
Assessment of Hate Speech on social media: The Danger and Crime

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed hate speech on social media: the danger and crime. Hate speech has reportedly become increasingly common on social media platforms. The anonymity provided by online spaces frequently gives people the confidence to promote unpleasant ideas they may hold back from saying in face-to-face conversations. The spread of hate speech via internet networks polarizes society and prevents cooperation and productive discussion. The study revealed that Understanding the psychological and societal ramifications of hate speech on social media is essential to conducting an effective assessment. The study reviewed the concept of hate speech, social media, crime, how to combat hate speech, the prevalence of hate speech the danger and crimes of hate speech. The study concluded that hate speech on social media is a very disturbing and troubling trend that is dangerous and may have legal repercussions. The prevalence of hate speech on these platforms has serious repercussions that harm people, communities, and whole society. The risk comes from the potential for hate speech to promote prejudice, inspire violence, and split society along ideological lines. The increase in online hate speech also acts as a hotbed for radicalization, which feeds intolerance and extremism. It is crucial for authorities, technology firms, and consumers to work together to solve this issue given how quickly nasty information spreads throughout social media platforms. One of the recommendations made was that governments should work to update and strengthen legal frameworks to address hate speech on social media platforms.

KEYWORDS: Hate Speech, Social media, Danger and Crime

Introduction

Social media has provided people with a platform where they can freely express themselves and take part in global dialogues; it has profoundly altered how we engage and communicate with one another. While social media has its benefits, it has also increased the transmission of hate speech, generating significant concerns about its potential social impact. An analysis of hate speech on social media is necessary to fully grasp its danger and criminal potential. This evaluation comprises analyzing the



presence, impact, and problems related to hate speech on social media in order to create policies that strike a balance between the need to protect people's right to free expression and the requirement to stop harmful material. Hate speech has reportedly become increasingly common on social media platforms (Hossain & Alhossainy, 2020). The anonymity provided by online spaces frequently gives people the confidence to promote unpleasant ideas they may hold back from saying in face-to-face conversations. This increase in hate speech strengthens preexisting prejudices and helps normalize discriminatory beliefs. Hate speech's effects on social media go beyond the virtual world. Its evaluation is essential for detecting possible risks to public safety because it has been connected to actual hate crimes (Klein & Rosenthal, 2020). Jealousy and unrestrained prejudice are typically the first steps in the development of hatred. A predilection for or against a person or group that interferes with one's capacity to make objective judgments is known as bias. If such bias isn't addressed, it can develop into violence and eventually become normative or accepted. When hatred toward an individual or a group of individuals appears, it typically results from ignorance, wrath, fear, a sense of hurt, or a perception that the status quo is in danger. When the word "hate" is used in a statute, such as the "hate crime law," it does not refer to fury or general distaste. "Hate" in this sense refers to prejudice towards individuals or groups who possess particular traits (OAG DC, 2023).

The phrase "hate speech" refers to "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. "Communication that incites violence, prejudice, or hatred based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, or ethnicity is referred to as hate speech, a contentious and multidimensional notion. Since its purpose is to denigrate and isolate certain people or groups, it goes beyond the bounds of free expression (United Nations, 2012). Understanding the psychological and societal ramifications of hate speech on social media is essential to conducting an effective assessment. The well-being and mental health of those who are targeted by hate speech can be negatively impacted by psychological anguish and feelings of exclusion (Davies & Hine, 2017). The spread of hate speech via internet networks polarizes society and prevents cooperation and productive discussion. Defining hate speech's bounds and separating it from valid criticism are difficult tasks in assessment and making sure that any steps taken to stop it don't interfere with the right to free speech. Internet-based social networking and microblogging sites are examples of social media. Through these platforms, users may exchange information, concepts, private messages, and other materials like films. While the terms social networking and social media are sometimes used interchangeably, social networking is typically understood to refer to people creating communities within those communities, whereas social media is mainly concerned with leveraging social networking sites and similar platforms to create an audience (Chadwick, A. 2023). Furthermore, Thotakura (2011) said that crime is a social wrong, as is the case with risk and crime. It is a behavior that society strongly condemns. Crimes include rape, homicide, fraud, and dacoities. Every civilization defines crime from a different point of view. There must be both a criminal act and a criminal purpose for a crime to be committed. It is a crime that transgresses state law and is roundly condemned by society.



Concept of Hate Speech

In popular parlance, "hate speech" is objectionable communication that targets a group or an individual based on intrinsic traits (such as race, religion, or gender) that may jeopardise societal harmony, according to the United Nations Organisation (2023). It is defined as "any communication, whether oral or written, or behaviour that attacks or employs derogatory or discriminatory language with reference to an individual or a group on the basis of who they are, that is, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender, or other identity factor. The Cambridge Dictionary defines hate speech as "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group on the basis of something like race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Hate speech is defined as "usually thought to include communications of animosity or disparagement of an individual or a group on account of a group characteristic such as race, colour, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or sexual orientation" in the Encyclopaedia of the American Constitution. Different nations have different legal definitions of hate speech. The topics of free speech, hate speech, and laws against it have all been hotly contested. According to the laws of some nations, hate speech is defined as any speech, conduct, writing, or display that calls for violence or other unfavourable actions against a group of people or an individual based on that person's membership in the group, or that disparages or threatens that person or individual based on that membership. Based on specific traits, the law may designate some groups as protected.

Hate speech is not recognised as a legal term in several nations. Additionally, most of what is considered "hate speech" in several nations, including the United States, is allowed under the constitution. A victim of hate speech may seek restitution under civil law, criminal law, or both in various nations. It is well acknowledged that one of the conditions for mass atrocities like genocide is hate speech. Extreme hate speech, like inciting genocide, has been criminalised by international tribunals like the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The definition of hate speech in Wikipedia (2023), is "public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Communication that incites violence, prejudice, or hatred based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, or ethnicity is referred to as hate speech, a contentious and multidimensional notion. Since its purpose is to denigrate and isolate certain people or groups, it goes beyond the bounds of free expression (United Nations, 2012). Questions of free expression, moral limits, and societal repercussions are all intertwined with the idea of hate speech. Its many facets necessitate a detailed analysis of judicial systems, cultural settings, psychological effects, and ethical issues.

Hate speech has profound psychological repercussions for its target as well as society at large. According to research, marginalized populations that are exposed to hate speech may experience increased stress and anxiety as well as decreased psychological well-being. Additionally, the normalization of hate speech has the potential to strengthen stereotypes, promote societal divides, and heighten animosity. The situation has been made worse by the introduction of digital platforms, which have increased the accessibility and virulence of hate speech. The idea of hate speech encompasses intricate psychological, legal, and ethical facets. In an increasingly linked



world, communities continue to have difficulties juggling the protection of free speech with the mitigation of harm (Nelkin, 2019).

Concept of Social Media

Social media are interactive technologies that make it easier to create and share information, ideas, and other kinds of expression through virtual communities and networks, according to Wikipedia (2023). According to Tufts University (2023), social media refers to methods of communication in which individuals create, share, and/or exchange knowledge and concepts via online groups and networks. Social media makes it easier for people to communicate with one another online. Social media refers to a wide range of applications and platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, the X platform (formerly known as Twitter), and YouTube, that let users share information, communicate online, and create communities. According to Maya Dollarhide (2023), more than 4.7 billion individuals, or nearly 60% of the world's population, utilise social media. The phrase "social media" is frequently used to describe emerging types of media that encourage interactive engagement. The two eras of media development—the broadcast era and the interactive era—are frequently separated. A single organisation, such as a radio station, television station, newspaper publisher, or film studio, would disseminate messages to a large number of individuals during the broadcast era (Manning, 2014). Internet-based social networking and microblogging sites are examples of social media. Through these platforms, users may exchange information, concepts, private messages, and other materials like films. While the terms social networking and social media are sometimes used interchangeably, social networking is typically understood to refer to people creating communities within those communities, whereas social media is mainly concerned with leveraging social networking sites and similar platforms to create an audience (Chadwick, 2023). Digital platforms that enable user engagement and the sharing of user-generated content via an internet app are referred to as social media. Social media is a platform that enables users to create networks and contact groups to manage connections and relationships. (Shannon, 2002).

According to Tufts (2023), social media is a method of communication in which individuals connect with one another to produce, share, and/or exchange knowledge and concepts through online groups and networks. Tolarhide (2023) says that through virtual networks, social media makes it easier to share thoughts and information. Social media refers to a wide range of applications and platforms that let users share material, communicate online, and create communities, from Facebook and Instagram to the X platform (formerly Twitter) and YouTube. Platforms for social media provide users with the ability to interact, find specialty communities, and access information instantly. As a result, the globe now seems more accessible and interconnected (Kietzmann and Hermkens, 2011). It has also enabled many people to communicate with others online. Social media are interactive technologies that enable the production and exchange of knowledge, concepts, passions, and other kinds of expression via online groups and networks. It may also refer to a group of websites and software programmes that emphasise collaboration, sharing of material, engagement, and communication (Ben, 2023). The term "social" as it relates to media implies that platforms are user-centric and encourage social interaction. Social media may therefore be seen as an online facilitator or enhancer of human networks of people who improve social connectedness (Dijck, 2013). Platforms that enable people to communicate, share knowledge, and produce



digital content are involved. Users frequently download services that provide social media functionality to their mobile devices (such as smartphones and tablets) or use web-based apps on computers to access social media services. Users of these electronic services build highly interactive platforms as they interact with them, enabling people, groups, and organisations to share, co-create, interact with, discuss, and alter user-generated or self-curated material that is published online (Bruno et al., 2020). In addition to the expansion of ideas via the creation of blogs, podcasts, movies, and gaming sites, social media are used to create memories, learn about and explore topics, market oneself, and create connections (Gwenn and Kathleen, 2011).

Concept of Crime

IGI Global (2022) defines crime as an offence deserving of public censure and retribution, typically in the form of a fine or incarceration. A crime is illegal conduct that is subject to governmental or other punishment. A crime is unlawful conduct that typically results in government penalties. A crime is the deliberate performance of an action that is generally seen as socially damaging or hazardous and is expressly forbidden, sanctioned, and defined by criminal law. Crime is socially harmful conduct that is forbidden under the nation's Criminal Code and is subject to penalty. A crime is defined as an intentional act that violates the law, is performed without justification or defence, and is subject to felony or misdemeanour punishment by the state (Tapper, 2023). IGI Global (2022) defines crime as an offence deserving of public censure and retribution, typically in the form of a fine or incarceration. A crime is illegal conduct that is subject to governmental or other punishment. A crime is unlawful conduct that typically results in government penalties. A crime is the deliberate performance of an action that is generally seen as socially damaging or hazardous and is expressly forbidden, sanctioned, and defined by criminal law. Crime is socially harmful conduct that is forbidden under the nation's Criminal Code and is subject to penalty. A crime is defined as an intentional act that violates the law, is performed without justification or defence, and is subject to felony or misdemeanour punishment by the state (Tapper, 2023). It is a crime that warrants condemnation from the public and retribution, usually in the form of a fine or jail sentence. Unlike a civil wrong (a tort), which is an action taken against a person and demands restitution or the payment of damages, this is different.

According to Thotakura (2011), crime is a social injustice. It is a behaviour that society strongly condemns. Crimes include rape, homicide, fraud, and dacoities. Every civilization defines crime from a different point of view. There must be both a criminal act and a criminal purpose for a crime to be committed. It is a crime that transgresses state law and is roundly condemned by society. The definition of a crime is an act or omission that is illegal and is subject to a fine or incarceration. Crimes include things like murder, robberies, break-ins, rapes, driving while intoxicated, neglecting children, and failing to pay taxes. Crimen, a Latin word meaning offence and offender, is where the word "crime" originates. Criminal activity is viewed as antisocial. A crime is a civil violation that may be investigated and prosecuted in a criminal court, where a sentence may be imposed. The term "crime" can be used to describe any act of human activity that the government decides to forbid via the use of socially acceptable legal processes and the fear of punishment. An act of default that seeks to harm the community and is prohibited by law or subject to punishment at the whim of the state is known as (Law



Global Hub 2022). A crime is an action that is against the law and offensive to society's moral values. As a result, according to Section 2 of the Criminal Law, a crime is any act or omission that exposes the perpetrator to a penalty under the law. A criminal act is one that is sanctioned by the law as being against the law or harmful to the general welfare. It is an intentional act or omission that violates the law, is done without reason or defence, and is classified by the state as a crime or misdemeanour (Course Hero 2023).

Easton (2010) said that a crime or offence (or criminal offence) is conduct that is injurious to a community, society, or the state as a whole ("a public wrong"). Laws prohibit and penalise such behavior. Depending on the context, an action may or may not be considered illegal; for example, acts of violence may be considered criminal in some situations but acceptable or even good in others. Modern criminal theories have replaced the old notion that crime was an expression of evil.

How to Combat Hate Speech

The internet era has seen a rise in hate speech, a type of communication that encourages prejudice, animosity, or violence towards certain people or groups based on their characteristics. To promote an open and polite online community, hate speech must be actively opposed.

- ***Promote Digital Literacy and Media Literacy Education***

Empowering individuals with critical thinking skills through digital literacy and media literacy education can help them recognize and counter hate speech. Encouraging users to question sources, verify information, and understand the potential impact of their words can discourage the spread of harmful content (UNESCO, 2013).

- ***Strengthen Social Media Platforms' Policies***

Social media platforms should enforce strict policies against hate speech, clearly defining what constitutes such speech and implementing efficient reporting mechanisms. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube should invest in AI-based content moderation tools to swiftly identify and remove hate speech (Center for Humane Technology, 2019).

- ***Collaborate with NGOs and Civil Society Organizations***

Engaging NGOs and civil society organizations that specialize in promoting tolerance and diversity can facilitate the development of anti-hate speech campaigns and educational resources. Partnerships can leverage their expertise to create impactful interventions (European Commission, 2020).

- ***Implement Legal Measures***

National and international legal frameworks can play a crucial role in addressing hate speech. Legislation that strikes a balance between freedom of expression and protecting marginalized groups can deter hate speech while respecting fundamental rights (Council of Europe, 2016).



- ***Educate Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems***

Law enforcement agencies and judicial systems need training to effectively handle online hate speech cases. Sensitizing them to the unique challenges of digital hate speech investigations can improve enforcement (OSCE, 2016).

- ***Support Algorithmic Fairness***

Algorithms can inadvertently amplify hate speech by promoting provocative content. To combat this, tech companies should strive for algorithmic fairness by auditing and refining recommendation systems to reduce the spread of harmful content (Crawford et al., 2019).

- ***Encourage Counter-Speech and Positive Narratives***

Empowering individuals to engage in counter-speech, where they challenge hate speech with reasoned arguments can be effective. Promoting positive narratives that celebrate diversity and unity can also dilute the impact of hate speech (Lewandowsky et al., 2012).

- ***Long-Term Education and Cultural Shift***

Combatting hate speech requires a long-term commitment to education and a cultural shift towards inclusivity. By fostering empathy, understanding, and acceptance, societies can address the underlying factors that contribute to hate speech (ICORN, 2019).

Prevalence of Hate Speech

The proliferation of hate speech on numerous online platforms has raised concerns, which is a reflection of the difficulties in upholding a secure and welcoming online environment. Research studies and publications highlight the need for effective solutions to address this issue by illuminating the extent to which hate speech has entered online places. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) discovered in a 2021 study that hate speech is prevalent on social media platforms. According to their study, 37% of questioned Americans reported having encountered serious online harassment and hatred, with Facebook being the most often mentioned venue for such events (Anti-Defamation League, 2021). The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University did another study that focused on Twitter and found that hostile content directed against underrepresented groups dramatically increased after certain sociopolitical events. During events like the Brexit referendum and the 2016 US presidential election, the study's analysis of tweets over a six-year period revealed rises in hate speech (Levin et al., 2017). According to study done on Instagram by the Online Hate Prevention Institute, hate speech frequently targets particular populations, especially those who are disenfranchised due to their race, religion, or gender. In comparison to other platforms, the study revealed that Instagram had a rather high incidence of hate speech, with comments on posts frequently including offensive language and damaging stereotypes (Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2019).



The Danger and Crimes of Hate Speech

Violence and bigotry are encouraged by hate speech. Sadly, hatred's destructive effects are nothing new. However, thanks to modern communications technology, its scope and influence have grown. Online hate speech has become as one of the most prevalent means of disseminating polarizing ideas on a worldwide scale, endangering international peace. In order to safeguard human rights and advance the rule of law, the United Nations has a long history of organizing the globe against hate of all types. The effects of hate speech affect several of the UN's priority areas, including upholding peace, establishing gender equality, assisting children and youth, and defending human rights and avoiding tragedies. The United Nations is striving to stop hate speech at every step since it is one of its basic values to combat bigotry, prejudice, racism, and injustice. The UN Charter, international human rights treaties, and efforts made worldwide to realize the Sustainable Development Goals all formally recognize this duty. Due to its potential to cause harm and rifts in society, hate speech a type of expression that encourages prejudice, animosity, or violence toward persons or groups based on their identity has become a serious social issue. This form of communication can have significant psychological and physical effects on its targets in addition to eroding societal cohesiveness.

Hate speech has the potential to develop into hate crimes, which can result in actual violence and prejudice. The problem has gotten worse in the digital era because internet platforms are a fertile environment for the quick propagation of such destructive information, which frequently has real-world repercussions. According to research, marginalized people who are exposed to hate speech may experience higher levels of anxiety, despair, and low self-esteem (Chetty, Segal, & Watts, 2017). The words themselves are not the only thing that poses a threat; they also have the power to incite hate, reinforce stereotypes, and spark acts of violence (Sreenivasan, 2003). It is important to recognize the role that hate speech plays in instigating violence and creating a dangerous atmosphere. Numerous studies on the connection between hate speech and hate crimes have shown a significant association between the two. According to research, communities where hate speech is more common are more likely to encounter hate-related violence against certain populations (Burns, 2017). Radio broadcasts that incited violence against the Tutsi community and eventually resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives during the 1994 Rwandan genocide serve as a somber reminder of the terrible effects of hate speech on a mass scale (Straus, 2007). Such historical occurrences highlight how urgent it is to combat hate speech in order to stop the progression from words to deeds of violence. Attempts to stop hate speech frequently result in arguments over free speech and censorship. It is crucial to understand that hate speech is a type of verbal violence that violates the rights and well-being of the persons and organizations it targets rather than just being an expression of divergent viewpoints. International organizations like the United Nations have emphasized how crucial it is to combat hate speech in order to advance diversity, tolerance, and respect for human rights (UNSPAHS, 2019). Governments, internet platforms, and civil society must all work together to address the challenging task of striking a balance between preserving free speech and halting the spread of toxic ideology.



Conclusion

The paper concludes that hate speech on social media is a very disturbing and troubling trend that is dangerous and may have legal repercussions. The prevalence of hate speech on these platforms has serious repercussions that harm people, communities, and whole society. The risk comes from the potential for hate speech to promote prejudice, inspire violence, and split society along ideological lines. The increase in online hate speech also acts as a hotbed for radicalization, which feeds intolerance and extremism. It is crucial for authorities, technology firms, and consumers to work together to solve this issue given how quickly nasty information spreads throughout social media platforms.

Recommendations

1. Governments should work to update and strengthen legal frameworks to address hate speech on social media platforms.
2. Clear definitions of hate speech, in accordance with international human rights standards, should be established to guide law enforcement and judicial proceedings. These laws should strike a balance between protecting freedom of expression and curbing harmful content, ensuring that perpetrators can be held accountable for their actions.
3. Educational programs that focus on digital literacy and responsible online behavior should be integrated into school curricula and community initiatives. These programs should empower individuals to critically assess information, recognize hate speech, and respond appropriately.
4. Social media platforms should implement user-friendly reporting mechanisms that allow users to flag hate speech easily. Timely response to reports, along with transparent communication about actions taken, can enhance user confidence and create a sense of collective responsibility in combating hate speech.



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