

Hate Speech or Free Speech

Can we regulate social media platforms?

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Research abstract:

Free speech has become a vital aspect of using the internet today. Co-operative features such as wikis, blogs, and social networking have changed media from being a traditional one-way broadcaster to two-way communication where anyone can participate and share their opinions. We all have a voice that can be heard now. However, it has gradually become clear that many chose to abuse this freedom in order to promote racism, sexism, and terrorism online; Hate speech. The Christchurch shooting was a heart-melting incident that New Zealand faced on the 15th of March 2019. The incident was recorded and live streamed through social media platforms by the attacker to gain supporters and spread his hateful message worldwide. After this tragedy, the world has been shouting for internet regulations. However, it is not as cut and dry as it may seem. The complexity of finding a balance between regulating hate speech and still permitting free speech. Hate speech needs to be legislated while free speech must be protected.

In this research we discuss the question inevitable question: if certain opinions and statements are to be censored by gatekeepers how are we still able to label this as free speech?

To answer the questions of this research, a number of interviews were conducted, such as Andre Oboler. He works as a senior lecturer at La Trobe University in Australia. He is also CEO of the Online Hate Prevention Institute and deals with cybersecurity and law daily. and with some influential Muslims society in Malborne, such as Mokhtar Mohammed, an imam at mosque of Swinburne University.

I Researched and reticulated in Facebook and Twitter and their own policy that they have put in place.

I have Read research and articles published on websites specialized in the field of media, such as Online Hate Prevention Institute and The Economist. (2019). Why free speech, hate speech and radicalization are hard to define.

Keywords: hatred, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression,

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خطاب كراهية أم حرية تعبير عن الرأي
هل يمكننا تنظيم منصات التواصل الاجتماعي؟

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ملخص البحث:

تغلغل حرية التعبير اليوم بشرايين شبكة الإنترنت. قلبت "الوسائل التعاونية مثل الويكيبيديا والمدونات ومواقع التواصل الاجتماعي" الإعلام رأساً على عقب، فأخرجته من دور المذيع أحادي الاتجاه إلى فضاء تتحاور فيه الأصوات وتتلاقى فيه الآراء. صار لكل منا صوت يسمع ويتردد. لكن، ومع تطور هذا المنبر الواسع، برزت أصوات شاذة تسعى لاستغلال الحرية في تأجيج النيران الدنيئة للكراهية، سواء كانت عنصرية أم جنسية أم إرهابية، لنطلق عليها إذاً اسمها الصريح: خطاب الكراهية.

لا تزال فاجعة إطلاق النار في كرايستشير لاندينيو زيلندا في 15 مارس 2019 تُدمي القلوب. فقد استغل المنفذ منصات التواصل الاجتماعي كمنصة لبث جريمته البشعة، محاولاً استقطاب الأنصار ونفث سمّه الكريه عبر أرجاء العالم. وفي أعقاب هذه الكارثة، ارتفعت الأصوات المطالبة بتقنين الفضاء الرقمي. لكن المسألة ليست بهذه البساطة، حيث تكمن الصعوبة الحقيقية في إيجاد التوازن الهش بين قمع خطاب الكراهية وحماية حرية التعبير عن الرأي. علينا إدانة الكراهية وتشريع قوانين لمكافحةها، وفي الوقت نفسه نحرض على صون حرية التعبير وضمن تواصلنا الإنساني الحر.

يسير هذا البحث غور هذا السؤال المحتم: إذا خضعت آراء وتصريحات معينة لرقابة البوابات الإلكترونية، فهل تبقى على اسمها "كحرية تعبير عن الرأي"؟

للكشف عن جوانب هذا السؤال، أجرينا مقابلات مع شخصيات عدة، من بينهم أندريه أوبولير، المحاضر الكبير في جامعة لا تروب الأسترالية والمدير التنفيذي لمعهد منع الكراهية على الإنترنت، والذي تتضمن مهامه اليومية قضايا الأمن الإلكتروني والقانون. كما أجرينا حوارات مع شخصيات مؤثرة في المجتمع الإسلامي بمدينة ملبورن، مثل الإمام مختار محمد من مسجد جامعة سوينبرن.

علاوة على ذلك، استكشفنا سياسات منصات التواصل الاجتماعي كفيسبوك وتويتر، وقمنا بتحليلها وتقييمها. كما استقينا مصادرنا من مقالات وبحوث نشرت على مواقع إلكترونية متخصصة في مجال الإعلام، على غرار معهد منع الكراهية على الإنترنت والمقال الذي نشره الإيكونومست عام 2019 بعنوان "لماذا يصعب الفصل بين تعريف حرية التعبير وخطاب الكراهية والتطرف؟"

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكراهية، حرية الرأي، حرية التعبير،

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Free speech has become a vital aspect of using the internet today. Co-operative features such as wikis, blogs, and social networking have changed media from being a traditional one-way broadcaster to two-way communication where anyone can participate and share their opinions. We all have a voice that can be heard now. However, it has gradually become clear that many chose to abuse this freedom in order to promote racism, sexism, and terrorism online; Hate speech. The Christchurch shooting was a heart-melting incident that New Zealand faced on the 15th of March 2019. The incident was recorded and live streamed through social media platforms by the attacker to gain supporters and spread his hateful message worldwide. After this tragedy, the world has been shouting for internet regulations. However, it is not as cut and dry as it may seem. The complexity of finding a balance between regulating hate speech and still permitting free speech. Hate speech needs to be legislated while free speech must be protected. And that, of course, leaves us with the inevitable question: if certain opinions and statements are to be censored by gatekeepers how are we still able to label this as free speech?



The Christchurch attack has caused Australians to protest against online hate (Source: BBC)

Traditional media such as tv and radio have always had an intentional broadcast delay when broadcasting to the public. This is used to prevent mistakes or inappropriate content. No such safety can be found on any social media platform.

“The security delay requires production resources to be effective. Individuals using something like Facebook Live, on their own, can simply stop the feed or choose not to post it after the live stream is over. With such huge numbers, in the millions, of live streams and shares each day, there is no way for platforms to have people monitoring the content and able make use of a delay.”

Andre Oboler works as a senior lecturer at La Trobe University in Australia. He is also CEO of *the Online Hate Prevention Institute* and deals with cybersecurity and law daily. Online Hate Prevention Institute inform and suggest social media platforms which content is harmful and should be removed. The organization has a close professional relationship to Facebook and has played a role in advising the platform on how to handle the regulation dispute evoked from the Christchurch tragedy.



(Source: La Trobe University)

“The disadvantages of being regulated by government is that it can slow down innovation and thereby create barriers to new technology. Regulation is normally done at a national level which means other countries that don’t have those regulations are able to leap ahead. On the other side, why are regulations a good idea? Well, the value of each society differs. Its government that ultimately decides what the rules and norms for that society should be. So, if the government does that then platform providers around the world have to start adapting themselves to local expectations. It could be possible to change the system for social media platforms in order to respond quicker to unsuitable content, but that may require changes at the level of company and law. It requires a great deal of cooperation between a company and the lawmakers.”

After the Christchurch terror attack, the debate on social media regulations has been everywhere. If successful, Australia will be the first country to punish social media platforms if violent and threatening content is not removed quickly enough.



Source

ABC reporter, Ariel Bogle, thinks that social media deserves blame for spreading the Christchurch video. Read her article on social media and hate speech here (Source: Twitter)

https://twitter.com/arielbogle/status/1106402168674746368?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.abc.net.au%2Fnews%2F2019-03-15%2Fchristchurch-shooting-live-stream-think-twice-about-watching-it%2F10907258

However, the digital age and the growth of online communities have managed to blur geographical borders and national boundaries. As the internet has no borderlines it is challenging to come to an agreement on what acceptable online behavior is. How do we draw the line between a bleak opinion and discrimination? And who will be responsible for making this call?

Like countless people within the Muslim society, Mokhtar Mohammed, an imam at mosque of Swinburne University in Malborne Australia, was devastated when hearing about the Christchurch tragedy and the horrific livestream that followed.



“People have freedom to say and do whatever they want. But they need to understand that, for promoting hateful and vengeance in the world, there are repercussions they need to be accountable for. And it is irrespective of any medium or channel you use to promote the hateful message.”

Mokhtar Mohammed believes in the fact that love is what should be among everybody in this world to stop the hateful incidents. Being an Imam at Swinburne University, he could understand the pain and impact of the devastating incident on people who come to Mosque to worship for better and healthier lives.

So how do we attempt to avoid similar future misfortunes being broadcasted globally? With years of experience within this subject, Andre Oboler believes he has a possible idea of how to better social media policies.

“I gave a talk for the launching of Tech Against Terrorism in Sydney. There I presented a model for how systems can be put in place using technology that the Online Hate Prevention Institute has already developed, so the public are able to report extreme content. Civil society organizations could hire a staff of active volunteers to look through these reports. They would then have the ability to elevate that so these reports could go into a priority list for the police. The idea is to empowering the public to report things but using civil society organizations and charities as gatekeepers.

The model, whilst still being fine-tuned, has to exist in some way, shape, or form within social media use. The massive, multi-billion social media companies control all of the power at this point in time, when it comes to what can, and is, posted on social media. Andre’s, or any other model, has to be created to ensure that federal governments have the ability to withhold the data or specific IP address of the individual who is promoting online hate. With or without the Australian, or any other progressive nation having some form of control when it comes to the prevention of hate online.

It is easier for Facebook, Twitter, or any other platform to hide behind their own policy that they have put in place, and cease any control that they manage to have over their platform, but to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of their website is paramount.

How do students view changes of free speech?

In the society that we live in currently, it is integral that free speech continues to be something that exists for all people. This is a staple of our society, and people should have the ability to speak their minds when it comes to certain topics. There has to be a line that is drawn, though.

The treatment of Muslims and other minorities on social media continues to be an issue throughout the Western world, where stereotypes and poorly researched opinions on certain segments of populations are treated so extremely poorly, with very little respect for their wellbeing, or just their general belief system. There is a major difference between free speech and informed opinions, masked behind the barrier of free speech. Members of

society who promote this, and other hateful comments to create a divide, rather than choosing to welcome and respect people like they deserve to be treated.

This is something that both Andre and Mokhtar believe, especially when it comes to social media and the trail of hateful speech online. Without specific social media policy, and groups like the Online Hate Prevention Institute, who conduct fantastic prevention on social media during and after catastrophic terrorist attacks, individuals will continue to use social media as a platform for the racist, uninformed opinions that can make large portions of society ostracized within their own country.

Mokhtar Mohammed ends the interview by telling us: “Social media was built to connect with people and spread awareness about right things. I urge all to continue doing so. And most importantly report any wrong doings you find on social media platforms. The people who spread hate in social media platforms need to be held accountable.

Want to know more about regulating social media? Listen to the full interview of Andre Oboler

Her [Andre Oboler - Audio Interview by SocialMediaRegulations \(soundcloud.com\)](#)

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