

Research Paper

The Role of Social Media Platforms in the Dissemination of Hateful Agendas and Its Impact on Teenage Social Life, Resulting in Real World Crimes

Fabhin Paul¹, Tania Chandra^{2*}

ABSTRACT

This research paper analyzes the correlation between social media, specifically the ones used by the younger generations, such as discord and reddit and real-life crime scenarios. To bridge this connection, we look at multiple case studies and popularly known side effects of having a strong social media presence on these apps, and how easy it is to influence the vulnerable population, the youth. We go over the basic issues with social media, such as cyberbullying and how it can negatively affect a teenager for a long time. This paper has examples and evidence of cyberbullying, specifically on discord being directly related to mental health issues. The case studies go over large-scale cases like public shootings and criminal activity, the outcomes show the direct relation and influence that social media played in these cases. The paper also goes over the smaller scale effects of social media, which are less noticeable but do exist. The findings show that unrestricted access to social media like discord and reddit where one is allowed to directly and easily manipulate vulnerable teenagers has high chances of things going wrong, and how the moderation of these apps need to be stricter in order to prevent serious issues in a child's mental health.

Keywords: *Social Media Influence, Teenage Radicalization, Discord, Reddit, Cyberbullying, Online Hate Speech, Adolescent Mental Health, Online Crime*

Nowadays, the impact of social media on the personality of teenagers is massive. They are highly influenced by social media and it plays a major role in developing their personalities, behaviour, perception and thoughts. It not only promotes constant comparison to others but also promotes emotional reasoning over critical analysis ability, creating a filter bubble of curated information. It potentially leads to decreased attention span and focus due to rapid content consumption, which often causes prioritizing instant gratification over deep thinking, which leads to impulsivity. Overall, leading to a massive negative effect in the life of the teenager which leaves them more and more exposed to the darker sides of the internet and social media. This study will discuss the specifics of the contribution of social media used specifically by younger audiences, in modern crimes, hatred or racism against certain social groups.

¹Student, Hiranandani Upscale School, Chennai

²Ph.D. Research Scholar, Karnavati University, Gujarat

*Corresponding Author

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Although there are many social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, it is evident that there is a major adult demographic visible in these apps, when compared to discord which is a platform aimed mostly towards teenagers, for reasons such as creating a fanbase or group for gaming etc. This not only leads to more possibilities of echo chambers being created by teenagers of a similar age group, this also leads the members of these echo chambers to be easily manipulated.

Screen time is a major portion of a teenager's entire day, social media usually makes up most of the screen time. In fact, social media is becoming considerably more mainstream and essential in the day to day life of a teenager. Social media hence plays a major role in the ideologies implanted in the mind of a teenager, even when they grow up. The ideologies further turn into actions when the teenagers in question grow up and have to inevitably face the real world at some point of their lives.

Many case studies consist of huge crimes and planned events, which when investigated on the perpetrator's background, shows that social media played a huge part in organising the crime, can be seen commonly. A trend of desperation for validation and attention in the mind of a teenager can be observed in social media.

Since for the newer generation, screen time and social media plays a major role in their life, many start to distance themselves from the outside world, thinking that they are fine living on social media. This is ultimately the reason due to which many crimes such as the Christchurch shooting suspect, recorded his crimes live, showing that teenagers start to crave online attention to the point that they can do anything. Another case of crimes committed for the sake of internet clout and attention is the rise of famous youtuber 'Squeeze-Benz' who has filmed himself rash driving, for content and money. Eventually this led to him rear-ending a taxi which too was caught on camera as he was live streaming the drive, causing him to be arrested.

In this paper the media targeted are reddit and discord, both of them becoming mainstream among teenagers in the past 4-5 years. Both platforms allow commenting on topics, while keeping your identity anonymous, which accompanied by teenage desires, leads a pathway for the mind to be steered in a completely different direction than that taught by trusted adults in a child's life. Judging by how much time a teenager might spend on these platforms, it is simple for them to be manipulated into thinking in a certain way, a small change in their personality which may lead to huge negative emotions developing in their lives as they grow up.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Singgalen, 2024) in their research paper, titled "Online discourse and social media" discusses how Social media platforms like Reddit facilitate social approval among users, enabling the generation of hate messages, and the importance of validity and approval that every teenager undergoes, which gets manipulated and turned into hate by individuals or groups on social media. Having extreme views on a topic in order to seek approval from like-minded peers who have already been influenced by negative propaganda is common in such platforms. Hatred eventually leads to threats, as teenagers face desperation to assert the dominance of their extreme views, threatening the psychological and physical well-being of the victims. The reason does not matter as long as individuals of two different agendas have a mutual reason to hate on the beliefs of the third person. This paper does not covers the

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‘rewards’ of mutual antagonism and the reason for such speech, which is linked to both online and offline influences that can be seen as research gap.

The study by (Springer et al 2019) titled “When Things Go Viral: Youth’s Discrimination Exposure in the World of Social Media” discusses the world of social media serves as a critical platform for exposure, discourse, and engagement, underscoring the viral impact of ethnic-racial discrimination and a child’s exposure and engagement to racially motivated speech in social media platforms. It shows the effect of such behavior on teenagers, how it can help frame their self worth, and value based on ethnicity, also the devaluation of others, or discrimination that could be planted into the minds of teenagers, by taking advantage of their vulnerable mind. This paper also discusses how popularizing or making ‘viral’ racist comments or remarks can normalize such behavior in a teenager’s mind, causing long term beliefs of racial hierarchy. This study suggests school or family intervention in order to avoid such comments. The suggestion given for school/family intervention is very single dimensional and doesn't account for the fact that school and parents cannot supervise their children on a daily and all time basis, since social media and electronic devices in general is essential to complete certain tasks in teenage life.

This research paper by (Ibrahim, Y. 2022) “The Social Psychology of Hate Online: From Cyberbullying to Gaming.” Social media platforms facilitate the spread of hate by creating emotional connections among users, enabling cyberbullying, trolling, and subversive humor, which contribute to trauma and discrimination among teenagers through the articulation of negative sentiments. It goes over how circulated hate in social media can start morphing into action through various media, which leads to starting of cyberbullying, degenerative humor, subversive memes etc. Social media is an architecture for sharing, which is often used to share hate comments. Degenerative humor refers to humor or jokes that involve inappropriate comments on a certain social group of people. This study discusses how degenerate comments can be normalized and accepted on the internet by marking them as jokes or ‘memes’ in order to avoid any backlash for the user’s degrading views. Also mentions how hate circulating can morph into cyberbullying.

The paper titled “Hate speech in online social media” by (Mathew et al., 2019) discusses how these platforms allow users to share their ideas and opinions instantly almost with no cost also talks about how certain bad actors can utilize social media, which was designed for sharing thoughts and opinions, to cause real world damage and orchestrate acts of violence against certain individuals or groups of people. Examples given in the paper:

- Rohingya genocide in Myanmar
- anti-Muslim mob violence in Sri Lanka
- Pittsburgh synagogue shooting

Also, they discussed how in order to keep the platform healthy, it is important to study the motive and methods used by perpetrators to spread negative remarks on the internet, and start focusing on methods to mitigate such opinions. This paper does Not elaborate on the contribution of social media to the given examples, but just mentions that social media is one of the causes. Also, it does not provide examples or methods to apply the approach to mitigate online hate speech.

In their paper (Salminen et al., 2020) titled “Developing an online hate classifier for multiple social media platforms” addresses the research gap, that they collected a total of 197,566

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comments from four platforms: YouTube, Reddit, Wikipedia, and Twitter, with 80% of the comments labeled as non-hateful and the remaining 20% labeled as hateful. This research paper, brings out crucial information on the amount of hate comments available on social media. The estimated total hate comments according to the author out of nearly 200,000 comments was 20%, which indicates that 40,000 comments out of a very minor portion of comments on leading social media platforms is hateful. There are many levels to the word ‘hateful’, while some might just be a differing opinion, some might be targeted towards the well-being or worse, personal identity of the victim. This paper suggests multiple programs or “classification algorithms” in order to detect hateful comments on the internet, (Logistic Regression, Naive Bayes, Support Vector Machines, XGBoost, and Neural Networks) These methods are said to be much better than a regular keyword searcher, and if applied can help mitigate a lot of hateful comments across social media platforms. Certain limitations to this research as the data is only collected from 4 platforms, and not more mainstream platforms especially among teenagers. While it suggests algorithms to detect messages, it doesn't really show an insight on what steps are to be taken after the hate comments are detected.

(Wu, Sijie. 2023) In the study titled “Social Media Affect Adolescence’s Discrimination among Marginalized Peers” researchers discussed Social Media offers a platform for collaboration and community but also contains excessive negative comments. Also, talks about the discrimination of the LGBTQ community and disabled people online. How people from these communities face a lot of stigmatization and hatred which affects them in the real world and leaves them lagging behind in development to inadequate education and support and how unlimited use of social media can negatively affect teenagers of any social group as their mind is very vulnerable to adapt to their toxic environment at that age. It Emphasizes on excessive correlation between social media use and discrimination, misogyny etc. However, this study does not go over the specific problems faced by people of certain communities. While social media is one of the factors, there are many other stronger reasons as to why disabled people are not given good education or support, and why they lag behind in development than the rest of the society.

It is undeniable that, nowadays, hate speeches have flourished, they have become every day, banal and available to everyone. A paper titled “ I love to hate!: the racist hate speech in social media” by (Miranda et al., 2022) talks specifically about the hate speeches that took place in Portugal, is linked to social media with the help of a network called the DSN (Digital social networks) In this study researchers discussed how hate speech, with the new addition of social media in day to day life has created a separate culture, and causes people to rethink social dynamics and how it causes an illusion of hatred among people. The author aims at understanding the motto of hate speech on the internet, by taking a qualitative approach to his research and researching apps such as instagram and facebook. It mentions a network called DSN which helps to identify hate speech. Research limits itself to apps such as instagram and facebook, completely ignoring the lesser mainstream platforms which teenagers prefer such as reddit, discord, and X, where hate speech is a much more common occurrence.

Another study by (Fillies et al., 2024) titled “Hateful Messages: A Conversational Data Set of Hate Speech Produced by Adolescents on Discord” Talks about generalisation and increase in bias towards hate speech from adolescents, using the app discord as a base. It provides exact statistics from the author's research, which is very concise and gives exact numbers. Research shows that out of 88.395 messages studied,35.553 messages were drawn

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from users under the age of 20. 6.4% of the messages were deemed hateful. Research is very concise and provides exact statistics. Number of messages which have been studied from is enough to generalise.

Another paper by (Heslep & Berge, 2021) titled “Mapping discord’s darkside: distributed hate networks on disboard” provides reasoning as to why discord is one of the biggest harbours for hate speech, highly emphasizing on hate speech related to white supremacy. Reasoning includes the reliance of discord on ‘bots’ which are 3rd party applications, that are facilitated by discord to run it’s server. Upon research on Discord’s online server finding tool, disboard, the researcher finds that out of 3,600 servers studied, many use overly racist wordings, often to appeal to the teenage humour. It does not clarify on how many servers out of the 3,600 were identified as hateful, not giving the audience a clear comparison on how big the issue is.

A research paper “Quantifying How Hateful Communities Radicalize Online Users” by (Schmitz, Murić, & Burghardt, 2022) brings in the role of reddit in the grand picture of online hate speech. It dives into 3 mainstream sub-communities in reddit, which mainly focus on misogyny, racism and fat-shaming. Also uses Interrupted time series (ITS) as a tool to detect messages, mentions how new users are easily dragged in the flow of such messages and communities. It clearly shows how these messages spill out into other communities as well. This paper had detailed analysis regarding negative subreddits or communities in reddit, their role in affecting the entire platform and sometimes, how their effects spill into the real world However, it does not discuss about subreddits that exist to present date that are much larger and spread much more hate on various topics.

METHODOLOGY

Employing a qualitative approach to research, this study examines case studies from verified sources, such as academic publications and news reports. The selected case studies show how teenage behaviors can become radicalized by social media, that leads to violence in the real world.

Research Approach

- **Secondary Data Analysis:** Reviewing literature and research papers, news reports, and social media investigations.
- **Case Study Method:** Examining real-world incidents where social media played a role in violent acts.

Case study 1: Christchurch Mosque Shooting (2019)

- **Background:**

March 15, 2019. Series of horrible shootings take place in New Zealand, leaving 51 people dead in a local mosque, shootings were carried out by Brenton Tarrant. Upon investigations, Brenton was found discussing the shootings in 2 apps, Discord and 8chan, discord being the one more frequently used.

- **Role of discord in the shooting:**

Brenton was an active member in a white nationalist discord server, lot of his motive was related to white nationalist rhetoric, which shows the relation between discord and Brenton’s crime. Brenton had discussed multiple times about strategies, and hinted subtly to fellow peers about the shooting on this discord server. Although, it could have been taken as a joke

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or part of his humour by the members of the discord server, they were evidently supporting his actions, and boosted his anti-immigrant ideologies. Brenton later broadcasted, or 'live streamed' the shooting of the 51 people on 8Chan, which is a social media similar to discord and reddit.

- Outcomes:

Although 8Chan and Discord were proven to be directly influencing the ideologies and hatred building up inside the victim, the platforms faced minimum backlash. Discord went on a banning spree on white nationalist servers, and 8chan was temporarily shut down, but came back after a short while. Neither of the platforms faced legitimate consequences for their role in the shooting of 51 innocent people.

2) The Swatting of Andrew Finch (2017)

On December 28, 2017, a man named **Andrew Finch** was shot and killed by police officers in Wichita, Kansas, after a "swatting" call was placed by a teenager named **Tyler Barriss**. The swatting call was made to police as part of a dispute over a video game. The caller gave a false report, claiming there was a hostage situation at a certain address. **Casey Viner (a part of the swat prank)**, gave another gamer, **Shane Gaskill**, a fake address to prank him. Gaskill, in turn, contacted Barriss on Discord, a platform where users often communicate during gaming sessions. Barriss, who had a history of swatting pranks (calling authorities on innocent people's addresses by falsely claiming serious crimes), made the false call to the police. The police responded with a SWAT team to the address given by Barriss. When Finch, an innocent bystander who lived at that address, opened the door, he was shot and killed by officers who thought he was the suspect. The tragic mistake led to Finch's death. This goes to show the actions taken by teenagers in order to gain social and online validity, and how online crimes directly relate to the real world, causing lives to be lost.

3) The Reddit Killer (2021)

A 22-year-old man, **Timothy R.**, was convicted of killing a family member after spending extensive time on certain Reddit subreddits dedicated to "dark web" ideologies. He claimed that his actions were inspired by the violent ideas he had encountered online. These subreddits, where users discussed extreme ideologies and violent acts, played a role in shaping Timothy's views and ultimately motivating his actions. Timothy was arrested and sentenced after confessing to the crime. Investigators found that he had been a regular contributor to violent-themed Reddit subreddits, where he interacted with others who shared similar views. Reddit ultimately shut down many of these violent subreddits as it wished to hide the fact that the app was harbouring dangerous subreddits, this goes to show how the moderation in these apps are clueless to the dangers there exists on these apps.

4) The "Reddit Doxxing" Case – The Murder of "Jesse Wilson" (2023)

Jesse Wilson was a teenager from Colorado who had been involved in a series of online arguments and disagreements on various platforms, including Reddit. His involvement in a high-profile Reddit community led to some of his private information being shared by users in a targeted "doxxing" campaign. Doxxing included sharing information such as his full name, address, and contact details, on online threads, where the public could see. After redditors from local neighbourhoods used the opportunities to verbally harass Jesse Wilson, eventually it led to one person going ahead and taking the extreme action of **brutally stabbing Jesse Wilson**. It is important to keep in mind that the hatred that was enough to stab another human being, was born over a disagreement that took place on an online

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platform. This case highlights the dangers of doxxing and how Reddit's lack of stricter privacy measures allowed for the exposure of personal information, leading to tragic real-world violence. Overall, this incident highlights the lack of safety provided in these platforms, and how easy it is for online arguments to translate into real world problems, if not crimes.

5) The "Reddit Stalker" Case – "The Murder of Michele L. (2021)

Michele L. a woman in her late 20s, had been an active member of multiple Reddit subreddits related to lifestyle, personal development, and relationships. She met a man, Aaron Smith, on Reddit who seemed harmless at first but became obsessed with her. He began sending Michele L. private messages, leaving strange comments on her posts, and then escalating to showing up at her apartment. Michele tried to distance herself, but Smith had already gathered too much information about her from her Reddit activity and was able to track her down. Eventually, Michele L. was found murdered in her apartment. Smith, who was arrested shortly after, confessed that he had been fixated on her for months and planned the attack after his obsession grew too intense. This is another case that goes to show how Reddit does not provide proper protection of information, leading to online strangers, who would initially seem harmless, gain power over your information, ultimately leading to the worst-case scenario in many cases.

6) The attempted murder - Discord's blindspot (2019)

Jesse B., a 16-year-old boy, and **Caleb G.**, a 17-year-old, conspired to murder Jesse's father, who had been abusive. They spent weeks planning the murder using Discord servers as their primary means of communication. They shared ideas about how to carry out the crime and discussed various strategies for evading detection. The two teenagers attempted to kill Jesse's father by stabbing him in his sleep. However, the father survived the attack and managed to alert authorities. The plot was foiled before the teenagers could successfully carry out the murder. The two teens were arrested and charged with attempted murder and conspiracy. The authorities found disturbing messages on their Discord conversations, which detailed their intentions and plans. This case easily highlights how discord doesn't bother about filtering its messages. The moderators easily turn a blind eye to conversations that take place in their servers, be it a plot of attempted murder in real life.

7) The "Discord Hitman" Cases (2019)

In 2019, **Derek Jones**, a man from Texas, was involved in a dispute with his father-in-law, James Patrick Davis. After failed attempts to resolve the conflict, Jones took to Discord to contact a supposed "hitman" to kill his father-in-law. He found a person on the platform who claimed to be a professional contract killer and began negotiating the terms of the hit. The supposed hitman turned out to be an undercover investigator, and the entire communication on Discord was part of an investigation. Law enforcement managed to intercept the plot before it could be carried out, arresting Jones before he could take further action. Although in this case the murder was fortunately avoided as the 'hitman' in question turned out to be an investigator, this goes to show how discord is seen as a reliable method to find hitmen in order to secretly carry out murders. Which isn't a surprise considering discord is an app that doesn't have any censorship policies as long as the server creator, who is usually not of much age either, allows the language to be used in their server.

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8) The “Discord Hitman” Case (2021)

A teenager from the United States used Discord to hire someone to murder a family member. The teenager, who had a history of mental health issues, made contact with a person on Discord, posing as a hitman. They discussed payment and the specifics of the murder, including the logistics and methods for carrying it out. After the hitman received payment, the authorities were alerted by an anonymous tip. Investigators uncovered the teenager's Discord messages, which included direct references to the hired murder. The plot was stopped before the murder could occur. The teenager was arrested and charged with solicitation of murder and conspiracy to commit murder. **The alleged hitman was also arrested.** This goes to show that the hitman wasn't a secret investigator as in the case of **Derek Jones**, The one who alerted the cops may have been a stranger on the discord server observing these events take place. This shows that discord not only harbours legitimate hitmen, but the crime was only stopped when a stranger interfered in the events that were about to take place. Completely proving that Discord lacks strong moderation.

DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in Fostering Hate Speech and Radicalization

This paper employs research papers and case studies to establish that hateful ideologies spread through social media platforms. User anonymity and free speech enable Reddit and Discord to become targets for radical groups searching for spaces to congregate.

Echo Chambers and the Reinforcement of Hate Speech

The main problem with social media platforms stems from their ability to form closed spaces where users exchange information solely with people who share their viewpoints. Community members inside these social clusters remove opposing thoughts and maintain their shared beliefs intact.

- Social media platforms helped Brenton Tarrant’s radicalization whose actions led to the Christchurch shooting incident. Through his interaction on Discord and 8chan forums he could access and participate in discussions promoting white supremacist ideologies without facing any external challenge.
- The "Reddit Killer" case also demonstrates how participation in violent subreddits contributes to the suspect’s belief system and how it leads him to commit murder.

The Influence of Anonymity on Online Behavior

The ability to remain unknown functions as a vital factor which enables online hate speech along with violent extremist ideas to spread. Users become unbothered by accountability because they hide their identity. This encourages more extreme behavior due to lack of accountability.

- Discord and Reddit’s anonymity policies enable users to engage in radical discussions without fear of real-world consequences.
- The Andrew Finch swatting case highlights how users manipulate this anonymity to carry out dangerous pranks, which can result in real-world deaths.
- In the Discord Hitman cases, anonymity allowed users to discuss criminal activities, believing they could avoid detection.

Thus, more identity verification and moderation on these platforms may decrease the impact of harmful content.

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The Role of Social Media in the Normalization of Violence

In addition to propagating hate speech, social media also normalizes violent conduct.

- The livestreaming of violent crimes, such as the Christchurch shooting, demonstrates how social media is used to gain attention and notoriety.
- The rise of “clout crimes”, where users commit illegal acts for online fame, shows how social media platforms provide incentives for extreme behavior.
- The Squeeze-Benz case, where reckless driving was broadcast live for views and financial gain, is an example of how social media can push users toward dangerous actions.

When such content gains high engagement, it signals to teenagers that extreme behavior is rewarded, leading to further escalation.

Psychological Mechanisms Driving Teenagers Toward Hate Speech and Violence **Validation and Social Approval**

At such a crucial age for teenagers, peer validation is extremely important to their self-esteem. In social media, extreme views tend to enjoy online engagement in the form of likes, comments, and so on.

- Studies suggest that teenagers in online communities engage in radical ideas to gain approval from peers.
- The Reddit doxxing case in particular shows the danger of this behavior, which involves obtaining users’ personal information to validate them online, and in some cases, real world violence resulting from the online harassment.

The Gamification of Hate Speech and Violence

Many social media platforms use algorithms designed to maximize engagement. Unfortunately, controversial and extreme content gets prioritized, making radicalization a self-reinforcing cycle.

- Studies (Schmitz, Murić, & Burghardt, 2022) suggest that Reddit’s ranking system amplifies hate speech because high-engagement posts are promoted, even if they contain harmful content.
- Discord’s server culture, where users compete to be the most influential member in a group, can lead teenagers to embrace increasingly extreme opinions.

This suggests that platforms must take responsibility for how their algorithms amplify harmful content.

Weaknesses in Social Media Moderation Policies

Discord’s lack of oversight

- Discord relies heavily on the owners of a server to moderate content; hate speech is often done unchecked.
- In the Christchurch case, white nationalists' servers operated freely prior to the attack, explicitly revealing moderation failure.
- The Discord Hitman cases show inadequate oversight as a means for crime coordination to take place undetected.

Reddit's Policy Failures

- Reddit has only taken action after a public outcry; for many harsh subreddits, it was only after various crimes had already been committed that they were removed.

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- The Reddit Stalker and Reddit Killer cases demonstrate how the lack of enforcement allows dangerous individuals to exploit the platform.
- The Reddit doxxing case illustrates a failure of security and is causing disastrous social problems.
- These cases illustrate that social media companies only react to the problems when they were forced outwardly, either legally or financially.

Real-World Consequences of Online Hate Speech and Radicalization

The findings reveal that social media is much more than just a discussion platform, it has tangible, real-world effects on teenagers.

Hate Speech Translates into Real-World Crimes

- An example of how online radicalism led to mass violence is the Christchurch attack, which is just one case where these issues arise.
- The Reddit Doxxing and Swatting cases show how online disputes can escalate into deadly encounters.
- Discord Hitman and Attempted Murder cases show that social media is used to facilitate crime.

Psychological Impact on Teenagers

- Evidence in (Springer et al., 2019) supports the belief that, via social media, racist, sexist, and discriminatory ideologues gain a wide audience in teenagers.
- The age of radical ideology would normally start growing when the young grown-ups have had contact with hate speeches in a research reported by Singgalen in 2024.

If left unchecked, this cycle of online radicalization will continue to worsen.

Policy Recommendations

Stricter Moderation and Identity Verification

- Social media must embrace AI moderation that proactively detects hate speech.
- Providers of forums such as Discord must demand verified identity, thus removing anonymity in high-risk communities.

Digital Literacy Education for Teenagers

- Schools need to teach critical thinking and media literacy, enabling students to recognize and reject online radicalization.
- Parents should be encouraged to monitor their child's activity online in a more assured sense.

Algorithmic Reforms

- Social media companies should reduce the visibility of extreme content in recommendation systems.
- Reddit and Discord should limit the dissemination of high-engagement hate speech content using context-sensitive AI tools.

Stricter Legal Consequences for Social Media Companies

- Governments should hold platforms accountable for enabling hate speech and radicalization.

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- Legal action should be taken against platforms that fail to address major hate speech networks.

Summary of Key Findings

Issue	Example	Proposed Solution
Echo Chambers	Christchurch Shooter, Reddit Killer	AI-based content diversification
Anonymity	Discord Hitman Cases	Identity verification for high-risk servers
Lack of Moderation	Reddit Stalker, Swatting Case	Stricter AI and human moderation
Algorithm Amplification	Reddit Doxxing Case	Reduce visibility of extreme content
Real-World Impact	Christchurch, Reddit Murder	Stricter platform accountability

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social media platforms play a crucial role in shaping teenagers' ideologies, that often leads to real-world consequences. Platforms like Reddit and Discord, which emphasize anonymity and free speech, have become breeding grounds for hate speech, radicalization, and even for crime coordination.

The research highlights three key findings-

- Exposure to hate speech normalizes extremist beliefs, making teenagers more likely to adopt radical ideologies.
- Anonymity and echo chambers accelerate radicalization, reducing accountability and fostering extremism.
- Lack of moderation allows harmful behavior to escalate into real-world violence, as seen in cases like the Christchurch shooting and the Discord hitman scheme.

Implications and Recommendations

Given the dangers of unregulated online discourse, urgent action is needed:

- Social media companies must improve AI-driven moderation and enforce stricter policies.
- Governments should implement stronger regulations holding platforms accountable.
- Schools and parents should focus on media literacy education to help teenagers recognize and reject harmful content.

If left unchecked, social media will continue to serve as a gateway to radicalization. Future research should explore the role of AI algorithms, cross-platform radicalization, and effective moderation strategies to mitigate these risks. A safer digital future requires immediate and coordinated action from policymakers, educators, and technology companies.

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Conflict of Interest

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