



Misinformation Exposure, Political Polarization, and Democratic Resilience among Young Social Media Users in South Asia: A Survey and Experimental Study

Adeel Aslam^{1*}, Ahtisham UL Haq²

¹Department of International, Preston University Islamabad Campus, Pakistan.

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*Corresponding to:

Adeel Aslam

Department of International, Preston University Islamabad Campus, Pakistan.

Email: adeelwattoo619@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid growth of social media has transformed political communication and civic engagement among young people while increasing exposure to misinformation that contributes to political polarization and threatens democratic resilience. Understanding these dynamics is particularly important in South Asia, where youth rely heavily on digital platforms for political information.

Objective: To examine the relationship between misinformation exposure, political polarization, and democratic resilience among young social media users in South Asia, and to evaluate the moderating role of media literacy and the effectiveness of fact-checking interventions.

Methods: A mixed-methods cross-sectional survey with an embedded experiment was conducted among 568 participants aged 18–29 years recruited from universities, youth centers, and community organizations across major South Asian cities. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, validated media literacy and polarization scales, and experimental misinformation vignettes. Participants were randomly assigned to a control or corrected-misinformation group. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, ANOVA, multiple regression, moderation analysis, and factor analysis, while qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis.

Results: Participants reported frequent exposure to political misinformation and moderate to high political polarization. Corrective information significantly improved misinformation detection compared with the control group ($p<0.001$). Media literacy positively predicted misinformation detection and moderated the association between misinformation exposure and political polarization. Participants also expressed relatively low trust in democratic institutions but strong support for fact-checking and content moderation.

Conclusion: Misinformation undermines democratic resilience among young social media users in South Asia. Strengthening media literacy and evidence-based fact-checking strategies can reduce susceptibility to misinformation, mitigate political polarization, and promote informed democratic participation.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital communication technologies and social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the way people access, share, and consume information (Alzubi, 2023; Azzaakiyyah, 2023; Cladis, 2020). Platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become major sources of news and political information, particularly among young people (Abbas et al., 2022; Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021; Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2021). Social media enables citizens to engage in political discussions, access diverse perspectives, and participate in democratic processes more actively than ever before (Jennings et al., 2021; Olaniran & Williams, 2020; Lybeck et al., 2024). However, alongside these benefits, digital platforms have also facilitated the rapid spread of misinformation, disinformation, and politically misleading content, raising significant concerns about their impact on democratic societies (Schia & Gjesvik, 2020; McKay & Tenove, 2021). As social media increasingly shapes public opinion and political behavior, understanding the consequences of misinformation exposure has become a critical area of scholarly inquiry (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020).

Misinformation refers to false or misleading information that is shared regardless of intent to deceive, whereas disinformation involves the deliberate creation and dissemination of false information for political, ideological, or economic purposes (Molina et al., 2021; Hameleers, 2023; Gibbons & Carson, 2022). The widespread circulation of misinformation has become a defining challenge of the contemporary information environment. Digital platforms enable information to spread rapidly across large

audiences through shares, reposts, and algorithmic recommendation systems (Pathak et al., 2023). Research has shown that false information often spreads faster and reaches more people than accurate information because it tends to evoke stronger emotional reactions and greater engagement (Weismueller et al., 2024; Pröllochs et al., 2021). Consequently, misinformation has the potential to influence political attitudes, distort public understanding of important issues, and undermine informed democratic participation (Au et al., 2022).

Young people are particularly vulnerable to misinformation exposure because they are among the most active users of social media platforms (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021; Papapicco et al., 2022). Globally, individuals aged 18–29 spend substantial amounts of time

HIGHLIGHTS	
Research insights	Political misinformation exposure is associated with polarization, while media literacy improves misinformation detection and supports democratic resilience among youth..
Practical insights	Strengthening media literacy and evidence-based fact-checking can reduce misinformation susceptibility, mitigate polarization, and promote informed democratic participation among young users.
Industry insights	Social media platforms should prioritize effective fact-checking and content moderation strategies to address misinformation and strengthen democratic resilience among youth.

online and increasingly rely on social media rather than traditional



news sources for political information (Matthes, 2022). While digital technologies provide opportunities for political engagement and civic participation, they also expose young users to information environments characterized by information overload, algorithmic filtering, and varying levels of content credibility (van den Berg et al., 2024). The ability of young citizens to critically evaluate online information is therefore essential for maintaining healthy democratic systems and informed public discourse (Kozyreva et al., 2020).

One of the major consequences associated with misinformation exposure is political polarization. Political polarization refers to the growing division of individuals into opposing ideological groups characterized by increasingly divergent beliefs, attitudes, and policy preferences (Bliuc et al., 2021). Scholars distinguish between ideological polarization, which involves differences in political opinions, and affective polarization, which refers to negative feelings toward members of opposing political groups (Bliuc et al., 2021). Research suggests that social media platforms can contribute to polarization by creating echo chambers and filter bubbles that reinforce existing beliefs while limiting exposure to alternative viewpoints (Bliuc et al., 2021; Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). Exposure to politically misleading information may further intensify polarization by strengthening partisan identities, increasing mistrust of political opponents, and reducing opportunities for constructive democratic dialogue (Hartman et al., 2022).

Political polarization poses significant challenges for democratic resilience. Democratic resilience refers to the capacity of democratic institutions, processes, and citizens to withstand political pressures, misinformation campaigns, and threats to democratic norms while maintaining public trust and civic engagement (Lührmann, 2021). Healthy democracies depend on informed citizens, trust in institutions, respect for electoral outcomes, and willingness to engage in dialogue with individuals holding different political views (Khan, 2020). However, misinformation and polarization can weaken these foundations by fostering distrust, misinformation-driven beliefs, and political hostility (McKay & Tenove, 2021; Pröllochs et al., 2021; Au et al., 2022). As a result, understanding the factors that strengthen or weaken democratic resilience has become increasingly important in the digital era (Lührmann, 2021; Khan, 2020).

Media literacy has emerged as one of the most effective tools for combating misinformation and promoting democratic resilience (Kozyreva et al., 2020; Khan, 2020). Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and critically interpret information from various media sources. Individuals with strong media literacy skills are generally better equipped to identify false information, verify sources, and resist manipulative content (Kozyreva et al., 2020; Khan, 2020). Recent studies have demonstrated that media literacy interventions can improve misinformation detection and reduce susceptibility to misleading political narratives (Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021; Khan, 2020). Consequently, media literacy is increasingly viewed as an essential component of civic education and democratic participation (Jennings et al., 2021; Khan, 2020).

South Asia represents a particularly important context for examining the effects of misinformation and political polarization (Lin & Tsai, 2022). The region is home to one of the world's largest youth populations and has experienced rapid growth in internet access and social media usage over the past decade (Correa et al., 2020; Ghai et al., 2022). Countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have witnessed increasing political engagement through digital platforms, accompanied by concerns regarding online misinformation, electoral manipulation, and political polarization (Olaniran & Williams, 2020; Zhuravskaya et al., 2020). Despite the growing significance of these issues, empirical research examining the relationship between misinformation exposure, polarization, and democratic resilience among South Asian youth remains

relatively limited compared with research conducted in North America and Europe (Badrinathan, 2021).

Existing studies have primarily focused on misinformation prevalence or political attitudes separately, with fewer investigations examining how misinformation exposure, media literacy, and democratic resilience interact within a single analytical framework (Rodríguez-Pérez & Canel, 2023). Furthermore, limited research has utilized experimental approaches to assess whether corrective information can reduce the influence of misinformation among young social media users (Kim et al., 2021). Addressing these gaps is essential for developing evidence-based interventions that strengthen democratic participation and information resilience in rapidly evolving digital environments (Sharma et al., 2022).

Therefore, the present study investigates misinformation exposure, political polarization, and democratic resilience among young social media users in South Asia. Specifically, the study examines how social media use, political ideology, media literacy, and prior exposure to misinformation influence misinformation detection, political polarization, trust in democratic institutions, and support for fact-checking policies. Through the integration of survey and experimental methods, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the challenges posed by misinformation and identifies factors that may enhance democratic resilience among young citizens in the digital age.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods cross-sectional survey design with an embedded experimental component to examine the relationship between misinformation exposure, political polarization, and democratic resilience among young social media users in South Asia. The research aimed to investigate how exposure to political misinformation influenced attitudes toward democratic institutions, political polarization, and willingness to engage with individuals holding opposing political views. The study combined quantitative survey data with an experimental vignette approach to assess participants' responses to misinformation and fact-checking interventions. Qualitative insights were obtained through optional open-ended responses to better understand participants' perceptions of misinformation and democratic processes.

The study population consisted of young social media users aged 18–29 years enrolled in universities, colleges, youth centers, and community organizations located in major urban centers across South Asia. Data collection was conducted in major cities, including Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Dhaka, New Delhi, and Kathmandu, depending on accessibility and institutional collaboration. Participants were recruited through university campuses, student societies, youth organizations, and community networks. A combination of convenience and stratified sampling techniques was employed to ensure representation across gender, educational backgrounds, political orientations, and urban-rural origins.

A total sample of 450–600 participants was recruited for the survey and embedded experiment. This sample size was considered sufficient to detect moderate effect sizes and provide adequate statistical power for multivariate analyses and experimental comparisons. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions: a control group, which viewed political information without corrective content, and a corrected-misinformation group, which received the same misinformation content followed by fact-checking and corrective information. Random assignment helped establish causal relationships between exposure conditions and outcome measures.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through paper-based or tablet-assisted formats during organized sessions, classroom visits, student common-area recruitment events, and youth organization meetings. The questionnaire consisted of several sections, including demographic characteristics, social media

use patterns, political attitudes, media literacy, misinformation exposure, polarization, and democratic resilience indicators. Demographic information included age, gender, education level, place of residence (urban or rural), and socioeconomic background. Participants also reported their political ideology or party preference, average daily social media use, primary social media platforms, and prior exposure to political misinformation.

The study's independent variables included age, gender, educational attainment, political ideology, social media usage patterns, media literacy scores, and previous exposure to misinformation. Dependent variables included misinformation detection ability, affective polarization, ideological polarization, trust in democratic institutions, confidence in electoral processes, willingness to engage in cross-cutting political discussions, and support for content moderation and fact-checking policies. Media literacy was measured using validated assessment tools evaluating participants' ability to critically evaluate online information sources. Political polarization was assessed using established affective and ideological polarization scales commonly employed in political communication research.

The experimental component involved printed vignettes consisting of text and image-based political content resembling real-world social media posts. Participants assigned to the misinformation condition viewed misleading political information, while participants in the corrected-information condition received the same content accompanied by fact-checking corrections. Following exposure, participants completed measures assessing misinformation detection, perceived credibility, trust in institutions, and political attitudes. Optional open-ended questions allowed participants to explain their reasoning and reactions to the presented information. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize participant characteristics and key variables. Independent-samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to compare differences between experimental conditions and demographic groups. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine predictors of misinformation detection, polarization, and democratic resilience. Moderation analysis assessed whether media literacy moderated the relationship between misinformation exposure and political polarization. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to validate scale structures and assess construct validity. Qualitative responses were analyzed using thematic coding techniques to identify recurring themes regarding misinformation perceptions, trust, and democratic engagement.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant Institutional Review Board before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. The study adhered to ethical guidelines governing social and behavioral research involving human participants.

RESULTS

A total of 568 young social media users participated in the study, comprising university students and youth recruited from educational institutions, youth centers, and community organizations across major South Asian cities. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 29 years, with a mean age of 22.8 ± 3.1 years. All respondents completed the survey, while the embedded experiment included 284 participants in the control group and 284 participants in the corrected-misinformation group.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 568)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
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Age Group	18–21 Years	214	37.7
	22–25 Years	246	43.3
	26–29 Years	108	19.0
Gender	Male	296	52.1
	Female	267	47.0
	Other/Prefer Not to Say	5	0.9
Residence	Urban	412	72.5
	Rural	156	27.5
Education	Undergraduate	384	67.6
	Graduate	152	26.8
	Postgraduate	32	5.6

The majority of participants were aged between 22 and 25 years (43.3%), resided in urban areas (72.5%), and were enrolled in undergraduate programs (67.6%).

Table 2: Social Media Usage Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Daily Social Media Use	<2 Hours	74	13.0
	2–4 Hours	178	31.3
	5–7 Hours	201	35.4
	>7 Hours	115	20.2
Primary Platform	Facebook	152	26.8
	Instagram	138	24.3
	TikTok	117	20.6
	X (Twitter)	84	14.8
	YouTube	77	13.6

Approximately 55.6% of respondents reported spending more than five hours per day on social media platforms.

Table 3: Media Literacy and Prior Exposure to Misinformation

Variable	Mean $\pm$ SD
Media Literacy Score	3.41 $\pm$ 0.67
Prior Exposure to Political Misinformation	4.02 $\pm$ 0.71

Scale: 1 = Very Low to 5 = Very High

Participants reported relatively high exposure to political misinformation but moderate levels of media literacy.

Table 4: Ability to Detect Misinformation by Experimental Group

Experimental Condition	Mean Detection Score $\pm$ SD
Control Group	2.94 $\pm$ 0.83
Corrected-Misinformation Group	3.81 $\pm$ 0.74

Scale: 1 = Very Poor to 5 = Excellent

An independent-samples t-test indicated a significant difference between groups ($t = 13.72$, $p < 0.001$). Participants exposed to fact-checking corrections demonstrated significantly greater ability to identify misinformation than those in the control group.

Table 5: Political Polarization Scores

Variable	Mean $\pm$ SD
Affective Polarization	3.89 $\pm$ 0.76
Ideological Polarization	3.67 $\pm$ 0.72
Overall Polarization Score	3.78 $\pm$ 0.69

Scale: 1 = Very Low to 5 = Very High

Respondents exhibited moderate to high levels of both affective and ideological polarization, suggesting substantial divisions in political attitudes and emotional perceptions of opposing groups.

Table 6: Democratic Resilience Indicators

Variable	Mean $\pm$ SD
Trust in Democratic Institutions	2.98 $\pm$ 0.81
Trust in Electoral Processes	2.87 $\pm$ 0.84
Willingness for Cross-Cutting Political Discussion	3.21 $\pm$ 0.79
Support for Fact-Checking Policies	4.18 $\pm$ 0.66
Support for Content Moderation	3.94 $\pm$ 0.71

Participants expressed relatively low trust in democratic institutions and elections but strong support for fact-checking and content moderation initiatives.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Predicting Misinformation Detection Ability

Predictor	β	t-value	p-value
Media Literacy Score	0.43	10.61	<0.001
Daily Social Media Use	-0.18	-4.12	<0.001

Education Level	0.21	5.09	<0.001
Prior Misinformation Exposure	-0.14	-3.18	0.002
Age	0.08	1.87	0.062

The model was statistically significant ($F = 42.73$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.39$). Media literacy emerged as the strongest positive predictor of misinformation detection ability, while excessive social media use was associated with poorer detection performance.

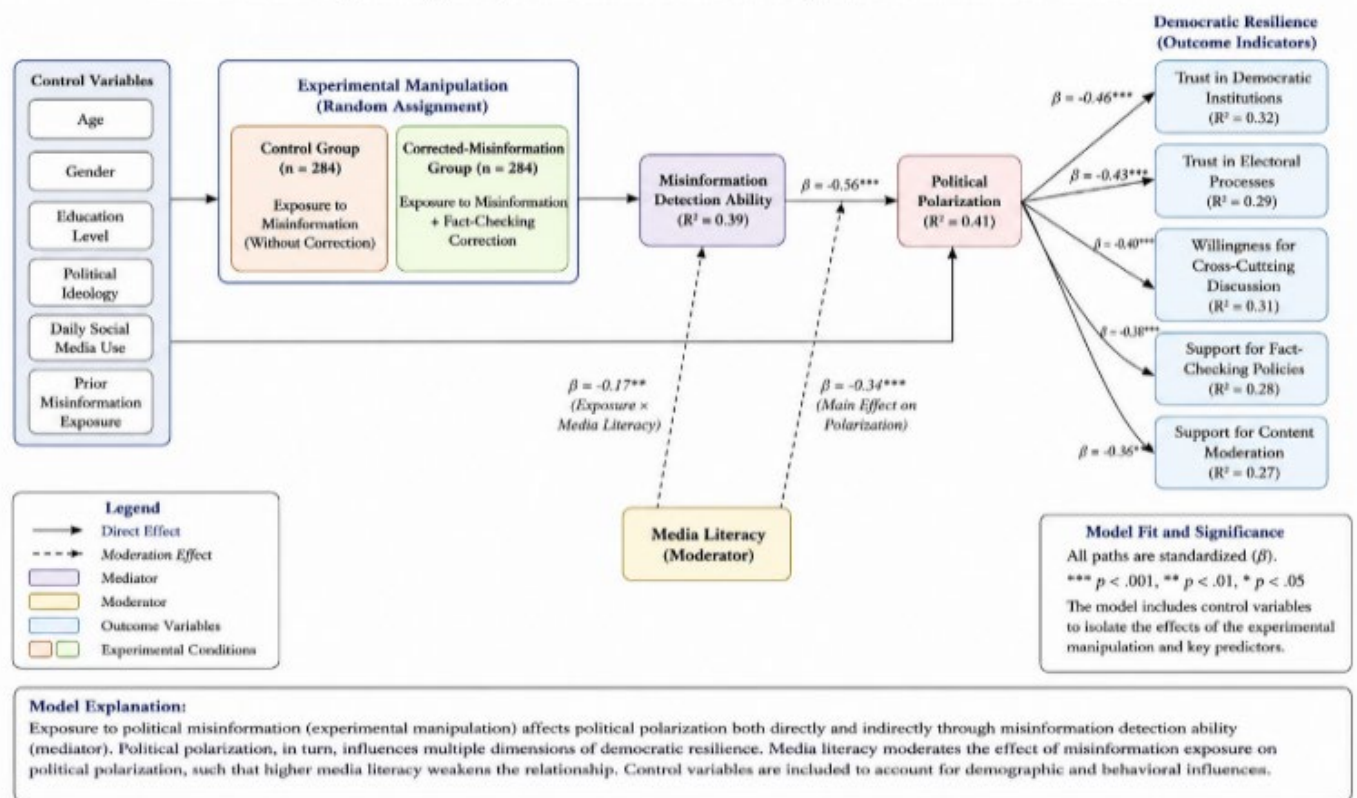
Table 8: Moderation Analysis: Media Literacy as a Moderator

Variable	β	p-value
Misinformation Exposure	0.29	<0.001
Media Literacy	-0.34	<0.001
Exposure $\times$ Media Literacy	-0.17	0.004

The interaction effect was statistically significant, indicating that higher media literacy weakened the relationship between misinformation exposure and political polarization. Participants with stronger media literacy skills were less likely to become polarized after exposure to misleading political content.

Figure 1. Moderated Experimental Structural Path Model

Standardized Path Coefficients (β) are reported. Solid lines indicate direct effects; dashed lines indicate moderation.



Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses identified four major themes:

1. Difficulty Distinguishing Reliable Information from False Content
2. Growing Political Divisions on Social Media
3. Declining Trust in Political Institutions
4. Demand for Stronger Fact-Checking and Digital Literacy Programs

Many participants reported that social media algorithms frequently exposed them to politically biased information, contributing to confusion and distrust. Respondents emphasized the importance of

media literacy education and independent fact-checking organizations in combating misinformation.

Summary of Findings

The results indicate that political misinformation is highly prevalent among young social media users in South Asia and is associated with increased political polarization and reduced trust in democratic institutions. The experimental findings demonstrate that fact-checking interventions significantly improve misinformation detection. Furthermore, media literacy plays a protective role by reducing the influence of misinformation on political attitudes and democratic resilience. These findings highlight the importance of digital literacy initiatives, fact-checking mechanisms, and responsible

platform governance in strengthening democratic resilience among young citizens.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationships among misinformation exposure, political polarization, and democratic resilience among young social media users in South Asia. The findings demonstrate that exposure to political misinformation is widespread among youth and has important implications for political attitudes, trust in democratic institutions, and willingness to engage in democratic discourse. The results further indicate that media literacy serves as a critical protective factor against the negative consequences of misinformation, while fact-checking interventions significantly improve individuals' ability to identify false or misleading content.

One of the most important findings of this study was the high level of exposure to political misinformation reported by participants. Consistent with previous research, young social media users encounter large volumes of misleading political content through digital platforms where information can spread rapidly without adequate verification mechanisms (Alzubi, 2023; Azzaakiyyah, 2023). The increasing reliance on social media as a primary source of political information has transformed how citizens access news and participate in political discussions (Cladis, 2020; Jennings et al., 2021). However, the same technologies that facilitate information sharing also create opportunities for misinformation, disinformation, and politically motivated manipulation (Schia & Gjesvik, 2020; McKay & Tenove, 2021; Olaniran & Williams, 2020). The high exposure levels observed in this study suggest that misinformation has become a routine component of the digital information environment experienced by young people in South Asia.

The experimental results revealed that participants exposed to corrected misinformation demonstrated significantly greater ability to identify false information than those in the control group. This finding supports previous studies showing that fact-checking and corrective information can effectively reduce belief in misinformation and improve information accuracy judgments (Badrinathan, 2021; Kim et al., 2021). The effectiveness of corrective interventions observed in this study suggests that fact-checking organizations, educational institutions, and social media platforms can play an important role in reducing the influence of misleading political content. Although some scholars have expressed concerns about the persistence of misinformation beliefs, recent evidence indicates that well-designed corrections can significantly improve public understanding of political issues (Kim et al., 2021).

The findings also demonstrated moderate to high levels of both affective and ideological polarization among respondents. Affective polarization refers to negative feelings toward members of opposing political groups, while ideological polarization reflects increasing divergence in political beliefs and policy preferences (Bliuc et al., 2021; Au et al., 2022). The observed polarization levels are consistent with international research showing that social media environments often encourage selective exposure, echo chambers, and partisan reinforcement (Bliuc et al., 2021). Digital platforms frequently use algorithmic recommendation systems that prioritize engaging content, which can inadvertently expose users to more extreme political viewpoints and deepen existing divisions (Pathak et al., 2023). The findings suggest that misinformation may contribute to political polarization by reinforcing existing biases and increasing hostility toward political opponents (Bliuc et al., 2021; Au et al., 2022). Another important finding was the relatively low level of trust in democratic institutions and electoral processes among participants. Trust in institutions is a fundamental component of democratic resilience because it influences citizens' willingness to participate in democratic processes and accept political outcomes (Jennings et al., 2021; Lührmann, 2021). The low trust scores observed in this study may reflect broader concerns about political accountability, governance, corruption, and information integrity

within the digital age. Previous research has demonstrated that misinformation campaigns can undermine confidence in elections, public institutions, and democratic norms by creating uncertainty and skepticism about political processes (Schia & Gjesvik, 2020; McKay & Tenove, 2021). Therefore, reducing misinformation may be essential not only for improving information quality but also for strengthening democratic legitimacy.

The study further revealed strong support for content moderation and fact-checking policies among respondents. This finding suggests that young people recognize the harmful effects of misinformation and are receptive to interventions designed to improve information quality online (McKay & Tenove, 2021; Hartman et al., 2022). Similar patterns have been reported in recent studies where social media users increasingly favor platform accountability, transparency, and independent verification mechanisms to address the spread of false information (Schia & Gjesvik, 2020; McKay & Tenove, 2021). However, policymakers must balance efforts to combat misinformation with concerns regarding freedom of expression and political neutrality (Olaniran & Williams, 2020; Hartman et al., 2022). Effective moderation strategies should therefore emphasize transparency, evidence-based decision-making, and protection of democratic rights (Schia & Gjesvik, 2020; McKay & Tenove, 2021).

One of the most significant findings was the role of media literacy in mitigating the effects of misinformation. The regression and moderation analyses demonstrated that media literacy was the strongest predictor of misinformation detection ability and significantly weakened the relationship between misinformation exposure and political polarization. These findings align with previous studies indicating that individuals with stronger critical thinking and media evaluation skills are better equipped to identify misleading content and resist manipulative information (Kozyreva et al., 2020). Media literacy enables users to evaluate sources, assess credibility, verify information, and recognize biased or deceptive content (Alzubi, 2023; Kozyreva et al., 2020). Consequently, educational interventions that promote digital literacy may represent one of the most effective long-term strategies for enhancing democratic resilience (Badrinathan, 2021; Sharma et al., 2022). The qualitative findings further supported the quantitative results by highlighting participants' concerns regarding information overload, algorithmic bias, and declining trust in online political content. Many respondents reported difficulty distinguishing between credible and misleading information, particularly when misinformation closely resembled legitimate news. Participants also expressed concerns about increasing political hostility on social media platforms and the influence of algorithms in shaping political opinions. These findings reinforce recent research suggesting that platform design and recommendation systems play a significant role in shaping contemporary political communication environments (Pathak et al., 2023). The study contributes to the growing literature on misinformation and democracy by providing empirical evidence from the South Asian context, a region characterized by rapidly expanding internet access, high social media engagement, and complex political environments. While previous studies have largely focused on Western democracies, the present findings demonstrate that misinformation poses similar challenges within developing and emerging democratic contexts (Badrinathan, 2021). The results suggest that strengthening media literacy, supporting independent fact-checking initiatives, and improving platform accountability may enhance democratic resilience among young citizens (Badrinathan, 2021; Kozyreva et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2022).

Overall, the findings indicate that misinformation represents a significant threat to democratic discourse and institutional trust among young social media users (Schia & Gjesvik, 2020; McKay & Tenove, 2021). However, the effectiveness of fact-checking interventions and the protective role of media literacy provide encouraging evidence that targeted educational and policy interventions can reduce vulnerability to misinformation

(Badrinathan, 2021; Kim et al., 2021). Strengthening digital literacy programs, promoting critical thinking skills, and fostering inclusive political dialogue are essential steps toward building more informed, resilient, and democratically engaged societies in South Asia (Kozyreva et al., 2020; Lührmann, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between misinformation exposure, political polarization, and democratic resilience among young social media users in South Asia. The findings revealed that political misinformation is highly prevalent within digital environments and is associated with increased ideological and affective polarization, reduced trust in democratic institutions, and greater skepticism toward electoral processes. The experimental results demonstrated that fact-checking interventions significantly improved participants' ability to identify misleading information, highlighting the effectiveness of corrective mechanisms in combating misinformation. Furthermore, media literacy emerged as a critical protective factor, reducing susceptibility to misinformation and weakening its influence on political polarization. Participants with stronger media literacy skills were better equipped to critically evaluate online content and maintain more balanced political attitudes. The study underscores the importance of investing in digital literacy education, strengthening independent fact-checking initiatives, and promoting responsible social media governance. Such measures are essential for enhancing democratic resilience, fostering informed civic engagement, and protecting democratic institutions from the growing challenges posed by misinformation in the digital age.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to relevant ethical principles for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before participation. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes.

Data Availability

The data analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to applicable ethical and confidentiality requirements.

Author Contributions

Adeel Aslam: Conceptualization, methodology, literature review, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, writing—original draft preparation, and writing—review and editing.

Ahtisham Ul Haq: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data curation, formal analysis, interpretation of findings, writing—original draft preparation, and writing—review and editing.

Final Approval: Both authors approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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