

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS HATE SPEECH IN THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA*SIKAP SISWA TERHADAP UJARAN KEBENCIAN DALAM PENGGUNAAN MEDIA SOSIAL***Ichwani Siti Utami*, Heri Kurnia, Hendri**

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Abstract: this study aims to analyze the level of students' attitudes toward hate speech on social media and the factors that influence students' attitudes toward hate speech. This study used a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method. The study population was all tenth-grade students of Nusantara Plus Senior High School, Ciputat, South Tangerang, with a sample of 70 students. The research instrument in this study was a questionnaire whose validity and reliability were tested. Data were analyzed using normality tests and one-tailed t-tests with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 2.0. The results of the study indicate that the level of students' attitudes toward hate speech is in the very low category, with an average score of 143.21, lower than the limit value of 294. Students' attitudes toward hate speech are influenced by a conducive school environment, parental supervision, and sufficient understanding of digital communication ethics. The results of this study emphasize the important role of schools and families in preventing negative behavior on social media through digital literacy development and strengthening tolerance values.

Abstrak: kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tingkat sikap ujaran kebencian siswa dalam penggunaan media sosial dan faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi sikap siswa terhadap ujaran kebencian. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif dengan metode survei. Populasi penelitian adalah seluruh siswa kelas sepuluh Sekolah Menengah Atas Nusantara Plus, Ciputat, Tangerang Selatan, dengan sampel sebanyak 70 siswa. Instrumen penelitian dalam kajian ini berupa angket yang diuji validitas dan reliabilitasnya. Data dianalisis menggunakan uji normalitas dan uji t satu pihak dengan bantuan Statistical Package for the Social Sciences versi 2.0. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa tingkat sikap siswa terhadap ujaran kebencian berada pada kategori sangat rendah, dengan nilai rata-rata 143,21 lebih kecil dari nilai batas 294. Sikap siswa terhadap ujaran kebencian dipengaruhi oleh faktor lingkungan sekolah yang kondusif, pengawasan orang tua, serta pemahaman yang cukup tentang etika komunikasi digital. Hasil kajian ini menegaskan pentingnya peran sekolah dan keluarga dalam mencegah perilaku negatif di media sosial melalui pembinaan literasi digital dan penguatan nilai toleransi.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology has transformed the global communications landscape, with social media becoming a dominant platform facilitating human interaction across the globe. Recent data from We Are Social and Meltwater (2024) shows that

60% of the world's population now actively uses social media, making it an integral part of daily life. Based on the results of the National Socio-Economic Survey in 2024, it was shown that 72.78% of the Indonesian population used the internet, up from 69.21% in the previous year (Central Statistics Agency, 2025). This

increase indicates that people's activities are increasingly connected in the digital space. The number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 221.56 million, with a penetration rate of 79.5% of the total population, with the majority of users coming from the younger generation, particularly Generation Z 34.40% and Millennials 30.62% (Prasetyo et al., 2024). This productive age group is the primary actor in digital activities.

The dominance of the internet used among teenagers is inextricably linked to the development of social media as one of the most popular platforms. We Are Social and Meltwater (2024) noted that 95% of internet users in Indonesia access social media via mobile devices, with the most frequently used platforms being WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Media can generally be understood as a communication tool, as defined by established definitions. The media often have mass characteristics, as explained in various mass communication theories. The term "social" in social media is theoretically related to the realm of sociology, which emphasizes relationships or interactions between individuals. These social relationships can be categorized into social action and social relations (Mawarti, 2018). Social media now functions not only as a means of communication and entertainment, but also as a space for expressing self-identity, sharing information, and influencing public opinion.

This phenomenon offers positive opportunities, such as expanding social networks, supporting online learning, and facilitating the socio-political participation of the younger generation. On the other hand, social media also has serious negative impacts, one of which is the rampant spread of hate speech, which can threaten social harmony. One factor fueling this phenomenon is the high number of social media users who simply follow trends, either by sharing or creating similar posts without understanding the intent, message, or type of post, simply because the content is popular and widely discussed (Ash-Shidiq & Pratama, 2021). Globally, the phenomenon of hate speech has been the subject of extensive research (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). The internet and social media have become primary platforms for the spread of online hate speech, becoming not only a local problem but a growing global challenge.

The definition of hate speech is often complex and debated across various disciplines. Difficulties in defining this term often hamper efforts to identify and regulate it effectively (Sellars, 2020). Hate speech is an offensive communication mechanism that expresses hateful ideology through stereotypes (Chetty & Alathur, 2018). The rapid, massive, and difficult-to-control nature of social media means that hate speech can spread within seconds, reaching a vast audience without geographic boundaries. Hate messages revolve around the group environment, the relationship between social issues, tendencies, and divisions, as politically focused issues (Gagliardone et al., 2015). Hate speech is an expression of the desire to harm, particularly division, hostility, and brutality, against the focal point of a social gathering or a specific group. For example, words that protect, divide differences, or enable acts of violence.

Hate speech is a communication phenomenon with serious social and legal impacts. The Ombudsman for Equality and Anti-Discrimination defines it as communication that belittles, threatens, harasses, or stigmatizes, thereby harming the reputation and dignity of an individual or group (Mauludi, 2018). Legally, hate speech is defined as any action, writing, performance, or phrase that is prohibited because it can incite violence or discrimination directed at both the speaker and the victim of the speech (Gunawan, 2017). The three main components of hate speech are intent, incitement, and proscribed result (Mendel, 2010). Hate speech on social media is often triggered by the misuse of digital platforms to spread hoaxes, provocation, and uncontrolled emotional expression. Hate speech can cause public unrest, social conflict, and psychological distress for individuals and groups (Prasetyo et al., 2024; Sa'idah et al., 2021). Hate speech has several key characteristics, including permanence, iterancy, anonymity, and transnational reach (Rahmi & Corsini, 2021). Hate speech is produced not solely by individual factors but also by the social environment, the anonymity of digital media, and weak social control.

Hate speech is a highly complex issue in Indonesia's ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Hate speech can trigger horizontal conflict and undermine social cohesion if not handled appropriately. Post-reform, freedom of expression in Indonesia has experienced

rapid growth, but this freedom also carries the consequence of increasing the risk of misuse of the digital public space to spread hatred. The highly heterogeneous nature of Indonesian society means that hate speech takes the form of not only individual verbal attacks but can also develop into collective and political provocations, particularly around important moments such as general elections or issues that touch on group identity (Karo, 2023). The limitations that can be prevented for those unable to handle hate speech are outlined in international law, namely the right to freedom of expression.

The Indonesian government has responded to this phenomenon with various regulations and policies. Some relevant regulations include the Criminal Code, which contains provisions on insults and slander; Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions, which regulates cybercrime, including the dissemination of negative content; and Law Number 40 of 2008 concerning the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination, which provides a legal basis for preventing identity-based hate speech. Furthermore, the National Police Chief's Circular Letter Number SE/06/X/2015 was issued to provide technical guidance to law enforcement officials in handling hate speech cases more effectively (Mauludi, 2018; Indonesian National Police, 2015). That in 2023, there were more than 12,000 reports of hate speech cases received, with approximately 35% of these involving interactions between teenagers on social media (Ministry of Communication and Information, 2024). This indicates that despite the existence of regulations, their implementation and prevention still face significant challenges, especially among the younger generation.

This phenomenon becomes even more concerning when it is associated with adolescents or high school students who are in the process of discovering their identity. Adolescents are a highly active group on social media and possess a strong sense of curiosity, but they often lack the digital literacy skills to critically filter information. This behavior often arises because individuals are unable to effectively manage their emotions in the digital space. Pre-research at SMA Nusantara Plus Ciputat showed that some students still used language that does not reflect the ethics of students in the

school environment. These statements often concern individuals, groups, student personalities, and the teaching and learning process. One case identified involved a conflict between 12th-grade students and 11th-grade students that began with a staredown, culminated in intimidation and coercion, and went viral among students. This phenomenon demonstrates how minor annoyances can escalate into hatred and harmful speech.

Social media has a significant influence on shaping people's behavior in everyday life. In practice, social media is often perceived as a free space without restrictions, or what is known as digital freedom. Therefore, users need to possess digital intelligence to avoid being easily influenced by negative opinions or even unknowingly spreading misleading information (Syarif, 2020). There is a significant relationship between emotional maturity and the tendency to engage in hate speech (Mokoagow et al., 2024). Social media itself has changed the way individuals express their thoughts and feelings. However, as activity in the digital space increases, the risk of hate speech spreading also increases and can spread rapidly. This condition makes manual detection of hate speech increasingly difficult (Karo, 2023; Elareshi, 2019). Awareness is a key factor in addressing this phenomenon.

Social media use is not only related to technical aspects, but also needs to be reviewed from a digital ethics perspective so that the younger generation is able to select content, maintain morality, and avoid negative behavior such as hate speech. Digital literacy that focuses solely on technical skills without being balanced with an understanding of media ethics has the potential to increase the risk of technology misused, including in terms of the production and dissemination of hate speech (Rawanoko et al., 2021; Tanjung et al., 2024). Repeated exposure to hate speech can trigger aggressive behavior and strengthen intolerant attitudes among adolescents (Alhakim et al., 2022). The impact of adolescents exposed to negative content such as hate speech is not limited to social interactions but can also affect psychological aspects such as emotional disorders, anxiety, and decreased self-confidence.

Understanding how adolescents respond to hate speech requires an appropriate theoretical approach. One relevant theory is social judgment

theory, which explains that an individual's attitude toward an issue is influenced by their frame of reference. Students in the context of social media assess and respond to hate speech based on the values, norms, and experiences they gain from their surroundings, such as family, school, and peer groups (Syarif, 2020; Bahari et al., 2021). Social judgment theory also introduces the concepts of latitude of acceptance, latitude of rejection, and latitude of noncommitment, which explain the extent to which an individual accepts, rejects, or remains neutral toward a message. Understanding adolescents' attitudes toward hate speech can provide important insights into how educational interventions and policies can be designed more effectively.

Strengthening character education and digital literacy in the era of digital transformation is urgently needed. Civic education plays a strategic role in equipping students with critical thinking skills, legal awareness, and tolerance needed to face challenges in the digital space. Teachers, through character education, provide role models and instill good manners of speaking and delivering material with tolerance. Learning character values is not only cognitive but also touches on internalization and concrete actions in students' daily lives within the community (Sari & Rifa'i, 2024). The most fundamental thing in addressing this problem is strengthening digital literacy and ethics in students (Supriatna & Sari, 2023). The higher a person's cognitive ability, the more selective they are in sorting out the information presented, including distinguishing between valid information and hoaxes or hate speech. Based on the problems described, this study aims to analyze (1) students' attitudes toward hate speech on social media, and (2) factors influencing their attitudes toward hate speech.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach with a survey method. The study was conducted at SMA Nusantara Plus, Ciputat, South Tangerang City, during the odd semester of the 2019/2020 academic year. The population consisted of 243 students, while 70 students were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The sample consisted of students who actively used social media and were willing to participate. The subjects were grades X.IPA-1, X.IPA-2, and

X.IPS. The research instrument consisted of a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire. The first section measured students' attitudes toward hate speech based on seven indicators adapted from the National Police Chief's Circular Letter SE/06/X/2015: provocation, insults, blasphemy, unpleasant acts, defamation, incitement, and hoaxes. The second section identified internal factors such as emotions, digital literacy, and ethical understanding, while external factors included peer group environment, parental supervision, and school culture.

The validity test results showed that all questionnaire items were valid, while the reliability test produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating a high level of instrument consistency. Data collection was conducted through distributing questionnaires to respondents, accompanied by interviews with teachers and several students, and observations in the school environment to strengthen the quantitative findings, especially regarding the factors causing the emergence of hate speech. Data analysis was carried out in two stages: descriptive analysis to describe the level of students' hate speech attitudes and inferential analysis to test the hypothesis. The normality test used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, while the hypothesis testing was carried out with a one-tailed t-test using the SPSS version 2.0 program. In addition, interview findings were analyzed thematically to enrich the understanding of the causal factors that influence students' hate speech attitudes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Attitudes Toward Hate Speech in Social Media

The level of hate speech attitudes of grade X students of SMA Nusantara Plus, Ciputat, South Tangerang, in the 2019/2020 academic year, in the use of social media, is classified as very low. Based on the results of data processing on 70 respondents, the average value of hate speech attitudes was 143.21, which is in the very low category. This value is far below the set test value, which is 294, thus indicating that, in general, students have a low level of involvement in hate speech behavior on social media. A more detailed description of the data on each indicator is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Hate Speech Attitudes

No	Indicator	Mean	Category
1	Provocation	4,25	Very Low
2	Insults	4,26	Very Low
3	Defamation	4,36	Very Low
4	Unpleasant Acts	3,99	Low
5	Defamation	4,16	Very Low
6	Incitement	4,14	Very Low
7	Hoaxes/Fake News	4,33	Very Low
Average Total		4,21	Very Low

The table above shows that almost all indicators of hate speech attitudes fall into the very low category. These findings indicate a strong rejection among students of various forms of hate speech on social media. This finding aligns with social judgment theory, which explains that an individual’s attitude toward a message is strongly influenced by the value framework established within their environment (Syarif, 2020). Students tend to reject hate speech because ethical values, school norms, and family supervision have created a space for rejection of such behavior. Despite exposure to hate speech on social media, negative attitudes toward it remain dominant due to internalized tolerance.

The results of the normality test presented in Table 1 indicate a significance value of 0.200, which exceeds the 0.05 threshold, confirming that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, parametric statistical analysis was appropriate for hypothesis testing. Based on the one-sample *t*-test results, the obtained *t* value was -159.738, which is smaller than the critical *t* value -1.66724 at the 5% significance level, $p < 0.05$. Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, indicating a statistically significant difference between the students’ mean hate speech attitude score and the predetermined test value. Further interpretation reveals that the students’ mean score of 143.21 is significantly lower than the test value of 294, suggesting that students demonstrate a strong tendency to reject hate speech behavior on social media. This statistically significant result indicates that students’ attitudes toward hate speech are not only descriptively low but also empirically different from the expected benchmark, providing a solid foundation for further discussion on the

factors shaping students’ attitudes in digital environments.

The phenomenon of low levels of hate speech among students becomes interesting when linked to national conditions regarding the internet and social media used among the younger generation. National data shows that the intensity of social media use in Indonesia is very high, especially among adolescents and young adults. A report by We Are Social and Meltwater (2024) shows that 95% of internet users in Indonesia access social media via mobile devices. The majority of these users are from Generation Z (34.40%) and Millennials (30.62%). This data indicates that high school students are a highly active group in the digital space. However, this high level of digital activity does not automatically correlate with increased hate speech behavior, as demonstrated in the findings of this study.

The results of this study also indicate that, despite students’ extensive exposure to content on social media, they have a high level of awareness to avoid directly engaging in hate speech. Most social media users are aware that posts they see contain hate speech, but tend to remain silent and refrain from taking action unless they are directly targeted (Ash-Shidiq & Pratama, 2021). Students have a good understanding of hate speech and emotionally reject such behavior (Pangaila et al., 2021). However, when it comes to action, the majority of students choose simple steps such as clicking the dislike or report button, and some even simply ignore hate comments. Only a few students dare to provide education or officially report cases. This condition aligns with this study, where students at SMA Nusantara Plus have negative attitudes toward hate speech but tend not to be proactive in stopping its spread.

These findings indicate that students have relatively good social awareness and self-control when interacting in digital spaces. Based on the measured indicators, the lowest scores were found for provocation and insults, while the spread of fake news (hoaxes) scored relatively higher. Hate speech manifests not only in the form of explicit verbal attacks but also through the spread of content that implicitly incites hatred (Rahmi & Corsini, 2021). The higher spread of hoaxes compared to provocation and insults indicates that students do not yet fully possess adequate critical digital literacy skills. Hate speech is not always explicit but can be hidden in the spread of content that implicitly incites hatred (Irawan, 2018). Given the rapid and difficult-to-control nature of social media, the spread of hoaxes can escalate into conflict and intolerance.

Although this study found that students' hate speech attitudes in social media use were very low, this finding needs to be further examined by comparing it to the context of students' actual experiences in the school environment. Hate speech is a measurable and quite abundant phenomenon on platforms like Twitter (Mondal et al., 2017). This suggests that while hate speech does exist and can be quantitatively measured, students' attitudes toward it tend to be negative and reject such behavior. In late adolescence, the inability to control emotions can increase negative behavior on social media (Mardia et al., 2023). Conversely, in this study, even though students were in the adolescent age range, the level of hate speech tended to be low. This difference is likely influenced by the more controlled school environment, teacher and parental supervision, and the presence of character education that emphasizes ethical communication.

Hate speech is a very common phenomenon in school environments, with most students experiencing it at some point. The most common forms of hate speech are insults and factual statements that attack a person's parents' name, religion, or physical appearance (Julyta et al., 2025). The problem of hate speech among the millennial generation (Wulandari et al., 2024). They identified that although this generation is adept at socializing and bold in expressing opinions on social media, they are also vulnerable to becoming targets or even perpetrators of hate

speech. This indicates the existence of protective factors, such as a conducive school environment and effective parental supervision, which can reduce the tendency for negative online behavior. Although social media is a primary platform for the spread of hate speech, its popularity among young people does not necessarily make them perpetrators (Serhan & Elareshi, 2019; Chetty & Alathur, 2018). Protective factors such as the school environment, family role, and ethical awareness play an important role in suppressing students' hate speech attitudes.

Factors Influencing Students' Attitudes Towards Hate Speech

The general definition of hate speech is often a complex and academically debated topic. Students' low attitudes toward hate speech indicate that the understanding formed through education and social environments has succeeded in internalizing values that reject such behavior (Sellars, 2020). Hate speech behaviors that occurred at SMA Nusantara Plus students in grade X included insulting each other due to differences in social status or different views and thoughts, insulting teachers based on teaching methods and appearance, provoking friends to protest school policies, teasing each other based on differences in religious beliefs, committing unpleasant acts against fellow friends, school security, defaming the school and teachers, and spreading fake news. Hate speech behaviors were carried out by students using social media via their smartphones or directly or verbally.

Although students generally reject hate speech, actual behavior can still emerge due to social influences and weak self-control. This condition can be explained by social learning theory, which emphasizes that behavior is formed through observation and imitation (Bandura, 1977). Some students continue to engage in hate speech because they are influenced by behavioral models around them, both from peers and content on social media. The impact of bullying and hate speech on children can be very damaging, both mentally and emotionally, as indicated by symptoms such as a tendency to isolate themselves, loss of self-confidence, and severe stress (Asri et al., 2022). The psychological impact of hate speech, such as shame and emotional influence, can damage students' mental health (Julyta et al., 2025). Hate speech, whether perpetrated or received

by students, can have various physical and psychological impacts.

Several factors influence hate speech in students, including a conducive educational environment, the role of teachers, an understanding of digital ethics, and parental involvement. Psychological and social factors contribute to hate speech in students, including negative emotional impulses, peer influence, and low social control in the school environment (Sa'idah et al., 2021). Hate speech is a form of verbal aggression influenced by psychological factors such as emotional immaturity, personal frustration, and the influence of the social environment (Rahmi & Corsini, 2021). Factors driving hate speech include emotional factors, ignorance, environmental influences, and political factors (Maidila et al., 2024). Emotional factors and peer influence are the most dominant factors in the context of high school students. When students are unable to manage their emotions or deal with differences of opinion, they are more likely to engage in negative behavior.

Parental involvement and supervision of social media use contribute to fostering wiser and more responsible attitudes. While emotional maturity plays a role in suppressing hate speech, other factors such as social control, digital literacy, and school support also play a crucial role (Mokoagow et al., 2024). Lack of parental supervision is a contributing factor to the imitation of abusive language in early childhood students (Jamil & Hastuti, 2025). The role of teachers and parents is crucial in fostering honesty as a bulwark against negative behaviors such as hoaxes and hate speech (Rochmawati, 2018). By cultivating honest behavior from an early age, students are equipped to reject misinformation and avoid hate speech in the digital space. Low attitudes toward hate speech among high school students can be interpreted as a result of improved digital literacy and effective supervision from parents and the community.

Conducive educational environment and the role of teachers in character development are crucial. A negative relationship between teacher social control and students' hate speech behavior is demonstrated by the higher teacher social control, the lower the tendency for students to engage in hate speech (Wulandari et al., 2022). Teacher supervision and guidance are important protective factors in limiting

deviant behavior among adolescents. Students' responses to hate speech are generally positive, indicating a positive trend among Indonesian students in addressing the issue of hate speech (Bahari et al., 2021). Educational communication plays a crucial role in providing education and persuasion, as well as setting limits on expression to minimize hate speech (Sari & Rifa'i, 2024). The positive attitudes in this study indicate that educational efforts in schools have been effective in instilling moral and ethical values that contradict hate speech.

Students' understanding of digital communication ethics is also a determining factor. Strengthening digital literacy and ethics is an effective solution to address hate speech (Supriatna & Sari, 2023). The higher a person's cognitive abilities, the more selective they are in sorting information. Integrating digital ethics into the civic education curriculum is crucial in a holistic and relevant manner (Nugraha, 2023). Discussions of digital ethics are an integral part of student competency. This can be achieved through two methods: in-depth learning materials covering digital rights and responsibilities, such as freedom of speech, privacy, and copyright, and project-based learning that encourages active student participation. Module development is needed to focus on students' critical skills in consuming digital information and incorporate practical aspects, such as online debate simulations, to resolve online conflicts.

Collective efforts are needed to combat hate speech. The involvement of technology companies is needed to monitor content and implement clear policies to prevent the spread of harmful content (Tanjung et al., 2024). Digital literacy, on the other hand, plays a crucial role by helping individuals develop a critical understanding of the dangers of hate speech. Digital literacy can encourage the creation of an ethical online culture through positive dialogue and respect for the rights of every individual, so that everyone can participate in a safe and inclusive digital space without fear. The attitude of hate speech in using social media among class X students of SMA Nusantara Plus, Ciputat District, South Tangerang, in the 2019/2020 Academic Year is known to be very low based on the calculation of indicators of provocation, insults, defamation, unpleasant

acts, incitement, and fake news. This study has limitations in that it only covers a single school environment, so the results obtained cannot be generalized or applied to the wider population due to potential differences in characteristics, culture, or other factors.

CONCLUSION

Students' attitudes toward hate speech on social media tend to be low and are more influenced by a supportive environment, an understanding of digital ethics, and supervision from family and school. Young people are not simply vulnerable to negative behavior in the digital space but have the potential to develop healthy interactions if supported by appropriate digital literacy and character education. The role of teachers and parents has proven crucial in establishing social controls that can suppress tendencies toward intolerant behavior and the spread of negative content. Students' experiences interacting on social media also influence their awareness of rejecting hate speech. Strengthening digital literacy programs that emphasize ethics, tolerance, and social responsibility is necessary. Digital literacy-based character education can be an effective strategy to prevent the development of a culture of hate speech among adolescents.

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