Religion, Society and Gender Identity: Women's Online Activism in Search of Public Space in Pakistan

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

This working paper analyses discourses on identity and space of women in Pakistani society. These discourses are drawn from the contentious activism of Pakistani traditionalists and non-traditionalists on social media and beyond. The non-traditionalists include women's rights groups, civil society, media outlets, and secular political factions which support the Western 'feminist foreign policy' agenda, while the traditionalists consist of local religious groups, media outlets, and supporters of religious patriarchy and the status quo. By employing group threat theory, the paper takes data from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and offers analysis of group threats in relation to the traditionalists and non-traditionalists, specifically on how the traditionalists push for religious patriarchy in relation to women's identity construction and how the non-traditionalists counter this patriarchy through activism. This paper discovers that as non-traditionalists fear women's freedom is under threat and therefore push for greater political and social space for women in Pakistani society, they are met with reactive and aggressive counter narratives and actions from traditionalists, who fear loss of control over power, politics, and resources. This intergroup threat has become a point of political contention between traditionalists and non-traditionalists in Pakistani society and beyond.

Key words : gender, western feminism , social media, religious patriarchy, women's identi

1. Introduction

Alongside the issues of discrimination and injustice, the subjects of women's social, cultural, religious, and economic status in Pakistan have recently been identified both within and outside the country as an issue particularly deserving of examination. In practice, however, the ways in which identity around gender and religion have been theorised and articulated in both colonial and postcolonial Pakistan has been highly variable. On the one hand, debates have led to thriving feminist movements within the country, but on the other, perceptions of perpetually oppressed Pakistani women have been – and are still – used as a pretence to justify a plethora of conservative viewpoints about this country, both at home and abroad. Since the formation of nation state of Pakistan in 1947, Pakistan's promotion of Islamic nationalism has been a driver of political contention regarding identity construction and citizenship rights of Pakistani women. They are, in the context of Pakistani citizenship, constituted as symbols of national identity, and their social roles have become a matter of public concern, particularly for state institutions (Rouse 2004). This contention is between the proponents of Western-oriented feminism and Muslim religious patriarchy regarding women's rights and position in society (Kangaspunta 2018).

Every year on 8 March, Pakistani feminists[1] organise Aurat March (Women's March) on International Women's Day. The March calls for a justice across a wide range of issues. Participants demand justice and support for women who experience violence and harassment at the hands of men, in public spaces, at home, and in the workplace, as well as economic justice, labour rights for women, recognition for women's work in the care economy as earning pay, maternity leave, and day care centres to ensure women's inclusion in the public life (Azeem 2020). Their perspective underlines the need for greater privileges of women in education, employment, marriage decision, and inheritance, and draws on statistics which state that restrictions on women's participation in public life has pushed Pakistan to sit among the top five countries for under-attainment in education and low levels of gender equality, making the country one of the worst for women to live in (Bruck, Baig, and Rachel 2015). Aurat March participants consider that male-controlled policy and law making sysem in Pakistan restricts the role of women in policymaking, job market, politics, and media representation, to the extent of becoming a state policy for the submissive identity construction of women (Chughtai 2020).

Although Pakistani anti-feminists are not necessarily against women's empowerment and rights, they view that presence of women in public spaces can cause sexual harassment and violence against women[2]. For instance, they argue that co-education proliferates indecency in Pakistani Muslim society, leading to crimes against women. The reason, they give, is that boys and girls who study together in same classrooms would develop friendships

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[1] The feminists include human rights groups, civil society, media, and liberal political groups such as the supporters of Aurat Azadi March Islamabad or "Women Freedom March Islamabad", The Feminist Collective, The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, and Awami National Party, or "Public National Party" (for details see BBC Asia 2020; Maya 2020).

[2] The anti-feminists include Muslim clergy-led religious groups and pro-patriarchy traditionalists. The mains actors are male and female students of *madrassas* or, Islamic religious schools, men-dominated print and electronic media groups and religiopolitical factions of Pakistan.

or fall in love and foster extramarital relations forbidden in Islamic values and Pakistani culture (Qureshi 2020). They deem implementation of Islamic criminal laws would significantly reduce crimes against women, where the existing British colonial era justice system (police, courts, and laws) has failed to prevent rapes and murders of women in the name of 'honour'. Anti-feminists also stress a greater role for women in family raising and care within the ambits of Pakistani culture and values (Safina 2020).

This working paper investigates how the Islamic ideology of Pakistan influences the state and its institutions and how this ideology leads to contention between religious patriarchy and 'Western' feminism in Pakistan. The Working Paper, through social media data and existing literature, unpacks the debate between traditionalists and non-traditionalists regarding women's space in public life in Pakistani society.

2. Background and context: Religion, society, and gender identity[3]

The contemporary controversy between 'Western' feminism[4] and local traditionalists in non-Western societies is manifestation of Western colonialism.[5] The British colonial systems of hegemony (including in present day Pakistan) are based on racializing[6] the local population, such as categorising and marginalising groups of people according to religion, ethnicity, and gender. These systems formed laws and legal norms that are specifically oppressive to women. Colonial administrators also disrupted existing gender relations and used rape, physical assault, sexual slavery, and sex crime as a tool of white Christian patriarchy and colonialism (Gouws 2018; Smith 2015). For example, in Nigeria, both men and women were chieftains in pre-colonial Nigeria, yet British colonial officials refused to negotiate with female chiefs, instead putting in place a system of land ownership that explicitly excludes women (Sheldon 2018).

In pre-partition British India (present day Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India), British colonial authorities polarised religious identity (Hindu versus Muslim) and created racial hierarchy. This provided the fodder for many armed conflicts in this region, ultimately

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[3] Gender identity is described as an individual's perception of self as being a man, woman, or mix of "man/boy and woman/girl or as someone fluctuating between man/boy and woman/girl or as someone outside those categories altogether". It differentiates from biological identity based on sex such as male and female. In this paper, gender identity, in view of the methodology and data, is taken as an individual's conception of being a man or woman or girl/boy or a male/female. For details refer to: https://www.britannica.com/topic/gender-identity.

[4] Feminism is the ideology which seeks equality women for in economic, social, and political space. It emerged in reaction to religio-patriarchal traditions in the West that curbed the rights of women. However, some Western feminists perceive women's issues of equality as a global phenomenon, thereby discarding cultural differences, ethnic and religious identities that has been reinforcing homophobia. This perception ignores the voices and struggles of non-Western non-White women putting them under one umbrella of Orientalism (for details see "McEwan 2001" & "Mills 1998").

[5] Western colonialism was a policy of hegemony of White Christian European nations over countries of people of Colour and non-Christian societies, often by establishing colonies and generally with the aim of economic dominance. In this policy of colonisation, colonisers imposed their religion, language, economics, and other cultural practices in large areas of the world (for details see "Magdoff., Charles., and Webster. 2020").

[5] The sociology of racialisation is a political process of ascribing ethnic, religious and, or racial identities to a relationship, social practice, or group that did not identify itself and were living without identity-based prejudice and conflict (for details see "Garner and Selod 2015").

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encouraging men to be aggressive and violent, even within the family (Mannell 2022). This is despite the fact that the Indian sub-continent has a long history of powerful women, such as queens, who rose up to face colonial conflicts and fought when the need to defend their society arose (Chakrabarti 2018).

The emotional consequences of racialisation of local populations arising from colonisation is important in understanding contemporary gender relations in postcolonial societies. The representation of the colonial traditional hero as a White Christian man leaves the non-Christian men of colour in these societies with a desire to be someone else. They are thus robbed of their sense of self, their agency, and their decision-making power (Seresin 2017). The officials, such as judges, writers and journalists, in postcolonial government institutions accede to an impulse of white, male fairness which they genuinely thought to be just and impartial thereby leaving a question over the truthfulness of this impulse (Anagol and Grey 2017).

In contemporary Western societies, new emergent diasporic spaces provide the further overlapping identity of women of colour. Skilled immigrant women of colour in a White Anglo-dominant society face racialisation of working spaces. Despite being highly skilled immigrant women, they come across prejudice and racism in the hiring process compared to non-White women (Carangio, Farquharson, Bertone & Rajendran 2021). These women feel the denial of their voice and space despite having educational credentials thus having contesting perceptions of gender, education, and cultural diversity, and myriad identities within the public spaces of postcolonial and transnational societies (Belford & Lahiri-Roy 2018).

While in the Western culture, women who participate in public space are more likely to experience gender-based abuse and harassment on new media compared to their male counterparts (Guerin & Maharasingam-Shah 2020). Still, the Western women feminists have been defying the White male Christian's patriarchal identity through new media like Facebook (Fight the Patriarchy 2022: Feminist News 2022). The American society has recently accepted an equal pay rate to sports women with sports men at national level which has eliminated a controversial pay gap that saw women players earning less than men (Hernandez 2022). Muslim women migrants from conflict affected countries (mostly induced by the Western governments) in the Western societies experience the loss of their language and culture identity. They are required to learn the Western language, such as English, to adjust in news society. As these women invest in language learning in order to acquire cultural, social and economic capital they reconstruct their identities. The contention arises between identity formation and language learning as these women struggle to seek belonging and acceptance in their new-found society as well as trying not to deconstruct their Muslim identity and culture (Shwayli & Barnes 2018).

In postcolonial Muslim societies such as Pakistan, male members were on the front in resisting colonial occupation and desired to acquire some form of agency or important status. They pursued this position by embracing conspicuous religiousness, particularly by adopting the status a freedom fighter (mujahid) whereby a woman position was being a mother, sister or wife of a martyr — a loss to the power and privilege of a women identity (Rashid 2006). During Pakistan's struggle for independence from British India in the 1940s, Muslim women's

ideal identity was shaped as mothers and wives who would nurture, support, socialise, and make sacrifices for the good of the Muslim nation. They were – and are – presented as biological and ideological reproducers of the nation, whose main value is to be wives and mothers who give birth to citizens and socialise youth into Islamic culture (Cook 2001). In the context of Pakistan's national identity, the state's Islamic nationalism dissuades women from participation in the Western-influenced gender rights movements[7], while traditionalists respond to such movements through Islamic activism (Jafri 2020).

Although religion presents barriers to women's rights and gender equality, as per the notion of religious liberty, it can be argued that cultural preservation is more prominent than religion in gender identity construction (Gunn 2020). In Indian society, for example, preference for a son often leads to infanticides against female children, while the custom of dowry supresses women's identity while construing men's superiority (Kaur 2021). Similarly, across the Indian subcontinent, including Pakistan, the patriarchy works to curtail women's freedom and rights through coercive methods (e.g. 'honour' killings, forced marriage), which are cultural practices that aim to suppress women's identity in social and political spaces. Women's identity is perceived to be inferior to that of men in both the home and the workplace, resulting in systematic marginalisation by their families and relatives based on their identity (Aurat Foundation 2014).

In the 1980s, the state-sponsored Islamisation of Pakistan introduced some of the country's most repressive criminal laws towards women[8]. These include the Hudood Ordinances, a set of laws dealing with rape, adultery, and fornication (Saeed and Khan 2000). Since that time, state-mandated resistance to 'Western' culture and efforts to revive the believed true Islamic norms – the key messages of traditionalists – have promoted the irrelevance of individual existence of women in relation to their citizenship rights (Kassam 2007).

In other Muslim majority countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, traditionalists promote gender inequality through the conscious selection of certain Qur'anic verses and hadiths in ways which can reproduce existing inequalities between men and women. The religious interpretation process becomes prejudiced by the religio-patriarchal social structures of the current Indonesian society (Aziz, Abdullah & Prasojo 2020). Similarly, Malaysian politics regarding gender, citizenship, and religion are deeply intertwined in the bodies of Malay women. For example, Malaysian law dealing with apostasy is unjust towards women (both Muslims and non-Muslims), with the body of the Malay woman becoming a position of contestation where patriarchal and religious traditions have taken precedence in law over notions of individual rights (Hussin 2021). In the same vein, the Pakistani religious patriarchy manipulates Islamic sacred texts to construct comforting spaces for women, which has led to the politics of religious interpretation and the informal influence of traditionalists.

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[7] During 1950s, women rights activists presented a Charter of Women's Rights to the Constituent Assembly intended to guarantee Pakistani women, among other things, equality of status, equality of opportunity and equal pay for equal work (for details see "Ansari 2009").

[8] Later in the 1980s, *Khawateen Mahaz-e-Amal* or Women's Action Forum, an early Western-oriented feminist campaign in Pakistan, was formed to protest the first sentencing of a man and woman under the Hudood Ordinances. After that, the Forum continued their feminist activism to challenge the Islamization of law and society (for details see Jamal 2005).

The inner conflict coerces women's identity into interrupting social and religious limitations in a Muslim society (Sarwar and Zeng 2021). The paper aims to analyse the social and political debate over women identity, patriarchy, and Islamic identity of Pakistani society as it has played out on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube).

3. Methodology

The data for this Working Paper was collected from social media, newspapers, television, journal papers and reports to analyse the argument and perspective of traditionalist and non-traditionalist activists in Pakistan. The social media sources of data were Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The Twitter accounts and Facebook pages and groups were accessed through searching for terms such as 'aurat march' and 'anti feminism Pakistan'. Screenshots were taken from tweets which appeared under these terms, along with screenshots of groups and pages on Facebook with the above search terms. These screenshots are numbered and subtitled at the end of this paper. The messages and counter messages of traditionalists and non-traditionalists represented in these screenshots are assessed in the analysis and discussion section. These screenshots include photos, posts, tweets, and the 'about' sections of Facebook pages and groups. Online data is supplemented with information regarding offline protests and gatherings of activists. By employing group threat theory, this Working Paper looks at how perceived group threats (realistic and symbolic) lead to gender identity contention between traditionalists and non-traditionalists in Pakistani society. This theoretical explanation is a novel contribution in the context of both Pakistani society and other Islamic societies. The metrics, including number of groups members, likes, comments, and retweets of social media posts, are circled in blue in Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5.

4. Theorising women's online activism in Pakistan

Group threat theory is a theoretical lens used to analyse the perceived threats of traditionalists and non-traditionalists. According to this theory, negative attitudes towards members of an outgroup arise from the perception of four threat types pertaining to that outgroup: realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. This paper employs two concepts of the group threat theory: realistic and symbolic threats. Realistic threats are concerns of a group relating to its power and resources, whereas symbolic threats are concerns of a group regarding its values, culture, language, and/or worldview (Stephan and Stephan 2013). In this context, men's perception that their ingroup is losing value across several social spheres is associated with social status and realistic threats, both of which are related to opposition to feminist movements. Information about the declining value of masculinity activates status threat, which decreases men's support for feminist movements, especially among men who strongly identify as masculine. Thus, the perceived decline in the social value of traditional masculinity creates status anxiety about the ingroup's future and motivates compensatory reactions against gender equality (Rivera-Rodriguez, Larsen & Dasgupta 2022). This Working Paper discusses the realistic threat and social status of Pakistani traditionalists in the form of losing power and resources in society, while non-traditionalists are afraid of symbolic and realistic threats to women's identity, position, and space in Pakistani society. The paper examines how men's perception of the

declining value of traditional masculinity activates social status and realistic threat in traditionalists, and how non-traditionalists in turn support feminist social movements in Pakistani society.

5. Discussion and analysis

The discourse of Pakistani feminists on social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter, create a 'group threat' in traditionalists regarding gender rights and equality (see Figure 1). This threat comes from different counter cultural concepts of non-traditionalists; for example, the arguments around mera jism meri marzi ("my body my choice"),[9] haq-mehar,[10] "there is no honour in killing," and jahaiz khouri band karo ("stop the custom dowry") (Rehman 2020). These counter cultural concepts of feminist/non-traditional activists, which aim to create greater space for women in Pakistani society, generate fear in the male-dominated system of the country by positioning women as victims of forced marriages, 'honour' killings, inequality in property rights in cases of divorce, and the practice of dowry. This negative stereotyping of members of the 'other' group – in this case, traditionalists – as a single group is associated with the release of negative emotional reactions (Croucher 2017). The greater the negative stereotyping, the greater emotional response there will be from members of the 'other' group.

There is also a debate among non-traditionalists on the concept of women's empowerment in Muslim societies. Feminists argue that the presence of women working in public is a visual marker of changes in society's gender norms. This helps widen women's sense of economic agency and the international perception that Muslim women have been empowered through mass employment in global value markets. But this identity of women empowerment is mere an individual pay check as the empowerment depends on women's abilities to organize and build independent work organizations (Nazneen, Hossain, & Chopra 2019).

In reaction, traditionalists engage state power and attempt to institutionalise traditional gender identity using religious notions. The response to Pakistan's Aurat March demonstrates this clearly, with traditionalists using terms such as 'blasphemy' and 'anti-Islamic agenda', arguing the March and its values have been pushed by the West on a Muslim society (see Figures 2 & 3). This reflects the state's policy, which sees the construction of women's identities, especially relating to working in public space, as a destabilising factor. In the 1960s, during an election campaign for presidency, traditionalists challenged the presidential candidacy of Fatima Jinnah[11] and declared it un-Islamic through a fatwa[12] (Weiss

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[9] The slogan *my body, my choice* first appeared in the 1960s in the U.S. and spread around the world in support of the reproductive and abortion rights. Its underlying message seeks bodily autonomy and self-determination for women. It asserts freedom from external control – specifically religious patriarchal control – over women's reproductive rights and choices (for details see Lanphier, E. 2021).

[10] A nominal amount of money that a bridegroom is entitled to give to the bride at the time of marriage contract as per Islamic law. In case of divorce, the amount is returned to the woman as property rights compensation for divorce. Feminists believe this meagre amount should not be a considered compensation in divorce as it cannot support the woman financially.

[11] Fatima Jinnah was the sister of Pakistan founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah. She was the first women in Pakistan who campaigned to contest the general presidential elections.

[12] A fatwa in Islam is a formal interpretation on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified Islamic legal scholar in response to the rise of a new issue in a Muslim society.

1994). Then, during the 1980s, when Benazir Bhutto stood for prime minister[13], a fatwa was issued stating that 'emir or the head of the state (i.e., president)' must be 'a man' (Weiss 1994). The women's non-domestic workspace is viewed as a danger to the national identity by which their contribution to national development becomes non-existent (Grünenfelder 2013). The traditionalists indirectly help the political interest of ruling class of Muslim elite, who do not want the freedom of the common Muslims from their medieval psyche as the status quo suits their socio-economic and political agenda (Upadhyay 2002).

The activism of traditionalists focuses on holding haya ('morality') marches in response to the perception of feminist activism as a threat to the values of a traditional Muslim society. Traditionalists argue that feminists are propagating immorality; traditionalists want to 'smash the feminism' as this is believe a 'cancer' in traditional Pakistani society. Traditionalists' counter discourses revolve around the concepts of main ba-parda hun ("I am veiled"), main ghar ki malka hun ("I am the queen of the home"), and behayai na manzoor ("we reject immorality") (see Figures 3 and 4). Traditionalists argue that the presence of women in public spaces such as universities and offices is against the country's Islamic values (see Figure 6). In other words, the argue that Islamic law should be implemented in in all aspects of life. To achieve this political goal, traditionalists employ state law against feminists and try to push law enforcement officers to view women's activism as anti-state and against Pakistan's values (see Figure 5).

In practice, religious values play a leading role in the performance of rituals at birth, death, and marriage, whereas in matters such as inheritance, divorce, and the role and status of women in society, patriarchal values dominate. Religious leaders and preachers cannot define gender relations, other than their customary roles, including women's education, employment, as well as state/citizen relationship (Alex 2005). The religious patriarchy puts Pakistani women in between the Western frameworks of intellectual thought and reasoning as well as in the context of their own potentially different social lives and self-identities as Muslim women. In addition to negotiating with the Western notions of feminism, these women simultaneously challenge indigenous patriarchal hegemonies and conservative religious discourses in their social context by attempting to rework notions of Muslim women's identity in Pakistan (Zubair and Zubair 2017).

Non-traditionalists feel threatened by the influence of traditionalists at the state level – such as in law enforcement, courts, media, politics, and education – and feel this influence cultivates a traditional mindset towards women for the future generations of Pakistan (see Figure 6). Laws and policies directed at women are strict and suggest severe punishment by men-dominated police, laws, and legal courts, representing a bias against women across all of Pakistani society (Rehman 2020). In cases of sexual harassment of women by men, victims are often afraid that society and the criminal justice system will blame them, instead of the harasser, which could further discriminate against them by restricting their movement in public space (Ahmed, Yousaf, and Asif 2021). In television and film, female characters are portrayed positively when they are submissive to husband and conform to societal norms. They are appreciated for obeying their parents and are expected to compromise. On the

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[13] Benazir Bhutto was a Pakistani politician who served twice (1988 to 1990 and then 1993 to 1996) as prime minister of Pakistan. She was the first woman to head a democratic government in a Muslim majority country.

contrary, women who do not follow these norms are shown as negative characters. However, a newer identity that neutrally depicts working women is increasingly being presented. These women are shown as independent yet still respectful of cultural norms. Such portrayals reflect the state-induced practice of gender relations in Pakistani society (Qamar and Farrukh 2021). In addition, non- traditionalists believe that male perpetrators of crimes against women find it easy to evade justice, leading to low conviction rates in cases of violence against women in Pakistani courts (Schaflechner 2018). They are concerned that such weaknesses of the justice system, as well as broader political discourse, facilitates male perpetrators to commit violence against marginalized groups, especially children, women of religious minorities, and transgender people with impunity (Saigol 1995). In context of the Islamic collective identity of Pakistan, non-traditionalists activists from Pakistani religious minorities claim that young girls of Pakistani Hindus and Christians are abducted and forcefully converted by Sunni Muslims; this crime is often followed by the forced marriages of those girls. Yet the perpetrators, courts, police, and media all present that the victim converted to Sunni Islam according to her own will because she was in love with the perpetrator (Minorities in Pakistan 2020: see Figure 7).

Online, some Pakistani women also create debate on YouTube, paralleling the activism of non-traditionalists and traditionalists. Instead of women's empowerment, this polarisation creates an identity crisis among Pakistani women (Naya Din 2022). For example, a member of the Council of Islamic Ideology asserted that Council 'strongly support[s] the women education and rights' but they feel intimidation by the Western-oriented messages[14] of non-traditionalists such as aurat bacha paida krny ki machine nai ha ("woman is not a machine to produce a child") and dupatta tumey itna pasand ha to khud hi oorh loo ("if you are so fond of scarf,[15] wear it yourself") (Aurat March ya Haya 2022).

By traditionalists, universal human rights organisations are mostly perceived to be a product of Western culture, threatening to undermine non-Western values about gender identity formation (Gunn 2020). In the aftermath of natural disaster crises that strike Pakistan, an unprecedented number of the Western aid actors arrive in the country. These actors influence Pakistani men's perceptions of change in the gendered division of labour, as the men claim this arrival has increased women's access to work in public spaces in Pakistani society. This creates a dichotomy in thinking process of local men across both urban and rural settings. Some male voices use this perceived increase to either try to further enhance women's access or to curtail it. Thus, men's narratives around women's access to work post-disaster reflects a crisis of masculinity in which some men try to reinforce the society's traditional patriarchy and others challenge it; while doing so, men are also staking a claim at redefining what it means to be a man (Loureiro 2019.

In recent years, many Western countries have introduced feminist foreign policy as a political tool in which they pour development aid targeting and incentivising programs that prioritise gender equality, gender parity, and women's rights through activism and advocacy

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[14] These messages have impacted thousands of Pakistani viewers who have watched, liked and commented on this video on YouTube.

[15] A *dupatta* is a long piece of cloth worn around the head, neck, and shoulders by women from South Asia including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

(Aggestam & Rosamond 2019). Consequently, intergroup anxiety gives rise to political contention, with both traditionalists and non-traditionalists in Pakistan and beyond feeling threatened with the increasing appearance the 'other' group. This contention even sometimes leads to violent confrontations between feminist activists and traditionalists in Pakistan (Amnesty International 2020).

6. Conclusion

By revisiting the above discussion and employing the group threat theory, this Working Paper draws on this theory in context of Islamic society; in this case, Pakistan. The paper suggests that women's identity construction and position in public space (employment, politics, and the media) in Pakistan implies a social status and power threat to the religious patriarchy because the reconstruction of women's identity as being equal to that of men is felt a peril to the political status quo (that is, men as rulers) among Pakistani traditionalists. This threat is linked with the negatively stereotyping of feminist activists, with terms such as 'behayai' and 'anti-Islam' widely used to disparage them on social media. In Pakistan, this contention is mainly encouraged by the Western countries on a political basis, because the West looks at feminists in Pakistan as their allies and promoters of women's rights; this support may, in fact, have a political goal, of increasing the Western countries' cultural influence in a Muslim country. This push further leads to intergroup anxiety and tension in Pakistan in the context of nationalism and gender identity formation. The intergroup threat in a Muslim majority society like Pakistan generates prejudice amongst members of non-traditionalist groups towards members of traditionalist groups. This arises from the perception of a 'realistic threat', which a traditionalist group perceives to threaten its power and control over resources, as well as a 'symbolic threat', which a group perceives as being against its Muslim values, culture, language, and worldview. This group threat gives rise to intergroup anxiety between traditionalists and non-traditionalists (in this case, Western-supported feminists) and the local (religious and political) elite who do not want to lose their power, privilege, and control in Pakistani society.

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Figure 1. Twitter accounts of non-traditionalists on Aurat or Women March across different cities in Pakistan

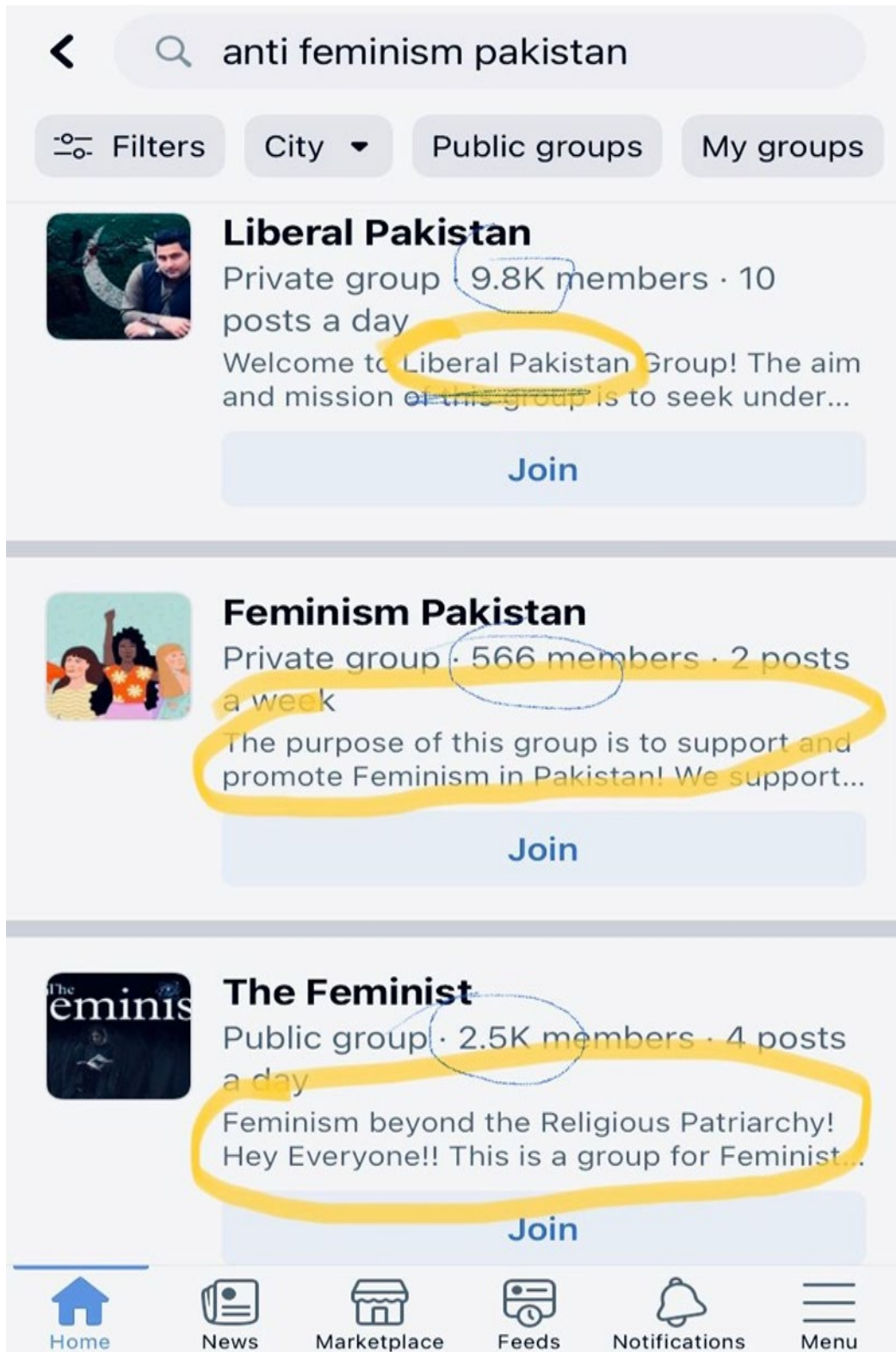Figure 2. Facebook pages of non-traditionalists in favour of feminism in Pakistan.

Figure 3. Facebook pages of traditionalists to counter feminism in Pakistan.
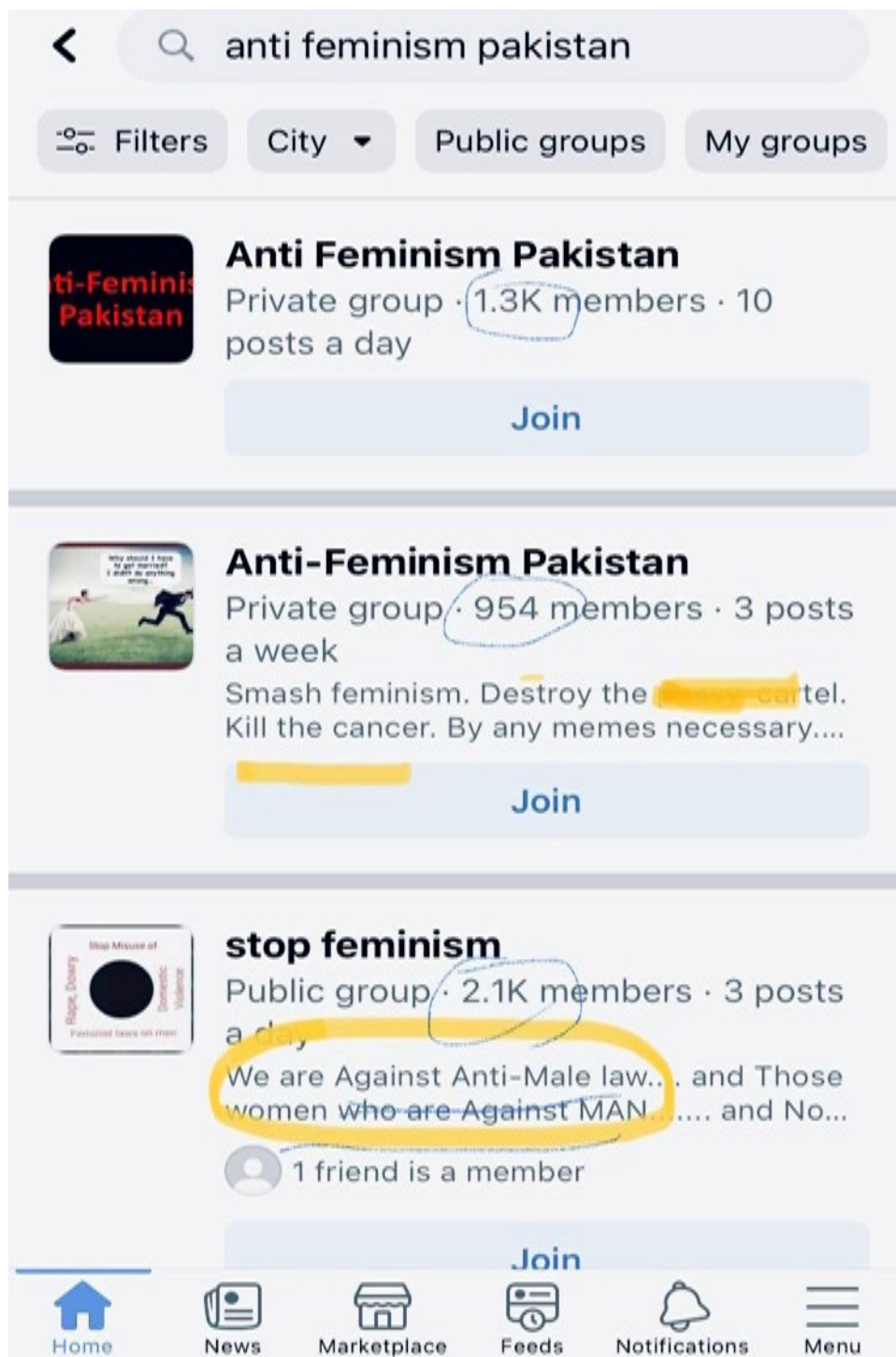
Figure 4. A Twitter post of non-traditionalists criticizes the religious patriarchy in justice system of Pakistan.
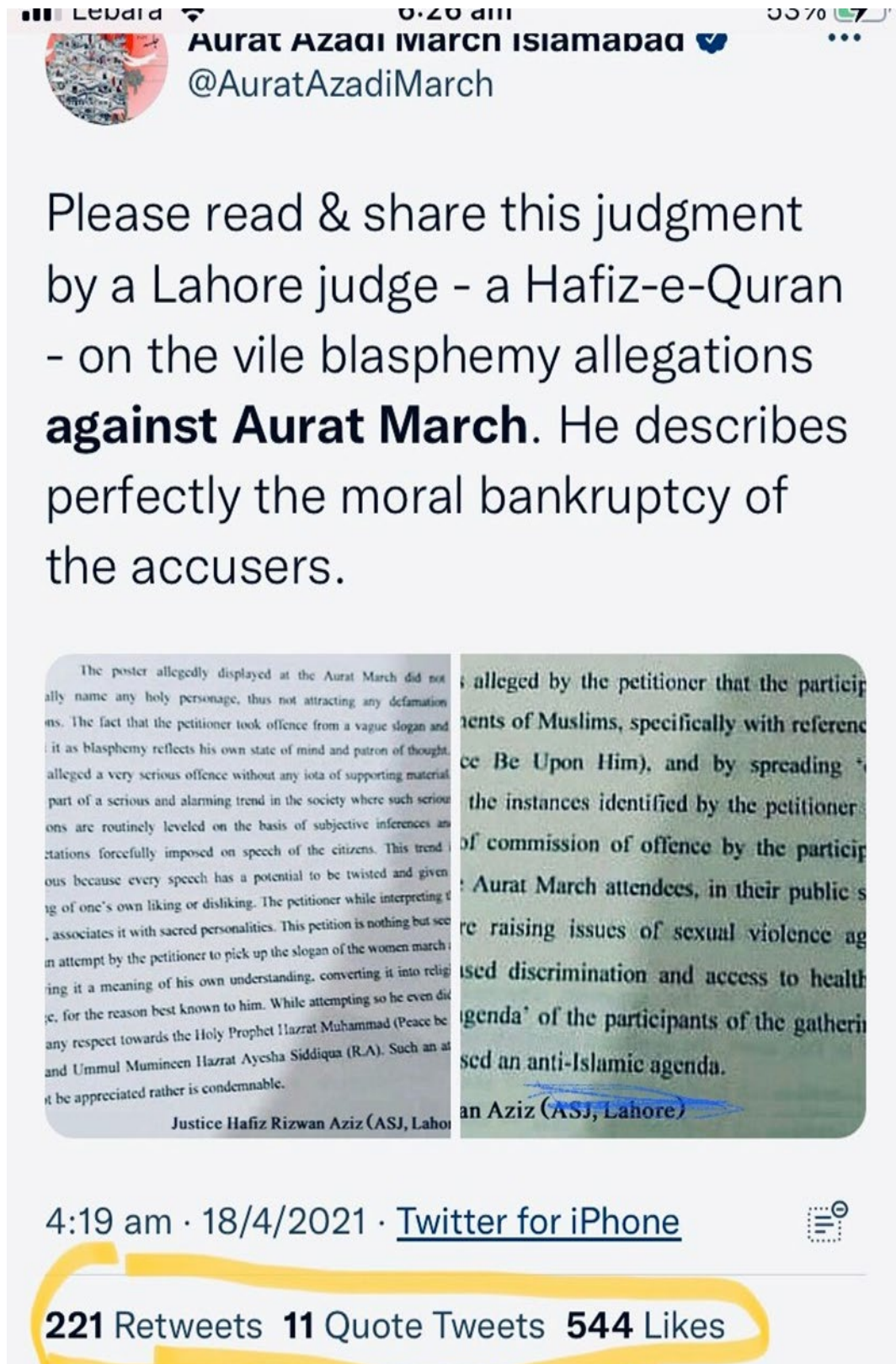
Figure 5. Non-traditionalists on Twitter censure the state sponsored full veil for schoolgirls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. They contend 'burqa' or, full veil is not part of the ethnic Pashtun culture.

@s... · 4/10/2019

مردان میرا آبائی گاؤں ہے اور ہمارے ہاں سفید چادر کا رواج ہے. بڑی عمر کی خواتین دو تھوں والی بڑے ارض والی چادر پہنتی ہیں اور لڑکیاں کڑھائی کی سفید چادریں برقع ہمارا کلچر ہے ہی نہیں. یہ پی ٹی آئی حکومت کے کمالات ہیں کہ ضلع کونسل کے فنڈ سے برقع لے کر بچیوں میں تقسیم کیے جا رہے ہیں

38.8K views

262   456   1,336

Show this thread

Figure 6. Non-traditionalists condemn the forced conversion and sexual violence against girls of Pakistani religious minorities.