



Hate Speech in Online Communities: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Power Relations, Identity Construction, and Discursive Normalization

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of hate speech within online communities has intensified alongside the expansion of digital space as an arena of open and intensive social interaction, thereby generating new challenges in understanding power relations, identity, and contemporary communicative practices. This study aims to examine how hate speech is produced, normalized, and interpreted within online communities through a qualitative approach employing a critical case study design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 to 20 participants who are active social media users, observations of digital interactions, and document analysis comprising online comments and posts. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach integrated with the CDA framework to uncover the relationships among language, ideology, and power relations. The findings reveal three principal patterns: the normalization of hate speech as a form of "community language"; the operation of power relations in an implicit manner within digital interactions; and the complex processes of identity negotiation among participants, encompassing strategies of resistance, adaptation, and withdrawal. These findings illuminate the fact that hate speech functions not merely as a linguistic practice but also as a mechanism for the reproduction of social inequality that has become internalized within everyday digital life. Theoretically, this study enriches CDA scholarship by emphasizing the dimensions of subjective experience and moral ambiguity in discursive practice, while practically offering implications for the strengthening of critical digital literacy, content moderation policy, and more contextually sensitive social intervention in addressing the dynamics of hate speech in the digital era.*

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis; Digital Discourse; Hate Speech; Online Communities; Power Relations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, digital space has evolved into an arena of social interaction that not only broadens public participation but also intensifies symbolic conflicts among individuals and groups. Across various platforms such as Twitter/X, TikTok, and online forums, hate speech has increasingly emerged as a constituent element of everyday communicative practice. This phenomenon does not merely constitute aggressive linguistic expression; it also reflects asymmetrical power relations in which particular groups—such as minorities, women, or vulnerable communities—are subjected to symbolic delegitimization and marginalization. For those who are directly affected, the experience of encountering hate speech rarely remains confined to the textual level, but frequently extends to psychological distress, social exclusion, and the silencing of participation in digital public spaces.

Preliminary observations of online community interactions indicate that hate speech is frequently normalized through practices of humour, sarcasm, or collective narratives framed as "public opinion." An exploratory study of social media comment sections reveals how the boundary between jokes and verbal violence becomes blurred, to the extent that utterances that

demean particular groups are perceived as entertainment or expressions of group solidarity (Loeis et al., 2026). Initial interviews with active social media users further indicate that perpetrators of hate speech frequently exploit digital anonymity to reproduce dominant ideologies without direct consequences. Conversely, victims tend to opt for silence or withdrawal from public discussion, thereby indirectly reinforcing existing power structures. These conditions confirm that hate speech is not solely an individual phenomenon, but rather a social practice rooted in power relations, ideology, and the construction of identity within digital society (Roitman et al., 2026).

The urgency of the present study is heightened by the escalation of hate speech within a global context characterized by political polarization, identity conflict, and digital disinformation. At the global level, numerous studies have demonstrated that hate speech functions as an instrument for constructing "otherness" and reinforcing social boundaries between groups (Guan & Chen, 2026). Within the local context, this phenomenon is also closely intertwined with sociocultural dynamics—such as religion, ethnicity, and political affiliation—that are frequently mobilized in digital discourse. Accordingly, understanding how hate speech is produced, disseminated, and interpreted becomes critically important, not only for linguistic inquiry but also for the development of social policy and digital literacy.

A review of the literature from the past five years reveals that research on hate speech has expanded substantially, particularly with the application of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which foregrounds the relationships among language, power, and ideology. Rozina (2022) demonstrates that hate speech linguistically reflects strategies of exclusion and domination through the deployment of specific pronouns and metaphors. Other studies have highlighted how digital discourse shapes and reproduce power relations in online interaction, particularly in contexts of cyberbullying and verbal violence (Nkopuruk et al., 2025). Feminist CDA research has further revealed that hate speech directed at women on social media operates as a mechanism of social control that sustains gender hierarchies (Ghimire & Rana, 2026; Iqbal et al., 2026). Moreover, more recent scholarship has begun to examine the ideological and political dimensions of hate speech within online communities, including its connections to polarization and the construction of collective identity (Topidi, 2026; Prabowo, 2026).

Nevertheless, significant gaps remain in the existing literature. The majority of studies continue to focus on the identification of linguistic forms or the automated detection of hate speech, while the dimensions of subjective experience, processes of meaning negotiation, and the dynamics of social interaction within online communities have yet to be explored in depth. Furthermore, quantitative and big-data approaches tend to overlook the complexity of social

context and the interpretations of the actors involved. Yet, from a qualitative perspective, hate speech cannot be understood exclusively as text; it must be recognized as a discursive practice entailing the production, distribution, and consumption of meaning within networks of power relations (Asardag, 2025; Chiluya, 2026). Accordingly, research that can explore in greater depth how hate speech is understood, negotiated, and experienced by members of online communities is both necessary and timely.

Against this background, the present study aims to analyse hate speech in online communities through the application of critical discourse analysis, with particular focus on how power relations are represented, produced, and sustained through discursive practice. The scope of inquiry encompasses the analysis of online interaction texts, the social contexts that inform them, and the experiences and interpretations of participants in relation to hate speech. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich CDA scholarship by emphasizing the dimensions of experience and social process in digital discourse. Practically, the findings of this research have the potential to contribute to the development of critical digital literacy, content moderation policy, and strategies for mitigating hate speech in digital public spaces.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a critical case study design, integrated with the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach was selected because it facilitates an in-depth exploration of hate speech as a complex, contextual, and power-laden discursive phenomenon. CDA, specifically Fairclough's three-dimensional model, is applied to examine the relationships among text, discursive practice, and social practice, thereby enabling an analysis of how language not only represents reality but also actively shapes and sustains structures of power within online communities (Madden et al., 2023; Yeh, 2026). This approach is particularly relevant to the study's objectives, which centre on the processes of meaning-making, subjective experience, and the social dynamics underlying the production of hate speech.

Participants and Research Context

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, on the basis that they possess direct experience with hate speech within online community interactions. Inclusion criteria comprised: (1) active users of social media platforms (Twitter/X, TikTok, or online forums) for a minimum of one year; (2) prior involvement as recipients of, or witnesses to, instances of hate speech; and (3) willingness to provide data through in-depth interviews. To broaden the

participant network, snowball sampling was additionally employed by soliciting referrals from initial participants.

The total number of participants ranged between 15 and 20 individuals, a scope considered sufficient to achieve the depth of data required in qualitative research. The study was conducted within the context of public online communities, with a focus on interactions in comment sections, discussion threads, and viral posts that generated controversy. This context was selected because it represents a space in which hate speech frequently emerges and is negotiated collectively (Uwalaka & Amadi, 2026).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three primary techniques:

In-Depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' subjective experiences of hate speech, including their perceptions, emotional responses, and coping strategies. Interviews were conducted online via platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet, with each session lasting between 45 and 60 minutes and recorded with participants' consent.

Non-Participatory Digital Observation

The researcher observed interactions within specific online communities in order to identify patterns of hate speech, linguistic strategies, and the dynamics of digital interaction. Data in the form of screenshots and comment transcripts were collected systematically.

Document Analysis

Supplementary data comprising social media posts, comment threads, and platform content moderation policies were analysed to elucidate the institutional and ideological context that shapes practices of hate speech.

All data were collected throughout a designated research period and organized in digital format to facilitate the analytical process.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach grounded in CDA, proceeding through the following stages. Open coding involved the identification of units of meaning from interview data and digital texts. Axial coding involved the grouping of codes into categories reflecting key themes, such as power relations, identity, and ideology. Selective coding involved the integration of themes to construct a theoretical narrative concerning the practice of hate speech.

Analysis subsequently proceeded through Fairclough's CDA framework, encompassing three levels: (1) textual analysis (lexical choices, metaphors, sentence structure); (2) discursive practice (the production and consumption of texts); and (3) social practice (ideological context and power relations) (Chaiyarat, 2026).

To enhance the systematization and transparency of the analytical process, this study employed NVivo software as a tool for coding and managing qualitative data. The use of NVivo enabled a more structured analytical process, including the tracing of themes and the examination of relationships among categories (Worth, 2025; Velloso, 2026).

Validity and Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data in this study was maintained through four principal criteria. Credibility was ensured through triangulation of data sources (interviews, observation, and documents) and member checking with participants. Transferability was achieved through the provision of rich contextual description to allow findings to be considered in other settings. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the research process to ensure consistency. Confirmability was upheld through the use of an audit trail and researcher reflexivity to minimize subjective bias.

Research Ethics

This study upholds the ethical principles of qualitative research. All participants were provided with informed consent prior to data collection, encompassing an explanation of the research objectives, procedures, and participants' right to withdraw at any time. Participant identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms. Collected data were stored securely and used exclusively for academic purposes. Furthermore, in gathering data from digital platforms, the researcher observed ethical boundaries pertaining to privacy and the use of publicly accessible content.

Theoretical Framework

The phenomenon of hate speech within online communities cannot be understood exclusively as an individual linguistic practice; it must be recognized as a manifestation of complex social processes involving the production of meaning, the negotiation of identity, and the reproduction of power relations. Accordingly, this study situates itself at the intersection of several theoretical approaches that collectively seek to explain how language functions as social practice. Three principal frameworks are employed: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), theories of power relations and ideology (drawing on van Dijk and a Foucauldian perspective), and theories of identity construction and otherness in digital discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the Primary Framework

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) constitutes the foundational framework of this study, given its capacity to articulate the relationships among language, social structure, and power. Within the CDA perspective, hate speech is not regarded as a neutral text, but as a discursive practice that functions to sustain social domination and to exclude particular groups. Recent scholarship demonstrates that in digital contexts, hate speech is frequently constructed through linguistic strategies such as labelling, stereotyping, and negative generalization, which systematically reproduce social inequality (Rozina, 2022).

Furthermore, research by Nkopuruk et al. (2025) in *Digital Discourse, Power, and Cyberbullying among Students on X (Twitter)* affirms that online interactions reflect power relations that are not always rendered explicit, yet are embedded within patterns of communication, lexical choice, and the distribution of participation. In this context, CDA enables the researcher to read texts not only as products of communication, but as sites in which power is negotiated and maintained.

This approach is likewise relevant to understanding the experiences of participants. A user who has been targeted by hate speech, for instance, may not only feel personally attacked but may also experience the delegitimization of their identity as a member of a particular group. CDA therefore provides a framework for connecting subjective experience to the broader social structures within which it is embedded.

Theories of Power Relations and Ideology in Digital Discourse

To deepen the analysis, this study also draws on theories of power relations and ideology as developed by van Dijk and from a Foucauldian perspective. Within this framework, language is understood as the primary medium through which ideology and social domination are reproduced. Hate speech constitutes one form of discursive practice that actively constructs "social truths" about particular groups.

Roitman et al. (2026) demonstrate that hate speech on social media does not exist in isolation but is connected to broader structures of power, including identity politics and social polarization. Guan and Chen (2026), writing in the *Journal of Contemporary China*, further emphasize that hate speech is frequently constructed through the production of "otherness"—the process of differentiating and diminishing other groups in order to reinforce the identity of the dominant group.

From the perspective of participants, these theories help to explain why hate speech frequently appears "normal" within particular communities. Individuals embedded in such communities may not perceive these practices as forms of violence, but rather as elements of

group norms. This observation illustrates that power operates in subtle ways through the internalization of ideology within everyday communicative practices.

Theories of Identity Construction and Otherness

The third framework complementing the analysis is that of identity construction in discourse, with particular reference to the concept of otherness. Within the context of online communities, identity is not fixed but is continuously shaped through discursive interaction. Hate speech plays a significant role in this process, as it establishes boundaries between "us" and "them."

Topidi (2026), in a study of hate speech directed at minorities, demonstrates that language is employed to define other groups as threatening, immoral, or inferior. Similarly, Alvanoudi and Georgalidou (2026) affirm that aggressive discourse in digital spaces functions to sustain social hierarchies by normalizing the subordination of particular groups.

In the experiences of participants, this process becomes manifest when individuals begin to internalize negative labels affixed to them, or conversely, when perpetrators of hate speech feel that their community confers social legitimacy upon their behaviour. Identity thus emerges as the product of a dynamic discursive process that frequently operates beneath the level of conscious awareness.

Comparative Analysis and the Researcher's Theoretical Position

The three frameworks outlined above are complementary in their emphases. CDA provides the analytical apparatus for examining text and discursive practice; theories of power relations explain the structures of domination that underlie such practices; while theories of identity construction illuminate the impact of these processes and how they are internalized at both individual and collective levels.

This study nonetheless deliberately positions CDA as its primary analytical lens, given the framework's capacity to integrate micro-level dimensions (text and experience) with macro-level dimensions (social structure and ideology). This approach enables the researcher not only to identify patterns of hate speech, but also to understand how such practices are produced, negotiated, and interpreted by participants within their specific social contexts.

Research Conceptual Framework

Building upon the theoretical foundations outlined above, this study conceptualizes hate speech as a discursive practice that operates within networks of power relations and processes of identity construction. Data are not read as direct representations of reality, but as the products of social processes involving the production, distribution, and interpretation of meaning.

The researcher positions herself to read participants' voices contextually, attending to how their experiences are shaped by the interplay of language, ideology, and social structure. When a participant states, for example, that they have "grown accustomed" to hate speech, such a statement is not interpreted as passive acceptance, but as an indication of the normalization of symbolic violence within a particular community.

The conceptual framework of this study is accordingly oriented toward revealing how hate speech does not merely reflect social reality, but actively shapes and sustains it through repeated discursive practices.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Data analysis yielded three principal themes that collectively illustrate how hate speech functions not merely as text, but as a lived social experience that is negotiated and frequently experienced as ambiguous by participants. These themes reflect the dynamics of power relations, the normalization of symbolic violence, and the struggles over identity within online communities.

Theme 1: The Normalization of Hate Speech as "Community Language"

In many of the interactions observed, hate speech was not invariably perceived as an aggressive act. Rather, it frequently appeared in the form of humour, sarcasm, or what might be described as a "community's characteristic mode of speech." This pattern was particularly prevalent in emotionally charged discussion forums and comment sections centred on politically or socially contentious topics.

One participant (P3) described their experience as follows:

"At first I was shocked, but gradually it became normal. If you don't go along with their style, you're seen as odd or out of place."

This statement reveals the presence of a subtle yet powerful form of social pressure to conform to the community's discursive norms. In this context, hate speech is no longer perceived as a transgression but as a mechanism for demonstrating group membership and solidarity.

This normalization, however, was not entirely free of internal conflict. Another participant (P7) disclosed:

"Sometimes I join in laughing, but I'm not really comfortable. It's as if there's a line I've crossed, but it's not clear where that line is."

This tension reflects the moral ambiguity experienced by individuals. A tension between the desire to belong and an awareness that such practices are ethically problematic. These findings align with recent qualitative studies demonstrating that hate speech is frequently disguised as humour in order to reduce social resistance (Jubran et al., 2025).

Theme 2: Concealed Power Relations in Everyday Interaction

The second theme reveals that hate speech functions as an instrument for sustaining and reproducing power relations within online communities. In many cases, majority or discursively dominant groups exercise greater control over the direction of conversation.

One participant (P11), who identified themselves as belonging to a minority group, stated:

"I rarely respond. Not because I have no argument, but because I know I'll be attacked by many at once."

This experience illustrates that power in digital spaces does not always assume a formal character, but instead manifests through sheer numbers, the intensity of engagement, and collective support in interaction. Hate speech thus becomes an instrument for silencing particular voices without recourse to formal mechanisms of censorship.

Conversely, participants who occupied dominant positions were frequently unaware of their role within this structure. P5 remarked:

"I don't feel like I'm attacking anyone. I'm just expressing an opinion like everyone else."

This statement reflects how dominant ideology operates implicitly, rendering practices of exclusion as something natural and unremarkable. From a CDA perspective, this illustrates how power functions through the naturalization of language within everyday practice (van Dijk, 2023).

Theme 3: Identity Negotiation and Strategies of Resilience

The third theme foregrounds how individuals who are targeted by hate speech respond to and negotiate their identities. These responses were by no means uniform; they ranged from active resistance and adaptation to withdrawal.

Some participants chose to respond directly. P2 stated:

"If I stay silent, they'll think they're right. So I respond, even though it's exhausting."

This strategy, however, frequently entailed significant emotional costs. Another participant (P9) articulated a different dilemma:

"I eventually chose silence. Not because I agreed, but because I was tired. It felt like fighting against a wall."

There were also more subtle forms of adaptation, in which individuals began to moderate their own speech in order to avoid becoming targets. P14 explained:

"I've become more careful. Sometimes I don't comment, even though I want to."

This phenomenon demonstrates that hate speech does not only affect momentary interactions; it also shapes the ways in which individuals position themselves within digital public spaces. Identity becomes something that is continuously negotiated, frequently under conditions of profound inequality.

Table 1. Summary of Themes

Main Theme	Sub-themes	Key Meaning
Normalization of hate speech	Humour, social pressure	Symbolic violence becomes normalized practice
Power relations	Majority dominance, silencing	Language as an instrument of social control
Identity negotiation	Resistance, silence, adaptation	Identity as a dynamic process

Inter-Thematic Transitional Meaning

These three themes do not exist in isolation; they are mutually constitutive in shaping the experiences of participants. The normalization of hate speech (Theme 1) creates conditions in which power relations (Theme 2) can operate in subtle and largely invisible ways. Within such conditions, individuals are then compelled to negotiate their identities (Theme 3), whether through resistance or accommodation.

Taken collectively, the findings of this study demonstrate that hate speech in online communities is not a linear phenomenon, but a complex network of experiences in which language, power, and identity become entangled in ways that are frequently unrecognized even by those who perpetuate them.

Discussion

This study reveals that hate speech in online communities does not exist merely as aggressive linguistic expression, but as a social practice that is normalized, operates within largely invisible power relations, and shapes processes of individual identity negotiation. The three principal findings: (1) the normalization of hate speech as community language; (2) concealed power relations; and (3) identity negotiation collectively demonstrate that this phenomenon is complex, ambivalent, and internalized within everyday communicative practices.

The Normalization of Hate Speech: From Deviance to Social Norm

The first finding indicates that hate speech frequently undergoes a semantic shift, moving from a deviant act to a practice regarded as "normal" within particular communities. From a CDA perspective, this process can be understood as a form of ideological naturalization, whereby practices of domination are concealed through language that appears unremarkable (Rozina, 2022). When hate speech is framed as humour or a mode of communication, it loses its designation as "violence," thereby weakening resistance toward it.

This finding aligns with Jubran et al. (2025), who demonstrate that humour in digital communities is frequently employed as a discursive strategy to legitimize offensive speech without being perceived as norm-violating. The present study, however, enriches this scholarship by foregrounding the dimension of subjective experience: participants do not fully accept these practices; rather, they experience a form of moral ambiguity—oscillating between the desire for belonging and ethical discomfort.

Accordingly, a significant contribution of this finding lies in demonstrating that the normalization of hate speech is not a linear process, but rather a space of internal negotiation that remains largely invisible in text-based or big-data studies.

Power Relations: Power Operating Subtly and Collectively

The second theme reveals that power relations within online communities are not invariably hierarchical or formal, but operate through collective mechanisms such as numerical strength, interactional intensity, and group support. Within van Dijk's framework, this reflects how power is reproduced through control over discourse and access to participation (van Dijk, 2023).

This finding is consistent with Nkopuruk et al. (2025), who demonstrate that interactions on X (Twitter) reflect power asymmetries that determine who is able to speak and who is silenced. The present study extends this understanding, however, by showing that power also operates through the unconsciousness of perpetrators, whereby individuals in dominant positions do not perceive themselves as engaging in exclusionary practices.

Moreover, Roitman et al. (2026) emphasize that hate speech is closely bound to social polarization and identity politics. The present study affirms this observation while also demonstrating that at the micro level, power is not always understood as "domination" but rather as "communicative habit." Herein lies a distinct contribution of this research: the revelation that power becomes invisible precisely because it feels normal.

Identity Negotiation: Between Resistance, Adaptation, and Social Exhaustion

The third theme demonstrates that individuals targeted by hate speech do not only experience emotional impact; they are also engaged in a complex process of identity negotiation. From the perspective of identity construction theory, identity is not static but is continuously shaped through ongoing discursive interaction (Topidi, 2026).

This finding resonates with Guan and Chen (2026), who show that hate speech plays a role in constructing otherness—the separation of "us" from "them." The present study, however, enriches this scholarship by revealing that individuals' responses to this process are not uniform. Some resist, some remain silent, and some adapt—all of which reflect strategies of survival under conditions of inequality.

Notably, silence does not invariably signify passivity. In certain instances, silence constitutes a form of quiet resistance as well as a strategy for preserving emotional well-being. This finding also resonates with Ghimire and Rana (2026), who demonstrate that victims of hate speech frequently develop complex coping strategies, including withdrawal from digital spaces.

This study therefore advances the perspective that hate speech does not only shape social relations, but also shapes the ways in which individuals understand and position themselves within the social world.

Theoretical Synthesis and Conceptual Contribution

When these three themes are read in an integrated manner, it becomes apparent that hate speech operates within a self-reinforcing cycle: normalization (Theme 1) enables power relations to function in subtle ways (Theme 2), which in turn compels individuals to negotiate their identities (Theme 3). This cycle demonstrates that hate speech is not merely a communicative phenomenon, but a mechanism for reproducing social structures within digital space.

In contrast to existing literature that tends to focus on linguistic detection or quantitative analysis, this study makes a distinctive contribution by deepening understanding of: participants' subjective experiences; moral ambiguity in communicative practice; and the internalization of power within everyday interaction. In so doing, this study reinforces the position of CDA as an approach that does not only analyse texts, but also illuminates the social processes that inform them (Etaywe, 2026).

Researcher Reflexivity

Throughout the process of data interpretation, the researcher acknowledged that the sociocultural backgrounds of participants—diverse in terms of identity, digital experience, and social position—substantially shaped the ways in which they attributed meaning to hate speech. Furthermore, the researcher's position as an observer without full membership in the communities under study also influenced the reading of the data.

This reflexivity is of importance, for in qualitative research, meaning is not simply "discovered" but is "constructed" through the interaction among data, theory, and the researcher's own perspective. The findings of this study, therefore, are not intended as a singular representation of reality, but as one interpretive account of a complex and continually evolving phenomenon.

Reflective Summary of Discussion

Taken as a whole, the discussion demonstrates that hate speech in online communities cannot be reduced to an individual or linguistic problem alone. It is a structured, normalized, and internalized social practice—one that ultimately shapes the ways in which individuals interact, think, and position themselves within digital society.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that hate speech in online communities cannot be understood narrowly as an individual linguistic expression, but must be recognized as a normalized social practice that operates through subtle power relations and produces complex processes of identity negotiation. The three principal patterns that emerged—normalization as "community language," power operating collectively and invisibly, and individual strategies of resilience collectively illustrate that hate speech pervades digital everyday life as something that is simultaneously accepted, questioned, and negotiated.

Drawing on the experiences of participants, this study generates a new understanding: symbolic violence in digital spaces is frequently not recognized as violence itself. It presents in fluid forms as humour, opinion, or habit which renders the boundary between ordinary interaction and practices of exclusion indistinct. In this context, the present study extends the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis by emphasizing that the meaning of hate speech is shaped not only by linguistic structures but also by emotional experience, moral ambiguity, and the social dynamics that individuals navigate directly. These findings reinforce the argument that hate speech constitutes a mechanism for the reproduction of social inequality in digital space (Unlu et al., 2026; Guerra et al., 2025).

Conceptually, this study contributes the perspective that hate speech is not merely "a text to be analysed," but a lived social experience, one that shapes the ways in which individuals understand themselves, others, and their positioning within digital society. Practically, the findings carry several important implications. For policymakers, approaches are needed that attend not only to content regulation but also to the social and cultural contexts that enable hate speech to become normalized. For digital education and literacy development, it is essential to integrate critical awareness of language, humour, and ideology, so that individuals are equipped to recognize concealed forms of symbolic violence. For social intervention and mental health support, spaces of support must be made available for those who are affected, given that experiences of hate speech frequently carry implications for emotional exhaustion and withdrawal from digital public spaces (Shah et al., 2025).

Nonetheless, this study is subject to certain limitations. Its focus on specific online communities means that the findings may not fully represent the broader dynamics of hate speech across the wider digital landscape. Furthermore, the relatively limited and homogeneous composition of the participant pool in terms of digital experience may have affected the diversity of perspectives that emerged. Temporal constraints also precluded a longitudinal exploration of how participants' experiences evolved over time. On this basis, future research is encouraged to employ alternative methodological approaches, such as long-term digital ethnography or mixed methods, to capture broader and deeper dynamics; extend the research context to encompass a range of platforms and social groups, including communities that are more vulnerable or marginalized; and investigate aspects that have yet to be fully illuminated, such as the role of algorithms, platform culture, and visual dynamics in reinforcing or mitigating hate speech.

Ultimately, this study affirms that understanding hate speech means understanding how digital society itself operates—how language, power, and identity become interwoven in shaping the social realities we collectively inhabit. This conclusion is not an endpoint, but a foundation from which to broaden academic dialogue and to develop social interventions that are more attuned to the complexity of human experience in the digital era.

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