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Role of Social Media in Creating Awareness on Terrorism in Swat: A Kap Analysis

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Abstract

The current study is an investigation of the social media role in creating awareness against terrorism in Swat by incorporating a comprehensive Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) framework. The data is collected from a diverse pool of respondents from all parts of Swat, ranging variations in age, gender, education, profession, marital status, job, and tehsil of residence. Findings of the study revealed a widespread agreement on social media's effective and efficient role in promoting awareness and facilitating counter-terrorism initiatives. The multi-layered impact of social media on public actions and counter-terrorism initiatives was quite evident, encouraging the survivors to actively participate, share personal tales, and promote community resilience. The study recommends demographic-specific campaigns and collaboration with influencers and activists to curb terrorism. The study also emphasized on education, online safety, and continuous monitoring along with thorough understanding of social media's profound role in awareness against terrorism.

Keywords: Terrorism, Social Media, Knowledge Attitudes & Practices (KAP) framework and Peace.

Introduction

Terrorism has always been a major threat to world's peace, and there are four waves of terrorism: religious wave, anarchist wave, new left wave and anti-colonial wave (Rapoport, 2017). However, in spite of all these definitions, terrorism is a very complicated subject to define or understand after studying only one event or incident. Terrorism needs to be thoroughly defined and described in-depth (Kaplan, 2016).

Along with the historical waves of terrorism, the current wave of terrorism is different than the old ones. This wave of terrorism can be termed as the technological terrorism (Clark, 1980). Apart from the conventional ways of creating fear through violence, in the current age and time, terrorism is effortlessly created and enhanced through modern ways of communication – social media and telecommunication tools (Lans, 2017). Lately, terrorists are now better-equipped to communicate with each other, and to spread their propaganda (Corman et al. 2006). In addition, contemporary terrorist organizations are aware of the fact that they cannot fight a war; therefore, they try to create a climate of fear in common people and even in governments (Stohl 2008). In the modern world, terrorists not only fight with guns and suicide attacks but also with propaganda on media. Similarly, terrorists also take advantage of the lack of awareness of masses regarding terrorism on social media or even mass media (Kimutai & K, 2014).

In the recent era, there are a number of articles written about terrorism; and its linkage with mass media or social media. However, there is very little written about countering terrorism through social media (Ressler, 2006). In the modern world of digitalization, the influence of social media is unbridled in all walks of life (Boler, 2008). The influence of social media is evident in the contemporary world and it has far-reaching implications in human life. The entire world is revolutionized by the rampant spread and popularity of social media in youth across the globe (Breuer, 2012). However, the fruitful use of social media is vividly dependent on digital literacy; and its advantages and disadvantages are deeply associated with digital literacy. Social media, and its use is often associated with abomination, animosity, hatred, bullying and extremism but its positive and educational face is of utmost significance as well (Khalid, Guriro, Lakho, & Shaikh, 2021).

Social media has been incredibly vital for the awareness in youth, especially in the current world which is flooded by intolerance, extremism and terrorism (Amit et al. 2021). Pakistan is also

facing these troublesome issues in general; and the north-western territory of Pakistan in particular. In the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Malakand division, suffered heavily from the previous wave of terrorism (2008-2010) with great intensity; however, in that era, social media was not that rampant and popular as it is now (Abbasi, 2013). The masses had to rely only on mainstream media which was not able to cater all the needs of the masses related to digital education. In contrast to the previous wave of terrorism, in today's world, the mushroom growth of social media sites and its popularity in the youth have made it possible to respond instantly to the recent wave of terrorism with protests and demonstrations - when the same forces tried to rise again in district Swat.

Knowledge contains first-hand information, and facts that masses in district Swat have about terrorism. A number of questions in this study address what the people of Swat know about the core issue of terrorism, its background, key figures, geostrategic, and geo-political context. Attitude delves deep into the fact that how the people feel about the menace of terrorism, and its impact on their lives. It is imperative to examine the psychological and emotional effects of terrorism on the community. To get a clear picture of the collective psyche of the masses of Swat, it is necessary to analyze the sentiments expressed on social media platforms.

This study, *Creating Awareness on Terrorism through Social Media in Swat: A KAP Analysis* is an attempt to highlight the fruitful use of social media in countering the resurgence of terrorism in Swat, addresses critical issues, including the extent to which social media raised awareness against terrorism and the importance of social media as a tool for uniting people against terrorism. By addressing these questions, the research provides a nuanced understanding of social media's multi-layered impact on public actions and counter-terrorism initiatives in Swat, guiding policymakers and community stakeholders in crafting targeted strategies for a resilient and united community response against terrorism.

Literature Review

The 9/11 attacks have shaped a specific opinion of terrorism in people's minds. Many schools of thought and scholars believe that the coverage of terrorism on social media could have a psychological effect on public. Rubin *et al* (2007) believe that there is a great rise in the level of stress after terrorist attacks which ultimately impact behavioral changes and sense of security. On the contrary side, some scholars have stressed on the physical effects of terrorism on people.

Sara and Joseph (2019) depicted the grave concerns of social media usage in terrorism and during terrorist activities. The study showed that terrorist groups are enjoying the use of social media while communicating with each other including its use in the recruitment of terrorists. This study has given certain examples of ISIS where they upload online videos to Twitter and YouTube to inspire others to join them and to recruit new ones in the cyberspace.

Saif-ur-Rehaman (2021) investigated that TTP is one of the most dreadful and deadly terrorist organizations in Pakistan. In the past, it used conventional ways to propagate its ideology; however, in the contemporary world of digitalization, it has started using social media for its extensive propaganda. The study analyzed the videos of TTP which were shared on social media 2017-2020. In these videos, the terrorist organization propagated its online presence by adopting certain propaganda techniques. The study portrayed a bright picture by saying that in the contemporary times, only few minds have been deviated due to the illogical narrative of TTP while majority of the young minds do not believe in the violent extremism of TTP.

Minhaj (2015) investigated the phenomena of violent extremism and the drivers behind this with specific focus on Pakistan in the last two decades. The study concluded that poverty and illiteracy plays a significant role in rising violent extremism. The study recommended that Pakistan needs to recognize the importance of introducing sweeping reforms in political, economic and educational fields in order to curb the menace of violent extremism and terrorism in Pakistan. It is a well-established fact that education and socio-economic development can take Pakistan to prosperity and stability. Consequently, it will help Pakistan to achieve a peaceful and harmonious society in the future.

Muhammad and Natasha (2021) found that there is a significant rise in the measures to counter terrorism with soft measures rather than hard measures. The study examined counter-narratives and efforts to fight violent extremism initiated by Pakistan, particularly, by coining the concept of Paigham-e-Pakistan. The study delineated the attempts made at Paigham-e-Pakistan to counter violent extremism and terrorism; although, it was a very wholesome and inclusive narrative to counter the extremist narrative coined by the extremists.

Farhan (2017) discussed the need of Countering Violent Extremism steps to curb Terrorism in Pakistan and found that Pakistan cannot fight against domestic extremism, violence and terrorism unless effective and efficient Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) steps are taken. The study

showed that Pakistan has only taken modest measures in this regard; hence, there is a greater need for rapid progress to be made. The US Department of Justice (2017) conducted a study on the negative role of social media in the growth of terrorism and extremism in the United States. As the Americans felt the risk of the rise of terrorism; they linked it to global terrorism that depends on modern communication techniques and a globalized social consciousness to motivate others to join them in terrorist activities. It was debated that social media was used to inspire others to agree with their belief system and radicalize peace-loving people who use social media and have access to internet. The study compared the structure of American terrorism to Hezbollah, and other networks that are allied with Al-Qaida and ISIS. Common people have joined ISIS in the same way as people go for chain migration by following the footsteps of their neighbors or peers etc. In the same way, people follow people on social media and act upon their extremist and radical beliefs. The study has also recommended certain ways to address the misuse of social media and to use it in a fruitful way. The study recommended that community education, duty to report, discourage and disrupt their hubs are essential in curbing terrorism and most importantly to suppress and discourage producers rather than consumers of terrorist propaganda online.

Research Objectives

1. To understand if social media play a role of source of information & awareness for the people of swat
2. To explore if social media has united the people of swat against terrorism and to promote and maintain peace in Swat
3. To investigate the role of social media in highlighting the issue of terrorism?
4. To reveal how effective social media remained in enabling the public of Swat to organize and coordinate Pasaons (peace walks) through its effective communication strategies.

Research Questions

1. How effectively social media has raised public awareness about terrorism in Swat?
2. How do the public of Swat perceive social media's role, in uniting the community against terrorism in Swat?

Methodology

For a better understanding of the social media in creating awareness related to terrorism this study employed quantitative research design. Keeping KAP framework – Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice in account this study used a structured questionnaire for the process of data collection. The researchers collected data from a diverse pool of respondents from all parts of Swat. however the sample size is selected through using Taro Yamane's formula.

KAP Analysis technique is a research technique that comprises of three factors: knowledge, attitudes and practices. It is used to assess the behaviors, knowledge and understanding of a specific population related to a specific issue. It is used in several fields of health, market and social sciences research. Among the components: Knowledge refers to the understanding and information that the specific population have about a particular issue. It can be assessed by asking the target population about the concept and facts related to the specific issue. This part of the KAP Analysis helped the researchers to gain and measure the level of awareness of respondents about terrorism in district Swat. The researcher asked questions about the nature and definition of terrorism, its background and main causes. The respondents were also asked about the new wave of terrorism in district Swat; and the sources of information they have and they trust?. Attitudes refer to those beliefs and feelings which the target population have regarding the particular issue. It can either be positive or negative or even neutral and can be assessed by using different scales or asking different questions. In this regard the researcher asked certain questions related to the beliefs, feelings and opinions of the respondents related to the causes of terrorism, the policies of government and counter-terrorism steps taken in order to ensure their security and safety. Respondents were also asked about the mainstream media's coverage and social media's role in developing their perceptions against terrorism. While the "Practices" part is the one which the respondents take or have taken related to the specific issue. It is assessed by asking the population about what they did in response to the issue, or how often they did it and in what circumstances they did it? The researcher asked the individuals about the practical steps which they had taken to ensure their safety; spread awareness about terrorism in district Swat; and the role of social media in uniting them and tackling the issue of terrorism in Swat. They were also asked about certain initiatives aimed at spreading awareness about the issue of terrorism. KAP analysis on raising awareness on terrorism in district Swat, helped

the researcher to understand the level of understanding, feelings and practical steps taken towards the issue of terrorism in district Swat.

Data Collection

The researcher collected the primary data from selected social media users through a structured questionnaires. The process is completed through physical interaction with respondent & online google forms. Using the Taro Yamane's formula, the researcher selected 400 individuals as sample size for this study and distributed questionnaires to them in person and online. The researcher also made certain stratas based on education, gender, profession, tehsils, marital status, and age and job status. The following seven Tehsils: Babuzai Tehsil, Barikot Tehsil, Bahrain Tehsil, Charbagh Tehsil, Kabal Tehsil, KhwazaKhela Tehsil and Matta Tehsil with around 170 Village Councils and 44 Neighborhood Councils remained part of the data collection process.

Result

The researcher aimed to understand the role of social media in creating awareness on terrorism in district Swat. Using Taro Yamane's formula A total number of 400 respondents were taken as sample size. Majority of the participant were observed to be male respondents i.e. 77.75%, while female respondents were 22.25%. Majority of these respondents (84.75%) were of the age between 20-30 age, while 10.25% were of 31-40 years of age. 14 respondents being 3.5% were seen between the age of 41-50, while a small number of respondents i.e. 6 (1.5%) were found to be in between 50-60 years of age.

DATA TABULATION

Strongly Agree	SA
Agree	Agr
Neutral	N
Disagree	DA
Strongly Disagree	SDA

Table 1: Frequency distribution of Social media role as source of awareness for the public during terrorism and for bringing peace in district Swat.

Variables	F	%
SA	146	36.5%
Agr	197	49.3%
N	18	4.5%
DA	17	4.3%
SDA	22	5.5%
Total	400	100%

Explanation

The above table shows the frequency distribution of Social media role as source of awareness for the public during terrorism and for bringing peace in district Swat. The data reveals that 85% of the respondents agreed to the statement that social media has been a great source of awareness among the public to bring peace in district Swat after the disastrous first wave of terrorism. However, 4.5% of the respondents remained neutral, 4.3% disagreed and 5.5% strongly disagreed to the statement.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of the role of Social media for unity among the people of Swat in order to promote and maintain peace in Swat.

Variables	F	%
SA	132	33%
Agr	206	51.5%
N	40	10%
DA	5	1.3%
SDA	17	4.3%
Total	400	100%

Explanation

Respondents were asked to see whether social media united them on the promotion and maintaining peace in Swat? Out of the 400 respondents, 132 (33%) of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement, while 206 being 51.1% agreed to the statement. 40 respondents remained neutral, while only 5 participants disagree to the above statement, and 17 individuals strongly disagree to the above mentioned statement.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of Social media role for the unity of the people of Swat against the issue of terrorism.

Variables	F	%
SA	121	30.3
Agr	200	50.0
N	31	7.8
DA	16	4.0
SDA	32	8.0
Total	400	100

Explanation

The statistic in the table above shows the opinion of the respondents regarding Social media role for the unity of the people of Swat against the issue of terrorism. out of 400 respondentat 121 respondents being 30.3% strongly agreed that social media play a role in uniting the people of Swat on the issue of terrorism, while 200 being 50% (Majority) agreed to the statement. However, 31, 16 and 32 respondents being 7.8%, 4% and 8% showed neutral, disagreement, strongly disagreement respectively, to the statement.

Table 4: Frequency distribution of Social media role in highlighting the issue of terrorism & enabled the public of Swat to organize and coordinate Pasons (peace walks) through its effective communication strategies.

Variables	F	%
SA	82	20.5
Agr	218	54.5
N	49	12.3

DA	31	7.8
SDA	20	5.0
Total	400	100.0

Explanation

The data above reveals that a significant majority of 54.5% of the respondents agreed to the statement i.e. Social media has **highlighted the issue of terrorism & enabled the public of Swat to organize and coordinate Pasoons (peace walks) through its effective communication strategies**". 20.5%, 12.3%, 7.8% and 5% of the total respondents strongly agreed, remained neutral, showed disagreement and strongly disagreement to the above statement respectively.

Table 5: Frequency distribution of the Social media role in allowing public to participate in dialogues, debates and discussions to looking into the root causes and solutions of terrorism in Swat.

Variables	F	%
Strongly Agree	92	23
Agree	196	49
Neutral	66	16.5
Disagree	23	5.8
Strongly Disagree	23	5.8
Total	400	100

Explanation

The data reveals that social media gives a platform for the people of Swat to engage in engage in meaningful discussions, debates and dialogues. Out of the total 400 respondents 196 being 49% as majority agreed that social media play a role in allowing public to participate in dialogues, debate and discussions etc. 23% strongly agreed 16.5%, 5.8% and 5.8% remained silent, disagreed and strongly disagreed to the statement respectively.

CONCLUSION

In the present study, the key role of social media in raising awareness on terrorism in district Swat was profoundly investigated. The findings of the research show the impact of social media platforms in engaging the youth and the broader community in discussions about counter-terrorism efforts. Through an in-depth analysis of the data, it has become evident that social media serves as a powerful tool for disseminating information, mobilizing resources, and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders in the fight against terrorism.

The findings of the study were aligned with the research objectives: To understand if social media play a role of source of information & awareness for the people of swat, To explore if social media has united the people of swat against terrorism and to promote and maintain peace in Swat, To investigate the role of social media in highlighting the issue of terrorism? & To reveal how effective social media remained in enabling the public of Swat to organize and coordinate Pasoons (peace walks) through its effective communication strategies.

The results suggested that social media has been effective in creating awareness against terrorism among the people of Swat, with a lot of participants exhibiting a strong agreement with the key role of social media in spreading information and news and even promoting discussions on counter-terrorism efforts. The findings also shed light on the key role of social media in uniting the masses against terrorism, promoting collective actions, and solidarity among different stakeholders in district Swat.

These findings have the most important implications for understanding the key role and dynamics of social media's influence in counter-terrorism efforts in terrorism-hit regions like district Swat. With the utilization of the power of social media, stakeholders can increase their messages, and even engage with diverse audiences, and mobilize resources more efficiently in the fight against terrorism. Moreover, these findings highlight the importance of considering local contexts and community perspectives in designing interventions and strategies to address security challenges.

The main aim of this study was to clarify the profound impact of social media in creating awareness on terrorism in district. The comprehensive analysis done in the study shows the deep impact of social media in creating awareness about terrorism in Swat.

A notable consensus was seen among respondents, showing a thorough recognition of social media in creating awareness against terrorism in district Swat. Social media has a unifying potential

as majority of the respondents agreed that it played a central role in uniting the people of Swat for promoting peace. The influence of social media helped in promoting tangible actions to curb terrorism, with participants agreeing that it provided a purposeful direction and suitable platform for arranging initiatives, like Pasoons and protests against terrorism. The collected data showed a widespread agreement that social media efficiently spread information about the re-emergence of terrorism in the valley, associated dangers, and its deadly impacts on Swat. Along with awareness, social media acted as a collaborative platform, promoting active participation in counter-terrorism efforts through peaceful means – debates, dialogues and joint initiatives.

The study also emphasized on the significant roles played by social media influencers, activists, local leaders, local authorities and law enforcement agencies in disseminating information and awareness against terrorism. Moreover, social media empowered the inhabitants of Swat to raise their concerns, opinions and demands related to counter-terrorism efforts, enabling community-led movements. Social media platforms also played a key role in mobilizing resources, such as donations, volunteers, and engaging with experts, researchers, and activists in the field of counter-terrorism. The findings of the study reveals that social media continues to be a powerful tool for spreading awareness against terrorism, demonstrating its impactful role on the local community to effectively respond to the issue of terrorism.

Furthermore, collaboration with social media influencers and local leaders is exceedingly important to promptly spread awareness against terrorism. They play a crucial role in extending the reach of counter-terrorism messages to a greater audience. Similarly, enhancing the cooperation and collaboration between social media platforms and law enforcement agencies promote a proactive presence, facilitating accurate information flow, and fostering security of the people. Likewise, the promotion of educational content through social media should be promoted to enhance public understanding of the multi-layered issue of terrorism.

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