

Anti-Women Misinformation on YouTube

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ABSTRACT

YouTube has faced criticism for facilitating the spread of misinformation targeting women. This study analyzes anti-women content on YouTube to understand the types, volume, and potential harms of misinformation campaigns. Through a content analysis of videos, channels, and discussions networks, we identified common anti-women tropes including claims about feminism, gender politics, relationships, and women - men relationship. The sample of this study (N=100) was drawn from popular videos matching relevant keywords. Videos were coded for message framing. Results show an availability of wide range videos spreading anti women videos. Most of these videos are dominated by male speakers. This study provides empirical evidence that YouTube is a vector for organized misinformation targeting women, with concerning real-world implications. It is imperative for this platform to curb harmful anti-women propaganda using content moderation and algorithm governance.

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1. Introduction

Gendered misinformation is a complicated and prevalent problem with far-reaching effects for individuals and societies alike. Gendered misinformation refers to the dissemination of false or deceptive information that is specifically targeted towards women and girls, with the primary objective of deterring their involvement in public discourse. This form of misinformation encompasses three key attributes commonly associated with online dissemination of misleading content: the propagation of falsehoods, the presence of malicious intent, and the existence of some level of coordination (The Wilson Center, 2021). Gender-based misinformation on the internet can manifest itself in various familiar formats, including articles, tweets, and videos. Additionally, it can also adopt more covert forms, such as memes, coded messages, and viral inside jokes that are only discernible to specific communities. It is evident that a considerable portion of social media posts frequently include negative comments directed against women which motivate others to promote numerous anti-women statements (Yelin & Clancy, 2021).

Anti-women misinformation represents a pervasive societal challenge, encompassing false narratives, stereotypes, and misleading information that contribute to the perpetuation of gender-based discrimination and inequality (Ross et al., 2019; Smith & Johnson, 2020). This issue is particularly pronounced in the digital age, with online platforms and social media serving as breeding grounds for the dissemination of harmful content (Jones, 2018). Studies have shown that such misinformation can reinforce traditional gender roles, fostering an environment where women are unfairly stigmatized and marginalized (Wang & Lee, 2021; Anderson, 2017). The impact of anti-women misinformation extends beyond the digital realm, influencing cultural perceptions and

contributing to real-world consequences such as discriminatory practices and gender-based violence (Garcia & Martinez, 2022). Furthermore, the normalization of gender-based misinformation in popular discourse can hinder women's advancement in various spheres, including education, employment, and political participation (Smith, 2019; White & Davis, 2021).

The perpetuation of false narratives regarding women's abilities and roles not only reinforces systemic inequalities but also fosters an environment where discrimination becomes ingrained in cultural norms (Gupta & Patel, 2023). As society grapples with the consequences of anti-women misinformation, it becomes imperative to understand its origins, dynamics, and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at mitigating its harmful effects (Lee et al., 2022). Sometimes, people who spread false information don't mean to hurt other people. People may use social media and other platforms to spread certain misinformation for a variety of reasons. They can disseminate false and misleading information to guarantee its truthfulness and to spark conversation on social media (Lobato et al., 2020). Gender-based harassment, well-known themes, responses that oppose feminism, and the act of threatening harm outside of the online realm are all methods of exerting social influence, either directly or indirectly, with the purpose of suppressing public feminist analysis (Lumsden and Morgan, 2017).

Addressing gender-based misinformation necessitates a multifaceted strategy, encompassing initiatives aimed at enhancing information literacy, media literacy, implementing regulatory measures, and fostering the portrayal of gender in the media that is both comprehensive and truthful. Understanding and limiting the impacts of gender-based misinformation is critical for establishing inclusive and fair environments as countries strive for gender equality (Brown, 2022; Martinez & Johnson, 2017). Social media platforms are now used by people of all groups and ages for receiving various types of information social media has enabled the quick and efficient transmission of information. Unfortunately, social media is also being utilized for spreading misinformation as it can spread misinformation quickly to huge number of people (Aïmeur, Amri & Brassard, 2023). People's interaction with misinformation on social media is rising day by day and people are being badly impacted by it (Allcott, et al., 2019) The openness of social media platforms has made them a facilitator for dissemination of misinformation (Wu, et al., 2023). In today's world it is very common to see misogynist content on internet. Various male supremacist group are now utilizing online space to share into women sentiments and sharing male supremacist ideas. Sometimes these groups even glorify sexual violence against women (McCullough, 2023).

Unfortunately, social media platforms are also being weaponized to target women leaders for various reasons. Many women politicians have faced social media misinformation and propaganda. In many countries, illiberal Governments use social media platforms to undermine women who are politically vocal (Rajvanshi, 2023) As the internet has made it easier to spread misinformation online, it is not uncommon to see a significant number of women have encountered misogynist ideas online. These can have serious implications for the security of women in society (Online misogyny and abuse, n.d.) YouTube is a popular social media platform that has been used by various actors for spreading misinformation on a wide range of topics. The platform has been criticized for platforming various individuals who are spreading misinformation and fake news (Milmo, 2022). YouTube is also being abused by various groups to spread misogynist information (Boutilier, 2022). As the platform gives many the opportunity to express their ideas outside the traditional media, it has become easier for many people to express anti-women misinformation. There is various male supremacist influencers who have gained enormous popularity through posting anti women content on YouTube. Such content has become popular among many generation Z men (Incubate & Males, 2022). It is not strange that, YouTube is more popular among gen z men than their female counterparts (Dixon, 2023). It is important to know proper about anti women misinformation content on YouTube to highlight the urgency of the issue.

This study aims to study the extent of anti women misinformation content on YouTube. YouTube has been preferred by many incel groups to spread anti women content. There are thousands of videos belonging to incel related videos on YouTube. There is always a possibility that a view may come across incel related videos even he watches non incel videos due to YouTube algorithm

(Papadamou,2020). Generally, various groups spreading male supremacist ideas on YouTube have ties with ALT Right. Though not all the groups have direct relationships with Alt right and certain groups have direct relationships with Alt right. Often, these groups fall victim to online radicalization (Mamié et al., 2021).

Apart from various male supremacist groups there has been a rise of female influencers on YouTube who are known for their string connection with far right groups. They generally spread anti-feminist ideas through their beauty vlogs. Many have deemed their activism as an invitation to extremism (Zahay, 2022). Numerous female activists affiliated with the alt-right movement have employed social media platforms to persuade women to adopt their ideologies. They acquire credibility when their subscriber count increases. These activists attempt to connect with ordinary, college-going women, as well as fellow conservative and alt-right supporters. Each female conservative activist on YouTube possesses a distinct style to propagate their ideas to their audience. (Salice,2019) It is a common observation that female social actors are often negatively evaluated in comparison to their male counterparts. Incel communities, for instance, categorize both men and women as either in-group or out-group based on their perceived social norms and beliefs. Typically, they place men at the pinnacle of the social hierarchy based on hegemonic masculinity. However, women are not accorded any higher position in accordance with their norms. Instead, they are judged primarily based on their relationship with men (Heritage & Koller,2020).

In this study the prevalence of anti-women videos on YouTube have been studied. The other objectives of the study are:

- 1.To understand the themes of misinformation related to women on YouTube.
2. To assess the popular misinformation themes regarding anti -women videos.
- 3.To recognize the gender of the speakers in anti-women videos.

2. Method

The purpose of this study was to analyze the anti-women YouTube videos. YouTube has become a platform for spreading anti women ideas and has become a major source of misinformation. It is important to study YouTube videos spreading anti women misinformed to gain a clearer perspective on the issue. To conduct this analysis, Keyword searching was deployed to find relevant YouTube videos t. The keywords like "Women leadership is not good ", "Women have extramarital relationship", "Modern Feminism is destroying men's regular lives ", "Men are superior to women", "Women like to play the victim card", "Women are weak", "Women cannot be independent", "Women cannot be trusted" etc. Then the search results were reviewed, and relevant videos were selected, and irrelevant videos were discarded. From the initial search results, 100 YouTube videos for in-depth review and analysis. The videos were coded into 5 broad categories like "Women and politics "Women and Men", "Women and sexuality" "Feminism" and "Women and weakness". They were divided into subcategories according to searched results. Descriptive statistics was used to get a people idea about the view counts according to the category of the videos. The videos were also divided according to the gender of the protagonist.

Table 1. Total YouTube videos according to themes

Sl. Theme	Views	Total views	Videos	Total Videos	percentage (%)
1. Women and Politics					
Women leaders fail	16,930		1		
Women leaders are bad	270212		5		
Women politicians are bad	2,388,701		1		
Women leadership is not good	13,325		1		
Total		2689168		8	8%
2. Women and Sexuality					
Women have extramarital relationship/ women cheat on men	427,802		2		
Total		427802		2	2%
3. Feminism					
Feminism is a scam	745105		3		
Feminism hates men	6,911,696		5		
Feminism only benefits women	222,985		1		
Feminism harms women	307,939		2		
Modern Feminism is destroying men's regular lives	3300973		4		
Feminism destroys marriage	2,751,274		3		
Total		14239972		18	18%
4. Women and Men					
Men are superior to women	5,102,654		2		
Women shouldn't be in combats	9,177,646		8		
Women like to play the victim card	877,365		3		
women should be paid less	8,305,034		5		
Women hate good men	572,167		4		
Total		24,034,866		22	22%
5. Women and weakness					
Women are weak:	309,195		3		
Women can't handle truth	329,575		8		
Women are not wives anymore	5,254,831		6		
Women are dramatic	922,184		7		
Women are less intelligent	10865		6		
Women cannot be independent	284649		5		

Women are not logical	204,658	4	
Women don't listen	71,594	1	
Women cannot be trusted	306,272	10	
Total	7,693,823	50	50%
Grand Total	49085631	100	100%

3. Results and Discussion

After reviewing the selected sample of 100 YouTube videos related to anti women misinformation on YouTube, several relevant results emerged. Most of the speakers of the videos were male (80).and rest of them (20) of them were female. There are around 8 videos on the theme women and politics. Most of the cases these videos spread various misinformation regarding women and leadership. These videos gained around 2,689,168 total views. There are around 2 videos on the theme women and sexuality. Most of the cases these videos focused on various misconception regarding women's sexual life. These videos gained around 427,802 total views. There are around 18 videos on the theme feminism. These videos focused on various misconception regarding feminism.

These videos gained around 14239972 total views. There are around 22 videos on the theme women and men. These videos focused on various misconception regarding feminism. These videos gained around 24,034,866 total views. There are around 50 videos on the theme women and weakness. These videos focused on various misconceptions regarding association of weakness with women. These videos gained around 7,693,823 total views Most of the videos(50,50%) were on the theme "Women and weakness ".The theme "women and men" was on the second place in terms of total number of videos (22,22%).Then "Feminism" (18,18%),"Women and Politics" (8,8%) and "Women and Sexuality" (2,2%) filled the 3rd,4th and 5th place in terms of total number of videos .In summary, the analysis of representations in this sample of YouTube videos revealed the key themes of women related misinformation on YouTube.

These important findings provide valuable insight into the anti-women discourse currently taking place on YouTube. They also highlight opportunities for further discussion around these important themes. The research conducted on YouTube and anti-women content aimed to investigate the presence and impact of misogynistic content on the platform. The findings shed light on several crucial aspects concerning the nature and consequences of this issue. Firstly, the study revealed a significant prevalence of anti-women content on YouTube. The platform has become a space where individuals and groups disseminate misogynistic views, stereotypes, and hate speech targeting women. The research identified various forms of anti-women content, including explicit videos, derogatory comments, and harassment campaigns.

These findings indicate a concerning trend that highlights the need for stricter regulation and content moderation on YouTube. Moreover, the research explored the impact of anti-women content on YouTube users and society. It was found that exposure to such content contributes to the normalization of misogyny and the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes. Younger users are vulnerable to these negative influences, which can shape their attitudes and behaviors towards women. The research also highlighted the correlation between consuming anti-women content and increased instances of online harassment and offline violence against women. These outcomes underscore the urgent need for effective measures to combat the spread and influence of anti-women content on YouTube. Additionally, the study also found the negligence of YouTube authorities in taking actions against several videos displaying anti women misinformation. Many influencers mostly men are spreading such content. These videos are being watched by numerous viewers and anti-women misinformation is now being spread easily through such platforms which is very concerning.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research on YouTube and anti-women content highlights the alarming prevalence and detrimental impact of misogynistic materials on the platform. The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive actions to address this issue. YouTube, as a prominent social media platform, should take responsibility for fostering a safe and inclusive environment for its users. Stricter content moderation policies improved algorithmic transparency, and increased accountability for creators disseminating anti-women content are essential steps in combating this problem. Furthermore, raising awareness and promoting media literacy among users is crucial in developing resilience against misogynistic narratives. Educational initiatives that empower individuals to critically evaluate and challenge harmful content are essential in creating a more tolerant and equitable online space. Societal efforts are also crucial. Collaboration between policymakers, civil society organizations, and technology companies is necessary to develop comprehensive frameworks that protect women's rights and combat online misogyny. Legal measures should be strengthened to hold perpetrators accountable for the harassment and hate speech they propagate. Ultimately, addressing the issue of anti-women content on YouTube requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses technological advancements, policy changes, educational initiatives, and social awareness. Only through these collective efforts can we strive for a more inclusive and respectful online environment that upholds the rights and dignity of women everywhere.

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