

Freedom of Speech and Involvement in Hatred Speech on Social Media Networks

Authors : Sara Chinnasamy, Michelle Gun, M. Adnan Hashim

Abstract : Federal Constitution guarantees Malaysians the right to free speech and expression; yet hatred speech can be commonly found on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. In Malaysia social media sphere, most hatred speech involves religion, race and politics. Recent cases of racial attacks on social media have created social tensions among Malaysians. Many Malaysians always argue on their rights to freedom of speech. However, there are laws that limit their expression to the public and protecting social media users from being a victim of hate speech. This paper aims to explore the attitude and involvement of Malaysian netizens towards freedom of speech and hatred speech on social media. It also examines the relationship between involvement in hatred speech among Malaysian netizens and attitude towards freedom of speech. For most Malaysians, practicing total freedom of speech in the open is unthinkable. As a result, the best channel to articulate their feelings and opinions liberally is the internet. With the advent of the internet medium, more and more Malaysians are conveying their viewpoints using the various internet channels although sensitivity of the audience is seldom taken into account. Consequently, this situation has led to pockets of social disharmony among the citizens. Although this unhealthy activity is denounced by the authority, netizens are generally of the view that they have the right to write anything they want. Using the quantitative method, survey was conducted among Malaysians aged between 18 and 50 years who are active social media users. Results from the survey reveal that despite a weak relationship level between hatred speech involvement on social media and attitude towards freedom of speech, the association is still considerably significant. As such, it can be safely presumed that hatred speech on social media occurs due to the freedom of speech that exists by way of social media channels.

Keywords : freedom of speech, hatred speech, social media, Malaysia, netizens

Conference Title : ICCCS 2017 : International Conference on Communication and Cultural Sciences

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : July 24-25, 2017