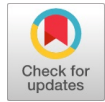


Evaluating the Impact of Fake News on Intolerance Among Socio-Economic Classes 3 & 4

Krishna Mohan Sharma



Abstract: The proliferation of fake news in the social media era has significant consequences for individuals, society, and democratic processes. Research has highlighted the detrimental effects of fake news on various aspects of society, including public opinion, political discourse, and individual decision-making. One consequence of fake news is the erosion of public trust in media and institutions. The finding reveals that fake news spreads much faster than credible information. This is a dangerous finding because, at best, fake news can spread false hope, and at worst, it can flare hatred and incite violence. A total of 100 cases of violations of religious hate speech were identified from the media studied in this research between 2022 and 2023. Regarding the religion involved in the cases, the Islamic denomination was predominant (32%), followed by Hindus (28%) and Catholicism (20%). Hate speech and incitement to violence were the most common topics (30%), although acts of discrimination and rejection (26%) and material damage or attacks on places of worship (19%) were also reported. The finding suggests that higher education students do not want to send fake news when they broadcast information. The finding also reveals that higher education students belong to many groups, and this does not affect the number of fake news stories because students conduct advanced research on the news and verify if it has a reliable source. Findings suggest that fake news and disinformation can subtly influence emotions and attitudes, potentially leading to behavioural consequences. The findings of the studies show that economic inequality is a potent enhancer of intolerance, inducing the escalation of out-group discrimination even without the presence of new intolerant mutants. Tolerance is positively associated with national-level economic prosperity, and this relationship is stronger for higher-income earners than for those with lower incomes. Individuals with job market insecurity and lower economic status (i.e., low income) are more likely to be more intolerant of people with different faiths. Once intolerance begins to act, it is almost unstoppable in the presence of inequality. The relationship between socioeconomic status, Misinformation, and intolerance is significant, as individuals from lower SES backgrounds are often at a higher risk of engaging in violent behaviour due to factors like poverty, lack of access to education, and limited economic opportunities. Lower family incomes of 30-60 K are more vulnerable to intolerance. Studies have shown a potential link between lower socioeconomic status (SES) and higher levels of intolerance, suggesting that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be more likely to exhibit intolerance towards others, particularly when facing economic hardship or perceived threats from different groups; Digital media has also made it easier to spread misinformation that is many a times unverifiable.

While name-calling, fake news, and other forms of low-level discourse and unethical political communication have always existed, social media has undoubtedly exacerbated these problems to a new level. The relationship between socioeconomic status, Misinformation, and intolerance is significant, as individuals from lower SES backgrounds are often at a higher risk of engaging in violent behaviour due to factors like poverty, lack of access to education, and limited economic opportunities.

Keywords: social media, individuals, society, public opinion, political discourse, Hate speech

Abbreviations:

SES: Socioeconomic Status

I. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of fake news in the social media era has significant consequences for individuals, society, and democratic processes. Research has highlighted the detrimental effects of fake news on various aspects of society, including public opinion, political discourse, and individual decision-making. One consequence of fake news is the erosion of public trust in media and institutions. As Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) [1] noted that misinformation can lead to misinformed beliefs and behaviours, with potentially serious consequences for individuals and society. When individuals encounter false information repeatedly, it can lead to scepticism and a decreased willingness to trust traditional news sources. This erosion of trust can have far-reaching implications for the functioning of democracy and the dissemination of accurate information. Fake news also has the potential to distort public opinion and influence political outcomes. Individuals exposed to false or misleading information may develop biased perceptions and make decisions based on inaccurate beliefs. As Lewandowsky et al. (2017) [2] emphasises that false information can influence political decision-making and threaten democratic processes. The intentional dissemination of misinformation for political gain can manipulate public sentiment and influence electoral outcomes, thereby undermining the integrity of democratic systems.

Historically, the concept of fake news has evolved. Its origin can be traced back to the distant past, but scientists began to deal with it only in the 20th century. Observing the rapid development of computing technology, we can see its connection with the increase in fake news reports. A social investigation was conducted. The willingness to believe phoney news was determined among students (15–18 years of age). The belief was tested using the Altemeyer test. Research has shown a possible correlation between the education research conducted and the willingness to verify a false report. Several studies suggest a relationship between

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the quality of education in individual countries and the inclination to believe and spread misinformation, also known as fake news.

The propagation of incorrect or deceptive material masquerading as legitimate or fake news has probably existed throughout human history. However, the phrase "fake news" has been used more frequently recently, especially in light of the development of social networks and the proliferation of online news sources. Email chain letters and other online disinformation were the primary means by which fake news was disseminated in the early days of the Internet. The growth of social networks has made it easier for fake news to spread quickly and widely, as individuals can easily share information with their followers' networks with only a few clicks. This has raised concerns about the potential harm that false news could have on how the public perceives events and topics, as well as on democracy and public dialogue.

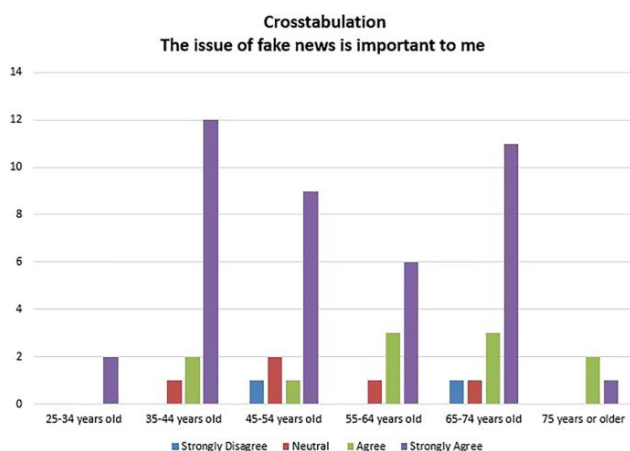
Fake news can be challenging to detect, as it is often designed to look like real news and be widely shared on social media and other platforms. Fake news can be identified through fact-checking, where information is carefully checked against multiple reliable sources to determine its accuracy. Media literacy education, which helps people become more critical consumers of information, can also help reduce the spread of misinformation and disinformation, including fake news. There are several strategies to help stop the spread of false information. Fake or biased news can be produced and spread for various reasons.

Figures available from various other sources indicate that in 79 incidents, there have been 266 cases of lynching since 2014, and this continues to show an upward trend. Thirty-seven persons were killed between 2010 and 2023. Of this, 26 were Muslims. The recent incidents of mob violence include those of Tabrez Ansari, Qasim Qureshi, and Samiuddin. The 24-year-old Tabrez Ansari was brutally beaten by a mob in Jharkhand for alleged theft, eventually leading to his death. Qasim Qureshi and Samiuddin were brutally attacked in Hapur, U.P., resulting in the death of the former and serious injuries to the latter.

Bengal's law is stringent, punishing with death those held guilty of lynching victims. Among other recommendations, the U.P. State Law Commission has emphasized taking strict action against officials for neglect of their duties. Political patronage to fundamentalist elements will deter the police officers from doing their duty. The implication of higher education may play an essential role in controlling "Fake News and Intolerance" because higher education and your qualifications determine the ability to think critically. Higher education develops a responsible citizenry. The cross-tabulation analysis for age determined that all age groups strongly agreed that fake news was essential to them.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As the world's fourth-largest Muslim country with a growing community of social media users, Bangladesh has been experiencing frequent online religious misinformation, inspiring violence against minorities and threatening interreligious harmony. Following an exploratory sequential mixed-methods analysis that combines a qualitative thematic analysis and a quantitative content analysis, we address two pertinent research questions. Sayeed Al-Zaman (2024) [7] found three ways users engage with misinformation: their topics of discourse, reactions, and appraisal. Users' discourse revolves around religious, radical, and political issues. Radical issues (60.4%) dominate users' discourse, followed by political topics (37.1%). Users' reactions are primarily adverse (94.1%), exhibiting different destructive behaviours. Alarmingly, adverse reactions are more than seventeen times positive (5.5%). Results for misinformation appraisal suggest that 69.3% of users believe misinformation, while only 25.9% can identify and refute it. Nearly half of the users (48.21%) concomitantly share radical content, react negatively, and trust misinformation. This research suggests that religious misinformation-led violence may have more political connections than religious ones. Phillips (2017) [4] indicates that there seems to be some consensus that exposure to violent media impacts aggression, but there is little evidence showing its impact on violent or criminal behaviour. Nonetheless, high-profile violent crimes continue to reignite public interest in media effects, particularly about copycat crimes. Criminologists and sociologists are generally reluctant to attribute violence and criminal behaviour directly to exposure to violent media. However, they are not dismissive of media's impact on attitudes, social policies, and social control, as evidenced by the myriad of studies on moral panics and other research that addresses the relationship between media, social anxieties, gender, race, and class inequalities. Laxmi M. and Deepthi (2023) [3] conducted a literature review on the relationship between media violence and aggression among young adults. The review included studies from various countries and media forms, including television, movies, video games, and social media. The review found that exposure to media violence is positively associated with increased aggression among young adults. The review also found that the relationship between media violence and aggression is complex, with



[Fig.1: Fake News and Intolerance]

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre and all states to frame stringent laws against lynching. Manipur passed an anti-lynching law in November 2018. Rajasthan and West Bengal have passed such legislation more recently. West

several factors influencing the strength and direction of the relationship, such as the type and amount of media consumed, the individual's personality traits, and their social environment. Srinivas et al. 2022 [6] conclude that a Fake spreader is a narcissist; a Real spreader is a Machiavellian prediction of fake news diffusion using psycho-sociological facets "Believe half of what you see and nothing you read online"1 Fake news is untrue information, which makes users believe it as a verified content, This impacted the belief of social users and it further increased the usage of hoax information in a social network like increased tremendously in a social network like Facebook, Twitter, etc.

The propagation of false content in social networks is causing significant changes in the dynamics of public lifestyle and culture, as it affects the opinions and mental behaviour of people. A study conducted by Laxmi M. and Deepthi V. (2021) measures the levels of aggression and media violence among young people as well as the correlation between the two. For the study, a sample of 80 young individuals (N=45 Males and N=35 Females) was selected based on purposeful sampling. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 received two surveys via an online survey. The 29-item Buss Perry Hostility Questionnaire was created to measure aggression in young individuals. Using the content-based media exposure scale, the level of media exposure was determined (A.H. Den Hermer). They used descriptive statistics as well as Pearson's product-moment correlation. Aggression and media violence among young people are directly related. Mob lynching, fuelled by online rumours, is only a small part of the ever-increasing role played by social media in Indian society and politics. Sen's (2018) [5]. The Study further reveals that while the nature and impact of social media in India are complex, the mob lynching incidents represent the dark underbelly of Internet technology, or what might be called its use for "wrongdoing." The Indian state is not equipped to deal with the spreading of misinformation and fake news on social media. Social media companies are loath to take steps because doing so would compromise their business model and freedom of speech.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Samples were collected from respondents who filled out a questionnaire and were interviewed. The questionnaire was the Primary data source, and Secondary data was collected from state headquarters and NCRB. Out of 1000 samples, 150 were collected from each of the following states: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Data was collected through a convenient sampling method using questionnaires, personal interviews, and Case studies.

The researcher prepared a research questionnaire. It consists of various items (questions) about the issue at hand, including general information about the respondent, such as Age, Gender, and educational qualification. The questionnaire includes both open-ended and closed-ended questions, as well as quantitative and Qualitative questions. Both types of questions are included here.

Objective: To understand the impact of Fake News on Intolerance among socioeconomic classes 3 & 4

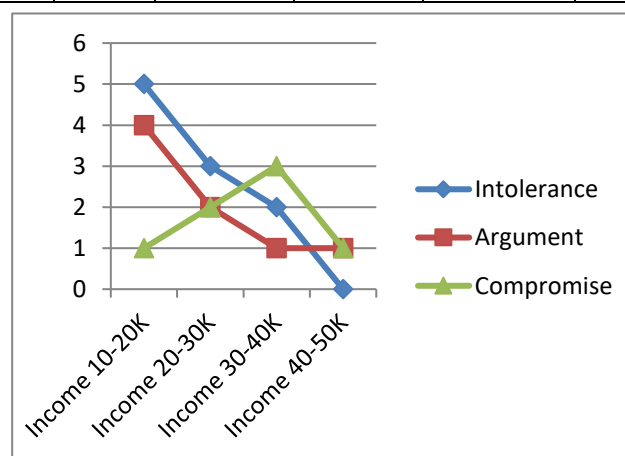
Hypothesis: There would be intolerance among socioeconomic classes 3 & 4 as a result of New Age Media/ Fake News.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the studies show that economic inequality is a potent enhancer of intolerance, inducing the escalation of out-group discrimination even without the presence of new intolerant mutants. Tolerance is positively associated with national-level economic prosperity, and this relationship is stronger for higher-income earners than for those with lower incomes. Individuals with job market insecurity and lower economic status (i.e., low income) are more likely to be more intolerant of people with different faiths. Once intolerance begins to act, it is almost unstoppable in the presence of inequality. Lower family incomes of 30-60 K are more vulnerable to intolerance. Studies have shown a potential link between lower socioeconomic status (SES) and higher levels of intolerance, suggesting that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be more likely to exhibit intolerance towards others, particularly when facing economic hardship or perceived threats from different groups; Digital media has also made it easier to spread misinformation that is many a times unverifiable. While name-calling, fake news, and other forms of low-level discourse and unethical political communication have always existed, social media has undoubtedly exacerbated these problems to a new level. The relationship between socioeconomic status, Misinformation, and intolerance is significant, as individuals from lower SES backgrounds are often at a higher risk of engaging in violent behaviour due to factors like poverty, lack of access to education, and limited economic opportunities.

Table -1- Impact of Fake News on Intolerance N = 50

SN	Income	Intolerance	Argument	Compromise	Total
1.	Income 10-20K	5	4	1	10
2.	Income 20-30K	3	2	2	07
3.	Income 30-40K	2	1	3	06
4.	Income 40-50K	0	1	1	02



[Fig.2: Graphic Illustration of Intolerance in SEC-3&4]

Case-1-Ayodhya: The data findings suggest that 5 (N=50) respondents were very aggressive towards their

political and religious beliefs after receiving news about communal violence during the Lok Sabha Election 2024 in Ayodhya. Later, that news was proven fake by the fact-checking team of PIB. Out of these five respondents who were involved in physical manhandling with their counterparts, 04 continued with the argument till police arrived and were arrested. One person, a Fruit Vendor with a monthly income of 12-17 K per month (SEC-4), compromised and was allowed to go.

Case-2-Jaipur: A Similar case study was taken from Rajasthan when tailoring Kanhaiya Lal Teli was murdered, in Udaipur in 2022. The killing sparked protests and tension in the city. The men identified themselves as Muhammad Riyaz Attari and Muhammad Ghaus. They claimed responsibility for the murder, which they said was in revenge for an insult to Islam. The men filmed the attack and posted it online. In this case, a total 07 people were involved in post-murder violence all of them were from (SEC-3) Income ranging between 20-30K/PM (SEC-4), three people were sent to jail as they were involved in murder, 02 continued vandalism in Jaipur City next day they were arrested 02 who initially argued. Still, later, he left the place by tendering apologies.

Case -3- Assam: Dokmoka mob lynching- Nilotpal Das and Abhijeet Nath had gone to a picnic spot at Kathilangso waterfalls on June 8, 2018, under the Dokmoka police station in Karbi Anglong. A mob, due to false suspicion, took them to be child kidnappers and lynched them to death. The cause of the lynching was very popularly attributed to fake news of child kidnappers, both by the public and the media. The uniqueness of this incident lies in the fact that for the first time, such a massive and widespread protest was organised in Assam against the perpetrators of the crime. So many people were involved, but initially, 06 people led the mob. Out of these six, two were arrested for direct involvement in the murder. The very next day, one person was also arrested for instigating the argument, while three others were released by the police who were initially involved. Later, they tried to calm the mob but failed to save them. Later, based on CCTV footage, they were freed by police. All 06 respondents (N=50) were in their early 30s, and their income ranged between 30-40 K/PM (SEC-3).

The research findings show that 4% to 9% of the respondents involved in aggressive behaviour were from (SE-3&4). They tend to compromise or become tolerant with increased economic status; hence, the hypothesis "There would be intolerance among socioeconomic classes 3 & 4 as a result of Fake News" is accepted. Data in the figure shows that two people from Delhi, whose monthly income falls under (SEC-2), i.e., 40-50K/PM, were involved in an argument over rumours of demolishing a temple in East Delhi. Still, later, they either compromised on the issue or left it after a heated argument.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 2015 found that exposure to violent media content was positively associated with aggressive behavior among slum-dwelling adolescents in Mumbai, with a correlation of 0.3 with aggression that translates into a change in the odds of aggression size of media violence in the same or bigger than the effect size of many other studies recognized threats to public health, exposure to electronic media violence increases the risk of

intolerance among socioeconomic class 3 & 4 they behaving aggressively in the short-run.

V. CONCLUSION

Intolerance can be categorized into three categories. These categories include risk, hate speech, and target, where the risk in the context of the coding sheet most likely refers to possible drawbacks, injuries, or unfavourable effects connected to elements found in the identified misinformation content on X and Facebook. Risk in religion refers to content-coding that may suggest possible harm or unfavourable consequences associated with one's religious identity or beliefs. This could include dangers, such as conflict, discrimination based on religion, or other adverse outcomes related to one's religious affiliation. Group means examining material that highlights potential drawbacks or difficulties associated with being a member of a specific social, racial, or cultural group. This may entail hazards connected to prejudice, stereotyping, or other unfavourable outcomes resulting from group dynamics. Studies confirm a potential link between lower socioeconomic status (SES) and higher levels of intolerance, suggesting that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be more likely to exhibit intolerance towards others, particularly when facing economic hardship or perceived threats from different groups.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

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