
Special issue

Anumita Goswami

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0200-8714>
anumita.goswami@tuni.fi
Tampere University

Anne Soronen

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1629-3744>
anne.soronen@tuni.fi
Tampere University

Kaarina Nikunen

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5747-4093>
kaarina.nikunen@tuni.fi
Tampere University

Submitted

December 9, 2025

Approved

May 20, 2026

© 2026

Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

www.communication-society.com

2026 – Vol. 39 (1)
pp. 541-559

How to cite this article:

Goswami, A., Soronen, A., & Nikunen, K.
(2026). Emotional atyachar (trauma):
Professional identity performance and
emotional labour of fact-checkers in India,
Communication & Society, 39(1), 541-559
<https://doi.org/10.15581/003.39.1.035>

Emotional Atyachar (Trauma): Professional Identity Performance and Emotional Labour of Fact-checkers in India

Abstract

This study explores the emotional labour incurred by Indian fact-checkers as part of maintaining their professional identity online. It demonstrates the connection between the theories of professional identity performance and emotional labour. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 fact-checkers from various fact-checking organisations in India. The findings highlight that though fact-checkers identify themselves as journalists they have emerging professional identity. It is much more restrictive compared to the journalists and dictated by IFCN Code of Principles. Due to the restrictive nature of the identity the fact-checkers have to incur emotional labour while performing it online. The cost of emotional labour is pronounced with respect to minority identity, fact-checking violent content and fear of persecution. It can be said that emotional labour has become part of Indian fact-checkers' professional identity and a way to protect themselves from the difficult aspects of the job, such as online hate speech. The study contributes to the existing literature on emotional labour in media work and particularly in fact-checking in the Global South.

Keywords

Professional identity performance, emotional labour, fact-checkers, India, social media.

1. Introduction

Fact-checking is a unique phenomenon that has recently gained global popularity with the rise of disinformation online. Fact-checking organisation's work is actively supported and used by social media companies to combat disinformation on their platforms. With the increasing use of fact-checking, many traditional media companies have set up their own fact-checking desks. This article, titled '*Emotional Atyachar*',¹ explores the questions related to identity performance and the emotional labour undertaken by fact-checkers in India. We do so by analysing the thoughts and feelings conveyed by the interviewees in the study.

¹ We chose the song 'Emotional Atyachar' from the 2009 Bollywood movie Dev D as a title because it talks about the emotional trauma of being jilted in a romantic relationship. However, it was used in a trivialising manner to describe emotional blackmail.

The advent of social media has coincided with the ease of creation and distribution of content. While social media has freed content creators from the hegemony of traditional media gatekeepers, it has also led to the rise of misinformation and disinformation online. Wardle and Derakshan (2018) defined disinformation as false content spread with the intent of causing harm. Misinformation, according to them, is also false content, but there is no intention to cause harm. For this article, we will employ the term ‘disinformation’ to describe any content created and spread online with the intent of misguiding the reader and causing harm.

Due to the ease of content creation, its affective nature and the social media affordances related to its creation and dissemination, the spread of disinformation has become a major problem. Fact-checking has emerged as an important method in addressing this problem. The origins of fact-checking can be traced back to the early 2000s in the United States (Graves, 2016) and the early 2010s in Europe (Graves & Cherubini, 2016). The two major influences of fact-checking are newsroom and non-governmental organisation (NGO) models. In the former, fact-checking is associated with the traditional media newsroom, which is deemed to further the principles of journalism. In the NGO model, political reformers and activists see fact-checking as a tool for social change (Graves et al., 2016). The newsroom model is more popular in the United States, while the NGO model is more prominent in Europe (Lyons et al., 2020). Recently, the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN),² a unit of the Poynter Institute, has emerged as an accreditation body for fact-checking organisations in various parts of the world that agree to and become signatories to its Code of Principles³ to conduct fact checks. By laying out the fact-checking principles for an organisation and its staff, the practice is made uniform universally. However, research in the Global South has shown that fact-checkers have to implement and adapt the Principles depending on national contexts (Mahl et al., 2026).

According to the IFCN, there are 105 active fact-checking organisations, 18 of which are currently in India,⁴ with most of them founded in 2016–2017. The reason for the emergence of fact-checking on social media was the rise in disinformation online, the effects of which spilled over offline, resulting in violence. Consequently, social media platforms such as WhatsApp had to publish ads in Indian newspapers to warn people about disinformation. In the last few years, extensive research on disinformation in India has shown various types of this phenomenon, the motivations behind it and those affected by it, especially through trolling, doxing or other forms of online harassment (Banaji et al., 2019; Udupa, 2016a, 2019).

A recent report on media in India (Media in India, 2022) underlined that journalists are often persecuted for their work and face online harassment. It also highlighted a sense of scepticism regarding Indian media, in general, because of the sensationalist and partisan news coverage and the failure to hold people in power accountable. Furthermore, online media recorded the lowest levels of trustworthiness among all media organisations, placing fact-checking organisations at a disadvantage because of their status as online media. In light of these dynamics, this article explores how fact-checkers create their professional identity, and the emotional labour endured in the process.

During our research we observed that most of the fact-checking literature is concentrated in the Global North and research on it in the Global South is sparse and in-

² International Fact Checking Network- <https://www.ifncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/>

³ IFCN Code of Principles: <https://ifncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/know-more/the-commitments-of-the-code-of-principles>

⁴ Verified signatories of the IFCN Code of Principles- <https://www.ifncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/signatories>

between. Through this article we attempt to bridge that gap. With the help of data collected from interviews with 11 fact-checkers in India we explore how they create their professional identity through their social media presence and how it affects them. We begin by presenting a brief background on social media landscape in India which presents the dominant ideology, narratives and the dominant users of social media. Thereafter, we present a literature review on the issue of fact-checking, the fact-checking genre, professional identity creation and emotional labour. The subsequent section contextualises the correlation between emotional labour and the creation of professional identity online, which is the main theme of this article. Against this backdrop, the research questions of the article are laid out, followed by a clear description of data collection and methodology. In the conclusion, we recontextualise the theme of professional identity creation and emotional labour in the context of India. The research questions addressed in this article are as follows:

RQ1: How do fact-checkers perceive their professional identity?

RQ2: How do Indian fact-checkers adapt IFCN's Code of Principles in their professional identity?

RQ3: How do the challenges from the Indian context impact fact-checkers individually?

2. Social Media Landscape in India

A review of literature on the disinformation landscape in India shows that it is dominated by the Hindutva ideology (Banaji, 2018; Banaji et al., 2019; Udupa, 2016b, 2016a, 2018, 2019). It is inspired from the fascist movements of 20th century Europe which has been adopted by Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)⁵. The organisation is opposed to the view of India being a secular democratic state. It is also the parent organisation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) previously known as Jan Sangh. It currently leads the ruling coalition in India. The party is responsible for introducing the ideology to Indian politics in the 1950s (Jaffrelot, 2009). The aim is to build a Hindu nation whose political, cultural and historical identity is rooted in Hindu traditional values bringing together the customs and culture of the land (Leidig, 2020). The major characteristic of the ideology includes upper caste dominance in political and economic life in India, the belief that minorities specifically Muslims as a nation's enemy and justified violence against individuals and sexual violence against women who are opposed to ideology or speak freely. This behaviour also extends to Hindu women opposed to it. This stems from the belief that religious and cultural ties define your ideology. Those who are opposed to it are seen viewed as being influenced by minority religious and cultural sentiments (Badrinathan & Chauchard, 2024). The ideology is spread by organised group of upper caste men who dominate social media usage called Internet Hindus (Banaji et al., 2019; Udupa, 2016a, 2019) who are colloquially known as IT Cell. They receive political patronage from the BJP (Sardesai, 2015; Swati Chaturvedi, 2016).

The narratives the IT Cell promotes follows the ideology. This includes, promoting the leader to a god like stature (Sinha, 2017) through positive campaign on social media of a strong male leadership which supersedes the faith in democracy (Neyazi & Nakamizo, 2026). It is complimented by nationalistic discourse focussing on the prowess of the current government, vilifying the opposition and encouraging Indians to take pride in their Hindu heritage and culture. It also involves rewriting Indian history by glorify Hindu rulers and vilifying Muslim rulers (Udupa, 2016a, 2019). The vilification is not limited to rewriting

⁵ Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashtriya_Swayamsevak_Sangh

history. It also extends to anti-minority rhetoric. Muslims are main targets of it with narratives highlighting the plight of Muslim women, vilifying Muslim men as purveyors of Love Jihad, portraying them as a threat to Hindus, celebration of violence against minorities and misogynistic discourse related to religious conversion. It encourages vilifying outspoken Muslim women as observed in the Sulli and Bulli App scandal⁶ and involves threatening and trolling women online. Furthermore, they minimise the agency of Hindu women who they claim are easily duped by Muslim men (Banaji et al., 2019).

3. Literature Review

3.1. *Previous Literature on Fact-checking*

According to Amazeen (2019), the three main goals of fact-checking are ‘public education, improved political behaviour and better journalism’. The author saw the practice as a ‘democracy-building tool’ (Amazeen, 2020), similar to Graves (2016), who mapped the institutional origins of fact-checking. According to Graves, the two major influences of fact-checking are the traditional media and the NGO models with varying motivations. In the traditional media model, the fact-checking field in the United States is occupied by professional journalists, who see the activity as an additional way of boosting the core principle of journalism. Conversely, the NGO model sees fact-checking as a tool for social change and improvement in political behaviour, as the field is occupied by political reformers and activists. In our research on fact-checking organisations in India, we could trace their origins to the above influences. However, we did find instances where both models were equally influential in setting up fact-checking organisations.

The reasons behind the emergence of fact-checking and the corresponding motivations have raised questions about the information being fact-checked (Brandtzaeg & Følstad, 2017). Brandtzaeg & Følstad (2017) analysed audience perceptions of fact checks and found that the audiences doubted the trustworthiness of these fact checks. The reason given was the highly contested nature of the media environment, where audiences generally rely on their beliefs and tend to distance themselves from contrarian views. Individual choices play a significant role in governing how people view fact-checked information. Audiences with more knowledge about the political environment tend to have a favourable view of fact-checks (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015). Other researchers (Young et al., 2018) found that the format rather than the tone can ensure success in the dissemination of fact checks. They observed that videos achieve more success compared to text-based content. Furthermore, transparency in reasoning and the process of fact-checking were also held responsible for the success of fact-checks (Brandtzaeg & Følstad, 2017).

3.2. *Processing of a New Media Genre*

Mena (2019) maintained that fact-checking is ‘a growing journalistic activity in the US and other part of the world’. Juneström (2020) built on the above statement while exploring ‘the ways in which the practice of fact-checking has contributed to the generation of a new media genre’. They identified three building blocks of fact-checking as a new media genre. The first block is access to information, which is achieved through symbols and rating systems that provide varying levels of distinction to fact checks, thus allowing for the differentiation between various fact checks. Moreover, they connected fact checks to initial stories that help the user relate fact checks with the main information and organise the

6 Bulli Bai, ‘Sulli Deals’: On Being Put Up for ‘Auction’ as an Indian Muslim Woman – <https://thewire.in/communalism/indian-muslim-woman-auction-bulli-bai>

content. The second building block is trust, which is built by involving the audience in the fact checks and asking them to suggest topics for the checking. Organisations can also use trigger warnings in their content and declare their transparency statements and methodology on their websites. The third building block is fighting information poverty, which is achieved by explaining the background of the fact check and including educational content. Juneström (2020) believed that adhering to the process points to fact-checking as a new media genre. The building block of trust is also part of the IFCN's Code of Principles, which fact-checking sites have to follow to build trust and transparency amongst audiences.

Kumar (2022) analysed fact-checking methodologies and adherence to transparency by fact-checkers in India; his findings were similar to those obtained by Juneström (2020). He reviewed the literature on fact-checking methodologies and transparency on the websites of seven fact-checking organisations. Through a qualitative content analysis, transparency was found to be an emergent theme in the analysed literature. He argued that the two reasons for adherence to transparency in the literature were as follows: First, the principle of transparency gave credibility to fact-checking as a trustworthy practice. The reason for citing trustworthiness as a major tenet of transparency was that fact-checkers regularly face questions regarding their ability, motives and allegiances, which he substantiated with examples from the literature (Brandtzaeg & Følstad, 2017; Humprecht, 2020). The previous literature also highlights that the 'commitment to and manifestation of transparency' by fact-checkers strengthens their position of trustworthiness amongst audiences. The second reason was the normative ideal of journalism. Kumar cited previous literature in presenting transparency as the epistemological development of objectivity. Accordingly, it not only strengthens the audience's trust but also adds another layer of journalistic practice and the process of being open to audiences.

3.3. Professional Identity Creation

IFCN is the organisation which accredits and lays down the Code of Principles for doing the fact checks. To become a verified signatory fact-checking organisations need to follow the Code of Principles which extends to the staff as well. They also need to declare these five set of principles in the fact-checking outlet's website. The Principles include first *commitment to non-partisanship and fairness* ensuring that same set standards are followed for every fact-check. It is done by putting the process of selection of fact checks done, relevant interests, refrain from taking policy or political positions and present evidence in manner that dictates the conclusions. The second is *standards and transparency of sources* done by providing a detailed process of the fact check using two or more sources which the readers if they wish can replicate. The exception to this rule is if there is personal security risk to the source. The third principle is *transparency of funding and organisation* where the signatories will declare funding sources to the audiences. They also need to clarify the organizational structure, ownership, legal statuses, the backgrounds of key figures, who exercises editorial control and have clear channels of communication with the audience. The fourth relates to *standards and transparency methods* wherein signatories are expected to disclose their methodology. It includes selecting, research, writing, editing, publishing and correcting process and policy associated with each of these steps. They are to encourage their audiences to send them claims to be fact checked. The fifth and final is adherence to *open and honest corrections policy*. They are expected to publish their corrections policy and follow it scrupulously. The policy should be easily accessible in their websites and should have a clear reasoning of the instances when and where it is to be done. These Principles

adheres to the elements of transparency which is one of the normative principles of journalism (Kumar, 2022).

As mentioned, the IFCN's principles of transparency and non-partisanship principle extends to the fact-checkers employed by the signatories, thus setting the stage for their creation of professional identity online. As stated earlier, most IFCN tenets have originated from the normative ideals of journalism; it is a relatively young profession in which audience expectations ought to be managed. Audiences question fact-checker motivations for fact-checking content (Kumar, 2022). The setting of social roles as constitutive of the process of identity creation was discussed by Goffman (1990). According to him, people exhibit their identity by performing their assigned social roles individually or in teams and try to underplay by maintaining impressions, the parts that are not idealised. Each individual or group is assigned a social role based on the social characteristics they exhibit. This exhibition, according to Goffman, is a performance that involves presenting an appearance, which is an idealised version, while underplaying those deemed incompatible. Goffman referred to this underplay as impression management, as he felt that considerable care is taken to manage performance with potential consequences for the individual performer or the performing team as a whole.

The consequences of identity creation can appear in the form of dilemmas about how to represent its idealised forms. This is observed in the case of journalism, which has been forced to redefine its public task in the age of social media (Nikunen, 2014). The public task is to inform, investigate, analyse, mobilise and provide multiple perspectives and a public forum and advance democratic values (Deuze & Witschge, 2018). According to the authors, the reason for this redefinition is the changing media environment where journalistic content has to compete with other types of social media content. The other reason is the shift in labour situation from job security to contractual or, as Deuze and Witschge (2018) called it, atypical work. These changes have led to a shift in approach towards the organisation they operate in, as well as the tasks they have to perform, which goes beyond their professional identity giving rise to dilemmas.

These dilemmas have been aggravated by the rise of social media, where journalists are encouraged to develop their professional identities online as personal brands (Brems et al., 2017). Previous research has shown that journalists are aware of the social context in which they need to create their identity. For example, they have to present themselves as authentic in front of audiences and sources so as to appear transparent. They do so by maintaining a professional account online, which is related to their organisation and has their work listed on it (Bossio & Sacco, 2017). However, social media platforms such as X (previously known as Twitter) offer spaces for the development of individual identity brands rather than organisational ones, for example, the case of health journalists who have strictly curated feeds (Molyneux & Holton, 2015). Though the negotiations between individual and organisational identities by journalists have given rise to identity dilemmas (Bossio & Holton, 2018), these dilemmas also arise because of social media affordances, such as the comment section in which journalists have faced trolling instead of discussion. These factors can be limiting in terms of presenting a professional identity (Brems et al., 2017).

3.4. Emotional Labour

The dilemmas between presenting personal and professional identities as part of work were explored by Hochschild (2012) through the concept of emotional labour. Hochschild introduced the concept in her book about how people in the airline industry induce, suppress and manage their emotions to produce a desired emotional reaction in others. The

process through which the strategies are implanted includes surface acting and deep acting. In surface acting, the worker suppresses their actual feelings as well as project feelings aligned to the job being performed. Conversely, in deep acting, workers orient their feelings according to the organisational expectation to produce real feelings, which Hochschild called 'beyond the smile that's just painted on'. According to her, deep acting is done either by 'directly exhorting a feeling' or indirectly by using a 'trained imagination'. Both these activities create negative emotions in the worker, thereby engendering alienation from work in the long run.

The consequence of emotional labour is not limited to the above industry and can also be found in other industries, such as visual journalism (Thomson, 2021), creative industries (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008), magazine work (Soronon, 2018) and activism (Nikunen, 2018). According to Thomson (2021), the exploration of emotional labour in journalism, especially visual journalism, is limited. He found that emotional labour is enacted by visual journalists during the production, editing and postproduction phases of their work. Furthermore, he maintained that the rules of emotional management originate more from interpersonal levels than from organisational or societal levels, which agrees with Hochschild's (2012) argument. Thomson also underlined the importance of research on emotional labour in journalism in the context of the rise of freelance work.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008) analysed freelance work and the emotional labour associated with it in the creative industry and drew on the conceptualisations of emotional labour through Hochschild (2012) and Grindstaff (2002). They concluded that in creative industries, such as reality television, emotional labour is more frequently exhibited by lower-level workers, because they not only have to manage their emotions with the participants in the show but also with the respective groups in which they work. Emotional management in the latter is important, as it develops contacts for future work. Emotional labour is further aggravated because some creative industry work is mostly freelance in nature (Soronon, 2018). Though freelance is prophesied as flexibility, there are insecurities associated with future work if contacts are not maintained, which the authors examined under the concept of precarity. The precarity of freelance labour in the creative industry adds another layer to emotional management. Soronen (2018) made similar observations with respect to magazine work in Finland.

In India, the emotional labour involved in contractual and freelance work is best understood from the literature on call centre workers (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2008; Nath, 2011; Shankar & Kumar, 2014). These workers occupy the frontlines of the customer service industry through the virtual medium that caters to the global market. Instances of emotional labour include, first, being polite when representing themselves and the company despite unruly customer behaviour. The second instance involves refraining from taking customer reactions personally, considering, for example, learning experience. The third is the lack of freedom to take breaks in between customer calls and the inadequacy of stress management support, leading to burnout.

4. Professional Identity Creation and Emotional Labour

Identity, according to Goffman (1990), refers to the performance of duties and rights given to an individual based on their social role. He likened the creation of identity to a theatre production, where the performer chooses to show the parts of their performative routine that match the audience's expectations and express their social identity. In recent times, social media and its affordances have provided a setting through which individuals can

exhibit their respective identities. These affordances help individuals identify their social groups, resulting in certain social groups (e.g., journalists) actively using social media as a branding tool (Brems et al., 2017; Molyneux & Holton, 2015; Molyneux et al., 2018).

Using social media as a branding tool positions journalists at the forefront and makes them recipients of online hate (Binns, 2017); this is especially true for women journalists (Chen et al., 2020). This not only affects their relationship with their audiences (Lewis et al., 2020) but also results in self-censor online (Waisbord, 2020) and a sense of alienation (Holton et al., 2021). Additionally, when journalists seek organisational help, they are asked to have 'thicker skin' to endure the hate (Chen et al., 2020). Previous research has also shown that journalists are encouraged to show restraint, instead of engaging in and actively reporting social media harassment (Holton et al., 2021). These findings show that journalists are actively asked to control and suppress their emotions online to exhibit a desired professional identity, thus corresponding to the main dimension of surface-acting, a strategy of emotional labour, as stated by Hochschild (2012).

Emotional labour, according to Hochschild (2012), is the process through which employees suppress or induce feelings depending on various societal, organisational or interpersonal contexts. On social media, journalists exhibit their professional identity, and in cases where their accounts are linked to their organisations (Brems et al., 2017), they represent both themselves and their organisations, which prevents them from confronting trolls. Moreover, in many organisational contexts, being overly sensitive may hamper their long-term career development (Holton et al., 2021). Furthermore, with media and journalism work becoming more freelance, these employees need to take special care to appear professional both online and offline for future work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2008; Soronen, 2018), which further compounds their emotional labour.

In this article, we explore how identity performance on social media leads to emotional labour among fact-checkers in India. Fact-checking is a developing field in journalism, and previous literature has regarded fact-checkers as journalists (Juneström, 2020; Kumar, 2022; Mena, 2019). Thus, we utilise the journalism literature to examine fact-checkers' professional identity performance online and the literature on emotional labour to obtain a clearer picture of its social contexts in India.

5. Data and Methodology

The first author conducted in-depth interviews with 11 fact-checkers from various organisations in India, including freelancers, fact-checkers from fact-checking organisations, fact-checking facilitators and fact-checkers associated with mainstream media organisations in India (Table 1). These groups exhibited varying characteristics. The first group comprised freelancers employed as consultant fact-checkers by online or mainstream media organisations. The second group comprised fact-checkers who were directly employed by fact-checking websites or outlets; some in this group also carried out other administrative responsibilities in the organisation. The third group was associated with the Factshala network,⁷ referred to as fact-checking trainers. The fourth group had fact-checkers who were full-time employees and had fact-checker as their job titles in mainstream media organisations.

⁷ Factshala is a news and information literacy programme run by Data LEADS with support from the Google News Initiative. (<https://factshala.com/>)

Table 1. Interviewees and their positions in their respective fact-checking organisations

Interviewee No.	Position	Type of Media Organisation
1	Senior reporter and fact-checking trainer	Traditional Media Organisation
2	Founding editor of a media organisation & fact-checking trainer	Digital Traditional + NGO model organisation
3	Founder of a media organisation & fact-checking trainer	NGO model organisation
4	Fact-checker in a fact-checking organisation	International Traditional media organisation
5	Freelance/consultant fact-checker	Digital Traditional Media Organisation
6	Fact-checker in an organisation	NGO model organisation
7	Founding editor of a fact-checking organisation & fact-checker	NGO model organisation
8	Fact-checker in a fact-checking organisation	Digital Traditional + NGO model organisation
9	Managing editor of media organization & fact-checker	Digital Traditional + NGO model organisation
10	Founder of media organisation & fact-checking trainer	Digital Traditional + NGO model organisation
11	Former editor of fact-checking organisation	International Traditional media organisation

Source: Own elaboration.

The fact-checkers were contacted through email, telephone or social media messages, which resulted in an initial batch who agreed to be interviewed. They were later asked to recommend their colleagues who might be interested in being interviewed. The effort snowballed, resulting in 11 interviewees. The interviews were held between September and December 2022 and were conducted in English and Hindi depending on the interviewees' comfort level. All interviews in Hindi were translated by the first author. The interviewees were asked various questions, including their roles in their respective organisations, the process of fact-checking, their experience with the process and their expectations from social media companies with regards to fighting misinformation and disinformation campaigns. All interviews were transcribed and then categorised according to broad themes such as methods of conducting fact checks, types of disinformation encountered and fact-checking in the current political environment.

The themes were further analysed by the first author based on the emotional labour theory by employing active listening of the interview recordings and rereading the transcribed data. While listening to the recordings, certain experiences and emotions were found to be recurring. These were issues faced by the interviewees following fact-checked publications in the context of the political climate in India and the spread of disinformation across the political spectrum. The final themes identified were the professional identity performance of a fact-checker, the emotional labour associated with it, the current political climate in India and the process of fact-checking. For the purpose of this article, only the first two themes were analysed.

6. Emerging Professional Identity

The two selected themes for analysis in this study provided insights into how the fact-checkers identified themselves and the emotional labour cost involved in maintaining their identity online. These themes are discussed below.

6.1. *Identity Creation under Pressure*

As stated earlier, most of the interviewees saw themselves as journalists; however, their professional designation in their respective organisations was that of a fact-checker. It became clear from the interviews that they had assimilated certain elements of both these identities whilst maintaining that professional norms are stricter for them than for journalists. Moreover, these rules are also established by the IFCN and the respective organisational websites (Kumar, 2022) show that the guiding principles of the profession are stricter. Previous research (Mena, 2019) has indicated the presence of a clear boundary between fact-checkers and journalists, even when some interviewees consider themselves journalists. The stricter adherence to the tenets of transparency and non-partisanship, as shown in the previous research and repeated by the interviewees, marks this delineation. On this basis, we classified the identity of a fact-checker into two categories: 1) as expected following the IFCN Code of Principles and 2) the way they exhibit their identity online.

To be eligible for the IFCN signatory status, fact-checking organisations and media organisations with fact-checking entities have to declare their commitment to the IFCN's Code of Principles. The first code concerns non-partisanship and fairness, which states that the organisation should not take policy or political positions or be associated with any political party or entity. The principle extends not only to the organisation but also to its staff. The only exceptions to these are in cases of accuracy and transparency. Moreover, the fact-checking organisation and their staff must present themselves as unbiased in front of members of the public.

During the interviews, we observed the two instances where participants had internalised the second point of identity performance online in terms of answering the interview questions and as part of their online identities. The first instance was when they were asked about the sources in traditional and online media that they considered trustworthy and reliable. Most of the interviewees replied that, as fact-checkers, they were trained to question everything and there were instances where they had to correct the information posted online by other media organisations. Some responded that as fact-checkers, they have stopped thinking of media organisations as credible news sources. Second, they underlined the presence of political and ideological biases in these organisations. The responses also showed that the fact-checkers adhered to stricter transparency codes as part of their identity compared to journalists. Below is an interview extract indicating a fact-checker's identity as non-partisan, transparent and fair in response to the question of sources of credible news in traditional and online media:

Interviewee 7: I can't answer that question right because I'm not looking at every piece of news that they [referring to traditional and online media] have put out. I'm not looking at them for validity. Of course, there are some more trusted than others, but I don't want to get into this conversation because, in my opinion, it is the wrong conversation to have. Of course, there are people who trust us, but even to them, I say that you know don't trust blindly just because [we said it is] it does not have to be true [referring to their own fact checks]. The whole point is to look at information with a more critical lens or be circumspect of everything.

It can therefore be interpreted that to gain trust in the eyes of the public, the fact-checkers themselves cannot trust any information without verification measures.

A fact-checker's identity was revealed during the interview when asked about the political climate in India and fact-checking under these circumstances. The question was asked because the fact-checker was arrested for a satirical tweet unrelated to the profession of fact-checking. While answering the question, some interviewees referred to this incident as a rarity and

pointed out that it had no relation to fact-checking. They were mildly critical of the arrested fact-checker by remarking that the job of the fact-checker was to present facts without being partisan. Furthermore, they remarked that if they presented facts in a fair and transparent manner, the political climate should not affect fact-checking, thus heeding the IFCN's Code of Principles laid out for fact-checkers in fact-checking organisations. The responses below summarise the above discussion:

Interviewee 10: In that context [arrest of the fact-checker] I would say, you know, at least from the kind of work that we do, as fact-checkers, frankly, it hasn't impacted me much so. If I remember correctly, the cases that were registered against him also have very little to do with fact-checking work. Especially even the kind of work that we do, limited to fact-checking content without any opinions or any kind of thing. So, in that sense, I don't think it has had any significant impact on the work that we do.

Interviewee 11: [Arrested fact-checker] was being targeted by the government for his identity, both as a Muslim, and as somebody with a credible voice who was kind of on a mission to, , fact check. A lot of fact-checked claims that the government was supporting directly or indirectly. So obviously ... was on the government radar and, his social media content or the kind of things that he posted, reflected his activist stand. Now, when we talk about fact [checkers], uh, you know, we as journalists, we have this, responsibility of being objective.

In terms of the fact-checker identity, the performance focuses on non-partisan, transparent and fair arbitrators of information online. To present a non-partisan identity, the interviewees disassociated themselves from the arrested fact-checker, stating that his arrest was not because of his profession as a fact-checker but due to his activism. This was also evident in the discussion around getting the fact check correctly published. These two instances show a tendency toward impression management, which is related to identity creation (Goffman, 1990).

From the above discussion, a clear picture of the online identity of a fact-checker emerges. Goffman likened identity to theatre performance, in which performers present an idealised version of themselves for their audience. The performance is done with the help of the setting, appearances and underplaying the parts of the performance that do not correspond to this idealised version. For a fact-checker, the IFCN's Code of Principles, social media affordances and declarations about non-partisanship, fairness and transparency on their respective websites (Juneström, 2020; Kumar, 2022) provide the necessary appearance and setting to perform identity work. As stated earlier, the interviewees seemed to assimilate the dual identity of a journalist and a fact-checker, though they reiterated the differences between them and journalists. One of the most important differences highlighted involved the aspect of scrutiny. According to the interviewees, there is more stringently scrutinised as compared to journalists, as people opposing their fact checks would look for examples in which corrections would be made to their work so as to claim that they are partisan or non-transparent. Thus, they are under pressure to get the fact check right the first time.

Therefore, from the discussions, a fact-checker can be defined as an individual who may or may not have a journalistic background, but who is associated with a fact-checking organisation or a traditional media organisation with a fact-checking beat. They are individuals who present fact-checked information by following the rules laid out in the IFCN's Code of Principles on non-partisanship, fairness and transparency. The organisational dimension of their creation of professional identity is strong. In addition, they should also refrain from taking policy or political positions to discourage accusations of bias from the public.

6.2. Emotional Labour of Fact-checking

Although fact-checkers may identify themselves as journalists, their identity and approach to their professional identity performance online are more restrictive than those of journalists. Some interviewees even called fact-checking a *new beat in journalism* (Interviewees 8 and 11). To maintain unbiased and transparent appearances in many instances and follow organisational and IFCN guidelines, they did not express their opinions online in their professional accounts. However, during the interviews, they indicated to have a desire to do so although are prevented due to the above rules. Thus, they suppressed their emotions and performed emotional labour. Hochschild (2012) defined emotional labour as the act wherein employees suppress or induce emotions based on societal, organisational and interpersonal contexts. The examples of situations in which fact-checkers have to perform emotional labour as part of their identity are discussed in the paragraphs below.

The IFCN Code of Principles on standards and transparency of sources clearly states that the signatory organisations should provide all sources and evidence they used to perform the fact check. The fact-checking process should be laid such that the readers can do it themselves. The only exception to the rule is if the source's security is compromised. In their fact checks, the signatory organisation uses a primary source of evidence instead of a secondary source. However, secondary sources can be relied upon when primary sources are unavailable. These fact checks should have more than one named source unless there is only one source relevant to the topic. The sources themselves should be such that they are irrefutable to the public.

As explained above in the IFCN code, fact-checkers have to use primary sources to fact-check information. This was also underlined by the interviewees during the interviews. When explaining the fact-checking process, they also remarked that to verify any information, they have to analyse the primary source image or video multiple times, which involves watching and rewatching it. These, in some instances, are violent and gory content. They remarked that watching these puts strain on them, and they have to separate themselves emotionally from their work. This is so because they have to suppress their own emotions, which may arise during the verifying process. Thus, they have to resort to deep and surface acting, where a labourer masks their real emotions to perform the job while keeping in mind the expectations of the job, as described by Hochschild (2012). As these themes began to emerge, later in the interview, they were asked to further clarify these feelings. They opened up and explained how fact-checking affects them, including the political climate in India. These feelings were very similar to those expressed by commercial content moderators in Roberts' (2019) book on the same issue. This suppression of emotions manifests in the form of, first, fact-checking taking a toll on their mental health. The process in which they deal with it is that, after the fact check has been published, they dissociate themselves from the work for some time. This helps them regain focus and continue. Some interviewees even described their work as traumatic.

Interviewee 6: Though you do a fact check and move on to the next mentally you cannot separate yourself for 2-3 days from it. You see a video on murder and people are angling it differently and there is blood in it. If there's a video where you cannot identify the location and have to rewatch it several times. Sometimes the profession seems traumatic because to ascertain correct information, you have to keep rewatching the same murder or blood-shedding. So, I have mixed feelings about fact-checking in this climate. It is good but sometimes it is stressful. Some days I feel after fact-checking some materials that I am done for the day I am relieved that I will do it again after 2-3 days. You need a break for 2-3 days sometimes.

The second form of suppression of emotions was the fear of persecution, which arose not only because of their identity as a fact-checker but also because of their religious identity. According to some of them, the fear of persecution was further aggravated because of the arrest of a fact-checker for a satirical tweet. As stated, religious identity was also a factor in the arrest; fact-checkers from the same religious identity commented that they would not be surprised if a similar thing happened to them. The fear of persecution was expressed clearly by the interviewees who were at lower levels of the organisation but not among those at higher levels. The description that suitably summarises this fear is as follows:

Interviewee 9: What happened with [arrested fact-checker] is an alarming thing for fact-checkers. I feel that when I say [in the context of fear of persecution] I tell my mom, you know, someday [authorities] will come, and say your name has come up. OK, you are flying too high [as a fact-checker]. So, you know, jokingly I tell this to my mom, [arrested fact-checker] has gone [arrested] and any day it might be my turn, and everyone will know my name. But when you look at it in this way, you know it is traumatising... staying in jail. Thousands of people are speaking against you for that thing which is your duty. A journalist's duty is to speak truth to power.

The third aspect highlighted by the interviewees in terms of suppression of emotions was trolling and hate from the trolls. Since they are bound by IFCN rules and organisational obligations, they cannot respond to trolling online. Moreover, trolls have attacked them not only on the fact checks done but also on their appearance and religious identity. This finding resonates with previous research on political dissent in India (Badrinathan & Chauchard, 2024). Badrinathan & Chauchard (2024) reported that hate speech and trolling activity increase when they fact-check prominent political personalities. Many of them also remarked that, in instances where they fact-checked traditional media personalities, the media personalities would rebuke them as well. This is similar to previous research where fact-checkers have an adversarial relationship with mainstream media (Vinhas & Bastos, 2025).

The interviewees explained that they have a clear correction policy according to the IFCN Code of Principles to boost transparency and non-partisanship. Nevertheless, they try to get it right the first time. This is because their previously corrected stories or for which they added supplementary information have been used by trolls to portray them as biased or someone giving out false information. Additionally, if they complain about it to their organisation, they are instructed *to grow a thicker skin*. Since the community is really small, they fear that repeated complaints may be perceived in the organisation as sensitive. Similar responses were found in previous research when journalists complained about repeated abuse online (Chen et al., 2020; Holton et al., 2021). The situation can be best understood by the following transcript, which sums up the reactions of different political groups from previous experiences of published fact checks:

Interviewee 8: After I have published a story, and mass reporting happens then people generally get divided into two groups. If you see the comment section, people who support the BJP [a political party in India] immediately start being abusive. They say who are you to tell this is fake news and so on and question [the fact-checking organisation] who you are to question what's your credibility. You take money and there's one [such instance] since I joined. Similarly to it, there's an accusation that like [the fact-checking organisation] is an AAP [a political party in India] sponsored website. Apart from it, let's say even you do fact-check about Congress [a political party in India] then the same people [who were abusive earlier] say this website is unbiased and Congress people will be abusive. The main thing which triggers me the most is when I do story [fact check] on communal things. You know

in India; I don't know why but people get triggered easily if it goes against your ideology or belief and then they become abusive.

Fact-checking in the current political climate in India seems to be gloomy; however, at the same time, the interviewees seemed hopeful about fact-checking as a practice. This optimism is attributable to three reasons. First, because they have seen instances where their work was appreciated, the second is that the work they are doing is for the greater good and the third reason is the news of a fact-checking organisation being shortlisted for the Noble Peace Prize in 2022.⁸ The fact-checkers recounted that since the inception of this profession, people's belief in fact-checkers has been positive and many of their critics have come to appreciate them later. Additionally, even if their peers did not win the Noble Peace prize yet, being shortlisted as Favourites to Win made them feel that their work is seen and appreciated by the international community. Moreover, this recognition gives them hope that their work is reaching people and helping in the fight against disinformation. These sentiments are expressed below:

Interviewee 9: ... [talking about since the inception of fact-checking in India] in the beginning people have abused us, trolled us for being biased to one side or the other because it was some fact-checking with something pretty new to even the users. But, as time passed by, people have observed, been observing the fact checks ... the amount of ... kind of accusations that we have received has significantly decreased. Those who are accused [us] of bias when we have started our work have started appreciating our work and also started promoting our content.

Interviewee 10: It is no doubt the great recognition [on Noble Peace Prize shortlisting] at the same time it gives recognition to the community those who are working in this field of fact-checking. Now we also know it is a global recognition, so it gives an identity for ourselves. People can now understand what fact-checkers are, what fact-checkers can do, and what fact-checkers are doing. So, it no doubt goes to [showing what fact-checking] community [does] and also recognition of the work we have been doing for the last five or four 5-6 years.

The above discussions indicate the emotional labour incurred by fact-checkers in maintaining their identity both online and offline. This emotional labour is further compounded because they do not have a clearly defined professional identity, unlike journalists. Journalists have their own more established professional identity on which they can rely online, whereas for fact-checkers, identity is a work in progress. Hence, they cannot rely on it, which makes them suffer from emotional labour more compared to journalists. In the interviews, the ambivalence of emotions was observed when the religious identity of a fact-checker was used to criticise their work through trolling and hate speech. This resulted in an interviewee suppressing emotions associated with religious identity and concealing their identity when publishing their work. Though the IFCN Code of Principles guides them in creating their identity online, fact-checkers have to incur emotional labour in doing so. All the above experiences generate a sense of alienation amongst the fact-checkers. The above examples show that interviewees in the lower level of the organisation performed more emotional labour compared to those higher up in the hierarchy in the organisation. This corresponds to the previous study conducted on reality television by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008). This was made clear while answering questions regarding trolling online and how it affects their work. The responses are also similar to the previous literature of emotional labour incurred by call centre workers in India with respect to

⁸ Here Are the Favourites To Win the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize- <https://time.com/6219502/nobel-peace-prize-2022-favorites/>

identity performance and mental well-being (D 'Cruz & Noronha, 2008; Nath, 2011; Shankar & Kumar, 2014).

7. Conclusion

In this study, we explored the interdependence between identity management and emotional labour incurred by fact-checkers on social media in India. This paper defines a fact-checker as an individual who presents fact-checked information by following the IFCN Code of Principles on non-partisanship, fairness and transparency. In addition to the principles, the fact-checkers also refrain from taking policy or political positions to discourage accusations of bias from the public. Fact-checking is a relatively new phenomenon that has emerged alongside the rise of disinformation on social media in India and the rest of the world. One of the interviewees in the study even termed it a new beat in journalism, a sentiment has echoed in previous research as well (Sharma & Sivakumar, 2023). Though many of them considered themselves journalists, the responses indicated the existence of a different identity when compared to their journalism peers. To a large extent, their identity is guided by the IFCN Code of Principles. Based on these, a fact-checker's identity can be defined to lie between that of a journalist and an individual who performs professional fact-checking while verifying online information in a non-partisan, transparent manner following the IFCN Code of Principles. The fact checks published through this process are void of opinion, policy or political position and bias. They are presented such that the audiences can themselves repeat the process.

The principles of non-partisanship and transparency are not limited to fact checks but also extend to maintaining this identity online. To achieve this, they undertake emotional labour, which involves, first, suppressing their feelings to respond to hate speech and trolling online. They use deep or surface acting as part of performing emotional labour. Deep acting is fuelled by the optimism about performing their work for the greater good, where they suppress their negative emotions while fact-checking information which, at times, includes violent and gory images. This finding is similar to research on commercial content moderators by Roberts, (2019). Notwithstanding this similarity previous research has pointed to similarities between third party fact-checking and content moderation (Suomalainen et al., 2025; Vinhas & Bastos, 2025). Surface acting is performed when they refrain from reporting abuses to avoid being labelled as hyper-sensitive. They are encouraged at the organisational level to *grow a thicker skin* and ignore the reactions they receive online. This framed by their organisations as not taking policy or political position which is based on IFCN's Code of Principle. These also show the professional identity management of fact-checkers and the emotional labour associated with it that affects their mental well-being. Moreover, the fear of persecution for their work, given the current political climate. However, it was exhibited only by the interviewees who were at the lower level of the organisational hierarchy. They have to suppress the emotions of anxiety while fact-checking information. Finally, the nature of the work, where they have to review violent and emotionally stressful content. While reviewing them, they have to suppress their emotions because it affects their mental health. According to them, this optimism helps them process the negative emotions associated with fact-checking in India while adding to the already existing emotional labour.

Thus, emotional labour in the context of fact-checking can be defined as underplaying or suppressing emotional responses to perform transparency and unbiasedness as the professional ideal of a fact-checker. It also involves internalising a sense of positivity that, despite tackling the abuses and political climate, they are educating the larger society and are at the frontlines of stopping the spread of disinformation on social media. The continuous

exposure to violent images and videos has led to many of them commenting that they feel a sense of alienation, which was underlined by Hochschild (2012) as an effect of emotional labour. One of the recurring themes that emerged from the interviews was the question of the ways to tackle disinformation online. Most interviewees underlined the need for media literacy among people as one of the ways to address this issue. According to them, this will empower ordinary people to differentiate between disinformation and real news.

Thus, this study highlights the role of emotional labour in maintaining the professional identity of fact-checkers in India. Since the inception of fact-checking, this phenomenon and its various aspects have been extensively studied; however, these have been limited to the developed world. This study, along with previous research on fact-checking website literature in India (Kumar, 2022), are small steps in understanding this phenomenon in the context of this country. Future research on this topic should explore working conditions, the process that goes into fact-checking in the developing world where political and social situations may not be conducive to doing so.

8. Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare. The study was supported by grant from C.V. Åkerlund Media Foundation (2022–23) during the data collection and writing of the article. The first author currently has funding from Finnish Cultural Foundation (2024–2026).

References

- Amazeen, M. A. (2019). Practitioner perceptions: Critical junctures and the global emergence and challenges of fact-checking. *International Communication Gazette*, 81(6–8), 541–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518817674>
- Amazeen, M. A. (2020). Journalistic interventions: The structural factors affecting the global emergence of fact-checking. *Journalism*, 21(1), 95–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884917730217>
- Badrinathan, S., & Chauchard, S. (2024). “I Don’t Think That’s True, Bro!” Social Corrections of Misinformation in India. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 29(2), 394–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612231158770>
- Banaji, S. (2018). *Vigilante Publics: Orientalism, Modernity and Hindutva Fascism in India*. *Javnost – The Public*, 25(4), 333–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1463349>
- Banaji, S., Bhat, R., Agarwal, A., Passanha, N., & Sadhana Pravin, M. (2019). WhatsApp Vigilantes: An exploration of citizen reception and circulation of WhatsApp misinformation linked to mob violence in India. 2019.
- Binns, A. (2017). Fair game? Journalists’ experiences of online abuse. *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*, 6(2), 183–206. https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms.6.2.183_1
- Bossio, D., & Holton, A. E. (2018). The identity dilemma: Identity drivers and social media fatigue among journalists. *Popular Communication*, 16(4), 248–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2018.1535658>
- Bossio, D., & Sacco, V. (2017). From “Selfies” to Breaking Tweets: How journalists negotiate personal and professional identity on social media. *Journalism Practice*, 11(5), 527–543. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1175314>
- Brandtzaeg, P. B., & Følstad, A. (2017). Trust and distrust in online fact-checking services. *Communications of the ACM*, 60(9), 65–71. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3122803>
- Brems, C., Temmerman, M., Graham, T., & Broersma, M. (2017). Personal Branding on Twitter: How employed and freelance journalists stage themselves on social media. *Digital Journalism*, 5(4), 443–459. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2016.1176534>

- Chen, G. M., Pain, P., Chen, V. Y., Mekelburg, M., Springer, N., & Troger, F. (2020). 'You really have to have a thick skin': A cross-cultural perspective on how online harassment influences female journalists. *Journalism*, 21(7), 877–895.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918768500>
- D'Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2008). Doing Emotional Labour: The Experiences of Indian Call Centre Agents. *Global Business Review*, 9(1), 131–147.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/097215090700900109>
- Deuze, M., & Witschge, T. (2018). Beyond journalism: Theorizing the transformation of journalism. *Journalism*, 19(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916688550>
- Goffman, E. (1990). The presentation of self in everyday life. In *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Penguin.
- Graves, L. (2016). *Deciding what's true: The rise of political fact-checking in American journalism*. Columbia University Press.
- Graves, L., & Cherubini, F. (2016). The Rise of Fact-Checking Sites in Europe. 2016. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research/files/The%2520Rise%2520of%2520Fact-Checking%2520Sites%2520in%2520Europe.pdf>
- Graves, L., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2016). Understanding Innovations in Journalistic Practice: A Field Experiment Examining Motivations for Fact-Checking: Understanding Innovations in Journalistic Practice. *Journal of Communication*, 66(1), 102–138.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12198>
- Grindstaff, L. (2002). The money shot: Trash, class, and the making of TV talk shows. In *The money shot*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2008). Creative Work and Emotional Labour in the Television Industry. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 25(7–8), 97–118.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408097798>
- Hochschild, A. R. (2012). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling* (Updated ed). University of California Press.
- Holton, A. E., Bélair-Gagnon, V., Bossio, D., & Molyneux, L. (2021). "Not Their Fault, but Their Problem": Organizational Responses to the Online Harassment of Journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1946417>
- Humprecht, E. (2020). How Do They Debunk "Fake News"? A Cross-National Comparison of Transparency in Fact Checks. *Digital Journalism*, 8(3), 310–327.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2019.1691031>
- Jaffrelot, C. (Ed.). (2009). *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Princeton University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7s415>
- Juneström, A. (2020). An emerging genre of contemporary fact-checking. *Journal of Documentation*, 77(2), 501–517. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-05-2020-0083>
- Kumar, A. (2022). Fact-Checking Methodology and its Transparency: What Indian Fact-Checking Websites Have to Say? *Journalism Practice*, 1–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2098520>
- Leidig, E. (2020). Hindutva as a variant of right-wing extremism. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 54(3), 215–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2020.1759861>
- Lewis, S. C., Zamith, R., & Coddington, M. (2020). Online Harassment and Its Implications for the Journalist–Audience Relationship. *Digital Journalism*, 8(8), 1047–1067.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1811743>
- Lyons, B., Mérola, V., Reifler, J., & Stoeckel, F. (2020). How Politics Shape Views Toward Fact-Checking: Evidence from Six European Countries. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 25(3), 469–492. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220921732>

- Mahl, D., Zeng, J., Schäfer, M. S., Egert, F. A., & Oliveira, T. (2026). "We Follow the Disinformation": Conceptualizing and Analyzing Fact-Checking Cultures Across Countries. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 31(2), 264–290.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612241270004>
- Media in India: Access, Practices, Concerns and Effects. (2022).
<https://www.kas.de/en/web/indien/laenderberichte/detail/-/content/media-in-india-access-practices-concerns-and-effects>
- Mena, P. (2019). Principles and Boundaries of Fact-checking: Journalists' Perceptions. *Journalism Practice*, 13(6), 657–672. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2018.1547655>
- Molyneux, L., & Holton, A. (2015). Branding (Health) Journalism: Perceptions, practices, and emerging norms. *Digital Journalism*, 3(2), 225–242.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2014.906927>
- Molyneux, L., Holton, A., & Lewis, S. C. (2018). How journalists engage in branding on Twitter: Individual, organizational, and institutional levels. *Information, Communication & Society*, 27(10), 1386–1401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1314532>
- Nath, V. (2011). Aesthetic and emotional labour through stigma: National identity management and racial abuse in offshored Indian call centres. *Work, Employment and Society*, 25(4), 709–725. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017011419726>
- Neyazi, T. A., & Nakamizo, K. (2026). Between democracy and authoritarian leadership: Institutional trust, media consumption, and political attitudes in India. *Democratization*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2026.2615851>
- Nikunen, K. (2014). Losing my profession: Age, experience and expertise in the changing newsrooms. *Journalism*, 15(7), 868–888. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884913508610>
- Nikunen, K. (2018). *Media Solidarities: Emotions, Power and Justice in the Digital Age*.
- Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2015). The Effect of Fact-Checking on Elites: A Field Experiment on U.S. State Legislators. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 628–640.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12162>
- Roberts, S. T. (2019). *Behind the screen: Content moderation in the shadows of social media*. Yale University Press.
- Sardesai, R. (2015). 2014: *The Election That Changed India*. Penguin Books Ltd.
- Shankar, B., & Kumar, S. (2014). *Emotional Labour and Burnout Relationship: Role of Social Support and Coping*.
- Sharma, N., & Sivakumar, G. (2023). Social media, political discourse and the 2019 elections in India: Journalists' perspectives on the changing role of the mainstream media in setting the political agenda. *Global Media and Communication*, 19(2), 185–205.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/17427665231186252>
- Sinha, S. (2017). *Fragile Hegemony: Modi, Social Media, and Competitive Electoral Populism in India*.
- Soronen, A. (2018). Emotional Labour in Magazine Work: Suppressing and evoking emotions as part of project-based teamwork. *Journalism Practice*, 12(3), 290–307.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1297685>
- Suomalainen, K., Nykänen, N., Seeck, H., Kim, Y., & McPherson, E. (2025). Fact-Checking in Journalism: An Epistemological Framework. *Journalism Studies*, 26(10), 1129–1149.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2025.2492729>
- Swati Chaturvedi. (2016). *I am a Troll: Inside the Secret World of the BJP's Digital Army*. Juggernaut Publication.
- Thomson, T. (2021). Mapping the emotional labor and work of visual journalism. *Journalism*, 22(4), 956–973. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918799227>
- Udupa, S. (2016a). Archiving as History-Making: Religious Politics of Social Media in India: Online Archiving-India. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 9(2), 212–230.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12114>

- Udupa, S. (2016b). Fast time religion: News, speculation, and discipline in India. *Critique of Anthropology*, 36(4), 397–418. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X16654550>
- Udupa, S. (2018). Enterprise Hindutva and social media in urban India. *Contemporary South Asia*, 26(4), 453–467. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2018.1545007>
- Udupa, S. (2019). *Nationalism in the Digital Age: Fun as a Metapractice of Extreme Speech*.
- Vinhas, O., & Bastos, M. (2025). When Fact-Checking Is Not WEIRD: Negotiating Consensus Outside Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic Countries. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 30(1), 256–276. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612231221801>
- Waisbord, S. (2020). Mob Censorship: Online Harassment of US Journalists in Times of Digital Hate and Populism. *Digital Journalism*, 8(8), 1030–1046. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1818111>
- Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2018). *Thinking about 'information disorder': Formats of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information*.
- Young, D. G., Jamieson, K. H., Poulsen, S., & Goldring, A. (2018). Fact-Checking Effectiveness as a Function of Format and Tone: Evaluating FactCheck.org and FlackCheck.org. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(1), 49–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699017710453>