

---

# Fact-Checking as Digital Labour: Ethics, Politics, and Big Tech’s False Framing of Online Fact-Checking

Aishik Saha\*<sup>1</sup> and Elizabeth Muthoni\*<sup>†</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) – Athens 157 72, Greece

## Abstract

Fact-checking is increasingly framed by global conservative/reactionary movement(s) as fundamentally opposed to ‘freedom of expression’, and therefore a form of censorship. Big Tech platforms, like Meta, that already interpret Trust & Safety operations as an ‘Expense Centre’ have directly sought, not only to dismantle fact-checking mechanisms, but directly charge fact checkers with obstructing free speech. ‘Disinformation work’ has been increasingly given attention through the lens of production studies that provides us with insights regarding the political economy of fake news (Udupa 2024, Ong 2022). Content Moderation work has also been given some attention especially with respect to the working conditions and precarity faced by those involved in the work. We attempt to shift the lens towards the labour performed by fact-checkers by situating them within the context of the broader digital economy. Rather than simply confirming the truth value of a statement, fact-checking involves a complex interrelationship between the individuals, workflows, technologies, and organizational pressures that influence how verification of ‘facts’ in online spaces are carried out. Our paper examines how fact-checking organizations in the Global South, specifically India and Kenya, produce verified information, manage editorial decisions, navigate various limitations, and grapple with the ethics and responsibilities of their roles as fact-checkers. The study deploys a mix of qualitative methodologies such as document analysis, interviews with fact-checking organizations, and participant & non-participant observation. We frame the everyday challenges in the context of attacks against fact-checking organizations from Big Tech itself.

**Keywords:** Fact, Checking, Big Tech

---

\*Speaker

<sup>†</sup>Corresponding author: mwahu7@gmail.com