An Epistemological Reading Of Racist Hate Speech On Social Media

Khemis Boukhedir

Mohamed Cherif Messaadia Souk Ahras University (Algeria),
(Education, Deviance, and Crime in Society Lab), kboukhedir@yahoo.fr

Abstract:

This research aims to identify the concept of racist hate speech on social media and find effective strategies to minimize its dissemination on these platforms.

One of the most significant findings of this study is that the definition of hate speech and racism on social media is multifaceted. Several reasons contribute to the emergence of this phenomenon, and various forms of such discourse exist. Moreover, social media platforms play a role in spreading violence, hate, and racism.

Keywords: Hate Speech - Racism - Social media.

Introduction：

Communication has existed since the dawn of human existence on Earth, manifesting in regular social exchanges among individuals within a community, interactions among groups within a tribe, and connections between various tribes. Throughout that period, communication relied on simple means, including direct or indirect verbal speech. However, with the emergence of writing around 3200 BC, communication evolved to encompass written speech. Therefore, it is considered an essential social process relied upon by humans as a means of understanding. As time passed and societies developed, communication within a single nation or between nations became an indispensable means.

With the emergence of the Industrial Revolution, the world experienced a technological transformation that required every country to adopt a distinct communication pattern. Why? Due to the prevailing global technological changes, no nation or community can resist or isolate itself from the impact of these winds of change. (Kofli, 2017, p. 20). The natural need for communication to achieve understanding has compelled the world to seek diverse and effective means.

The language was the first and most sophisticated of these communication methods, as it is closely tied to human consciousness. This is because language seeks to transmit information, whether spoken or written. Thus, language entered the realm of communication, considered one of the most important facilities that connect different parts of the globe in our present time (Al-Raoui, 2015, p. 49). Thanks to language, Alvin Toffler coined the term "the Information Age" or "the Age of Information Revolution" for this era (Al-Dasuqi, 2009, p. 12).

The world's challenges in the 21st century have necessitated individuals, groups, and communities to adapt to the significant and ever-growing technological advancements encompassing all aspects of human life. This is evident in the digital revolution of social networking platforms and the emergence of what is known as "social media" on the internet, which has introduced a new form of intercommunication among individuals, groups, and nations in a vast space without temporal or spatial boundaries.

Moreover, the steady and noticeable increase in the tendency of some individuals within or outside a single state, under the guise of "freedom of expression," to use certain speeches that contain implicit and explicit words and phrases that incite animosities like hatred and racism.

Hate speech and racism are especially notable for their alarming spread among the intellectual elite on the one hand and the educated youth sector on the other., especially university students through the use of social media sites, where there is a vast cyberspace of freedom of expression and loss of effective control.

Based on the above, we will attempt to approach this research according to the following plan:

Introduction

First. Research problematic
Second. Research Methodology
Third. Research importance
Fourth. Research plan
1: Defining Concepts
2: Racist Hate Speech
3: Social Media Platforms

4: Effective Strategies to Reduce the Spread of Racist Hate Speech on Social Media
Conclusion

First - Research Problematic
The widespread dissemination of the World Wide Web has led to an open informational space accessible to the world, where millions of individuals interact in a remarkably interconnected manner, drawing attention. Moreover, it has become integral to many people's daily lives (Al-Shahri, 2014, p. 31). The purpose of its use, then and now, is social communication, which necessitates human attention in one way or another.

Engaging on social media networks is regarded as an authentic interaction that demands communication from various directions without central oversight. As a result of these factors, public speeches have been generated and facilitated, with their creators actively participating and imposing their views on others through this public connectivity. Moreover, this social interaction on social media platforms has allowed individuals, who were once ordinary users, to transition into groups and communities of activists who adopt a stance, opinion, or sympathy towards countries, sports teams, artists, celebrities, public figures, and societal groups (Lamsih, 2017, p. 14).

Therefore, the emergence of social media platforms has contributed to the spread of diverse and varied speeches that fuel regional, sectarian, religious, and ideological conflicts, posing a significant threat to social harmony. This is manifested in racist hate speech that some individuals adopt as an ideological creed, using the notions of freedom of opinion and expression as justification. As a result, the expression of opinion may exceed its boundaries, leading to incitement to violence, insults, and degradation of the social status of individuals, creating polarization between supporters and opponents on various issues, including crucial societal values such as tolerance, love, acceptance of others, rejection of discrimination, and violence. Because criticism, freedom of opinion, and expression are permissible for everyone through these social media platforms. People can express their opinion in the manner they prefer and through any suitable means, unlike others who uphold constructive criticism as a universal doctrine rather than an isolated one. Thus, social media platforms, a vital communication tool, have provided specific individuals with a vast space and fertile environment through

their various applications to disseminate diverse ideas, explicitly or implicitly, that may carry elements of hatred and racism.

Given the immense importance and serious danger that racist hate speech poses to the cohesion of society in the present and future, this research aims to identify the concepts of racist hate speech as well as their prevalent forms across social media platforms and their reflection on society. It also aims to determine the manifestations of the spread of racist hate speech and the adequate means to confront it (Abdrabbuh, 2019, p. 248) or reduce the spread of racist hate speech.

Therefore, this research seeks to unveil the realities of racist hate speech on social media platforms and the adequate means to limit its spread. Through raising the following question: **What is the reality of spreading racist hate speech on social media platforms, and what are the effective ways to limit its dissemination?**

Second - Research Methodology

In this sociological research, we will follow a systematic methodology primarily based on a scientific approach that Durkheim advocates. Thus, any social researcher is directed to adhere to the principles of the scientific method in studying social phenomena, enabling the derivation of scientifically sound results. Consequently, the researcher perceives that, for this study, the descriptive methodology is the most suitable. It aims to describe social phenomena by collecting, categorizing, analyzing, and processing data from various outlets such as books, memoirs, theses, scientific research, academic journals, and internet resources. The ultimate goal is to depict the research variables and establish their relationships comprehensively.

Third - Research Importance

The importance of this research is determined based on its topic. The proliferation of social media platforms and the ease and freedom of access to them have resulted in the production of negative social values that were not previously known before the emergence of such social platforms. Among these negative values is racist hate speech. This research holds significance as we attempt to:

- Understand the concept, causes, and motivations of racist hate speech on social media platforms.
- Address the ongoing debate in society regarding the role played by social media platforms in the spread of racist hate speech and its negative impact on communities and individuals.
- Reduce the extensive speech among different segments of society concerning the adverse effects of racist hate speech on communities and individuals.
- Contribute to providing a clearer understanding of hate speech and its spread on social media platforms for relevant entities in the state and society.
- Focus on the content of racist hate speech and how it affects society's cohesion, values, customs, and traditions.
- Contribute to raising awareness among users of social media platforms about the dangers of certain behaviors and actions disseminated through these social platforms.
- Develop strategies to effectively mitigate the spread of racist hate speech on social media platforms.
- Present examples of images and phrases that reflect various forms of hatred and racism against others or different components of the same society.

First Theme: Concepts definition

In this research, we will attempt to define the following concepts:

1 - First Sub-Theme: **Racist Hate Speech**

The concept of racist hate speech encompasses several definitions, including the following:

1.1 - First Definition: Racist hate speech is defined as "any speech that spreads hatred, incites conflicts and disputes based on factors such as color, race, or religion, promotes denial and marginalization of others, spreads discord, and accuses the other party of betrayal and corruption" (Ahmed & Al-Shaizemi, 2018, p. 32).

1.2 - Second Definition: Racist hate speech is "any form of communication that disparages an individual or group due to personal attributes, racial, ethnic, ideological, or religious affiliations. This phenomenon began with the internet, which provides an expansive platform for expression. Many extremists and fanatics began utilizing

social media networks to spread hatred" (Al-Mansour, 2012).

1.3 – Third Definition: Racist hate speech is defined as "various forms of public expression that propagate hatred, discrimination, hostility, incitement, promotion, or justification against an individual or group based on their religious beliefs, ethnic origin, nationality, color, lineage, gender, or any other identity factor." If we do not address this speech, it can lead to acts of violence and hate crimes against marginalized communities. While some statements may not directly incite violence, they can sow seeds of prejudice and anger that legitimize acts of hatred (King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, 2021).

1.4 – Fourth Definition: Racist hate speech is defined as "any content on social media that involves attacking individuals based on their race, religion, gender, national identity, disability, or illness." (Al-Khasawneh & Al-Attoum, 2020, p. 303).

1.5 - In this research, **Racist hate speech is operationally defined as** "any content that targets individuals based on their race, ethnicity, origin, religion, gender, type, disability, or illness, whether explicitly or implicitly, and is disseminated on social media platforms."

The Second Sub-Theme: social media
To grasp the concept of social media, it is necessary to first understand the concept of social communication as one of the components of the term "social media." Which can be defined as "a modern social phenomenon based on synchronous or asynchronous interactive relationships facilitated by digital interactive communication channels, through which information is sent and received between two or more parties" (Al-Dubaisi & Al-Tahat, 2013, p. 322).

There are multiple perspectives through which social media platforms are viewed. Therefore, there have been various definitions of this concept, including the following:

2.1 – Definition by "Marsi Mushri" is provided as follows "a group of social identities created by individuals or organizations who have connections resulting from social interaction. It is represented by a dynamic structure or form of a social

community. It is created to expand and activate professional relationships or friendships. Social media is also referred to by various terms, including the web, digital social networks, social networks, and social media platforms" (Mushi, 2012, p. 166).

2.2 - Definition by "Djamal Mokhtar": "Services that work on building and enhancing social networks for exchanging communication between people who share common activities, hobbies, interests, and inclinations. They communicate through conversations, emails, videos, blogs, and group discussions." (Mokhtar, 2009, p. 9).

2.3 - Definition by "Khaled Ghasan": "A collection of websites that provide internet applications and features such as setting up personal pages, communicating with the page designer, and exchanging information among subscribers of those pages and websites." (Ghasan, 2013, p. 24).

2.4 - Definition by "Radi Zaher": "An electronic network system that allows subscribers to create their websites and establish a communication link for social electronic systems among members who share talents and specialties." (Zaher, 2003, p. 23).

2.5 - Definition by Rajendran: "An electronic network system that allows the subscriber to create a personal website and then link it through an electronic social system with other members with the same interests and hobbies" (Rajendran, 2014, p. 612).

2.6 - As for the researcher, he defined social media sites procedurally in this study as: "Those social websites on the Internet that enable communication among individuals of various demographic levels and within virtual communities."

Second Theme: Racist Hate Speech:
Under this title, we will attempt to address two fundamental elements:
1 - First Sub-Theme: Causes Leading to Racist Hate Speech:
Numerous reasons contribute to the emergence of racist hate speech. Among them are:
- Misconceptions about the other.
- Fear of competition.
- Perceiving the other as the enemy.
- General culture, upbringing, and education.

- Interpretation of history, as many nations remain captive to historical events.
- The influence of media and information is absent, as many stances are built upon the need for more information and preconceived notions (Al-Rubaie, 2019, p. 10).
- Media falls under the control of politicians, being manipulated to serve their interests.
- Journalists' limited understanding of the potential impact of certain unethical words and images that promote hatred and incite violence (Tamara, 2019).

2 - Second Sub-Theme: Forms of Racist Hate Speech:
Numerous forms of racist hate speech are prevalent on social media platforms. We can mention those identified by the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2013:

- Dissemination of ideas promoting superiority, racial hatred, or ethnicity through any means of communication.
- Incitement of hatred towards individuals of any group based on race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin, or contempt/discrimination against them.
- Directing threats of violence against individuals or groups or inciting such threats based on race, color, descent, national or ethnic origin.
- Insulting, ridiculing, defaming, justifying hatred, showing contempt, or discriminating based on the criteria above, when it is evident that these actions incite hatred or discrimination.
- Participating in organizations and activities that promote and incite racial discrimination (Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2013).

3 - Third Theme: Social Media Platforms:
Under this heading, we will address the following two aspects:
1 - First Sub-Theme: **Characteristics of Social Media Platforms:**
Social media platforms are characterized by several features that can be summarized as follows:

- It is noticeable that the user is the cornerstone of these platforms' content, only content with the user's engagement in rooms and forums (Ayoub, 2016, p. 126).
- These platforms operate based on the social characteristics provided by the community, such as hobbies, attributes, and interests (Shuqra, 2014, p. 80).
- Provide emotional content for members alongside information, creating emotional security for users during their engagement.

- Serve as a new marketing tool for products and ideas and understanding customer opinions (Al-Qandilji, 2013, p. 340).
- Embody user interaction to ensure continuity and development (Noumar, 2012, p. 54).
- Chat rooms encourage people to communicate and share ideas (Ayoub, 2016, p. 127).
- They are characterized by increased competitiveness among them, manifested through rising rates of patent demand in light of protecting intellectual property rights for advanced application owners (Nowotarski, 2010).
- Encompass intelligence and creative perception, achieved through data packages and information from search engines like Google (Center for Strategic Studies, 2012, p. 14).
- Focus on the concept of trust with users in the data and content they present and aim to offer novel data and information (Center for Strategic Studies, 2012, p. 16).
- Serve as a citizen's private media, or in other words, a participatory media method allowing citizens to produce media content themselves.
- Present a challenge to geographical frameworks and constraint that limit population movement, representing behavior similar to what people engage during their regular lives, exchanging knowledge, communicating, commenting, and expressing feelings and situations they encounter.
- Eliminate temporal and spatial barriers by incorporating electronic games. Lead to increased interaction levels among individuals engaging in these electronic games (Ayoub, 2016, p. 128).
- Bring together all segments of society and all professions and specialties, where one can find doctors, engineers, programmers, teachers, and more (Agboola, 2014, p. 107).

The Second Sub-Theme: The Role of Social Media Platforms in Disseminating Violence, Hatred, and Racism:

Social media platforms are considered one of the most significant tools for social expression and rapid exchange of ideas, profoundly impacting public opinion in our contemporary societies. They have exceeded the boundaries of surveillance, control, and actual dominance imposed on communications by governments and dictatorial states. The influence of these social platforms is not limited to the social and economic aspects alone but has sometimes extended to political influence and mass mobilization. They have created a

politically charged atmosphere, sparking widespread revolutions. The events that unfolded in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria during the Arab Spring revolutions are a clear testament which led to the downfall of long-standing authoritarian rulers who held power for many years. These platforms have significantly and visibly contributed to the mobilization and rallying of protesters.

Social media has played an active role in interacting with others and has led to positive changes and benefits from the experiences and knowledge of others through social interaction among different social groups. However, when we look from another perspective, we notice that social media gradually contributes to the spread of deviant cultures, hatred, racism, sectarianism, tribal conflicts, excommunication of people, insulting religions, and other negative matters (Al-Rahamneh, 2018, pp. 22-23).

Additionally, social media has helped individuals acquire new meanings, beliefs, and perceptions about the world it presents, which may differ from the real world. These social platforms have significantly facilitated the communication of extremist and fanatical individuals under pseudonyms, as well as the process of mobilization and recruitment to spread hatred toward specific groups and communities (Al-Sarhan, 2017).

Furthermore, social media has created numerous avenues for extremists, fanatics, and those seeking to spread racist hate speech, disseminating messages of disdain and derogation. This can be seen through commenting on news websites, where comments are often unrelated to the news itself (Al-Rubaie, 2019, p. 3).

The Third Sub-Theme: Effective Approaches to Limit the Spread of Racist Hate Speech on social media:
It is the international community's responsibility, encompassing individuals, groups, and governments, to take action to limit the proliferation of such speeches that propagate deviance, crimes, discrimination, conflicts, and various forms of violence. They must take on a significant role in preventing incitement and protecting their citizens from committing social crimes. This can be achieved by combating racist hate speech, which contributes to inciting and encouraging acts of violence.
There are several methods adopted to combat and prevent racist hate speech, including:

- Raising awareness through local training workshops and educating friends and family about the dangers of discrimination and intolerance.
- Reporting social media posts that spread rumors or false information.
- Flooding social media spaces and online platforms with positive messages advocating peace and tolerance.
- Supporting individuals or groups targeted by racist hate speech and encouraging policymakers to take action against discriminatory language or policies.
- Hosting workshops on conflict-sensitive journalism to help journalists develop ethical capabilities in identifying conflict sources and conveying news fairly and accurately.
- Establishing early warning and response committees at both national and local levels to monitor hate speech, racism, and other forms of incitement to violence.
- Suppose criticism, hate speech, or racism is directed towards you by a vital individual or holds personal significance. In that case, it is essential to respond with a direct message, inquire about the reason for the reaction, and attempt a friendly discussion. If the intention is merely to provoke, either block the user or refrain from responding altogether.
- Implement a form of moderation on your platform by monitoring and removing offensive comments directed at specific groups and inappropriate speeches. This practice is referred to as the "gatekeeper theory" in media.
- One of the reasons for directing racist hate speech is to attract the reader's attention and generate interaction. Therefore, refrain from responding or engaging so as not to fulfill their desires. Responding sometimes leads to shedding light on the subject and exacerbates the intensity of hatred in the speech.

Research Results:

Through the theoretical presentation of this study, the researcher has reached a set of results aimed at identifying the concept of hate speech on social media and raising awareness within the community about the seriousness of this social phenomenon, which will undoubtedly impact society in the short and long term. These results include:
- Racist hate speech includes diverse definitions, each tied to specific variables and perspectives of different scholars.
- Several factors contribute to the emergence of racist hate speech.
- There are various forms of racist hate speech.

- Social media platforms play a role in disseminating violence, hatred, and racism.
- There is a need to intensify awareness about hate and hate speech to encourage individuals to be cautious and avoid such behaviors.
- Awareness should be raised about the negative effects of spreading hate speech on social media, supported by various reasons, including religious justifications and identity preservation.
- Every social media user should refrain from sharing information without verifying its accuracy.
- Visitors to social media platforms should steer clear from promoting extreme opinions and ideas.
- Social media platforms should be used for positive actions, promoting positivity, and avoiding the spread of misinformation.
- Incorrect information should be corrected to the best extent possible.
- A culture of tolerance and mutual respect among individuals should be promoted while combatting racist hate speech.
- Renunciation of violence and combating extremism within society.
- A culture of love and tolerance should be disseminated among the youth.
- Moderate and balanced religious ideology should be propagated.

Results

Social media platforms are essential tools that provide opportunities for communication and interaction with the outside world, breaking down temporal and spatial barriers. However, we see today the use of these social platforms to dismantle societies, break down social and religious barriers, spread hate speech, and sow discord and evil. These platforms attack individuals based on their actual or perceived race, ethnicity, lineage, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, illness, or even through jokes, comedy, vulgar lyrics, etc. Social media can also spread misinformation, deception, and support recruitment into hate and racist groups.

Social media platforms can also disseminate misinformation, manipulation, and support for recruitment into hate and racist groups. Therefore, religious and political leaders, the educated class, and civil society institutions must raise awareness, exercise caution, and understand the negative

opinions resulting from hate speech and racism on these social platforms. This is aimed at countering and combating them before they escalate among individuals within a single society and among communities that share specific characteristics and traits.

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