



# Fact-Checking in Combating Misinformation to Foster Altruism

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## Abstract:

In the digital age, misinformation has proliferated, presenting significant challenges for trust in institutions and individuals. This paper focuses on the impact of misinformation on fostering altruism, particularly in a diverse country like India. Misinformation can fuel tensions between communities, exacerbating existing divisions and hindering efforts towards unity and harmony. Furthermore, it distorts perceptions of social needs and priorities, undermining individuals' motivation to engage in charitable activities or support marginalized communities. False narratives propagated by misinformation can also foster apathy or hostility towards certain groups, impeding progress towards social justice and equity. To combat this problem, fact-checking plays a vital role in verifying information and promoting accurate knowledge. By promoting fact-checking practices and emphasizing the importance of credible information sources, individuals can make informed decisions, maintain trust, and contribute to fostering altruism in society.

**Keywords:** fact-checking, misinformation, trust, diversity, unity, harmony, altruism, social needs, charitable activities, social justice.

## Introduction

The digital age, offers to access information like never before, has also become a breeding ground for **misinformation**; false or misleading information presented as fact.<sup>1</sup> This widespread phenomenon creates significant challenges for trust in institutions, media, and even among individuals. When people are constantly exposed to false information, they become skeptical and may find it difficult to discern what is true and what is not. This can lead to a breakdown in trust between citizens and government, businesses, and other social and religious entities. In a diverse country like India with numerous cultures, religions, and languages, social interconnection is crucial for maintaining peace and stability.<sup>2</sup> Misinformation can fuel tensions between different communities by spreading rumours, stereotypes, and inflammatory content.<sup>3</sup> It can get worse existing divisions and sow seeds of discord, hindering efforts towards unity and harmony. Misinformation can even undermine altruistic behaviour by distorting perceptions of social needs and priorities. When individuals are misinformed about social issues or crises, they may be less motivated to engage in charitable activities or support marginalized communities.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, false narratives propagated by misinformation can foster apathy or

<sup>1</sup> Michael Hameleers, Thomas E. Powell, Toni G.L.A. Van Der Meer & Lieke Bos, "A Picture Paints a Thousand Lies? The Effects and Mechanisms of Multimodal Disinformation and Rebuttals Disseminated via Social Media," *Political Communication*, 37/2 (2020): 281.

<sup>2</sup> Hameleers, M., & van der Meer, G. L. A., "Misinformation and polarization in a high-choice media environment: How effective are political fact-checkers?," *Sage Journals: Communication Research*, 47/2(2019): 89.

<sup>3</sup> Jerit J., Barabas J., "Partisan perceptual bias and the information environment," *The Journal of Politics*, 74 (2012): 674.

<sup>4</sup> Jerit J., Barabas J., Partisan perceptual bias and the information environment, 768.

even hostility towards certain groups, hindering efforts for social justice and equity.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Fact-checking is a process of verifying the accuracy and truthfulness of claims, statements, or information presented in various forms of media, including news articles, social media posts, speeches, and other sources. Hence, the paper highlights the critical role of fact-checking in addressing the proliferation of misinformation across digital platforms. And to focus on behavioural change to foster altruism the paper emphasises the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) to focus on the psychological accuracy of information to prevent its harmful effects on individuals and society.

### Conceptualization

There is difference between misinformation and disinformation, misinformation refers to misleading or sometimes false statements that run contrary to the fact-checking consensus of the scientific community.<sup>6</sup> Disinformation, on the other hand, can be defined as the deliberate spread of false information for secondary gain, for the financial, political, or both.<sup>7</sup> Within these categories lies a wide spectrum of conflicting or misleading information. Misinformation and disinformation are both of concern in the era of information and interactive age as it relates to the dissemination of pervasive dangers of misinformation/disinformation and its nefarious influence on our capacity for altruism.

Fact-checking is a systematic process and plays a crucial role in verifying the accuracy and truthfulness of claims, statements, or information presented in various forms of media for the public discourse.<sup>8</sup> It helps to combat the spread of misinformation and empower individuals to make informed decisions based on reliable information. Fact-checking operates on principles that prioritize accuracy, transparency, and accountability.<sup>9</sup> *Accuracy* is the fundamental principle of fact-checking.<sup>10</sup> Fact-checkers rigorously assess the evidence and sources behind a claim to determine its validity. They strive to verify the factual accuracy of information by cross-referencing it with credible sources, checking for consistency and legalization, and evaluating the expertise and trustworthiness of sources.<sup>11</sup> The ultimate goal of fact-checking is to ensure that only truthful and reliable information is disseminated to the public. *Transparency* is another essential principle for maintaining the integrity and credibility of the fact-checking process.<sup>12</sup> Fact-checkers are transparent about their methodology, sources, and reasoning behind their conclusions.<sup>13</sup> They provide readers with a clear explanation of how they conducted their investigation, the criteria used to assess the accuracy of information, and any limitations or uncertainties associated with their findings.<sup>14</sup> By being transparent about their process, fact-checkers enable readers to evaluate the reliability of their conclusions and make informed judgments about the genuineness of the information presented.<sup>15</sup> Another principle is *Accountability*, is key to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of fact-checking efforts.<sup>16</sup> Fact-checkers are accountable to their readers and the public for

<sup>5</sup> Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Reifler, J., & Wood, T.. "Taking fact-checks literally but not seriously? The effects of journalistic fact-checking on factual beliefs and candidate favorability." *Political Behaviour*, Vol.42 (Springer: 2019):942.

<sup>6</sup>Swire-Thompson B, Lazer D, "Public health and online misinformation: challenges and recommendations," *Annu Rev Public Health*, 41 (2020):435.

<sup>7</sup>Swire-Thompson B, Lazer D, Public health and online misinformation: challenges and recommendations, 3/2 (2019): 436.

<sup>8</sup> Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Reifler, J., & Wood, T.. Taking fact-checks literally but not seriously? The effects of journalistic fact-checking on factual beliefs and candidate favorability, 948.

<sup>9</sup> Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Reifler, J., & Wood, T.. Taking fact-checks literally but not seriously?

<sup>10</sup> Bhattacharjee, A., & Sanford, C., "Influence processes for information technology acceptance: An elaboration likelihood model," *MIS Quarterly*, 30, (2006): 808.

<sup>11</sup> Bhattacharjee, A., & Sanford, C., Influence processes for information technology acceptance: An elaboration likelihood model, 805.

<sup>12</sup> Cotter, K., DeCook, J. R., & Kanthawala, S., "Fact-checking the crisis: COVID-19, infodemics, and the platformization of truth," *Social Media + Society*, 8/1 (2022):4.

<sup>13</sup> Cotter, K., DeCook, J. R., & Kanthawala, S., Fact-checking the crisis: COVID-19, infodemics, and the platformization of truth.

<sup>14</sup> Curry, A. L., & Stroud, N. J., "The effects of journalistic transparency on credibility assessments and engagement intentions," *Journalism*, 22/4, (2021): 903.

<sup>15</sup> Curry, A. L., & Stroud, N. J., The effects of journalistic transparency on credibility assessments and engagement intentions, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Curry, A. L., & Stroud, N. J., The effects of journalistic transparency on credibility assessments and engagement intentions.

the accuracy and impartiality of their work.<sup>17</sup> They adhere to professional standards and ethical guidelines that prioritize objectivity, fairness, and independence.<sup>18</sup> Fact-checkers strive to correct any errors or inaccuracies on time and evidently, taking responsibility for any mistakes and learn to improve the quality of their future fact-checking endeavours.<sup>19</sup> To hold accountable to high standards of accuracy and integrity, fact-checkers contribute to the overall credibility and effectiveness of the fact-checking process.

Fact-checking and Opinion are distinct concepts that serve different purposes in the realm of information dissemination. Fact-checking involves verifying the accuracy and truthfulness of specific claims, statements, or information presented in various forms of media.<sup>20</sup> The primary objective of fact-checking is to ascertain whether a claim or statement corresponds with objective reality, based on available evidence and verifiable data.<sup>21</sup> Fact-checking relies on evidence-based verification, where claims are assessed against credible sources, expert opinions, official records, and other reliable information.<sup>22</sup> Fact-checking seeks to uncover factual inaccuracies, errors, or misrepresentations in information, aiming to provide an accurate and objective account of reality.<sup>23</sup> Fact-checking is guided by principles to ensure that the information presented is based on verifiable evidence and rigorous investigative methods.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Opinion refers to objective viewpoints, beliefs, or interpretations expressed by individuals or groups, often based on personal experiences, values, or ideological perspectives.<sup>25</sup> Unlike fact-checking, which focuses on verifying the factual accuracy of information, opinions are inherently subjective and may not be objectively verifiable.<sup>26</sup> Opinions can vary widely among individuals and are influenced by factors such as cultural background, education, socio-economic status, and personal biases. While opinions are valuable for expressing diverse perspectives and to foster dialogue, they are not subject to the same standards of evidence-based verification as factual claims.<sup>27</sup> Opinions are typically distinguished from factual statements by expressions such as "I believe," "in my opinion," or "it seems to me," signalling that the statement reflects a personal viewpoint rather than an objective fact.<sup>28</sup>

A fact is a specific detail that is true based on objective proof. A fact is discovered. An opinion is an interpretation, value judgment, or belief that cannot be proved or disproved. Therefore, fact or opinion are evidence-based verification to distinguish between factual claims and opinions, to ensure that information presented to the public is grounded in verifiable evidence and based on objective reality.<sup>29</sup> Lewandowsky, Ecker & Cook emphasize that for evidence-based verification, fact-checking helps to uphold the integrity and accuracy of information, preventing the spread of misinformation and promoting informed decision-making among the

<sup>17</sup> Cotter, K., DeCook, J. R., & Kanthawala, S., Fact-checking the crisis: COVID-19, infodemics...

<sup>18</sup> Boukes, M., & Hameleers, M., Fighting lies with facts or humor: Comparing the effectiveness of satirical and regular fact-checks in response to misinformation and disinformation, *Communication Monographs*, 90/1 (2023): 73.

<sup>19</sup> Boukes, M., & Hameleers, M., Fighting lies with facts or humor: Comparing the effectiveness of satirical and regular fact-checks in response to misinformation and disinformation.74.

<sup>20</sup> Cotter, K., DeCook, J. R., & Kanthawala, S., Fact-checking the crisis: COVID-19, infodemics...

<sup>21</sup> Cotter, K., DeCook, J. R., & Kanthawala, S., Fact-checking the crisis: COVID-19, infodemics...

<sup>22</sup> Boukes, M., & Hameleers, M., Fighting lies with facts or humor: Comparing the effectiveness of satirical and regular fact-checks in response to misinformation and disinformation, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Ecker, U., Lewandowsky, S., & Chadwick, M., "Can corrections spread misinformation to new audiences? Testing for the elusive familiarity backfire effect," *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 5/41 (2020):51.

<sup>24</sup> Cotter, K., DeCook, J. R., & Kanthawala, S., Fact-checking the crisis: COVID-19, infodemics, and the platformization of truth, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Vraga, E. K., Kim, S., & Cook, J., "Testing logic-based and humor-based corrections for science, health, and political misinformation on social media," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 63 (2019): 395.

<sup>26</sup> Curry, A. L., & Stroud, N. J., "The effects of journalistic transparency on credibility assessments and engagement intentions" *Journalism*, 909.

<sup>27</sup> Carnahan, D., & Garrett. R. K., "Processing style and responsiveness to corrective information," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 32/3 (2020): 542. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edz037>

<sup>28</sup> Carnahan, D., & Garrett. R. K., "Processing style and responsiveness to corrective information" *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 540.

<sup>29</sup> Pingree, R. J., "Effects of unresolved factual disputes in the news on epistemic political efficacy," *Journal of Communication*, 61, (2011): 24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2010.01525.x>

public.<sup>30</sup> In an era of widespread misinformation and disinformation/falsehood, how social factors serves as a bulwark against false claims and propaganda, enabling individuals to discern truth from falsehood and make informed judgments based on reliable information.<sup>31</sup> Ostermeier points out the lacking transparency in how the fact-checked claims get selected.<sup>32</sup> The selection/objective effect may lead to a biased perception of a politician's credibility: actors who receive more negative fact-checking ratings deemed less truthful than those who are checked rarely and receive fewer negative ratings.<sup>33</sup> The receiver's decision relies on information contained in a sender's (fact-checkers) claim and a fact-check output. To prioritizing behaviour change of a receiver, fact-checking must reinforce the importance of critical thinking, skepticism, and reliance on credible sources in evaluating information, empowering individuals to navigate an increasingly complex media landscape with confidence and discernment.

### Theorizing the concept

Fact-checking theories encompass various approaches and methodologies used to verify the accuracy and truthfulness of information. While there is no single unified framework, several theories and methodologies have been developed to guide fact-checking efforts, such as; a) *Traditional journalistic* practices, serve as the foundation for many fact-checking endeavours.<sup>34</sup> Journalists employ rigorous investigative techniques, such as cross-referencing sources, corroborating evidence, and seeking expert opinion, to ensure the accuracy of their reporting.<sup>35</sup> b) *Source verification* - Fact-checkers examine the reputation, expertise, and track record of the source to determine its trustworthiness. This approach involves verifying the authenticity of the source and scrutinizing its motives and potential biases.<sup>36</sup> c) *Content analysis* involves to examines the Fact-checkers to analyze the language, tone, and framing of the content to assess its accuracy and objectivity. This approach may involve fact-checking specific claims, statements, or data points within the content.<sup>37</sup> d) *Cross-referencing* method - Fact-checkers consult a variety of independent sources, including official records, expert opinions, peer-reviewed studies, and credible news outlets, to corroborate the information and verify its reliability.<sup>38</sup> d) *Data verification* focuses on fact-checking statistical or quantitative information presented in various forms, such as reports, studies, or government data. Fact-checkers scrutinize the methodology used to collect and analyze the data, assess the accuracy of statistical claims, and verify the interpretation of the findings.<sup>39</sup> e) *Crowdsourced* fact-checking harnesses the collective efforts of volunteers, journalists, and experts to verify information collaboratively. Crowdsourced fact-checking enables rapid verification of large volumes of information and encourages public participation in the fact-checking process.<sup>40</sup> f) *Automated* fact-checking utilizes artificial intelligence and natural language processing algorithms to automatically detect and verify misinformation. This approach involves analyzing textual or visual content against databases of factual

<sup>30</sup> Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., Seifert, C. M., Schwarz, N., & Cook, J., "Misinformation and its correction: Continued influence and successful debiasing," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 3(2012):106–131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612451018>

<sup>31</sup> Ognyanova, K., Lazer, D., Robertson, R. E., & Wilson, C., "Misinformation in action: Fake news exposure is linked to lower trust in media, higher trust in government when your side is in power," *Harvard Kennedy School (HSK) Misinformation Review*, (June, 2020):022. <https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-024>

<sup>32</sup> Eric Ostermeier, "Selection Bias? PolitiFact Rates Republican Statements as False at Three Times the Rate of Democrats," *Smart Politics*, (2011): 10.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Uscinski, and Ryden Butler, "The Epistemology of Fact Checking", *Critical Review*, 25/2, (2013):163.

<sup>34</sup>This approach involves adhering to principles of accuracy, fairness, and impartiality in gathering and verifying information.

<sup>35</sup> Berkowitz, Dan, and David A. Schwartz Miley, "CNN and the Onion," *Journalism Practice* 10 /1 (2016): 4. doi:10.1080/17512786.2015.1006933.

<sup>36</sup>Andersen J., Sør S. O. Communicative actions we live by: The problem with fact-checking, tagging or flagging fake news – The case of Facebook. *European Journal of Communication*, 35/2 (2020):126–139.

<sup>37</sup>Brennen, A. J. S., Simon, F. M., Howard, P. N., & Nielsen, R. K. *Types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation*, (Oxford University Press, April, 2020). 1–13.

<sup>38</sup> Margolin DB, Hannak A, Weber I. "Political fact-checking on Twitter: When do corrections have an effect?" *Political Communication*,35 (2018): 196–219.

<sup>39</sup> Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Reifler, J., & Wood, T.. Taking fact-checks literally but not seriously? The effects of journalistic fact-checking on factual beliefs and candidate favorability

<sup>40</sup> Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Reifler, J., & Wood, T.. "Taking fact-checks literally but not seriously? The effects of journalistic fact-checking on factual beliefs and candidate favorability."

information and identifying inconsistencies or false claims. Automated fact-checking tools can help to scale fact-checking efforts and provide real-time verification of information.<sup>41</sup>

The above traditional fact-checking methods primarily aim to identify and expose misinformation, focusing on information accuracy. But to address, how fact-checking could focus on behavioural change to predict a positive attitude to foster altruism, Ajzen & Fishbein opined “fact for human is a general dispositions tend to be poor predictors of behavior in specific situations.”<sup>42</sup> To explain, **Disposition:** A person might be generally considered honest and truthful. **Specific situation:** In a high-pressure work environment with tight deadlines, the same person might be tempted to lie on a report to avoid negative consequences. Therefore, the predictability of behavior depends on the measurement accuracy of the investigated variables,<sup>43</sup> intention and perceived behavioral central can help predict the performance of the behaviour.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, to foster altruism in the midst of misinformation, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) which started as the Theory of Reasoned Action in 1980 used as a method to predict an individual’s intention to engage in a behaviour for a specific (mis)information. The theory is intended to explain the behavioural intentions to influence the attitude about the subjective evaluation of the information rather than objective realities in the fact-checking.

This Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) goes beyond, exploring how fact-checking influences individuals’ attitudes, perceived norms and perceived control focusing on behaviour change, particularly in altruistic actions.<sup>45</sup> TPB help to predict how exposure to fact-checking might encourage or discourage altruistic actions. For instant, TPB exposes the false claims about a charity’s effectiveness or legitimacy, decreases the negative attitude of the people to contribute or to donate.<sup>46</sup> It analyses the psychological and social factors to play, providing insights beyond just information access. TPB investigates deep into individual motivations for engagement with altruism, by understanding how attitudes, social pressure, and perceived ease of action influence choices, fact-checking efforts help to address specific barriers and motivators for different groups.<sup>47</sup> Instead of just presenting facts, TPB interventions can address positive attitudes towards altruism, build social norms around helping others, and increase perceived control over engaging in altruistic actions.

Feature	Traditional fact-checking methods	Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)
Focus	Identify and expose misinformation	Understands and predict behaviour change
Outcome	Verified information	Alter the attitudes, intentions, and actions
Application	Identify the false information	Design interventions to motivate behaviour
Strengths	Rigorous verification, evidence-based	Identifies psychological and social factors to influence behaviour.

### Problematizing the limitations and nuances of Fact-checking through TPB

It is essential to recognize and problematize the effectiveness of Fact-Checking through TPB. The fact-checking is a valuable tool in combating misinformation, its effectiveness in countering the spread of false information

<sup>41</sup> Nyhan, B., Porter, E., Reifler, J., & Wood, T.. “Taking fact-checks literally but not seriously? The effects of journalistic fact-checking on factual beliefs and candidate favorability.”

<sup>42</sup> Icek Ajzen, “The Theory of Planned Behavior,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50 (1991):180.

<sup>43</sup> Nguyen Thanh Dung, “Theory of Planned Behavior as a Theoretical Framework,” (Hanoi: Foreign Trade University, 2020) 2.

<sup>44</sup> Nguyen Thanh Dung, “Theory of Planned Behavior as a Theoretical Framework,1.

<sup>45</sup>.Ajzen, I.,”The Theory of Planned Behaviour,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50 (1991): 182.

<sup>46</sup> Ajzen, I.,The Theory Of Planned Behaviour, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 183.

<sup>47</sup> Ajzen, I.,The Theory Of Planned Behaviour, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 179.

may be limited. Misinformation often spreads rapidly through social media and other online platforms, reaching a wide audience before fact-checkers can expose it. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offers a valuable framework for understanding how fact-checking might influence altruism, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations and potential dangers. Therefore, the extent to which fact-checking can effectively mitigate the impact of misinformation on fostering altruism needs critical examination. Many people in India may not be aware of the existence or importance of fact-checking initiatives which alters attitudes, intention, and actions in their behaviour. Social media platforms and messaging apps have become primary channels for the rapid spread of misinformation in India. False information can quickly go viral, reaching a wide audience before it can be fact-checked.<sup>48</sup>

Though Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) offers a valuable framework, it focuses on a set of factors such as attitude, subjective norm, and perceived control to influence behaviour. But overlooks the other crucial aspects like emotions, past experiences and unconscious biases. A central factor in the theory of planned behaviour is the individual's intention to perform a given behaviour. Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behaviour.<sup>49</sup> TPB primarily focuses on individual psychology, neglecting the broader social, cultural and economic contexts that shape altruism and which is weakness to misinformation.<sup>50</sup> TPB did not adequately address i) the power dynamics and Asymmetries who decide which information gets labelled potentially influencing public discourse and silencing marginalized voices. ii) the algorithmic biased platforms perpetuate existing inequalities and shape information access and visibility. iii) and fact-checkers to avoid pressure, receive funds by powerful institutions or governments to present information favouring specific agendas, undermining trust and objectivity.<sup>51</sup> It address to Choose how to frame and present debunked misinformation can influence emotional responses and delicately persuade individuals towards specific attitudes or behaviours raises ethical concerns, requires careful consideration of potential unintended consequences and respecting individual autonomy.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, TPB did not differentiate between different motivations for altruism, instead, overlook the situations where misinformation might encourage harmful or exploitative forms of "helping."<sup>53</sup> By critically examining TPB and its limitations, helps to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in using fact-checking to promote positive social change and encourage responsible altruism in the Indian context.

### **Ethical considerations by using TPB to promote altruism in Fact-Checking**

To apply a Theory of planned Behaviour in fact-checking to promote altruism in India raises several ethical considerations. Fact-checking must be conducted in a manner that respects freedom of expression and the rights of individuals to hold and express diverse opinions. While fact-checking aims to counter misinformation, it should not be used as a tool to suppress dissent views or stifle legitimate debate. Applying a western-developed theory like TPB to promote individualistic narratives without considering India's diverse cultural contexts, values, and social norms can lead to unresponsive interventions. This might clash with Indian values of communal responsibility and duty, leading to low engagement.

TPB offers a framework for understanding individual intentions, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations and potential ethical drawbacks when promoting altruism in diverse contexts like India. Amitai Etzioni a

<sup>48</sup> Bordia, P., & Rosnow, R. L., "Rumor rest stops on the information highway transmission patterns in a computer-mediated rumor chain," *Human Communication Research* 25/2 (1998):163. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1998.tb00441.x.

<sup>49</sup> Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M., *Understanding attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980) 9.

<sup>50</sup> Bagozzi, R. P., "Attitude Formation Under the Theory of Reasoned Action and a Purposeful Behavior Reformulation," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, (1986): 25.

<sup>51</sup> The Editorial Board. Facebook and the digital virus called fake news. *The New York Times*. (2016). Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/facebook-and-the-digitalvirus-called-fake-news.html>

<sup>52</sup> Strömbäck, J., Djerf-Pierre, M., & Shehata, A, The dynamics of political interest and news media consumption: A longitudinal perspective. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 25/4 (2013):422. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/eds018>.

<sup>53</sup> Vraga, E. K., & Tully, M, News Literacy, Social Media Behaviors, and Skepticism Toward Information On Social Media, *Information, Communication & Society*, (2019):3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1637445>.

communitarian ethics argue for considering social norms and collective responsibility, potentially offering a more relevant framework. Focusing on individual attitudes and beliefs might overlook the influence of social norms and community expectation in India's collectivistic culture.<sup>54</sup> TPB could lead to interventions that resonate less with target audiences. Iris Young a feminist scholar highlights the need to consider diverse perspectives within communities.<sup>55</sup> Fact-checking interventions based on TPB need to be sensitive to diverse cultural contexts and religious beliefs. Addressing misinformation without acknowledging these factors could lead to distrust and resistance. Gayatri Spivak critique western-centric approaches that might reinforce colonial power structures.<sup>56</sup> fact-checking interventions should be mindful of potential power imbalances within communities. TPB-based approaches might unintentionally amplify existing inequalities. Journalists and media ethics experts advocate for transparency and accountability as core principles of ethical journalism and fact-checking. Fact-checking methods and sources should be transparent and accountable to build trust and credibility. Impervious interventions based on TPB could raise ethical concerns.

Altruism in India might be driven by different factors like religious duty, family obligations, or community expectations requires fact-checking. For instance, exposing misinformation by supporting a particular charity without addressing the religious motives behind could lead to distrust and resistance to fact-checking.<sup>57</sup> Fact-checking should address misunderstandings while acknowledging the religious significance of helping others, foster trust and promote informed decisions. Fact-checking interventions based on TPB need to be translated and adapted for diverse languages and communication styles. Using complex, academic language in translated fact-checks might alienate rural populations with limited formal education, hinders outreach and impact. By reaching wider audiences effectively and ethically, TPB should utilize local dialects, storytelling, and cultural relevant to enhances accessibility, engagement and understanding in fact-checking.

## Evaluation

Misinformation can have a significant impact on altruistic behaviour in India, affecting individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and actions towards charitable endeavours and social causes. Misinformation destroys trust in altruistic establishments and initiates by spreading false or exaggerated claims about their activities, impact, or integrity. India's collectivistic culture, prioritizes social harmony and trust in authority facts. This can lead to unquestioning acceptance of misinformation from religious leaders, community elders, or trusted individuals in caste groups within social circles, potentially making them more susceptible to misinformation spread within these networks. Also, India live in villages, there is lack of access to quality education and critical thinking skills which can make individuals less able to evaluate information sources and identify misinformation. This can be worsened by language barriers and the prevalence of non-traditional media sources like WhatsApp groups, where verification is often absent. Misinformation often influences religious beliefs, historical grievances, or social anxieties to evoke strong emotions, making it more likely to be shared and believed without critical evaluation. This can be particularly effective in communities facing social or economic challenges.

In India, misinformation targets different religious communities to fuel prejudice, stereotypes, and social divisions are widely been seen. This can have a significant impact on altruistic behaviour towards targeted communities. Sacred symbols or revered facts are being misused to a legitimize false claims or manipulate cultural sensitives for selfish motives. This can erode trust in genuine altruistic efforts and discourage participation. Misinformation in urban and rural areas spread differently due to varying access to technology,

<sup>54</sup> Amitai Etzioni., "Communitarianism," *Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World* (London: Sage Publications, 2003): 226.

<sup>55</sup> Young, I. M. "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 23 (2006): 104.

<sup>56</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 287.

<sup>57</sup> Batson, C. D. and Shaw, L. L., "Evidence for altruism: Toward a pluralism of prosocial motives", *Psychological Inquiry*, 2/2 (1991): 112.

education and traditional media platforms. Marginalized communities might be more susceptible to specific types of misinformation due to social hierarchies and power dynamics. Such misinformation can foster apathy or inaction by downplaying the severity or urgency of social problems, leading individuals to underestimate the need for altruistic intervention. False claims that minimize the impact of poverty, inequality, or other social injustices may discourage individuals from taking meaningful action to address these issues. *Example*, misinformation try to suggest that homelessness is exaggerated or that poverty is not a significant problem in India may lead some individuals to believe that altruistic assistance is not needed or that social problems are beyond their capacity to solve, resulting in a lack of engagement in altruistic endeavours.

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to combat misinformation, promote media literacy and critical thinking skills, and foster a culture of transparency, accountability, and empathy in altruistic endeavours. TPB plays a crucial role in promoting social change and encourages altruistic actions in India by fostering a more informed and engaged public, to enhance transparency and accountability, and countering the spread of misinformation that may hinder altruistic efforts.

TPB factors such as attitude, subjective norm, and perceived control to influence behaviour, with accurate information, can alter individuals' attitudes towards social issues and charitable endeavours, make people to believe in the effectiveness and importance of contributing. This can subsequently increase their perceived behavioural control, empowering them to take action. By exposing false claims, TPB helps individuals to navigate complex social challenges and identify effective ways to contribute for positive social change, potentially to strengthen peoples' intention to be altruistic. However, it's crucial to acknowledge that TPB alone might not fully capture the complexities of promoting altruism in a diverse cultural context like India. Because, addressing social norms, often crucial in influencing altruistic behaviour within Indian communities, might require strategies beyond solely focusing on individual attitudes and beliefs.

