

# Misinformation On YouTube

Use Of Misleading Titles To Promote  
Hateful Narrative Against Aurat March  
In Pakistan



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## Use Of Misleading Titles To Promote Hateful Narrative Against Aurat March In Pakistan

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# Executive Summary

Aurat March (Urdu for “Women’s March”) is a popular women's rights movement in Pakistan which, over the past five years, has become central to the discourse on feminism in the country. The march takes place on March 8 on International Women’s Day each year and is given significant coverage by both mainstream media and independent channels on social media.

This study looks at the coverage given to the Aurat March in 2022 by three popular verified YouTube channels which, while not being part of mainstream media, have a significant number of subscribers. In particular, the study examines the extent to which disinformation was spread through their coverage. Based on the definitions put forward by First Draft for different types of misinformation and disinformation, the research found that the content in these videos fell under three main categories. These categories were then codified to ensure consistency while categorising the videos.

The types of misinformation were also examined as the basis of the arguments being made on these YouTube channels and how these arguments or narratives play on more populist views in society. The idea of the research was to see how populist arguments are used as a form of gendered misinformation and disinformation because they are more likely to rile up the public.

Misleading titles were the most common form of disinformation in the videos that were analysed. The channels, through misleading titles, made the opinions expressed by participants in their videos appear controversial enough to fuel the already growing anti-Aurat March views in Pakistan. This was observed in 47 percent of the total videos analysed.

Khabar Gaam, the least known of the YouTube channels analysed, had the highest amount of misleading content, with 36 percent of the videos relying on fabrications, an active form of disinformation. Bol TV, which is a mainstream news channel, was found to have 13 percent of videos with deceptive content.

Some of the common themes across these videos relying on a populist narrative against Aurat March implied that the marchers were:

1. asking for rights not granted in the religion and making illegitimate demands
2. part of a foreign-funded western agenda
3. against men and family structure
4. inciting violence

# Introduction

The impact of gendered misinformation and disinformation has been widely acknowledged and studied around the world. The role that the internet has played in amplifying this impact has also been looked at; however, while there is enough evidence to support that populist narratives, especially when used by politicians, cause not only the spread of but also remain at the helm of misinformation and disinformation campaigns, there has been little research to show how similar narratives are weaponised against feminist movements across the world.

This study is a baseline attempt to look at how populist narratives in Pakistan can be used, in the same way they are used politically, to not only discredit the work that feminists and women's rights movements are doing, but also to build a narrative against them. It examines the common themes across three popular YouTube channels in terms of the arguments that were used to discredit the movement, and attempts to understand how these narratives and arguments classify as misinformation and disinformation.

Populism or populist narratives rely heavily on creating two categories, "Us" and "Them", where there are "the pure ones" and the "the corrupt ones".<sup>1</sup> These narratives used by populist leaders throughout the world provide simplistic, appealing solutions to larger structural issues often borrowing from right wing populist narratives. By creating an "other", the focus then becomes fixing this "other" which would resolve economic or social issues that society at large has to face. The idea of "other" is created based on the already existing conspiracy theories and half truths that fuel partisan views.<sup>2</sup>

It is also important to note that more conservative and traditional right-wing views on gender relations are also central to populist views. Julie Mostov, an American political scientist, argues that the primary reason for this is that when you create two categories, in order to protect yourself and society from the "other" corrupt category of people, it is imperative to protect women, who remain primarily responsible for birthing and rearing children.<sup>3</sup> To have children who are raised well, it is important to have women who fall in line with the values espoused by the populist leader or narrative.

In QAnon or white superamist groups, there exists a trend of "tradwife". Tradwives (short for traditional wives) are white cisgendered women who not only promote ultra-traditional gender roles and encourage women to take pleasure in traditional domestic duties, but also choose to submit to their husbands. Rejecting suggestions that they are oppressed, women from these alt-right groups claim that feminism has failed women by robbing them of the chance to have a male provider and happy home where they can focus on raising their children.<sup>4</sup>

*QAnon groups started in online spaces like 4chan, where an anonymous user called 'Q' claiming to have high level government clearance, said that the likes of Hilary Clinton and other mainstream politicians are controlled by a group of satan worshipping paedophiles. They also believe that former US President Donald Trump was going to wage war and send the ruling elite, like Clinton, to Guantanamo Bay. The group believes in the presence of a deep state, which orchestrates events around the world and in the US - from the assassination of JFK to ISIS.<sup>5</sup>*

01. Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, 39(4), 541–563. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>

02. Bergmann, E. (2020). Populism and the politics of misinformation. *Safundi*, 21(3), 251–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2020.1783086>

03. Mostov, J. (2021). Populism Is Always Gendered and Dangerous. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.625385>

04. Love, N. S. (2020). Shield Maidens, Flashy Femmes, and TradWives: Feminism, Patriarchy, and Right-Wing Populism. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2020.619572>

05. Rahn, W., & Patterson, D. (2021, March 29). What is QAnon? What does WGG1WGA mean? The conspiracy theory that explains everything and nothing. CBS News. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-is-the-qanon-conspiracy-theory/>

In more conservative and patriarchal societies like Pakistan, the role of a woman is viewed through a similar lens that purports feminism to be a western ideology “corrupting” young women, steering them away from their “natural” role of being mothers.<sup>6</sup>

In this context, any woman who seeks to step outside of the traditional roles and expectations placed on them are looked upon with suspicion.<sup>7</sup> This widespread narrative on social media has actively been used to discredit critics of autocratic governments, especially when these critics are women.

This is not to say that disinformation campaigns have not been used in the west to discredit women's movements or women politicians. The women's liberation movement in the west saw opposition where it was blamed for rising divorce rate, and the anti-suffrage movement also aimed to insinuate the same. The internet, through hashtags and online trends, if anything, has made it easier to see just how this narrative of the bad or corrupt “other” woman is used when women challenge the status quo. It has also made it easier to discern the difference in the treatment of men and women – leading to the idea of misinformation and disinformation being gendered.

06. Zia, A. S. (2009). The Reinvention of Feminism in Pakistan. *Feminist Review*, 91(1), 29–46. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2008.48>

07. Kandiyoti, D. K. (2014, September 1). No laughing matter: Women and the new populism in Turkey. *openDemocracy*. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/no-laughing-matter-women-and-new-populism-in-turkey/>

# Gendered Disinformation

Gendered misinformation and disinformation is the use of false or misleading narratives against women to force them out of public spaces and undermine their participation in politics. The gendered impact of disinformation has already been studied widely.<sup>8</sup> Women politicians, activists and journalists often bear the brunt of organised character attacks online. In India, journalist Rana Ayyub faced death and rape threats after calling out online the killing of an elderly Srinagar resident in Kashmir in 2020, and for her criticism of the Saudi government's intervention in Yemen.<sup>9</sup> She has been the target of consistent online violence, facing attacks directed not just at her credibility as a journalist but her character as well. These online attacks also included circulation of doctored images of Ayyub and false tweets in her name.<sup>10</sup>

The populist narrative, painting the woman as possessing an amoral character through disinformation, aims to discredit women as the “other” demanding rights that do not fit into the frame of the said narrative. In Ayyub's case, doctored objectionable videos of her were sent to her and circulated online, along with rape threats.<sup>11</sup> The idea being that a woman who does not fall in line is not to be protected or respected.

Similar narratives are used against the women's movement in Pakistan. The organisers have not only been subjected to trolling and abuse online, but the movement itself has been targeted with online disinformation campaigns. In 2021, doctored material emerged online purporting that women at the Aurat March were chanting blasphemous slogans.<sup>12</sup> Each year, a number of fake posters are circulated on social media accusing women of being morally or financially corrupt, and that they are against religious and cultural values.<sup>13</sup>

08. TROLL PATROL FINDINGS. (2017). Amnesty International. <https://decoders.amnesty.org/projects/troll-patrol/findings>
09. Crouch, E. (2022, January 28). Indian journalist Rana Ayyub receives rape, death threats. Committee to Protect Journalists. <https://cpj.org/2022/01/indian-journalist-rana-ayyub-receives-online-rape-and-death-threats/>
10. Rana Ayyub. (2019, June 10). [Twitter]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/RanaAyyub/status/1138140787185610752/photo/1>
11. Web Desk. (2018, November 21). I was vomiting: Journalist Rana Ayyub reveals horrifying account of deepfake porn plot. India Today. <https://www.indiatoday.in/trending-news/story/journalist-rana-ayyub-deepfake-porn-1393423-2018-11-21>
12. Hashim, A. (2021, April 17). Pakistan police file 'blasphemy' case against feminist marchers. News | Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/16/pakistan-police-file-blasphemy-case-against-feminist-marchers>
13. Doctored images circulate after International Women's Day marches in. (2022, March 15). Fact Check. <https://factcheck.afp.com/doc.afp.com.324U666>



# Populist Narratives, Misinformation and Social Media

Misinformation and populist narratives have existed since long before social media. The appeal of a populist national narrative, the idea of one great unified nation state, based on homogenous views and populations is also not new.<sup>14</sup> At the time though sources of information and access to information was severely limited.

Where the internet, particularly social media, democratised information, it also created space for the amplification of misinformation on a larger scale. Conspiracy theories on Facebook groups often reach other social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, where they gain wider reach and exposure. For instance, relatively obscure QAnon blogs were amplified by YouTube shows like InfoWars, reproduced on multiple websites and social media platforms, and were often picked up by right-leaning mainstream media in the US.<sup>15</sup> This results in more people replicating the same ideologies in their own content, constantly reaffirming, legitimising and amplifying misinformed and false information among the growing audience.

YouTube is one of the main social media platforms that have been significantly understudied in terms of its impact on the spread of misinformation. Recently, a group of 80 fact-checking organisations got together urging the platform to put in efforts to classify and counter misinformation.<sup>16</sup> The letter addressed to Chief Executive Susan Wojcicki stated that YouTube is “one of the major conduits of online disinformation and misinformation worldwide.”

In 2017, YouTube claimed that people watch one billion hours of videos every day on the world's largest video streaming website, adding that 80 percent of total internet users use YouTube.<sup>17</sup> This shows that not only does YouTube have a huge impact based on its massive viewership, but misinformation on the platform can also go a long way without being contained, especially in content being made in non-English languages from developing countries. As a result, misinformation affecting individuals and communities that are already oppressed or at the risk of being targeted, including rights activists, journalists, gendered minorities, can have profound impact on them, often with serious consequences.

14. Molloy, B. D. (2018, March 6). *What is populism, and what does the term actually mean?* BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43301423>

15. Thompson, C. (2020, September 18). *YouTube's Plot to Silence Conspiracy Theories*. Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/youtube-algorithm-silence-conspiracy-theories/>

16. Coleman, B. A. (2022, January 12). *Fact-checkers label YouTube a "major conduit of online disinformation."* BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-59967190>

17. Cristos Goodrow. (2017, February 27). *You know what's cool? A billion hours*. Blog Youtube. <https://blog.youtube/news-and-events/you-know-whats-cool-billion-hours/>

## Scope of the Study

This research paper will look at gendered misinformation and disinformation espousing populist narratives on YouTube in Pakistan. This will be done by analysing the coverage of Aurat March 2022 by three popular channels on Youtube.

Through content analysis, including discussion, headlines of videos, story angling, line of questioning, among other things, the study will show how these channels have covered and tried to discredit a well-recognised gender rights movement in the country over the past three years. This analysis will then be placed within the larger social and political context of the country to show how it interacts with populist narratives.

# Research Methodology

The research is based on a rudimentary content analysis of videos from three YouTube channels, and focuses on their coverage of Aurat March from the year 2022 to understand the types of misinformation and disinformation. The analysis focuses on the headlines (titles and text used in thumbnail images), and the discussion in the videos. The channels chosen for analysis have a considerably large viewership and subscription on YouTube. These channels are listed below:

1. **Bol Television**'s YouTube channel started in 2016 and has 4.56 million subscribers as of May 2022, which, for a digital news media outlet, would be a decent figure in comparison to other newer independent, purely digital media outlets. The channel has struggled to gain credibility as a media organisation from the public owing to its association with the notorious IT company, Axact, which was raided by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in 2015 for the company's involvement in issuing fake degrees<sup>18</sup>. However, the digital channel continues to create sensationalised content deploying misinformation and disinformation.
2. **UrduPoint** also disseminates its content largely through social media platforms. It started in 2014, and is currently among the top channels in terms of viewership. UrduPoint has 6.67 million subscribers as of May 2022.
3. **Khabar Gaam** is a relatively new channel with 857,000 subscribers. Created in 2019, Khabar Gaam received significant attention for its coverage of Aurat March, which gathered more views compared to the channel's regular content. It was chosen for this study over other independent channels because of its verification by the platform.

The videos on Aurat March 2022 picked from these channels either used the Aurat March hashtag in their description, titles or headlines. The content was analysed manually.

18. FIA takes Axact employees into custody, seizes equipment following Nisar's orders. (2015, May 19). Express Tribune. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/888790/chaudhry-nisar-orders-inquiry-into-axact-scandal>

# Aurat March

Aurat March has become a prominent women's rights movement in Pakistan. It is an annual demonstration that takes place in various cities across Pakistan on March 8, which is International Working Women's Day.<sup>19</sup> The march is organised by different groups of women associated with each other and has a different group of organisers in each city. Over the past few years, after early marches were subjected to an onslaught of online trolling, criticism and faced disinformation campaigns, the organisers introduced a manifesto, a charter of demands and a theme to ensure their motives are publicly available before and after the march is held. This step was taken as a result of various questions raised at the demands of the Aurat March by those working to discredit the movement, claiming that the march is against Pakistan's cultural, political and societal beliefs.

The movement and its organisers have faced serious disinformation campaigns. Given its democratic nature where organisers do not police or control the slogans and placards being brought to the march, the movement was subjected to abuse, trolling, and vicious targeted campaigning in the mainstream and digital media. For instance, after the first women's march in 2018,<sup>20</sup> organisers faced strong backlash for the placards that participants brought to the event. The content of some posters was taken out of context and misinterpreted by the mainstream media and online vloggers alike.<sup>21</sup> Out of the hundreds of slogans carried and raised at the event, critics of the march picked on the slogan, "Mera Jism Meri Marzi," ("My Body, My Choice"), which was, in fact, a commentary on an individual's basic right to bodily autonomy, sexual abuse and violation of consent.

Various detractors at the time framed the slogan as a rallying cry for the sexual liberation of women, and by extension, a western agenda.<sup>22</sup> This type of discourse can be categorised both under misinformation and disinformation because while the slogan has been referred to the sexual liberation of women, it historically has been associated with the feminist movement for reproductive rights in the west. It has also been used in different contexts by various feminist movements across the world, since the 1970s when it first seems to have been coined.<sup>23</sup>

Subsequently, the organisers across the cities added more context in an attempt to prevent the spread of disinformation.<sup>24</sup> This, however, did not discourage the detractors orchestrating disinformation campaigns against the movement. In the following years, despite organisers appearing on national television, publishing manifestos and charter of demands to highlight the purpose of the march, disinformation campaigns against the Aurat March continue to surface online.

Posters carried by various participants are known to have been photoshopped, images circulated out of context, and accusations of blasphemy have been levelled against both organisers and participants through doctored material.<sup>25</sup>

In 2021, fake videos framing a group of women marchers as blasphemers were circulated on social media and even ended up being shared by some known male journalists.

Most of the anti-Aurat March discussion takes place on social media, with independent vloggers and bloggers covering the event playing a significant role. Therefore, it is important to examine the coverage of these independent channels to understand the type of discourse and ideas they perpetuate against the march.

19. Irfan, A. (2021, October 2). *Pakistan's Aurat March and its Unrelenting Feminists*. New Lines Magazine. <https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/pakistans-aurat-march-and-its-unrelenting-feminists/>

20. Dawn.com. (2022, March 8). *Aurat March: Women walk for their rights across cities in Pakistan*. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1678931>

21. Najeeb, Z. (2020, March 8). *Aurat March 2020: A case for 'scandalous' slogans* | Special Report | *thenews.com.pk*. The News International. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/624735-a-case-for-scandalous-slogans>

22. Digital Rights Foundation. (2018, March 22). *Aurat March backlash and the Continuum of misogyny from the street to Facebook Pages*. <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/aurat-march-backlash-and-the-continuum-of-misogyny-from-the-street-to-facebook-pages/>

23. V. (2020, July 27). *The Evolution of "My Body, My Choice"*. Voices of Gen-Z. <https://www.voicesofgenz.com/post-1/the-evolution-of-my-body-my-choice>

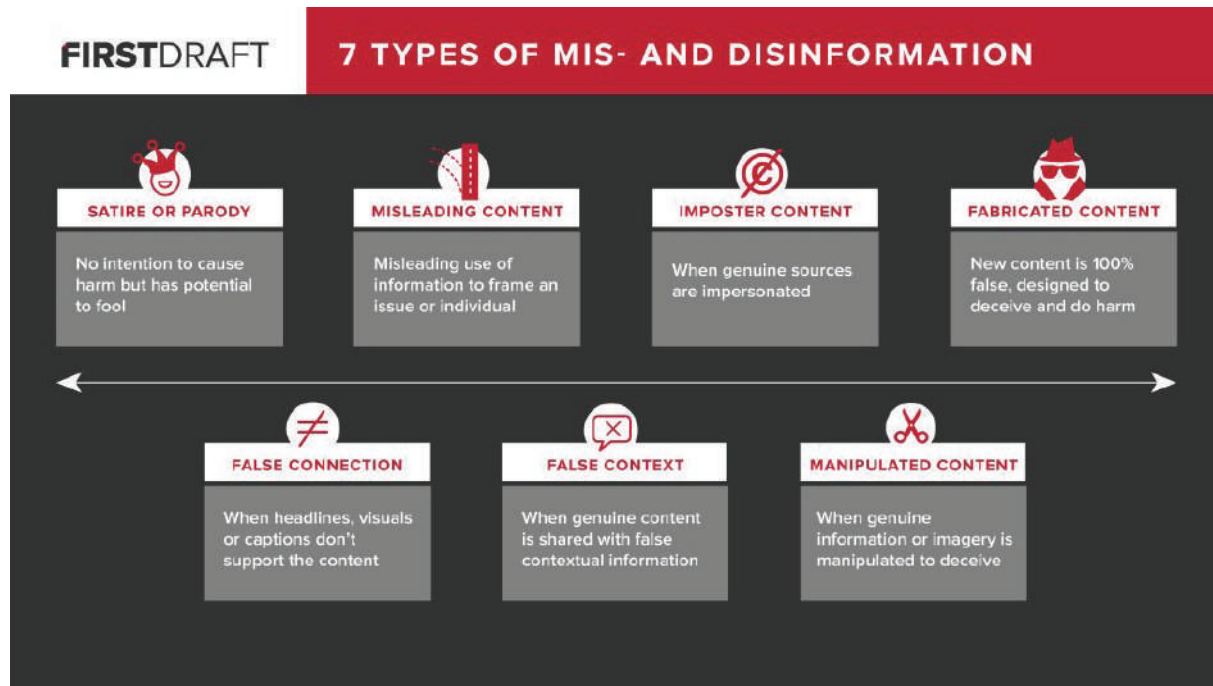
24. Pl, V. (2022, February 18). *Aurat March Releases Charter of Demands, Manifesto; Expresses Disappointment over Qudri's Remarks*. Voicepk.Net. <https://voicepk.net/2022/02/15262/>

25. Hussain, J. (2021, March 14). *Controversial material related to Aurat March on social media being investigated: minister*. DAWN.COM. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1612519>

# Misinformation and Disinformation as Analysed

The categorisation of content for this analysis was based on the definitions of misinformation and disinformation put forth by First Draft. However, given the overlap between the two terms, a narrowed version of the definitions was used to ensure that the data was consistent in measurement.

Disinformation is wrongful information shared with the intent to cause harm, while misinformation is information shared as part of a socio-political identity.<sup>26</sup>



*7 Types of Mis- and Disinformation. Source: First Draft*

The titles and definitions used for categorisation of the content analysed are as follows:

DATA DICTIONARY	
Titles	Definitions
Misleading Titles	YouTube titles or headlines in thumbnails that used sensationalism to mislead audiences
False Connection	Information mentioned in headlines not present or discussed in the video at all
False Context	Information that is true is misrepresented in the video
Fabricated Content	Information that is entirely untrue or made up

26. *Understanding Information disorder*. (2021, August 3). First Draft. <https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/understanding-information-disorder/>



## Findings and Analysis

Categories	No. of Videos	Percentage	Rounded off %ages
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### Urdu Point

Videos Analysed	17		
Misleading Titles	8	47.05882353	47%
False Connection	2	11.76470588	12%
False Context	4	23.52941176	23%
Fabricated Content	2	11.76470588	12%

### Bol TV

Videos Analysed	30		
Misleading Titles	17	56.66666667	57%
False Connection	8	26.66666667	27%
False Context	2	6.66666667	7%
Fabricated Content	4	13.33333333	13%

### Khabar Gaam

Videos Analysed	30		
Misleading Titles	17	56.66666667	57%
False Connection	8	26.66666667	27%
False Context	2	6.66666667	7%
Fabricated Content	4	13.33333333	13%

Categories	No. of Videos	Percentage	Rounded off %ages
Videos Analysed	61		
Misleading Titles	29	47.54098361	47%
False Connection	15	24.59016393	25%
False Context	13	21.31147541	21%
Fabricated Content	11	18.03278689	18%

Even though misinformation and disinformation have been categorised with definitions, there is an overlap between the two. A video that uses a sensational misleading headline, can also be using false context, and at times, completely fabricated content. Most disinformation, as was the case with majority videos, relied not on complete fabrication but rather half-truths and sensationalism, where creators would pick those pieces of information which they could turn into something controversial for the headlines or would completely misrepresent the scenario.

Some of the common themes across the channels that attempted to create an “us vs them” narrative implied that the marchers were:

1. asking for rights not granted in the religion and making illegitimate demands
2. part of a foreign-funded western agenda
3. against men and family structure
4. inciting violence

# Misleading Headlines

A large number of videos on UrduPoint were based on interviews with the Aurat March participants. The channel also deliberately focussed on amplifying comments that would stir some sort of controversy rather than highlighting the real substantial issues. One video used the title, “Aurat March Me Naujawan Naya Slogan Le Aya - Divorce Ka Taboo Tor Do, Tang Kare To Chor Do,” which translates to, “Young man brings a new slogan to Aurat March - Break the taboo around divorce, leave him if he bothers”. It attracted over 29,000 views. Similar attempts to generate controversy around the march have been made by amplifying some posters and interpreting them out of context – attempts which have been criticised by both organisers of the march and activists in the past.

In this nearly six-minute video, the man who is being interviewed and whose statement and poster were used in the headline as well, is given the screen time of one minute, whereas other participants speaking about important issues such as harassment in public spaces were given over four minutes of screen time. However, none of the opinions expressed regarding these significant issues were used in the headline. The headlines, thus, are misleading the public into believing that most people at Aurat March are making demands that are either illegal or threaten the family structure. In a conservative country like Pakistan, the idea of women divorcing spouses is not considered normal and walking away from an unhappy or abusive marriage is not encouraged. So trying to demonise the movement and get clicks on a video by putting one comment and a poster from one attendee in the headline is sensationalist and contributes to the idea that the demands of Aurat March do not fit within the boundaries of our society.



Using sensationalism to create an “Us vs Them” or a “good woman vs bad woman” narrative, as seen in these videos, is a form of disinformation that is often used by populist leaders. According to the findings, 47 percent of the videos that were analysed for the study used similar misleading headlines, of which a majority not only sensationalised Aurat March, but in doing so put forth a narrative that suggested that Aurat March was a movement that ventured beyond the norms of a religious and moral society.

Headlines such as “Mujhe Sar E Aam Nachne or Shorts Pehanne Ki Azadi Nahi Chahiye (I do not want the freedom to dance and wear shorts in public)” reinforce the narrative that the demands of Aurat March are not legitimate - even though the theme of the 2022 march in Lahore was “Asal Insaaf” (Reimagining Justice). Most of the videos appear to disregard actual demands put forth by the Aurat March and focus on trivial issues instead.

27. Aurat March Me Naujawan Naya Slogan Le Aya - Divorce Ka Taboo Tor Do, Tang Kare To Chor Do. (2022, March 9). Urdu Point | YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXBhjAE0GmQ>
28. Alam, A. (2021, March 21). A narrative, distorted | Shehr | thenews.com.pk. The News International. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tms/detail/807273-a-narrative-distorted>
29. Mujhe Sar e Aam Nachne or Shorts Pehanne Ki Azadi Nahi Chahiye - Humaira Biker - Aurat March 2022. (2022, March 8). [Video]. Urdu Point | YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRZL3i6vu5w&ab\\_channel=UrduPoint.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRZL3i6vu5w&ab_channel=UrduPoint.com)
30. Charter 2022 English.pdf. (2022, February 19). [Press release]. Aurat March Lahore. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uoHmxPE2gx4thiqOBfOPYSUlj2YHEzEb/view>



Mujhe Sar e Aam Nachne or Shorts Pehanne Ki Azadi Nahi Chahiye - Humaira Biker - Aurat March 2022

246K views • 1 month ago

UrduPoint.com

Mujhe Ye Azadi Nahi Chahiye Ke Sar e Aam Dance Karoon Aur Shorts Pehnun - Aurat March Me Famous Biker Azad Aurton Par ...

One headline on a video posted by UrduPoint read, “Jamat-e-Islami Ki Khawateen Ka Sabse Bara Aurat March - Mard Ki Azmat Ko Salam Paish Karne Nikal Aye.”<sup>31</sup> The title translates to, “The biggest Aurat March organised by the women of Jamaat-e-Islami – Came out on the streets to salute the greatness of men.” Jamaat-e-Islami, a mainstream religious political party, has been among the most active opponents of Aurat March. For the past two years, the party been organising a counter-rally called Haya March (Modesty March) on Women’s Day, with women, comprising students from various seminaries, carrying banners that read, “My hijab, my Creator’s choice,” in response to the poster seen at the Aurat March that said, “My body, my choice.”



Women at Haya March 2021 hold banners that read “A woman’s prized possession is her modesty.” Source: Khaleej Times<sup>32</sup>

31. Jamat e Islami Ki Khawateen Ka Sabse Bara Aurat March - Mard Ki Azmat Ko Salam Paish Karne Nikal Aye. (2022, March 8). [Video]. YouTube.

32. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnbFo0IN7Ag&ab\\_channel=UrduPoint.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnbFo0IN7Ag&ab_channel=UrduPoint.com)

A. (2021, March 13). Pakistan women's day organisers receive death threats. Khaleej Times. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/asia/pakistan-womens-day-organisers-receive-death-threats>





*Women at Haya March 2020 hold placards that say, “long live married life”, and “your house your heaven, your husband your protector”. Source: Pakistan Web<sup>33</sup>*

The idea that the women who were marching under the banner of Haya March were not only dressed in conservative clothing, but were also paying tribute to men in some way, makes it more acceptable to a patriarchal mindset. Through the creation of this “Us vs Them” narrative women who were not part of the Aurat March were constantly pitted against the participants of the Haya March. The videos used half-truths and, at times, disinformation to create a narrative of “good vs bad women” too. These channels termed Haya March the largest women’s protest without providing any adequate reporting that supported these claims. They also asked the Haya March participants about what message they had for the Aurat March women.

The host in the video by UrduPoint asks the participants of Haya March whether they have come out in opposition to the women of Aurat March. Through interviews with some participants he tries to insinuate that the women at Haya March are in fact in opposition to those at the Aurat March. One woman interviewed in this video says, “You can say that we are opposing to Aurat March.”<sup>34</sup>

One video from Bol TV explicitly pitted the participants from both marches against one another: “Aurat March vs Haya March.”<sup>35</sup> In another video they used the headline “Mera Jism Meri Marzi vs Mera Burqa Meri Marzi (My Body, My Rights vs My Burqa, My Choice)”.<sup>36</sup>

33. Hussain J, M. (2020, March 8). *Modest Girls are The Queens of Islam - Haya March - Women's Day 2020*. Pakistan Social Web.

<https://www.pakistan.web.pk/threads/modest-girls-are-the-queens-of-islam-haya-march-womens-day-2020.77564/>

34. A. (2021, March 13). *Pakistan women's day organisers receive death threats*. Khaleej Times. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/asia/pakistan-womens-day-organisers-receive-death-threats>

35. *Aurat March vs Haya March | Why Women Against Aurat March? | Women's Day Special Transmission*. (2022, March 8). [Video]. BOL News | YouTube.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYjQw9QMNPu&ab\\_channel=BOLNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYjQw9QMNPu&ab_channel=BOLNews)

36. *Mera Jism Meri Marzi vs Mera Burqa Meri Marzi | Aurat March Pakistan vs Indian Muskan | Fiqa Akbar*. (2022, February 10). [Video]. BOL News | YouTube.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwFdb9mXgMo&ab\\_channel=BOLNe](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwFdb9mXgMo&ab_channel=BOLNe)





## Aurat March vs Haya March | Why Women Against Aurat March? | Women's Day Special Transmission

6K views • 1 month ago

BOL News

Aurat March vs Haya March | Why Women Against Aurat March? | Women's Day Special Transmission #AuratMarch ...

The dichotomy of “good woman vs bad woman” in these videos is not new, rather it is an attempt to pit women against each other – a trope that is very old in Pakistan’s patriarchal society that has been normalised and widely accepted, purporting women to be each other’s worst enemies. This narrative is also popularised through pop culture, entertainment, political commentary and now through campaigns and reporting targeted against a movement that demands equal rights for all. By creating this distinction, these channels assert that the Aurat March and the women’s rights movement in Pakistan is about demanding “superiority” for women and challenging religious and cultural beliefs when, in fact, it demands basic equal rights for everyone in society and not just for women.

## Fabricated Content and Disinformation

Some of the videos by Khabar Gaam purported that the participants of Aurat March were somehow “bad women” whose demands were not legitimate. Two reporters accused the women at the Aurat March of smoking ICE, a drug also known as crystal meth, and further claimed that this was the “freedom” that they wanted. These claims were supplemented with blurry shots of women smoking, some of which also appear in the same channel's coverage of Aurat March from the year before. Through reusing images and showing random and unrelated shots of women smoking the channel attempted to provide “evidence” for the claims made in the videos. The title of the video suggests that women were caught using substance at the march, but provides no substantial evidence. This information seems to be completely fabricated and sets the tone that the women at the Aurat March have what these channels claim to be “illegitimate” demands.<sup>37</sup>

Claire Wardle, the US Director of First Draft, writes in her essay on misinformation and disinformation that it is important to understand the motivation of those sharing the content as well as for what purpose this content is being made.<sup>38</sup>



37. *Aurat March 2022 Main Larkiyen Ice Ka Nasha Karti Rangy Hathon Pakri Gayi | Women March 2022*. (2022, March 8). Khabar Gaam | YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dW0Jjvk0xPI&ab\\_channel=KhabarGaam](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dW0Jjvk0xPI&ab_channel=KhabarGaam)

38. Rinehart, A. (2021, March 29). *Fake news. It's complicated*. First Draft. <https://firstdraftnews.org/articles/fake-news-complicated/>

The line of questioning posed towards participants of the Aurat March in these analysed videos was an important aspect to understand the motivation with which the content was being created. The focus appears to be on trivialising the meaningful slogans at the event and the hosts rarely pick up on the theme of the march or highlight the demands and manifestos released by organisers ahead of the event. In one instance, the host for UrduPoint asks a participant, “Aap ko kia lagta hai sarey jo slogans hai yahan per woh theek hain, woh achey hain?” (Do you think all slogans being used at the march here are correct, are they good?)<sup>39</sup> He also keeps repeating slogans surrounding gender roles such as, “Apna khana khud garam karo (warm your food yourself),” and “Apney mozey khud dho (Wash your socks yourself),” and made them out to be the “demands” set forth by Aurat March. While most of these slogans have been endorsed by the organisers because of the nuanced issues around gender-based violence that women face in Pakistani society, the fact that the host does not ask a single question related to the manifesto or the charter is in line with a pattern of questioning that chooses sensationalism over discussion.

False claims are repeatedly brought up in the form of legitimate questions even when organisers categorically deny and have denied them over the past few years.

For instance, Imaan Mazari, a human rights lawyer from Islamabad, has clarified multiple times in her interviews that Aurat March relies on donations to organise the march,<sup>40</sup> but the question of who funds Aurat March is raised repeatedly, especially by anchors at Bol TV.<sup>41</sup> Even when the anchor is told how the various chapters of Aurat March are funded, the question is posed again in subsequent interviews with an intention of labelling the organisers of the march as seeking funds from abroad – an accusation that has repeatedly been made against human rights activists and civil society in the country. The hosts presented no legitimate document or information that would prove that the march is “foreign-funded,” or that women wear short or revealing clothes at the march and are fighting for the same.

While the line of questioning gave the participants and, in Islamabad, the organisers a chance to respond to the allegations and counter false claims, the constant repetition of the questions makes them seem more orchestrated as opposed to regular questioning by journalists. Organisers from other cities were not interviewed by any of the channels. While Bol TV did invite Dr Mehrub Moiz Awan, a trans rights activist who has been involved with various chapters of Aurat March, especially in Karachi, there was no representation of the organisers in Lahore on any of the channels, even though most of the media in Lahore focused on the march.

39. *Aurat March Me Naujawan Naya Slogan Le Aya - Divorce Ka Taboo Tor Do, Tang Kare To Chor Do*, (2022, March 9). Urdu Point | YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXBhjAE0GmQ> - Timestamp: 1:10  
 40. *Mera Jism Meri Marji Ke Naam Par Imaan Mazari Ko Aurat March Ki Jazbat Kyu Nahi Milti?* (2022, March 8). [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6MMn\\_fCYl0&ab\\_channel=UrduPoint.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6MMn_fCYl0&ab_channel=UrduPoint.com)  
 41. *Who funds Aurat March in Pakistan ? | Aurat March 2022 | Special Transmission | BOL News*, (2022, March 6). [Video]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZSEm1TXjs0&ab\\_channel=BOLNews](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZSEm1TXjs0&ab_channel=BOLNews)

## Conclusion

This research study provides a very basic analysis of the Aurat March coverage by three YouTube channels and it does not capture a full picture of the extent to which Aurat March organisers and participants are targeted online for taking to the streets to demand equality and fundamental rights. Overall, the lack of engagement with the actual manifesto, charter of demands or the themes of various marches itself is glaringly obvious in the content that was analysed in this report. Questions that have been posed over the years can also be seen being brought up repeatedly with an obvious intent to stoke controversy. For instance, the question of how the march is funded is raised each year and yet no journalist or anchor has ever been able to provide any conclusive evidence that the organisers receive funds from abroad to organise marches across Pakistan.

In light of these findings, there is a need to take a more in-depth look at the narratives that these independent channels operating on social media have perpetuated against the feminist movement in the country.





## About MMfD

Media Matters for Democracy (MMfD) works to defend the freedom of expression, media, Internet, and communications in Pakistan. The main premise of our work is to push for a truly independent and inclusive media and cyberspace where citizens in general, and journalists in specific, can exercise their fundamental rights and professional duties safely and without the fear of persecution or physical harm.

We undertake various initiatives, including but not limited to training, policy research, movement building and strategic litigation to further our organisational goals. We also work on acceptance and integration of digital media and journalism technologies, and towards creating sustainable 'media-tech' initiatives in the country.

MMfD recognises diversity and inclusion as a core value of democracy and thus all our programs have a strong focus on fostering values and skills that enable and empower women, minority communities, and other marginalised groups.