

Misogyny and the construction of toxic masculinity in the Spanish Manosphere (*Burbuja.info*)

Charo Lacalle; Beatriz Gómez-Morales; Mireya Vicent-Ibáñez

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Charo Lacalle ✉
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0024-6591>
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Campus Bellaterra
08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona), Spain
rosario.lacalle@uab.es



Beatriz Gómez-Morales
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0557-528X>
Universitat de Lleida
Campus Rectorat
25003 Lleida, Spain
beatriz.gomez@udl.cat



Mireya Vicent-Ibáñez
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8331-5387>
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Ciudad Universitaria
28040 Madrid, Spain
mireyavi@ucm.es

Abstract

The anonymity of the Manosphere has provided a fertile breeding ground for the spread of misogyny through increased hate speech on the Internet. In recent years, this virtual space composed mostly of men, has been the subject of numerous studies aimed at identifying the discursive mechanisms of identity constructions that underlie the denigration of women. This paper takes the findings from international research on the subject to address a phenomenon still little explored in Spain through the analysis of misogynistic comments on *Burbuja.info*. Economic forum. The analysis sample comprises 4,281 messages that include the lexeme "woman" posted over 2.5 years, 761 of which contain expressions that ridicule, disparage, or insult women. Thematic analysis demonstrates the repetition of misogynistic topics and tropes common in the most radical *Reddit* and *4chan* subforums, such as hypergamy, objectification, and the constant disparagement of the world of women, not to mention criticism of feminism, left-wing political parties, and legislation on gender violence. The results obtained show that the "male identity crisis" is narratively constructed in the messages on *Burbuja.info* using the motif of sacrifice –the cornerstone of a monotypic story in which the purpose of the hero-man-victim's journey is to punish the villain-woman. Furthermore, we also found that there are different configurations of identity related to attitudes toward women; these match up with the four most prominent masculinist subcultures identified in the leading literature on the subject: *Men Rights activists (MRA)*, *Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)*, *Pickup Artists (PUA)*, and *Involuntary Celibates (Incels)*.

Keywords

Manosphere; Misogyny; Hate speech; Sexism; *Burbuja.info*; Feminism; Masculinities; Identities; *MRA*; *MGTOW*; *PUA*; *Incels*.

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1. Introduction

The massacre in Isla Vista (California), perpetrated by Elliot Rodger in 2014, and his reference to the *Incels* in the video that he released on *YouTube* before committing suicide, directed media attention to that misogynist group, which Rodger himself described in his “Manifest” as “a forum full of men who are starved of sex, just like me.”¹

Four years later, Alek Minassian committed murders in Toronto and mentioned Rodger on *Facebook*, proclaiming,

“The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!”

impacting on the more radical forums while intensifying public concern about hate speech against women on the Internet (Venäläinen, 2022). Minassian’s pronouncement further demonstrated that misogynists also hate those men who, in the narrative of their tormented sexuality, “steal” women from them: the alpha males or “Chads” (Bates, 2020; Johanssen, 2022; Vallerga; Zubriggen, 2022).

Since then, the media, institutions, and academia have issued warnings about the expansion of the Manosphere—the virtual space through which misogynistic messages circulate and are perpetuated—and this ecosystem’s influence in the real world, which has become a real threat (Ebner, 2021). Research carried out to date underlines the powerful appeal that masculinist communities have for both adult men, disillusioned with the expectations created by neoliberalism, and young men, weighed down by their own insecurities (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Bujalka; Rich; Bender, 2022; Sugiura, 2021; Van-Valkenburgh, 2021; Vingelli, 2019). It also highlights the similarity between anti-feminist communities and far-right ideology, with which they share a misleading and all-encompassing notion of masculinity (Bazzano, 2022; Carreras, 2019; Johanssen, 2022; Lacalle; Martín-Jiménez; Etura-Hernández, 2023; Marwik; Lewis, 2017; Messner, 2016; Nagle, 2017).

Complementary to some contributions on the Spanish Manosphere (Bonet-Martí, 2021; Caldevilla-Domínguez et al., 2022; García-Mingo; Díaz-Fernández, 2022a; 2022b; García-Mingo; Díaz-Fernández; Tomás-Forte, 2022; Lacalle, 2023a; 2023b; Juárez-Miro; Toff, 2022), this article aims to deepen the understanding of a phenomenon that is still in an initial phase of study in Spain by analyzing misogynistic messages on one of the most popular forums: *Burbuja.info*. The specific aim of this study is to determine the different modalities of the construction of identity in the comments that make up the sample. We start from the hypothesis that hate speech against women on *Burbuja.info* forms a melting pot of identities with characteristics similar to the subtypes identified in the English-language literature on the subject:

- *Men Rights Activists (MRA)*
- *Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW)*
- *Pickup Artists (PUA)*
- *Involuntary Celibates (Incels)*.

The study also takes as its premises some of the results obtained by research conducted using Big Data techniques, notably how posts are perpetuated, the porosity of the different echo chambers that make up the Manosphere, and the gradual transition of the members of the oldest communities (*MRA* and *PUA*), which come from the real world, to the most radical ones (*MGTOW* and *Incels*), generated in the virtual environment (Farrell et al., 2019; Frenda et al., 2019; Hopton; Langer, 2022; Horta-Ribeiro et al., 2021; Krendel; McGlashan; Koller, 2022; Manne, 2018).

2. The Manosphere

The origins of misogynist groups can be traced back to the men’s liberation movement of the 1970s and the fathers’ rights movement of the 1990s, as with the pioneering National Coalition for Men founded in 1977 that remains very active today. The development of the Internet from the mid-2000s onward brought about the meeting of these first subcultures and the new masculinist communities that emerged on the Internet, with the declared objective being “[to] eliminate gynocentrism and male disposability.”²

The term “Manosphere” was first used in a 2009 blogspot to denote

“a chaotic, decentralized, heterogeneous, and constantly changing nebulous online community” (Lilly, 2016, p. 134).

The designation gained increasing popularity following the 2012 publication of Ian Ironwood’s book *The Manosphere: A New Hope for Masculinity*. Since then, it has been used as an umbrella term to describe

“everything from progressive men’s issues activists dealing with real neglect of male health, suicide and unequal social services to the nastier corners of the Internet, filled with involuntary celibacy-obsessed, hate-filled, resentment-fueled cultures of quite chilling levels of misogyny” (Nagle, 2017, p. 86).

The communities in the Manosphere are rooted in the propagation of their misogynistic and anti-feminist discourses (Ging; Siapera, 2018) and are recognized for their proven toxicity (Krendel; McGlashan; Koller, 2022). Despite the univocality of their attitude toward women and the common language they share (Marwick; Caplan, 2018), the Manosphere is composed of an extensive and diffuse network of subreddits, blogs, social networks, and forums. Its heterogeneity comes from its complexity and extreme fragmentation as well as its constant evolution (Kyparissiadis; Skoulas, 2021). However, far from impeding their configuration, the characteristic diversity of these groups does not preclude their re-

presentation as a phenomenon in the social imaginary, since their shared contempt for women acts as the glue that binds together a variety of disparate or sometimes even antithetical characteristics. In fact, the communities in the Manosphere are typified by the porosity of the boundaries between them and the ease with which they relate to one another (**Han; Yin**, 2022). It follows a structure of concentric circles

“in which these narratives are being intensified as a consequence of the emergence and dissemination of sexist and anti-gender discourses in the political and social arena” (**Zugasti-Hervás**, 2022, p. 141).

The crisis of masculinity is the cliché of choice used to justify the reassertion of patriarchal values (**Bujalka; Rich; Bender**, 2022; **Dupuis-Déri**, 2012), one of the tropes that provides greater “cross-pollination” between the masculinist, neomasculinist, and anti-feminist subcultures of the Manosphere (**Nagle**, 2017). The patriarchal past, mythologized and structured around the traditional division of roles and existing inequalities between men and women (**Kyparissiadis; Skoulas**, 2021; **Lilly**, 2016), is invoked to bridge the gap in a way that culture, society, economy, and politics cannot (**Vingelli**, 2019). Hence, the shared rituals of the Manosphere are structured around nostalgia for the lost privileges and consequent self-victimization of grieving men, stripped of their ancestral rights by women.

Misogynist communities reject the feminist premise regarding the structural inequality suffered by women (**Marwick; Caplan**, 2018), with their objective being to slow down the progress of gender equality (**Zugasti-Hervás**, 2022). In this sense, the redefinition of feminist tropes (the domination and objectification of women) is one of the weapons used against women as a whole and against the movement itself, in what **Banet-Weiser** defines as a constant struggle for power (**Banet-Weiser**, 2018).

García-Mingo and **Díaz-Fernández** (2022a, p. 77) believe that the Manosphere fills the emotional void of those men

“who feel that they are victims of the social order based on a socio-sexual hierarchy that, in their opinion, benefits women.”

Both authors identify the roots of victimhood in the idea of male disposability and the imposition of a misandry that, according to misogynists, permeates the whole of contemporary Spanish society (**García-Mingo; Díaz-Fernández**, 2022b).

The hypergamy attributed to women –selecting men for their ability to provide material goods and/or the best possible genetic characteristics for their offspring– is another of the arguments used by these subcultures, obsessed with the idea that feminism and left-wing political parties indoctrinate a part of the male population into renouncing their own interests (**Lacalle**, 2022; 2023b).

In the Manosphere’s shared narrative, these men taken in by feminist doctrines and leftist slogans are awakened by taking the “red pill”: a “philosophy” rooted in the accusation that women occupy a dominant position owing to their sexual power (**Azzolari; Borodi; Garusi**, 2021). The metaphor of the red pill, which comes from the movie *The Matrix* (**Lilly and Lana Wachowski**, 1999), has become the most important trope of all the rhetorical figures of speech that circulate in the Manosphere in terms of liberating men from the misandry and brainwashing of feminism (**Ging**, 2019). However, as **Van-Valkenburg** (2021) points out, this trope is not only used to express hegemonic masculinity; it is also a powerful weapon when it comes to integrating neoliberal and scientific discourses into the recruitment strategies implemented by the various subcultures. “Redpillers” use the term “bluepillers” to refer to men won over to the feminist cause and, in general, to all those who do not hate women.

The formalization of the four subcultures in the Manosphere of the English-speaking world identified by **Lilly** (2016) and **Ging** (2019), among other authors, and, moreover, revalidated in other recent research conducted in the European Mediterranean area (**Azzolari; Borodi; Garusi**, 2021; **Vingelli**, 2019; in addition to those already cited by **García-Mingo** and **Díaz-Fernández**, 2022a; 2022b, and **Lacalle**, 2023a; 2023b), forms the conceptual framework of this study. The characterization of the discourses analyzed in each of them also represents a valuable window into the mental organization behind the messages (**Caldevilla-Domínguez et al.**, 2022).

Despite the differences in the strategies implemented and tactics deployed by the discursive manifestation of the hatred of women, all posts share the stated objective of “reclaiming” the power, pride, and privilege of being a man, expressed through the aforementioned hostility toward feminism, criticism of liberalism, and disapproval of current gender roles (**Ebner**, 2021). As Han and Yin point out,

“[t]he common traits are a misogynist worldview and a redefinition of masculinity in the contemporary context, with the use of different narratives about performance relying on a set of stereotypical models of masculinities” (**Han; Yin**, 2022, p. 14).

The following is a summary of the defining characteristics of each of the four groups mentioned (*MRAs*, *MGTOWs*, *PUAs*, and *Incel(s)*), bearing in mind that many posts may express the distinctive features of more than one subculture or even include characteristics of all of them.

“The shared rituals of the Manosphere are structured around nostalgia for the lost privileges and consequent self-victimization of grieving men, stripped of their ancestral rights by women”

Men's Rights Activists (MRA)

The MRAs represent the most conservative wing of the *Men's Liberation Movement (MLM)*, which emerged after the dissolution of the latter and transformed into an anti-feminist group. Protection of the family and terms of divorce soon became the main stated objectives of this subculture, characterized by having greater interaction with the real world than the others. Its discursive influence in the Manosphere centers around the economic precariousness in which divorces place men and the Machiavellian nature of women, who use children to obtain the best terms possible in the settlement.

Men going their own way (MGTOW)

Like MRAs, MGTOWs are men who are disappointed with what they see as a society dominated by gynocentrism; however, instead of fighting women, they tend to avoid them. Nonetheless, this subculture's discourses reflect a wide spectrum of attitudes: from renouncing sexual relations with women, or, at the very least, becoming romantically involved with them, to clinging to monogamy to avoid possible allegations of sexual abuse. The latter type of misogynists often scrupulously follow what they themselves call the Pence Principle, attributed by Randall Bentwick to Donald Trump's ex-vice president, Mike Pence, in a bestseller published in 2018 (*The Pence Principle: Lessons All Men Must Learn from Ford-Kavanaugh*). The Pence Principle is summarized in rules, such as never meet a woman alone, never drink alcohol at parties unless accompanied by one's own wife, etc.

Pickup Artists (PUA)

The PUA's disdain for women does not differ much from the attitude of MGTOWs; however, instead of shunning or protecting themselves from them, they try to deceive them so as to seduce them. The governing principle of these misogynists is based on the conviction that every woman is worth as little as the others, so that, when a strategy does not work on one of them, she should be ignored, and they should move on to the next. Their "philosophy" is condensed in the book published in 2005 by journalist Neil Strauss (*The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*), who blended in with these insiders to write the work. Converting the tactics used in seduction into formulas has led to a growing million-dollar business (courses, publications, etc.), based on the denigration of women.

Involuntary Celibates (Incels)

The Incels share the problems of relating to women with MGTOWs; however, in contrast to many of the latter's voluntary renunciation of engaging in sexual relations with women, the frustration of the Incels stems specifically from the difficulty in establishing romantic relationships. These "blackpillers" represent the extreme, symbolic, and systemic attitude of hatred of women (Sugiura, 2021), a result of their low self-esteem and physical complexes, so they embody better than any other subculture the character of the "otherless other" that Johanssen (2022) used to describe misogynists.

"Incels are the (violent) manifestation of a new social order where sexuality and intimacy are signs of status and even social membership" (Illouz, 2020, p. 311),

notes sociologist Eva Illouz in her celebrated *The End of Love: A Sociology of Negative Relations*.

3. Method

Burbuja.info emerged in 2003 as an "Economy Forum" and achieved great fame by predicting the 2008 Spanish economic crisis, although this did not prevent it from drifting into the "craziest conspiracy theories" and "chauvinistic conversations" (Hernández, 2016). The narcissism of its members, who comment on any type of post in which they are mentioned; the constant confrontations with *Forocoches*, the largest Spanish forum also known for its hate messages against women; and the systematic reference to the subcultures of the Manosphere of the English-speaking world, make *Burbuja.info* an ideal place to observe the phenomenon under study.

This forum was chosen primarily due to its impact, but also to the absence of studies on it, except for those by Lacalle (2023a; 2023b) cited above, and to its accessibility. In relation to the latter, it should be noted that, despite being a closed space with subscription access, all its content is published openly, unlike *Forocoches*.

Burbuja.info ranks 35th among the most visited Spanish forums, with traffic of 7.2 million visits in November 2022, its main competitor being specifically *Forocoches* (25.8 million). Of the audience that visited *Burbuja.info* in November, 68.9% were men and 31.1% were women. By age group, the largest was the 25-34-year age group (27.3%), followed by the 35-44-year (22.0%) and 45-54-year (18.8%) age groups. Visitors between the ages of 18 and 24 years (13.9%) were in fourth place, which provides us with some insight into its potential impact among young people.³

3.1. Searching and data collection

Data collection was carried out through a process of web scraping throughout July 2022. To narrow down the relevant posts as much as possible, we used the advanced options of the forum's own search engine, which allowed us to locate all comments posted between January 2020 and July 2022 that included the lexeme "woman" ["*mujer*"] and to download each of the threads in which they had been posted. The data were downloaded using the *Instant Data Scraper* tool. As a result of this process, 118 different threads were collected, which included a total of 4,281 messages: 962 posted in 2020, 1,202 in 2021, and 2,117 in the first seven months of 2022.

3.2. Analysis of posts

After a preliminary review of the posts, 761 messages that included some expression of dislike, hatred, and/or contempt toward women, that is, misogynistic comments, were identified. The content of these messages was subjected to thematic analysis, a technique that allows for rigorous categorization of the data (Braun; Clarke, 2022). The analysis consisted of three stages: extensive reading, coding, and analysis:

- The exhaustive reading of the posts, following the literature review carried out, made it possible to identify differences and similarities between the posts, and to reach a consensus on the coding system (Saldaña, 2016).
- The coding system of the posts was structured on the basis of two supercategories of analysis: the misogynist profile and the main theme. In both cases, the categories established take the classifications and characteristics identified in previous research as a reference (Han, Yin, 2022). In relation to the misogynist profile, four groups were identified, as already presented in the previous section: *MRA*, *MGTOW*, *PUAs*, and *Incels*. The themes that make up the codebook are the following:
 - hypergamy and nonconformism;
 - infantilism and/or animalism;
 - political leftism and the institutional protection of women;
 - problems derived from divorce;
 - gender violence and fear of being reported for sexual aggression;
 - objectification of women; and
 - female infidelity and male frustration.

In turn, coding using Excel allowed us to establish different thematic patterns and subthemes, which are developed in the following section.

To ensure the reliability of the intercoders, the three researchers worked together, comparing and contrasting their respective codings of the same post.

- The analysis, development, and review of the themes was carried out manually, taking into account both the similarities and the diversity of the profiles, their problems, and the type of language used.

The methodology used is the successor to the netnography promoted by Kozinets (2015), as well as an update of other works on audience comments on Spanish television fiction (Lacalle; Gómez-Morales; Narvaiza, 2021; Lacalle; Castro-Mariño, 2018) and the Manosphere itself (Lacalle, 2023a; 2023b).

4. Results and discussion

The results of the analysis reveal the repetition of some cross-sectional themes in most of the messages analyzed, which are characteristic of misogynist discourse. However, they also reveal the existence of significant differences between some comments and others, consistent with the subcultures identified in the research that framed this study.

“Women’s pragmatism in economic matters, which they prioritize above all other considerations, is one of the criticisms repeated the most in the messages”

4.1. Cross-sectional themes

4.1.1. Female hypergamy

Women’s pragmatism in economic matters, which they prioritize above all other considerations, is one of the criticisms repeated the most in the messages⁴:

“You’ve hit on the key word: SELF-INTEREST. A chick is genetically programmed to look for the best possible male, which means that, when she is with you she doesn’t stop looking for him; it is a relationship of total and absolute self-interest.”

Some messages from this group link hypergamy with a female need to spend impulsively, to splurge:

“A guy who has a girlfriend won’t save a cent, another problem for a guy who wants to save and escape the rat race. There is a contradiction between tasting pussy and saving money, the two things are incompatible.”

4.1.2. Infantilism and animalisation

Constant nonconformity is another trait attributed to women by the different misogynist subcultures. While it is true that this nonconformity may stem from multiple issues (for example, the lack of help they receive from men when it comes to household chores and childcare), the messages state that men’s low spending power is a determining factor, which is where the constant reference to hypergamy comes from. Moreover, women never seem to be satisfied with what they have, as they are capricious, pretentious, and egomaniacal creatures, who want everything for nothing. This is a space of “infantilization of women”: WOMEN = CHILDREN and their actions never have consequences.

Some posts adopt a pseudobiological perspective to argue that their intellectual maturation process ends much earlier than that of men or even that it does not take place at all, so they do not know what they want or suddenly change their

minds. This widespread conviction is particularly problematic because of its repeated use as a justification for harassment or abuse:

“They don’t know what they want; some of them invite you straight to their house, you screw her, and the next day she tells you that you’re not her type or, worse, that she didn’t want to. The situation is complicated.”

“The recourse to infantilism and/or female animalism is designed to portray women as beings who are devoid of conscience and/or who are hysterical, as opposed to men –logical, rational, and superior”

Some posts suggest “animalizing” a woman:

“you have to treat them a bit like dogs: first tame them and then keep them on a short leash.”

Other messages rule out the possibility of “domesticating” women and compare them to small, dim-witted, and supposedly unsympathetic animals, such as chickens. In the sexual arena, on the other hand, they are equated to monkeys to reiterate the idea that they “use” men and do not leave them until they have found a better one (“women are like monkeys, they do not let go of a branch until they have another one in their grasp”). As for physical appearance, there is no shortage of posts that use coarse humor in which plus-size women are compared to big animals, such as cows, orcas, or seals.

In any case, the recourse to infantilism and/or female animalism is designed to portray women as beings who are devoid of conscience and/or who are hysterical, as opposed to men –logical, rational, and superior:

“Genius is a path of total solitude, and that is why it is reserved for men (a woman would never get there).”

Some posts even go so far as to equate women with animals in a perverted way, with the aim of associating women’s rejection with immorality and depravity.

4.1.3. The political left and female privilege

Another inexhaustible source of criticism is the privileges granted by leftist political parties to women. It is also the main argument used to advocate against unprecedented discrimination experienced by “heterosexual white men:”

“The globalist social engineering that is being carried out with the pervasive hypersexualization of Western societies is solely aimed at the total destruction of the heterosexual white man.”

Numerous messages are devoted to defining and enumerating the advantages of being a woman in Spain today: access to public employment through a special quota for being a woman, incentives for companies to hire women, specific subsidies for self-employed women, sick leave for painful menstruation, positive discrimination on physical tests to do certain professions, and free training courses, among others. As a result, the incorporation of women into the labor market has produced widespread unease. This is because it implies that women have become rivals for job opportunities and that they do not compete fairly owing to the privileges granted to them by the left, and, on the other hand, incorporating them into the labor market also involves working with them, which adversely affects men because women have lower productivity and, in the end, men would end up doing all the work:

“Women parasitize men’s work in a pleasing way through seduction or in an aggressive and a nasty way through feminazism. In an awful communist State like this one, the woman parasitizes the man with the help of the public authorities.”

Posts claim that this low female productivity results from constant conflict among women:

“There is no worse work environment and no more despotic superiors than women. Freeloaders, useless by nature, playing the victim, with no concept of teamwork and workplace unity, selfish ... They are the cancer of the company.”

Thus, sisterhood is portrayed as a fabrication of feminism, since women are incapable of having healthy relationships with each other. They argue that women should not be part of the job market and that they should stay at home:

“Why do you think that women have been at home for centuries, our ancestors were assholes? Well, they hadn’t learned from experience and knew what was up, but we modern people want to think we know better.”

Feminism is depicted as an “absurd doctrine” of which women are the victims because, as inferior beings, they can be duped more easily:

“Deceived from a very young age by the elites into thinking that ‘working frees and empowers you’ after a few years treading water and eating shit, the few smart ones learn the lesson.”

Posts of this type also tend to criticize the “allies,” the female-dominated men:

“It is incredible how Spanish men have changed in just a single generation, before we had balls and only a mother told you what you had to do, years and years of simp guys landed us with a society in which women dominate but play the victim, and the guys? They support them.”

The messages are also very critical of men who support feminism, calling them “bitch boy” [*“pagafantas”*], “wimp” [*“blandengues”*], “pansy” [*“parguelones”*], “wuss” [*“calzonazos”*], “pantysniffers” [*“huelebragas”*], and even emasculating them through the term “mangina” (a portmanteau of “man” and “vagina”):

“A Mangina is a self-deprecating man who unconsciously hates himself and blindly believes that women are superior to him.”

“ Numerous messages are devoted to defining and enumerating the advantages of being a woman in Spain today ”

4.2. Specific topics

4.2.1. Men Rights Activists (MRA)

This subculture’s anxieties are the main theme of 11.0% of the posts, although they also filter into a good number of messages focused on other topics, such as female hypergamy or the consequences of the current Spanish government’s institutionalized feminism. This set of posts insists on the idea that, after a breakup with or without children in common, women have the privilege of staying in the family residence, whereas men are “kicked out” of the home and are forced to pay alimony even if their economic situation does not permit it (“No judge gives a shit if there is money left for rent or food, gasoline”). The high number of messages from this group that reflect a serious worry about the possibility that the woman’s new romantic partner may move into the family residence is striking:

“the woman stays in the house, and within 3 months her new partner enters, who prefers the house bought with your savings and/or you’re still paying for!”

On the contrary, no posts show irritation at the inability to live with their own children or spend more time with them. In some cases, paternity is even questioned:

“it is possible that the child is the neighbor’s, but it is forbidden for you to take a paternity test.”

A good number of posts on the problems arising from separation blame the situation in which these men find themselves on false reports of gender violence and excessive state protection for women:

“I have LIVED this in the form of people in my family and friends 2 TIMES. Both times it was like this: First time: ‘Either I keep the house, or I sue for abuse’ [...]. Second time: ‘Either I keep the house or you’ve raped me’.”

Although there may be many reasons for a separation/divorce, users state that these are mainly due to the woman’s dissatisfaction with the man’s decrease in or absence of economic income:

“Spanish women, as soon as their husband sinks down –in economic terms– begin with the reproaches, the insults, and in the end they end up leaving them for being failures who do not live up to what they deserve.”

Some posts even go so far as to claim that women abandon their husbands because, once they’ve reached motherhood and economic stability is assured, they no longer need them.

4.2.2. Men Going their Own Way (MGTOW)

Posts on sexual violence, false allegations, and the lack of the presumption of innocence are the central themes of 16.3% of the messages analyzed. This group of posts tends to deny the official data, which they call inaccurate, and claim that false accusations are widespread and lead to statistical overrepresentation of women as victims of sexual violence. They also claim that the figures are biased, as they believe that both “sexual violence” and “domestic violence” are not exclusively female problems:

“I only put what I find, but there is a legit mountain of corpses every week in Spain due to women.”

Some posts even suggest that there is a conspiracy against men:

“Murders have been around as long as human beings have existed. The thing is to solve them quickly and prosecute the person responsible in order to punish them. Nothing else needs to be done. But HERE IT’S ALL ABOUT FUCKING WITH MEN.”

In discussions about femicides, messages suggest that the “real” reasons for the death are always unrelated to gender-based violence:

“The death of a woman at the hands of some tough guy she hangs out with is not murder, it is suicide.”

Yet, a small number of comments even justify violence against women:

“I thought I would commend him by uploading a video on my instagram where I advise women to keep their husband or boyfriend happy and satisfied if they don’t want him to beat them for fleecing them and keep them on bread and water.”

The fear of being exploited by a woman often leads to a self-protection strategy based on emotional and sexual detachment from women by renouncing the role of husband, boyfriend, father, or resource provider:

“We have to learn to be self-sufficient, and emancipate ourselves from the tutelage of a woman, to be aware that we have value on our own, independent of female validation, which is frivolous, selfish, changeable and self-serving, and of the dependence that women seek to create in us, with the aim of putting us at their mercy.”

“Feminism is depicted as an “absurd doctrine” of which women are the victims because, as inferior beings, they can be duped more easily”

In the same vein, some posts discredit and mock men who still long for a relationship with a woman:

“A lot of complaining, but many of you are partnered up with a woman. If that pisses you off, I’ll even be happy about it. You deserve nothing less. [...] You’re gyno-codependent shits, and I’ll laugh a thousand times over at the shit you waste. Screw you.”

In other cases, however, alternatives for satisfying their sexual/reproductive needs are proposed in which women are completely dispensable:

“Yep, as soon as they invent a suit/machine that can connect to a computer and reproduce the sensations of being with a woman, the human species will go extinct in a couple of generations.”

The posts defending the legalization of surrogacy demonstrate extreme hatred, expressed through the use of profanity:

“But what the fuck are you talking about? There is no such thing as an alpha woman. And, look, the alpha male seems to me an idiot with a good view of stupidity. An inferior being because of their gyno-codependency [...] Your only reason for being is sex, but you suck at that, and you are useless when it comes to that. You are scum in a state of fucking filth.”

4.2.3. *Pick Up Artists (PUA)*

Hate messages related to utilitarianism put seduction before any ideological, ethical, or philosophical ramifications of achieving that goal. Thus, these posts (9.6%) defend the original “method,” that is, a set of aggressive seduction techniques that do away with the boundary between consent and active harassment:

“You are the master. That’s right, a real man should pursue the woman. And in a way that feels insistent and acts and adapts accordingly.”

Some arguments use a pseudoscientific packaging to make them effective:

“It is based on the brain morphology of women, more neural connections between lobes than men, but less activity and ‘intra-lobular’ neurons. They have a hard time keeping reasoning in their heads, so they can be easily manipulated.”

In other cases, on the contrary, they recommended feigning disinterest as a winning tactic:

“Really important: demonstrate that you don’t need any of them. But it is not enough to fake it. You have to really live it. Give up any intention of flirting ahead of time. Make up your mind that you are not interested in flirting. Look, this does not mean joining the *burbumori* brotherhood of guys who can’t get laid and *Incels*. In fact, it’s the opposite.” (where “burumori” describes the community that uses the website studied herein)

The conversations that facilitate seduction even make use of apparently contradictory reasoning, based on portraying women as creatures as detestable as they are desirable. To all appearances because, in reality, the dichotomy is reconciled by objectifying women; reducing them to objects that affirm their male privilege and their “erotic capital” in the sexual market. In other words, they become trophies:

“A man with balls and self-esteem knows he’s a fucking star and a valuable commodity that is in high demand, and they line up to have sex with him.”

This type of affirmation masculinity is also characterized by claiming that a woman’s value to a man is inherently linked to her physical attractiveness. Hence their propensity to open threads dedicated to making rankings of, for example, “the most fuckable female celebrities,” “the most screwable actresses,” or “female celebrities who were bangable in the nineties.”

4.2.4. *Involuntary Celibates (Incels)*

Male frustration is the main theme of the posts related to the characteristics of the *Incels* (19.4%). However, although users seem to explain their experience with the sole purpose of finding support and being part of a community of peers, other messages also show a violent response to the rejection of women, paradoxically accusing them of being both frigid (“because despite what the social engineers of the system sell us, women do not have a real compulsive need for sex, unlike men”) and promiscuous (“Women have whorishness in their DNA”).

An aggressive tone and vulgarity characterize much of the group of posts related to the Incel subculture, which even tend to justify the use of violence. On the one hand, they justify physical violence against women as a form of punishment

“I just want people who do not respect the natural law to be treated as they deserve to be treated and if the sluts of today need to be slapped, then they’ll get it.”

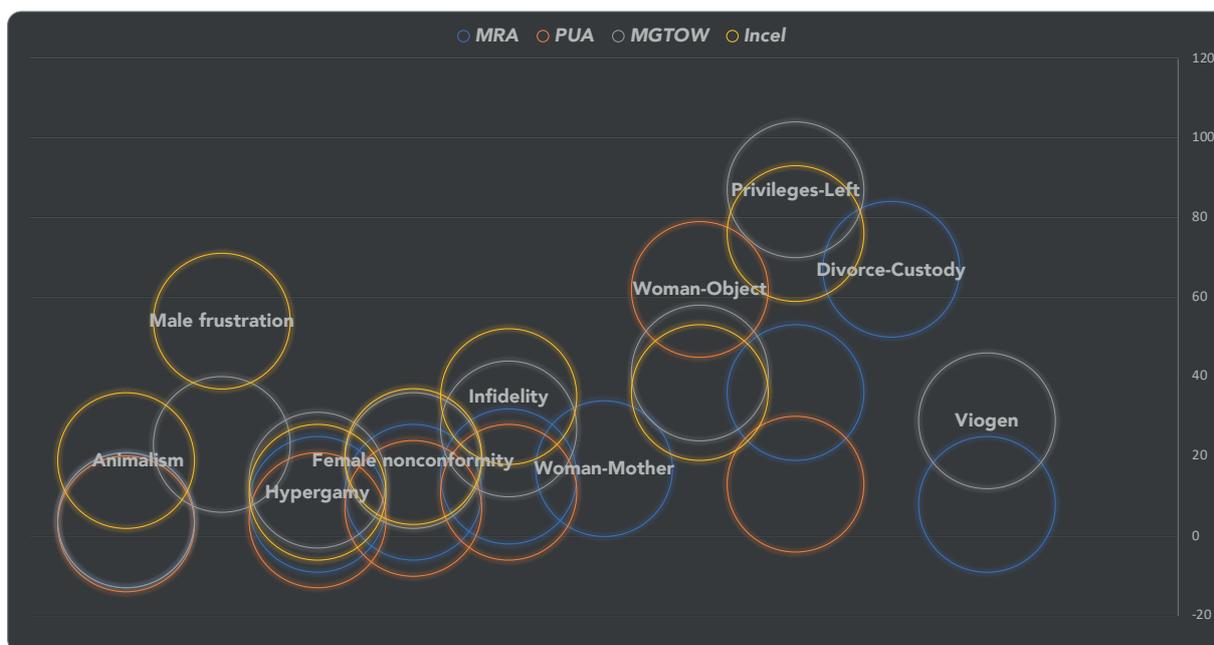


Figure 1. Configuration of topics of misogynist posts on *Burbuja.info*

On the other hand, they trivialize sexual violence by saying that women really desire it, even going so far as to attribute their own sexual fantasies to them:

“I’d go with the part where you’re underneath her while she has a big black cock destroying her ass. It’s impossible for a woman to get more pleasure.”

These fantasies unequivocally refer to the main topics of pornography, which seems to be their primary source of information about female pleasure. Regarding this last point, it is essential to point out that obsession with sex is a defining feature of this misogynist profile, which is very apt to see sexual connotations everywhere. Hence, a large portion of the posts only refer to sexual behavior and do not relate to the discussion topic at all.

5. Conclusions

This analysis confirms the main findings of research on hate speech against women, in terms of both the themes and topics characteristic of misogyny and the reasoning of the comments. Hypergamy, objectification, and the disparagement of the world of women are recurring tropes, to which must be added criticism of feminism, left-wing political parties, and, therefore, the current left-wing government. Among the contradictions that emerge in the study, the oft-repeated contradiction between frigidity and promiscuity attributed to women –one of the most prevalent manifestations of the Freudian virgin-whore complex– stands out. Another recurring paradox is the desire to push them out of the professional sphere to perpetuate their dependence on men while accusing them of destabilizing men economically.

The social identity attributed to women that surfaced during the analysis –utilitarian, ignorant, and privileged– contrasted with the victimhood that exuded from most of the comments. In this sense, it can be said that the “crisis of masculine identity” is narratively constructed in the messages. In this sense, it can be said that the “male identity crisis” is narratively constructed in the messages of *Burbuja.info*:

- men immolated by the unfavorable conditions of divorce;
- by the constant threat of being accused of gender violence;
- by the contempt they are subjected to by women;
- by the defenselessness against social and institutional privileges granted to the female sex...

And a long etcetera that is only interrupted by the dissonant voices of the *PUA*, who recommend to their fellow men to seduce women at any price: turning them into objects to be used and thrown away.

Although the intensity of the hatred varies significantly from one commentary to another, all of them explicitly express a deep contempt for women. This evidence is compatible with the characteristic animosity of the Manosphere, a prime example of a culture of anonymity in which users can air their darkest thoughts with impunity, as **Nagle** (2017) noted regarding *4Chan* blogs. The discursive and repeatedly stated contempt suggests that the low number of posts inciting violence could be due to the strict control exercised by those responsible for the forum, in accordance with the warnings made in the “Terms and rules” section of the blog: “We reserve the right to remove or modify any Content posted for any reason without explanation.”

<https://www.burbuja.info/inmobiliaria/help/terms/>

The results obtained demonstrate the unequivocal similarities between the major misogynist subcultures of the Manosphere described in international research (*MRA*, *MGTOW*, *PUA*, and *Incels*) and the different profiles identified in the misogynistic posts on *Burbuja.info*. This fact, along with numerous posts explicitly referencing said groups (Lacalle, 2023b), explains the persistence of a monotypic narrative in which the only way to respond to the “crisis of masculinity” is to punish the villain-woman, as Palma (2020) states in relation to the *Incels*, in the most degrading messages.

“Misogyny is spread through a set of tactics aimed at undermining women’s growing role in social life and their institutional visibility”

Although the textual nature of the analysis does not enable us to establish exact correlations with the real world, it is essential to very seriously consider how misogynistic posts on the Manosphere engender violence against women and vice versa—a bloodletting that neither Spanish society nor the institutions nor the politicians have successfully curbed despite public condemnation and actions aimed at eradicating it. A “holistic, longer-term approach based on an alliance across different sectors and political parties” (Ebner, 2021) is therefore required. Politicians, technology companies, social workers, educators, and civil society are called upon to coordinate their efforts in this enormous undertaking.

To summarize, it can be concluded that, in the messages analyzed, misogyny is spread through a set of tactics aimed at undermining women’s growing role in social life and their institutional visibility. The tropes utilized and the intensity of the hatred expressed defined four subcultures comparable to four expressions of toxic masculinity.

6. Notes

1. See *My Twisted World The Story of Elliot Rodger*, at <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/1173808/elliott-rodger-manifesto.pdf>
2. See, for example, *A voice for men, created in 2009*. <https://avoiceformen.com/>
3. Data provided by *Similarweb*, a company specialized in website traffic and performance. <https://www.similarweb.com/es/website/burbuja.info/#geography>
4. In the Spanish version of this article, all of the posts on *Burbuja.info* included as examples have been transcribed verbatim, maintaining the errors (typographical, spelling, syntactic, etc.) made by their writers.

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