someone in a city can complete the process online.

**4. Economic Opportunities:** The digital divide can limit access to job opportunities, online training, and educational resources. People who lack digital access are unable to benefit from these services, putting them at a disadvantage in the job market. Online job portals help urban citizens apply for various positions, while those in rural areas may miss out on job postings because they lack access to the internet.

**5. Social Inequality:** The digital divide deepens existing inequalities in society. Those who have access to digital tools and information can improve their quality of life, while those without are left further behind. Students with access to online education platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic could continue their studies, while those without access missed out on learning opportunities, widening the education gap.

**6. Exclusion from Digital Citizenship:** Digital citizenship refers to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in the digital world, such as participating in online discussions, accessing online services, and contributing to social media. People without internet access are excluded from these activities, making them feel disconnected from modern society. Citizens who cannot access the internet may not be able to contribute to online debates about policy changes or join online communities focused on social issues.

**7. Limited Access to Education:** The digital divide can restrict access to online education and learning opportunities. Those without internet access or digital skills miss out on distance learning, online courses, and educational resources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, students from lower-income families or rural areas in Pakistan struggled to attend online classes, leading to unequal learning experiences.

**8. Reduced Economic Opportunities:** People on the wrong side of the digital divide may miss out on job opportunities, as many job applications, training programs, and recruitment processes are now conducted online. E-commerce and digital entrepreneurship are also out of reach for those without access to technology. In urban areas, small businesses use digital platforms to market their products, while in rural areas, businesses without internet access may not be able to reach as wide a customer base.

**9. Weakened Civic Engagement:** People without access to digital tools are often unable to participate fully in civic activities such as online voting, petitions, and discussions on social media platforms. This can lead to feelings of exclusion from the political process. Citizens in remote regions of Pakistan who lack internet access cannot participate in digital platforms for political debate or online voting initiatives, resulting in a weaker voice in democratic processes.

**10. Lack of Access to Government Services:** Governments are increasingly offering services online, from tax filing to healthcare appointments. Those without digital access are unable to benefit from these services, leading to delays and inefficiency in receiving necessary assistance. In urban areas, individuals can renew licenses or apply for government assistance online, while those in remote regions without internet access have to travel to government offices, increasing costs and time burdens.

**11. Increased Social Inequality:** The digital divide reinforces existing social inequalities by giving digitally connected individuals greater access to information, services, and economic opportunities. Meanwhile, disconnected individuals remain marginalized. In many countries, affluent individuals use digital platforms to learn new skills, grow businesses, and engage with government services, while those without internet access are often left out of these opportunities, widening the gap between rich and poor.

**12. Exclusion from Digital Culture:** People on the wrong side of the digital divide are unable to engage in digital culture, including social media, entertainment, and global trends. This can lead to a sense of isolation and a lack of connection with broader societal developments. Young people in urban areas of Pakistan are highly active on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, while youth in rural areas without internet access are excluded from these digital interactions, leading to cultural disconnects.

**13. Health Inequality:** Telemedicine and online health resources are increasingly common, but those without digital access cannot benefit from these services, resulting in poorer health outcomes. In urban areas, patients can consult doctors through telemedicine services, but in rural areas without digital infrastructure, patients must travel long distances to access healthcare, leading to delayed treatment.

**14. Impact on Digital Literacy:** People without access to technology miss out on opportunities to develop digital literacy skills, which are essential in today's workforce. This puts them at a disadvantage in job markets where digital skills are increasingly required. A person with no access to computers or the internet will struggle to compete for jobs requiring basic digital skills, such as data entry,

customer service, or marketing, in contrast to those with access who can develop these skills.

**15. Barriers to Innovation:** The digital divide hampers innovation in communities where people lack the tools and knowledge to create, collaborate, and contribute to new technologies or solutions. Innovators in cities with high-speed internet can develop new apps, services, or tech solutions, while those in areas with little to no internet access are cut off from such opportunities, slowing technological progress in those regions.

**16. Misinformation and Lack of Awareness:** People with limited internet access may rely on fewer information sources, which can result in misinformation or limited knowledge about critical issues such as health, politics, and social matters. In regions with limited access to the internet, people may rely on rumors or inaccurate information shared locally, leading to misunderstandings about important health guidelines or government policies.

**17. Cultural and Linguistic Isolation:** Individuals who lack access to the internet are often excluded from global cultural exchanges, which occur primarily online. This can lead to cultural isolation, where local languages and traditions are preserved but connections with the wider world are limited. Communities without internet access may have limited exposure to global music, art, and language trends, preventing them from participating in global culture and exchange.

**18. Digital Skill Gaps in Future Generations:** Children and young adults who grow up without regular access to digital tools will be less prepared for future careers, as many industries are moving toward technology-heavy jobs. Children in urban schools with access to computers learn coding, software skills, and online research, while children in rural schools without these resources fall behind in digital knowledge, impacting their future job prospects.

## Addressing Digital Divides:

Governments and organizations around the world are trying to bridge the digital divide by increasing internet access, providing affordable devices, and offering digital literacy programs. This helps citizens become more engaged and informed participants in society.

**1. Providing Affordable Internet:** Governments can provide subsidies for low-cost internet in rural and underserved areas. In Pakistan, the government has launched projects to provide internet access in rural areas, improving connectivity for citizens.

**2. Expanding Infrastructure:** Building new infrastructure like fiber-optic networks in remote regions can provide people in those areas with access to fast internet.

Countries like India have made efforts to install internet services in remote villages to bridge the geographic divide.

**3. Offering Digital Literacy Training:** Digital education programs can teach people how to use the internet and digital tools effectively, ensuring that everyone can benefit from online services and opportunities. Non-profit organizations in Pakistan and other countries provide workshops on how to use smartphones, navigate online banking, and access e-learning platforms.

**4. Providing Affordable Devices:** Lowering the cost of smartphones, tablets, and computers or offering government-subsidized devices can help low-income families access digital resources. Some governments have introduced programs to provide affordable laptops to students from low-income families to help them in their education.

