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**MATE – An Innovative, Student-Centered Approach
to Intercultural Skills Acquisition for Students and Young Migrants**

Coordinated by

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1. Introduction

Please provide a summary of the main findings and the overall situation of hate speech as found in your research.

Cyprus became a migration destination only at the end of the 1980s. After abandoning the restrictive immigration policy followed until 1991, in an effort to meet low-skill labour shortages generated by an economic development model based on mass tourism and services (Trimikliniotis, 2013), Cyprus attracted a substantial number of migrants amounting to 5.7% of the population (Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2012). According to the 2015 Migration Policy Index, anti-immigrant attitudes are higher in Cyprus than on average in the EU. Additionally, Cyprus does not provide favourable conditions for foreigners to access and integrate in the labour market on a long-term basis and to have real opportunities to participate in democratic life. The current hardening of immigration control in Cyprus is closely related to the recent financial crisis. A side effect of the economic policies pursued has been the intensification of debates on migration and a stronger anti-migration sentiment. Indicative of this development is the sustained campaign by antiimmigrant politicians, who have been targeting migrants, particularly asylum-seekers, as excessively benefiting from welfare allowances and health care services (Miloni, Spyridou & Vadratsikas, 2015). During the academic year 2018-2019, 51,086 students were enrolled in Cypriot universities. 47% of them (23,872) are Cypriots, 35% (17,959) are European citizens and 18% (9,255) are third-country citizens¹.

¹ Source: <https://politis.com.cy/politis-news/kypros/synolika-51-086-chiliades-oi-foitites-stin-kypro-oi-misoi-allodapoi/>

Main Findings of the Research

According to our research, hate speech in Cyprus revolves around five axes:

- a) Race and ethnicity
- b) Physical appearance
- c) The socio-economic status
- d) Political orientation

Race and ethnicity are commonly targeted traits; they mostly rely on stereotyped notions of superiority and tend to be cultivated in the family environment. More recently, stereotyped discourses about immigrants enjoying benefits and dismantling national and social cohesion -stemming primarily from far-right groups- tend to consolidate prejudiced and xenophobic attitudes.

The study (both in the focus groups and the survey) designated an important aspect of hate speech, which is often neglected. The physical appearance of young people constitutes a fertile ground of hate speech. Apparently, young people are being harassed and bullied because their appearance does not conform to well-established notions of accepted looks.

The third axis of hate speech found in the Cypriot landscape revolves around discriminatory and negative discourses targeting the socio-economic status of a person. Interestingly enough, the survey results showed that students of higher income are more likely to express hate speech against others.

Finally, a common target of hate speech is the political orientation of a person. In the Cypriot environment this is partly linked to the polarization of the society because of the Cyprus issue and its potential resolution, and also associated with a more widespread condition where extremists and hatemongers have the opportunity to harass and attack people of different views, especially online.

Regarding the punishment and criminalization of hate speech, young people do not hold a strong opinion. Although the majority believes that hate speech should be severely punished, yet the majority of those who have used hate speech claim to have done so because they were expressing their beliefs freely.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desktop research

ONLINE

Data was sought on Facebook which comprises the most popular social network in Cyprus. In particular, we looked at the Facebook pages of the youth divisions of the main political parties in Cyprus:

- EDON (ΕΔΟΝ) (affiliated to AKEL, a communist influenced party) <https://www.facebook.com/EDON.Cyprus/>
- NEDISY (ΝΕΔΗΣΥ) (affiliated to Dimokratikos Synagermos, a right-wing party) <https://www.facebook.com/nedisycy/>
- EDEK Youth (Νεολαία ΕΔΕΚ) (affiliated to ΕΔΕΚ) (Κίνημα Σοσιαδημοκρατικών), (a centre-left party) <https://www.facebook.com/NeolaiaEdek1969/> and
- ELAM (extreme right wing) <http://elamcy.com/category/neolea/>.

In the case of ELAM, because the Facebook page of the party was shut down in April 2017 due to evidence of hate speech (<https://dialogos.com.cy/den-mas-pezi-to-facebook-paraponiete-to-elam/>), we studied the website of the party, and in particular, the “Youth” Section of the website as the youth division does not have a separate website. In order to complement our sources, we also looked at the Facebook page of NIKI, which is the student party affiliated to ELAM.

Second, we analysed the content of one of the most popular websites addressing students in Cyprus: <https://studentlife.com.cy/>.

Third, following the data collection guidelines, we looked at the content of AEGEE Cyprus on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AEGEE-Contact-In-Nicosia-634630643406509/>) but we did not detect any form of hate speech.

Finally, we studied the Facebook accounts of six persons who are considered influencers in the Cypriot public sphere: Konstantinos Pittakas (student), Anastasios Angelides (Hr Manager – in the past CUT student), Marinos Nomikos (Columnist at newspaper), Iakovos Mina (CUT Student), Antonis Alexopoulos (Associate lecturer) and Constantinos Constantinou (Costis Con) (Columnist at newspaper).

OFFLINE

The study analysed content (uploaded on YouTube) from speeches of student candidates during the election period at the Cyprus University of Technology.

Also, we looked at messages printed on walls in the city centre around CUT and we analyzed racist messages/graffiti discussed on news stories.

2.2 Focus Groups

The sample of our study comprises of local (Cypriot students) and foreign students from Uganda, Greece, Ukraine, Georgia and Romania. The majority are students studying at the Department of Communication and Internet Studies and the Nursing School of the Cyprus University of Technology.

Participants were selected through a convenience sampling method. An open call was sent on social media to local and foreign students. During the selection process we tried to keep a balance between male and female participants and also between local and foreign students. The main selection criterion was their interest to participate. In the two focus groups we had 20 participants (10 in each focus group). In terms of gender, each focus group had six males and four females. In terms of ethnicity, each focus group had five local students and five with a foreign background.

During the first focus group, one foreign student (male) (FG1-5) and one local (female) (FG1-7), felt slightly awkward and embarrassed and refrained from expressing themselves freely and adequately. This limitation of the study may be attributed to both the circumstances of the discussion and also the synthesis of the focus group. It is argued that local and foreign students should have been recruited separately.

Students of local background

In total, 10 students with local background participated in the two focus groups. These students mentioned that they use Facebook, YouTube and Instagram frequently.

Students of immigrant background

In total, 10 students of foreign background participated in the two focus groups. They arrived at different times in Cyprus, between 2009 to 2018. They come from Greece (2), Uganda (2), Ukraine (3), Georgia (1) and Romania (2)². They are frequent users of social media, and in particular, Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, Vk, WhatsApp and Twitter.

Participation forms

See MATE_IO1A3_Participation_Form_FocusGroup_Cyprus.pdf

Consent forms

See MATE_IO1A3_Consent_Form_FocusGroup_Cyprus.pdf

Setting

a. Location

Both focus groups took place in a conference room of the department of Communication and Internet Studies of the Cyprus University of Technology in Limassol.

b. Timing

The focus groups took place on the following dates:

- 05/4/2019, 16:30 – 17:45
- 12/4/2019. 15:00 – 17:00

² Two of the participants of foreign background were born in Cyprus, but one of their parents comes from a third-country



The focus groups took place on Friday evenings in order to make it easier for students to participate regarding their class schedule.

Facilitator profile

The focus groups were moderated by Raphael Sofokleous. Raphael is a PhD candidate at the Department of Communication and Internet Studies at Cyprus University of Technology. He is an experienced researcher in qualitative research and has conducted substantial research on the topic of discrimination. Raphael moderated the discussion, encouraged participants to express themselves freely and managed misunderstandings.

Assistant/note taker profile

The assistant note taker was Rebecca Ioannou, a fourth year undergraduate student at the department of Communication and Internet Studies at Cyprus University of Technology. Rebecca has experience in conducting focus group discussions. Rebecca had an assisting role, took notes and facilitated the discussion.

Materials

The consent form and the participant form were signed at the beginning. The discussion was audio recorded, while sheets and pens were made available to the participants if needed to take notes. A tag with the name of each participant was placed in front of them, in order to facilitate the discussion and create a sense of intimacy. The discussion was based on the focus group script provided, and started with the following question: “In your opinion, proportionally to the total population of Cyprus, how many immigrants do you think live in Cyprus?”.

Participants were encouraged to freely express themselves at any point. To avoid confusion, it was suggested that only one person speaks at each time. The atmosphere was good and friendly as most of the participants known each other. At the end of each focus group, refreshments and snacks were proposed to the participants.

2.3 Questionnaire

2.3.1 Methodology

An open call was made to students through social media, emails, face to face communication and class lectures. Responses were collected from April 12 until May 31, 2019. A total of 217 responses were collected; 189 respondents are local students and 28 respondents are foreign students (from Greece, Romania, UK, Colombia, Uganda, Georgia and Kenya).

2.3.2 Limitation(s)

The main limitation of the research concerns the composition of the sample due to the overrepresentation of local students. This limitation among others is due to the fact that the questionnaire was distributed only in Greek (the local language) and thus a percentage of foreign students was excluded.

3. Findings

3.1 Desktop Research

3.1.1 Main forms of hate speech offline

The political conflict regarding the Cyprus issue is the main arena of hate speech bringing to the fore ethnocentric and nationalistic perspectives.

There is a clear division between “us” and “them”. Us refers to those Cypriots who acknowledge “occupation”, who consider themselves Greeks in the broad sense of the term, and ancestors of ancient Greece and Alexander the Great and who perceive the idea of the federation as “turkishazion”. “Them” refers to those who are ready to reconcile towards a viable solution to the Cyprus problem and who opt for a Cypriot identity and culture.

This opposition is well- connected to political ideology (left-right) and portrayed as a token of resistance to protect the Nation that is threatened by globalization and capitalism.

Although online ethnocentric-discourses prevailed offline we also found limited

evidence of so claimed anti-fascist discourses. Those who do not agree with the solution of the bizonal, bicomunal federation are accused by their political opponents as “fascists”, “authoritarian” and “dangerous”.

Respectively, hate speech against immigrants was scarcely documented offline. A wall message wrote: “Romania Mafia”, a statement which reproduces well-established stereotypes of immigrants as “thieves” and “dangerous”.

Hate speech is constructed at the dipole “we” vs “them”. We are right, we are entitled to our identity, we have suffered enough, we need to protect ourselves and our rights from the “progressives”, the “immigrants”, the “homosexuals”.

Hate speech discourses are justified by an underlying argument that someone needs to say stop to “them” otherwise our existence is at stake.

We did not find substantial evidence to support racism and discrimination offline; we came across a stereotypical portrayal of immigrants -and in particular Romanias as “mafiosi”, connoting an inherent inclination to criminality.

Despite notions of widespread hate speech, our findings show limited evidence of hate speech in general, and when found it was mostly detected online.

It ought to be mentioned that within the Cyprus context, the political conflict around the Cyprus problem (and the relevant ideologies) seems to provoke more hate speech when compared to anti-immigrant discourses.

However, it is worth noting that both types of hate speech detected (ethno-centric, nationalistic and xenophobic, racist) share some common elements: a) divide societies between “us” and “them”, b) take for granted the superiority of “us”, c) employ an anti-neoliberal view in the sense that the powerful/ elite impose political decisions that serve their interests, d) natives (in the case of Cyprus the natives are Greeks) should resist, e) natives cannot afford to stay silent (but need to speak the truth) because the political and economic independence of the country is at stake.

3.1.2 Main forms of hate speech online

Discourses of hate speech are very limited and mostly found on the website of ELAM (the right-wing party), and to a smaller extend on the accounts of influencers.

The Facebook pages of the main political parties adhere to the tenets of political correctness. In Cyprus the main hate speech discourses focus primarily on the political ideology (left-right) and on the position regarding the Cyprus problem.

The second most frequent form of hate speech is anti-immigrant discourses.

Discourses of hate speech found are predominantly associated with political ideology which is debated on two levels: a) the left-right division and b) positioning on the Cyprus issue.

We found evidence of severe political antagonism which results in nationalistic discourses. The nationalistic discourse, often includes hate speech against “the traitors”, “those who bargain away the country”, namely those who support the idea of compromises in order to find a solution, and regard the creation of a bizonal, bicomunal federation as a viable solution for the Cyprus problem. A clear division between “us” and “them” was identified. The former perceive themselves as saviors of the nation, the national identity, and in the long run of political and economic independence. In this discourse Turkish-Cypriots are seen as Turks and any tolerance towards them equates with a national disaster. Another trait of the nationalistic discourses, is the extensive employment of alarm language (“struggle”, “resistance”, “short-term solutions”, “dangerous suicidal path”).

Anti-immigrant discourses is the second most frequent type of hate speech detected, however only in the case of ELAM. The number of immigrants is too big (massive) and thus the national identity and the economic prosperity of the locals are severe threatened. In particular, xenophobic hate speech is based on expressed concerns of demographic alteration, of Islam (islamophobia), unemployment (they will take our jobs), and security (immigrants are often portrayed as “thieves”, and “dangerous”. Such concerns are put forward to target immigrants and justify the anger felt by the communicators. It is worth noting that anti-immigrant discourses tend to treat economic immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers alike.

It is worth mentioning that nationalistic political discourses and anti-immigrant discourses share a common anti-capitalist argumentation: the power elites [Europe (Berlin), the USA] have imposed globalization, and thus influence political developments and the economy. Therefore, Cypriots should resist and protect their national independence.

The third type of hate speech detected targets homosexuals and minorities. The social groups are presented in stereotypical manners as “weird” and “substandard” who threaten “to dismantle the racial status of each nation-state”. Another type of attack against them lies in the argument that they present themselves as weak only to receive more benefits, which is at the expense of the “normal, native people”.

Ethno-centric and anti-migrant hate-speech expresses itself as a discursive act of national identity protection and as an act of alarming. The country is faced with severe challenges: the Turks (a traditional enemy), the large number of immigrants who try to survive at the expense of the locals, neo-liberalism that drives globalisation and limits political and economic independence.

Hate speech thus is employed in the context of cultural, economic and political issues. These issues are addressed sentimentally, while argumentation is simplistic, often causing false casualties between developments.

Using generalisations, simplifications, exaggerations and insults, hate speech opens a gap between “us” and “the other”, insists on difference(s) and creates a power relation that puts the speaker in the strong position.

3.2 Focus Groups

The main findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The majority of participants expressed positive attitudes towards immigrants, and no extreme racist or discriminatory opinions were identified. However, the majority thinks that Cypriots are xenophobic.
- 2) Hate speech was predominantly defined as offensive behaviour.
- 3) The basic motivation for racism and discrimination against others is a stereotyped sense of superiority.
- 4) Lack of education and a racist family environment are viewed as the main factors cultivating racist attitudes.

- 5) Most participants were aware of racist and hate speech incidents both online and offline
- 6) Offline hate speech is considered more important than online.
- 7) While racism on the basis of race is considered the most frequent type of discrimination, it was argued that 'racism toward the poor' (class racism) is equally important, and sometimes tends to overcome racial discriminations. Special emphasis was also given to gender and sexual racism.
- 8) While hate speech and racist behaviour are considered a bad thing that needs to be avoided and fixed, however when the discussion reached the issue of legal perspectives and punishments, the majority were opposed. It seems that participants view hate speech as bad behaviour and not as an indictable act.

3.2.1 Definition(s) of hate speech

Dominant view: Offensive behaviour rooted in a stereotyped perception of inferiority toward others. The offensive behaviour can be based on sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, class etc.

Other views: Ethnocentrism.

Participants defined hate speech predominantly as offensive behavior rooted in a stereotyped perception of inferiority toward others.

3.2.2 Forms of hate speech

While racism on the basis of race came up as the most frequent type of discrimination, it was argued that 'racism toward the poor' (class racism) is equally important, and sometimes it tends to overcome racial and other discriminations. For example, it was fervently argued that one may be gay or black, but if he/she has a lot of money, it is unlikely that he/she will experience racist behaviour.

Additionally, students think that hate speech based on gender, sexual orientation and physical abilities are also very common. Finally, participants emphasized the case of hate speech based on Physical appearance. It was argued that there is a tendency to treat dark people suspiciously. The opposite stands for blonde and white people. In their opinion, this is odd, as Cypriots tend to have dark colours.

3.2.3 Motivation(s) for hate speech

According to the participants, hate speech is mainly motivated by a false sense of superiority, and in some cases because of insecurity and life disappointment. Lack of proper education, a racist family environment and the media are seen as the main factors that tend to cultivate and legitimize hate speech.

3.2.4 Factors facilitating and/or reproducing hate speech

Dominant view: hate speech is provoked by a stereotyped perception of inferiority toward others.

Other views: insecurity, media stereotypes, lack of proper education, a racist family environment.

3.2.5 Differences between online and offline hate speech

Dominant view: Offline hate speech is much more important than online. Online hate speech is not that harmful; basically, it degrades the person who is writing such comments. Eventually the community will alienate these people.

Other views: Both types are important and need to be dealt with through legal provisions.

3.2.6 Perceptions on how to combat hate speech

various views:

- Internet control of speech
- Include relevant courses in school and university curricula
- Families play a crucial role (different opinions between teaching through talking and hitting when kids do not conform)
- Public disgrace – “name and shame”.

General views on racism in Cyprus

Dominant view: Cypriots are xenophobic

Other views: Cypriots are not that xenophobic compared to other countries

Dominant view: Children are not bad with foreign kids, they accept the difference

Other views: Children tend to bully those who are different in any way

Dominant view: Need to distinguish between hate speech which insults and hate speech that encourages physical violence.

The punishment of the former should be light, whilst legal actions should be taken in the second case.

Other views: Hate speech should be punished anyway.

The majority of the participants think that parents and teachers should teach children from early on to be tolerant toward differences. Although the majority of students see immigrants positive and condemn incidents of hate speech, however some of them draw a distinction between hate speech (as a verbal act which expresses offensive discourses) and hate speech that promotes physical violence. That said, most of them believe that hate speech punishments should have an educational character rather than be treated as typical indictable acts.

Regarding online hate speech, it was argued that governments should apply an online control system that would forbid specific words. For example, the word immigrant should not be accompanied by a negative word.

Another participant disagreed with the absolute control that Facebook tries to apply in order to combat hate speech because it restricts freedom of speech. Everyone should write what he/she believes and the state should punish those who express hate speech by fines.

3.2.7 Describe three-four main incidents/experiences of hate speech

Regarding hate speech experiences, most participants mentioned incidents of hate speech on the basis of ethnicity and race, homosexuality, gender and religion. The most characteristic incidents include:

- Young boys on the street yelling to people from Bangladesh to go back to their country.
- High school students bullying foreign students at school by calling names and spitting on them

- A Romanian girl at school who received a message from her classmate saying that he would give her money to have sex with her.
- Quite a few participants mentioned Elam's anti-immigrant discourses, which are seen as a major problem
- Another participant had read somewhere that refugees bring and transmit diseases.
- Participants referred to common stereotypes in the Cypriot society which link third-country nationals and black people to the status of servants.
- A participant from Uganda mentioned three experiences: a) as he was walking in Limassol, young boys called him a black monkey; b) he took the bus and as he was looking for his student card, the driver didn't believe he was a student, and that he was lying in order to pay less money; c) when he went to give blood to the hospital, a nurse offended him by saying "Are you African? Why do you come here?".
- A girl from Ukraine shared her own experience of hate speech at high school because she didn't know to speak Greek.
- When the same girl asked for a job, the responsible at the office told her that she had to choose between six jobs -all related to cleaning.
- Two participants mentioned the anti-immigrant discourses adopted by the archbishop of Cyprus who called immigrants dirty.
- The Archbishop was mentioned several times as he systematically echoes stereotypical and very negative discourses about homosexuality and homosexuals. According to the participants his position allows him to reproduce such discourses and he cannot be stopped.
- Another participant mentioned a similar event of hate speech toward homosexuals at school by a teacher who told them that homosexuality is a psychological illness.
- At university one participant referred to the anti-immigrant speech given by a far-right student who had the nerve to ask Erasmus students to vote for her.

Although participants mentioned quite a few hate speech incidents in the real world (either as witnesses or as victims), their hate speech experiences online are very limited. The most common incident they have encountered is to have someone write anti-immigrant comments on social media, especially Facebook.

- An example given was associated with the rape and murder of a girl in Greece by a Greek and an Albanian. Users talked too racist about the Albanian and said nothing about the Greek guy.
- Another participant referred to an online promotion by a super market advertising reduced prices for turkey. An ignorant user expressed hate speech toward the brand, thinking that the supermarket promotes products from Turkey (“the enemy”)
- One participant expressed the opinion that the most serious hate speech comes from institutional organizations and gave the example of social media posts claiming that that they don’t want Arabs to live in Cyprus.
- Another participant had read an online comment that Rumanians are to blame for 80% of the accidents in Cyprus
- Two participants talked about a case which ended up in court. Someone called a Cypriot person stupid because he had a child with an Asian woman.

3.3 Questionnaire

Main findings

1. Hate speech is predominantly defined as racist behavior attempting to derogate other people due to identity traits.
2. Half of the respondents have experienced hate speech.
3. 71.4% of the foreign respondents have experienced hate speech.
4. Although there is much discussion lately about the extent of hate speech taking place online, our findings suggest that hate speech is more frequent in real life. About one fourth of the respondents (24.7%) claim to have suffered hate speech incidents online, while the respective percentage offline was double (49.8%).
5. The physical appearance is the most targeted trait of hate speech both offline and online
6. 27% of the respondents admit to have used hate speech against others.

7. The majority of those who have exerted hate speech claim to have done so as an expression of their beliefs.
8. The majority (68%) agrees or strongly agrees that the “punishment of hate speech should be strict”.
9. Gender did not prove to be a factor triggering hate speech offline, but the opposite was found in the online environment, with male students were found to be attacked more frequently.
10. Income seems to have an effect on how the respondents behave especially offline. The findings show that as the income increases, so does the percentage of the students who admit to have used hate speech against others.

3.3.1 Definition(s) of hate speech

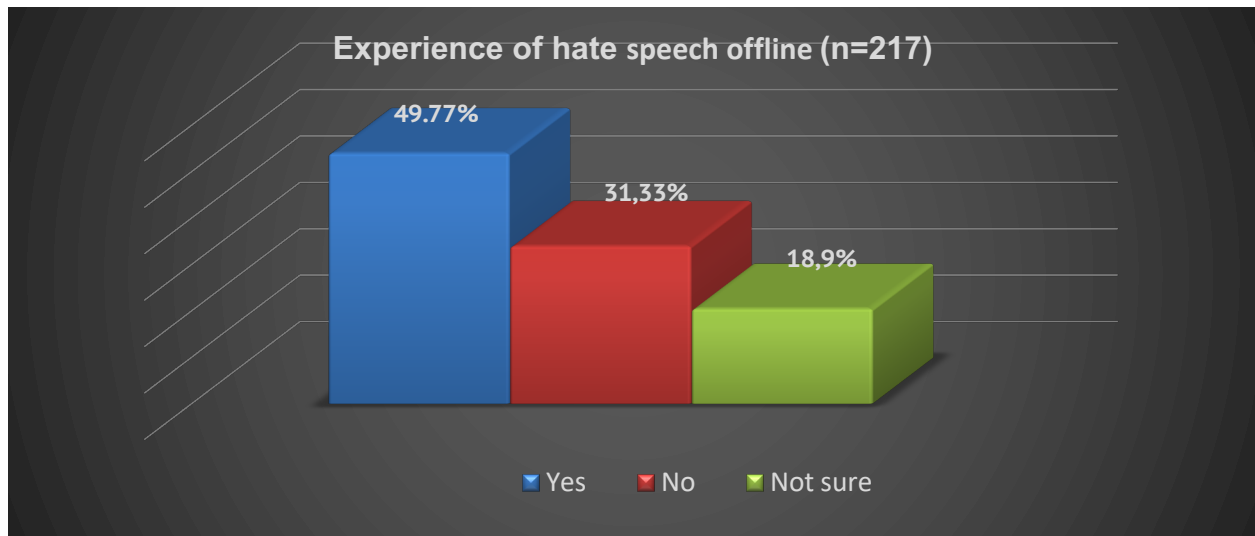
A set of common elements emerged through the analysis of the answers provided by the respondents;

- racism against ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion; “racism” and “racist behavior” were the most common terms encountered in the analysis
- offensive behavior
- dislike of others because of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion
- content of others
- anger towards others
- prejudice against others
- hostility against others

3.3.2 Common forms of hate speech experienced

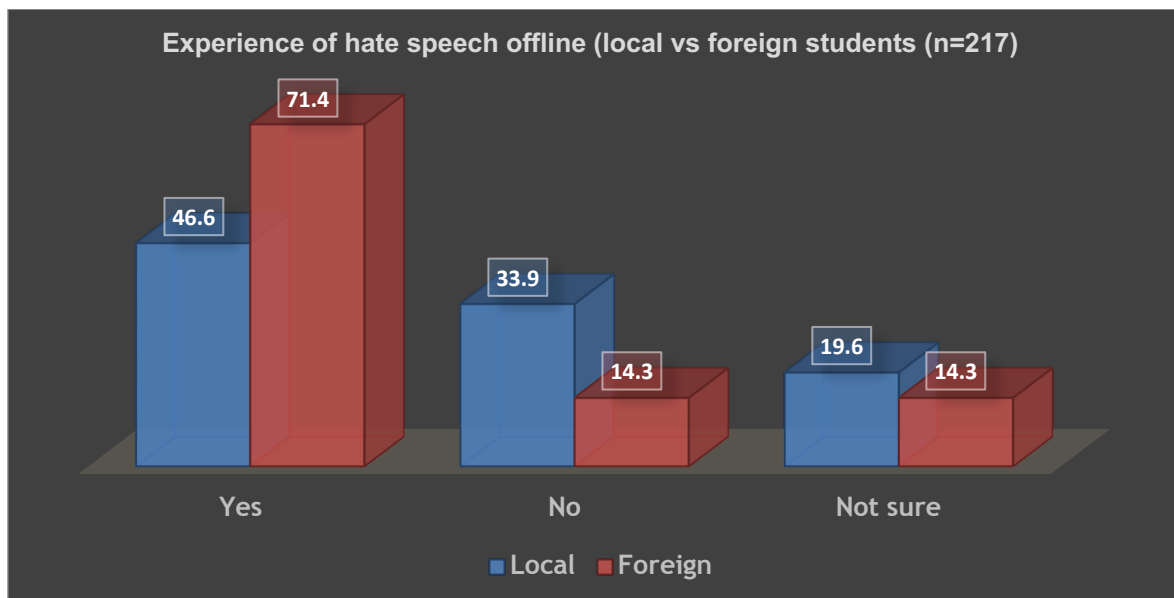
About half of the sample (49.8%) have experience hate speech offline, whilst one third (31,3%) of the sample have not. Interestingly enough approximately one fifth of the respondents (18.9%) are “not sure” (see Graph 1).

Graph 1



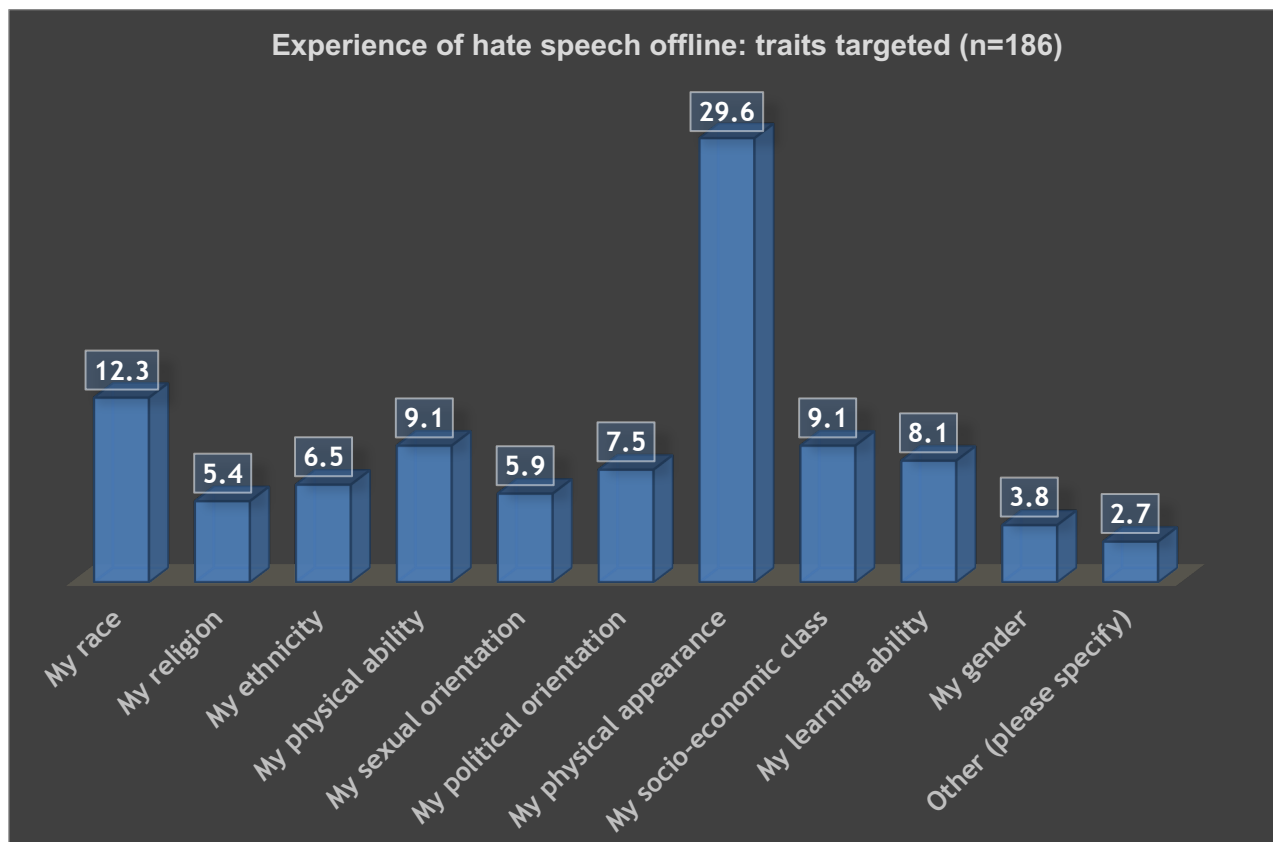
As expected, when comparing the percentages of hate speech victims between the local students and the foreign ones, some differences emerge. Almost two thirds of the foreign students (71.4%) have experienced hate speech, whilst only 14.3% of the foreign sample (as opposed to 31.33% of the local students) claim to have never been victims of hate speech (see Graph 2).

Graph 2



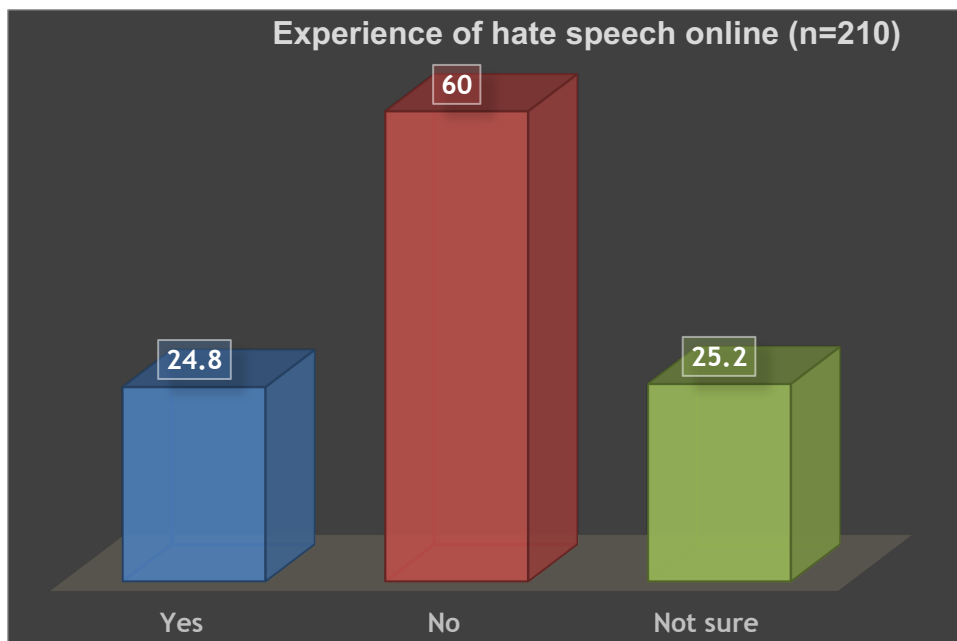
When asked which aspect of their identity was being predominantly targeted (Q3), the answers of the students point to a variety of characteristics. Contrary to common wisdom, the most common form of hate speech referred to the ‘physical appearance’ of the respondents (29,6%), while ‘race’ was the second most frequent source of hate speech (12,3%). The physical abilities and the socio-economic status of the respondents were found to be a rather common target of hate speech to an extent of 9.1% respectively (see Graph 3).

Graph 3



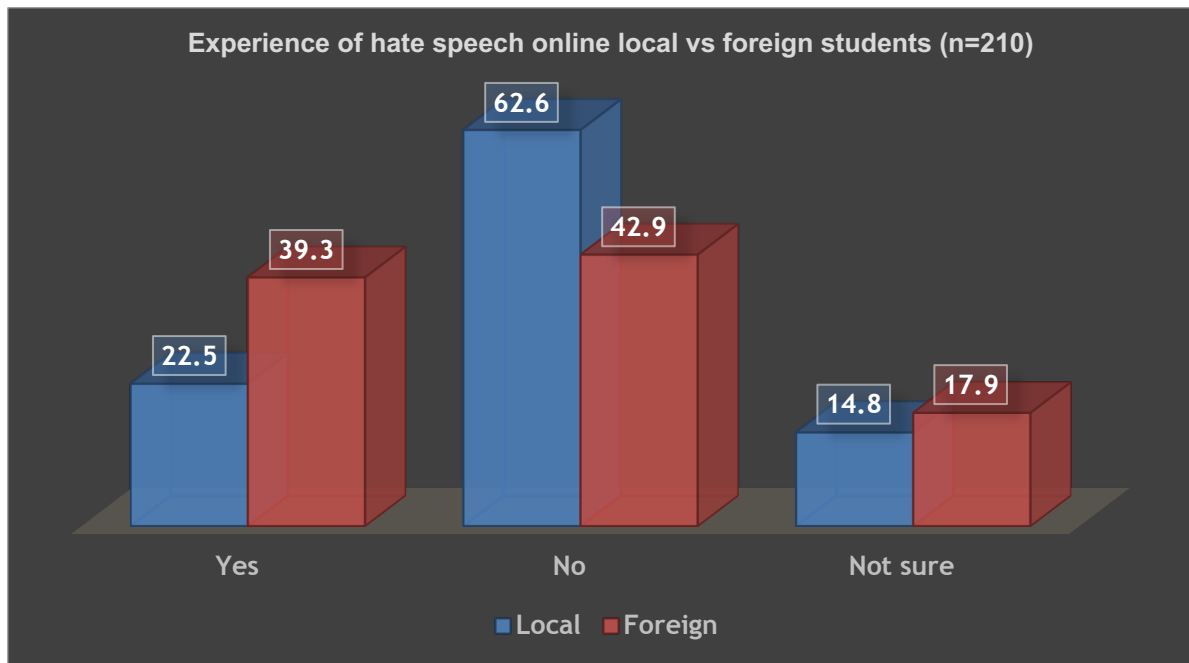
Although there is much discussion lately about the extent of hate speech taking place online, our findings suggest that hate speech is more frequent in real life. About one fourth of the respondents (24.7%) claim to have suffered hate speech incidents online, while the respective percentage offline was double (49.8%) (see Graph 4).

Graph 4



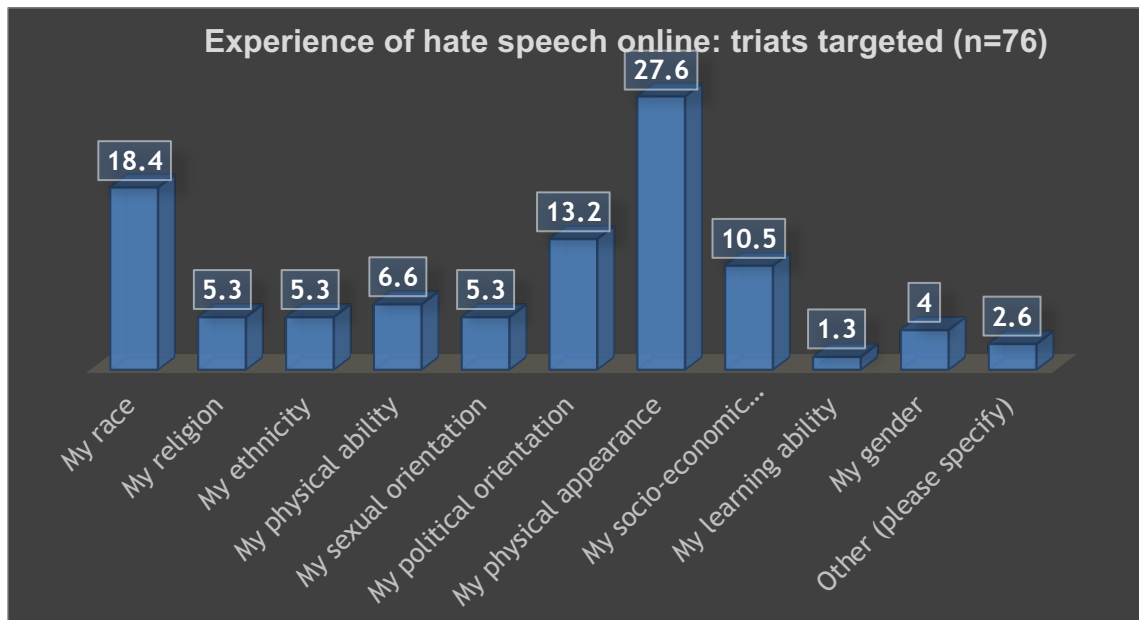
Again, just like offline, the foreign population is more frequently faced with hate speech; 22.5% of the local students have experienced hate speech online, while for foreign students the percentage almost doubles (39.3%) (see Graph 5).

Graph 5



When exploring which identity traits triggered hate speech online, the findings are quite revealing. The two traits provoking most hate speech online are the same ones that were found offline: “physical appearance (27.6%) and “race” (18.4%). However, the third most attacked element is “my political orientation” (13.2%); this finding designates an emerging and persistent problematic aspect of online communication: the attempt to silence counter or opposing voices. Again, just like in the offline case, the fourth most commonly attacked trait was found to be the socio-economic status of the respondents (10.5%). (see Graph 6)

Graph 6

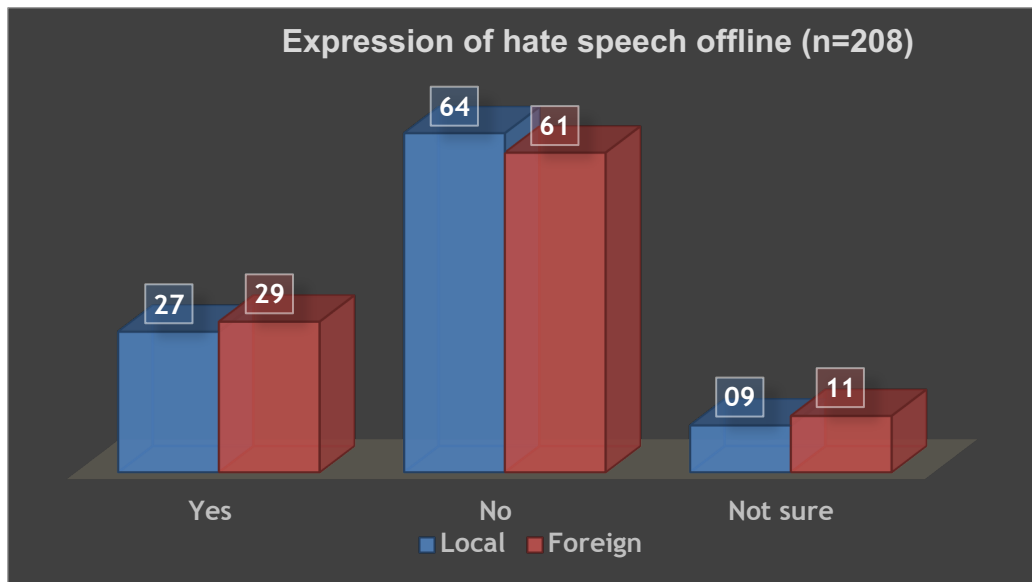


Finally, when exploring how hate speech incidents are commonly expressed online, three dominant ways were identified: through comments in group pages (40,0%), through comments on personal pages (30.8%) and through personal messages (26%).

3.3.3 Common forms of hate speech provoked

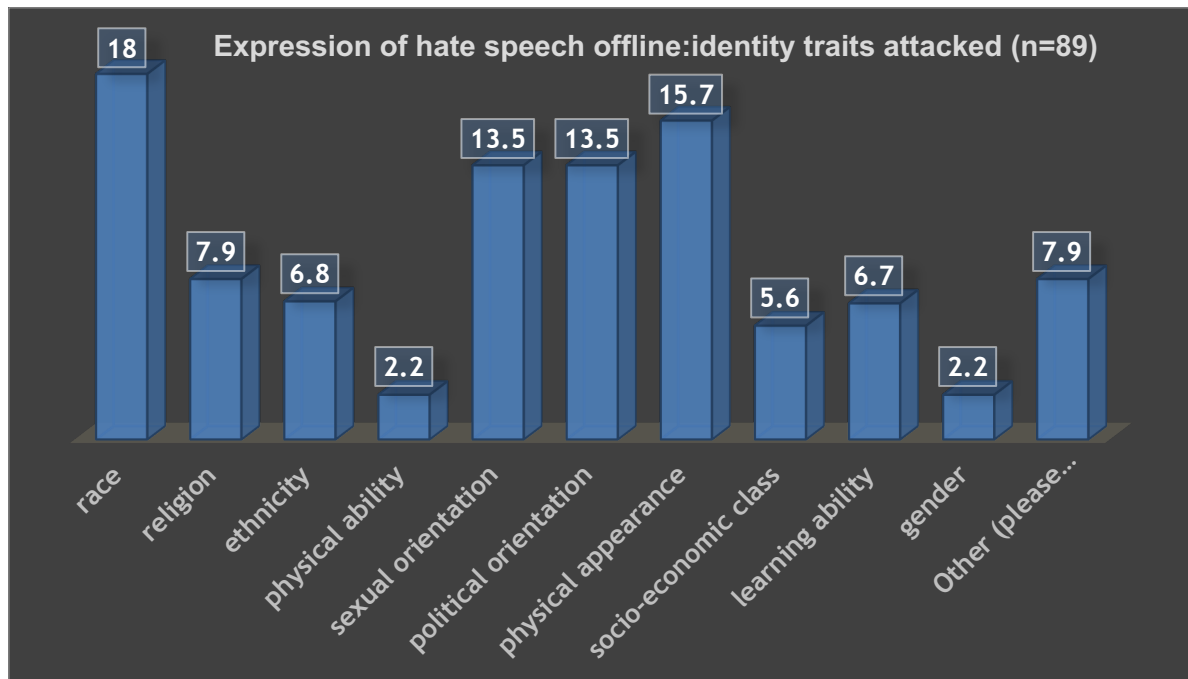
Interestingly enough almost one in three (27%) of the respondents admit to have expressed hate speech offline, while nine percent are not sure whether they have actually done it or not. According to our findings no differences were found between the local and foreign students (see Graph 7).

Graph 7



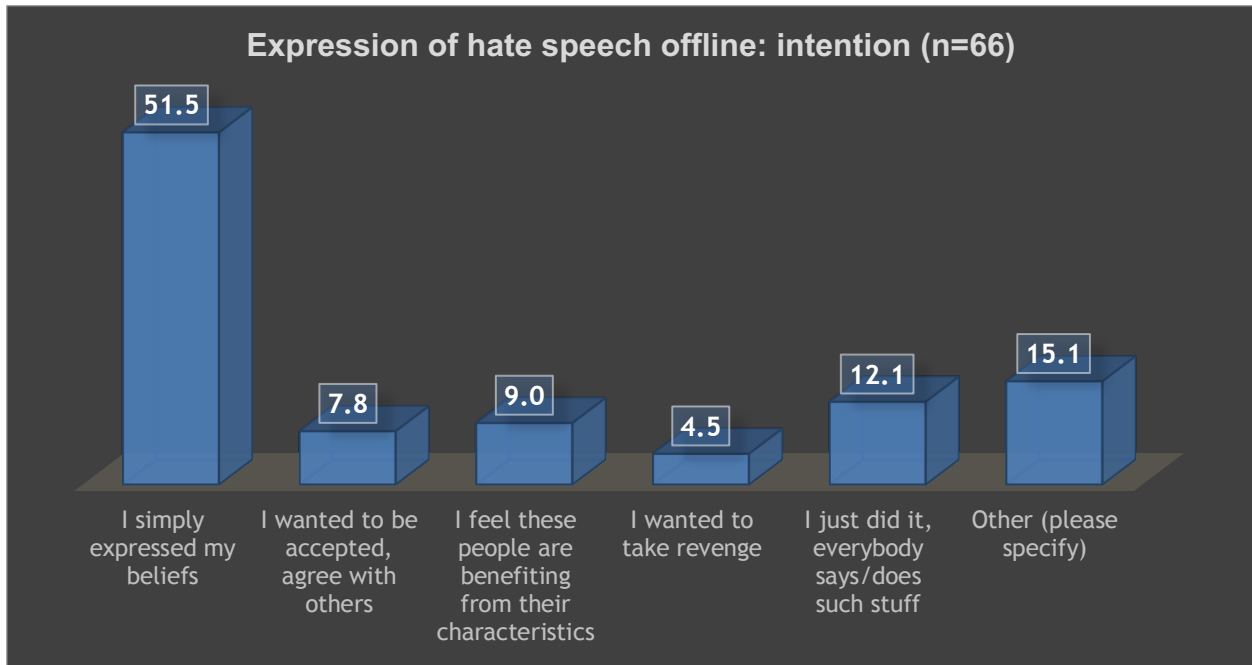
When asked which trait of the other person(s) they attacked, the findings point to a variety of characteristics; however four traits seem to be the main target of hate speech: race (18%), physical appearance (15.7), sexual orientation (13.5%) and political orientation (13.5%). (see Graph 8)

Graph 8



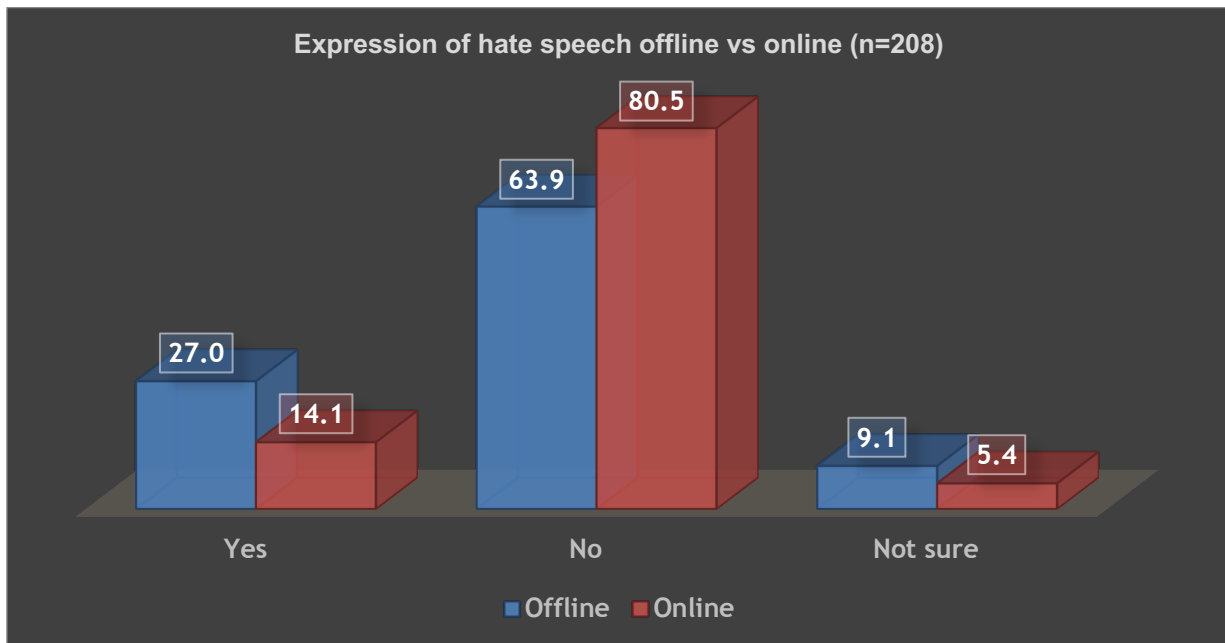
When asked what was the reason of their negative and racist remarks or comments, half of the respondents (51.5%) attribute their behaviour to free expression of their opinion (see Graph 9)

Graph 9



Finally, the findings suggest that the respondents are more likely to express hate speech offline than online (see Graph 10)

Graph 10



3.3.4 Attitudes towards sanctions/punishment of hate speech

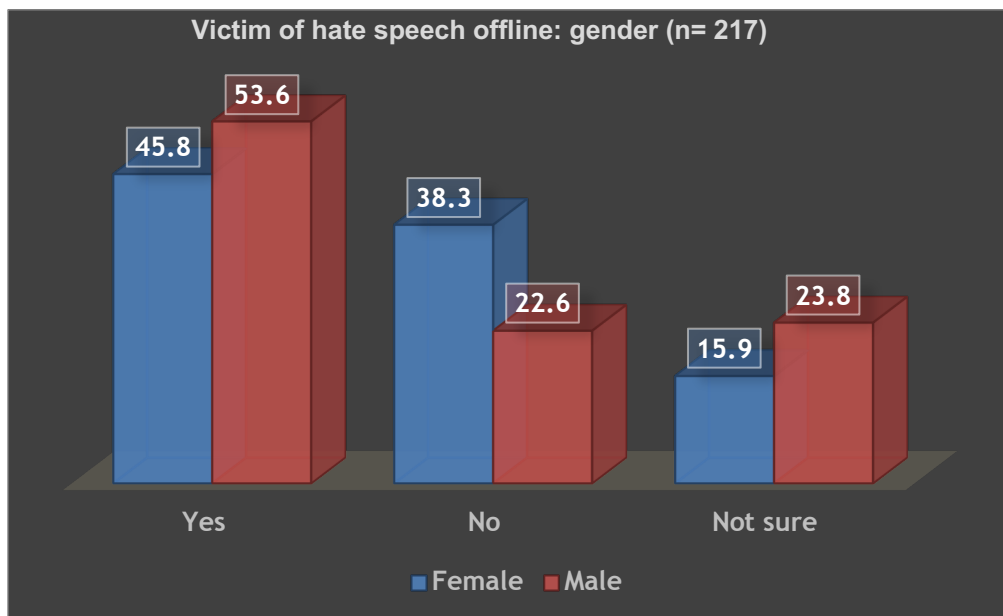
About one fourth of the respondents 24.6% are aware of whether hate speech is criminalised in their country of residence/studies, however the majority (68%) agrees or strongly agrees that the “punishment of hate speech should be strict”.

Half of the respondents (53,60%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that “people should be free to express their ideas, even if they offend others”. Finally, 63% disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that “people who use hate speech should not be punished if hate speech does not lead to committing criminal action”.

3.3.5 Differences of hate speech experiences and attitudes in relation to gender, ethnicity, income

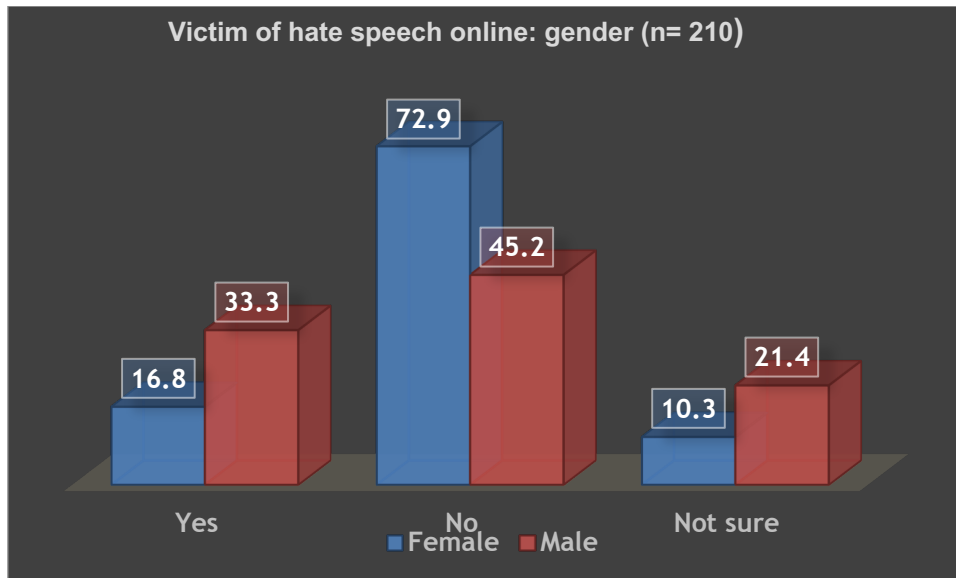
Contrary to dominant views, our findings suggest that gender does not affect the respondents’ experience of hate speech offline. The percentage of male respondents who have been attacked is slightly higher (53.6 as opposed to 45.8%), while male students seem to have a harder time understanding whether they have actually experienced hate speech (see Graph 11).

Graph 11



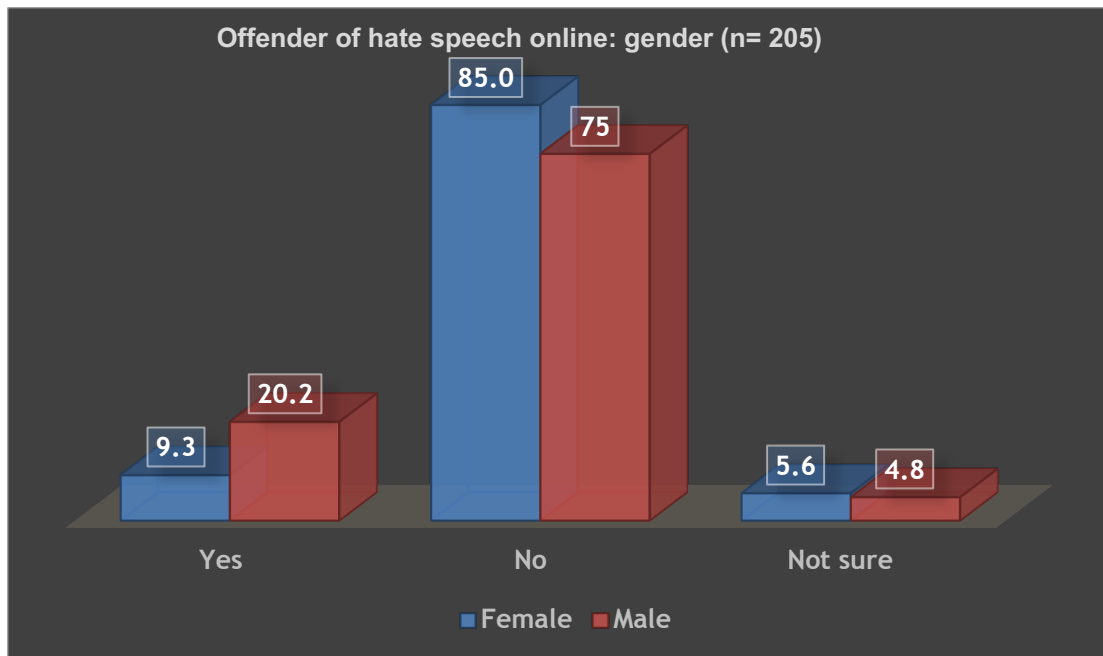
Apparently, the situation is even harder for male students in the online environment. The percentage of the male participants who have experienced hate speech online is double compared to the female students (33.3% as opposed to 16.8%) and so is the percentage of the male students who are not completely sure (21.4% as opposed to 10.3%). (see Graph 11)

Graph 11



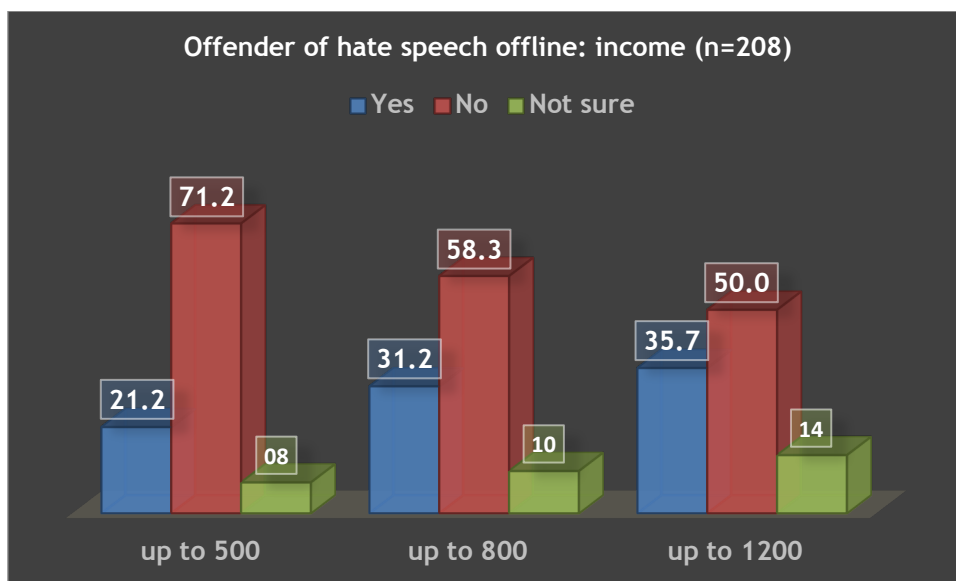
When the respondents become the offenders, no significant differences were found offline. About one fourth (24.3% of the female respondents and 28.6% of the male respondents) have expressed hate speech against others. However, the male students seem to be more likely to engage in hateful discourses online. 20.2% of the male respondents admit to have used hate speech online, while the respective percentage for female respondents drops to 9.3%. (see Graph 12)

Graph 12



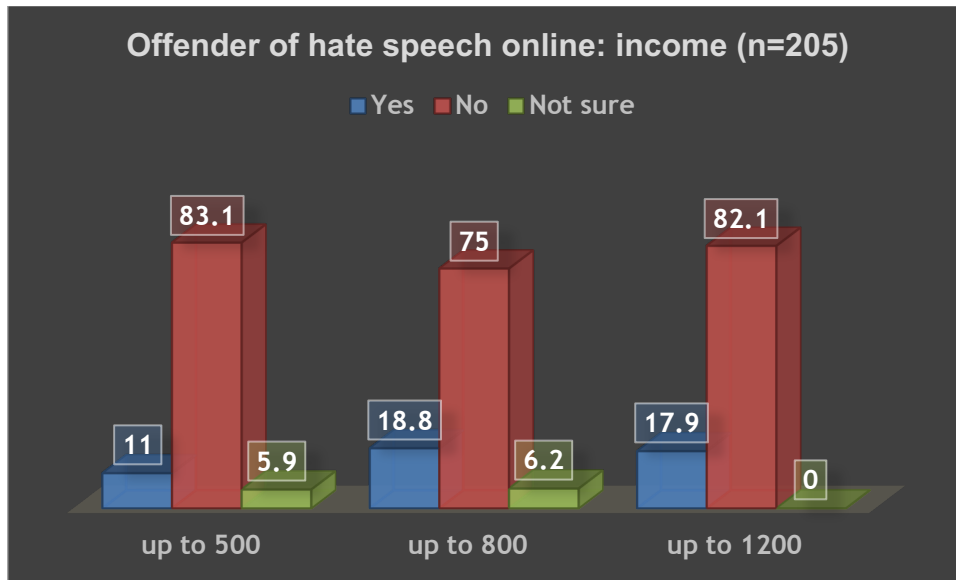
Finally, the income factor seems to have an effect on how the respondents behave online and offline. The findings show that as the income increases, so does the percentage of the students who admit to have used hate speech against others (see Graph 13).

Graph 13



The tendency of the students with lower income to be less aggressive, was also found in the online environment. However, online no differences were actually detected between students of medium and high income (see Graph 14)

Graph 14



4. Conclusions

Cyprus seems to reflect dominant contemporary trends documented in the western world. Hate speech is a common phenomenon, especially in the offline reality. In fact, students tend to consider offline hate speech as a more important form of racism and discrimination compared to hate speech instances taking place online. Unsurprisingly, hate speech is very often targeting the race and ethnicity of people. Racist discourses against foreign people are used by the proponents of the far-right as arguments for solving economic problems and national sovereignty. But generally speaking, foreign people are more frequently victims of hate speech.

Beyond racial discrimination, the results indicate that the physical appearance of a young person is very often the object of hate speech. In fact, this finding prevailed both in the focus group study and the survey. Apparently, a person's looks have become a primary issue of socialization; unless one's physical appearance conforms to

dominant norms and standards, this may put him/her in a lot of trouble. The second finding deserving attention regards “racism against the poor”. It was well-emphasized in the focus group study that a third-country national (commonly a victim of hate speech) would be ok if he/she was of upper economic status. The survey results also confirmed this finding. Additionally, there seems to be a growing trend towards silencing people of different views and opinions. Hate speech targeting the political orientation of students emerged as a dominant form of hate speech, especially online. Finally, gender and income seem to influence instances of hate speech. Contrary to common perceptions male students proved more frequent victims of hate speech compared to female students. Regarding the income factor, it turns out that more affluent students are more likely to exert hate speech.

5. Recommendations

First of all, young people seem to not be fully aware of the consequences of hate speech; therefore, the development of tools which can familiarize students with the diversity of hate speech and negative effects of hate speech on people’s development and socialization are deemed important. The focus groups showed that often young people tend to be tolerant towards hate speech; they tend to see it as “bad behavior that should be fixed” instead of a criminal act that needs to be punished. This issue is associated with a low awareness of the deep and negative effects of hate speech on people’s lives.

Second, the students should be trained to develop intercultural competence. Emphasis should be given: 1) on the notion of “respect”; valuing other cultures); openness (withholding judgement); curiosity (viewing difference as a learning opportunity); discovery (tolerance for ambiguity) and 2) skills; listening, observing, evaluating using patience and perseverance; viewing the world from others’ perspectives.

Thirdly, tools to raise awareness regarding the multiple and diverse forms of hate speech are needed. Although the focus groups revealed racism toward the poor to be

a dominant and common form of discrimination and hate speech, this dimension did not come up in the definitions provided by the respondents (at least those who gave definition mentioning the origin of the racist behavior). Additionally, when students were asked to provide definitions of hate speech, the majority of answers defined hate speech as racist behaviour targeting identity traits, such as race, gender, sexual orientation and religion. Interestingly enough, racism and discrimination targeting three of the most common forms of hate speech identified in the research (socio-economic status, appearance and political orientation) did not come up in the definitions provided by the respondents.

6. Other Comments