

## **POLITICAL DISINFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA POSTED BY THE POLITICAL LEADERS OF GILGIT BALTISTAN: AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

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### **Abstract**

*In today's world, social media serves as a crucial and influential platform for the dissemination of information, with its benefits evident across various sectors of life. This study aims to investigate the role of social media in spreading political disinformation, which poses a threat to democracy and disrupts the balance between civil and military power. A qualitative and quantitative mixed approach was employed. To carry out the study 5 closed ended and 5 opened ended questions were designed. The data was collected from the BS level students of Gilgit Baltistan who are studying in various universities of Rawalpindi, Islamabad. Through critical analysis of the collected data, the researcher drew conclusions revealing that disinformation spread by political leaders on social media weakens democracy and undermines the civil-military balance. The study suggests that social media platforms should invest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) tools to detect and flag false information early. Additionally, companies should enforce stricter rules regarding political disinformation, including suspending or banning accounts that repeatedly disseminate false information. Transparency in enforcing these actions is key to building public trust.*

**Keywords:** Political, Disinformation, Social media platforms,

## **INTRODUCTION**

*Gilgit-Baltistan is an extremely beautiful region located in the north of Pakistan. Immediately after the independence of Pakistan, the people of this region also decided to annex themselves to Pakistan, since then it has been under the administration of the Pakistani government. Gilgit-Baltistan was given the status of a transitional province by the Pakistan People's Party in 2009, since then the people here, especially the young generation, started participating in Pakistani politics. At present, all political parties of Pakistan including some nationalist organizations are represented in Gilgit-Baltistan. Like other provinces of the country, representatives of political parties and nationalist organizations in Gilgit-Baltistan use different social media platforms to convey different political messages to their political followers. Many times I have observed many political representatives sharing false information which has nothing to do with reality just to charge their workers for political purposes. Disinformation spread by the political parties on social media platforms is increasing day by day. Therefore, this study is being done to find out whether the country's institutions and democracy are damaged due to these political statements given by the political leaders based on disinformation and what are the solutions.*

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

*In the research process the formulation of research questions is one of the very important steps in defining the scope of a systematic review. It shapes decision-making throughout the review process and helps ensure that the findings are more focused (Booth et al., 2012; Counsell, 1997; Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Siddaway et al., 2019). In light of this, the present study seeks to address the following core research questions:*

- *What kind of posts the political leaders generally share on social media?*
- *How do the posts of political leaders spread disinformation on social media?*
- *What impacts does the political disinformation spread by political leaders on general public?*
- *What impacts does the political disinformation spread by political leaders on the relationship between Pakistan Army and Political leaders?*

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. *To analyze the posts on social media posted by politicians*

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2. *To investigate the political disinformation on social media posted by political leaders of Gilgit Baltistan*
3. *To investigate impacts political disinformation spread by the political leaders of Giglit Baltistan on public*
4. *To investigate impacts political disinformation spread by the political leaders of Giglit Baltistan on relationship between Pakistan Army and Political leaders*

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

*Gilgit-Baltistan is geographically a sensitive region and at present there is a high risk of harming the national unity due to misuse of social media platforms by the political leaders and workers of different Pakistani political parties and nationalist organizations. In light of this, the researcher decided to conduct this study to know how we can control the news spread based on political disinformation by the political leaders and the nationalist organizations of Gilgit Baltistan on various social media platforms so that we may ensure to maintain national unity and strengthen democratic government in Pakistan.*

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

*Misinformation refers to the unintentional spread of information that is not supported by empirical or verifiable evidence or expert opinion (e.g., Tandoc Jr. et al., 2018; Thorson, 2016; Wardle, 2017). We know markedly little about the ways in which misinformation is signaled in today's post-truth online media societies. Even if we cannot assess the veracity of misinformation constructions, politicians' labeling of information as erroneous may reduce citizens' trust in the media and politics – irrespective of whether this attribution is factually correct. Especially when politicians delegitimize information that is not in line with their worldview, whilst claiming that congruent information is real, constructions of reality and attributions of misinformation may not only increase distrust, but also foster polarized divides between the “right” in-group and the “factually incorrect” others.*

*Nowadays, social media platforms are the most important and fastest means of communication for people within any country to communicate with each other or to communicate with the rest of the world outside the country. For this reason, the importance and use of social media is increasing day by day. People use social media platforms in daily life to get information about*

education, health and political activities. So we can say that social media has become an important part of our life now. Living without is no longer possible. However, while there are thousands of benefits of using it, there are also some disadvantages. If we look at the use of social media in the context of our own country Pakistan, these platforms are used by political and religious parties to achieve many political goals, but unfortunately, different political parties have been using social media platforms to spread political misinformation/disinformation. It has also used to spread negative news for the achievement of sectarian goals due to which this country has suffered irreparable damage. Misinformation sticks. Erasing “fake news” from one’s memory is a challenging task, even under the best of circumstances; that is, in the psychological laboratory when participants are motivated to be accurate and are free from distraction (for a review, see Lewandowsky et al., 2012). In the cardinal misinformation experiment, people are presented with a fictitious scripted story (e.g., about a warehouse fire). In one condition, information that was presented early on (e.g., that oil paint had been found in a wiring cabinet) is explicitly corrected later in the script (e.g., the wiring cabinet was actually empty). In a control condition, the script never contains a correction and the wiring cabinet is presented as empty from the outset (e.g., Ecker et al., 2011; Johnson & Seifert, 1994; Wilkes & Leatherbarrow, 1988). Although most participants can recall the correction, when present, after they have finished processing the script, they continue to rely on the original misinformation on an inference test. That is, when asked to explain why there was “so much black smoke”, participants might refer to oil paint in the wiring cabinet. This “continued influence effect” of misinformation has been demonstrated repeatedly (for reviews, see Chan et al., 2017;. Misinformation does not just misinform. It also undermines democracy by calling into question the knowability of information altogether. And without knowable information deliberative democratic discourse becomes impossible (for an elaboration of those concerns, see Lewandowsky et al., 2017a, 2017b). Fortunately, we are not entirely powerless in confronting the “post-truth” malaise.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The present study adopts the qualitative and quantitative mixed approach to achieve a more nuanced understanding of Political Disinformation on Social Media Posted by the Political Leaders of Gilgit Baltistan: an Analysis

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*of Political Discourse on Social Media. This design was chosen to leverage the strengths of both approaches: the depth of understanding afforded by qualitative research and the generalizability provided by quantitative analysis. Moreover, In order to collect data for this research, the researcher designed 5 closed ended questionnaires and 5 opened ended questionnaires. To collect data 20 GB students were selected as sample of the study form various university of Rawalpindi Islamabad.*

### **THEORETICAL FORMWORK**

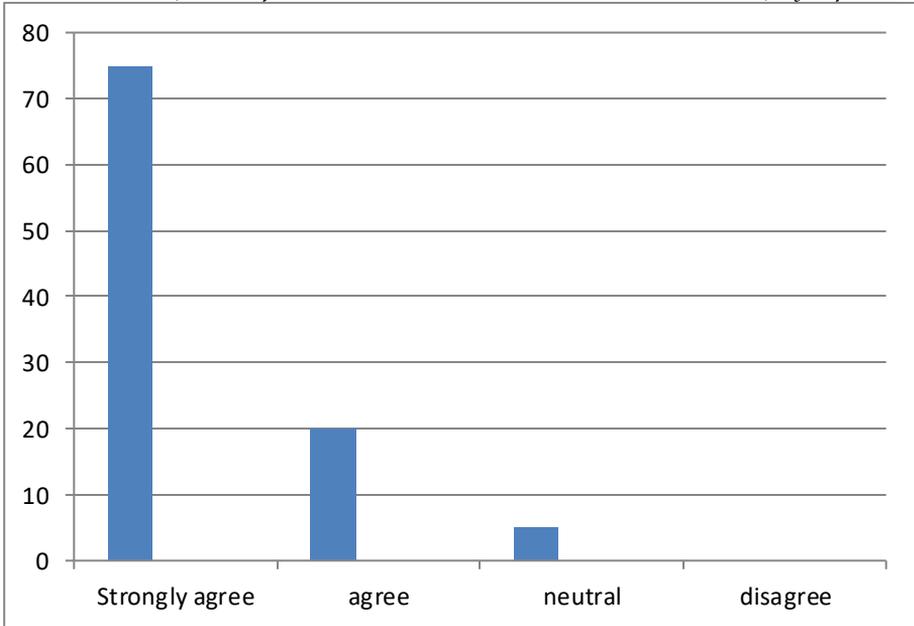
*To conduct this study within a proper theoretical framework, the researcher adopted critical discourse analysis as the guiding framework. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a framework proposed by Fairclough in (1992), and Van Dijk (1993). The researcher has adopted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as theoretical framework as it is an appropriate theoretical framework to analyze any discourse because the framework analyzes language use to understand power dynamics, social relationships and ideology.*

### **ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

*To collect data for this study, the researcher designed both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires, which were distributed among the participants. Prior to data collection, proper permission was obtained from the respondents, and data were gathered only after their formal consent. To safeguard participants from any potential risks, their identities have been kept entirely confidential, and all collected materials have been securely maintained.*

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

*Figure1. The statements based on disinformation given by the political leaders of Gigit Baltistan on their social media platforms harm Pakistan's democracy.*



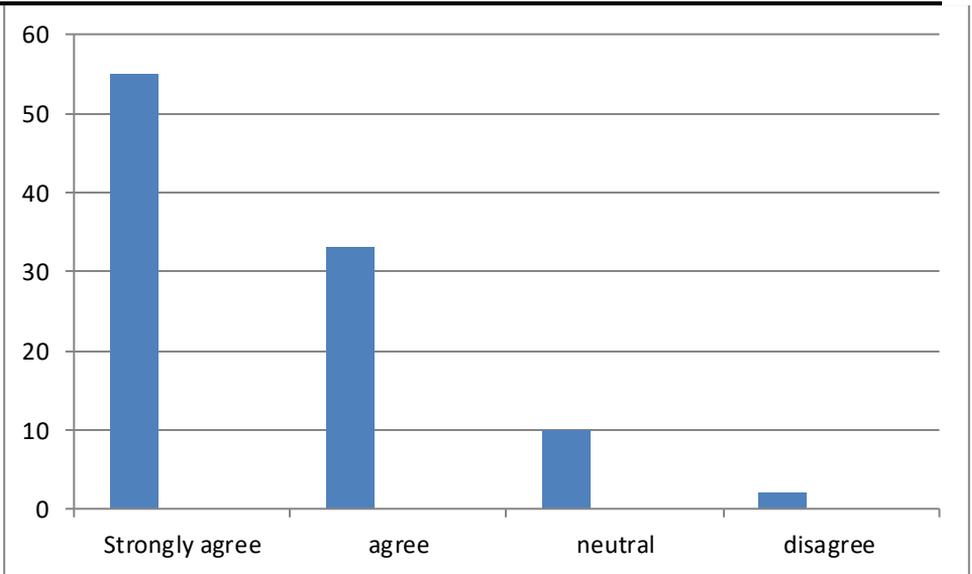
**Figure 1**

**ANALYSIS**

*In order to check whither the statements posted by the political leaders of Gilgit Baltistan on their social media platforms based on disinformation harm democracy in Pakistan or not, the researcher designed a statement shown in the above Figure 1. The answers of the respondents were critically analysis through pie chart. The result shows that 75% of the respondents are strongly agreed and 20% agreed that political disinformation posted by the political leaders of Gilgit Baltistan on different social media platforms weakens democracy in Pakistan. However, 5% of the respondents were neutral.*

*Figure 1.1 The statements based on disinformation by the representatives of political parties of Gilgit Baltistan on their social media platforms, create hatred against the government.*

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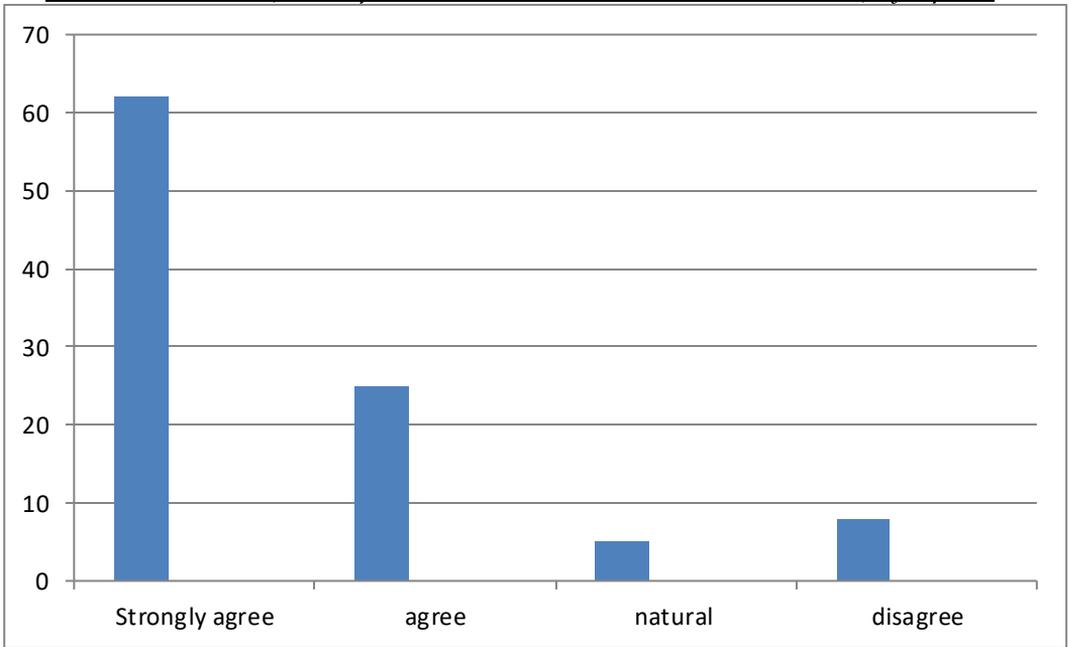


**Figure 1.1**

**ANALYSIS**

*In order to check whether the statements that, wither, the statements based on disinformation by the representatives of political parties of Gilgit Baltistan on their social media platforms, create hatred against the government or not the researcher collected that from the respondents through the above mentioned questioner. The answers of the respondents were critically analysis through pie chart shown in the Figure 1.1. The result shows that 55% of the respondents are strongly agreed and 33% agreed, 10% neutral and 2% of the respondents were disagreed with the statement.*

*Figure 1.2 Political disinformation on social media platforms affects trust in democratic institutions and the military.*



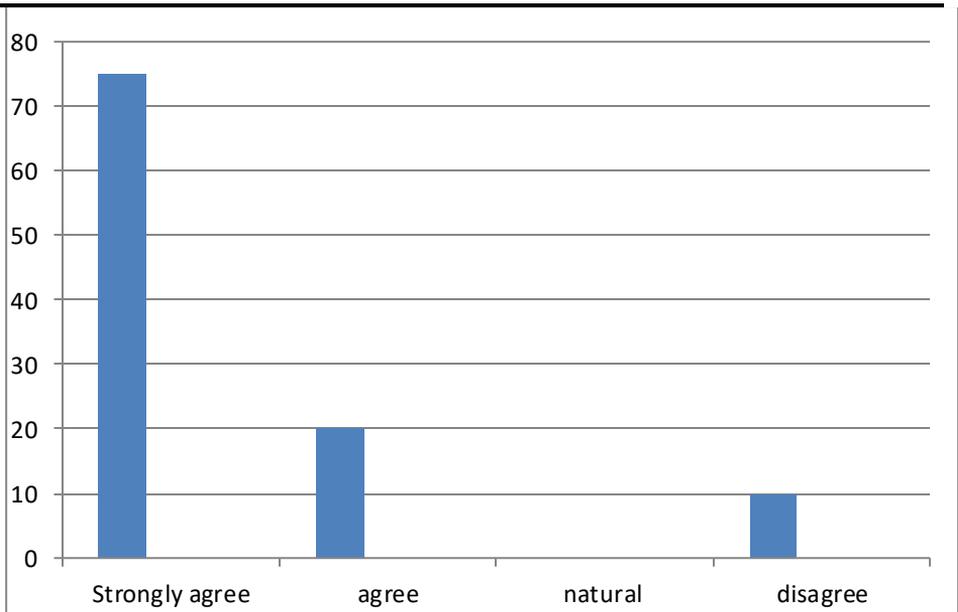
**Figure 1.2**

**ANALYSIS**

*In order to check whither the statement mentioned above in Figure 1.2. The researcher collected data from the respondents through questionnaire. The answers of the respondents were critically analyzed through pie chart mentioned in Figure 1.2. The result shows that 62% of the respondents are strongly agreed, 25% agreed, 5% were natural and 8% of the respondents were disagreed with the statement.*

*Figure 1.3. The statements based on disinformation posted by the leaders of GB on their social media platforms increase distance between the army and the people of Gilgit Baltistan.*

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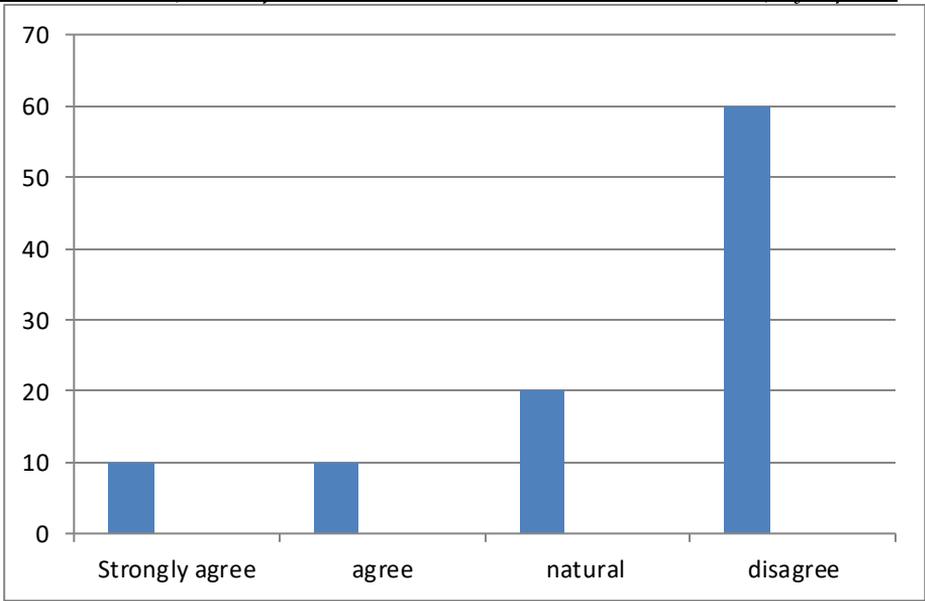


**Figure 1.3**

**ANALYSIS**

*In order to test the above mentioned statement in Figure 1.3 the researcher collected data from the respondents through questionnaires. The result of the respondents shows 75% of the respondents are strongly agreed with this statement, 20% agreed and 10% of the respondents were disagreed with the statement.*

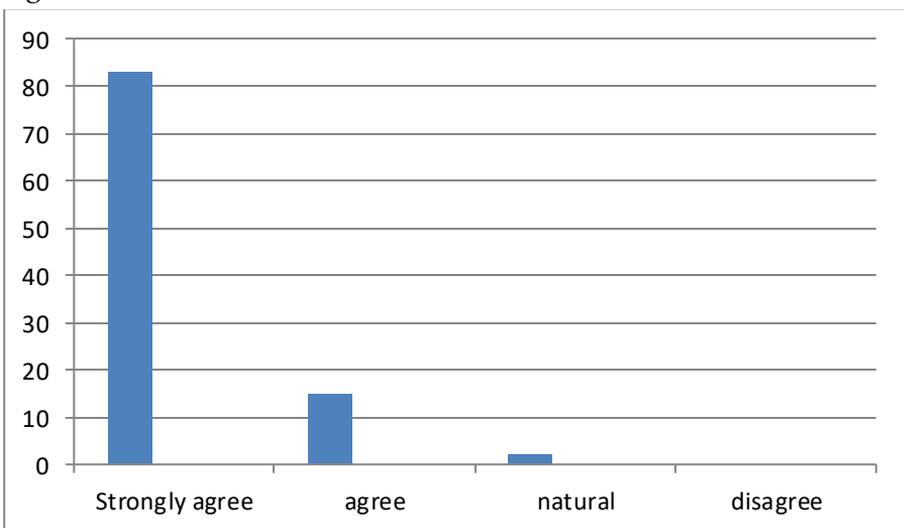
*Figure 1.4. The posts based on disinformation posted by the leaders of GB on their social media platforms do not increase any distance between the army and the people of Gilgit Baltistan.*



**Figure 1.4**

**ANALYSIS**

*In order to check the statement that, the statements based on disinformation posted by the leaders of GB on their social media platforms do not increase any distance between the army and the people of Gilgit Baltistan, the researcher collected data from the respondents through questionnaires. The collected data was critically analysis through Pie chart mentioned in the Figure 1.4. The answer of the respondents shows that 10% of the respondents are strongly agreed, 10% and 20% were natural. However, 60% of the respondents were disagreed with this statement.*



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**ANALYSIS**

*In order to check whether the statements posted by the political leaders of Gilgit Baltistan on their social media platforms based on disinformation weakens democracy in Pakistan or not, the researcher designed a statement 1. The answers of the respondents were critically analysis through pie chart. The result shows that 75% of the respondents are strongly agreed and 20% agreed that political disinformation posted by the political leaders of Gilgit Baltistan on different social media platforms weakens democracy in Pakistan. However, 5% of the respondents were neutral.*

1. *How can we control the political disinformation on social media platforms?*

*To find out the result of this research question the researcher interviewed 20 GB students who are leaving in various university of Rawalpindi Islamabad. The results show that Government should invest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) tools to detect and flag false information early. Additionally, companies should enforce stricter rules regarding political disinformation, including suspending or banning accounts that repeatedly disseminate false information.*

2. *How can we improve the civil military relationship from political disinformation speared by the GB Political leaders in Gilgit Baltistan?*

*The results of this research question show that in order to improve civil military relationship in GB Government should provide job opportunities to the educated youth of Gilgit Baltistan. Moreover, Government must organize awareness programs for the young generation of GB to tell about the importance of civil military relationship to protect the country from internal and external enemies of Pakistan.*

3. *How can we counter political disinformation spread by the political leaders of Gigit Baltistan on social media?*

*The results of this research question show that Government should take action against the fake accounts. Moreover, Government should Bering such a policy for social media users that they will not be able to make any social media account without showing their complete identity. The respondents also suggest that government should organize proper training programs to the political leaders of GB to give awareness regarding positive usage of social media*

platforms, those who are violating and spreading political disinformation government must take strict action against them as per the rule.

4. How can we maintain a strong relationship between the Pakistani military and the people of Gilgit Baltistan?

In response to this research question, many respondents said that Gilgit-Baltistan is a very sensitive area, so there must be a strong alliance between the people and the Pakistani forces so that anti-national elements whether they are inside the country or outside may not become successful to sabotage the relationship between the people of Pakistan and Pakistani army. Moreover, the result of the study also shows that Pakistan Army must take special measures for the construction and development of this area because from the day first the people of Gilgit Baltistan trust in the Pakistan Army more than the political parties. Furthermore, the political parties who harass the youth of Gilgit-Baltistan unnecessarily through the officers of various institutions for political purposes should be stopped in time because such actions are causing distance between the army and the people of GB.

## **FINDINGS/DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study show that:

- The statements posted by the GB political leaders on their social media platforms based on political disinformation, harm Democracy in Pakistan.
- The statements posted by the GB political leaders on their social media platforms based on disinformation, create hatred against the government.
- Political disinformation on social media platforms affects trust in democratic institutions and the military.
- The statements posted by the leaders of GB on their social media platforms based on disinformation, increase distance between the army and the people of Gilgit Baltistan.
- Government should use Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) tools to detect and flag false information early. Additionally, companies should enforce stricter rules regarding political disinformation, including suspending or banning accounts that repeatedly disseminate false information.
- To improve civil military relationship in GB Government should provide

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- Pakistan Army must take special measures for the construction and development of this area because from the day first the people of Gilgit Baltistan trust in the Pakistan Army more than the political parties. Furthermore, the political parties who harass the youth of Gilgit-Baltistan unnecessarily through the officers of various institutions for political purposes should be stopped in time because such actions are causing distance between the army and the people of GB.



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