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Individual-Level Factors and Variation in Exposure to Online Hate Material: A Cross-National Comparison of Four Asian Countries

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Abstract

Internet has become one of the key drivers of social evolution. It has also provided an array of help forming certain kinds of negative behaviors against deviant groups through hate material. South Asia has witnessed a significant raise in online hate activities in recent past. To explore the possible explanations behind this spike, a survey method is used to collect the data from young adults (19-28) from different universities of Pakistan (n=457), India (n=523), Bangladesh (n=426), and Sri Lanka (n=381). The study found the conceptual roots in Routine Activity to understand the nexus between possible offenders (hate groups) and potential victims (internet users). The results showed that there was a significant difference between the exposures to online hate material across four Asian countries. The study theorized three of the possible explanations to account for this variation that include the score of each country on Inglehart-Welzel's self-expression scale, anti-hate-speech laws, and literacy rate. The data partially fits in the explanation of the variation by literacy rate better than the other two. Moreover, men are more prone to exposure to online hate material as well as the people with more social networking sites use, frequent visit to dangerous websites, using internet as anonymous, and having more Facebook friends. The study recommends taking into account the individual factors while formulating anti-hate-speech laws in South Asia. Also, the study recommends conducting a similar cross-national consideration in particularly those countries where the militant groups are using online space to make people radicalized.

Keyword: *Online Hate, Routine Activity Theory, South Asia, Hate Speech*

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Introduction

"Pakistani media is an agent of CIA and RAW, Shariat or Shahadat (Shariah or Martydom), and Shias are non-believers", and other hateful content are posted and shared regularly on social media in Pakistan (Haque, 2013). In the online sphere of India, supporting content related to lynching a man for eating beef, boycotting Muslim film actors, voting against BJP would make Pakistan burst firecrackers, etc. has been observed in recent past (Arun, 2019; Pandy, 2015; Yaqzan, 2020). Bangladeshi youth demands ban on Jamat-e-Islami who supported to remain with Pakistan at the time of independence (Bhattacherjee, 2016). Moreover, many bloggers were arrested for expressing their views and some of them are brutally killed by the mob for their views on religion in Bangladesh (House, 2017). After Easter bombings in Sri Lanka in 2019, a significant spike in hate speech against Muslims was noticed (Imtiyaz, 2020) and for at least three times in 2019, social media applications were blocked to prevent the consequences of hate speech (Malsha & Wansatilake, 2019). What do we need to account for all this? A report of Asia Centre (2020) concluded that violent incidents have been erupted due to hate speech which divided communities during recent communal and political tensions across South Asia.

The common factor behind all these occurrences, mentioned above, is happening on the internet which, since its utilization for social connection, has changed the way we interact with each other. It has changed the dynamics of seeking and disseminating information, building relationships, and in contemporary times, studying in pandemic. Despite the significant role in enhancing human life experiences, it has also

provided an array of help forming certain kinds of negative behaviors. For example, many groups operate in the online sphere to spread hatred based on racism, xenophobia, and extremism (Brown, 2018; Chau & Xu, 2007; Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002; Costello & Hawdon, 2012). The existence of such organized groups came into being shortly after the invention of the internet (Bowman-Grieve, 2009).

Previous scholars have documented the existence of the hate material available online (Foxman & Wolf, 2013; Tynes, 2006). The groups who spread hate are a significant threat to national security (Hussain & Saltman, 2014). Yet few have investigated those who hear or see it online. Since the dynamics of the internet allows it to spread content beyond distance, the hate material could travel across borders and spread hatred. Only a limited number of researches have been found which took into account cross-national consideration (Hawdon, Oksanen, & Räsänen, 2017; Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson, & Vodeb, 2011; Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011). Keeping in view the scope of the internet, it is the need of the hour to compare the exposure to online hate across nations. A cross-national consideration will also enable us to know the factors behind variations across countries so effective strategies and counter-narratives could be designed to prevent the victims from radicalization.

Online Hate Material

Hate material available online is a kind of hate speech that expresses hatred towards a collective (Blazak, 2009; Hawdon, Oksanen, & Räsänen, 2014). It is not something that attacks

someone in isolation, but it spread hatred against a collective entity which makes is different from cyber-violence like cyberbullying or cyberstalking. Hate material is an expression of attitudes to demean others on the bases of ethnicity, religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, national origin, or some other characteristics that define a group.

As described earlier, the organized groups started operating soon after the invention of the internet and the hate-advocating sites have increased with the passage of time. A recent wave of unorganized groups spreading hatred online has made the fact darker (see Potok, 2017). These unorganized hate-advocating groups operate on different online platforms that include social networking sites (SNS), discussion forums, blogs, listserves, and internet chat communities (Douglas, 2007).

Many sites containing hate material do not necessarily incite violence every time (McNamee, Peterson, & Peña, 2010; Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003) and the promoters of that content are not offenders in a traditional sense because they do not directly victimize anyone. These untraditional offenders are different than the people involved in street crimes or online crimes like cyberbullying or fraud.

Here the question arises why they are operating then? Douglas (2007) discussed that the main objectives of the hate-advocating groups are to connect likeminded people and recruit them for a cause. The messages of the following groups encourage participation in their campaigns, promote association within their group, invoke the natural right of the group, and denounce others who oppose the ideas of the group (McNamee et al., 2010). It also

points to ponder that since its exemption from space and time, because once it's posted in the online sphere anybody can be exposed, the exposure may lead the individual to any unlike socio-cognitive behavior in the future.

So, the exposure may or may not be victimizing. In the traditional sense, those who actively search for the following content would not be categorized as victims because they have had asked for it. The others, who expose involuntarily, would be regarded as victims even if they do not consider the exposure overly harmful. For the same reason, the people experience larceny-theft would be regarded as victims even if they consider it 'not a big deal'. Some who expose define the event overly harmful and victimizing. Evidence is documented regarding the emotional harmfulness of the following content (Lee & Leets 2002; Leets, 2002; Tynes, 2006; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). This emotional harmfulness may lead to acts of violence (Kiilakoski & Oksanen 2011; Foxman & Wolf, 2013). So, both type of exposure (intentional or unintentional) are equally damaging.

The primary focus of this study is not to evaluate how damaging the content available on different sites nor exploring what is the disposal function of the exposure. Rather the study explored whether the young adults exposed by the content that they interpret as expressing hate. What factors could vary the exposure and then how much the young adults of one nation's exposure differs from the other countries. Nevertheless, we believe that the quality and function of online hate material should also be explored. As far as this study is concerned, this is beyond the scope of it (see limitations at last).

Factors Varying Exposure to Online Hate Material

Though the existence of online hate material posits a challenge to everyone who uses the internet. Many factors vary exposure to the following material. Let's start with the demographic variables. Reyns, Henson, and Fisher (2011) explored that females are more likely to experience cyberbullying and online harassment due to their greater perceived target attractiveness. Also, studies found that females experience more cyber-victimization than males (Marcum, Higgins, Ricketts, 2010; Reyns, Burek, Henson, Fisher, 2013; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). Applying this logic to online hate material, it is hypothesized that H1. Females are more likely to expose to online hate material than males.

Though age may also relate to exposure to the following content, the existing literature does not offer the findings that indicate the consistent correlation between cyber-victimization and age (Holt & Bossler 2008; Livingstone et al., 2011, Marcum et al., 2010; Van Wilsem, 2011). However, keeping in view the hateful physical events, it is observed that people of relatively younger at age are more prone to become victim as compared to the veterans. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H2. Age will be inversely related to the exposure to online hate material.

The existence of hate material online posits a chance of being exposed by internet users. It is a good proxy to say the other way that exposure to online hate material is directly proportional to the use of the internet. People who use more internet tend to expose more to hate material online than those who use internet

less. Some studies have found that the more time someone spends on the internet, the more he or she will likely be victimized by cybercrimes (Pratt, Holtfreter, & Reisig, 2010; Hinduja & Patchin 2010). But some other scholars have failed to deduct this logic (Ybarra, Mitchell, & Korchmaros 2011; Reyns et al., 2013). The latter makes more sense since the global measure fails to measure the patterns of behaving such a way that increases the likelihood to observe virtual proximity to potentially offensive websites (Howdon. Oksanen, Räsänen, 2017).

Though the time spends by the user, in general, does not accurately predict the exposure to such material but specific cyber-activities likely to increase the exposure to online hate material just like other practices of cyber-victimization (Howdon et.al, 2017). Like sharing sensitive or personal information, visiting websites having harm-advocating content, and communicating with strangers or with friends in anonymous chat rooms increase the chances of being victimized by some sorts of cybercrimes (Bossler, Holt, & May, 2012; Reyns et al., 2013; Marcum et al. 2010; Pratt et al., 2010; Ybarra et al., 2011). Subsequently, social networking sites provide a platform to express opinions and views including the hateful ones. Hawdon et al. (2014) conducted a study on young internet users of America and found that those who were using more than six services available online (SNS active users) were likely to expose to hateful messages two times more than those who used SNS passively. Other behaviors showing online, mentioned above, would increase the chance to compromise on deterrence ability of the users to become victimized (Imtiyaz, 2020) which increases the

vulnerability of that user and prove to be the suitable target of the potential offender. One of the following activities is talking someone privately. It could be understood by the 'incognito' browsing function of web browsers which offers its users to surf without letting the browser know. Consequently, the browser would not be able to offer its protection system to prevent its user from the potential threat (i,e. fraud, explicit content, etc.). Applying the same fact here, if someone talks to private in the online sphere, the conversation will happen without a potential guardian. It is explored that if the user prefers to remain anonymous while doing online activities, it will increase the chances of being exposed to hate material online. Also, visiting websites that support self-harm content increases the chances of being exposed to hateful content (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Harris, McLean, & Sheffield, 2009). Based on the following arguments, we hypothesize that:

H3. (a) Frequent social networking sites use, (b) visiting websites that contain harmful content, and online anonymity will be positively related to the exposure of online hate material.

The number of people one interacts online also functions as explaining the variation in exposure to online hate material. The probability of increasing of coming into interaction with those who show opinions that one finds deviant, foreign or offensive increases with interaction with more and more people. It is explored in a study, which was conducted on American youth, that increase in the number of friends in online interaction will increase the exposure to materials one finds offensive (Hawdon et al., 2014). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed

H4. The increase in the number of people (on Facebook) with whom one interacts online will increase the probability of being exposed to online hate material.

Näsi et al. (2015) found that the perceived trust is a significant contributer towards exposure to online hate. Livingstone et al. (2011) discussed that the people who trust others in an online interaction are generally less guarded and it is severely dangerous for those who solely met online because of the lack of typical cues one uses to measure the truthfulness of others. The people we know in the traditional sphere offers more cues that could be used to decide whether the other person is trustworthy or not. And those cues could also offer help to evaluate the trustworthiness of the people we also use to interact online. Perceived trust positively media the relationship between the media use and cyber-victimization (Pieschl & Porsch, 2017). The following hypothesis is drawn.

H5. The individuals who trust more on online interactions are more likely to expose online hate material than those who trustless.

Online Hate Material and Cross-National Consideration

This study attempts to explore the exposure to online hate material in four Asian countries which are Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. This design allows the study to measure the variation across nations and attempt to theorize the reasons behind the variation.

These countries have been taken as a sample to measure the variation because of several other reasons. Keeping in view the starting instances, it is imperative to know the dynamics

which could lead to exposure to online hate material. Adding to this, internet penetration by population has been significantly raised in all of the four countries. Internet World Stats (2020) published a comprehensive report of the world and according to the website, the statistics of the sample countries are as follows;

In Pakistan, there were only 133900 internet users in 2000 but this number raised to 71,608,065 users in 2020 which is 32% penetration of the total population. In India, there were five million users of the internet in 2000 and now there are 560 million internet users which is 40.6 % penetration of the total population. And only 0.1 million people were using the internet in Bangladesh in 2000 but now this number is about to touch the 10 million internet users (9.6 million at now) which is 58.4 % penetration to the total population. For Sri Lanka, the figure of 121,500 has been raised to 7,169,533 internet users which is 33.5 % penetration to the total population. The increased participation also helps the masses to become the voice of the voiceless. However, as discussed earlier, increased use may invite exposure to online hate material. Also, there are critical differences between these countries which could account for variation in exposure.

These countries vary on Inglehart-Welzel's self-expression scale (2006) which takes into account the diversity tolerance of a society (World Values Survey, 2014). The following scale also includes the measurement of the attitude toward deviant groups (i.e. foreigners, ethnic minorities, etc.) which become the target of hate material. Into the bargain, it is plausible to consider the following scale in the account to exposure to online hate material (Howden et al. 2017). The more a country shows

religious and political intolerance, the more the hate material produced, posted, and distributed in that country (Hawdon et al., 2017). Parker and Janoff-Bulman (2013) explored that intolerance is related to the rejection of the deviant groups having different opinion.

According to (World Value Survey, 2014), on Inglehart-Welzel's self-expression scale, Pakistan scored lowest (standing between -1 and -1.5) and India scored the highest score by standing at near zero. The score of Bangladesh is touching the demarcation line at -1. The following survey was conducted in 2014 that did not take into account Sri Lanka's self-expression score. However, the latter country will be included in the next edition. Anyhow, based on the following scale, Pakistani youth should have the highest exposure to the online hate material because of their lowest score on the scale. The position of Sri Lana will be discussed by evaluating the scale with exposure to the other three sample nations.

The second factor that could consider for the variation is anti-hate speech laws in these countries. Because these work as the capable guardian in the interaction between the offender and potential victim (see Theoretical Framework of the study).

In the sub-continent, before 1929, there was no significant law to protect society from hate sentiments (Narrain, 2015). They were enacted by the British Government which were sealed more by the past rulers for political purposes in Pakistan. The 1973's constitution of Pakistan allows a remarkable entry of article 19 which states that every citizen shall enjoy the freedom of expression but subject to different restrictions (Riaz & Taj, 2017).

Based on those notions, cyber laws are made to curb the misuse of this freedom granted by the constitution.

Pakistan was included in countries having the least supportive of free expression with a score of 2.78 indexes in spring 2015 (Desk, 2016). Nevertheless, USCIRF's annual report in 2011 found that the literature of primary and secondary education books fosters intolerance and prejudice towards minorities especially Hindus and Christians (Hussain, Salīm, & Naveed, 2011). Moreover, Pakistan was reported as a country having the highest cases of hatred against minorities and religious extremism in 2011 (Kiska, 2012). This intolerance has shrunk the minorities from quarter to the total population (at the time of inception) to less than four percent (Ispahani, 2017).

In 2016, Pakistan's Prevention of Electronic Crimes Bill (PECB) was passed from the parliament. This law gave the authorities the power to curb even those views that would not be regarded as a cyber-violation according to an international standard. Also, it is observed over time that the laws that prohibit a different kind of hatred (i,e. blasphemy) enable abuse. Those who violate certain laws and spread hatred receive more hatred in return. For example, if an individual says something (about religion) which could regard as hate speech, a spread of hate would be observed in return to that hate. Despite having strict laws, considering the significant presence of such material, it is plausible to assume that the utilization of such laws is of different nature than curbing hate speech.

India claims to be a secular state. Critics blame it for not segregating state operations from religious affairs. Anyhow

India's constitution also guarantees the right to expression subject to some conditions (Smith, 2015). Its laws which prevent hate speech are more comprehensive than Pakistan. It prevents discord among religious or ethnic communities (Narrain, 2015). The right to freedom of expression is given by article 19 of the constitution. However, this freedom is restricted in some instances to prevent hate speech. For example, Section 295 (A) bans speech contains the intention of outraging any citizen by words, signs (visible or otherwise), written, or attempts to insult any religion, etc. The maximum punish is imprisonment or fine or both. This section was exercised on many occasions. Many books were banned from publication (Hasan, 2010). Association for Progressive Communication (2016) made a comparative analysis of hate speech laws in Asia. Nevertheless, a report from the following association discussed that hate speech against progressive and religious minorities is encouraged by political and state authorities in India which compromises security and violation of freedom of expression. Having said this, however, based on the following, Indian sample should have exposed less than the sample of Pakistan.

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, the South Asian country has gone through the political turmoil in recent past (Abedin, 2020). One of the effects cultivates a hostile environment for freedom of expression. Information and Communication Technology Act 2003 was claimed to be against hate speech, but critics said it criminalized many forms of freedom of expression. Article 39 of the constitution of Bangladesh warranties freedom of speech. Section 295 and 298 of the Penal Code of Bangladesh

impose preventive measures to curb making derogatory remarks on religious beliefs. These laws are strict in the sense even the ICT minister of Bangladesh was charged for his comments in an informal meeting under section 298 (Hussain & Mostafa, 2016). Anti-Terrorism Act also includes a few clauses related to preventing the discussing phenomena. Bangladesh is also a signatory of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) to prevent spreading racial discrimination on any forum. So, Bangladeshi sample's exposure would be relatively less than both of Pakistan and India.

Sri Lanka becomes the signatory of ICERD in 1982 (Shirane, 2011). On the other side, significant influence is observed of national hard-liners and extremist Buddhist factions on dictating various matters including state policies. Hate speech is openly distributed through social media often in local languages (Orjuela, 2020). However, Sri Lankan authorities have added in its penal code some fresh amendments to curb hate speech (Adams, 2020). In the recent past, Sri Lanka has also banned media from reporting ill-treatment against minorities. Article 10 and 14 of the following country's constitution guarantee the freedom of religion and expression. Section 291(A) consider the offense related to wounding religious feelings. In wake of the recent even of "Easter Bombing", a new law is being demanded to prevent Muslims and other minorities from being victimized from hate speech. Since the new happenings demand new laws. It is plausible to theorize the existing laws are not much effective so the exposure in Sri Lankan sample is also expected to have more exposure than all or some of the other sample countries.

When comes to hate speech, one thing is common in all sample countries that these countries are currently using the hate speech laws to silence the voice of activist, journalists and their political opponents. For example, in January 2019, a correspondent (Hedait Hossain Molla) was arrested under the digital security act in Bangladesh. Similar examples exist in the remaining three countries. Mass surveillance on the name of hate speech does not helping these countries to stop hate speech because these countries are not implementing the laws in the right direction. Considering all this, the results will help to understand how well the anti-hate speech laws could explain the variation in the different Asian countries.

Another factor that could account the variation is literacy rate. Because education is a significant factor which resist against the exposure to online hate material (Durodie, 2016; Gagliardone, Gal, Alves, & Martinez, 2015). A latest survey found that Sri Lanka has over 90% literacy rate, India has 71.20%, Bangladesh has 61.50%, and Pakistan has 57.90% (World Population Review, 2020). According to this, Sri Lankan sample should have the least exposure to online material as compared to the other three Asian countries.

Theoretical Framework

The study found its conceptual roots in Routine Activity Theory (RAT) which is given by Cohen and Felson in Criminology. However, its adaptions in other disciplines (Reyns et al., 2011) offers help to understand the contributing factors to exposure to online hate material. RAT theory proposes that when a potential offender comes across a suitable target in the lack or absence of a

capable guardian, in other words, if the three factors converge in time and space, a crime happens. So, the patterns of activities the people engage themselves shape their likelihood of being victimized by exposing dangerous places, people, and situation which alters the guardianship of possible guards to confront the offenders which they expose (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Applying this to our context, it is plausible to say that when a person exposes to online hate material it will bring the person into virtual proximity to hateful opinions and reduce the capability of others (guardianship) to disrupt the potential hateful expression of hateful content (Howden et al., 2017). This explains the potential threat of the factors varying the exposure to the following material like online trust, talk private online, etc. Oksanen et al. (2014) used the same frame work to explore the explore to online hate material in cross-national setting (i.e Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States). This study acknowledged and followed the footprints of work laid by the previous scholars of similar previous study (Howdon et al. 2017).

Methodology

Data were collected through survey from 1787 South Asian university students. Questionnaires were shared with the participants for data collection with the help of their university teachers between October 2019 to December 2019. The data from Pakistan (n=457) and Indian (n=523) sample were collected in October 2019. And the data from Bangladesh (n=426) were collected in November, the same year. Sri Lankan sample (n=381) was approached in the month of December, 2019. More than half of respondents were male (52.7%) and 47.3 % were female. The

mean age of participants was 23.4 years. The study considered the young adults (19-28 years) for two reasons. Firstly, they become particularly relevant in order to understand the exposure to online hate material because the groups who operate in the online sphere recruit young people actively (Lee & Leets, 2002). Secondly, they engage themselves more in online communities and they consider SNS as an important source of social identification. And, they are less capable to distinguish the people they met online and offline (Lehdonvirta & Räsänen 2010). These factors also make the youth and young adults more vulnerable to the exposure and consequences after the exposure by the hate groups. More than half of the respondents were undergraduate (55.3%), nearly one third of respondents were master's degree holder (32.4%) and remaining 12.3% mentioned the PhD degree.

In terms of religion, majority of the participants were Muslims (55.5%), less than one third of participants mentioned the Hinduism (23.2%), while 21.3% mentioned the Budhism. To examine the variation and predictors of exposure to online hate material, four comparable datasets were used. The details about the sample number in each country represent the data which was emerged after cleaning the data (i.e. excluding outliers etc.). Respondents were selected purposely from different public and private universities of each county and data was collected by giving students the questionnaire in their classrooms. Non-probability sampling technique was used because the sampling frame of the social media users who previously exposed to online hate was not available. Therefore, reader of this study should take

caution regarding generalizability and ecological validity of the study.

Measurement

The central focus variable is exposure to online hate material. Since the nature of the variable is considered as nominal so it was measured by simply asking "In the past three months, have you seen hateful or degrading writings or speech online, which inappropriately attacked certain groups of people or individuals?" and this definition of question is adopted from (Howden et.al., 2017) as it is coded in dichotomy (yes, or no). The independent variable of gender was also coded as a dichotomy (Male or Female). Age is measured as a ratio variable and asked as an open-ended question. Friends on Facebook was also asked as an open-ended question but in the analysis stage it was recoded into three categories (1 to 100, 100–300, Above 300). The scales for other independent variables (Social Networking Sites (SNS) use (M= 3.91 SD=0.05), Dangerous websites Anonymity (M=3.95, SD=0.08), Online Trust Friends on Facebook (M= 3.84, SD=0.04) were adapted from the previous study and measured on 5-point (Howden et.al., 2017). Moreover, these scales showed a reliability between 0.73 to 0.85.

Data Collection

Survey questionnaire along with SPSS file was emailed to different acquaintances in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. They took the print of the questionnaire and distributed the questionnaires among their colleagues. Every teacher briefed the class about the purpose of study and took the consent from participants before distributing the questionnaires. Name and

email address were not asked from the participants to keep the anonymity. Teachers discarded the questionnaires that were partially filled. After data collection, acquaintances entered the data into SPSS file and they emailed the participants data to authors of study.

Data Analysis

Logistic regression was used to analyze the data because our dependent variable was categorical and have a nominal level of measurement. In addition to this, logistic regression helps test the model because of its predictive nature. At the first stage, it was predicted that either all counties have an equal level of exposure to online hate material. We also predicted that what is the role of socio-demographic and behavioral variables in determining the exposure to online hate in four Asian countries. At stage two, we also checked the variation of exposure to online hate material in all four countries by controlling the socio-demographic and behavioral variables.

In logistic regression, we used the standardized beta values (β) and standard error (SE) to compare the differences among the countries and the role of the independent variable in predicting the online hate exposure in the same models. In addition to this, marginal effects were also reported in the study to demonstrate the changes in a different model. As the independent variable predicts the variation in independent variable, so it is necessary to report the marginal effects to show the effect size across all the observations used in the study. Reporting of marginal effects statistics also insured the reliability of prediction. This marginal effect size can be changed across

different models, so we also reported the average marginal effects (AME) to further enhance the reliability of prediction. Moreover, adjusted prediction (derived from the marginal effect coefficient) was also reported to show the variation/changes in exposure to online hate among four Asian counties. Estimates of chances of being exposed to online hate material are also reported across four countries before and after controlling some demographical and other independent variables.

Results

It is becoming relatively common phenomena that people who are using the internet are exposed by online hate material, but this phenomenon is not similar across countries. Table 1 shows the percentages and frequencies of respondents who exposed to online hate material in the last one year. Average marginal effects coefficients (brackets) are also available in the table which is representing the chances/likelihood of being exposed to online hate material across four Asian countries. In the Indian sample, 63% of respondents reported that they are being exposed to online hate crime in the last three months, while 57% of Pakistani, 48% Bangladeshi, and 40% of Sri Lankans exposed to online hate material. The estimated likelihood and adjusted predictions of four Asian countries is showing the variation in countries, which means that exposure to online hate is not equal among all countries. The coefficients values are like percentages values because no additional variable has been added at this stage of analysis. Compared to Sri Lankan young adults, Bangladeshi young adults have an 8 % higher likelihood of being exposed to online hate. In addition to this, Pakistanis have a 25% higher

possibility of being exposed to online hate material while Indians have a 35% higher chance of being exposed from online hate. Moreover, this model predicts the 26.1% variance in independent variable which is exposure to online hate material.

Table 1: Comparison of countries regarding exposure to online hate material

Online Hate Exposure (yes)	Percentage (Frequencies)	Coefficients
India	63.23(523)	.952(.091) ***[.354]
Pakistan	57.34(457)	.637(.102) ***[.251]
Bangladesh	48.54(426)	.436(.086) ***[.092]
Sri Lanka	40.52(381)	ref.
χ^2		121.32***
Log-likelihood		-2361.328
Pseudo R^2		.261

Note. ****p*<. 001, ref.=reference category in logistic regression, regression coefficients (β), standard errors (in parentheses), and average marginal effect [in brackets].

In the second step, the effects of behavioral and sociodemographic variables on exposure to hate material have been observed and similarity of these effects across countries has been mentioned. The table 2 shows the main effect model regarding four Asian countries. The first two variables, Social networking sites use and visiting dangerous sites were a significant predictor of exposure to online hate material across the sample. SNS use is a significant predictor in India and Pakistan and the value of average marginal effects shows that using different social networking sites use increases the likelihood of exposure to online hate by 10-11%. While this chance of being exposed to online material was less for Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (5-6%). Visiting the dangerous sites was also a significant predictor of exposure to online hate material among India and

Pakistan samples. The likelihood of being exposed to online hate material after visiting the dangerous sites was 15% among the Indian and 13% for the Pakistani sample. While chances of being exposed to online hate material which is predicted by dangerous websites for remaining countries were between 8-9%. These results show that both factors have stronger effects on the Indian and Pakistani samples. Thus, H3(a) and H3(b) are accepted.

While moving to the remaining independent variable, the results show that anonymity and online trust are also significant predictors of exposure to online hate material. The chances of being exposed to online hate were 22-23% higher in India and Pakistan (19-20%) in case of anonymity and online trust but this percentage was less in the case of Bangladesh (anonymity 12%, online trust 15%) and Sri Lanka (anonymity 8%, online trust 12%). Moreover, having more Facebook friends also increased the chance of being exposed to online hate material and this independence is significant across four Asian countries. The likelihood prediction of this variable was also high in India (32%) and Pakistan (27%) scenario. In Bangladesh (25%) and Sri Lanka (22%) sample, this prediction of online hate material by Facebook friends was minimal than Indian and Pakistan. Thus, H3(c), H4 and H5 are accepted.

Age was also a significant predictor of online hate material in all countries and minimal variation was found regarding four countries. These results show that age is a significant contributor in exposing the individual from online hate material but with the increase of age exposure to online hate material decreases. In addition to this, gender was also a

significant predictor of online hate among four Asian countries. The chances of being exposed to online hate material were high among Indian and Pakistan male participants (approximately 25.7% for India and 23.4% for Pakistan) while minimal changes were found in the case of females. In Bangladesh (16%) and Sri Lanka (17), the chances of being exposed to online hate material were also high among males than females. The model account different amount of variance for different Asian countries. The model accounts for 25.1% variance in Indian sample, while for Pakistan 24.2%, Bangladesh 21.7% and for Sri Lanka 13.6% variance. Thus, H1 and H2 are accepted.

When the model was checked without any controlling variable (not available in table), the results show that more respondents are being exposed to online hate among four Asian countries and the percentage was high for Pakistan and Indian samples. While Bangladesh and Sri Lanka participants show a lower percentage of exposure to online material without keeping the controlling variable in the model.

Table 2: Logistic regression of exposure to online hate material across four Asian countries

Online Hate Exposure (yes)	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka
Social Networking Sites use	.802(.089) ***[.113]	.706(.112) *** [.102]	.172(.089) ***[.052]	.184(.089) ***[.064]
Dangerous websites	.526(.059) ***[.154]	.721(.024) ***[.132]	.425(.081) ***[.084]	.851(.081) ***[.092]
Anonymity	.234(.029) ***[.224]	.625 (.039) ***[.193]	.421(.029) ***[.121]	.725(.027) ***[.082]
Online Trust	-.792(.032) ***[.231]	.682 (.048) ***[.204]	.715 (.032) ***[.154]	.613(.033) ***[.123]
Friends on Facebook	.822(.051) ***[.323]	.713(.083) ***[.273]	.689(.061) ***[.253]	.561(.061) ***[.221]
Gender	.416(.142) ***[.257]	.578(.025) ***[.234]	.745(.067) ***[.162]	.487(.051) ***[.17.4]
Age (years)	-.741(.018) ***[-.010]	-.684(.025) ***[-.002]	-.652(.017) ***[-.005]	-.231(.019) ***[-.008]
χ^2	203.77***	190.15***	92.17***	98.61***
Log-likelihood	-595.756	-555.321	-325.621	-355.692
Pseudo R^2	.251	.242	.161	.187

Note. ****p*<. 001, ref.=reference category in logistic regression, regression coefficients (β), standard errors (in parentheses), and average marginal effect [in brackets].

Discussion

Social media as a platform provides two types of opportunities to its users. First, it provides an opportunity to share encouraging and positive ideas. Second, it provides an opportunity for those people who wants to share negative or hateful content/ideas. The purpose of this study was to find out the factors which correlates and variation in exposure to online hate material across nations. This was specifically explored among the young adults of four Asian countries. Young adults were included in the study because

they are active and vulnerable users of social media. Previous studies have investigated this problem more in a single country setting and less in a cross-national context. This study extended the literature by doing it on four Asian countries.

Routine Activity theory explains how crime occurs or under what circumstances a crime happens. This study used the RAT framework to explain how online hate exposure occurs on social media. Young adults spend most of their time on social media and this platform increases the chances of being exposed to hate material. Findings show that posts/tweets/videos related to crime and suicide increasing the likelihood of exposure in all four Asian countries. Moreover, dangerous websites also playing their part in exposing people to self-harm content which is consistent with the previous findings (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Harris, McLean, & Sheffield, 2009). The results also explored that Facebook friends can also increase the likelihood of exposure to hate material and friends were a significant predictor in India as compared to other countries. This result is also consistent with the work of previous scholars (Hawdon et al., 2014). While Facebook friends are a less important factor for Sri Lanka. In addition to this, gender was also a significant contributor in exposure to hate material and males have more chances to be exposed to online hate material in all countries. Age was also a predictor, but it increased fewer chances to expose someone from hate material in all four countries.

When the same model was checked while controlling the individual factors, the exposure to online material still varies among the four Asian countries but the likelihood of exposure

was decreased. This shows that individual factors are important. We also hypothesized three possible explanation for the variation without individual factors. The first one was to understand on the base of Inglehart-Welzel's self-expression scale which described that countries that have higher scores on self-expression scale are more tolerant towards minorities and foreigners. According to the results based on the following scale, we already plausibly mentioned that India should has a higher score than Pakistan and Bangladesh. Our data results do not fit well in India's case, results are in line with the world value survey for Pakistan and Bangladesh. One of the possible reasons behind this is the Hindu-Muslim conflict during the data collection which may prove higher exposure to online hate material by Indian sample.

Second, we theorize that India should have less exposure than Pakistan due to more strictness in their hate speech laws. However, the anti-hate laws do not accurately account the variation in the sample four countries. For example, according to the previous debate, it was plausibly said that Indian Sample should have less exposure than Pakistan, but it scored the highest among all other three countries. Similarly, despite the demand of introducing new hate speech laws, and this demand usually emerge when the existing laws failed to deliver. Sri Lankan youth exposed the least to hate material online as compared to other sample nations. As a long time before, it was mentioned that less developed countries with less strict anti-hate speech laws or poor implementation of those laws, individuals from those countries would spread more hate speech content (Walker, 1994). Even after 25 years, this argument seems relevant in online sphere also.

The third plausible explanation behind the variation in exposure was theorized due to the literacy rate. Sri Lankan sample exposed the least to online hate material and also the country has the highest literacy rate among all four. Also, the results can partially be related to Bangladeshi sample score with a discrepancy. Bangladeshi sample should have scored less than Pakistan but more than India. However, the following scored more than Indian and Pakistani sample. Similarly, India has higher literacy rate than Pakistan but the sample of the former exposed more to hate material online.

Conclusion

Free and easy access to tweeting/posting/commenting with millions of users on social media makes it an affordable tool for spreading hate material. Our research is contributing practically and theoretically in the body of literature. In practical terms, this research is useful because we tried to find potential predictors of online hate material exposure. Individual factors that are leading towards online hate will be useful for lawmakers, practitioners, and media educators. Media educators can guide their students that they should keep these individual factors in mind while exploring the internet and social media world. Moreover, this study also extending helping hand for those who are working on anti-hate speech laws and they should consider the role of individual factors. Theoretically, this study has extended the routine activity framework for online hate material by explaining how web 2.0 has become a dangerous place which is increasing a chance of crime in an online setting by exposing an individual to online hate.

At the same time, we also stress upon the fact that the existence and exposure to hateful content online do not guarantee that it would be yielded into behavioral repertoire. As Hansen (2012) discussed that Pakistanis have a common tendency towards using radical rhetoric's while commenting about other nations, people, religions, and sects but when it come to their practical behavior, majority of them are moderate. So, the finding of this study should be taken as they are. Any further preposition (behavioral repercussions) should be followed with empirical observations.

Also, the study draws attention of the administration of social networking sites to enhance and advance the hate speech detection algorithm and it is reported that only 4 out of 22 official languages of India supported by the Facebook hate speech detection algorithm. Three fourth of Indian people (25%) do not speak at least one of the four languages. So, the online sphere should be more protected by introducing new algorithms, bots and security software.

The study concludes with a suggestion that this type of cross-national considerations should be carried out in other countries (especially where ISIS and other militant groups are operating) so preventive measures could be taken before struggling for cure.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The first limitation of the study is the age of respondents. We took the data from young adults whose age was between 19 to 29 years. These young adults actively visit their social media profiles and read the comments under their own or other persons' posts.

Moreover, they actively share and comment on different posts. Second, we measured the exposure to online hate as a categorical variable and measured this variable in general terms.

Future researchers should make a comparison between younger adults and older people regarding exposure to online hate material in cross-national settings. Moreover, future studies should go beyond one step further from theorize level to hypothesize with respect to anti-hate speech laws and tolerance level to predict the exposure to online hate material. Studying the effect of the anti-hate law in a cross-national setting will provide interesting insights regarding online hate material exposure. In addition to this, researchers should use the online hate exposure in specific terms rather than taking it in general terms.

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