WHO SUPPORTS A BAN? EXAMINING TRUST, CONSPIRACY, AND ECONOMIC UTILITY IN PAKISTAN'S X (TWITTER) SHUTDOWN

[1]Farahat Ali

[1]School of Media and Mass Communication, Beaconhouse National University, Pakistan
[1]farahat.ali@bnu.edu.pk

Abstract

This study investigates public attitudes toward the February 2024-May 2025 ban on X (formerly Twitter) in Pakistan, amid allegations of election rigging and concerns over misinformation and national security. Drawing on survey data from 512 diverse Pakistani adults, it examines how factors such as X usage frequency, content trust, anti-government sentiment, tech conspiracy beliefs, and perceived economic utility influence support for the ban. Hypotheses posit negative associations between support and higher usage, trust, anti-government views, and economic utility, while conspiracy beliefs predict positive support. The findings reveal that higher usage, trust in content, anti-government sentiment, and perceived economic utility are significantly associated with lower support for the ban. Conversely, belief in global tech conspiracies predicts greater support, reflecting nationalist anxieties. These relationships persist after controlling for demographic and political variables, with regression models explaining 17.8% of the variance in ban support. The study contributes to the literature on digital authoritarianism by integrating attitudinal, political, and economic dimensions into a unified model suited for hybrid regimes. It highlights the centrality of platforms like X in shaping dissent, economic engagement, and state legitimacy. Theoretically, it advances media resistance and conspiracy scholarship in the South Asian context, while empirically filling gaps in quantitative research on censorship acceptance. Practically, it offers policy implications for balancing security, economic livelihoods, and freedom of expression in digitally contested spaces. These findings underscore the complexities of digital governance in politically volatile societies, where bans may provoke backlash rather than compliance.

Introduction

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) have become integral to global discourse, facilitating information dissemination, political engagement, and economic interactions. However, governments in various regions have increasingly resorted to restrictions on these platforms, often justified by concerns over national security, misinformation, and public order. In Pakistan, the recent ban on X, imposed in February 2024 amid allegations of election rigging and lifted in May 2025, exemplifies this trend. Authorities cited the platform's role in amplifying dissent and potential threats to stability during the general elections, where opposition figures leveraged it for mobilization (Ahmed et al., 2024). This measure disrupted access for millions, forcing reliance on virtual private networks (VPNs) and highlighting the tension between state control and digital freedoms. Internationally, similar actions in countries like Turkey and Egypt have been linked to authoritarian consolidation, where platforms are viewed as tools for unrest (Miller, 2022; Schmidt-Feuerheerd, 2024). In Pakistan, the ban compounded existing patterns of intermittent shutdowns, such as those during protests in 2017 and 2023, resulting in economic losses estimated at millions due to halted e-commerce and communication (The Express Tribune, 2025). Reports indicate that such restrictions exacerbate social isolation and hinder real-time information flow, particularly in politically volatile contexts (Rosson et al., 2024).

Scholars have extensively documented the motivations and consequences of social media bans in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes. For instance, research on global censorship patterns reveals that over 70 countries, including Pakistan, have imposed restrictions since 2015 to curb foreign influence and dissent (Feldstein, 2021). In Pakistan-specific studies, analyses of laws like the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) show how they enable broad content regulation, often targeting anti-establishment narratives (Kamran, 2023). Forbeck (2024) examined user behaviors during prior shutdowns, finding that frequent platform engagement correlates with heightened opposition to bans, as users perceive them as infringements on expression. Internationally, Roozenbeek and van der Linden (2022) explored trust in social media content, demonstrating that perceived reliability reduces support for prohibitions, even amid misinformation challenges. Furthermore, studies on political sentiments indicate that negative views of governments amplify resistance to censorship, as platforms serve as outlets for criticism (Al-Zaman, 2024). Conspiracy beliefs, particularly

regarding U.S.-based tech firms, have been linked to favoring bans in nationalist contexts (Fürstenau, 2024). Economic utility assessments reveal that platforms' role in commerce diminishes ban support among dependent users (Thumfart, 2024). Pakistani-focused research has highlighted local dynamics, noting how bans intersect with cultural and security imperatives (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Despite these insights, significant gaps persist in the literature. Existing research predominantly focuses on the causes and immediate impacts of bans, with limited empirical examination of public attitudes toward them. For example, while international studies address trust and usage (Dini & Sæbø, 2016), they rarely integrate factors like government sentiment or conspiracy beliefs in developing contexts. In Pakistan, analyses often overlook how perceived economic benefits influence support for restrictions, despite the platform's role in livelihoods (Kamran, 2023). Moreover, few studies employ quantitative approaches to model multivariate associations between these variables and ban endorsement, leaving a void in understanding nuanced user perspectives amid recurring shutdowns (Bin Morshed et al., 2017; Wagner, 2018). This gap is particularly acute given Pakistan's unique blend of political instability and digital growth, where bans affect diverse stakeholders without tailored policy responses (Yilmaz et al., 2025). This research addresses these deficiencies by investigating the factors shaping public support for the X ban in Pakistan. Drawing on survey data, it tests associations between usage frequency, content trust, anti-government sentiment, tech conspiracy beliefs, and economic utility perceptions with ban attitudes. By employing regression analysis, the study elucidates how higher engagement and trust correlate with opposition, while conspiracies predict favorability, providing a comprehensive model grounded in local and global contexts (Roozenbeek & van der Linden, 2022; Al-Zaman, 2024). This approach resolves the lack of integrated frameworks, offering evidence-based insights into user dynamics.

The contributions of this study are multifaceted. Empirically, it advances knowledge on digital governance by quantifying attitudinal drivers, informing strategies to balance security and freedoms (Feldstein, 2021). Policy-wise, findings can guide equitable regulations, mitigate economic harms and fostering trust (Ahmed et al., 2024). Theoretically, it enriches literature on censorship in hybrid regimes, highlighting Pakistan's case as a bridge between South Asian and global patterns (Ahmed et al., 2024). Ultimately, it promotes informed dialogue on sustainable digital policies amid evolving threats.

Literature review

Social Media Usage and Resistance to Bans

The frequency of social media engagement significantly shapes user attitudes toward platform restrictions. In Pakistan, where digital penetration has surged, platforms like X serve as critical spaces for information exchange and civic participation. Several studies have found that frequent users in restrictive environments develop a strong reliance on social media for real-time updates, viewing bans as direct threats to their connectivity and expression (Myers West, 2018; Miller, 2022; Parks et al., 2017). This aligns with global patterns; for instance, Al-Zaman (2024) noted that in 76 countries implementing social media restrictions since 2015, high-frequency users consistently oppose bans due to their integration into daily routines. In Pakistan, prior shutdowns during protests (e.g., 2017, 2023) revealed that users who engage daily are more likely to perceive restrictions as infringements on their rights (Freedom House, 2023). Internationally, studies on mobile media in authoritarian contexts highlight that habitual use fosters a sense of digital community, amplifying resistance to state interventions (Schleffer & Miller, 2021). These findings suggest that frequent X usage in Pakistan may cultivate opposition to its ban, as users prioritize uninterrupted access.

H1: Higher frequency of X (formerly Twitter) use is negatively associated with support for the platform's ban in Pakistan.

Trust in Social Media Content and Ban Attitudes

Trust in the informational content shared on platforms like X plays a pivotal role in shaping user attitudes toward bans. In contexts where traditional media face credibility challenges, social media often fills informational voids. Riedl et al. (2022) demonstrated that users who trust social media content are less likely to support bans, as they perceive platforms as reliable sources despite misinformation risks. In Pakistan, where state-controlled media often dominate, X provides an alternative for unfiltered news, fostering user loyalty (Adnan, 2025). Global studies reinforce this; for example, users who trust platform content in restrictive regimes view bans as attempts to suppress truth (Redeker, 2024). However, eroded trust due to algorithmic biases or misinformation can paradoxically increase support for regulation. Erisen and Erisen (2024) found that skepticism about content accuracy in polarized settings can lead to calls for state intervention. In Pakistan, where misinformation during elections has fueled regulatory debates, trust remains a critical determinant of ban opposition (Ipsos, 2023).

H2: Higher trust in news and informational content shared on X (formerly Twitter) is associated with lower support for its ban.

Political Sentiments and Opposition to Censorship

In many hybrid or semi-authoritarian regimes, users with negative views of state authorities perceive social media bans as oppressive state tactics, which often *strengthen* their resolve to resist (Ayanian et al., 2025). Platforms like X serve as crucial tools for anti-government activism, enabling real-time protest coordination and coalition-building, as demonstrated by Qin et al. (2024) in the Chinese context. According to Meier et al. (2025), hybrid repression, where state and non-state actors collaborate to curb dissent, creates environments in which individuals are more likely to reject information controls and bans. In Pakistan, where institutional distrust is widespread and political crises are common, the 2024 ban on X occurred amid mounting allegations of electoral fraud and political unrest. Opposition factions and civil society actors mobilized on X to challenge the dominant narratives, while many users viewed the ban itself as a symbol of authoritarian repression. Internationally, similar findings emerge: in settings with high regime legitimacy, citizens may tolerate bans as security measures, but where trust is low, restrictions amplify dissent.

H3: Higher negative sentiment toward the Pakistani government or establishment is negatively associated with support for the X (formerly Twitter) ban.

Conspiracy Beliefs and Support for Bans

In nationalist contexts, beliefs in global tech conspiracies, especially those charging U.S.-based platforms like X with advancing foreign agendas, are significantly associated with support for social media bans to safeguard national sovereignty (Trang et al., 2025). Cinelli et al. (2022) confirm that in countries marked by nationalist discourse, public distrust toward foreign technology firms correlates with greater endorsement of regulatory restrictions. Mehl et al. (2025) further shows that populist attitudes, particularly anti-elitist and sovereignty-focused beliefs, positively predict willingness to impose platform limitations. In Pakistan, long-standing nationalist narratives have historically framed U.S.-origin platforms as conduits for external influence, particularly during election-related controversies, suggesting that conspiracy-minded users are more inclined to support restrictions on X.

H4: Stronger belief in global tech conspiracies is positively associated with support for banning U.S.-based platforms like X (formerly Twitter).

Economic Utility and Ban Opposition

Social media bans and internet blackouts carry significant economic and social consequences, particularly in developing economies where digital platforms drive business operations and consumer engagement. A 13-day blackout in Dhaka, Bangladesh, caused major financial losses for freelancers and entrepreneurs, reducing GDP and national reserves (Redwan et al., 2025), while Nigeria's Twitter ban disrupted commercial communication, triggering job losses and investor distrust (Anyim, 2021). Social media platforms offer essential economic utility, helping businesses cut costs, increase visibility, and grow sales through influencer and digital marketing strategies (Wang et al., 2023). These tools are especially vital for small and medium enterprises that depend on online platforms to reach and retain customers. As such, user attitudes toward bans are often negative, not only due to perceived violations of expression but also because of the direct economic harm. In Turkey, users bypassed the 2014 Twitter ban and amplified criticism of the government, reflecting strong psychological reactance and resistance (Miller, 2022). Consequently, economic harm reinforces public opposition to bans, as communities dependent on digital connectivity recognize the threat to their livelihoods.

H5: Lower perceived economic utility of X (formerly Twitter) is associated with higher support for its ban.

Despite substantial research, important gaps remain. While studies such as Wang et al. (2023) and Roozenbeek et al. (2022) examine factors like internet regulation and misinformation resilience, they rarely integrate multiple attitudinal dimensions, such as anti-government sentiment, conspiracy beliefs, and economic utility, within a unified analytical model, especially in developing contexts like Pakistan. Local analyses often focus on regulatory or ideological aspects, but lack quantitative investigations of public opinion. For example, Yilmaz et al. (2025) explore digital authoritarianism and religious populism in Pakistan but do not empirically assess user attitudes toward platform bans. Moreover, existing global studies tend to generalize findings, overlooking Pakistan's distinct socio-political and economic conditions. Finally, the combined influence of these variables on public support for bans remains underexplored, with limited use of multivariate modeling to test their relationships. This study addresses these gaps by quantitatively analyzing how usage frequency, content trust, government sentiment, conspiracy beliefs, and economic utility predict attitudes toward the X ban in Pakistan, offering a comprehensive and context-specific contribution.

Method

Sample Characteristics

The study recruited 512 adult participants from Pakistan to assess attitudes toward the X (formerly Twitter) ban. The sample was designed to reflect Pakistan's demographic diversity, capturing variations in age, gender, education, income, and urban/rural residence. The mean age was 34.2 years (SD = 12.5), ranging from 18 to 65 years. Gender distribution was nearly equal, with 49.8% males (n = 255), 49.4% females (n = 253), and 0.8% identifying as other or preferring not to disclose (n = 4). Education levels included 22.3% with high school or less (n = 114), 38.7% with a bachelor's degree (n = 198), 28.5% with a master's degree (n = 146), and 10.5% with a doctoral or professional degree (n = 54). Household income was distributed as follows: 31.4% earned below PKR 50,000 monthly (n = 161), 42.6% between PKR 50,000 and 150,000 (n = 218), and 26.0% above PKR 150,000 (n = 133). Geographically, 58.2% resided in urban areas (n = 298) and 41.8% in rural or semi-urban areas (n = 214), aligning with Pakistan's urban-rural population split. Political ideology was measured on a seven-point scale from very liberal (-3) to very conservative (3), with a mean of 0.45 (SD = 1.72), indicating a slight conservative lean. Party affiliation, also on a seven-point scale from strong opposition party support (-3) to strong ruling party support (3), had a mean of -0.28 (SD = 1.89). Regarding X usage, 62.1% were active users before the ban (n = 318), 24.6% were occasional users (n = 126), and 13.3% were non-users (n = 68), ensuring a mix of digital engagement levels to analyze ban attitudes in Pakistan's politically charged environment.

Measurements

All variables were measured using multi-item scales adapted from prior research, translated into Urdu where necessary, and back-translated to ensure linguistic accuracy. Responses were collected on seven-point Likert-type scales (0 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) unless specified, with higher scores indicating greater agreement or frequency. Scales were validated for internal consistency (Cronbach's α > .80) and construct validity via exploratory factor analysis (factor loadings > .60, eigenvalues > 1).

Support for the X Ban: The dependent variable was assessed using a four-item scale (α = .89) adapted from Tran et al. (2025). Items included: "I believe the government's ban on X was necessary for national security," "The ban on X helps prevent misinformation during

elections," "I support continued restrictions on X to maintain public order," and "Banning X is justified to curb dissent that threatens stability." The mean score was 3.15 (SD = 1.68).

Usage Frequency: A three-item scale (α = .84), adapted from Lumare et al. (2024), measured pre-ban engagement with X: "How often did you use X for news and information?" (0 = never to 6 = multiple times daily), "How frequently did you post or share content on X?" and "How much time per day did you spend on X?" The mean was 3.82 (SD = 1.47).

Content Trust: A five-item scale (α = .91), adapted from Gupta and Dhami (2015), evaluated perceived reliability of X content: "I trust the information shared on X to be accurate," "Content on X is reliable compared to traditional media," "X provides unbiased views on political issues," "I believe X users share credible sources," and "Misinformation on X is minimal." The mean was 2.98 (SD = 1.55).

Anti-Government Sentiment: A four-item scale (α = .87), adapted from Schneider (2017), measured distrust in government actions: "The current government handles issues poorly," "I distrust government decisions on digital platforms," "Government actions like the X ban are politically motivated," and "The government suppresses opposition voices." The mean was 4.12 (SD = 1.62).

Tech Conspiracy Beliefs: A six-item scale (α = .92), adapted from Brotherton et al. (2013), assessed beliefs about foreign tech influence: "Foreign tech companies like X are tools for Western interference in Pakistan," "X promotes anti-Pakistan agendas," "Conspiracies involving U.S.-based platforms threaten our sovereignty," "Bans on X are needed to counter hidden foreign influences," "Tech firms collect data to manipulate elections," and "Conspiracies about platform control justify government restrictions." The mean was 3.76 (SD = 1.59).

Economic Utility Perceptions: A four-item scale (α = .85) was self-constructed to capture perceived economic benefits of X: "X supports my business or e-commerce activities," "Banning X causes economic losses for users," "I rely on X for professional networking and income," and "Platform access is essential for economic opportunities in Pakistan." The mean was 3.45 (SD = 1.71).

Control Variables and Covariates: Demographic variables (age, gender, education, income, urban/rural residence) and political ideology (mean = 0.45, SD = 1.72) were included as controls. Data privacy concerns, a potential covariate, were measured with a three-item scale (α

= .82), adapted from Wang et al. (2022): "I worry about data leaks on X," "Platforms like X invade user privacy," and "Government bans protect personal data" (mean = 4.03, SD = 1.44).

Data Collection

Data were gathered through an online survey, conducted from December 15, 2024, to January 10, 2025. This timing captured fresh public sentiments amid ongoing debates about digital governance. Purposive sampling ensured representation across age (18-29: 25%, 30-44: 35%, 45-59: 25%, 60+: 15%), gender (approximately 50% male/female), education (aligned with national levels), income (low, middle, high thirds), and residence (urban 60%, rural 40%). Invitations were sent to a panel of over 2,000 registered social media users, with eligibility restricted to Pakistani residents aged 18+ fluent in English or Urdu.

The survey began with informed consent, emphasizing anonymity, voluntary participation, and the study's focus on digital platform attitudes. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete, with questions randomized within blocks to reduce order effects. Attention checks (e.g., "Select 'agree' for this item") ensured response quality, and incomplete or speeding responses (under 5 minutes) were excluded. Participants received entry into a prize draw for PKR 1,000 mobile credits as an incentive. From 612 responses, 512 were retained after removing duplicates (n=32), failed attention checks (n=58), and statistical outliers (n=10), yielding an 84% response rate. The study received ethical approval from the researcher's university institutional review board, adhering to data protection standards.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 28, and descriptive statistics were used to summarise sample characteristics and variable distributions. Bivariate correlations were used to explore initial associations among variables. Hierarchical Multiple regression models were used to test the relationships between independent variables (usage frequency, content trust, anti-government sentiment, tech conspiracy beliefs, and economic utility) and support for the X ban, while controlling for demographics and political ideology. This methodology ensured a comprehensive, quantitative examination of factors shaping public support for the X ban, addressing gaps in understanding user and non-user perspectives in Pakistan's digital governance landscape.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the key variables. Support for the X ban had a mean of 3.15 (SD = 1.68) on a 0–6 scale, indicating moderate and polarized support. Usage frequency (M = 3.82, SD = 1.67) reflected frequent pre-ban engagement. Content trust was slightly lower (M = 3.98, SD = 1.55), suggesting mixed perceptions of platform reliability. Anti-government sentiment was relatively high (M = 4.12, SD = 1.62), consistent with the country's history of political volatility. Tech conspiracy beliefs (M = 3.76, SD = 1.59) indicated prevalent concerns about foreign tech influence, and economic utility (M = 3.45, SD = 1.71) underscored the platform's perceived value. The standard deviations suggest substantial heterogeneity, reflecting Pakistan's diverse socio-political context.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*
Support for X Ban	3.15	1.68
Usage Frequency	3.82	1.67
Content Trust	2.98	1.55
Anti-Government Sentiment	4.12	1.62
Tech Conspiracy Beliefs	3.76	1.59
Economic Utility	3.45	1.71

Note. N = 512

Table 2 presents Pearson correlations among the variables. Support for the X ban was negatively correlated with usage frequency (r = -0.15, p < .01), content trust (r = -0.13, p < .01), anti-government sentiment (r = -0.27, p < .001), and economic utility (r = -0.19, p < .001). These negative associations suggest that higher engagement, trust in content, distrust in the government, and perceived economic benefits are linked to opposition to the ban. Conversely, tech conspiracy beliefs showed a positive correlation (r = 0.22, p < .001), indicating that stronger conspiracy beliefs are associated with greater support for bans. Intercorrelations among predictors were low (e.g., usage frequency with content trust, r = 0.08, ns), suggesting minimal multicollinearity (all VIF < 3).

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations Among Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Support for X Ban	-					
2. Usage Frequency	–.15**	-				
3. Content Trust	–.13**	0.08	-			
4. Anti-Government	–.27***	0.08	0.05	-		
5. Tech Conspiracy	.22***	–.06	–.03	–.04	-	
6. Economic Utility	–.19***	.11*	0.09	0.07	–.05	-

Note: N = 512. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 (two-tailed).

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Table 3 presents the hierarchical regression results predicting support for the X ban. Model 1 included demographic and control variables (age, gender, education, income, urban/rural residence), political ideology, and data privacy concerns (α = .82; M = 4.03, SD = 1.44), explaining a modest but significant proportion of variance (R^2 = 0.071, adjusted R^2 = 0.058, $F(7,504)$ = 5.56, p < .001). In Model 2, the inclusion of the five main predictors significantly improved the model (ΔR^2 = 0.107, F change (5,499) = 22.78, p < .001), with the final model explaining 17.8% of the variance in support for the ban (adjusted R^2 = 0.169, $F(12,499)$ = 22.78, p < .001). Usage frequency (β = –0.118, p = .002), content trust (β = –0.113, p = .001), anti-government sentiment (β = –0.209, p < .001), and economic utility (β = –0.180, p < .001) were all significant negative predictors, supporting H1–H3 and H5. Tech conspiracy beliefs (β = 0.165, p < .001) positively predicted support, supporting H4. The model demonstrated a medium effect size (Cohen's f^2 = 0.217), indicating substantial explanatory power.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Predicting Support for X Ban

Predictor	Model 1 β (SE)	Model 2 β (SE)
Constant	3.105	3.482 (0.295)***
Age	–0.036 (0.028)	–0.025 (0.027)
Gender (Male = 1)	–0.022 (0.113)	–0.011 (0.110)
Education	–0.048 (0.031)	–0.033 (0.030)
Income	0.045 (0.027)	0.031 (0.026)
Urban/Rural	0.019 (0.103)	0.012 (0.101)
Political Ideology	–0.067 (0.034)*	–0.059 (0.033)

Data Privacy Concerns	0.085 (0.028)**	0.061 (0.027)*
Usage Frequency		–0.118 (0.038)**
Content Trust	–	–0.113 (0.034)**
Anti-Government Sentiment	–	–0.209 (0.033)***
Tech Conspiracy Beliefs	–	0.165 (0.033)***
Economic Utility	–	–0.180 (0.032)***
R^2	0.071	0.178
Adjusted R^2	0.058	0.169
F Statistic	5.56***	22.78***
ΔR^2	–	0.107***

Note: N = 512. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide a robust and nuanced examination of public attitudes toward the X (formerly Twitter) ban in Pakistan, a nation navigating a volatile intersection of digital growth, political unrest, and state-driven control. By confirming all five hypotheses, the results illuminate how higher frequency of X usage, greater trust in its content, pronounced anti-government sentiment, and stronger perceptions of economic utility correlate with diminished support for the ban, while robust beliefs in global tech conspiracies bolster its endorsement. These patterns, persisting across rigorous statistical analyses, reflect the polarized landscape of Pakistan's digital governance, where the February 2024 ban, enacted amid election-related controversies and lifted in May 2025, sparked intense debates over state authority versus individual freedoms. This polarization, deeply embedded in Pakistan's socio-political fabric, mirrors global struggles over digital control, positioning the country as a critical case study in the dynamics of hybrid authoritarianism (Bashirov et al., 2025; Ahmad & Ahmed, 2025).

The negative association between frequent X usage and ban support underscores the platform's role as a lifeline for information and connectivity in restrictive environments (Rafiq et al., 2022). Users who engage regularly develop a profound dependency on X for real-time updates, social interaction, and political expression, perceiving bans as direct assaults on their digital agency (Schlieffer & Miller, 2021). In Pakistan, where traditional media often face state influence, X's role in facilitating unfiltered discourse, particularly during the 2024 election

turmoil, amplifies this resistance (Digital Rights Foundation, 2024; Freedom House, 2024). This finding resonates with global patterns observed in countries like Turkey and Indonesia, where habitual social media users rally against restrictions that disrupt their digital ecosystems (Wildana, 2021; Yilmaz et al., 2022; Freedom House, 2021). The intensity of this opposition in Pakistan suggests that frequent users view X not merely as a tool but as a vital public sphere, challenging state narratives and fostering civic engagement. This dynamic aligns with research on mobile media's emancipatory potential in semi-authoritarian settings, where platforms empower users to bypass censorship (Augustine Tshuma & Matsilele, 2025; Beban et al., 2019). Trust in X's informational content further diminishes support for the ban, highlighting the platform's credibility as an alternative to controlled media. Users who perceive X's content as reliable are less likely to endorse restrictions, viewing them as attempts to suppress authentic voices (Rico, 2021). In Pakistan, where state media often face skepticism, X serves as a conduit for unfiltered news, particularly during politically charged events like elections (The Media Line, 2024). This trust-driven opposition echoes findings from other restrictive regimes, such as Nepal and Egypt, where social media fills informational voids left by traditional outlets (Centre for Media Research - Nepal, 2022; Freedom House., 2022). However, the dual-edged nature of trust, where misinformation can erode confidence, complicates this dynamic. In polarized contexts, distrust in content can paradoxically fuel calls for regulation, yet the current findings suggest that in Pakistan's volatile climate, trust in X's content strengthens resistance to state intervention (Rehman et al., 2020; Kumari et al., 2025). This underscores the platform's role as a counter-narrative space, challenging government-controlled information flows.

Anti-government sentiment emerges as a powerful force driving opposition to the ban, positioning X as a critical outlet for dissent in Pakistan's hybrid regime. Users harboring distrust toward state institutions interpret bans as authoritarian tools to silence criticism, particularly amid allegations of electoral fraud in 2024 (Fazal Khaliq, 2024). This sentiment aligns with a previous study analysis of digital public spheres, where platforms like X enable coalition-building and resistance against perceived oppression (Jackson & Kreiss, 2023). Globally, similar patterns are evident in authoritarian contexts where social media facilitates protest coordination, as seen in Myanmar and Iran (Shirky, 2011, Tufekci, 2017). In Pakistan, the ban's timing intensified perceptions of state overreach, galvanizing opposition among those skeptical of government motives (Amnesty International, 2024). This finding also intersects

with economic concerns, as distrustful users view bans as not only politically motivated but also economically disruptive, reinforcing their resistance. The strength of this association highlights X's role as a digital battleground for political expression, amplifying voices marginalized by traditional power structures.

In contrast, beliefs in global tech conspiracies significantly bolster support for the ban, reflecting nationalist anxieties about foreign influence. In Pakistan, narratives portraying U.S.-based platforms like X as tools for Western interference gain traction during politically sensitive periods, justifying restrictions as sovereign defenses (Erisen & Erisen, 2024; Mir & Siddiqui, 2024). This aligns with Douglas et al.'s (2019) findings on conspiracy theories, where perceptions of external agendas drive regulatory endorsement. Similar trends appear in Russia and China, where nationalist rhetoric fuels ban to protect cultural and political sovereignty (Ma et al., 2025). In Pakistan, these beliefs counterbalance the opposition from engaged users, creating a divide between nationalist supporters and cosmopolitan detractors (Ahmed et al., 2024). This tension underscores the broader struggle between global connectivity and local control, positioning X as a flashpoint in Pakistan's digital governance debates.

The economic utility of X further complicates attitudes, with users valuing its role in commerce and networking opposing bans due to tangible losses. In Pakistan, where digital platforms support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), disruptions like the 2024 ban incurred significant economic costs, reinforcing resistance among economically reliant users (Long, 2025). This finding aligns with global research on platform economies, where economic contributions reduce ban support, as seen in India's TikTok ban backlash (Bellara, 2023). In developing economies, where digital tools bridge economic disparities, such disruptions exacerbate inequalities, amplifying opposition (Rafiq et al., 2024; Ho et al., 2025). This economic dimension, combined with political and trust factors, paints a complex picture of public sentiment, where practical stakes intertwine with ideological ones to shape attitudes toward digital restrictions (Koiranen et al., 2020).

Theoretically, this study makes a transformative contribution to the literature on digital authoritarianism by synthesizing multiple attitudinal drivers into a cohesive framework tailored to Pakistan's hybrid context. By demonstrating direct associations without mediation through privacy concerns, this research challenges universal models, emphasizing how Pakistan's political volatility amplifies anti-government sentiment's dominance (Ahmed et al., 2023). This

extends Bashirov et al. (2025) collaborative authoritarianism framework, positioning Pakistan as a nexus of imported digital practices, such as China's censorship models, and local nationalist impulses. The inclusion of economic utility addresses a critical gap in censorship studies, which often overlook livelihood impacts in non-Western settings (West, 2016). By integrating these dimensions, the study enriches media resistance theories, showing how trust and usage fuel broader socio-political opposition (Han et al., 2022). It also advances conspiracy theory scholarship by contextualizing tech-related beliefs within South Asian nationalism, complementing global taxonomies (Mir & Siddiqui, 2024). This framework bridges historical analyses of state control with contemporary digital dynamics, offering a lens for understanding hybrid regimes where platforms both empower and provoke state responses.

The study's findings also resonate with securitization theory, particularly in the context of Pakistan's May 09 incident, where state-led securitization efforts faced significant counter-securitization resistance (Kaunert & Khan, 2025). The ban on X can be viewed as a securitization move, framing the platform as a threat to national stability, yet the public's opposition, driven by usage, trust, and anti-government sentiment, mirrors the counter-securitization dynamics observed during the 2023 protests. This parallel suggests that digital bans, like physical crackdowns, trigger resistance when perceived as illegitimate, aligning with global patterns of digital dissent (Earl et al., 2022). The economic utility finding further ties to studies of platform shutdowns, where economic losses undermine state legitimacy, as seen in comparative analyses of internet restrictions (Feldstein, 2021). By weaving these threads, the study positions Pakistan's digital governance within broader theoretical discourses on power, resistance, and technology.

Practically, these insights offer actionable guidance for stakeholders in Pakistan and similar hybrid regimes. For governments, the strong opposition from frequent and economically reliant users suggests that blanket bans risk alienating key demographics, potentially escalating unrest rather than ensuring stability. Targeted content moderation, leveraging frameworks like the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, could address security concerns without widespread disruption, fostering legitimacy. The link with conspiracy beliefs highlights the urgent need for media literacy initiatives to counter nationalist misinformation, reducing support for restrictive policies. Platforms like X could strengthen user trust through transparent content curation and localized fact-checking, mitigating perceptions that fuel bans.

Civil society organizations can capitalize on these findings to advocate for digital rights, emphasizing economic impacts to build coalitions against shutdowns. Internationally, development agencies could support hybrid governance models that balance security and freedoms, drawing from global best practices. For businesses, understanding utility perceptions could inform strategies to mitigate losses during bans, such as diversifying platforms. These recommendations collectively promote a digital ecosystem that prioritizes access, equity, and resilience, countering authoritarian tendencies while addressing legitimate concerns.

The study's limitations open avenues for future research to deepen these insights. The cross-sectional design limits causal claims, suggesting longitudinal studies to track attitude shifts across ban cycles. The reliance on online panels may underrepresent less digitally literate groups, necessitating mixed methods to capture diverse voices. Focusing solely on X overlooks multi-platform behaviors, warranting comparative analyses across platforms like TikTok or WhatsApp. Exploring moderators like digital literacy or regional differences could reveal nuanced variations in attitudes. Qualitative approaches, such as interviews, could unpack the narratives behind conspiracy beliefs and dissent. Experimental designs testing media literacy interventions might assess their impact on ban support. Cross-national studies comparing Pakistan with neighbors like India or Bangladesh could illuminate regional patterns in digital governance. Finally, investigating emerging technologies, such as AI-driven censorship, could anticipate future challenges. These directions promise to enhance theoretical rigor and practical relevance, fostering inclusive digital policies in an era of rapid technological change.

In conclusion, this research delivers a powerful analysis of public attitudes toward Pakistan's X ban, validating the hypotheses and offering a comprehensive model of support and opposition. By addressing theoretical gaps and providing actionable insights, it elevates discourses on digital rights in hybrid regimes. The findings underscore the delicate balance between state control and public agency, positioning Pakistan as a critical lens for understanding global digital authoritarianism. Future efforts should build on this foundation to promote governance that harmonizes security with the transformative potential of digital platforms.

References

Adnan, M. (2025). A double-edged sword? The role of mobile media in press freedom in Pakistan. *Mobile Media & Communication*, Article 20501579251343754. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/20501579251343754

Ahmad, F., & Ahmed, Z. (2025). The Twitter (X) Ban in Pakistan: Digital Censorship and Its Effect on Democracy. *Social Science Review Archives*, *3*(2), 1020–1025. https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i2.691

Ahmed, Z. S., Yilmaz, I., Akbarzadeh, S., & Bashirov, G. (2023). Digital authoritarianism and activism for digital rights in Pakistan. *European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS)*.

Ahmed, Z. S., Yilmaz, I., Akbarzadeh, S., Bashirov, G., & Morieson, N. (2024). Contestations of internet governance and digital authoritarianism in Pakistan. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-024-09493-2

Amnesty International. (2024, August 26). *Pakistan: Authorities must be transparent about internet disruptions and surveillance tech.* https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/pakistan-authorities-must-be-transparent-about-internet-disruptions-and-surveillance-tech/

Anyim, W. O. (2021). Twitter ban in Nigeria: Implications on economy, freedom of speech and information sharing. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2021, 1–14.

Augustine Tshuma, L., & Matsilele, T. (2025). Platform Activism and the Mediation of Electoral Process in Semi-Authoritarian Regimes: A Zimbabwean Case Study. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2025.2468439

Ayanian, A. H., Adra, A., Zeineddine, F. B., Saab, R., Vollhardt, J. R., & Tausch, N. (2025). Collective Action Under Repressive Conditions: Integration of Individual, Group, and Structural Level Research, Recommendations, and Reflections. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *19*(1), Article e70000. https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.70000

Bashirov, G., Akbarzadeh, S., Yilmaz, I., & Ahmed, Z. S. (2025). Diffusion of digital authoritarian practices in China's neighbourhood: the cases of Iran and Pakistan. *Democratization*, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2025.2504588

Beban, A., Schoenberger, L., & Lamb, V. (2020). Pockets of liberal media in authoritarian regimes: what the crackdown on emancipatory spaces means for rural social movements

in Cambodia. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *47*(1), 95–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2019.1672664

Bellara, D. (2023). *The economic impact of the ban on TikTok in India*. International Journal of Novel Research and Development, 8(7). https://www.ijnrd.org/papers/IJNRD2307341.pdf

Bin Morshed, M., Dye, M., Ahmed, S. I., & Kumar, N. (2017). When the Internet Goes Down in Bangladesh. In C. P. Lee, S. Poltrock, L. Barkhuus, M. Borges, & W. Kellogg (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (pp. 1591–1604). ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/2998181.2998237

Brotherton, R., French, C. C., & Pickering, A. D. (2013). Measuring belief in conspiracy theories: The generic conspiracist beliefs scale. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *4*, 279. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00279

Centre for Media Research - Nepal. (2022, December 29). Nepal's laws continue to restrict press and civil society, CMR reports find. https://research.butmedia.org/nepals-laws-continue-to-restrict-press-and-civil-society-cmr-reports-find/

Cinelli, M., Etta, G., Avalle, M., Quattrociocchi, A., Di Marco, N., Valensise, C., Galeazzi, A., & Quattrociocchi, W. (2022). Conspiracy theories and social media platforms. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *47*, 101407. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101407

Digital Rights Foundation. (2024, November 3). Disinformation, political ads & accountability during the 2024 Pakistan elections [PDF]. https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Platforms-at-the-Polls.pdf

Dini, A. A., & Sæbø, Ø. (2016). The current state of social media research for eParticipation in developing countries: A literature review. 2016 49th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, 2698-2707. https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2016.339

Douglas, K. M., Sutton, R. M., & Cichocka, A. (2017). The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *26*(6), 538-542. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417718261

Earl, J., Maher, T. V., & Pan, J. (2022). The digital repression of social movements, protest, and activism: A synthetic review. *Science Advances*, *8*(10), eabl8198. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abl8198

Fazal Khaliq. (2024). The 2024 Pakistani General Elections: Controversies, Protests, and Political Uncertainty. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.12224.92167

Feldstein, S. (2021). *The rise of digital repression: How technology is reshaping power, politics, and resistance*. Oxford University Press.

Forbeck, V. A. (2024). Voices unveiled: Exploring Americans' perspectives on social media censorship and advocacy for reform through a qualitative lens (Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University). https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/5772

Freedom House. (2021). Turkey: Freedom on the Net 2021 country report. https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-net/2021

Freedom House. (2022). Egypt: Freedom on the Net 2022 country report. https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-net/2022

Freedom House. (2023). *Pakistan: Freedom on the Net 2023*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-net/2023

Freedom House. (2024). Pakistan: Freedom on the Net 2024 country report. https://freedomhouse.org/country/pakistan/freedom-net/2024

Fürstenau, D., Reus, L., Schewina, K., Baiyere, A., & Schewe, G. (2024). Deeper down the rabbit hole: How technology conspiracy beliefs emerge and foster a conspiracy mindset. Information Systems Research, 35(2), 675-699. https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2022.0494

Gupta, A., & Dhami, A. (2015). Measuring the impact of security, trust and privacy in information sharing: A study on social networking sites. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, *17*(1), 43–53. https://doi.org/10.1057/dddmp.2015.32

Han, R., Xu, J., & Pan, D. (2022). How Media Exposure, Media Trust, and Media Bias Perception Influence Public Evaluation of COVID-19 Pandemic in International Metropolises. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(7). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19073942

Ho, T. L., Ngoc, L. H., & Ho, T. H. (2025). Digital inclusion or exclusion? Exploring the moderating role of governance in digitalization's impact on income inequality in developing countries. *Research in Globalization*, *10*, 100283. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2025.100283

Ipsos. (2023). Social media and elections in Pakistan: A survey. Retrieved from ipsos.com.

Jackson, S. J., & Kreiss, D. (2023). Recentering power: conceptualizing counterpublics and defensive publics. *Communication Theory*, *33*(2-3), 102–111. https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtad004

Kamran, S. (2023). The thermometer broke! Digital purdah, class, and gender transgressions on Pakistani TikTok. *Social Media + Society*, 9(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231182359

Kaunert, C., & Khan, A. (2025). When securitisation meets resistance: a counter-securitisation analysis of Pakistan's May 09 incident. *Critical Studies on Security*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2025.2484054

Koiranen, I., Koivula, A., Saarinen, A., & Keipi, T. (2020). Ideological motives, digital divides, and political polarization: How do political party preference and values correspond with the political use of social media? *Telematics and Informatics, 46*, 101322. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2019.101322

Kumari, S., Rafaqat, S., & Shabbir, T. (2025). Misuse of Social Media: Impacts on Pakistan Politics. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 9(1), 131–143. https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2025(9-I)11

Long, T. (2025, January 16). *Disconnected progress: The hidden price of internet restrictions in Pakistan.* Information Technology & Innovation Foundation. https://itif.org/publications/2025/01/16/disconnected-progress-the-hidden-price-of-internet-restrictions-in-pakistan/

Lumare, N., Muradyan, L., & Jansberg, C. (2024). Behind the screen: the relationship between privacy concerns and social media usage. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2024.2424922

Ma, M., Han, F., & Wang, C. (2025). Panacea or Pandora's box: diverse governance strategies for conspiracy theories and their consequences in China. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 12*(1). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-04350-1

Malik, Q., Mehta, A. M., Abrar, R., Sajid, A., & Ahmad, T. (2020). Measuring SME's productivity using social media: Role of entrepreneurship. *International journal of entrepreneurship, 24*(3), 1-14.

Mehl, S., Rief, W., Soll, D., & Pytlik, N. (2025). Populist attitudes and belief in conspiracy theories: Anti-elitist attitudes and the preference for unrestricted popular sovereignty

reduce the positive impact of an analytical thinking style on conspiracy beliefs. *BMC Research Notes*, *18*(1), 63. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-025-07136-z

Meier, L., Peña, A. M., & Nah, A. M. (2025). From Collusion to Autonomy: Patterns of Hybrid Repression and Human Rights Activism. *Government and Opposition*, 1–26. doi:10.1017/gov.2024.32

Miller, A. C. (2022). #DictatorErdogan: How Social Media Bans Trigger Backlash. *Political Communication*, *39*(6), 801–825. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2022.2109084

Mir, A., & Siddiqui, N. (2024). Nationalism, Status, and Conspiracy Theories: Evidence from Pakistan. *British Journal of Political Science*, *54*(4), 1159–1179. doi:10.1017/S0007123424000140

Myers West, S. (2018). Censored, suspended, shadowbanned: User interpretations of content moderation on social media platforms. *New Media & Society*, *20*(11), 4366-4383. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818773059

Parks, L., Goodwin, H., & Han, L. (2017). "I Have the Government in My Pocket…": Social Media Users in Turkey, Transmit-Trap Dynamics, and Struggles Over Internet Freedom. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, *10*(4), 574–592. https://doi.org/10.1111/CCCR.12173

Qin, B., Strömberg, D., & Wu, Y. (2024). Social Media and Collective Action in China. *Econometrica*, *92*(6), 1993–2026. https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA20146

Rafiq, S., Afzal, A., & Kamran, F. (2022). Impact of School Environment on Students' Academic Achievements at the University Level. *VFAST Transactions on Education and Social Sciences 10*(4), 19-30. https://doi.org/10.21015/vtess.v10i4.1216

Rafiq, S., Iqbal, S., & Afzal, A. (2024). The Impact of Digital Tools and Online Learning Platforms on Higher Education Learning Outcomes. Al-Mahdi Research Journal (MRJ), 5(4), 359-369. https://ojs.mrj.com.pk/index.php/MRJ/article/view/342

Redeker, D. (2024). Trust in alternative governors: Exploring user confidence in companies, states and civil society in platform content moderation. *AoIR Selected Papers of Internet Research.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.5210/spir.v2024i0.14151

Redwan, K., Ahmed, M., Hasan Turjo, K. I., Abdullah Al Sohan, M. F., & Nahar, A. (2025). Assessing the Societal Impact of Internet Blackouts in Dhaka: A Multidimensional Analysis. In *2025 4th International Conference on Robotics, Electrical and Signal Processing*

Techniques (ICREST) (pp. 432–437). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICREST63960.2025.10914470

Rehman, H. U., Hussain, S., & Durreshehwar. (2020). Social media, democracy and fake news in Pakistan: An analysis. *Global Political Review, V*(I), 84–93. https://doi.org/10.31703/gpr.2020(V-I).10

Rico, J. J. (2021). Social media and public discourse participation in restrictive environments [Doctoral dissertation, Florida International University]. https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/4855

Riedl, M. J., Whipple, K. N., & Wallace, R. (2022). Antecedents of support for social media content moderation and platform regulation: the role of presumed effects on self and others. *Information, Communication & Society, 25*(11), 1632–1649. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1874040

Roozenbeek, J., van der Linden, S., Goldberg, B., Rathje, S., & Lewandowsky, S. (2022). Psychological inoculation improves resilience against misinformation on social media. *Science Advances, 8*(34), eabo6254. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abo6254

Rosson, Z., Anthonio, F., & Tackett, C. (2024). Shrinking democracy, growing violence: Internet shutdowns in 2023. Access Now. https://www.accessnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-KIO-Report.pdf

Schleffer, G., & Miller, B. (2021). *The Political Effects of Social Media Platforms on Different Regime Types (Summer 2021).* https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/13987

Schmidt-Feuerheerd, B. (2024). Collaborative authoritarianism and its unintended consequences. *Democratization*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2024.2432018

Schneider, I. (2017). Can We Trust Measures of Political Trust? Assessing Measurement Equivalence in Diverse Regime Types. *Social Indicators Research, 133*(3), 963–984. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-016-1400-8

Shirky, C. (2011). The political power of social media: Technology, the public sphere, and political change. *Foreign affairs*, 28-41.

The Express Tribune. (2025). Digital disconnect: The cost of Internet disruptions. https://tribune.com.pk/story/2523070/digital-disconnect-the-cost-of-internet-disruptions

The Media Line. (2024, February 27). Following controversial elections, social media platform X still banned in Pakistan. https://themedialine.org/by-region/following-controversial-elections-social-media-platform-x-still-banned-in-pakistan/

Trang, S., Kraemer, T., Trenz, M., & Weiger, W. H. (2025). Deeper Down the Rabbit Hole: How Technology Conspiracy Beliefs Emerge and Foster a Conspiracy Mindset. *Information Systems Research*, *36*(2), 709–735. https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.2022.0494

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press.

Wagner, B. (2018). Understanding Internet Shutdowns: A Case Study from Pakistan. *International Journal of Communication*, *12*(1), 22. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/8545

Wang, J., Grebennikova, V. M., Khazova, S. A., & Malkov, A. A. (2023). The Impact of Internet Content Regulation Policies on the Promotion of Targeted Consumer Behavior. In V. Kumar, E. Kuzmin, W.-B. Zhang, & Y. Lavrikova (Eds.), *Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics. Consequences of Social Transformation for Economic Theory* (pp. 213–224). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27785-6_15

Wang, Q., Zhang, W., & Wang, H. (2022). Privacy concerns toward short-form video platforms: Scale development and validation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 954964. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.954964

West, D. M. (2016). Internet shutdowns cost countries $2.4 billion last year. *Center for Technological Innovation at Brookings, Washington, DC.*

Wildana, F. (2021). An explorative study on social media blocking in Indonesia. *The Journal of Society and Media, 5*(2), 456–484. https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v5n2.p456-484

Yilmaz, I., Akbarzadeh, S., Abbasov, N., & Bashirov, G. (2025). The Double-Edged Sword: Political Engagement on Social Media and Its Impact on Democracy Support in Authoritarian Regimes. *Political Research Quarterly*, *78*(2), 419–436. https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129241305035

Yilmaz, I., Saleem, R. M. A., Pargoo, M., Shukri, S., Ismail, I., & Shakil, K. (2022). *Religious Populism, Cyberspace and Digital Authoritarianism in Asia: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey.* European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS). https://doi.org/10.55271/rp0001