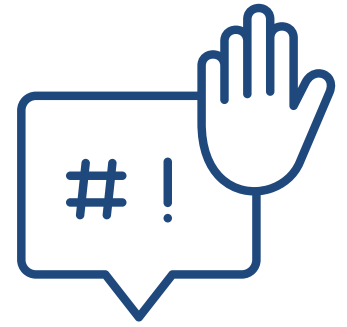


PARENT'S AND EDUCATOR'S QUICK-GUIDE TO

HATE SPEECH



What is hate speech?

Hate speech goes beyond offensive language—it encompasses any form of expression aimed at demeaning, humiliating, or inciting hostility toward a particular group or category of people. It can occur in both, online and offline environments, and is usually manifested through words, symbols, images, memes, emojis, or videos. Typically, online hate speech targets individuals or groups based on core aspects of their identity, such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or gender identity.

Why is hate speech so dangerous?

Hate speech continues to pose significant threat to individuals, communities, and democratic societies. Contemporary research confirms that those targeted by such speech frequently experience emotional distress, psychological trauma, and even physical health consequences. Anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, diminished self-worth, and, in extreme cases, self-harm or suicide are frequent consequences of hate speech and bullying.

A particularly alarming form—known as dangerous speech—can escalate tensions and directly incite violence. This type of speech is marked by recurring patterns across various cultural and historical contexts and typically targets marginalized groups.

How does hate speech differ from critical speech?

Not all forms of negative, or opposing speech is hate speech. It is entirely valid to critically discuss ideologies, political decisions, or cultural practices without being hateful. For example, one can critique a religious belief, challenge a government's actions, or question traditional customs without targeting individuals or communities.

The distinction lies in intent and focus. Critical speech addresses ideas, actions, or policies. Hate speech targets people based on inherent characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Hate Speech - Is It Bullying in Disguise?

Hate speech and bullying frequently overlap. Bullying—whether face-to-face or online—is defined as repeated, intentional, and aggressive behavior rooted in a real or perceived power imbalance. It may start as teasing or exclusion but can escalate into more serious abuse. When bullying includes degrading or attacking someone based on aspects of their identity—such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or physical appearance—it crosses into the realm of hate speech. In today's digital environment, such behaviors are increasingly visible on social media, where they can spread quickly creating serious emotional and psychological harm especially to young people.

More About Hate Speech



Legal Framework and Challenges Related to Hate Speech in North Macedonia

Legal regulation:

In North Macedonia, hate speech is punishable under the Criminal Code, particularly when it incites national, ethnic, racial, or religious hatred, discord, or intolerance. The law also includes provisions for hate-motivated crimes committed online. Additionally, the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services prohibits the broadcast of content that incites discrimination, intolerance, or hatred.

Online platforms and hate speech:

Despite the existing legal framework, hate speech remains prevalent on social media and online media outlets. It tends to escalate during election periods, with increased ethnic-based hate narratives circulating on social networks and certain media platforms.

The role of private platforms:

Although North Macedonia's Constitution guarantees freedom of expression, private companies such as social media platforms have the right to regulate content on their services. They may remove content that violates community guidelines, including hate speech, without infringing on the right to free expression.

Initiatives to combat hate speech:

In 2023, UNICEF and the Telekom Foundation for Macedonia launched a campaign against cyberbullying and online hate speech, involving young people in awareness-raising activities. The campaign aims to highlight the consequences of online violence and encourage youth to report such incidents. The campaign aims to highlight the consequences of online violence and encourage youth to report such incidents.

For further guidance, educators and parents may also consult the Council of Europe's "**No Hate Speech Movement**" initiative, which offers educational resources and best practices for addressing hate speech, particularly among youth.

A few things parents & educators can do to combat hate speech:

- **Promote healthy digital habits.** Encourage your teen to balance his/her time on Instagram with other activities. Suggest taking breaks from screens, engaging in hobbies, spending time outdoors, or connecting with friends and family in person. This balance can promote overall well-being and prevent negative effects from excessive screen time.
- **Stay informed.** As social media platforms continue to evolve, it's crucial to stay updated on new features, trends, and potential risks. Being informed allows you to guide your teen more effectively and address any concerns that may arise.



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