



Prepared for the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression

Freedom of Expression and the Gender Dimensions of Disinformation.

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'Gendered disinformation' refers to the dissemination of false or misleading information that specifically targets or affects individuals or groups based on their sexual orientation, biological sex or gender identity. It can include deliberate falsehoods, stereotypes, or harmful narratives that perpetuate gender-based discrimination, bias, or violence.

The presupposition of this study is that genders are treated equally on every continent, in every culture, and in every socio-economic category, but gender-based violence, gender biases and intimate partner violence exist on a spectrum around the world, and are intersected by sexual orientation.

Given the broad interpretation of the term "violence" which includes verbal abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, social abuse by isolation, legal and institutional abuse, and psychological abuse which now permeate the definition of violence, beyond physical abuse and sexual violence, (both online and offline) This report appears to polarize gender norms and anchoring biases as if the multitude of interpretations of violence are exclusively perpetrated by one gender, and does not examine the effects of sexual orientation, on the pervasiveness of abuse in both online and offline environments.

While it is agreed that in some cultures, when women raise their voices, they are often suppressed, in other cultures when men raise their voices they too are suppressed.

While 'gendered disinformation' and online gender-based violence share certain similarities, they are distinct concepts. Gender-based violence refers to any harmful act perpetrated against individuals based on their gender, including physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. 'Gendered disinformation' specifically focuses on the spread of false information that targets individuals based on their gender and perpetuates gender inequality. Without robust debate and clear definitions of what "false" information is being distributed, there is significant indicia that a report such as the one proposed by the Special Rapporteur, is not starting from a position of gender neutrality, nor does it account for socio-economic or cultural influences.

Nation states, digital companies, and international organizations have taken various measures to combat 'gendered disinformation.' These have included developing policies, guidelines, and legal frameworks to address online harassment, hate speech, and disinformation that target individuals based on their gender,



and while these responses should ideally comply with international human rights standards, particularly freedom of expression, to avoid unnecessary restrictions on legitimate speech, they frequently do not.

In Canada, Parliament recently passed Bill C-18 which limits freedom of expression by digital content creators, through regulations enforced by digital distribution companies. The interpretation of what constitutes hate speech in Bill C-18 is ambiguous, and arguably gender biased on its face, and needs further clarification to prevent gendered disinformation from permeating the online space.

Not only do regulations such as the aforementioned, contravene international human rights law standards, but there is also a lack of enforcement and accountability for clear violations of national human rights frameworks, perpetrated by both the legacy media and online digital media distributors.

Political policy which enables and frequently vocalizes hate speech in both tone and verbiage has a downstream effect on the respective judiciaries and NGO's who benefit from federal funding initiatives.

The effectiveness of measures to address 'gendered disinformation' varies across different contexts and jurisdictions. Evaluating the impact of these measures requires comprehensive research and analysis. It is crucial to strike a balance between combating harmful disinformation while upholding freedom of expression and avoiding disproportionate restrictions on speech.

Identifying effective solutions to combat 'gendered disinformation' requires collaboration among stakeholders. The Special Rapporteur may consider making recommendations to Nation states, digital companies, international organizations, and civil society on improving policies, increasing awareness, fostering digital literacy, and promoting research to better understand the gender dimensions of disinformation.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: A GENDER-BASED ISSUE?

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2376897/>

Differences in Frequency of Violence and Reported Injury Between Relationships With Reciprocal and Nonreciprocal Intimate Partner Violence

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1854883/>

When Intimate Partner Violence Meets Same Sex Couples: A Review of Same Sex Intimate Partner Violence

<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01506/full>

Intimate partner violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer communities

https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/cfca-resource-dv-lgbti-2020_0.pdf

Sincerely

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