

Editorial: Cybercrimes and Cybersecurity in Pakistan: Growing Challenges and Institutional Preparedness

Like several developing countries, the use of internet has seen an explosive growth during the past few years. A recent study titled “Journey to Digital” outlined that approximately 54 percent of the country’s population is now connected to the cyberspace. It also notes that 46 percent access internet every day. The annual Payment System Review (PSR) conducted by the State Bank of Pakistan also reported rapid growth in digital payments. The number of transactions processed through PRISM or Pakistan’s Realtime Interbank Settlement Mechanism grew by more than 60 percent during the last financial year. E-banking transactions also spiked by more than 31 percent during the same period. *Dawn* has also reported that about 9 million people in Pakistan engage in cryptocurrencies trading.

Unsurprisingly, the above trends indicate the robustness and relative connectedness of Pakistan into global cyber economic sphere. However, such rapid growth also poses multiple challenges for law enforcement in Pakistan. Recent crime statistics shine light on growing share and types of cybercrime activities. These also highlight the need for law enforcement capacity-building. Recognizing the challenge, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) launched a user guide for cyber users. On the occasion, the Director General FIA stated that the Agency received almost 85000 cybercrime complaints in 2020 – a massive 300 percent increase from the previous year. He also communicated to the gathering that cybercrime complaints currently account for 80 percent of the total complaints received by the FIA.

At the institutional level, steps such as setting up the Cyber Crime Wing (CCW) and the establishment of National Response Center for Cyber Crime (NR3C) at the FIA have already been taken. However, the capacity of these institutions is struggling to keep up with the magnitude and rapidly changing trends in the cybercrime activity. The Additional Director of the NR3C told *Express Tribune* about the difficulties of meeting the demands of the burgeoning cases registered both by common citizens and the police. He revealed that the shortage of resources at the NR3C results in creating backlog and delays. Such delays in forensic analysis benefit criminals. The CCW and other cybercrime law enforcement bodies have aired similar capacity-related concerns.

In the final analysis, it must be mentioned that whereas it is unconceivable to restrict internet activity in Pakistan, steps must be taken to better train and equip law enforcement in dealing with the new challenges. There is also greater need for inter-agency coordination to avoid overlaps,

contradictions, and duplication of work. The agencies at the forefront of the challenge need greater allocation of human and financial resource.

Keeping with the tradition, this issue of the Journal casts a broad focus and includes a number of topical as well as theoretical perspectives. Nicholas Lassi writes about the relationship between Confucian Sincerity Theory and deviancy among young people. The study found that Sincerity was linked to lower levels of deviancy in children. Deviancy was represented in the study as antisocial behavior involving telling lies, bullying, and being mean to others, to name a few. A similar study by Kiran A. Khan et, al. explores the relationship between Dark Triad Traits – indicated as Machiavellian, narcissism, and psychopathy – and delinquent behavior in juveniles. The study links these early traits and tendencies to criminal conduct.

Hussain Ahmad and Sara Qayum juxtapose the trail of civilians in military courts in Pakistan with the international standards on fair trial. The scholars note that there exist widespread reservations regarding the trend on account of human rights and due process concerns. The study concludes that whereas trials in the military courts largely meet the standards of fair trial, the long-term solution is to strengthen the ordinary criminal justice administration.

An interesting article by Syed R.S. Gilani et. al, explores and problematizes the notion of militant democracy. The study points out that the paradoxical notion is often justified in the name of the security of the state. However, the expansion of the militant dimension, the democratic dimension is often undermined. Tabinda Rani and Noorullah Khan undertake an exploratory study of women inmates in prisons in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They highlight a number of challenges that these inmates have to face. At the end, they also offer best practices that would enhance the functioning of these prisons.

Another study focusing on children is by Akhter Muniret, al. The article studies interventionist approach to Choice Theory in schools in the northwest of Pakistan. Taking a qualitative approach, the scholars interviewed teachers in multiple schools. The study prescribes public awareness, teachers training, and strengthening of interaction between parents and teachers as the way forward. The study of Dr. Waheed Ahmed Abbasiet, al., analyses various structural factors responsible for violent extremist thoughts. The authors adopted a qualitative approach and collected data from the students and teachers of Madrassas and Universities in the Sindh province of Pakistan.

Two short essays written by Kamran Adil (PSP) are also included in the issue. The first essay of Kamran Adil is highlighting the importance of

the use of digital daily diary. The author adjudicate the constitutional and legal safeguard for IT based policing for police officials. The second essay of Kamran Adil discussed the challenges faced by criminal justice system in Pakistan. The author highlights the governance of criminal justice system should be organized on modern management principles that require accountability and authority

Aamer Raza (PhD Massachusetts),
Editor-in-Chief,
Pakistan Journal of Criminology,