

Learning about Fallacies

An activity of "Kashmir attack makes life hard for India's Muslims"

In "Kashmir attack makes life hard for India's Muslims" (page 9, *What's Up* March 2019), we learn that a terrorist group carried out an attack that killed 40 Indian police personnel. Some Hindus quickly blamed the attack on the whole community of Muslims, even though it was carried out and supported by a tiny group.

This is called a fallacy – an argument based on mistakes in reasoning. This fallacy is called "hasty generalisation" – just because a tiny group of Muslims were responsible for the attack, it does not mean that the whole community of Muslims in general were also responsible for the attack.

There are many types of fallacies. Here are some of them:

Type of fallacy	Description	Example	This is wrong because...
Questionable cause	Saying that one thing causes another just because they happened together or one after another.	Jack spilled some milk this morning. Jack also failed his exam that day. Therefore, spilling the milk caused Jack to fail the exam.	Spilling the milk did not cause Jack to fail the exam. The two events just happened one after another, with nothing to link them.
Appeal to popularity	Saying that something is correct just because everyone else says so too.	Everyone says that Jack stole the wallet, so he must have stolen the wallet.	There is no evidence Jack stole the wallet. Just because everyone says something doesn't mean it is true.
Personal attack	Saying that a person is wrong about something just because of the way he looks or his past actions.	My doctor tells me that being overweight is unhealthy, but he himself is overweight! Therefore, he must be wrong.	The appearance of the doctor has nothing to do with whether or not he is wrong.

Now, can you think of one example of a fallacy you have come across? Discuss it with your partner and describe the example below. Then, share it with your classmates.

Type of fallacy:

Example:

This is wrong because...