

## HATE CRIMES IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A CRIMINOLOGICAL REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

Hate crime in social media is a common phenomenon around the world. Hate crime against different races, minorities, and ethnic people or groups is now spreading via social media platforms in form of hate speech. The anonymity of the internet user and the availability of the internet make this crime very easy to commit by the offender. This paper aims to find out the targets of hate crime in social media and its effect on the victims. The people who are victimized by hate crime in social media because of their race, gender especially female and religious minority. The study has done by secondary data analysis. Hate crime in social media has a devastating effect on the victim both physically and mainly psychologically which makes them mentally inferior, degradation of self-esteem, and also create a fear of violence in their mind. The existing laws against hate crime in social media should be implemented more precise way and different types of detection methods should be applied to detect the offenders. This paper can be helpful to increase awareness about hate crime in social media which is unnoticed by many researchers in our country and can lead a way to stop victimization in social media platforms.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hate means bias against people or a group of people and hate crimes are those which are committed on the ground of the victim's actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender and disability (Atte Oksanen, 2014). Generally, hate crimes can be divided in to two types: physical assault and verbal abuse. The verbal abuse uses a kind of hate crime that can be committed by the use of social media which is known as hate speech against a person or group based on their race, religion, ethnic origin and sexual orientation. Hate speech can be defined as statements that, 'express hatred or degrading attitudes toward collective often times directed against minorities (Hawdon J, 2017). According to Ring (2013) social media is "the collective of online communication channels dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curating and wikis are among the different types of social media. Example- Facebook, Twitter etc. We live in an era of tele communication and technology, in this era globalization spread across every country of the world with the help of social media using internet. As this social media platform opens a new area of communication become a boon for human civilization but it has also a dark side and one of the dark sides of social media is spreading hate through communication in the social media. Smartphones, laptop computers, and fast mobile wireless connection for instance, are some of the primary means of converging online and offline spaces. New technologies have also played an important role in accelerating the success of social networking sites. The hateful content of social media spread to a broader audience without editorial control and often behind a veil of anonymity. While any one come across a lot of material in the social media that offends him or her a small portion of it is actually illegal. Hate material online is recorded by police as hate crime when a crime defined in a law is committed with hate motivation. A large number of attacks on

immigrants and other minorities has raised new concerns about the connection between online hate speech online and violent acts, as well as the role of the state in combating the hate speech. Researchers say trends in hate crimes around the world changes in the political climate, and that social media can magnify this discord. At their most extreme, rumors and online hate speech can be resulted in to violence against ethnic minorities.

Using bad comments is a common scenario to express hate about a specific person or a group in social media. Around 29% comments all over the internet are either bad or illicit. Stupid people put unnecessary and illogical comments and harass targeted people or group. Sometimes, these kinds of bad comments are supported by stupid people and the victim is exposed to serious kinds of danger and humiliation (Tade, 2011). Spreading false news and rumors about someone by social sites is another medium of spreading hate in our country. In our country there have found different types of online pages where there may use one's news which might turn into another news by creating false news and rumors and make a harassing situation in one's lifestyle (Yar, 2019).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study is based on secondary data analysis. Data collected from journal articles, books, reports, other electronic and printed media documents.

### Objectives

The main objective of this paper to identify the hate crimes in social media platform. The other objectives are to find out the targets of hate crimes in social media and effects of hate crime in social media.

### Analysis

To define Hate speech in social media platform legal scholars focused on the expressive value of language to classify hateful speech. According to Geenwalt (1989) any analysis of the law in regard to hate speech offline has to consider the extent to which the language has expressive value which can provoke a response of violence, they may deeply wound those at whom the speech is directed which can cause offence to those that they hear it and has degrading effect on social relationship within any community. In a study of Perry and Olsson (2009) the web creates a new common space for hate groups and that can form a 'global racist culture' if hate speech in online social media is unchallenged (Burnap, 2015). Hate speech is offense motivated, in whole or in a part, by the offender's bias against an aspect of a group of people, so online hate speech may not be a crime but it is harmful to people (Silva, 2016). In online platform the hate speech is a kind of which is defined as speech that attacks a person or group on the basis of attributes such as race, religion, ethnic origin, national origins, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity (ElSherief, Kulkarni, Nguyen, Wang, & Belding, 2018). the use of online media such as Facebook has prompted youths to become self-derogatory as they seek the acceptance of other users online. This social derogatory has led to increasing negative social consequences such as posting of nude photos to express hate against a specific person or a group.

### The targets of hate crime in social media

The paper of Silva, et al. the hate speech target is categorized by the hate base which provide words like ethnicity, race, religion etc. and FBI reported hate crime categories. By formalizing these two categories Silva, et al. ended up with nine categories of hate speech targets, they are:

#### Categories

#### Online hate speech targets

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Race</b>               | Nigga, black people, white people        |
| <b>Behavior</b>           | Insecure people, sensitive people        |
| <b>Physical</b>           | Obese people, beautiful people           |
| <b>Sexual orientation</b> | Gay people, street people                |
| <b>Class</b>              | Ghetto people, rich people               |
| <b>Gender</b>             | Pregnant people, cunt, sexist people     |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>          | Chinese people, Indian people, Pakistani |
| <b>Disability</b>         | Retard, bipolar people                   |
| <b>Religion</b>           | Religious people, Jewish people          |

Other

Drunk people, shallow people

(Leandro Silva, 2016)

Whisper is a popular anonymous social media site, launched in March 2012 as a mobile application. Whisper users post short anonymous messages called “whispers” in this platform. Whisper represents a valuable venue for studying online hate speech. In fact, recent works suggest that Whisper offers an interesting environment for the study of online hate speech. These efforts show that users present a disinhibition complex in Whisper are more likely to shed their hesitation and disclose more personal information in their communications. (Mainack Mondal L. A., 2017)

Mainack Mondal et al. in their paper categorize top ten hate targets that from the data set of whisper and twitter. They manually level 178 hate targets into categories which accounts to more than 97% of both twitter and whisper hate speech.

**Table 2. The hate categories observed in hate speech from twitter and whisper**

| Categories         | %Posts (Twitter) | %Posts (Whisper) |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Race               | 48.73            | 35.81            |
| Behavior           | 37.05            | 19.27            |
| Physical           | 3.38             | 14.06            |
| Sexual orientation | 1.86             | 9.32             |
| Class              | 1.08             | 3.63             |
| Ethnicity          | 0.57             | 1.96             |
| Gender             | 0.56             | 1.89             |
| Disability         | 0.19             | 0.82             |
| Religion           | 0.07             | 0.41             |
| Other              | 6.50             | 12.84            |

Research from Mondal .et al, they identified 20,305 tweets and 7604 whispers containing hate speech. The top hate targets from twitter and whisper shows racist hate words like Black people, white people or Nigga are the most significant hate words. They use 65% of twitter data set and 99% of the whisper data set to identify top ten targets of hate in twitter and whisper. From their study most of the posts target Nigga (31.11%) in twitter and Black people (10.10%) in whisper, other notable targets of the posts are Fake people (9.77%) and Fat people (8.46%) in whisper. (Mainack Mondal L. A., 2017)

In 2014 a self-administered online survey of 2849 web users, the researchers found that 66% people who had experienced online harassment most incident occurred on a social networking platform (Vittorio Lingiardi, 2019). In 2014, A nonprofit agency of twitter which known as Women, Action and the Media (WAM) found that among 317 genuine harassment reports that were submitted to WAM, 27% of them related to hate speech (Matias, 2022)

Race ethnicity on national origin-based discrimination can be seen in social platform which is a type of hate speech. Researchers have used various types of measures to asses this type of discrimination (Kawachi, 2003) Some social media researchers have focused on race-based discrimination which specially describe the racist concepts (Yang, 2018).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Race as a hate crime in social media

In a study of internet based racial hate crime in United states from the period of 2001-2008 it was found that broadband availability increases the race base hate crime and social media increase racist group operations, especially the racism is conducted by lone wolf preparator (Jason Chan, 2016). Racism is a continuity violence which creates threats and intimidation. Because of racism the repeated insult, threat or violence now extends into the social media and it creates a climate of unsafety which is experience by minority group. A black person is always known that he or she belong to such a group that is threatened in this manner (Matthew L Williams, 2020).

#### Gender as a hate crime in social media

Gender based hate crime are the consequences of gender inequality which affect the woman. The gender-based hate crimes are criminal offences which is motivated by bias against the person’s gender. The gender-based hate crime on social media has a long-lasting impact on the victim which hamper the social cohesion and security by perpetuating gender inequalities. (ODHR, 2021). Hate speech against women in social media platform can be happened in various ways like threat of sexual harassment, stalking, sending and sharing nude pictures which impact women’s freedom, dignity and equality (WILK, 2018). Online gender-based violence is a global gender rights tragedy. An [online poll](#) conducted by Amnesty International across eight high-income countries in 2017 revealed that

23% of women had experienced some form of abuse or harassment in social media platforms, ranging from 16% in Italy to 33% in the United States (Dehingia, 2020). Another conducted in 2014 across the European Union found that 1 in 10 women reported having experienced online gender-based abuse since the age of 15. Online abuse can take different forms including bullying, stalking, impersonation, non-consensual pornography, revenge porn or image based sexual abused (Dehingia, 2020):

#### **Online hate crime against the religious minority**

For the United States specifically research has shown that anti Muslim hate crimes since President Donald trump's presidential campaigns have been concentrated in counties with high twitter usage (M'uller, 2018). Religious minorities specifically Muslims are often targeted by hateful online comments (Awan I. , 2014). The conflation of Muslims and Islam with terrorism which particularly developed after September 11, 2001 play a vital role in Islamophobic attitudes (Di'ene, 2006). A significant increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes was observed after the terrorist attacks because the terrorists identify themselves as Muslim and they are acting in the name of Islam (Alexandra Olteanu, 2018). Because of this Muslim identity where the Muslim are minors being the most vulnerable to hostility including online intimidation, abuse and threats of violence (Awan I. a., 2022). Online hate speech has become an alarming phenomenon in Bangladesh now a days. Online hatred against minority religious groups (Hindu, Christian, Buddhism) was experienced through online media by the major religious groups in Bangladesh. (Hossain, 2022). In a survey of 2018 among 29 respondents 11 participant from the religious minority groups stated that they had experienced abuse, discrimination, denigrated and being offended through social media by random people and they also said 69.2% offenders belong to Muslims the majority religion of Bangladesh and other respondents 15.4% were victimized and discriminated by atheists. (Hossain, 2022)

#### **Effects of hate crime in social media**

Hate speech can be pervasive and have serious effect, according to a special Rapporteur to the UN Human rights council the failure in dealing with the hate speech in time can be resulted in subordination of targeted minorities which can make them vulnerable attacks but even it can influence the majority population to do more online hatred (Alexandra Olteanu, 2018). The main characteristics of the online hate speech unlike other forms of online communication it aims to degrade individual due to their particular social, racial or religious group (Hawdon J, 2017). An act of online hate speech can only mark a single incident can lead to a repeated victimization (Leonhard L, 2018). The online hate speech can be resulted in to counter hate speech can be resulted in to counter speech (Krasodonski-Jones, 2022). Many researchers suggest that the hateful counter speech may be counterproductive and it can cause more uncivil attitudes and behavior (B Neyhan, 2010) and it can also cause more hostile discourse (Lu, 2017). Many researchers have shown the hate speech in online media has a diverse psychological effect on individual or groups (Nielsen, 2002). Hate speech can create short term psychological consequences such as mood swings, anger, loneliness, fear and long-term effects can be erosion of social trust which can lead to radicalization and can create a mind set up to accept the extremist ideology (Oana \*TEFĂNIPĂ, 2021). Hate speech offends the dignity which creates emotional distress, affects the personal development of the victim and also can cause psychometric disorder, anxiety, depression and alcoholism (Brown, 2015). In anti-Muslim online hate speech, the victims experience a heightened state of fear of abuse and they are always worried because the threats of online could materialize in real world at any time (Awan I. Z., 2016). The online sexist hate speech against woman have immediate short term, long term and intergenerational effects on women. It effects women and their belongings the people they care for and their extended community and society and this type of violence effect women's sense of safety, physical and psychological health. (WILK, 2018)

#### **Criminological explanations**

Theory is a set of interconnected statements that can give logical explanation of a particular phenomenon. As social media hate is a form of crime it can be discussed through criminological point of view and using theories of criminology. Social media hate crime can be discussed through the structured action theory and space transition theory of Criminology. Structured Action theory emphasizes that social structure as gender, race, class are constructed through every day interaction. Barbara perry's structured action theory of 'doing difference' can give a macro level explanation of hate crime. According to Perry crime can be understood as the ultimate from of discrimination which emerge from cultural segregation. The power dynamics is very important to explain hate crime in society. Because of this power dynamics the notion of 'difference' emerged which results from belong to a particular group, which has similar identity and characteristics. Eventually who fall outside of this societies construction of identity they are seen as different. Because of this difference they are resisted and feared, for some individuals this difference creates helplessness and insecurity about their place in society and eventually this helplessness transfer into animosity against the different group. Finally, the different group forced to take the subordinate position to the society. This process of subordination can lead to hate violence to the target group. To explain how this hate against a particular group or race spread through the social media we can discuss this through

‘space transition theory’ coined by Jai Shankar. Space transition theory explains how criminal behavior is directed through cyber space. Space transition involves the movement of persons from one space to another which means physical space to cyber space. According to space transition theory a person who has repressed criminal behavior has a tendency to commit crime in cyber space. From this point of view, a person who has hate against a particular group or race can express his or her hate feelings through social media which is a cyber platform like Facebook, Twitter, Whisper etc. Because of identity flexibility and anonymity in the cyber space the criminals use to spread hate through social media platform. From this explanation it can be realized that social media is a great source of doing hate crime because of this flexibility in social media it is very easy for doing hate crime by the preparator and the targeted people can be easily victimized through social media.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Hate crime in social media is now an easiest way to do crime for an offender. Because of anonymity in social media platform, it is very easy for an offender to spread his or her hatred to minority community which sometimes not possible in the real world and the offender can send and share the hate speech to many people and the number of victims of these hate speeches can be huge. So, hate crime in social media is one of the great disadvantages of cyber platform. In social media platform hate speech can affect the both social life in both individual and collective level. Hateful comments and contents can cause harm and suffering in psychologically and physically to anyone. The online hate speech and wrongful content can motivate anyone to do crime in real world. So, hate crime which spread in social media in the form of hate speech should be detected. In Bangladesh to detect Bengali hate speech in social media encoder and decoder-based machine language model to classify social users’ Bengali comments in Facebook pages can be used (Amit Kumar Das, 2021). According to section 29 of Bangladesh Digital security act 2018 publication, transmission etc. of defamatory information by any person will be punished for 3 years and Taka 5 lac with both but law against hate speech against any minority is not specific in Bangladesh, specific laws should be enacted and implemented to remove hate speech against the minority community in Bangladesh. In an international view there are specific laws against hate crime in social media is very specific. The United Kingdom has a range of criminal prohibition against hate speech such as: The Crime Disorder Act, Malicious Communications Act 1998 and Communications Act 2003 which prohibit speech which is derogatory on ground of race, ethnic origin, religious and sexual orientation. In Bangladesh there is a few research and investigative work on hate crime in social media but with the rapid growth of internet users the hate crime is increasing in social media specially against the religious minority. Proper steps should be taken to detect the offender users to make the social media crime free.

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