

Supplementary Material

Appendix A. Analytical Framework, Coding, and Dataset Construction

Table A1. Operationalization of Key Concepts.

Concept	Definition (as used in this study)	Operational markers in the data
<i>Gendered disinformation</i>	False, misleading, or distorted content that mobilizes gendered stereotypes, moral tropes, or sexualized insinuations to damage women’s credibility, legitimacy, or safety (Gehrke & Amit-Danhi, 2025).	Coded only when all three were present: (1) falsity/distortion (fabricated allegations, manipulated visuals, doctored audio/video, decontextualized screenshots); (2) activation of gendered stereotypes (purity, modesty, immorality, sexual deviance, nationalism, “Westernization”); (3) strategic reputational harm aimed at delegitimizing political participation rather than generic hostility.
<i>Semiotic violence</i>	Symbolic or representational acts—through language, visuals, memes, metaphors, and imagery—that degrade, shame, or discredit women’s authority in public life (Krook, 2020).	Sexualized or incest-coded metaphors, words, or memes; explicit or suggestive AI composites; “uglified” edits of faces or bodies; captions reframing routine activities (speaking, protesting, mentoring, holding office) as scandal. Treated as meaning-making strategies producing reputational injury regardless of factual verifiability.
<i>News-template mimicry</i>	The deliberate simulation of established news media aesthetics—like logos, typography, and “breaking news” layouts—to lend false institutional credibility to fabricated or misleading content.	Use of recognized media color palettes (e.g., Jamuna TV, Somoy TV, <i>The Daily Star</i> red/black) and fonts; insertion of fake headlines into “breaking news” banners; unauthorized use of media house logos; formatting of personal photos to resemble official news graphics or “photocards.”
<i>Digital vigilantism</i>	User-led practices of shaming, doxing, impersonation, or punishment framed as holding “offenders” accountable outside formal institutions (Trottier, 2017).	Coordinated harassment waves; calls for punishment (physical, social, reputational); doxing (phone numbers, workplaces, family details); impersonation or sock-puppet accounts; offline spillovers (stalking, following, workplace rumors) clearly triggered by online campaigns.
<i>Networked misogyny</i>	Culturally rooted and platform-amplified hostility toward women that circulates through digital networks and polices visibility and participation (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2015).	Harassment cutting <i>across</i> ideological lines (e.g., Islamist vs. secular, rival parties); repeated misogynistic phrasing and templates across accounts; gender used as the primary vector of delegitimization; high engagement on misogynistic content.
<i>Polycrisis</i>	A condition in which multiple political, economic, and institutional crises interact,	Escalation of hostility alongside political transition and legitimacy deficits; compounded harms during repression or platform outages;

	intensify, and become mutually reinforcing (Morin & Kern, 1999).	institutional failures (police inaction, workplace sanctioning, victim-blaming) amplifying digital violence.
<i>Digital social resilience</i>	Collective, relational practices enabling individuals and groups to endure, adapt, and resist digitally mediated threats (Tomkova, 2020).	Coded only when agency and adaptation were present: collective reporting and evidence documentation; humor, meta-commentary, and counter-speech; solidarity networks and encrypted support circles; tactical withdrawal followed by strategic re-entry; public critique of platform inaction.
<i>Feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA)</i>	A strand of CDA focused on gendered power relations, symbolic violence, and discursive practices that reproduce inequality (Lazar, 2007).	Analysis guided by: (1) discursive strategies (moral policing, sexualized insinuation, nationalist/religious framings, reputational attacks); (2) interdiscursivity between patriarchal, religious, and partisan discourses; (3) multimodal reading of visuals, memes, and captions; (4) visibility politics reframing women’s speech as deviant.
<i>Thematic analysis (TA)</i>	A qualitative method for identifying patterned meanings across datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	Initial open coding of all transcripts; development of thematic clusters (e.g., punishment, doxing, family fallout, withdrawal, adaptation); abductive refinement in dialogue with FCDA; quotation selection based on salience, richness, and variation.
<i>Coordinated manipulation</i>	Synchronized or patterned activity across accounts suggesting directed action rather than spontaneous criticism.	Identical or near-identical phrasing; time-clustered posting; attack waves around specific triggers (speeches, media appearances, awards); clusters of newly created or low-content profiles. Used heuristically without automated detection claims.

Table A2. Artifact Dataset Construction and Sampling Pipeline.

Stage	Decision rule (applied consistently)
<i>Seed identification</i>	Public Facebook pages/groups and Telegram channels identified via keyword- and event-based searches and participant references as arenas of coordinated harassment or disinformation
<i>Language scope</i>	Bangla (primary); English (secondary where bilingual circulation occurred)
<i>Initial retrieval</i>	Keyword- and event-based search within identified seed spaces
<i>Snowballing</i>	Followed engagement trails (shares, reposts, mirrored visuals, cross-posts)
<i>Deduplication</i>	Retained earliest or highest-engagement instance; additional copies logged as mirrors
<i>Inclusion filter</i>	All three required: falsity/distortion + gendered framing + strategic reputational harm
<i>Down-selection</i>	Applied severity and circulation thresholds to prioritize analytically salient cases
<i>Archiving protocol</i>	Redacted screenshots and manual saving; identifiers removed
<i>Analysis</i>	Multimodal FCDA integrated with abductive thematic analysis

Table A2a. Corpus Identification and Down-Selection Flow.

Stage	Description	Exclusion basis	n
<i>Identification</i>	Artifacts retrieved from public Facebook pages/groups and Telegram channels	Public accessibility; relevance to women activists and post-uprising political context	312
<i>Screening</i>	Initial relevance check and deduplication	Duplicates or mirrored reposts; content not targeting women activists; generic political hostility; satire without plausible harm; negligible circulation	-96
<i>Eligibility</i>	Assessment against inclusion criteria	Harassment without deception or deception without gendered framing	-116
<i>Included (Final Corpus)</i>	Artifacts selected for qualitative analysis	Met all three inclusion criteria	100
	Platform distribution	Facebook (80); Telegram (20)	
	Language distribution	Bangla (93); English (7)	

Table A3. Artifact Coding Scheme (Abbreviated).

Variable	Values	Decision rule	Boundary handling
<i>Content form</i>	Text / Image / Meme / Video / Audio / Photocard / Screenshot	Dominant semiotic form	Hybrid forms coded by primary cue
<i>Deception type</i>	Fabricated / Edited / Decontextualized / Impersonation / False attribution	Falsity or manipulation required	Harassment without deception excluded
<i>Gendered frame</i>	Sexual deviance / Purity / Respectability / Betrayal / Nationalism	Gendered moral logic central	Generic insults excluded
<i>News-template mimicry</i>	Yes / No	Includes use of news tickers, 'breaking news' banners, or formatting resembling established media outlets (e.g., Jamuna TV, <i>Amar Desh</i> templates).	Ambiguous cases marked "unclear"
<i>Coordination signal</i>	Present / Absent / Unclear	Time-clustering, copied phrasing, sock-puppet cues	Qualitative heuristic
<i>Offline spillover</i>	Yes / No	Migration beyond platform	Interview corroboration
<i>Primary harm</i>	Reputational / Sexual humiliation / Intimidation / Doxing	Dominant harm pathway	Multiple harms memoed

A4. Intercoder Reliability and Analytical Calibration

Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen’s Kappa on a 15% pilot subset, stratified by platform and participant age cohort. While recognizing the interpretive nature of FCDA, we calculated κ to ensure consistent application of the inclusion criteria and coding definitions during the pilot phase. Reliability was substantial for interviews ($\kappa = 0.80$) and social media artifacts ($\kappa = 0.76$).

Units of analysis: interviews and artifacts.

Procedure: shared review of definitions and exemplars; independent pilot coding; discrepancy resolution through negotiated agreement; refinement prior to full coding.

A5. Boundary and Negative Cases

- Harassment without deception → excluded from gendered disinformation corpus
- Deceptive content without gendered framing → excluded
- Rapid debunking cases curtailing escalation → retained analytically as contrasts

Table A6. Data Saturation and Triangulation Matrix.

Finding	Interview support	Artifact support	Typical trigger
Sexualized disinformation escalated post-uprising	~18+ participants	~70–75 artifacts	Speeches, panels
Visibility punishment after recognition	~8–10 participants	~15 artifacts	Awards, media coverage
Offline spillover from digital attacks	~6–8 participants	~10 artifacts	Doxing, threats
Collective resilience as primary defense	~20+ participants	Indirect (response posts)	Sustained attacks

Note: Counts are indicative ranges to avoid re-identification.

A7. Power and Reflexivity in the Analytical Process

Power shaped this research at multiple levels. First, in the data environment, patriarchal norms, platform algorithms privileging outrage, and institutional failures (e.g., police inaction, workplace bias) actively structured what counted as “evidence” against women. Second, in participant narratives, accounts of fear, surveillance, family pressure, and political risk were treated as situated knowledge of gendered power relations rather than individual perceptions. Third, researcher positionality—Bangladeshi scholars in their mid-20s with shared language, contextual familiarity, and activist proximity—enabled trust and disclosure while also risking normalization of certain dynamics. Reflexive memos, peer debriefing, negotiated coding, and attention to negative cases were used to surface and interrogate these biases. Knowledge production is understood here as contingent, power-laden, and relational rather than neutral.

Appendix B. Interview Materials and Ethics

Table B1. Participant Profiles.

Participant Code	Age Range	Location	Affiliation Type	Interview Format
P1	20–24	Dhaka	Student Political Wing	In-person
P2	20–24	Chittagong	Student Political Wing	Zoom
P3	20–24	Dhaka	Student Political Wing	Zoom
P4	20–24	Dhaka	Political Party	Zoom
P5	20–24	Sylhet	Political Party	Zoom
P6	20–24	Rajshahi	Rights-Based	Zoom
20–24 (n=6)				
P7	25–29	Dhaka	Student Political Wing	Zoom
P8	25–29	Chittagong	Student Political Wing	Zoom
P9	25–29	Khulna	Political Party	Zoom
P10	25–29	Sylhet	Political Party	Zoom
P11	25–29	Dhaka	Political Party	In-person
P12	25–29	Rajshahi	Rights-Based	Zoom
25–29 (n=6)				
P13	30–34	Dhaka	Political Party	In-person
P14	30–34	Chittagong	Political Party	Zoom
P15	30–34	Dhaka	Feminist Organization	Zoom
P16	30–34	Sylhet	Feminist Organization	Zoom
P17	30–34	Dhaka	Rights-Based	Zoom
P18	30–34	Rajshahi	Rights-Based	Zoom
30–34 (n=6)				
P19	35–40	Dhaka	Political Party	In-person
P20	35–40	Khulna	Political Party	Zoom
P21	35–40	Dhaka	Feminist Organization	Zoom
P22	35–40	Chittagong	Feminist Organization	Zoom
P23	35–40	Dhaka	Rights-Based	In-person
P24	35–40	Sylhet	Rights-Based	Zoom
35–40 (n=6)				
P25	40–45	Dhaka	Rights-Based	Zoom
40–45 (n=1)				

Note: In-person interviews were conducted only in Dhaka. All others were via Zoom. We included age as a factor because initial interviews showed that it shapes exposure to threat.

Table B2. Complete Interview Protocol.

Section	Question	Related RQ(s)
<i>Introductory Remarks</i>	<p>Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. We’re conducting a study on how women activists experienced digital harassment and disinformation during and after the 2024 political uprising in Bangladesh. Your voice is incredibly important.</p> <p>Everything you say will remain confidential. You can skip any question, stop the interview at any time, or ask for clarification.</p> <p>If at any point you feel distressed, we can pause or end the interview immediately.</p> <p>(After this, obtain verbal or written informed consent depending on context.)</p>	–
<i>Background & Context</i>	1. Can you briefly describe your role in activism or public engagement during the 2024 political events?	RQ1
	2. What social media or messaging platforms did you use, and why?	RQ1
	3. Compared to before the uprising, did you notice any change in how people behaved online—toward you or toward women activists more generally?	RQ1
<i>Experiences of Harassment & Disinformation</i>	4. Did you personally experience harassment, abuse, or disinformation online? What forms (e.g., insults, sexualized slurs, impersonation, fake content, threats, exposure of private information)?	RQ1
	5. Which platforms did these incidents mostly occur on (e.g., Facebook, Telegram, TikTok)?	RQ1
	6. Were the attacks gendered or personal in tone—for example, targeting your appearance, morality, or private life rather than political views?	RQ1
	7. Were any visual materials used against you—such as edited images, memes, fake videos, or deepfakes?	RQ1
	8. Did the attacks appear coordinated or linked to political/ideological groups?	RQ1
	9. How did these experiences affect your ability/willingness to speak publicly or remain active online?	RQ1
<i>Perceptions of Intent & Coordination</i>	10. Do you think the attacks were spontaneous, or did they feel organized and linked to political actors?	RQ2
	11. Did you notice other women facing similar attacks around the same time?	RQ2
	12. Were those women from particular political groups, social classes, or regional backgrounds?	RQ2
	13. What do you believe was the main purpose behind the abuse (e.g., silencing, punishment, intimidation, or political discrediting)?	RQ2
<i>Resilience, Support, and Response</i>	14. How did you respond emotionally or practically when harassment occurred?	RQ3
	15. Did you block/report users, take down posts, or leave certain platforms?	RQ3

	16. Did you ever feel that withdrawing (e.g., going offline, deleting posts) was a form of resilience—or do you see it differently?	RQ3
	17. Did you receive support from peers, feminist networks, digital rights groups, or others?	RQ3
	18. What does “digital resilience” mean to you?	RQ3
	19. Since these incidents, have you changed how you behave online (e.g., limiting visibility, self-censorship, changing platforms)?	RQ3
<i>Reflection and Recommendations</i>	20. What could have been done to prevent or reduce the kinds of online abuse you experienced?	RQ3
	21. What kinds of support—legal, emotional, technological—would be most useful for women like you?	RQ3
	22. What advice or message would you offer to other women activists facing similar threats?	RQ3
	23. What would a safer digital space for women activists look like to you?	RQ3
	24. Is there anything else you’d like to share that feels important to your experience?	RQ3
<i>Optional Media Reflection</i>	If comfortable, walk me through a specific post, image, or video that affected you most. (Only proceed if the participant shows clear comfort and willingness.)	RQ1, RQ2
<i>Closing Remarks</i>	Thank you so much for your time and honesty. Your voice is vital in shaping how we understand digital violence and resistance in Bangladesh. If you’d like, we can share a summary of findings with you once the research is completed. Please take care of yourself, and don’t hesitate to reach out if you need to follow up or withdraw anything you’ve said.	–
<i>Ethical Reminders</i>	Store all recordings securely, pseudonymize transcripts, avoid quoting sensitive material without explicit consent, and consider follow-up well-being check-ins.	–

Note: Table 1 in the manuscript presents a summarized version of this interview protocol. This table provides the full protocol and shows how prompts map onto the research questions (RQ1–RQ3).

B3. Ethical Protocols and Safety Measures

All interviews were transcribed in Bangla and translated to English by the authors. Key cultural terms (e.g., ‘Shahbagi,’ ‘bhabi’) were retained to preserve semantic nuance. To mitigate risks associated with trauma and political violence, we enforced:

1. Do-no-harm prioritization;
2. Tiered, encrypted consent with withdrawal at any stage;
3. Immediate anonymization at collection;
4. Continuous distress monitoring with pause/termination protocols.

Appendix C. Search Logic and Retrieval Transparency

C1. Search Terms Used for Corpus Building (Non-Exhaustive)

Our corpus building involved passive, non-participant observation of women activists' public profiles, which served as primary vectors for gendered attacks. Additionally, we monitored public groups and pages, e.g., political, partisan, anti-feminist, or 'troll' networks, that facilitated the dissemination of disinformation and harassment. To maintain ecological validity, we did not interact (e.g., react, comment, share) with any content.

We conducted targeted searches to locate artifacts concerning activists *beyond* our interview sample. However, to strictly adhere to ethical protocols and to avoid re-identification and retraumatization, we have excluded specific search strings containing the names or unique identifiers of these activists from this file. The search terms listed below reflect broader gendered disinformation patterns observed in the corpus, combining role identifiers, event markers, and time windows. Bangla terms are followed by English glosses for interpretive clarity.

A. Gendered Character Assassination (Disinformation Framing)

- a. চরিত্রহীন (*immoral / characterless*), নোংরা চরিত্র (*dirty character*), নৈতিকতা নাই (*lacks morals*), এইসব মেয়েরা আন্দোলন করে (*these kinds of women join protests*)

B. Sexualized Fabrications and False Intimacy Claims

- a. কার সাথে সম্পর্ক (*who she is involved with*), একাধিক পুরুষের সাথে (*with multiple men*), বেড/ affair/ scandal (*sexual insinuation; Bangla-English mixed use*), ভাইরাল ভিডিও আছে (*there is a viral video*), অডিও ফাঁস (*audio leaked*)

C. Political Delegitimization

- a. বিদেশি এজেন্ট (*foreign agent*), ডলার খাওয়া (*paid by foreign money*), কার ইশারায় চলে (*acting on someone else's orders*), ব্যবহৃত হচ্ছে (*being used*), নারী কার্ড খেলছে (*playing the woman card*)

D. Visibility-Triggered Gendered Disinformation

- a. সমন্বয়ক মেয়ে (*female coordinator*), মঞ্চে উঠছে (*going on stage*), বক্তৃতা দিচ্ছে (*giving a speech*), প্যানেলে বসছে (*appearing on a panel*), মিডিয়াতে আসছে (*appearing in media*), পুরস্কার পেলেই (*as soon as she receives an award*), রিট করলেই (*as soon as she files a writ*), নির্বাচনে দাঁড়ালেই (*as soon as she contests an election*)

A. Justificatory / Punitive Language (Authorization of Harm) and Platform-Specific Amplification Cues

- a. শিক্ষা দেওয়া দরকার (*needs to be taught a lesson*), উচিত শিক্ষা (*appropriate punishment*), বাড়িতে বসে থাক (*stay at home*), দেখুন সবাই (*everyone look*), ভাইরাল করা দরকার (*this needs to go viral*)

C2. Retrieval Strategy Note

Search terms were **never used in isolation** but combined with activist roles, political events, and high-activity time windows. Retrieval prioritized **gendered disinformation mechanisms**—false or misleading claims mobilizing gender to undermine political legitimacy—rather than general moral commentary. All materials were anonymized and securely archived.

Appendix D. Empirical Examples

Table D1. Gendered Disinformation and Harassment Targeting Women Activists.

Target Role	Platform	Attack Form	Core Description	Observed Situation (from interviews / observation)	Analytical Codes
Woman activist / public speaker	Facebook	Fabricated audio + sexualized rumor cascade	A falsified audio clip circulated immediately after a public speech, framed as a “leak” implying sexual impropriety. The clip became a recurring reference point across posts and comment threads.	Comment sections across unrelated content shifted to sexualized insinuations. Subsequent media appearances triggered renewed attacks anchored to the same fabrication, creating a durable interpretive frame.	Fabrication; sexualized disinformation; reputational anchoring; audience amplification; semiotic violence
Woman activist	Facebook	Fake news-style image (“photo-card” mimicry)	A photograph was embedded in a graphic mimicking mainstream news aesthetics, attributing a sexually suggestive statement to the target and implying institutional verification.	Users treated the image as credible “proof.” Sexualized ridicule and moral shaming followed, framed as justified exposure rather than harassment.	Visual disinformation; legitimacy borrowing; moralized misogyny; institutional mimicry
Woman academic/ admin.	Facebook, cross-platform circulation	AI-generated pornified composite	An AI-generated image depicted the target in an intimate pose with a male student, implying sexual misconduct and abuse of authority without factual basis.	Comment threads focused on sexual speculation rather than professional conduct. Administrative actions were reframed as scandal; circulation persisted in private groups after public criticism.	AI-enabled disinformation; professional delegitimation; sexualized moral panic; persistence beyond debunking
Woman student activist / litigant	Facebook, Telegram → offline	Public incitement invoking sexual violence	During a university election dispute, a post called for a “procession” invoking collective sexual violence in response to a legal challenge filed by the target.	Despite condemnation, screenshots circulated in private channels. The threat functioned as a deterrent to other women considering legal or political action.	Digital vigilantism; sexual violence threat; political intimidation; offline spillover risk

Woman activist	Facebook, Telegram	Rumor-based sexual delegitimation	After public recognition, posts alleged the achievement resulted from sexual favors rather than merit, without requiring fabricated artifacts.	Celebration posts became harassment sites. Professional credibility was undermined, converting positive visibility into reputational liability.	Sexual quid-pro-quo narrative; merit erasure; visibility punishment
Woman rights activist	Facebook	Impersonation + unauthorized image reuse	Fake profiles reused the target's photographs with suggestive captions and edited visuals, intensifying after political statements.	Blocking and reporting became routine defensive labor. Platform response was limited; harassment escalated during politically sensitive moments.	Impersonation; image-based abuse; coordinated harassment; platform failure
Woman political activist	Facebook, Telegram	Cross-ideological moral shaming	Islamist-leaning users attacked lack of modesty, while secular critics attacked religious appearance, converging on disciplining visibility through incompatible claims.	The target was positioned as perpetually deviant regardless of compliance, illustrating misogyny transcending ideological divides.	Cross-ideological policing; misogyny; respectability trap; moralized disciplining
Woman activist	Facebook → offline	Doxing and surveillance spillover	Following criticism of political actors, the target's phone number circulated in comment threads, leading to anonymous calls.	Harassment migrated offline, producing sustained stress and behavioral changes; participation became conditional on constant risk management.	Digital vigilantism; doxing; offline intimidation; chilling effect

Note: To avoid re-circulation of non-consensual, pornified, or threatening material, all identifying information (names, pages, institutions, locations) has been removed and/or replaced with bracketed descriptors. We included examples to demonstrate how gendered attacks operate, not to reproduce harm.