

Fake News in Kashmir: A Case Study

¹Ab Rouf Bhat & ²Dr. Syeda Afshana

¹Ph.D Scholar, Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir, J&K (India)

²Associate Professor, Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir, J&K (India)

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 13 March 2019

Keywords

Fake News, Rumors, Kashmir, Social Media

*Corresponding Author

Email: roufbhat7890[at]gmail.com

ABSTRACT

While social media is used to proliferate news, it is also used to peddle fake news, rumors and misinformation. There is an upward trend in the circulation of fake news on social media throughout the world. The phenomenon of fake news is as old as the media itself but it has dominated the public discourse since the post-truth era and is directly related to the increase in the usage of social networking sites. The online media sphere of Kashmir is not immune to fake news either. Kashmir is one of the few places where Internet services are often disrupted by government to stop the spread of "misinformation" during the escalation of violence. But it is never clear as what constitutes "misinformation" for the government. The repercussions of fake news in a conflict place can be dangerous given the role it can play in mobilizing people and ideas. This paper looks into how social media is used to spread fake news in Kashmir and who are the players involved in it. It also explores how the absence of any fake news debunking mechanism makes this phenomenon a dangerous thing in conflict torn Kashmir.

1. Introduction

Fake news is defined as "false stories that appear to be news, spread on the Internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views (Cambridge dictionary, 2019)." For University of Michigan, (n.d.) news stories that are "fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes" qualify for being called as fake. Based on the understanding of these two definitions, fake news contains "fabricated facts" with "unverifiable origin" aimed at "influencing views". But the ecosystem of fake news is so vast that there is still no consensus between journalists and scholars of communication as what and what not constitutes fake news. The phenomenon of fake news is as old as media itself. However, the usage of the term "fake news" garnered attention since the 2016 US Presidential election or what we call as "post-truth" era. This was substantiated in the *Google Trend Map* (2018), which showed a record increase in the search enquiries related to "fake news" in the second quarter of 2016.

Different people, based on their understanding and application of the phrase, define fake news differently. The universe of fake news is ever-expanding as the proliferation of fake news on different media platforms, mostly on social media, is increasing with the growing number of Internet users and the easy availability of Internet service. Claire Wardle (2017), former Research Director at the *Tow Centre, Columbia Journalism School*, has created a typology of fake news. According to her, there are seven types of fake news, which exist between "mis- and disinformation" within our information system. These are: satire or parody; misleading content; imposter content; fabricated content; false connection; false context; manipulated content.

Fake news is a very catchy term. "The economy and simplicity of the two-word combination... instantly conjures up a variety of meanings and can thus be used very flexibly (McGonagle, 2017)." The definitional dilemmas persist as the

phrase is interchangeably used for both mis- and disinformation. The phrase has thus become very vulnerable and is being politicized.

2. Review of Literature

a) Understanding Fake News and Rumors

"Rumor is a complex phenomenon. It may be provisionally regarded as the product of a series of witnesses, each of whom bears testimony to a statement imparted to him by his predecessor (Hart, 1916)." Gordon Allport and Allan Hunt (1947) in their path-breaking book, *The Psychology of Rumor* write: "Rumors are impetuous in nature. They spread like wildfire because they deal with an immediate threat. Engulfing a community in an amazingly short period of time, they include rumors of violence, or accidents, catastrophes. Starting in a highly charged atmosphere, rumors of this class are likely to incite prompt and vigorous action because they are based on strong emotions of panic, rage." Fake news is thus a snowballing process.

Fake news is mostly viral fictitious stories that are presented as "news". The repercussions of fake news vary based on the socio-political fabric of the society in which it is peddled. In a literate society, information (news) plays an important role in its functioning that is why fake news has caused a buzz in our societies. A society fed with fake information tends to function abnormally. The uncontrolled distribution of fake news points out to a sociological problem that is deteriorating every day. The nature of fake news poses a challenge not only to the way media organizations disseminate information but also to the entire information system of a society.

b) Motivation Behind Fake News

The reason for the production of fake news can be political, economical or social in nature. People with political interests use fake news to do propaganda against their rivals

or manipulate public opinion regarding a particular issue. Political parties and politicians peddle fake news to discredit opposition particularly during election time or heightened political unrest. Politicians sometimes manipulate news in their favor to gain sympathy from audience or voters. Several groups of websites and social media handles, modeled on newsroom setup, have been established to spread fake news at the behest of people with ulterior motives. For example during 2016 Presidential Elections in USA, several fake news websites were traced to Russia (Timberg, 2016). Advertisements, shares and clicks generate thousands of dollars of revenue for fake news websites, thus making it a lucrative business (BBC, 2017). Fake news is spread intentionally to mobilize people, cause panic, or mislead people. In countries like India, rightwing groups have circulated fake news reports to create mass hysteria and an atmosphere for violence to terrorize a minority population (BBC, 2018).

c) Role of Social Media in Dissemination of Fake News

Social media is the minefield of fake news. Most of the fake news emerges on social media first before it mobilizes people and opinions. Due to the absence of foolproof mechanism on different social media platform, it becomes easy for social media users to peddle fake news. "The extent of untrustworthy information on social media is concerning (Shyrokykh, 2018)." There is much more to fake news and it needs different elements to complete the cycle. Other than (mis)information and motivation, social media is needed to spread fake news (Trend Micro, 2017). On social media, fake news is not spread by common users only but by bots and trolls (CITS, n.d.), who are sometimes paid for their job. Under pressure for not tackling the menace of fake news, Social media sites like *Twitter* and *Facebook* often come up with measures to curb its spread on their sites. Facebook has entered into partnership with other fact-checking organizations and has built an entire team to check the circulation of news on their platform (Chang & Brackett, 2018). Similarly, *Twitter* has blocked thousands of fake accounts responsible for spreading fake news (Confessore & Dance, 2018). *WhatsApp* messenger brought several changes to its application for the sole purpose of having more control on fake news. It invited communication scholars to help build a system to decrease the application's role in the dissemination of fake news (Jalan, 2018). However, the phenomenon still persists on all platforms and needs more robust redress.

3. Methodology

The methodology for this study comprised a content analysis of a dataset comprising some nine cases to identify key actors and conversations. The cases were chosen and collected selectively on the basis of the response garnered on social media in Kashmir.

4. Kashmir: Case Study

a) Social Media in Kashmir

The advent and usage of mobile Internet for social media networking is more than a decade old practice in Kashmir. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (2019) in its report put the mobile subscriber base in Jammu and Kashmir at 11408435. There are over four million people who use Internet,

mostly on their mobile phones. Social media, like in any other country in the world, is popular in Kashmir; *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *WhatsApp* being the preferred platforms among people. Cheap Internet service coupled with unregulated social networking sites, the production, distribution and consumption of news has become easy. Social media is used for recreation, news and in highlighting the conflict in region. Internet services are often disrupted by government in the name of maintaining "law and order" in Kashmir (Agrawal, 2018). *Internet Shutdown Tracker* (2019) reported 124 incidents of Internet shutdown in Kashmir in 2018 alone; the reason behind being the violent encounters between militants and government forces or civilian killings.

Social media has turned out to be a boon for Kashmir because of the marginalization of peoples' voices in mainstream Indian media. People of Kashmir have donned the hats of storytellers and are now narrating their own conflict. In the frenzy of communicating the happenings of Kashmir to the world outside, fictitious reports or rumors galore on social media platforms, getting shared thousands of times before being verified as false.

Social media in Kashmir is mostly unchecked, with no myth busting mechanisms in place. With millions of users posting stuff daily on social media, it becomes difficult to regulate the content. Equipped with smartphones and 4G Internet service, social media users have donned the hat of journalists in times of easily-available news material. Without caring to fact-check the content of news, it becomes easy for users to post the stuff of their liking, which sometimes turns out to be fake. Except for online news portal, *Free Press Kashmir* and blogging site, *With Kashmir*, the mainstream news organizations have not setup special desks dedicated to the busting of fake news in Kashmir as is the trend in media world over. Neither has state government come up with any solution. A news portal, *stopfakeinkashmir.org*, touted to fact-check and spot fake news in Kashmir turned out to be a damp squib.

With no mechanisms in place to detect and debunk fake news, the spread of fake reports has shot up. There are evidences that not only common citizens but state including government forces are involved in the dissemination of fake news in Kashmir. The government often stops Internet during encounters between militants and armed forces in order to "maintain law and order" by preventing people from circulating any "news". "The Jammu and Kashmir state government banned 22 social networking sites in 2017 citing their misuse (Wani, 2017)." During this period, government claimed to have shutdown around 350 *WhatsApp* groups involved in spreading rumors in Kashmir. The ban was highly criticized and challenged by people. People resorted to VPNs to bypass ban on social media sites. But "social media has added new dimension to rumor mongering in Kashmir, here [in Kashmir] news would often travel even in information-blackout like wildfire (Mirani, 2016)."

Indian news channel, *NDTV*, (2018) reported that police arrested two boys for spreading fake news in Kashmir. The mushrooming of news pages, owned by ordinary people with no journalistic skills, on *Facebook* and *Twitter* has made it

difficult to regulate news on social media. A rumor, believed to have originated on a *Facebook* page, prompted entire Kashmir to run to hospitals (Yasir, 2016). Frustrated by frenzied crowd on roads in every nook and corner of Kashmir, the state government decided to regulate news pages on social media. The move was, however, criticized by media who said it would amount to legalizing rumor mongering in the state. Allport and Hunt's words appropriate the chaos and confusion in Kashmir caused by fake report of infant's death by expired vaccine. It also shows how social media is misused in Kashmir. Hundreds of news pages and *WhatsApp* groups run by self-styled journalists spread "news" without checking the authenticity of the facts.

Communication scholars believe that fake news threatens the social fabric of already-volatile Kashmir. The dangers associated with fake news are far bigger in a fragile place like Kashmir than in any other normal place. The penetration of consumption of fake news via social media sites in Kashmir is so high that it can take the blink of an eye to send entire Kashmir into flames. The state was sent into tizzy by a fake report on social media which was later run by some news organizations that the Supreme Court of India has scrapped the controversial Article 35-A of Indian Constitution which grants special rights to the state under Indian domain. As soon as the news spread, many districts including the capital city Srinagar and volatile Anantnag witnessed violent clashes and shutdown by people (Dailyhunt, 2018).

The repercussions of fake news in Kashmir suggest how the menace should be dealt heavily so as to save lives. But in the rat race of sharing news, even the professional news organizations have succumbed to fake reports several times in Kashmir. It has become a serious challenge to curb fictitious reports and the violence caused thereof. Daily newspaper, *Rising Kashmir*, (2018) in its editorial said: "The apprehensions over the circulation of harmful content or dissemination of information that is misleading have... got magnified in the backdrop of violent... incidents." The "information curtain" drawn by state authorities has turned Kashmir into a "fertile ground for rumors". Rumor-mongering has also been used by elite class to have a check on common citizenry in Kashmir during the time of Maharajas (Mirani, 2016).

b) Fake Reports in Kashmir

Case One

In recent times, one of the biggest fake news that echoed the chambers of Kashmir was the rumor of the death of an infant due to polio vaccination. In panic, "thousands of children who were administered pulse polio drops were rushed to hospitals across Kashmir... by their parents (Ganai, 2016)." The rush of anxious parents with their infants choked every road that led to medical facilities in Kashmir. Authorities were caught unawares by the swelling of hospitals and roads by people. At some places people vandalized hospital furniture and equipment and beat doctors in anger. The unprecedented number of people rushing for hospitals was unmanageable for the administration. Police had to take swift action and arrest the person responsible for posting the fake news of an infant's death due to polio vaccine.

Case Two

A senior police officer, Ayub Pandith, was lynched by mob on June 23, 2017 during the congregational prayers of *Shab-e-Qadr*, the most auspicious night in the Muslim holy month of Ramdhan. The incident happened in the compound of central mosque, also known as *Jamia Masjid*, in the old city of Srinagar. Soon social media was abuzz with rumors that the officer was killed for his surname "Pandith" (Faysal, 2017). This surname is shared mostly by Hindus of Kashmir who migrated from Kashmir to different parts of India after violence plagued the state during 1990s. However, Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir share many common surnames. The rumor, mostly shared by Kashmiri Hindus also known as Pandits, on social media, blamed Muslims for killing the officer because of his surname, which was far from reality. A faction of Pandit population share hostile feelings for Muslims and blame them for their exodus from homeland. The same hate was translated into controversy over police officer's killings, who happened to be a Muslim. The intention behind such a campaign was to malign the Muslim population and stoke communal tension in the state.

Case Three

Panic gripped Rajouri district on May 25, 2017 when a "report" of a school bus falling in gorge started to circulate on social media (Sood, 2017). The bus, according to the report, had around 40 students on board who were on way to a picnic spot. The rumor sparked panic in many areas as parents and district administration was struggling to establish communication with the school bus. The bus was on way to Peer ki Gali, a picnic spot in mountains in Poonch district, which is devoid of any communication facility. As the reports started to trickle down, number of ambulances and private vehicles carrying parents and relatives of students rushed to the "spot of accident". However, soon the district administration managed to establish connection with the bus and found out that the report was a hoax. The actual accident had happened seven years ago in which over 43 students were injured. The district administration had a difficult time to pacify and assure worried parents about the safety of students.

Case Four

Former Pakistani cricketer, Shahid Afridi, was scheduled to address people of Kashmir at Srinagar's *Jamia Masjid* in the third week of April in 2018. The news was highly circulated as the cricketer has a mass following in Kashmir. The cricketer has been in past vocal about the human rights violation at the hands of Indian forces in Kashmir. During T20 World Cup in 2016 in India, Afridi stirred a hornet's nest by thanking Kashmiri fans after a match. Even some mainstream media organizations like *Mumbai Mirror* carried the news of the rumored speech. Police had to suspend mobile Internet services in Srinagar on the day of cricketer's rumored address via telephone. It later turned out to be a hoax. A *Facebook* page, *Kashmir Today*, even went on to write "internet googly prevents Afridi to open account in Kashmir."

Case Five

The government of India announced a ceasefire with militants in Kashmir during the month of Ramadan in 2018. Few days later a report making rounds on Twitter declared that

militants in violation of ceasefire killed five Indian paramilitary men in Pampore area. The fake tweet originated on *Twitter*. The user was soon rebutted by netizens as no such incident had happened in the area. Under pressure, the local police had to file a case against the accused for circulating fake news. The tone of the tweet questioned the ceasefire announced by the government.

Case Six

Zakir Musa, a commander of a militant outfit, was spotted in some part of Punjab, the northern state of India. A blurred photo of a man with a turban and beard was shared hundreds of times on social media sites. The man was said to be Zakir Musa, who has gone into hiding in fight against government forces. The photo was soon picked up by Indian mainstream news organizations like *Zee News*, *CNN News18*, *India Today*, *IANS*, and *Financial Express*. Any media outlet couldn't verify the photo. In fact, *India Today* broadcast the same photo in 2017 as that of Musa (Free Press Kashmir, 2018). The unrelenting media coverage of Musa being spotted in Punjab forced local police to issue high alert across the state of Punjab.

Case Seven

A video clip of a Sikh beating a drum in dark went viral in Kashmir (Free Press Kashmir, 2018). The caption of the clip announced that the man was waking up Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan in a village in south Kashmir. The video was circulated as a symbol of communal harmony in Kashmir with praise being showered on the elderly man. The unverified clip was reported by *Press Trust of India* as a symbol of harmony between the people of different religions in the region. Later the likes of *NDTV*, *Hindustan Times*, *Times Now*, *ABP News*, *WION* carried the report too. However, a team of a local news portal, *Free Press Kashmir*, decided to verify the video clip and went on to find the man. It turned out to be that no such man existed in the area mentioned in the video clip. It was found that the clip was uploaded on *YouTube* by a Pakistani news site but the video was shared on social media as that of Kashmir, which was untrue.

Case Eight

Free LED bulbs under Ujala scheme were disturbed by Power Development Department in 2017 and 2018 to every household in Kashmir. Soon a rumor spread that the bulbs were fitted with spy camera, used by government forces to maintain surveillance on militant activities in the region. As the rumor gained ground that several militants hiding in civilians homes were killed after government forces spied on them using "surveillance cameras" fitted in the bulbs of these houses, people started destroying the "spy bulbs". A video circulated on Facebook, claiming that an engineering student has found a spy camera fitted in the bulb, garnered more than 2 lakh views in few weeks. The rumor having first originated in south Kashmir was soon believed to be untrue (Nazir, 2017).

Case Nine

On November 14, 2019, a suicide bomber driving a vehicle hit a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) bus in Lethpora, Pulwama, killing at least 49 paramilitary men. This was one-of-the-first-kind attack on Indian forces in Kashmir;

the incident caused uproar across India. Angry citizens shared millions of posts on social media after the attack, some of them fake. *Boom*, an independent digital initiative formed to fact-check viral content, identified around 25 fake news posts related to the attack (2018). These included the rumor of the suicide of widow of a slain paramilitary man, and the video of a former CM of Uttar Pradesh state laughing in the background of a coffin of a security man killed in the attack. Other fake news post related to the attack included the beating of a Delhi minister, Prashant Bushan, after the attack; film star, Shahrukh Khan, donating money to Pakistan post-attack; Saudi Prince, actually one Imam Tawheedi, an Iranian-born Australian, speaking against the attack; the app-generated photo of the mastermind of the attack. As the result of the attack, hundreds of Kashmiri students and workers living in different Indian states were either manhandled or threatened with violence. The CRPF denied dozens of testimonials and news reports of Kashmiri students manhandled by Indian citizens and termed them fake. The denial, however, was rebutted by numerous testimonials by the victims.

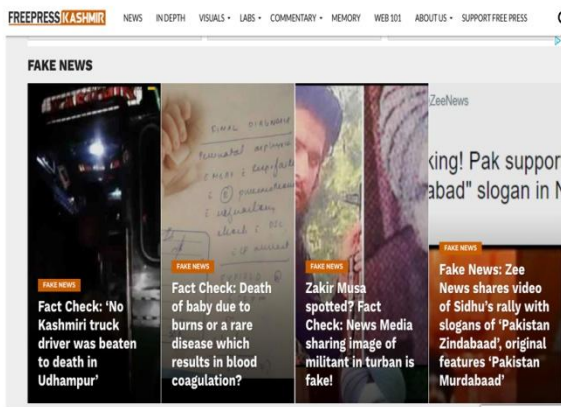
5. Recommendations

a) Danger of Fake News and How to Overcome it

The dangers of fake news are very high when the percentage of people with access to the production and consumption of news is high. Fake news has become a tool to instill mistrust among people and stir social conflicts. Social conflicts between frenzy groups can snowball into violence at times. There have been recorded instances when fake news was used against minorities or marginalized sections of the society. It can lead to further 'otherization'. The misinformation is also used as a method to manipulate public opinion and mobilize people with mob mentality. It is also employed as a means of character assassination of people, which can result in the loss of lives. Fake news is often peddled to polarize people and divert their attention from the issues of real importance to their societies, particularly during elections. The implication of anonymity of social media users amplifies the dangers of fake news and complicates the fight against the menace.

Scholars and social media experts believe that it is impossible to stop the production of fake news altogether. However, there are steps one can take to decrease its circulation. Among them the development of information literacy and critical thinking about data among people are of great importance (Leetaru, 2016). Wendling (2017) believes that algorithms used by social networking sites and messaging apps could be a part of the solution to stop the spread of fake news. But Weaver (2018) thinks that fake news is like jet fuel to algorithms. He also believes fact-checking teams and debunking websites also have a role to play. Another important thing that can be handy is the owning of responsibility of the content shared on social networking sites by people. A high percentage of responsible users can change the demography of entire ecosystem of false information prevailing in the virtual world. Weaver believes that Internet "is at once the most public place we've ever created, but also one of our most private experiences." Anonymity of social media users is a major enabler of fake news on social media. However, identity verification can annoy people and defenders of privacy on

digital media.



HOME
Shutdown in Kashmir Valley over Fake News on Article 35A



To remedy the fake news problem, journalism schools can play a role too. They should emphasize on digital literacy to prepare students identify fake news by reflecting on the process by which one arrives at epistemological investigation of fake news. Besides, the learning of technological solutions with instructional activities for identifying misinformation and disinformation can also go a long way in keeping a check on the spread of fake news.

6. Findings and Conclusion

Since there are different political dynamics operating in Kashmir, the phenomenon of fake news is relatively complex and menacing than any other place. The nature of fake news in Kashmir suggests different reasons behind its circulation. They range from creating mass hysteria, polarization, panic, and mobilization of people in a certain way. In a sensitive place like Kashmir where rumors fly fast, fake news can lead to endless cycles of violence and death as mass mobilization easily attracts violent response from government forces. A number of cases listed in this paper suggest that fake news is circulated to mislead people and tarnish the social fabric. Kashmir is a polarized place when it comes to different religions. There is a

widening divide between migrated Hindus and Muslims of Valley as is evident from the discourses on social media. It is found that fake news is used as a tool to malign a particular population and create an environment of frenzy against it and further the divide between the two communities. Not only ordinary citizens, the state institutions also indulge in peddling fake news at times. The motives for this range from cleaning the image of state and its institutions or to contain the frenzy among people during disturbed times. An analysis of fake reports cited here fit into different categories as proposed by Wadle. For example, the report of old Sikh man beating drum during Ramadhan falls under the category of “misleading content.” Similarly, the killing of paramilitary forces in Pampore can be termed as “fabricated content.” The killing of police officer can be bracketed in “false connection” category.

The fact remains that the absence of fact-checking sites and less media literacy have also contributed to the escalation of fake news in Kashmir. With no sincere efforts to curb fake news and educate people about the dangers of fake news, it is unlikely to see a coordinated effort between different stakeholders to address the problem.

References

1. Agrawal, Ravi. (2018). The inside story of how India shuts down the internet in Kashmir. *Quartz India*. Retrieved from <https://qz.com/india/1408071/how-india-shuts-down-internet-in-kashmir/>
2. Allport, Gordon W & Postman, Leo. (1947). *The Psychology of Rumor*. New York, USA: Henry Holt and Company.
3. British Broadcasting Corporation. (2017). *How do Fake News Sites Make Money*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/business-38919403/how-do-fake-news-sites-make-money>

4. British Broadcasting Corporation. (2018). *Nationalism a driving force behind fake news in India, research shows*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-46146877>
5. Boomlive.in (2018).
6. *Cambridge dictionaries online*. (2019). Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fake-news>
7. CITS. (n.d.). *How is Fake News Spread? Bots, People like You, Trolls, and Microtargeting*. Retrieved from <http://www.cits.ucsb.edu/fake-news/spread>
8. Confessore, Nicholas & Dance, Gabriel. (2018). *Battling Fake Accounts, Twitter to Slash Millions of Followers*. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/technology/twitter-fake-followers.html>
9. Chang, Lulu & Brackett, Eric. (2018). *Facebook outlines plans for combating false news*. *Digital Trends*. Retrieved from <https://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/facebook-fight-fake-news/>
10. Dailyhunt. (2018, August 27). *Shutdown in Kashmir Valley over Fake News on Article 35A*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/zBqRwh>
11. Faysal, Muhammad. (2017). *Was Ayub Pandith Killed Because of His Surname? WithKashmir*. Retrieved from <http://withkashmir.org/2017/06/25/ayub-pandith-killed-surname/>
12. Free Press Kashmir. (2018). *Zakir Musa spotted? Fact Check: News Media sharing image of militant in turban is fake!* Retrieved from <https://freepresskashmir.com/2018/12/06/zakir-musa-spotted-fact-check-news-media-sharing-image-of-militant-in-turban-is-fake/>
13. *Google Trend Map*. (2018). Retrieved from <https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=today%205-y&q=fake%20news>
14. Ganai, Naseer. (2016). *Social media misused on pulse polio day in J&K*. *India Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/social-media-misused-on-pulse-polio-day-304246-2016-01-18>
15. Hart, Bernard. (1916). *The Psychology of Rumour*. *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 9 (Sect Psych), 1-26.
16. *Internet Shutdowns*. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.internetshutdowns.in>
17. Jalan, Trisha. (2018). *WhatsApp to fund 20 research projects into fake news, 6 in India*. *Medianama*. Retrieved from <https://www.medianama.com/2018/11/223-whatsapp-fake-news-research-india-grant/>
18. Leetaru, Keliv. (2016). *How Data And Information Literacy Could End Fake News*. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kalevleetaru/2016/12/11/how-data-and-information-literacy-could-end-fake-news/#722179d33994>
19. McGonagle, T. (2017). *"Fake News": False fears or real concerns?* *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights*, 35(4), 203-209.
20. Mirani, Haroon. (2016). *Kashmir: Fertile ground for rumours*. *Greater Kashmir*. Retrieved from <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/kashmir/kashmir-fertile-ground-for-rumours/207301.html>
21. NDTV. (2018). *Social Media Group Admins Arrested In Kashmir For Spreading Fake News*. Retrieved from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/social-media-group-administrators-arrested-in-kashmir-for-spreading-fake-news-1862985>
22. Nazir, Aijaz. (2017). *Kashmir unrest: 'Spy' LED bulbs distributed under Ujala scheme? Rumours breed panic*. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/kashmir-unrest-spy-led-bulbs-distributed-under-ujala-scheme-rumours-breed-panic-3327892.html>
23. *Rising Kashmir*. (2018, July 30). *Fake news*. Retrieved from <http://www.risingkashmir.com/news/fake-new>
24. Sood, Shyam. (2017). *Reports about death of 38 students in Poonch mishap a hoax*. *The Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jammu-kashmir/community/reports-about-death-of-38-students-in-poonch-mishap-a-hoax/412592.html>
25. Shyrokikh, Karina. (2018, November, 5). *Fake news on social media: Whose responsibility is it?* *Ericsson*. Retrieved from <https://www.ericsson.com/en/blog/2018/11/fake-news-on-social-media-whose-responsibility-is-it>
26. Timberg, Craig. (2016). *Russian propaganda effort helped spread 'fake news' during election, experts say*. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/russian-propaganda-effort-helped-spread-fake-news-during-election-experts-say/2016/11/24/793903b6-8a40-4ca9-b712-716af66098fe_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.6ffe1af21496
27. *Telecom Regulatory Authority of India*. (2019). *Highlights of Telecom Subscription Data*. Retrieved from <https://www.trai.gov.in/sites/default/files/PRNo01Eng02012019.pdf>
28. *Trend Micro*. (2017). *Fake News and Cyber Propaganda: The Use and Abuse of Social Media*. Retrieved from <https://www.trendmicro.com/vinfo/pl/security/news/cybercrim-e-and-digital-threats/fake-news-cyber-propaganda-the-abuse-of-social-media>
29. *University of Michigan Library*. (n.d). *"Fake News," Lies and Propaganda: How to Sort Fact from Fiction*. Retrieved from <https://guides.lib.umich.edu/fakenews>
30. *Wendling, Mike*. (2017). *Solutions that can stop fake news spreading*. *BBC*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-38769996>
31. Wani, Fayaz. (2017, April 26). *J-K government bans social media sites in Kashmir for a month*. *New Indian Express*. Retrieved from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/apr/26/j-k-government-bans-social-media-sites-in-kashmir-for-a-month-1597990--1.html>
32. *Wardle, Claire*. (2017). *Fake news. It's complicated*. *First Draft*. Retrieved from <https://firstdraftnews.org/fake-news-complicated/>
33. *Weaver, Jesse*. (2018). *A Unified Theory of Everything Wrong with the Internet*. *Medium*. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/s/story/the-anonymity-paradox-a-unified-theory-for-what-is-wrong-with-the-internet-673cf6706140>
34. *Yasir, Sameer*. (2016, April 20). *Fake news in Kashmir: How this epidemic threatens the Valley's social fabric*. *Firstpost*. Retrieved from <https://www.firstpost.com/india/fake-news-in-kashmir-how-this-epidemic-threatens-the-valleys-social-fabric-2738884.html>