



Incels vs. femcels: dissecting the gendered realities of involuntary celibacy

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<https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/cgen.99350>

Recibido: 29/12/2024 • Evaluado: 15/01/2025 • Aceptado: 27/03/2025

ENG Abstract. The aim of this research is to conduct a comparative analysis between two web subcultures: incels (male involuntary celibates) and femcels (female involuntary celibates), both marked by a radical view of social reality and strong feelings of envy, anger, and resentment toward the opposite sex. Focusing on the /r9k/ (incels) and Crystal.cafe (femcels) imageboards, it examines how derogatory language fosters group identity and homophilic networks, fueling emotional polarization. Through Digital Media Ethnography, we investigate how these dynamics unfold, exploring whether such interactions deepen exclusion and resentment, with potential implications for real-world social relations.

Palabras clave. incel; femcel; netnography; hate speech; social polarization.

ENG Incels y femcels: explorando las realidades de género en el celibato involuntario

ESP Resumen. El objetivo de esta investigación es realizar un análisis comparativo entre dos subculturas web: los *incels* (célibes involuntarios masculinos) y las *femcels* (célibes involuntarias femeninas), ambas caracterizadas por una visión radical de la realidad social y fuertes sentimientos de envidia, ira y resentimiento hacia el sexo opuesto. Centrándose en los *imageboards* /r9k/ (*incels*) y Crystal.cafe (*femcels*), se examina cómo el lenguaje despectivo fomenta la identidad de grupo y redes homofílicas, intensificando la polarización emocional. A través de la Etnografía de Medios Digitales, investigamos cómo se desarrollan estas dinámicas, explorando si tales interacciones profundizan la exclusión y el resentimiento, con posibles implicaciones para las relaciones sociales en el mundo real.

Keywords. incel; femcel; netnografía; discurso de odio; polarización.

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Cómo citar: Pasciuto, F., Pizzimenti, D. (2025). Incels vs. femcels: dissecting the gendered realities of involuntary celibacy. *Comunicación y género*, 8(1), e99350

1. Introduction

Involuntary celibacy describes the condition of individuals who seek a romantic or sexual relationship but are unable to form one despite their efforts (Donnelly et al. 2001). This experience can lead to frustration, sadness, and social isolation, with negative effects on self-esteem and psychological well-being (Sparks et al. 2022; Kumari et al. 2024). The reasons behind involuntary celibacy vary and may include shyness, low self-confidence, difficulties in social interactions, or past trauma and some individuals also struggle to find compatible partners or navigate

romantic relationships. Specifically, involuntary celibacy can affect both men and women, yet societal stereotypes often spotlight the male experience. It is essential to acknowledge that both genders can encounter challenges in forming romantic or sexual connections. Stereotypes may change our understanding, portraying involuntary celibacy as an exclusively male issue, claiming that women can find sexual partners wherever and whenever they want (Kay 2022).

However, research shows that women may confront similar barriers, although influenced by distinct

societal pressures or cultural norms shaping how their situation is perceived (Penna 2024). Although both the incel and femcel communities share a common bond in experiencing involuntary celibacy – a circumstance beyond their immediate control – it is crucial to recognize that they are distinct entities. While they may be united by this shared experience, they cannot be conflated, overlapped, or deemed identical.

The aim of this research is to examine differences and similarities between the incelsphere and the femcelosphere through Digital Media Ethnography. Using non-participant observation, we analyze comments from two imageboards - /r9k/ (incels) and Crystalcafe (femcels) - to explore language use and gender dynamics. This approach highlights both shared traits and divergences in their online interactions, offering insight into the digital spaces they inhabit and the socio-cultural forces shaping their identities.

2. Decoding incels and femcels

The most renowned and extensively researched male masculinist subgroup of individuals experiencing involuntary celibacy within the manosphere in academic literature is undoubtedly the incels. The term “incel” itself reflects their situation, stemming from the combination of “celibates” and “involuntary”. What characterizes the incel movement is a sense of victimization coming from identifying themselves as celibate against their will. These individuals attribute their loneliness and lack of romantic or sexual relationships to women, describing themselves as ugly, of low socio-economic status and “beta” (Ging 2019) and thus less desirable to their female counterparts. Within these radical groups, there is a prevalent notion of a crisis of masculinity, attributed to women’s empowerment and their perceived dominance in Western society (Kelly et al. 2015; Woerner et al. 2018; Ciccone 2020).

The incel phenomenon, formally considered part of the broader Manosphere movement, refers to a movement initiated by men and geared towards other men, characterized by a variety of interconnected subcultures (Lilly 2016; Ribeiro et al. 2021). Although these movements serve different purposes, they are interlinked and driven by anti-feminist, misogynistic, and often violent sentiments (Ging 2019; Vingelli 2019; Pizzimenti & Pasciuto 2022). Rooted in a hegemonic notion of masculinity, these groups have gradually expanded and diversified over time, giving rise to various groups such as the Pick Up Artists (PUA), the Men’s Rights Activists (MRA), the Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW), and the incels.

Among the most prominent concepts in the incel community, particularly relevant is the Red Pill theory, which originated on Reddit in 2012 (Farci & Righetti 2019; Cannito et al. 2021; Van Valkenburgh 2021; Vallerga & Zurbriggen 2022) and was inspired by the movie “The Matrix”. Followers of this theory tend to divide society into two spheres: those who have taken the red pill - who are awakened to the idea that society promotes a significant falsehood, where women hold the greatest privileges in a covert manner; and those under the blue pill effect - who

remain unaware of living in a world dominated by female sexual power.

A related yet distinct phenomenon is the emergence of online communities that position themselves in explicit opposition to the Manosphere while self-identifying as “feminist”. These communities center on “women’s interests”, critique misogyny and sexism, and often espouse explicitly misandrist views, frequently invoking claims of female supremacy. We refer to this diverse digital ecosystem as the femosphere - a constellation of women’s online communities that have proliferated since 2018, primarily on Reddit, in a defensive response to the manosphere (Kay 2024). Therefore, we conceptualize the femosphere as a gender-inverted or mirrored counterpart to the manosphere. Some scholars have described these communities as “analogs” of their manosphere counterparts (Balci et al. 2023), encompassing groups such as femcels (Kay 2021; Kay & Johanssen 2024; Pizzimenti & Penna 2024), female dating strategists, Women Going Their Own Way (WGTOW), and “gender-critical” feminists. Among these groups, *femcels* are less widely recognized compared to their male counterparts. The term originates from the combination of “female” and “involuntary celibate” and refers to women who experience profound and persistent sexual frustration, often accompanied by intense emotional isolation. Similar to incels, femcel also exhibit a significant fixation on physical appearance, viewing their perceived lack of attractiveness as the primary source of their discontent, as they believe men are solely drawn to women’s physical beauty. Within this female domain, there is a rich selection of subcultures and subgroups, each often differing significantly from the others. Among femcel ideologies, for instance, we encounter the Pinkpilled women who draw inspiration from the Radfem movement, advocating for the Women Going Their Own Way initiative and focuses on women’s education and empowerment. The Pink Pill movement emerges predominantly in online spaces, aiming to provide women with a nuanced understanding of relationship dynamics and male behaviour (Evans & Lankford 2023; Balci et al. 2023; Pizzimenti & Penna 2024). It challenges established gender stereotypes by urging women to assert their rights, desires, and needs within romantic relationships and society. It supports women in living their romantic and social relationships with awareness, advocating for assertiveness in pursuing their desires while rejecting harmful norms or discriminatory behaviour differentiating between toxic individuals and those capable of fostering healthy relationships. Conversely, like incels, some women identify themselves as Redpilled, embracing beliefs that emphasise traditional gender roles, male authority, and skepticism towards certain aspects of feminism. They may argue that contemporary feminism has led to the erosion of traditional values and the breakdown of the family unit, and they may advocate for a return to more traditional gender roles and values. Yet, there are also groups sharing strategies to gain male approval and attention. Thus, within the femcelosphere, various expressions coexist, reflecting different interpretations of femininity and manifestations of intersecting patterns of social exclusion.

Despite gender-specific challenges, both incels and femcels find relief in online communities, where they seek validation, support, and understanding among their shared experiences of loneliness and frustration. Through an examination of their differences and similarities, we reward valuable insights into the complex interplay of gender, society, and relationships in the digital age.

2.1. Differences and similarities between incels and femcels

Incels and femcels communities have become prominent features of the digital landscape, representing a complex intersection of social dynamics, identity, and ideology. These groups often blend in online forums and imageboards, providing a space for individuals who feel marginalized or ostracized in the realm of romantic and sexual relationships. Within these digital communities, members often find solace in shared experiences, forming bonds through mutual understanding and empathy. However, this camaraderie can quickly give way to more toxic elements, as discussions veer into blaming external factors or even advocating for harmful ideologies. The use of hate speech is one of the main characteristics associated with the incel community (Pelzer et al. 2021; Pizzimenti & Pasciuto 2022; Gajo et al. 2023), however, incitement to hatred and the use of violent language belongs not only to incels but also to the femcel community. In their large-scale quantitative study of what they call “Online Women’s Ideological Spaces” on Reddit, Balci et al. (2023) identify femcels as a “toxic community”, categorising femcels as a “manosphere analog”, because they correspond to the incel community (i.e. *Female Dating Strategy* has been understood as women’s equivalent of male pick-up artistry). Balci et al. identify the following subreddits as “femcel” groups: *r/Trufemcels*; *r/AskTrufemcels*; *r/Vindicta*; *r/Pinkpill-Feminism*, and *r/TheGlowUp*. These femcel groups saw significant user activity until most of them were banned in 2020 and 2021 by Reddit for promoting hate - presumably due to transphobia, misandry and racism (Johanssen & Kay, 2024). Through their study of the *r/Vindicta* subreddit, Pizzimenti & Penna 2024 identified the use of a common vocabulary that promotes the adoption of anti-feminist language, along with lookist expressions and attitudes characteristic of the incel movement. In another study, Cava & Pizzimenti 2024 associated the Crystalcafe platform with hate speech and misandrist ideologies, highlighting how a sense of community emerges from the sharing of a system of shared sentiments, characterized by narratives centered on anger, misandry, loneliness, and sadness.

In both incel and femcel, expressions of hostility often target the opposite gender. Within the incel community, this can include derogatory terms, objectification, sexualization and dehumanization of women, as well as explicit expressions of violence like rape and murders or harm towards them. Similarly, in the femcel community, this can take various forms, including derogatory language, generalizations about men, and expressions of frustration or anger towards perceived societal injustices perpetrated by men.

Moreover, the anonymity afforded by online platforms can amplify extremist views, leading to the proliferation of these forms of misogyny, misandry, hate speech and prejudice, enabling individuals to freely voice their opinions, contributing to a phenomenon termed *online disinhibition*, as outlined by Suler (2004). Within digital spaces, this disinhibition can lead to the development of a fragmented identity, particularly when individuals engage in antisocial behaviour. The perception of anonymity and absence of consequences in online environments can intensify such conduct, fostering an atmosphere conducive to the dissemination of extreme viewpoints and the proliferation of confrontational and offensive discourse. Moreover, the echo chamber effect (Garret 2009; Sunstein 2017) reinforces existing beliefs and can serve to radicalize individuals further. Additionally, these online communities establish precise rules of behaviour to maintain order and coherence. In the forums and imageboards they attend, members create and adhere to guidelines that discipline their interactions, serving as a code of conduct, delineating what is acceptable and what is not. Violating these rules often results in punitive measures such as warnings, temporary suspensions, or outright bans.

Despite the differing experiences based on gender, both incels and femcels grapple with similar emotions of loneliness, rejection, and alienation. In both communities, another striking similarity emerges: a shared sense of victimhood (Lounela & Murphy 2023; Zimmerman 2024) that becomes a unifying narrative. Members of these groups share stories of personal struggles, experiences of rejection, and a pervasive sense of alienation from mainstream society. This victimhood often fosters a sense of solidarity within each community, providing a space where individuals can find validation for their experiences and a sense of belonging among peers who understand their pain. This narrative can perpetuate a cycle of resentment and hostility, further entrenching members in their beliefs. In this complex landscape, another thread that stands out prominently is even the identification of a common enemy. While on the surface, these groups may appear to be at odds due to their differing gender compositions and narratives, a deeper examination reveals a shared antagonist that transcends traditional gender boundaries. For incels, the perceived enemy often manifests in the form of women. Similarly, femcels direct their hate towards men.

However, beyond these gender-specific features, both incels and femcels identify a broader, systemic enemy that expresses itself through homophobia, transphobia, racism and ableism (Held 2023; Gheorghie 2024).

Moreover, within the lexicon of these communities, there are additional terms denoting perceived common enemy. For incels, one such target is the *Simp* (Sucker/Sucka Idolizing Mediocre Pussy), a term used to describe men who are seen as overly submissive or willing to do anything to gain the affection or attention of women. On the other hand, femcels often identify *Pick-me Girls* as a source of frustration Pizzimenti & Penna 2024, indication of women who seek validation or approval from men by denigrating other women, adhering strictly to traditional

gender roles, or downplaying their own accomplishments and interests. These terms, along with others like *Chad* and *Stacy* constitute a shared vocabulary that facilitates communication within the communities (Cannito et al. 2021; Menzie 2022). In this lexicon, *Chad* typically refers to men who are perceived as conventionally attractive, confident, and successful, often contrasting with the perceived inadequacies of incels. Similarly, *Stacy* is used to describe women who embody societal ideals of beauty and desirability, often seen as out of reach for incels and serving as objects of envy or resentment. Through the use of this vocabulary, members of the incel and femcel communities are able to articulate their frustrations and shared experiences, forging connections and finding validation within their respective online subcultures. Despite their shared traits, these two communities diverge in fundamental ways. Kay (2022) highlights a key contrast between incel and femcel communities: while incels are frequently associated with elements of white supremacy, authoritarian populism, and anti-feminism, femcels lack such political recognition. This perspective assumes that incels emerge as a political consequence of societal changes, wherein perceived loss of power fuels the toxicity within their community - a phenomenon acknowledged if not condoned. The femcel are outside of this mechanism and are subject to a double form of abjection: "cast out from mainstream beauty standards and romance cultures but simultaneously denied the possibility of building an identity based on their experiences of exclusion and loneliness" (Kay 2022: 31). Moreover, the analysis of language employed by the incel and femcel groups provides a compelling lens through which to examine the perception and portrayal of the opposite gender. Both communities show manifest disdain through language saturated with violence, misogyny, misandry, and a desire to eliminate the opposing gender. However, a notable divergence surfaces in how members of these groups characterize individuals of the opposite gender. Incel discourse tends to objectify and sexualize women, relegating them to mere objects of sexual gratification and disregarding their multifaceted identities and societal roles, reducing women to mere tools for sexual satisfaction while disregarding their inherent humanity and dignity. Conversely, femcels adopt a distinct approach in their discourse. Rather than sexual objectification, they critique men's behaviour, attributing to them violence, animosity towards women, and culpability for the injustices inflicted on women and children. This form of language scrutinizes men's actions over their sexuality, underscoring femcels' concerns regarding gender dynamics and patriarchal violence. In incel culture, these misogynistic acts are further exemplified by the practice of taking photographs of girls, including strangers, and posting them on specialized forums for users to vote on, reflecting the objectifying and sexualized mindset prevalent within the movement. Moreover, certain militants within the incel sphere have perpetrated terrorist massacres, including the 2014 murder of six civilians on a California campus and the running over 11 pedestrians in Canada (Hoffman et al. 2020). Notably, such violence has yet to be associated with the femcel community, as they have not committed any terrorist or criminal acts.

3. Study desing

This research is based on Digital Media Ethnography (Sumiala & Tikka, 2020), a qualitative methodology designed to examine online spaces as dynamic and socially constructed environments. Unlike traditional ethnographic methods, which rely on direct engagement with community members, digital ethnography is particularly suited for studying online subcultures and ideological movements that exist exclusively in digital environments. Digital ethnography was developed to examine the dynamics of online spaces, focusing on how the architecture of digital environments shapes user behavior, interactions, and cultural processes. This methodological approach goes beyond merely analyzing the content of online interactions; it also considers how these interactions are structured. This study focuses on two imageboards, /r9k/ and Crystalcafe, analyzing textual comments and identifying keywords related to hate speech to understand how such discourses emerge and develop within these online communities. Imageboards are anonymous digital platforms where users exchange content and engage in discussion without the constraints of fixed identities. Their structure encourages unfiltered expression, making them fertile ground for the development of radicalized discourses. Among various imageboards, /r9k/ and Crystalcafe were selected due to their centrality within incel and femcel communities. In contrast, Crystalcafe, designed as a female-oriented alternative to 4chan, has become a primary discussion space for women who identify with the femcel subculture (Pizzimenti & Penna 2024). While the rhetoric on Crystalcafe tends to be less overtly violent than that found on /r9k/, it nonetheless reflects a polarized view of gender relations. The analysis of these two imageboards provides a valuable opportunity to explore how language and digital interactions contribute to the formation and radicalization of groups unified by a shared perception of social and sexual exclusion. The absence of regulation and the anonymity embedded in these platforms foster a sense of belonging, intensifying frustration and resentment that manifest in hate speech dynamics and the construction of the "other" as an enemy. The research adopted a non-participant observational approach ("lurking") to collect data without community interference. While ethical debates around invisibility persist (Boyd & Crawford, 2012), this strategy allowed for the unobtrusive capture of discourse in its natural form (Delli Paoli & Masullo, 2022). To further ensure participant anonymity, direct quotations have been anonymized, and any personally identifiable information has been removed. For ethical reasons, data were not reported exactly as they appear on the platform, and although all data collected were publicly available, only summarised excerpts were included to prevent identification.

A better understanding of the analysed phenomenon can benefit from an overview of the platforms, including their historical development, community characteristics, and ideological frameworks, crucial for interpreting the linguistic patterns and hate speech dynamics analyzed in this study. /r9k/ emerged as a male-dominated space on 4chan and has since evolved into a hub for incel ideology. Crystalcafe, by contrast, was created as a female-oriented alternative to similar anonymous forums, becoming a key site for

femcel discourse. On the site, participants can engage in discussions on a wide range of topics, divided into thematic categories. Despite the absence of precise data on the exact number of active users, the platform appears relatively popular among women seeking exclusively female spaces, with a significant level of interactions and numerous discussions ongoing every day. Given the anonymous nature of the site, it is difficult to determine the exact number of active users at any given time; however, the community appears to be dynamic and engaged. Similar to other online communities, Crystalcafe uses a verbal and visual language enriched with memes, subcultural terms, and references to the wider web culture. Crystalcafe can be considered a reference point for women adhering to the principles of the Pink Pill movement and seeking support and an online community.

3.1. Data collection

The research was conducted between April and May 2023, during which data collection and analysis took place. As a first step, the researchers personally read and examined all the comments included in the analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the discourse and its nuances. This preliminary phase allowed for an initial familiarization with recurring themes, linguistic patterns, and the overall tone of interactions within the selected imageboards. Subsequently, the comments and keywords were manually selected and categorized with the assistance of the Nvivo software for digital material storage (Coppola, 2011), while the understanding and interpretation of the texts are guided by the expertise of the researchers themselves. The selection of comments and thread messages under study followed a targeted approach (Patton, 1990; Delli Paoli, Masullo, 2022). Specifically, comments that inspired interest within the online community, i.e., those that received a high number of comments and interactions, were identified and preserved. For the present analysis, we collected a sample of 2,043 comments and conducted a qualitative content analysis. The analyzed sample derives from a non-probabilistic sampling procedure aimed at ensuring “typological” rather than statistical representativeness. In other words, the intent is to provide a description of a reality present on digital platforms, without guaranteeing correspondence between the selected sample and the entire population of Crystalcafe and /r9k/ users. Given that premise, despite the qualitative nature of this study, we considered it useful to include graphical elements as a complementary tool to enhance the systematic organization and interpretation of data. Digital Media Ethnography requires structuring large volumes of textual content to identify patterns and trends within online discourse. By categorizing comments into different categories and subcategories, the use of percentages allows for a clearer representation of how these features characterize incel and femcel communities. These quantitative elements provide a structured overview that facilitates the comparison of recurring patterns, making qualitative interpretations more transparent and grounded in empirical data. During the analysis process, we applied a deductive coding methodology to systematically categorize the contributions under study into various subcategories and aggregate them into three main

macro-categories. First, we identified “explicit hate speech” as a category characterized by direct expressions of hatred and contempt. This includes personal insults, targeting specific individuals, general insults, aimed at collectives, and concrete threats of physical, psychological, or other forms of violence. The classification follows established conceptual paradigms, defining insults as expressions that attack individuals or groups based on their characteristics and are insulting, derogatory, or degrading (Erjavec & Kovačič, 2012; Rieger et al., 2021). Additionally, we analyzed the context of personal insults and identified the subjects targeted by general insults.

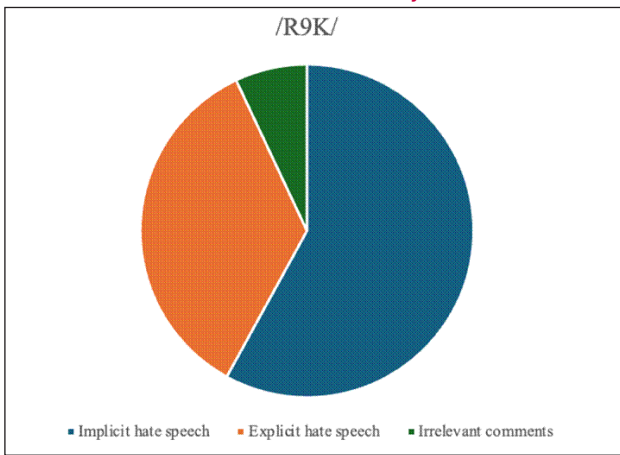
The second macro-category, labelled “implicit hate speech”, involved various subcategories, including “negative stereotyping”, “disinformation/conspiracy theories”, “ingroup elevation”, and “in-human ideology”. This classification regards those comments that manifested less explicit but still evident forms of hatred, such as negative stereotypes, the spread of misinformation, excessive idealization of some groups over others, and ideologies that de-personalise and dehumanise people. This phenomenon exhibits significant conceptual overlap with the notion of “fear speech”, previously delineated by Buyse (2014), characterized by the strategic intent to instil existential fears towards specific social groups, emphasizing alleged threats or ambitions for future dominance (Saha, Mathew, Garimella, & Mukherjee, 2021; Rieger et al., 2021). It is important to emphasize that incitement to implicit hate displays in various forms within the intentional dissemination of false news, involving the conscious dissemination of false statements or conspiracy theories regarding specific social groups, with the explicit aim of marginalizing them (Hajok & Selg, 2018; Rieger et al., 2021) promoting negative prejudices. A concrete example is the term “roastie,” used by /r9k/ militants to refer to women, may not seem offensive in itself, but within its context, it conveys dehumanization, contempt, and hatred. A similar example can be found in the terms “XY”, “scrote”, and “comer” used by the femcel group on Crystalcafe. Although seemingly innocuous, such terms in the context in which they are employed clearly denote a dehumanising and denigratory perception towards men, manifesting a sense of contempt and hostility. The third macro category, labelled “category spam”, contains comments that could not be assigned to the hate categories outlined above and were therefore of little use for the analysis.

3.2. Data analysis and discussion

The prevalence of gendered hate speech in online communities such as /r9k/ and Crystalcafe must be understood within the broader socio-political landscape of digital misogyny, online extremism, and gender-based radicalization. Scholars have extensively documented how digital subcultures shape, normalize, and amplify gendered grievances, reinforcing exclusionary narratives that position men and women as adversaries. These platforms do not merely reflect existing societal biases; they actively participate in shaping and legitimizing them, providing ideological validation for misogynistic, misandrist, and extremist worldviews. The use of both explicit and

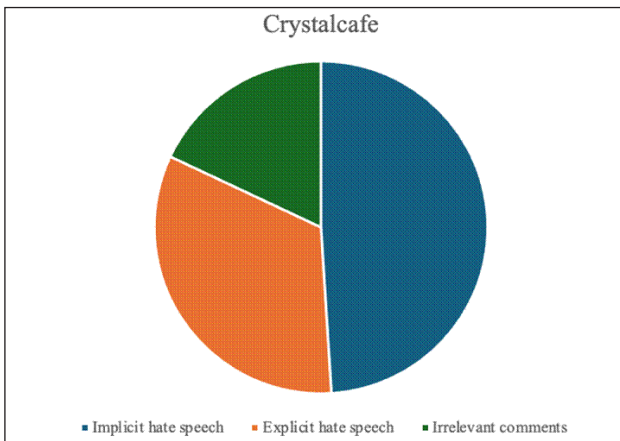
implicit hate speech in these spaces is consistent with broader reactionary movements that challenge feminist advancements and seek to reinstate patriarchal hegemony (Leidig, 2023). Within this framework, the analysis of discourse in /r9k/ and Crystalcafe provides insight into the ways in which gendered alienation, social resentment, and ideological polarization manifest in contemporary digital environments. The results of the analysis highlight significant differences and similarities between the /r9k/ group and the femcel community of Crystalcafe. Graphs 1 and 2 show the percentage distribution of comments across the identified macro-categories: implicit hate speech, explicit hate speech, and category spam (irrelevant comments).

Graph 1 - Classification of comments into macro-categories for the r9k community



Own elaboration

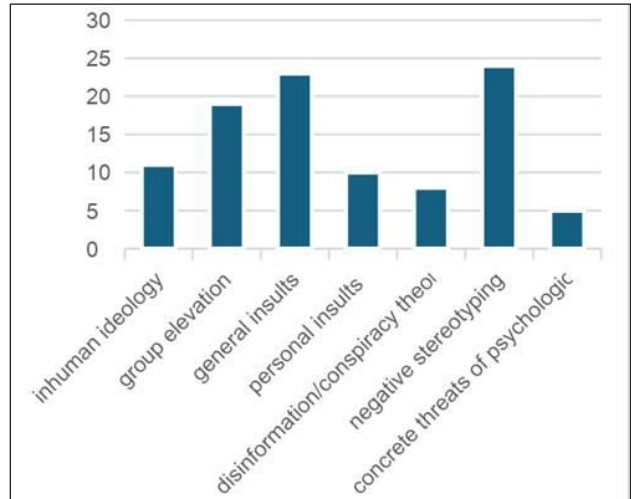
Graph 2 - Classification of comments into macro-categories for the Crystalcafe community



Own elaboration

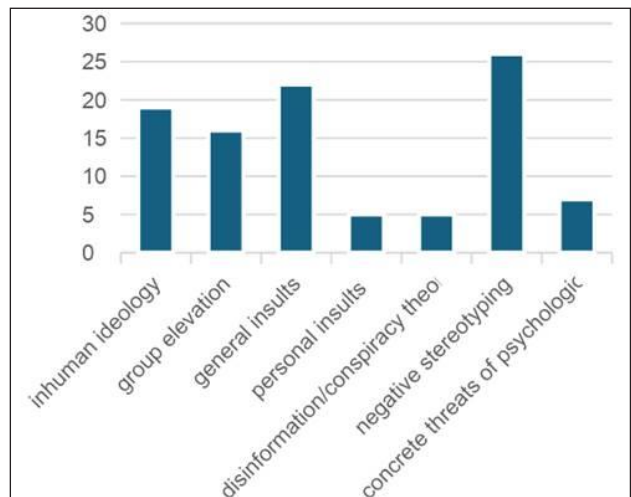
In the case of /r9k/, the majority of analyzed comments contained forms of implicit hate speech, with 35% of comments characterized by explicit hate and only 7% considered irrelevant. Conversely, in the analysis of comments on Crystalcafe, over half of the comments exhibited forms of implicit hate speech, while about a third contained explicit hate. Concerning the total comments, 18% on Crystalcafe were classified as irrelevant. Graphs 3 and 4 show the percentage distribution of comments across the identified subcategories.

Graph 3 - Trend of comments characterized by implicit and explicit hate speech in the r/9k community



Own elaboration

Graph 4 - Trend of comments characterized by implicit and explicit hate speech in the r/9k community



Own elaboration

Both communities display strong in-group dynamics and ideological closure, often reinforced through scapegoating and the use of dehumanizing language. Terms such as “roastie” and “scrote” serve as boundary markers, reinforcing collective identity while portraying the opposite gender as a hostile outgroup. These rhetorical patterns reflect broader discursive mechanisms of polarization, resentment, and exclusion that define the incel and femcel imaginaries. Among the terms most representative of each group are those that contribute to the dehumanisation and blaming of the other. In the context of /r9k/, this dynamic is manifested through the use of the term “roastie” to denigrate women, while for Crystalcafe’s femcels, the term “scrote” is employed to disdain men. These results underscore the widespread dissemination of discriminatory and offensive language within both groups, reflecting predominant negative perceptions and ideologies within their respective online communities.

User form Cristalcafe: We should chain men like that together in basements and set them

on fire. Fuck trials, fuck prison, and first we should gouge out all their eyes

User from /r9k/: It's time to attack women in public. Every time you see a woman dressed like that, attack her. Throw shit at her, call her a whore, insult her, hit her on the head and run away. I always carry a bottle of water with me and every time I see a woman like that, I throw my water on her head and run away.

The violent and misogynistic language highlighted in the analysed comments is indicative of deep rooted anger and frustration within the incel and femcel communities. These comments suggest a desire for violence and revenge against the opposite sex, accompanied by a sense of social and sexual marginalisation. The frequent use of insults, threats, and incitements to violence reflects a distorted and dangerous mentality, which can have serious consequences for the safety and well-being of those involved. It is important to note that these comments not only reflect individual outrage but also broader dynamics of hatred and discrimination, including transphobia, homophobia, ableism, and racism. These manifestations of intolerance and hate contribute to the creation of a toxic and harmful environment within online communities, further fuelling the cycle of violence and discrimination. Furthermore, it is significant to observe that, despite sharing similar experiences and views on social reality, members of these communities tend to maintain strong individualism and fail to form a cohesive group. This could be attributed to the anonymous and decentralised nature of online platforms, which fosters isolation and self-pity rather than solidarity and mutual support. Ultimately, the analysis of these comments underscores the importance of proactively addressing hate speech and online hate dynamics. The findings of this study underscore the significant role of online platforms in shaping gendered discourse and reinforcing structural inequalities through digital interaction. The rhetorical and ideological dynamics observed in /r9k/ and Crystalcafe illustrate how hate speech, gender-based grievances, and exclusionary narratives are cultivated and sustained within self-reinforcing online environments. Prior research has demonstrated that online misogyny is not merely an expression of individual hostility but a systemic phenomenon deeply embedded in contemporary socio-political structures (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Similarly, misandrist rhetoric, while lacking the same institutionalized power as misogyny, operates within an oppositional framework that reacts against patriarchal norms.

These dynamics align with the concept of *e-bile* (Jane, 2012), which captures the extreme forms of digital hostility, often targeting women through hyperbolic insults, threats, and sexually violent language. The unfiltered and often anonymous nature of platforms like /r9k/ and Crystalcafe facilitates the proliferation of *e-bile*, normalizing aggressive and dehumanizing discourse under the guise of free expression. The intensity and persistence of such discourse illustrate how digital spaces not only reflect but actively amplify societal anxieties and gendered resentments. Moreover, these platforms exemplify the characteristics of *toxic technocultures* (Massanari, 2015),

where the structural affordances of digital environments – such as weak moderation policies, algorithmic amplification, and community self-regulation – enable and sustain cultures of gendered hostility. The normalization of gendered hate speech within /r9k/ and Crystalcafe reflects a broader backlash against gender equality, aligning with the rise of reactionary movements that exploit narratives of victimhood and resentment (Chouliaraki, 2024). These findings emphasize the necessity of intersectional analyses to examine how digital spaces function as sites of ideological socialization and political mobilization (Ging, 2019).

The extent to which these online discourses translate into offline behaviors – ranging from heightened polarization to real-world acts of gender-based violence – remains a critical area for future research. Addressing these dynamics requires not only policy interventions and content moderation strategies but also a broader societal effort to challenge the ideological conditions that fuel gender-based online extremism.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of online communities such as r9k and Crystalcafe provides a valuable opportunity to understand the complex dynamics and social implications of the incel and femcel phenomena. Despite significant differences in the manifestations of violence and hate speech expression, both groups demonstrate profound misogyny and misandry, as well as a tendency towards echo chamber closure. Similarities between the two phenomena include the widespread use of discriminatory and offensive language, the construction of a strong collective identity, and the quest for support and connection among individuals marginalized by traditional social scenarios. The context of online communities such as /r9k/ and Crystalcafe necessitates a detailed analysis of their dynamics and consequences to understand how individuals feeling isolated offline find support and connection with others facing similar issues and concerns within these virtual communities. The prevalence of hate speech, both implicit and explicit, within both groups underscores the persistence of discriminatory and offensive attitudes within virtual communities. This phenomenon not only reflects predominant negative perceptions and ideologies in these online environments but may also contribute to perpetuating and reinforcing such attitudes in the offline world (Noble, 2018). Gender dynamics within online communities can be complex and reflect and amplify inequalities and biases present in broader society (Kay, 2022). Hate speech, or speech that promotes hatred or violence against a particular group, is an extreme manifestation of these dynamics as it reflects and reinforces misogynistic and misandrist ideologies present in society.

Online hate speech can have multiple negative consequences. Firstly, it can contribute to creating a toxic and hostile climate within virtual communities, making it difficult for individuals to express themselves freely and feel safe and respected within such spaces (Benesch, 2013). Secondly, it can fuel a cycle of discrimination and gender-based violence, normalising and legitimising discriminatory and offensive behav-

groups. The presence of a strong collective identity and a tendency towards echo chamber closure indicates the formation of isolated and self-referential groups, where ideas and opinions are amplified and reinforced without adequate engagement with differing viewpoints. This phenomenon can lead to radicalization and polarisation of opinions, limiting the possibility of dialogue and mutual understanding (Sunstein, 2017; Pariser, 2011; Zuckerman, 2014;). The “construction of the enemy” is a phenomenon often contextual to social categorization, which can reinforce individuals’ belonging to a group by highlighting the negative aspects of other

groups (Galimberti, 2013). These cognitive processes allow individuals to simplify the complexity of the world but can also fuel stereotypes, stigmatisation, and rejection of others. The presence of gendered hate speech and symbolic violence within anonymous communities such as /r9k/ and Crystalcafe underscores the need for continued scholarly attention to the dynamics of radicalization, digital resentment, and gendered online extremism. Future research should investigate how these narratives circulate beyond their origin platforms and influence wider socio-political imaginaries.

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Financiación: Esta investigación no recibió financiación externa.

Declaración de conflicto de intereses: La/s persona/s firmante/s del artículo declaran no estar incurso/s en ningún tipo de conflicto de intereses respecto a la investigación, a su autoría ni/o a la publicación del presente artículo.

