

Gender-Based Disinformation

Gender-Based Disinformation – When Lies Are Used as a Weapon

Gender-based disinformation is one of the most insidious forms of indirect digital violence. It operates quietly, often without immediate detection, and relies not on direct insults or threats but on spreading false or misleading information framed as “logical” or “socially acceptable.” It frequently draws on stereotypes about women and their societal roles.

This form of digital violence aims to undermine credibility, question competence, and push women out of public life without the need for overt threats. In the Palestinian and Arab context, disinformation often takes recurring forms, such as:

- Linking women’s public participation to “reputation” or private life
- Focusing on appearance, clothing, or personal choices instead of ideas or achievements
- Taking statements out of context to falsely suggest wrongdoing

The danger lies in its amplification: false information spreads to wide audiences, turning recipients into unwitting participants in the harm.

What Is Disinformation?

Disinformation is the deliberate use of false, fabricated, or misleading information and exclusionary language to undermine women, particularly in politics, media, and public life.

Examples include:

- Attaching a photo of a female politician with a caption criticizing her appearance or clothing
 - Questioning professional competence without evidence
 - Using private life details to cause reputational harm
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How Disinformation Works

Disinformation often begins with incomplete information or cropped images, which are then presented in emotionally charged language. It is amplified through multiple accounts or closed groups, creating the illusion of “public opinion.” Repetition causes false information to appear credible, making denial more difficult than belief.

Impact on Victims

The effects of gender-based disinformation extend beyond reputation:

- Loss of self-confidence
- Withdrawal from public debate
- Avoidance of media exposure
- Fear of expressing opinions

Many women reduce their digital activity or remain silent to escape persistent waves of suspicion and doubt.

What to Do When Facing Disinformation

- Document all evidence: links, screenshots, dates, and account identifiers.
- Alert your close circle, particularly other women.
- Report incidents to platforms and seek technical support if necessary.
- Review digital security practices and do not share passwords.
- Prioritize digital, psychological, and physical safety; seek psychosocial support.
- Address disinformation through careful documentation rather than emotional engagement.
- Calmly dismantle misleading narratives using verified facts.
- Rely on trusted sources.
- Recognize that disinformation is not a personal failure but a systemic tool of exclusion.

Why Disinformation Is Extremely Harmful

Digital reputation is closely tied to social and professional opportunities. Any damage to it can have long-term consequences on personal, professional, and social life.

Protecting Yourself from Digital Disinformation

Disinformation creates a false reality and undermines trust, particularly when targeting individuals. Avoid sharing information before verifying its source and context. Critical awareness, fact-checking, and careful documentation are essential tools to confront disinformation and protect yourself and your digital space.