

Online Hate Speech and the Personal Experiences of Young Adult Filipinos

Noel B. Manarpiis, Keisha Mae Cortez, Mary Grace Cortez and Bianca Nicole L. Mendoza

Abstract

This study was anchored on Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis. It answered the main problem: What are the personal experiences of young adult Filipinos about online hate speech? Socio-demographic profile in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and educational attainment were discussed; online hate speech based on their personal experiences, the participants' demographics, the intensity of online hate speech, topics that mostly produced hate speech, personal experiences that caused them to receive and practice online hate speech, the determined emotions felt by the young Filipino adults when they receive and practice online hate speech, and correlations between all the variables of the study were discussed and described. Descriptive survey research revealed the demographic profile of the participants while correlational research interpreted the relationship between the variables of the study. Findings reveal that the young Filipino adults perceived hate speech as a negative assumption towards other people. They experienced it on Facebook from users who mostly insulted their gender preferences and age, and whenever they talk about politics. The participants feel angry and embarrassed when they practice and receive hate speech, respectively. Statistical findings however show that based on the seven main variables that were investigated, results show no significant correlation of young adult experiences on five of the seven variables. However, the results of correlation between the intensity of hate speech and the reception of the participants revealed a very highly significant correlation between variables. It gained a correlation of 32.516 and p-value of 0.000. Results of correlation between topics on social media and the personal experiences of young adults about hate speech gained a correlation of 33.934 and p-value of 0.000 showing a very highly significant correlation between the variables. Among others, the research recommends careful attention on young adults' further experiences that may become traumatic when not properly addressed.

Key Words: Online Hate Speech, Critical Discourse Analysis, Online Personal Experiences

Introduction

Nowadays, it is very easy for someone using the social media platform such as Facebook to experience receiving hate speech from people they hardly know. Tontodimamma et al. (2020) explain that hate speech is any communication that downgrades a person or group in terms of some characteristics such as race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and religion. Bahador (2020) wrote that it includes insults, discrimination, dehumanization, demonization, and incitement to violence. Hate speech is more than just "harsh words." Hate speech is hard to classify because according to Crabb et al. (2019), its interpretation is subjective in nature.

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Filipinos were seen to have a high average of spending their time on social media, which leads the Philippines to be known as the “social media capital of the world” (Ichimura, 2020). They spend 102,054 hours on social media and that is equivalent to 4,252 days or 11.64 years in total. Social media users interact and share content and information with each other every day, hence, providing a huge chance for hateful messages to circulate. According to O’Regan and Theil (2020), “the age of digital media has allowed online speech and content to be shared anonymously and often without a second thought for the consequences.”

Many cases of hate speech have been documented in social media platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Tiktok, and other popular sites to which the youth and young adults alike go. Aslan (2017) found out that labeling innocent people that bashers despise is just one of the many “crimes” committed. He cited in his study the example of Syrians who are the constant victims of bashers in Youtube. They were labeled with undesirable names such as “traitors, potential threat, overstepping, and the sources of financial difficulties.”

In Europe, Assimakopoulos, Baider, and Millar (2017) report the plight of migrants from neighboring continents who are being put on spotlight in many social media discourses using iteration of expressions such as “huge migration crisis, waves of migrants flooding the EU” and many other undesirable expressions. These xenophobic hate speeches are hurtful to the migrants concerned and will add up to their concerns of homelessness together with other serious worries.

In the Philippines, nothing is more serious than the hate speeches of the sitting president against his critics. Since these speeches are televised live, they are also uploaded in Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook. These moments catch the attention of his supporters who, it seems, are well-trained to lash out soul-wrecking hate messages. His and his cohorts’ war of attrition with journalists like Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa is a classic example. Conde (2020) believes that the show of authoritarianism in the Philippines harms the free speech of the Filipinos. However, free speech can also do people harm especially the youth and young adults who are daily users of social media.

The present research found out what online hate speech can do to one of the most vulnerable sectors of the society who are the young single adults – whether male or female. These groups are those who are into Facebook, Omegle, Twitter, Tiktok and other social media platforms that are prone to hate speech and cyberbullying.

The study determined the demographic profile of the participants in terms of (a) age; (b) gender; (c) educational attainment; and (d) ethnicity; meaning of hate speech based on respondents’ personal experiences; social media platforms used; demographics prone to hate speech; impact of hate speech, topics on social media that produce hate speech; personal experiences of young adults that made them practice or receive hate speech; participants’ feelings of practicing or receiving hate speech; and correlations of demographics to personal experiences, intensity of hate speech to participants’ reception, and social media topics to the personal experiences of the respondents.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on the Theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that was proposed by Norman Fairclough in 1995. It was used in this study to analyze hate speech on social media based on the personal experiences of the respondents. Critical Discourse as a theory analyzes qualitatively and critically the ways in which discourses construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. In the present research, the authors

investigated the “bashings” of social media users on the posts made by young single adults aged 15-30. As what CDA asserts, the way in which people use language in social media is purposeful, whether the language choice uttered in written form is conscious or unconscious.

Scope and Limitations

The study was limited to the single, adult Filipinos aged 15 to 30 who use the social media and receive hate speech from social media users. Critical Discourse Analysis was used to analyze their feelings while the use of Pearson Chi-Square helped describe their experiences.

Materials and Method

Research Design

For this research, the use of CDA was purposively used quantitatively by using a descriptive correlative survey design. The research described the participants' demographic profile and their personal experiences toward hate speech on social media. Correlational research design was used to describe the relationship between the variables (a) demographics and personal experiences of the participants, (b) intensity of hate speech and the reception of the participants, and (c) topics on social media and the personal experiences of young adults about hate speech.

Sampling Techniques and Participants

This research used probability sampling method to adhere to the theory of probability to be able to get a sample in the most scientific way. The Researchers used 20 percent to get the total respondents needed to represent the population. Using plus or minus 5 percent margin of error, the total respondents were 260 individuals having equal male and female participation. The participants were young adults aged 15-30 (as per Republic Act 8044). They were divided equally according to gender; thus, 130 males and 130 females.

Instrument

The research primarily used a four-point Likert scale questionnaire to survey the participants and obtain their answers. It was validated and subjected to Cronbach Alpha's reliability test for a more reliable result.

Data Gathering and Ethical Considerations

The questionnaire was designed and submitted to experts for validation; ran a pilot test, revised by entering the corrections; used principal components analysis to identify underlying components that are being measured by the survey questions; subjected the survey questionnaire for Cronbach Alpha to check its internal consistency; revised the survey form for the last time. Then, the questionnaire was encoded using the Google Form. The Researchers sent the questionnaire through email to the selected participants for actual data gathering. The participants' full consent was obtained, and their privacy and anonymity were ensured. The answers were tallied and interpreted immediately. Finally, the Researchers avoided the representation of primary data findings in a biased way. In the entire conduct of the research, the Researchers assured the participants of the protection of their names and information.

Data Analysis

Since the design is being governed by quantitative approach, the research used quantifiable data analysis that includes calculation of frequencies of variables and differences between variables. It employed frequencies, percentage, and mean to calculate the simple statistics. Since the research is correlative in nature, it employed the use of Pearson Chi-square correlation to find out the degree of correlation of every variable used in the study.

Result and Discussion

Question 1: What is the demographic profile of the participants in terms of (a) age;(b) gender;(c) educational attainment; and (d) ethnicity

Figure 1 shows more than 48% of the participants belong to ages 21-23, followed by participants belonging to ages 18-20 having 45%, while participants aged 24-26 have a total of 4.42%; and, lastly, participants belonging to ages 27-29 have a total of 1.61%. On the other hand, Figure-2 shows that the female participants (49.00%) outnumbered the male participants (44.18%) and LGBTQ participants (6.83%). Meanwhile, Figure-3 reveals that there were more 2nd year students (51.41%) who participated in the study than 3rd year students (30.12%) and 1st year students (18%).

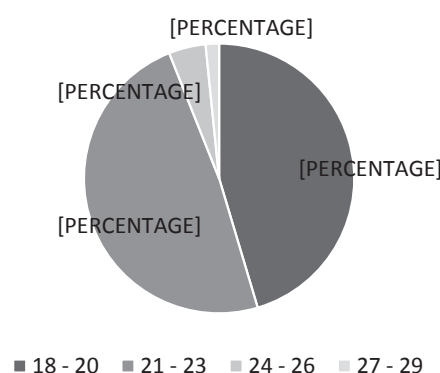


Figure 1. Age

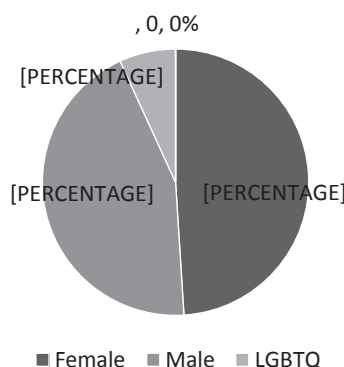


Figure 2. Gender

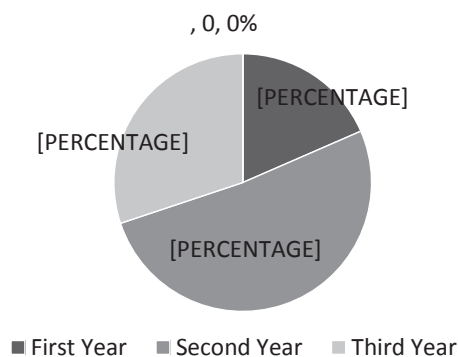


Figure 3. Educational attainment

The demographic profile shows that age 17-30 are the big users of social media. This is corroborated by statistics shown (**statista.com**) that in the Philippines, 86% of social media users belong to age 18-24 years old who are young adults.

Table 1 presents the ethnicity of the participants where the majority is Tagalog with 81%, followed by Cebuano with 2.41%, then Bicolano and Ilocano with 2.01%. On the other hand, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Hiligaynon/Ilonggo and Waray received the lowest percentage; 0.40%, 0.80%, 0.80% and 0.80%.

Table 1	Ethnicity	
Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Bicolano	5	2.01
Cebuano	6	2.41
Cebuano, Hiligaynon/Ilonggo	1	0.40
Hiligaynon/Ilonggo	2	0.80
Ilocano	5	2.01
Kapampangan	1	0.40
Pangasinense	2	0.80
Tagalog	202	81.12
Tagalog, Bicolano	5	2.01
Tagalog, Cebuano	2	0.80
Tagalog, Hiligaynon/Ilonggo	4	1.61
Tagalog, Ilocano	7	2.81
Tagalog, Ilocano, Pangasinense	1	0.40
Tagalog, Pangasinense	2	0.80
Tagalog, Waray	2	0.80
Waray	2	0.80

Question 2: What is the meaning of hate speech, according to young adults, based on their experiences?

Figure 4 revealed the three answers with the highest scores on the respondents' thoughts about hate speech. First, is the notion of the word hate speech as "unpatriotic." In the societal context of what is happening around the country, not being patriotic could mean disloyalty to the cultures and traditions of the Filipinos. Most appropriately, it could connote xenophobia or racism even to a fellow Filipino. Second answer is that hate speech reflects issues in the society. Presently, the Filipinos are politically charged due to the incoming election and so, people can read a lot of bashings done by one person to another, and mudslinging of people against people. Finally, the top answer in the survey about hate speech being an act of insult or disrespect which looks like just the two as it has the similar context of not according high regards for the opinions of others.

Gagliardone et. al (2015) explained that in matters of national or international legislation, hate speech connotes harm, discrimination, hostility, or violence. This research showed disrespect, societal problems, and insult as synonymous to hate speech. Summing up, we conclude that social problems are the root cause of hate speech in social media.

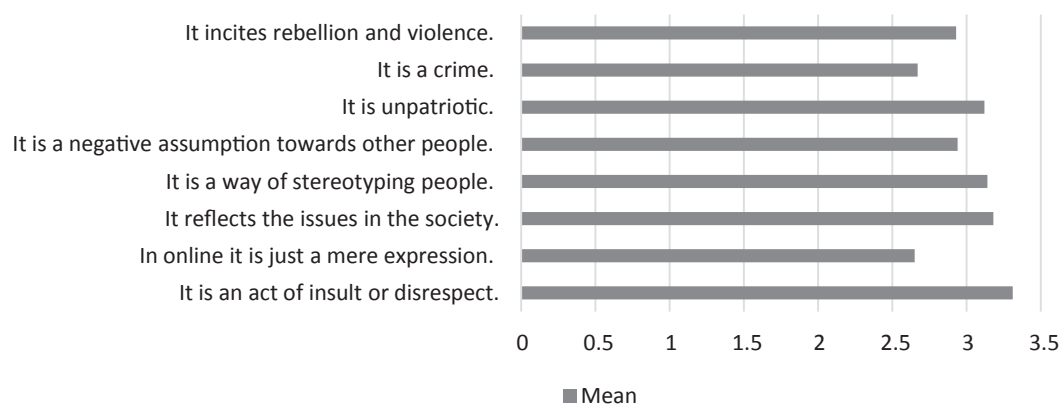


Figure 4. Respondents' meaning of hate speech

Question 3: What particular social media platform do young adults use where they encounter hate speech mostly?

Figure 5 presents the particular social media platforms that young adults use where they encounter hate speech mostly. Among the social media platforms listed, Facebook got the highest mean of 3.69. As of July 2021 (statista.com), this social media site ranks the first over all other social media site as it registered over two billion users around the world.

According to the findings of this research, Facebook remains as the number one platform for hate speech. According to **Rappler (2021)**, Facebook is also no. 1 in the list of social media platforms that are open for abuse.

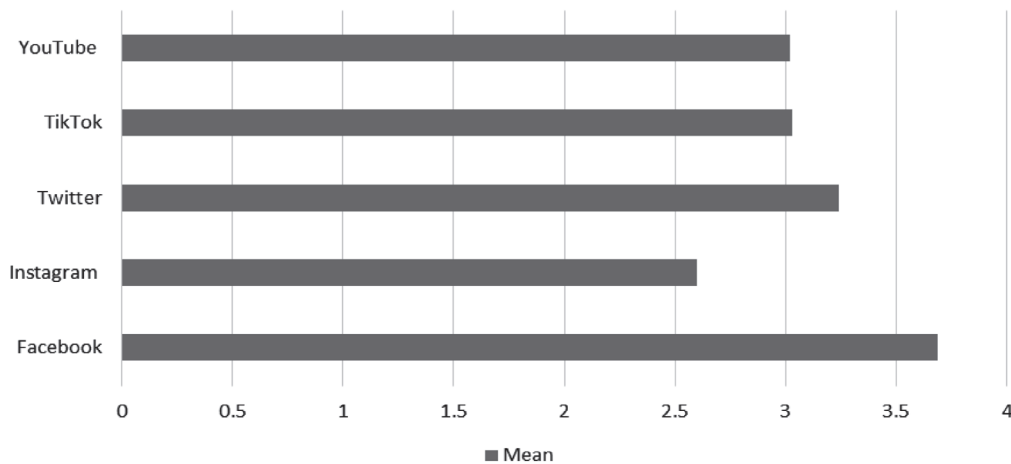


Figure 5. Particular Social media platform that young adults use

Question 4: What demographics of social media users are prone to hate speech?

Gender preference as the highest scoring answer for this question is not a surprise after all. Nowadays, talks about gender is as poverty, rape, and other social problems. The second answer that is “color” is another social disease that the Filipinos must cure. In the USA, presently, American Asians, like the Filipinos, are being discriminated against because of their color and features. This leads us to the third most popular answer which is Race. It could be contemplated from the answers that from the West to the East up to the Southeast Asians, gender, race, and color are problems that the Filipinos need to hurdle if they want to live peacefully as world citizens. Figure- 6 shows the details.

Olafson and Tran (2021) report that 55% of social media users around the world are males. While their research did not clearly point men as the source of cyber hate crimes on gender, color or sexual reference, other research and newspaper reports point to the male gender as those that lead in groups in reference to these three demographics.

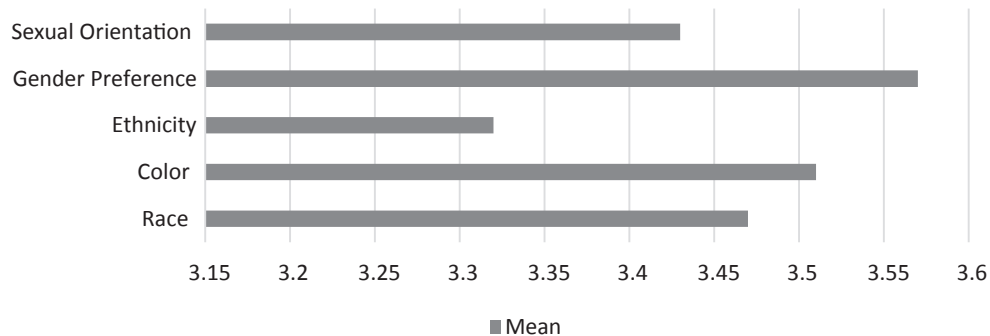


Figure 6. Demographics of social media users prone to hate speech

Question 5: What impact of hate speech have the respondents received?

The top three answers show the impact of hate speech on the receivers. These are as follows: (a) someone tried to change my point of view; (b) I felt insulted; and (c) My claims, ideas, and points of view were challenged as they do not agree with it. Nowadays, it is not common for social media users to bad-mouth somebody or tear up one's beliefs no matter how firm it is. They will use language that is disgusting, condescending, and disparaging which an innocent user would take heavily to the heart.

Not only in the Philippines, but around the world hate speech has a resounding impact to crimes such as mass murder, lynching and ethnic cleansing that started only with insults, harsh speech, and disagreements (Laub, 2019).

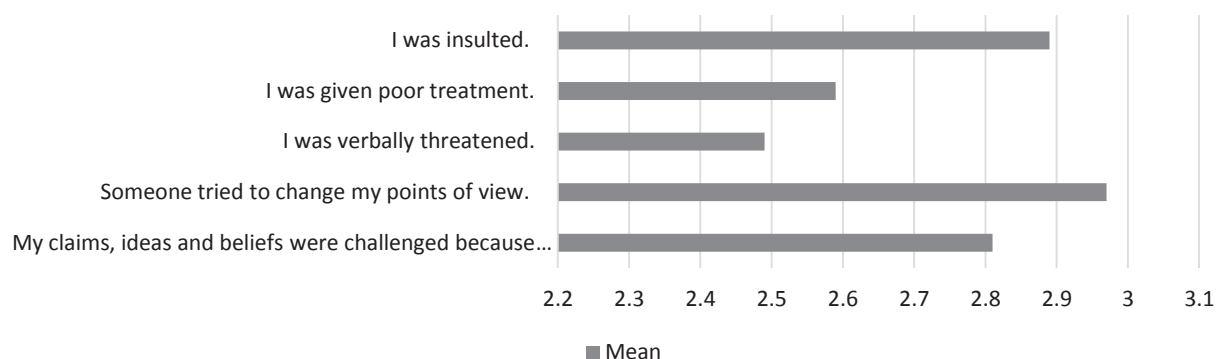


Figure 7. Impact of hate speech received by media users

Question 6: What topics on social media mostly produce hate speech?

Politics, physical appearance, and activism – these are the top three answers of the respondents which also reflect the social problems people nowadays face. With politics, even before election begins, it has been the favorite topic in the social media by the users. Issues about President Rodrigo Duterte, the Marcoses, Aquinos, and many other political personalities have triggered the interest of the Filipinos about political debates in social media. Then, there is body shaming, face shaming, and lewd remarks that constitute people's physical appearance. Finally, there is activism, particularly in politics that makes the people's day in social media. These, among other reasons, are the flavors that give color to social media use.

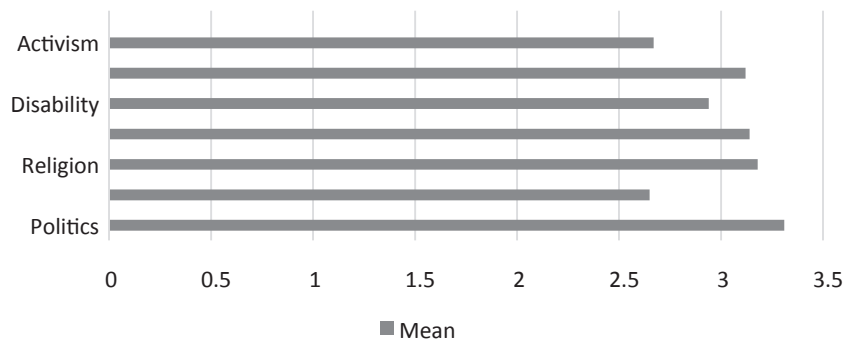


Figure 8. Topics in social media that mostly produce hate

Question 7: What personal experiences of young adults (a) made them practice hate speech as well? (b) caused them to receive hate speech on social media?

From the answers received, top three personal experiences that make young adults practice hate speech are as follows: (a) race; (b) age, and (c) physical appearance. This means nowadays, it is easy for anyone to throw mud at others because of these three social reasons. Meanwhile, the personal experiences of young adults that make them receive hate speech include (a) age, (b) race, and (c) political views. Notice that in the previous questions posed by this research, these reasons have already emerged as main variables that make people hate other people.

Tontodimamma et al (2020) affirmed that politics, physical appearance of a person, activism, among others have been leading topics in social media that produce hate speech. The findings of the present research agree on this.

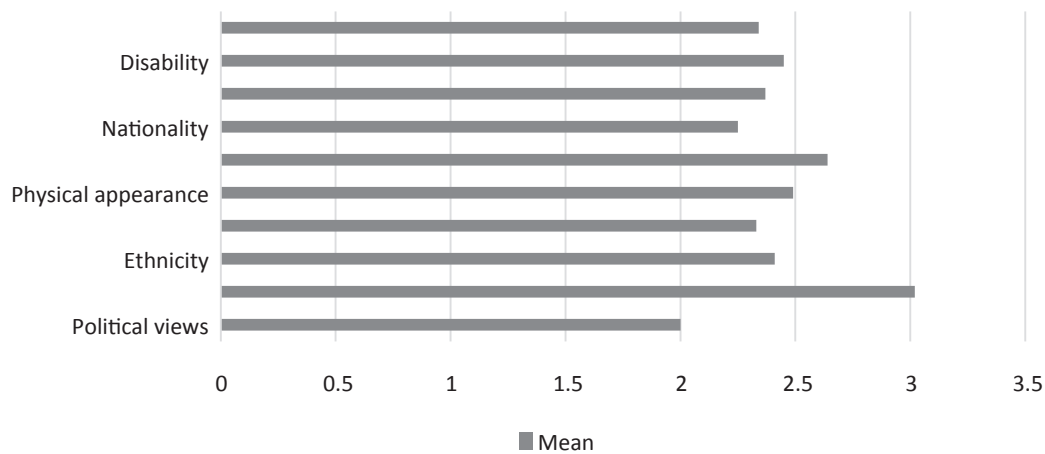


Figure 9. Personal qualities that cause young adults to practice online hate speech

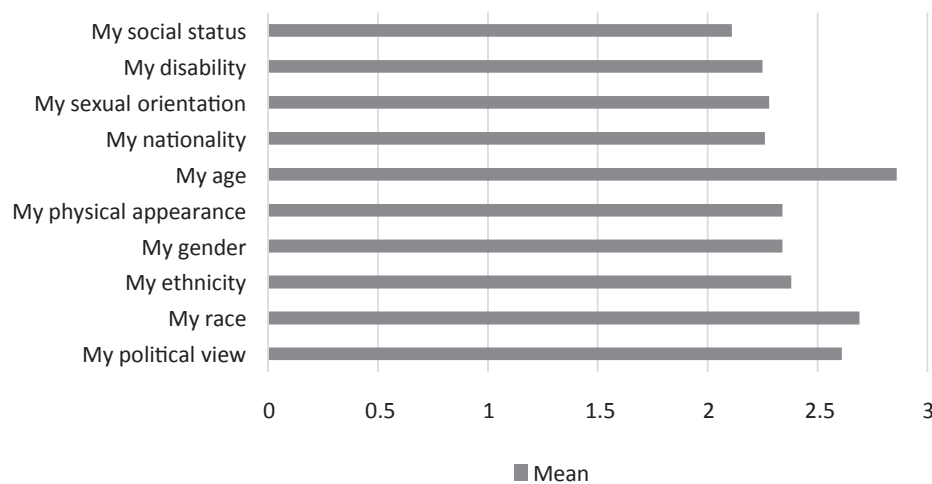


Figure 10. Personal Qualities that cause young adults to receive online hate speech

Question 8. What was felt by the participants upon (a) delivering hate speech to others, (b) receiving hate speech from others?

Most of the participants felt angry upon delivering hate speech on others. Others felt guilty while not so many of them said they were satisfied with what they did. But when they were given hate speech, they felt embarrassed, angry, and threatened. In a world where usually hate begets hate, these are how the respondents felt. The effect of hating others is a retaliation of an unsatisfied feeling that the respondents have learned as they participate in the game of mudslinging, shame, and destroying one's personality in social media.

In the Psychology of hate crimes released by APA.com, the writers believe that those who have been offended by hate crimes may generally feel violated, offended, frightened, but not all will retaliate by getting even. The research findings based on the respondents think otherwise as most of them have felt offended and ended up offending others as well.

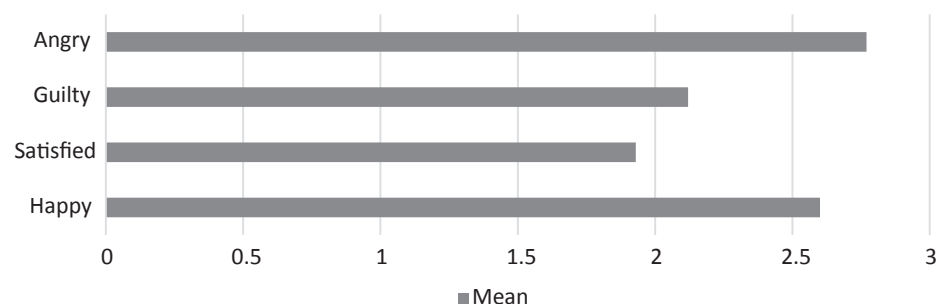


Figure 11. Participants' perceptions upon delivering hate speech to others

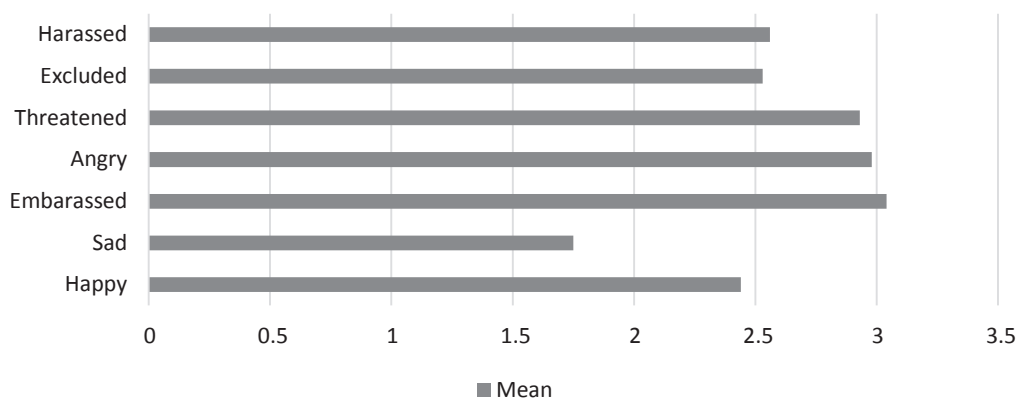


Figure 12. Reception of the participants upon receiving hate speech

Question 8. Is there a correlation between demographics and the personal experiences of young adults?

In terms of age, findings reveal that there is no overall significant correlation between the respondents' age and their personal experiences in social media although religion is significantly correlated. This finding means that age has nothing to do with social media users' personal experiences when they indulge in the use of any social media platform.

Pacheco and Melhuish (2018) detailed their findings in their research showing that demographics indeed play a big role in the personal experiences of young adult users of the social media.

Table 2 Correlation of Age to Personal Experiences			
Personal Experiences	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value	Interpretation
Race	20.324	0.908	No significant correlation
Color	21.247	0.880	No significant correlation
Ethnicity	18.773	0.945	No significant correlation
Gender preference	24.855	0.732	No significant correlation
Sexual orientation	18.712	0.946	No significant correlation
Nationality	42.110	0.070	No significant correlation
Religion	44.009	0.048	Significant correlation

Table 3 reveals that there is no correlation between participants' gender and their personal experiences on social media. This means that gender does not have anything to do with the variables that have touched their feelings except in religion where a significant correlation was observed.

Table 3 Correlation of Gender to Personal Experiences			
Personal Experiences	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value	Interpretation
Race	8.040	0.235	No significant correlation
Color	5.920	0.432	No significant correlation
Ethnicity	7.436	0.282	No significant correlation
Gender preference	5.528	0.478	No significant correlation
Sexual orientation	8.962	0.176	No significant correlation
Nationality	5.904	0.434	No significant correlation
Religion	16.750	0.010	Significant correlation

Table 4 reveals that there is no significant correlation of educational attainment on the personal experiences of the young adult social media users. It means that the media users' educational orientations have nothing to do with whatever they have experienced on the social media.

Table 3 Correlation of educational attainment to users' personal experiences			
Personal Experiences	Pearson Chi-Square	p-value	Interpretation
Race	5.796	0.446	No significant correlation
Color	3.325	0.767	No significant correlation
Ethnicity	3.3622	0.768	No significant correlation
Gender preference	4.939	0.552	No significant correlation
Sexual orientation	0.588	0.997	No significant correlation
Nationality	12.506	0.052	No significant correlation
Religion	9.135	0.166	No significant correlation

Question 10: Is there a correlation between the impact of hate speech and the reception of the participants?

The result of the correlation of the impact of hate speech on how the participants received, it shows through Pearson chi-square that at 32.516 with $p = 0.000$, the impact was very highly correlated. It means that these two variables have a very strong relationship with each other. Therefore, the impact of hate speech is strongly tied to the impact of acceptance of those that have been affected by this act.

Ring (2013) summarized that social media are rife with hate. She explained how the young users are torn apart because of the hate speech that they usually read in the social media. Ring's dissertation corroborated with the statistical findings of the research that there is a very highly correlation between the impact of hate speech and the reception of the participants towards it.

Question 11: Is there a correlation between the topics on social media and the personal experiences of the young adults about hate speech?

The result of the correlation between topics found in the social media platforms and how the young adults received them was calculated using Pearson Chi-Square. The result of 33.934 with $p = 0.000$ shows a very highly significant correlation. This means that the two variables are strongly tied to each other. The young adults are highly affected by what they read as they engage with those who bash them on social media.

According to the research of **Shields-Nordness (2015)**, young adults are very sensitive to the topics found in social media and their sensitiveness results to isolation most of the time. This research also found out that there is a very high correlation of topics in social media and the personal experiences of the young adults.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media could be one of the best things that happened in this world as seen on how fast communication is, if compared to the slow snail-like methods of the 20th century. Presently, people are enjoying its glory, and even its power to connect to people everywhere around the world. True to form, the world has become one whole village of communicating people. However, in return of this boon lies the bane of misuse of the social media. It seems like people everywhere have been given the power or authority to lay out their platform, what's more their deep thoughts turned into nightmares. These nightmares may include what have been tackled in this research – hate speech which, as this research asserts.

With the findings of the present research, the following recommendations are presented to the readers:

1. That the government will give stricter rules about cyber bullying in the country
2. That the parents will become a constant guide to their young adult sons and daughters who are one of the victimized sectors of the society in terms of social media viewing
3. That the country will produce a hotline for the victims of online bullying for the further protection of this vulnerable sector.
4. Finally, that a hotline on mental health will be established for everyone's care of sanity in the country.

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