



CYBER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS (CVAWG)



Defamation



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DEFAMATION DEFINITION

Defamation is a false statement presented as fact that harms the reputation of an individual.



Online, this often occurs through posts, comments, images, or videos shared on social media, blogs, or forums.



Women and girls often face defamation rooted in stereotypes, morality shaming, or gender-based harassment.

DEFAMATION DEFINITION

Quick Poll



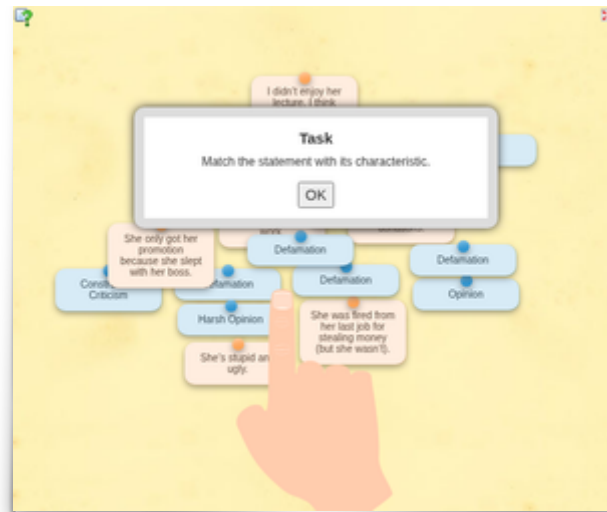
Which of these examples count as defamation?



DEFAMATION DEFINITION

Quick Poll

Which of these examples count as defamation?



Ask participants to match each example with a characteristic.

Irrespective if the answer given is right or wrong, show the correct and explain, based on the below:

Opinion (NOT defamation)

“I didn’t enjoy her lecture. I think she’s not a very engaging speaker.”

→ This is a subjective opinion, not defamatory.

Constructive Criticism (NOT defamation if true)

“She often arrives late to meetings, which delays our work.”

→ If true, this is fair criticism based on fact.

False Statement (DEFAMATION)

“She was fired from her last job for stealing money.” (but she wasn’t)

→ Harmful false statement presented as fact.

Rumor / Reputation Damage (DEFAMATION)

“She only got her promotion because she slept with her boss.”

→ False, gendered defamation targeting character and morality.

Harsh Opinion (NOT defamation)

“I think her new book is boring and badly written.”

→ This is opinion, protected speech.

False Criminal Allegation (DEFAMATION)

“She runs a scam charity that steals donations.” (but she doesn’t)

→ False claim of crime → clear defamation.

Insult (NOT defamation, but harassment)

“She’s stupid and ugly.”

→ Offensive and harmful, but generally categorized as insult/harassment, not defamation, because it’s not about a verifiable fact.

Manipulated Content (DEFAMATION)

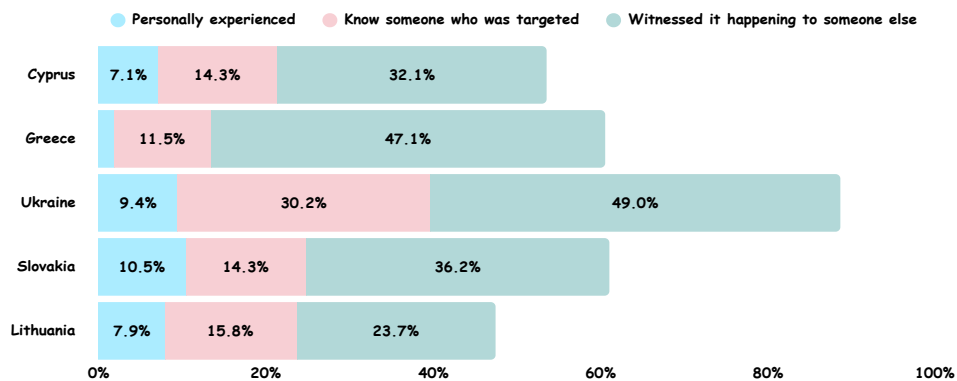
Sharing a doctored screenshot that makes it look like she said something offensive.

→ False evidence used to harm reputation = defamation.

PREVALENCE OF DEFAMATION



CyberEqual Survey



According to recent studies, nearly 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced some form of gender-based violence.

And with the rise of digital technology, many face violence online too, from harmful messages to threats.

The CVAWG survey was implemented in the context of the 'CyberEqual' project, a project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, aiming to map the prevalence of Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls in Cyprus, Greece, Ukraine, Slovakia and Lithuania. 467 women, aged 15 to 35 years old, participated in the study 76% of them reporting having experienced, witnessed, or knowing someone who experienced CVAWG.

In terms of Defamation the prevalence per country is shown in the current figure.

These numbers show that CVAWG isn't just happening in one place; it's a global problem affecting millions across different countries and communities.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK



Europe

Cyprus
Greece
Ukraine
Slovakia
Lithuania

European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Art. 8
EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Art. 7, 21 & 47)
Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence.



****Partners should include their country's legislation on the threat addressed (replace the question mark, the flag and keep their country's name on the box). Another slide maybe added if necessary.****

There is no Single EU Law on “Defamation”. Defamation law (libel, slander) is traditionally governed by national laws in each European country.

The European Union (EU) does not have a specific directive or regulation that harmonizes defamation laws across member states.

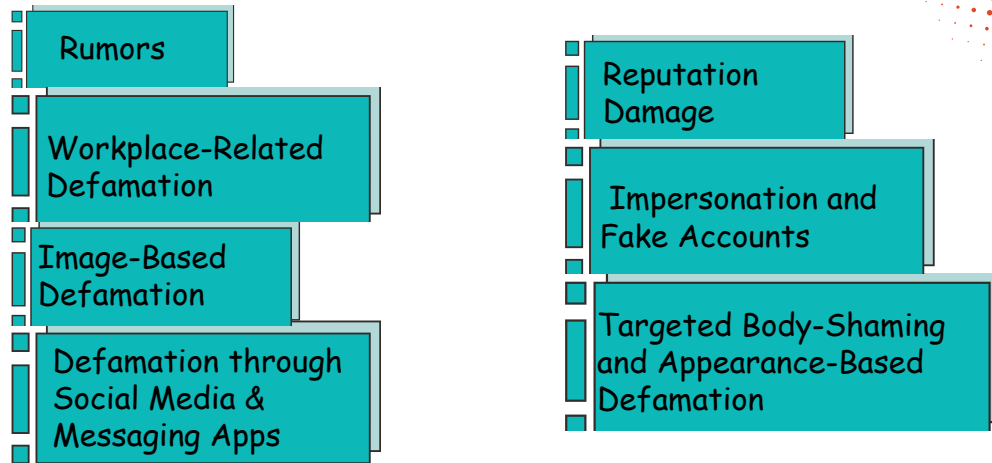
This means what counts as defamation, and how it is punished, varies between (for example) France, Germany, Cyprus, or Sweden.

Although there’s no EU directive on defamation itself, women and girls are indirectly protected through human rights frameworks (ECHR, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights) and GBV frameworks:

- * EU Directive 2011/93/EU on combating sexual abuse and exploitation (covers certain online harms).
- * Digital Services Act (DSA) (2022), which requires platforms to remove illegal online content (including defamatory or misogynistic abuse) more effectively.
- * Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence which includes provisions to tackle online gender-based violence, which can intersect with defamation.

UNRAVELING DEFAMATION

Forms of Defamation



Reputation Damage

False claims about a person's morality, behavior, or personal life.

Examples: Accusations of promiscuity, infidelity, or "immorality" spread via social media or online forums.

Image-Based Defamation

Using real, edited, or fabricated intimate images to damage reputation.

Examples:

NCIIA: Sharing private sexual images without consent.

Deepfakes: AI-generated explicit videos/images falsely portraying someone.

Rumors

Spreading unverified or false information, either verbally or through digital platforms, that damages a person's credibility or character. Online spaces make rumors spread rapidly and repeatedly, which increases their perceived believability.

Defamation through Social Media & Messaging Apps

False posts or viral campaigns targeting someone's personal or professional reputation.

Examples: Fake screenshots, defamatory hashtags, or group chats spreading lies.

Impersonation and Fake Accounts

Creating fake profiles in another person's name to post damaging or obscene content.

Examples: Fake accounts used to spread false political statements, scams, or sexual content under

another person's identity.

Workplace-Related Defamation

Rumors or false claims harming a person's career.

Examples: Suggesting an employee or politician was promoted due to sexual favors; anonymous defamatory reviews on professional platforms.

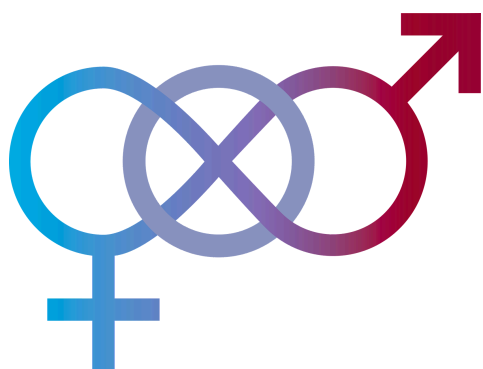
Targeted Body-Shaming and Appearance-Based Defamation

Posts attacking a person's body, looks, age, or dress sense to demean them socially or professionally.

Example: Viral memes mocking leaders' or professionals' appearance.

Women often face gendered defamation (slut-shaming, questioning morality, fabricated sexual histories).

Gendered Defamation



Group 1

If someone wanted to ruin a **man's** reputation, what kinds of lies might they spread?

Group 2

If someone wanted to ruin a **woman's** reputation, what kinds of lies might they spread?



Divide participants into two mixed gendered groups: one brainstorms for men, the other for women.

Give 5 minutes to each group to make a quick list of “common defamatory claims” they think are used.

Example for men: corruption, incompetence, financial failure.

Example for women: promiscuity, infidelity, “sleeping with the boss,” immoral behavior.

Then each group presents their answers to the plenary.

UNRAVELING DEFAMATION

If someone wanted to ruin a man's reputation, what kinds of lies might they spread?



Common defamatory lies

- He is corrupt / took bribes
- He is incompetent at his job
- He is financially irresponsible
- He cheated in business deals
- He is weak or unmanly
- He abandoned his family

Themes behind the lies

- Power
- Competence
- Strength
- Financial credibility
- Leadership



Discuss:

1. What do these differences tell us about gender stereotypes in society?

They show that society tends to measure men and women by different standards. Men are often judged by their power, competence, and financial success, while women are judged more on their sexuality, morality, and family roles. This reflects traditional gender stereotypes: men as providers and leaders, women as caretakers who must remain “pure” and “respectable.”

2. How do cultural expectations make women more vulnerable to sexualized defamation?

Cultural norms often tie a woman’s worth to her sexual purity, modesty, and reputation. Because of this, false claims about promiscuity, infidelity, or “sleeping her way to success” can be devastating, even if untrue. Societies that tolerate slut-shaming and victim-blaming make it easier for attackers to weaponize sexuality against women, knowing such rumors will gain traction.

Why do such attacks “stick” more easily for women than for men?

Sexualized defamation “sticks” more because it plays into deeply ingrained stereotypes about women. People are more likely to believe or spread these rumors since they align with cultural biases. For men, a sexual rumor might even boost their status (“he’s a player”), while for women it damages their credibility and dignity. In other words, the double standard makes women far more vulnerable to lasting reputational harm.

UNRAVELING DEFAMATION

- Sexuality
- Morality
- Family roles
- Appearance
- Emotionality

Themes behind the lies

★ If someone wanted to ruin a woman's reputation, what kinds of lies might they spread? ★

Common defamatory lies

- She slept with her boss (promotion)
- She is promiscuous / immoral
- She is a "bad mother" or neglects her family
- She had an affair / cheated in her relationship
- She dresses "provocatively"
- She's mentally unstable or "too emotional"



Discuss:

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DEFAMATION IMPACT



Joanna, a 26-year-old marketing professional, ended a long relationship with her controlling boyfriend. In revenge, he posted her private photos online and also created a fake account in her name. Using online groups, he spread false claims that Joanna had slept with her boss to get promoted, saying this was the reason for their breakup. Joanna only discovered these activities after mutual friends and family members told her they had received private messages with these allegations.



Step 1: Read the story of Joanna aloud or display it on a slide/handout.

Make sure participants understand the situation before moving on.

DEFAMATION IMPACT



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How might Joanna's life be affected personally, socially, and professionally by her ex-partner's actions?



Step 2: Share the main discussion question:

“How might Joanna’s life be affected personally, socially, and professionally by her ex-partner’s actions?”

Step 3: Divide participants into small groups (3–5 people).

DEFAMATION IMPACT

How might Joanna's life be affected personally, socially, and professionally by her ex-partner's actions?

Personal Impacts

Social Impacts

Professional Impacts



Ask each group to discuss the question and write down possible impacts in three categories:

- * Personal (emotions, mental health, safety, daily life)
- * Social (family, friends, community, reputation)
- * Professional (career, workplace, future opportunities)

DEFAMATION IMPACT

How might Joanna's life be affected personally, socially, and professionally by her ex-partner's actions?

Personal Impacts

- Emotional distress: shame, anger, anxiety, depression
- Loss of self-confidence and self-esteem
- Fear of further harassment or exposure
- Isolation or withdrawal from social and online spaces
- Strain on mental health, possibly leading to long-term trauma

Social Impacts

Professional Impacts



Let's take a closer look at the personal impacts Joanna might face due to her ex-partner's actions.

First, consider the emotional distress she is likely experiencing. Feelings of shame, anger, anxiety, and even depression are common reactions.

Secondly, imagine the loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. Such a public violation can dramatically affect how one views themselves. This can make navigating daily life incredibly challenging.

Finally, Joanna might live in constant fear of further harassment or exposure. This fear can lead to isolation or withdrawal from social and online spaces, further straining her mental health. In the long term, she could face trauma that affects her ability to engage with the world around her.

DEFAMATION IMPACT

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Personal Impacts

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Social Impacts

- Damaged reputation among friends, peers, and family.
- Gossip, judgment, and victim-blaming in her community.
- Strained relationships, as some people may distance themselves.
- Loss of trust in others, especially close relationships.
- Stigma that can follow her even if the allegations are proven false.

Professional Impacts



Now, let's dive deeper into the social impacts of defamation on Joanna.

One of the most profound effects is the damage to her reputation. This can ripple out among her friends, peers, and family, affecting her relationships with those closest to her.

Additionally, Joanna might face gossip, judgment, and even victim-blaming within her community. These reactions can be incredibly isolating and painful, often leading to strained relationships as people may start to distance themselves.

Lastly, Joanna could find herself dealing with a loss of trust in others, particularly within her close relationships. The stigma of defamation can linger, overshadowing her even if the allegations are later proven false.

DEFAMATION IMPACT



How might Joanna's life be affected personally, socially, and professionally by her ex-partner's actions?

Personal Impacts

- Emotional distress: shame, anger, anxiety, depression.
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Professional Impacts

- Colleagues and employers may doubt her integrity.
- Risk of losing her job or career opportunities.
- Harm to her professional reputation and credibility.
- Hesitation to participate in professional networks or public platforms.
- Potential exclusion from projects or promotions due to "bad image."



As we continue exploring the impact of defamation on Joanna's life, let's delve deeper into the professional consequences she faces.

First, consider the potential doubts her colleagues and employers may have about her integrity. This can be incredibly damaging in the workplace, where trust and credibility are key. Joanna may find herself at risk of losing her job or missing out on career opportunities, simply because of a tarnished reputation.

Another significant impact is the harm to her professional reputation and credibility. This could lead to hesitation in participating in professional networks or public platforms. Imagine being excluded from projects or promotions due to a perceived 'bad image'; a challenging situation by any measure.

Ask participants:

Which type of impact do you think is often the most visible?

Most visible: Social and professional impacts (gossip, damaged reputation, workplace doubts) because others can see and react to them immediately.

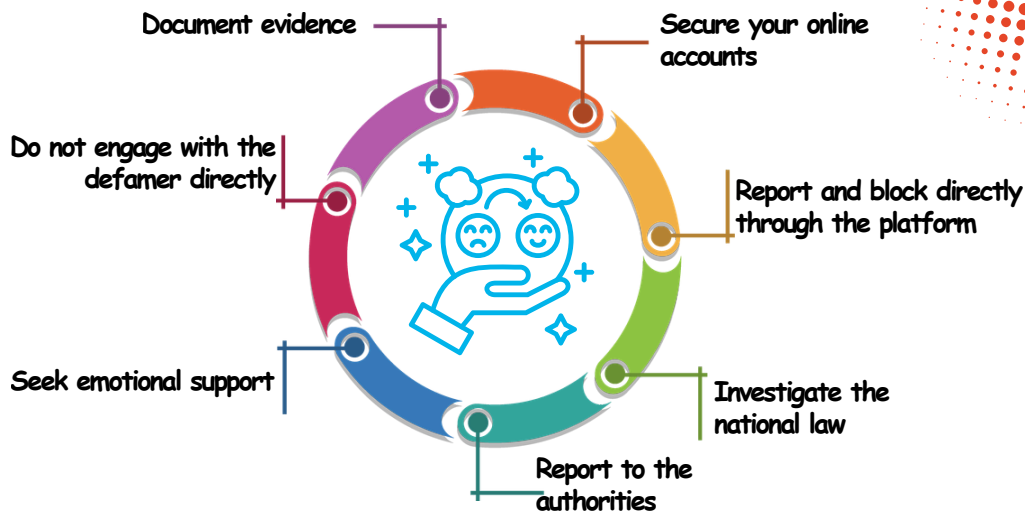
Which is the most hidden?

Most hidden: Personal impacts (mental health struggles, fear, loss of self-worth) because these are internal and may not be openly expressed.

Why do these attacks often harm women in specific ways (e.g., targeting sexuality or reputation)?

Conclude by emphasizing that cyber defamation isn't just about "words online" – it affects whole lives.

COPING WITH DEFAMATION



Knowing how to cope with defamation, which can be a deeply distressing experience can help also mitigate its impact if encountered. First, it's crucial to document all evidence of the defamatory statements. This will be invaluable if you decide to take legal action or report the incident.

Next, remember not to engage directly with the defamer. Engaging can escalate the situation and might be used against you. Instead, focus on securing emotional support. Talk to friends, family, or seek professional counseling to help manage any emotional distress you might be feeling.

Another important step is to report and block the defamer through the platform where the defamation occurred. Make sure to secure your online accounts by changing passwords and enabling two-factor authentication, which adds an extra layer of protection.

Furthermore, it's wise to investigate the national law regarding defamation, as laws can vary significantly from one place to another. If necessary, report to the authorities to ensure the situation is handled appropriately. This can be an empowering step, knowing you're taking action to protect yourself.

These steps can help you navigate the challenging process of dealing with defamation while maintaining your peace of mind.

REPORTING OF DEFAMATION



Report to police

Report to the cybercrime unit, or national hotline.

Cyprus

Office for Combating Cybercrime (O.C.C.)



+357 22808200



Cyber-Crime Online Reporting Form



cybercrime@police.gov.cy

Report to online platforms

Report to platforms such as Instagram, X, Tik Tok, Facebook etc.

On each platform, follow the instructions available for reporting the incident(s) and request the content to be removed.

** Remember to keep screenshots before requesting removal.*



**** Each partner should replace the country, police unit and contact details.****

Now, let's discuss the steps for reporting defamation effectively.

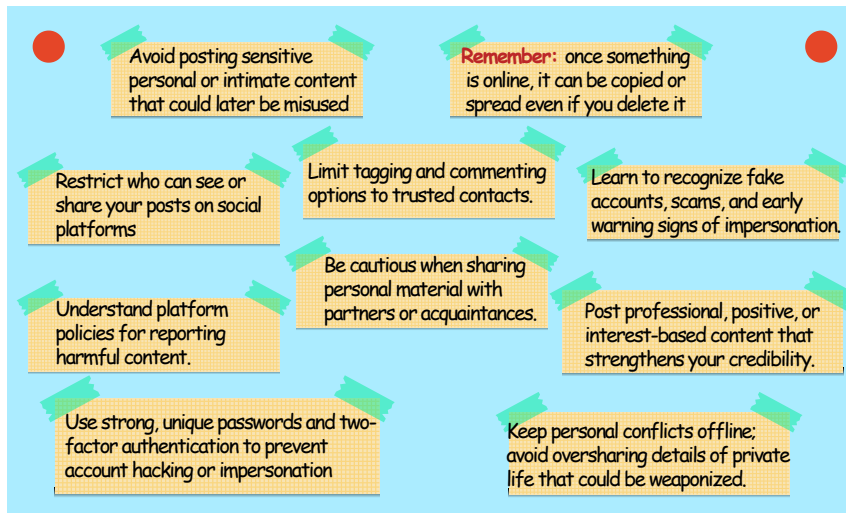
One way is to report any defamatory content to the police. This ensures that the incident is officially documented and can be acted upon by law enforcement.

Another way is to report the issue to the specific online platforms where the defamation occurred (Instagram, X, TikTok, Facebook, or others). Each platform has its unique reporting process, and following their instructions can help ensure the content is reviewed and potentially removed.

*Remember, before you request any content removal, it's crucial to take screenshots. This documentation serves as evidence, should you need to escalate the matter further.

These steps are essential to protect yourself and your reputation online. Let's empower ourselves with knowledge and take action against defamation.

PREVENTION OF DEFAMATION



Closing, let's talk about how we can prevent defamation in our digital lives.

First, it is imperative to understand that once something is online, it can be copied and spread, even if you delete it. So, be mindful of what you post (especially sensitive or intimate content). This is your first line of defense against potential misuse.

Next, take control of your online presence. Restrict who can see or share your posts on social platforms. Limit tagging and commenting options to those you trust. These settings help protect your privacy and prevent unwanted exposure.

Also, be vigilant about recognizing fake accounts, scams, and early signs of impersonation. This awareness can save you from potential headaches down the road.

Remember, keep personal conflicts offline. Oversharing details of your private life can backfire, so share wisely. Instead, focus on posting professional, positive, or interest-based content that can enhance your credibility.

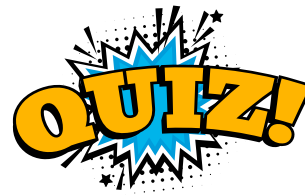
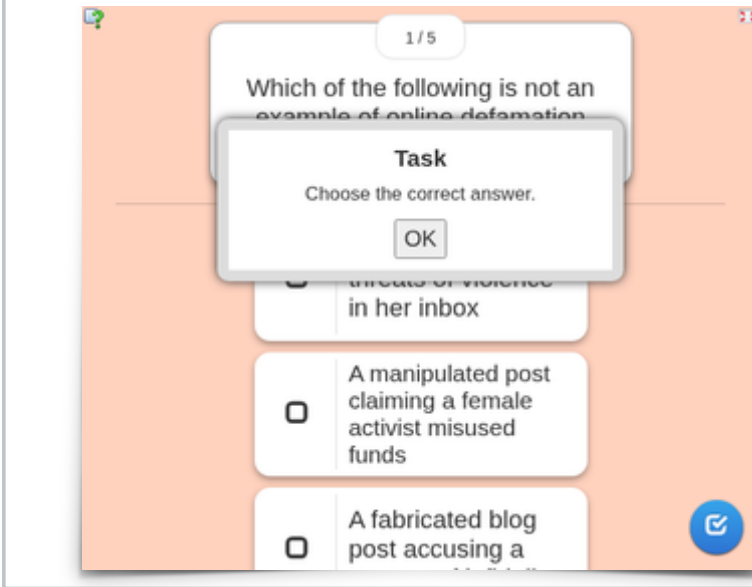
Finally, protect your accounts with strong, unique passwords and two-factor authentication. This extra layer of security is essential to prevent hacking or impersonation.



THE DEFAMATION QUIZ



DEFAMATION



Q1. Which of the following best describes online defamation against women?

- A) Posting any opinion about a woman on social media
- B) Sharing false statements online that damage a woman's reputation
- C) Criticizing a woman's work performance in private
- D) Sending private insults in a closed message to one person

Correct Answer: B

Q2. Which of these could be an example of online defamation?

- A) A fake article claiming a female politician was involved in corruption
- B) A meme ridiculing a woman's hairstyle
- C) A woman sharing her own personal story online
- D) A debate about a woman's professional achievements

Correct Answer: A

Q3. Why are women often targeted with gendered online defamation?

- A) Because their professional skills are always questioned
- B) To silence them, discredit their voices, and reinforce stereotypes
- C) Because defamation laws don't apply to women
- D) To encourage more women to join online discussions

Correct Answer: B

Q4. Which of the following is not an example of online defamation against women?

- A) A fabricated blog post accusing a woman of infidelity
- B) A false rumor spread on Twitter about a woman's "immoral" behavior
- C) A woman receiving threats of violence in her inbox
- D) A manipulated post claiming a female activist misused funds

Correct Answer: C (threats = online harassment, but not defamation)

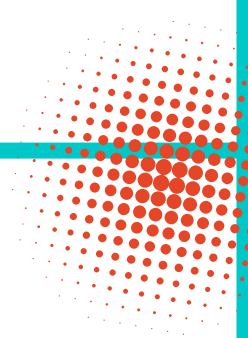
Q5. What is a potential impact of online defamation on women?

- A) Strengthened professional credibility
- B) Greater willingness to participate in public debates
- C) Damage to personal reputation, career, and mental health
- D) Automatic legal protection without needing to report

Correct Answer: C



THANK YOU!



CVAWG IS REAL VIOLENCE!



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