

Abstract:

Elon Musk in April 2022 surprisingly declared his intention to buy Twitter with the goal to ensure free speech. However, maybe ensuring free speech on a powerful social media platform with 229 million active users per day is not a risk-free endeavour. The focus of this thesis is the incel community, which revolves around shared frustrations about failing to achieve sexual relations, opposition to feminism and violence-inciting misogyny. I ask the question: To what extent do more radical tweets diffuse further within the incel community? More concretely, I quantitatively investigate the relationship between the toxicity and the misogyny of a tweet and the number of times it is retweeted on a self-collected dataset encompassing 52,927 tweets. My findings suggest that toxic and misogynist tweets are retweeted more often and thus do spread further within the incel community on Twitter. This has crucial implications for the radicalisation potential of the incel community on Twitter as frequent exposure to radical content might amplify the radicalisation of others.

Keywords: Incels – Information diffusion – Radicalisation – Echo-chambers – Twitter