Understanding Misinformation and Disinformation
Introduction
Misinformation
Examples of misinformation
Disinformation
Examples of disinformation
Types of Misinformation and Disinformation (M&D)
Contributing Factors To M&D
Impacts Of M&D
Solutions To M&D
Tips to spot and verify information
Gendered M&D
Information has real-life consequences. It can save lives, literally - when it's true. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true. Untrue information can cause great harm. Wrong information can spread widely, like a virus, causing what’s been called an infodemic.

Now more than ever, we are experiencing the spread of two forms of wrong information: misinformation and disinformation. These two words, so often used interchangeably, are merely one letter apart. But behind that one letter hides the critical distinction between these confusables words: **intent**.

excerpt from www.dictionary.com
MISINFORMATION

The unintentional spread of incorrect, false and misleading information simply because it is believed to be true.

This usually stems from internal and external factors within society due to information overload and existing biases or beliefs often based on social, cultural and religious factors. It also refers to out-of-context information that is presented as fact regardless of an intent to deceive.

Misinformation has always existed as a tactic of social manipulation, the growth of the internet and social media platforms has simply given it a wider reach. It is everywhere online, and anyone can be vulnerable to it.
Examples of Misinformation

- Spreading incorrect rumours or gossip about one's sexuality based on their perceived identity and expression.
- Jumping to conclusions without in-depth digestion of all given information or making assumptions of a story centered on only its headlines.
- Unknowingly relying on outdated, wrong or bad sources of information for research studies and articles.
Disinformation is the deliberate spread of false information with the intent to deceive or cause harm.

It is heavily based on a lack of (sufficient) information as well as bias, dislike, hatred or the necessity for gain (financial, social or otherwise) through sharing untrue information.

It is very powerful, destructive, and divisive because it is designed to trick its readers into believing something that isn't true.
Examples of Disinformation

- Untrue rumors stemming from deep fakes
- Omission or exaggeration of details in a story or article
- Intentionally using wrong or bad sources of information
- Hate speech or propaganda

In a recent research report on Disinformation Pathways and Effects (May 2022) by CIPESA, online platforms are noted to be the current key drivers of disinformation through various forms and examples such as use of deep fakes to share manipulated and fabricated content.
# Types of Misinformation and Disinformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fabricated Content</strong></td>
<td>Completely false content</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Manipulated Content</strong></td>
<td>Genuine information or imagery that has been distorted, e.g., a sensational headline</td>
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<td><strong>Imposter Content</strong></td>
<td>Impersonation of genuine sources, e.g., using the branding of an established agency</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Misleading Content</strong></td>
<td>Misleading information, e.g., a comment presented as fact</td>
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<td><strong>False Context</strong></td>
<td>Factually accurate content combined with false contextual information, e.g., when the headline of an article does not reflect the content</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Error</strong></td>
<td>A mistake made by established news agencies in their reporting</td>
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<td><strong>Propaganda</strong></td>
<td>Content used to manage attitudes, values and knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sponsored Content</strong></td>
<td>Advertising or PR disguised as editorial content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>False Connections</strong></td>
<td>When headlines, visuals or captions do not support the content</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Satire &amp; Parody</strong></td>
<td>Humorous but false stories passed off as true. There is no intention to harm but readers may be fooled</td>
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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO MISINFORMATION & DISINFORMATION (M&D)

- Digital and social media platforms
- Little to no repercussions for perpetrators
- Unverified and outdated sources of information
- Low literacy levels and exposure
- Prejudice, bias and misrepresentation
- Inaccurate and/or biased media representation

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IMPACTS OF M&D

The fast spread of misinformation and disinformation can cause serious impacts especially when the targets are marginalized communities such as structurally silenced womxn. This further limits their meaningful participation and engagement in civic, online and physical spaces.

01 Pushback on progress of human rights and marginalization of minority groups.
02 Failure by governments and stakeholders to make informed decisions.
03 Discredits the right sources of information and promotes tainted narratives.
04 Increase in cases of violence, stigma and discrimination due to "moral judgement".
05 Continuous criminalization of minority groups which prompts systemic exclusion.
Here are solutions to debunk misinformation and disinformation in this digital revolution...

SOLUTIONS TO M&D

Independent and verified fact checks and investigations

Non-discriminatory enforcement of current cyber laws

Diverse narratives to eliminate biased media reporting

Influence digital community standards and policies

Awareness about M&D issues and how they can be addressed

Media and digital literacy programs

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TIPS TO SPOT AND VERIFY INFORMATION

It is important to have knowledge on basic fact checking tips which will help us discern between the facts and falsehoods amidst the myriad of information that we are exposed to online and offline in a bid to counteract misinformation and disinformation.

| Use the 5Ws + 1H rule to establish the relevance of the information. |
| Run background checks to establish the validity of your sources. |
| Scrutinize the reliability of your website domains and social media sources. |
| Read beyond the headlines and verify information across other official sources. |
| If still uncertain about the information, please don’t share or repost. |
Gendered disinformation cripples the representativeness of democratic institutions and poses a security threat, since online harassment can sometimes inspire offline aggression.

The practice has a silencing effect on practically half of the world population, as women are drawn to disengage from the conversation, censor themselves, and avoid careers in politics and other male-dominated occupations. Over time, GBD becomes a cautionary tale, an invitation to discretion as a safety measure that potentially leads to the acceptance of victim-blaming logic – as if targets have called the abuse upon themselves by voicing their opinions. Therefore, more needs to be done to prevent and eliminate this abuse, which may cast a long shadow over future generations, the victims and their families, eroding the right to equality and truthful information.
Let's make the Internet safer together!

Contact us

**Website**
www.herinternet.org

**Email Address**
info@herinternet.org

HER Internet

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