

Disinformation about Gender-Based Violence: Denialism and Antifeminism in *Mediterráneo Digital*

La desinformación en torno a la violencia de género: negacionismo y antifeminismo en la plataforma *Mediterráneo Digital*

Desinformação sobre a Violência de Gênero: Negacionismo e Antifeminismo na Plataforma *Mediterráneo Digital*

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Abstract

Disinformation about feminism has increased significantly in Spain in recent years. A key aspect of this trend is the denial of gender-based violence, a narrative promoted by conservative social organisations and far-right political parties, whose influence has been growing. This study analyses how *Mediterráneo Digital*, a prominent digital disinformation platform in Spain, contributes to the construction of a denialist and conspiratorial discourse on gender-based violence. Through a content analysis of 116 articles published in 2022 in the 'Feminism' section, the discursive strategies employed by the website to downplay violence against women and reinforce the far-right narrative that 'violence has no gender' are examined. Among the most recurrent topics are the portrayal of women as criminals, false accusations, and the discrediting of feminism and equality policies, which the website associates with unwarranted public spending and control over institutions. This type of content legitimises and strengthens the discourse of anti-feminist movements and political parties aiming to undermine gender policies in Spain. Furthermore, it is observed that *Mediterráneo Digital*, through a polarising approach, portrays men as victims of gender laws and encourages distrust of feminism, presenting it as a threat to their rights.

Keywords

Disinformation; Denialism; Gender-based violence; Antifeminism; Pseudo-media; Polarisation.

Resumen

La desinformación en torno al feminismo ha experimentado un notable incremento en España durante los últimos años. Una de las claves de este fenómeno ha sido cuestionar la existencia de la violencia de género, un argumento defendido por organizaciones sociales conservadoras y partidos políticos de ultraderecha, en creciente expansión. Este estudio analiza cómo *Mediterráneo Digital*, una destacada plataforma digital de desinformación y exponente de la manosefa en España, contribuye a la construcción de un discurso negacionista y conspirativo sobre la

violencia de género. A través de un análisis de contenido de 116 artículos publicados en 2022 en la sección 'Feminismo', se examina la manera en que esta web utiliza estrategias discursivas para minimizar la violencia contra las mujeres y reforzar la idea de que 'la violencia no tiene género', promovida por sectores de ultraderecha. Entre los temas más recurrentes destacan la representación de las mujeres como criminales, las falsas denuncias, y la desacreditación de políticas de igualdad y del feminismo, que esta web asocia con el gasto público innecesario y el control sobre las instituciones. Este tipo de contenidos legitiman y amplifican el discurso de movimientos antifeministas y de partidos políticos que buscan debilitar las políticas de género en España. Además, se observa cómo *Mediterráneo Digital*, mediante un enfoque polarizador, apela a los hombres como víctimas de las leyes de género y los alienta a desconfiar del feminismo, presentándolo como una amenaza a sus derechos.

Palabras clave

Desinformación; Negacionismo; Violencia de género; Antifeminismo; Pseudomedio; Polarización.

Resumo

A desinformação sobre o feminismo aumentou de forma notável em Espanha nos últimos anos. Uma das principais razões para este fenómeno é a negação da existência de violência de género, um argumento defendido por organizações sociais conservadoras e partidos políticos de extrema-direita, que estão em crescente expansão. O presente estudo analisa a forma como *Mediterrâneo Digital*, uma importante plataforma de desinformação digital e expoente da manosphere em Espanha, contribui para a construção de um discurso negacionista e conspiratório sobre a violência de género. Através de uma análise de conteúdo de 116 artigos publicados em 2022 na secção "Feminismo", examinamos como este sítio Web utiliza estratégias discursivas para minimizar a violência contra as mulheres e reforçar a ideia de que "a violência não tem género", promovida por setores de extrema-direita. Entre os temas mais recorrentes estão a representação das mulheres como criminosas, as falsas acusações e o descrédito das políticas de igualdade e do feminismo, que os

meios de comunicação social falsos associam a gastos públicos desnecessários e ao controlo das instituições. Este tipo de conteúdos legitima e amplifica o discurso dos movimentos antifeministas e dos partidos políticos que procuram enfraquecer as políticas de género em Espanha. Além disso, observa-se como o *Mediterrâneo Digital*, através de uma abordagem polarizadora, apela aos homens como vítimas das leis de género e encoraja-os a desconfiar do feminismo, apresentando-o como uma ameaça aos seus direitos.

Palavras-chave

Desinformação; Negacionismo; Violência de género; Antifeminismo; Pseudo-media; Polarização.

1. Introduction

1.1. Gender-based Violence in Spain as a Social Problem

Gender inequality between men and women is rooted in different forms of social control, the most extreme manifestation of which is violence (Comas d'Argemir, 2015). Patriarchal structures sustain oppression and domination based on the concept of gender, a social and cultural construct imposed through education, which justifies the differential treatment of men and women (Toribio del Hierro, 2021). The ideas about gender and sexuality in this system underpin gender-based violence, characterised by its structural dimension, the objective of control, and the isolation of the victim (Lorente-Acosta, 2020). Moreover, these forms of violence are common to all women in all historical periods and geographical regions, being present throughout their entire life course in various forms (physical, psychological, sexual, symbolic, and patrimonial). In many contexts, they are regarded as a problem that does not warrant institutional intervention, despite being an attack on Human Rights (Sánchez-Ramos et al., 2024).

In Spain, the perception of gender-based violence has changed significantly over the last two decades. Violence perpetrated by partners or former partners had long been regarded as a private matter belonging to the family sphere. Having initially ignored this issue, journalism began covering such assaults and

murders as crime stories (Berganza, 2003; Novo-Arbona et al., 2023). The 1997 femicide of Ana Orantes marked a turning point (Vives-Cases et al., 2005; Marín et al., 2011; Gámez, 2012). Three days after speaking on television about the violence she had suffered for forty years, her former partner burned her alive. Since then, gender-based violence has been recognised as a social problem that must be placed at the forefront of public debate (Carballido, 2007).

This shift in perspective has been driven by three key actors: collective action, the media, and political institutions. The feminist movement has been crucial to ensuring that these forms of violence are understood as a matter of collective concern. In the 1970s, the Battered Women's Movement in the United States launched a campaign to bring this issue out of the private sphere and make it understood as a social problem (Gillespie et al., 2013). In Spain, the feminist movement has been instrumental in placing gender-based violence on the political and legislative agenda (Comas d'Argemir, 2015). Organisations advocating equality and women's rights played a key role in the creation of new meaningful practices around gender-based violence — a task known as the process of definition, which was necessary for the press to begin recognising such incidents as newsworthy (Fagoaga, 1994). From the 1990s onwards, the media began to cover mobilisations and negotiations between feminist groups and public institutions (Vives Cases et al., 2005).

Journalism has played a decisive role. An increasing number of media outlets have stopped portraying male violence against women as crimes of passion (Rodríguez Cárcela, 2008; Sánchez-Ramos et al., 2024). Journalistic reporting began to focus on gender inequalities and the ideological and cultural framework that underpins them (Zurbano-Berenguer, 2010). The profession began to provide more specialised coverage, improving the lexicon, incorporating expert sources, and adopting ethical guidelines (Novo-Arbona et al., 2023), although not always with the desirable follow-up (Zurbano-Berenguer & García Gordillo, 2017; Edo & Zurbano-Berenguer, 2019). As Bernal-Triviño (2019, p. 24) points out, some of the information about male violence against women has been false, prioritising sensationalism and morbid curiosity, and 'reflections that play into the hands of the patriarchy' are still being published.

Spanish political institutions have also made progress in the fight against this problem. The passing of Organic Law 1/2004 on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender-Based Violence states that 'gender-based violence is not a problem

confined to the private sphere but rather the most brutal symbol of the inequality that exists in our society'. Since its passing, the media have been regarded as allies in the fight against gender-based violence, taking on a proactive, educational role (Sánchez-Ramos et al., 2024). The law was passed with the support of all political parties and has commanded broad consensus over the years. Public opinion has also demonstrated greater awareness of the seriousness of this social problem, with Spain being the most sensitised country in Europe (Collet, 2020).

1.2. The Anti-Gender Threat and the Rollback of Equality

Despite the progress made in the fight against gender-based violence, recent years have seen regressions in gender equality in Spain. These setbacks are due to the emergence of two actors in the public sphere: one social and the other political (Álvarez-Benavides & Jiménez Aguilar, 2021). Both share a denialist stance on gender-based violence, claiming it to be an 'ideological invention' of feminism (García-Mingo & Díaz Fernández, 2022). This discourse fractures the political and social consensus on the existence of this violence, downplaying its significance and attributing it to foreign men (Boneta-Sádaba et al., 2024). They argue that violence has no gender and that men are also victims, emphasising cases of female perpetrators and false accusations (García-Mingo et al., 2022).

The focus on violent acts committed by women resonates with the traditional portrayal of the female criminal as a monster, violating society's gender norms (Garcin-Marrou, 2011). Journalistic coverage of infanticidal mothers, for example, accentuates the cruelty of the act, portraying them as closer to animals than to human beings (Constant, 2016). This reinforces the ideal of women being devoted to the domestic sphere, lavishing love and care (Santillán, 2017). Descriptions of female criminals provide more information about the position they are expected to occupy in the social space, and the gender relations that shape it, than about the crime itself (Dubec, 2022).

In the social sphere, various organisations linked to anti-gender movements defend this denialism (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2018). They argue that gender-based violence is a leftist ideological tool to discriminate against men (Bonet-Martí, 2021). They advocate the repeal of laws and regulations countering this phenomenon, considering it to be a

fabrication. HazteOir.org is a prominent voice for the anti-gender movement in Spain (Cornejo-Valle & Pichardo, 2018). Its campaigns in recent years have included the deployment of a bus bearing the message 'It's not gender-based violence. It's domestic violence. Gender laws discriminate against men' (with the hashtag #StopFeminazis), and taking out full-page ads in conservative newspapers on 8 March 2019, International Women's Day.

In the political sphere, the growing presence of Vox in Spanish institutions has driven movements to roll back gender equality (Álvarez-Benavides & Jiménez Aguilar, 2021). Vox argues that masculinity is threatened by feminism (Castillo Jara et al., 2019; Rubio-Pueyo, 2019), presenting it as a problem that imposes policies and government decisions, while economically benefiting from them (Lacalle et al., 2023b). The party has proposed the repeal of laws against gender-based violence (Ferreira, 2019). In an interview in December 2018, the leader of Vox, Santiago Abascal, stated, 'We don't want a law that criminalises men.'

This message is having an impact on Spanish society. A survey by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas revealed that 44.1% of men 'strongly' or 'somewhat agree' that 'we have gone so far in promoting women's equality' that they are now discriminated against (CIS, 2023). This idea is most widely shared (51.8%) among young people aged 16–24, revealing a higher incidence of anti-equality discourse among younger generations. Those who work with young people observe a growing rejection of feminism and a trivialisation of gender-based violence (Boneta-Sádaba et al., 2023). According to the 2023 Youth and Gender Barometer, 23.1% of males aged 15–29 believe that 'Gender-based violence does not exist; it is an ideological invention,' while this was 12% in 2019 (Rodríguez San Julián et al., 2023).

1.3. Disinformation Against Feminism

The emergence of actors questioning feminism and the existence of inequalities between men and women, including gender-based violence, is occurring in parallel with an increase in disinformation about these issues. Recent studies have revealed that opponents of feminism see it as an anti-male movement (Herrero-Diz et al., 2020). Although the demonisation of feminism is not new (De Miguel, 2008), new media have amplified these critical voices and reinforced disinformation — now

the main ally of anti-feminist cyber-ghettos (Herrero-Diz et al., 2020), which function as echo chambers and spread conspiracy theories (Pérez Bernal, 2022). Disinformation is defined as intentionally false messages aimed at causing harm (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), whereas conspiracy theories provide alternative explanations of reality that are widely shared in digital spaces without any verification (Uscinski, 2018).

The impact of these messages is amplified by a hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013), in which the internet and social media play an increasingly significant role in information consumption (Newman et al., 2024), and a post-media public sphere where political and social actors can reach citizens without the mediation of journalists, leading to a crisis in the public sphere (Palau-Sampio & López-García, 2022).

Disinformation about feminist issues has specific characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of information disorder (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). According to Malquín and Gamir (2023), the most frequent intentions behind this type of disinformation are to polarise and destabilise societies, and its discursive strategies include falsehoods and decontextualisation. Herrero-Diz et al. (2020) highlight that most of the disinformation about feminism is disseminated through social networks, followed by digital media. The digital environment has seen the emergence of the *manosphere*, an anti-feminist space composed of forums, social networks, and specific websites (García-Mingo et al., 2022). These channels, which are predominantly occupied by young men, produce anti-feminist, misogynistic discourses that incite hatred against women (Boneta-Sádaba et al., 2023), characterised by male victimisation, the ridicule of feminism, and a call to action against it (Delgado Ontivero & Sánchez-Sicilia, 2023). The narrative in these spaces seeks to delegitimise feminist struggles (García-Mingo & Díaz Fernández, 2022) and demonstrates a 'crisis of masculine identity' by portraying men as wronged by a system that favours women (Lacalle et al., 2023a).

Among the actors in the *manosphere* are pseudo-media outlets. Many digital platforms responsible for disinformation are not legitimate journalistic outlets. The concept of 'pseudo-media' refers to websites that function as ideological platforms associated with the ideologies of political parties. These platforms mimic journalistic formats but pursue objectives that contradict the principles of rigorous, high-quality journalism, which is grounded in verification and ethical codes

(Palau-Sampio & Carratalá, 2022). These websites aim to negatively influence the social context with false or inaccurate information (Kim & Gil de Zúñiga, 2021). They violate ethical principles and professional standards of journalism, opting for polarisation, ideological activism, the promotion of conspiracy theories, and the dissemination of false and biased content (Arce García & Rodríguez Fernández, 2024).

2. Objectives and Methodology

This study is based on the hypothesis that *Mediterráneo Digital*, as a pseudo-media outlet within the manosphere, contributes to the denialist discourse on gender-based violence through disinformation strategies. *Mediterráneo Digital*, one of the most active sources of disinformation in Spain (Carratalá, 2023), positions itself as a digital media outlet with a distinct xenophobic ideology. Founded in 2010 by Edgar Sánchez, the platform claims to provide free and independent journalism, distanced from political correctness (Palau-Sampio & Carratalá, 2022). Previous studies have, however, indicated that it is a website dedicated to the dissemination of fake news (Rodríguez Fernández, 2020; Vila Márquez, 2020), with both economic and ideological motivations (Sendino Marcos et al., 2022), a view that is shared by journalists (Montemayor Rodríguez & García Jiménez, 2021). Its disinformation content includes fake news and falsehoods about women (Herrero-Diz et al., 2020; Mottola, 2022; Chiwerto Callejo & García Pernía, 2024).

Data from SimilarWeb (2025) indicate that, in December 2024, *Mediterráneo Digital* received 335,836 visits, predominantly from mobile devices (91.35%), with the majority of access originating from social networks (70.08%), particularly X (98.81%). In January 2022, the website's Twitter account had 71,310 followers, growing to 108,779 by January 2025.

The main objective of the research is to determine whether *Mediterráneo Digital's* publications support the notion that 'violence has no gender', a stance advocated by conservative groups and far-right parties. The specific objectives are to identify the dominant topics in the 'Feminism' category, analyse its coverage of gender-based violence, and examine whether its content presents a dichotomous narrative in which women are portrayed as aggressors and men as victims.

All articles published in 2022 under the 'Feminism' section were collected, totalling 116 pieces between 4 January and 23 December. All of them are presented as journalistic news items. According to the Government Delegation against Gender-based Violence, 49 women in Spain were murdered due to gender-based violence in 2022, the second-lowest annual figure. Nevertheless, the 016 gender-based violence helpline received over 100,000 calls for the first time in 2022. Additionally, two minors were killed due to vicarious violence, and the percentage of false accusations was 0.01%, according to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

The pieces were subjected to content analysis, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative analysis (Krippendorff, 1990) recorded the frequency of the articles, their temporal distribution, and the most common topics, particularly those related to the feminist agenda and gender-based violence, using manual coding based on inductively created categorical variables. The units of analysis were coded based on the headlines, as they prioritise certain macrostructures or mental models (Van Dijk, 2016).

The qualitative analysis enabled the study of the discursive strategies in the articles from two perspectives. First, through frame analysis, the study examined how the media select and exclude aspects of reality to promote a definition of the problem, an interpretation of its causes, a moral evaluation, and a recommendation (Entman, 1993). The study of media frames considers both the identification of generic frames in journalistic coverage (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) and specific frames to make a more precise and detailed interpretation of the preferred readings conveyed regarding certain topics of interest in the public debate (Matthes & Kohring, 2008; Brüggemann & D'Angelo, 2018). Previous studies on male violence against women have looked for specific frames in the coverage of these events (Gorosari González, 2021).

The qualitative analysis is complemented by critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), examining the pieces in relation to the political and social context and their role in reproducing and legitimising abuses of power and inequality. Aspects such as lexical choice, the construction of an us/them divide (reinforcing polarisation through the ideological square), and the presence of implications and presuppositions — which allow for the indirect assertion of 'facts' that may not be true — were considered (Van Dijk, 2016).

3. Results

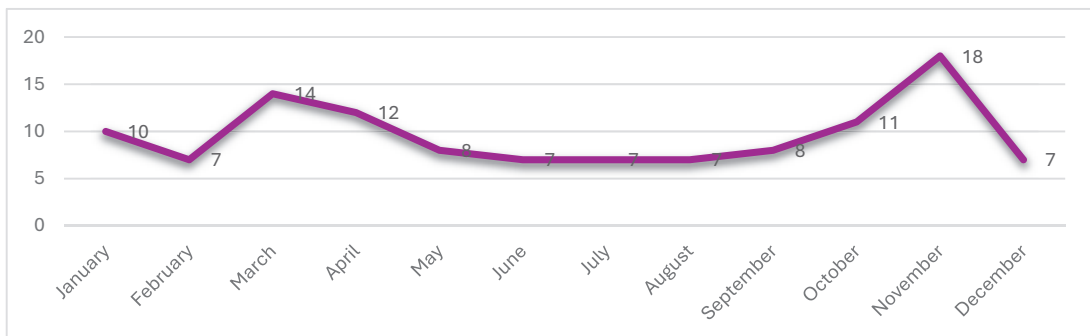
3.1. Frequency, Evolution, and Main Topics of the Publications

The analysis of the 116 articles in *Mediterráneo Digital's* 'Feminism' section in 2022 reveals a consistent publication pattern, with an average of nearly ten articles per month. The months of March and November stand out due to their higher frequency, with fourteen and eighteen articles respectively (Figure 1), making them more visible.

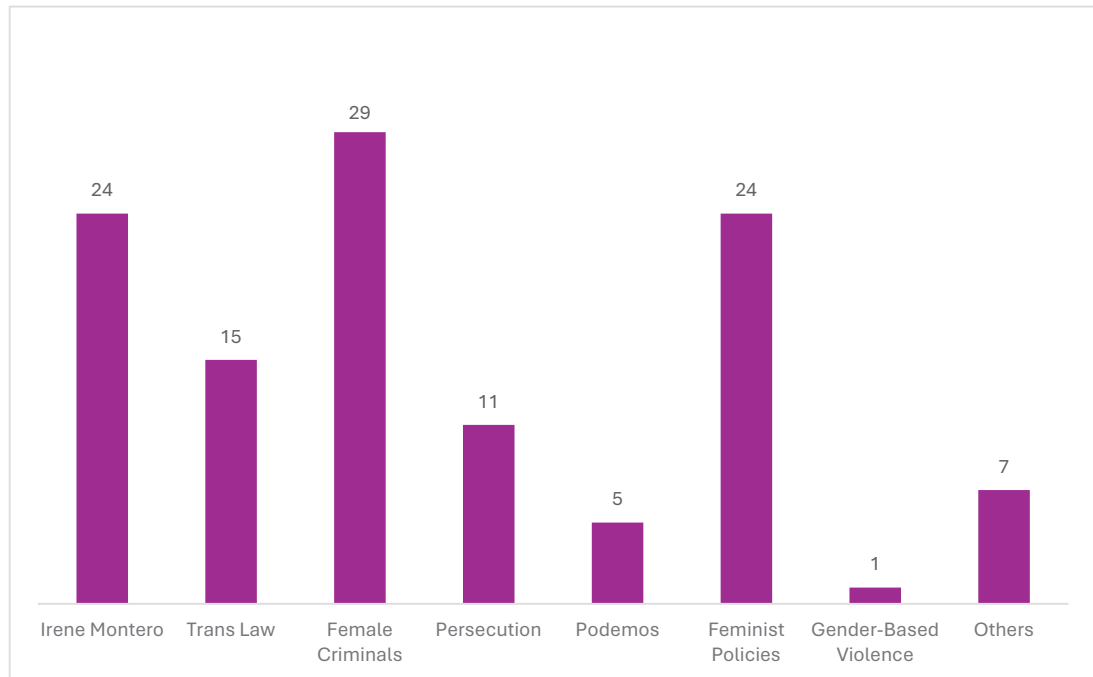
The main topics addressed (Figure 2) include the portrayal of women as perpetrators of crimes, which accounts for 25% of the articles. Two other recurring topics, each representing 21% of the sample, are pseudo-news about feminist policies (such as abortion, sexual consent, and gender perspective in education) and articles focusing on the Minister for Equality, Irene Montero, the driving force behind some of these legislative proposals.

Additionally, articles on the 'Trans Law' (15 pieces), which aims to improve the protection and equality of trans people, are identified, along with pseudo-information suggesting that feminism is used as an excuse to persecute certain practices or social actors (11 pieces). Also present are articles on Podemos, the Minister for Equality's party, with five pieces. Only one article addresses gender-based violence.

Figure 1. Evolution of articles in the 'Feminism' section in 2022



Source: prepared by the author.

Figure 2. *Main topics in the analysed articles*

Source: prepared by the author.

3.2. Coverage of Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence receives very limited coverage in the articles from *Mediterráneo Digital's* 'Feminism' section, with only one piece directly addressing sexual assaults on women, titled 'With the rise in immigration, cases of gender-based violence soar' (13/10/2022). The remaining references to gender-based violence are found in articles on public policies aimed at eradicating violence against women and promoting gender equality education.

These articles are divided into two thematic areas. On one hand, there is pseudo-information that portrays public policies against gender-based violence as a waste of public money, with headlines such as 'Government spends 14,601 euros of public funds on report criticising gamers as sexist' (28/03/2022), 'Government allocates 157 million euros to fire fighting and 20.319 million

euros to “fighting sexism” (19/07/2022), and ‘Spain to donate 100 million euros to gender equality organisations’.

On the other hand, there are publications suggesting that measures to combat gender inequality and gender-based violence are useless, ineffective, or counter-productive, as seen in articles titled ‘New Education Law: “gender perspective” more important than effort’ (05/04/2022) and ‘Rapist has sentence reduced thanks to Irene Montero’s law’ (15/11/2022).

3.3. Female Criminals vs. Male Victims

The third objective of this study is to identify whether the articles in the corpus present a dichotomous viewpoint in which women are portrayed as aggressors and men as victims. Of the 116 articles, 29 focus on women who have committed crimes, with regular publications throughout the year, except in February. This discourse on female criminals permeates the broader narrative of the pseudo-media. The topics under the category ‘female criminals’ are divided into five subcategories: assaults on children, assaults on men (often husbands), false accusations, assaults on female partners (lesbians or bisexuals), and other topics (such as assaults on cultural heritage).

The most frequent type of article emphasises that women are aggressive, even towards their children, across thirteen units of analysis, as seen in the following examples: ‘Mother arrested for beating two-year-old son to death’ (15/06/2022), ‘Mother arrested for recording pornographic videos of son to sell online’ (19/07/2022), and ‘Will feminists protest? Woman kills six-year-old daughter after losing custody’ (31/10/2022).

The second most common topic is women assaulting men, featured in seven articles. These articles depict women as particularly cruel, as in ‘León woman kills husband by slitting his throat with a knife’ (22/06/2022) and ‘Feminazi sent to prison for killing husband and giving his skull to friend’ (09/12/2022). In third place are articles about women making false accusations, with six pieces, as illustrated by the following headlines: ‘False accusation! Woman arrested after sleeping with friend and accusing him of rape’ (24/04/2022), ‘False accusation!

Man acquitted after girlfriend sought 10-year prison sentence' (27/09/2022), and 'CAUGHT! Woman convicted for making 10 false accusations of rape' (06/10/2022).

3.4. Frames Concerning Women and Violence

The content published in 2022 by *Mediterráneo Digital* in the 'Feminism' section, particularly on feminist policies and 'female criminals', reveals a discourse based on two frames: one primary and the other specific. The primary frame suggests that feminism is harmful to society, especially to men. In accordance with the structure proposed by Entman (1993), this frame defines the problem (feminism causes grievances among Spanish people) and its causes (false accusations, unjust gender laws, and female criminals concealed by institutions and the media). Examples of this are the headlines 'Woman stabs flatmate, and "feminist justice" lets her walk free' (20/11/2022) and 'Complete list of mothers who killed their children Government is hiding' (16/12/2022). Moreover, mainstream media are accused of silencing these facts, as reflected in the following headlines: 'It won't be on TV: mother kills child in revenge on ex-husband' (05/04/2022), 'It won't be on TV: woman stabs husband, sticking knife into his chest' (06/05/2022), and 'Will it be on TV? Woman arrested for stabbing boyfriend out of jealousy' (11/10/2022). The discourse also delegitimises feminism through moral evaluation, employing strategies such as the use of the term 'feminazi'. Headlines such as 'Feminists make abortion of babies with Down's syndrome possible "up to the moment of birth"' (26/11/2022) and 'Feminazi sent to prison for killing husband and giving his skull to friend' (09/12/2022) are examples of this. The proposal for addressing the problem posed by this primary frame is not presented openly but emerges implicitly through the portrayal of feminist policies in the analysed articles: when they are depicted as wasteful and counterproductive, it is implied that the solution would be to halt, or even reverse, the legislative progress achieved by feminism.

The specific frame posits that violence has no gender. This message is made explicit in pieces such as 'Girl arrested for stabbing man with scissors at New Year's Eve party' (05/01/2022), which concludes as follows: 'Can anyone imagine what would happen if it were the other way around, a man stabbing a woman with a pair of scissors? The story would lead TV news bulletins, dominate debate shows,

and fill all the front pages of the media. [...] Since the aggressor is a woman and the victim a man, they won't even report it. And with so many isolated cases of men being killed, we've already lost count. Violence has no gender.' This framing polarises the discourse between women (feminists) and men (who are wronged by feminism). The message that permeates several pieces, particularly those on 'female criminals', distinguishes between an 'us' (men) and a 'them' (women). *Mediterráneo Digital* seems to be targeted at heterosexual Spanish men, positioning them as vulnerable to equality policies, as reflected in the headline 'I believe you, brother: man found naked and penniless after being attacked by feminazis' (13/12/2022).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis conducted demonstrates that *Mediterráneo Digital* is a source of disinformation about feminism and, in particular, violence against women. As the research has shown, this pseudo-media outlet supports the strategy of denying that violence against women is a result of the patriarchal structure that shapes our societies. As has been demonstrated, gender-based violence has no place in its content. For this platform, male violence against women does not exist. The thematic agenda of this website did not report any of the 49 women murdered due to gender-based violence in Spain in 2022, nor the two violent deaths of minors recorded that year through vicarious violence. The only instance in which violence against women is mentioned in *Mediterráneo Digital* is when this pseudo-media outlet finds an opportunity to link it to immigration, giving rise to a xenophobic, racist discourse. In contrast, the figure of the evil woman is given centre stage. The prominent focus that *Mediterráneo Digital* reserves for pieces on crimes committed by women, often with a heavy dose of sensationalism, capitalises on the cultural resonance cultivated by stories featuring female criminals, who are portrayed as a true transgression of the caregiver and protector role assigned to them by the cultural construction of gender (Garcin Marrou, 2011; Constant, 2016). The hypothesis of the study is thus confirmed, as it is evident that this pseudo-media outlet contributes to the denialist discourse on gender-based violence through strategies characteristic of disinformation.

The production of disinformation discourse on violence against women observed in the pseudo-media outlet is also grounded in one of the key axes identified in previous research as a distinctive feature of falsehoods about feminism: polarisation. As other studies have shown (Malquín & Gamir, 2023), disinformation about feminist issues aims to generate social destabilisation by pitting men against women. The messages from *Mediterráneo Digital* clearly align with this goal by presenting a primary frame that portrays feminism as a social grievance, particularly for men, who suffer from unjust gender laws, are victims of false accusations, and must endure political, judicial, and media institutions complicit with feminist agendas. This discursive approach is structured around the dichotomous division between 'us' and 'them', which, according to the ideological square strategy (Van Dijk, 2016), serves to downplay the negative aspects of 'us' (such as the invisibility of male violence against women) while emphasising the negatives of 'them' (in this case, female criminals). In this way, the discourse of the pseudo-media outlet seeks to empathise with men through strategies such as the use of the expression 'I believe you, brother', which aims to parody and appropriate one of the most widespread slogans from recent feminist demonstrations in Spain. In these protests, the cry of solidarity, 'Sister, I do believe you,' sought to denounce how judges and police often fail to give sufficient credibility to women victims of male violence (Ballesteros Doncel & Blanco Moreno, 2021). Simultaneously, it identifies the threatening 'other' — feminist women — whom it refers to as 'feminazis', a term commonly used by ultraconservative actors within the anti-gender movement, seeking to associate feminism with totalitarian regimes and equating gender equality policies with authoritarian impositions that curtail freedoms and rights.

At the same time, these publications are an example of how disinformation (the references to false accusations in the analysed units are a good example) often turns into hate speech (Carratalá, 2023), a phenomenon within the current information disorder (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) that has continued to grow in Spain (Ministerio del Interior, 2024). The disinformation targeting the Minister of Equality is a clear example (Iranzo et al., 2024). In this regard, alongside the denialist strategy, the study has also identified a conspiratorial tone in the messages of this pseudo-media outlet. These publications, through open accusations ('Government is hiding') or suppositions arising from certain editorial strategies

(‘feminist justice’), suggest that the various branches of the state are entirely controlled by feminism, to which all of their actions have become subordinated. Similarly, the idea that mainstream media are responsible for concealing the true extent of violence committed by women is also implied.

This is a thoroughly anti-feminist rhetoric which, although it permeates the platform’s content throughout the year, is concentrated in the months of March (International Women’s Day) and November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women), key moments for the demands and visibility of the feminist movement. As noted in the introduction, some initiatives led by actors involved in the rollback of the fight against violence against women in Spain — such as the campaign spread through the press by the ultraconservative organisation HazteOir.org calling for the repeal of laws against gender violence, precisely on 8 March — also coincided with particularly significant dates for the feminist agenda. The circulation of these publications at times when the feminist message is trying to make its way into the public sphere represents a discursive counterbalance aimed at delegitimising, questioning, and eroding the validity of the voices that continue to advocate the necessity of deepening equality policies.

In short, the content published by *Mediterráneo Digital* in relation to feminism shapes a narrative of an alternative reality, thus connecting with one of the defining features of conspiracy theories (Uscinski, 2018). The circulation of this discourse, which finds privileged channels for dissemination in the digital spaces of the manosphere (Boneta-Sádaba et al., 2023; García-Mingo et al., 2022), contributes to the weakening of social awareness regarding the inequality and violence suffered by women. At the same time, this pseudo-informative narrative reinforces the ideological positions of far-right organisations, both social and political, that advocate the principle that violence has no gender. The rise of the far-right, which champions this message, is driven precisely by the elements of polarisation and hate speech present in pseudo-media outlets like the one analysed, and which political parties such as Vox also incorporate into their public communication (Ferreira, 2019; Rubio-Pueyo, 2019). Therefore, there is a clear feedback loop between the two actors: pseudo-media and the far-right develop a parallel communication strategy based on the same logic and disinformation tactics. The crisis in the public sphere, resulting from the loss of the journalistic profession’s mediating capacity (Palau-Sampio & López-García, 2022) in the face of the new hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013), increases the possibilities

for the dissemination of this discourse as well as its impact on the public — a significant percentage of whom consider that advances in equality policies have gone too far, and that men are now being discriminated against (CIS, 2023).

The analysis of the content published by *Mediterráneo Digital* over the course of a year provides sufficient clues to identify the strategies employed by this pseudo-media outlet to reinforce the maxim that ‘violence has no gender’, although the sample size limits the scope of the findings to this case study. Building on the conclusions drawn, future research could expand this initial analysis to cover longer time periods and include other actors in the digital space, particularly those representing the manosphere. Similarly, it will be important to assess the real reach of these discourses across broader public opinion, focusing on media literacy as a tool to counteract their impact, as well as investigating the correlation between the audience profile of this pseudo-media outlet and the voter base of ultraconservative political parties.

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