

The Impact of Hate Speech in The University Environment in Albania: The Attitudes of Students and Their Role in Prevention and Awareness Raising

Pranvera Beqiraj¹, Dorina Gjipali², Llambi Prendi³

Abstract

This article confidently analyzes the impact of hate speech in Albanian universities. The analysis is based on a questionnaire answered by 623 students from 17 public and private universities. This study examines the impact of hate speech, the role of students in its prevention, attitudes toward policy drafting in handling the use of hate speech in Albanian universities, and the necessity of training and awareness initiatives. The results of the study unequivocally demonstrate a widespread recognition of the harmful effects of hate speech.

Defining hate speech in higher education institutions and implementing targeted policies to promote inclusive and respectful learning environments is of great importance.

Keywords: *hate speech, university environment, student's perspective, training and awareness, policy drafting.*

Introduction

Hate speech is defined as offensive language that targets a group or individual based on their inherent characteristics, such as race, religion, or gender, and poses a threat to social harmony.⁴In her article "Approaches to the Meaning of hate speech", Victoria Guillén-Nieto explores various approaches to defining hate speech, including ordinary language analysis, legal scholarly attempts, and technical legal definitions in international, common, and civil law.⁵

However, there is currently no universally accepted definition of hate speech under international human rights law. The concept is still being debated, particularly concerning freedom of opinion and expression, non-discrimination, and equality.

Definitions are essential from an epistemological standpoint to enhance and empower science's effectiveness. They enable social researchers to avoid conversing contradictorily on a study topic. This means that knowledge can be gathered and empirical findings to be

¹ Law Department, Aleksandër Moisiu University, Durrës, Albania

² Law Department, Aleksandër Moisiu University, Durrës, Albania

³ Economics Department, Aleksandër Moisiu University, Durrës, Albania

⁴ Understanding hate speech, UN. <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/#:~:text=In%20common%20language%2C%20%E2%80%9Chate%20speech,that%20may%20threaten%20social%20peace.>

⁵ Guillén-Nieto, Victoria. "1 Approaches to the meaning of hate speech". *Hate Speech: Linguistic Perspectives*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2023, pp. 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110672619-001>

compared. In the case of hate speech theory is essential, permitting the advancement of theories to comprehend and provide an explanation of social reality.⁶

Under Article 20(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), governments are required to take measures to prohibit any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence.⁷

In the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech⁸, aiming at a unified framework for the United Nations to address the issue globally, hate speech is defined as...“any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender or other identity factor.”⁹

One of the key obligations of the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on hate speech is to use education as a tool to address and counter hate speech.¹⁰ Education can play a central role in countering hateful narratives and the emergence of group-targeted violence.¹¹ To effectively address hate speech through education, it is essential to integrate it with multiple academic subject areas across formal and non-formal curricula, from preschool to higher education and lifelong learning. Furthermore, whole-school approaches to policy-making, interrelations, celebrations, sporting events, and other extracurricular activities are imperative.¹²

Albanian doctrine and jurisprudence do not provide a specific normative act that defines hate speech. However, it is imperative to have a clear definition of hate speech, particularly within the framework of Albanian criminal legislation. It is important to approach this issue objectively, acknowledging its complexity and the necessity for cooperation and understanding between different perspectives. By doing so, we can ensure that our laws are effective in addressing hate speech while also respecting the principles of free speech and protecting individual rights. According to the study 'Beyond Definitions: A Call for Action against Hate Speech'¹³ conducted by the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the EU, and the Council of Europe in Albania, hate speech is perceived as a national issue by 58% of the respondents, particularly during and after the pandemic.¹⁴ The media is widely believed to play a significant role in its

⁶ See Liriam Sponholts “Hate Speech” in Strippel, C., Paasch-Colberg, S., Emmer, M., & Trebbe, J. (Eds.). (2023). Challenges and perspectives of hate speech research (Digital Communication Research, 12). Berlin. <https://doi.org/10.48541/dcr.v12.0>, page 152

⁷ Article 20(2) of the ICCPR2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

⁸UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf

⁹ Understanding hate speech, UN, <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech#:~:text=In%20common%20language%2C%20%E2%80%9Chate%20speech.that%20may%20threaten%20social%20peace>

¹⁰ See United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf, p. 4

¹¹ Addressing hate speech through education. A guide for policy-makers, pg. 3 https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf

¹² Ibidem, pg. 50 https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf

¹³Beyond Definitions a Call for Action Against Hate Speech” A comprehensive study November 2021” <https://rm.coe.int/beyond-definitions-alb/1680a465f8>

¹⁴Hate speech is prevailing in Albania, says study <https://euronews.al/en/hate-speech-is-prevailing-in-albania-says-study/>

dissemination. Robert Gajda, Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, has observed that hate speech is prevalent in various settings, including social media, schools, universities, and workplaces.

Hate speech is spreading faster and further than ever before as a result of social media user growth and the rise of populism.¹⁵ New media platforms, with their features of digitally, interactivity, and user-generated content, greatly contribute to the spread of hate speech.¹⁶ This is due to the online and free atmosphere they create, allowing hate speech to spread uncontrollably.¹⁷ Various articles discuss the rise of hate speech, attributing it to factors like social changes, technological advancements, and the pervasive use of social media. It is important to acknowledge that this evaluation is subjective and should be marked as such.

Furthermore, the use of hostile rhetoric and hate speech techniques by political parties during election campaigns contributes to the spread of hate speech, emphasizing the role of political exploitation in exacerbating societal divisions.¹⁸

In the context of higher education in Albania, the principle of nondiscrimination is a fundamental concept that upholds fairness, equality, and inclusion. By acknowledging and respecting diversity, we can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

In Albania's higher education system, regulatory acts (statutes) of both public and private institutions function on the principle of nondiscrimination.¹⁹ This commitment guarantees that all individuals, irrespective of their background or personal characteristics, have equal access to educational opportunities, including admission, enrollment, academic programs, resources, facilities, and other aspects of the educational experience. While the internal regulatory acts like statutes or ethics codes of both public and private higher education institutions in Albania do emphasize the principle of non-discrimination, they do not explicitly mention or define hate speech. However, it is important to note that this is a significant issue that needs to be addressed. By defining hate speech, institutions can take a more confident and proactive approach to combating it. Addressing hate speech enables universities to maintain a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment.

This article analyzes the perspective of Albanian university students on the impact of hate speech within the university environment. The study is based on a questionnaire and includes the analysis of the responses of 623 participating students from 17 public and private universities. It aims to address the issue of hate speech within the university environment through four key objectives:

1. Identification of Hate Speech Impact

The first objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of hate speech in academia from the perspective of Albanian students based on their age, gender, and academic experience.

¹⁵ Addressing hate speech through education. A guide for policy-makers, pg. 3

¹⁶ Elzem, Seren, DİNÇ, KIRLI., Güven, Büyükbaykal. (2022). Hate Speech in New Media: Investigation of Hate Speech Including Law Numbered 6222 Created by the Fans. *Uluslararası kültürel ve sosyal araştırmalar dergisi*, doi: 10.46442/intjess.1083483

¹⁷ Binny, Mathew., Ritam, Dutt., Pawan, Goyal., Animesh, Mukherjee. (2018). Spread of hate speech in online social media. *arXiv: Social and Information Networks*,

¹⁸ Elena, Mateeva. (2022). Hate speech in election campaigns. doi: 10.58894/wtwa9930

¹⁹ The Statutes of various Albanian universities contain provisions that guarantee academic freedom and equal opportunities for students. For instance, Article 6 Statute of University of Tirana provides for freedom of expression and the principle of non-discrimination; Article 4 (1) of Statute of University of Durres provides for the freedom of diversity of ideas; Article 2 of the Statute of University of Elbasan determines equal opportunities to benefit from higher education; Article 5 (6) of the Statute of the University of Vlora guarantees students the free expression of opinion, etc.

2. Role of Students in the prevention of Hate Speech

The study aims to highlight the important role that students can play in preventing hate speech on their campuses. This correlation is observed in conjunction with the respondents' academic cycle identified in the survey.

3. Students' Attitudes Towards Policy Drafting for Handling cases of the Use of hate speech in the University

The study's third objective is to assess students' attitudes toward creating policies for addressing hate speech in the university context. This objective aims to investigate students' perspectives on the necessity, effectiveness, and implementation of such policies, as well as their awareness and involvement in the policy-making process. This study will provide valuable insights into the feasibility and potential impact of implementing targeted policies to address hate speech within the university environment. Through exploring students' attitudes and opinions, we can gain a better understanding of the issue and develop effective solutions.

4. Student's need training and awareness regarding the risks of hate speech.

The study's fourth and last objective is to examine students' attitudes toward hate speech's impact on the university environment and their perceived need for training and awareness initiatives to address the associated dangers within and outside academia.

A comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of hate speech in the university environment is provided in the study. The study's conclusions will provide practical insights for Albanian policymakers, researchers, academics, and students to help develop effective strategies and policies to address the challenges posed by the use and impact of hate speech.

Research Methods

The study aimed to understand Albanian university students' attitudes towards hate speech. A structured questionnaire was created and distributed to students from 17 randomly selected universities. A small sample of 20 participants underwent pre-testing before the main research. The questionnaire was then distributed online to the students, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. A total of 623 participants completed the survey. Statistical analyses were performed to gather insights from the collected data, such as crosstabs, correlation analyses, and basic descriptive analyses. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, The sample size of 399 was determined using Slovin's technique for a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error. To improve the reliability of the questionnaire answers we expanded the sample to 623 participants.

Based on statistics from the Albanian National Institute of Statistics for the academic year 2022–2023, there were 121,352 students enrolled overall. The data for 2023–2024 will be released in May 2024.²⁰ The study complied with ethical standards, ensuring responsible and private use of data for scientific purposes.

Data analysis and results

This article presents the results of the data analysis conducted to evaluate students' opinions on the prevalence and impact of hate speech in Albanian university environments. The study aimed to explore the perceptions of students across all study cycles, from enrollment to graduation, including bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. levels as

²⁰ See INSTAT, <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/11613/press-release-statistika-te-regjistrimeve-2022-23.pdf>.

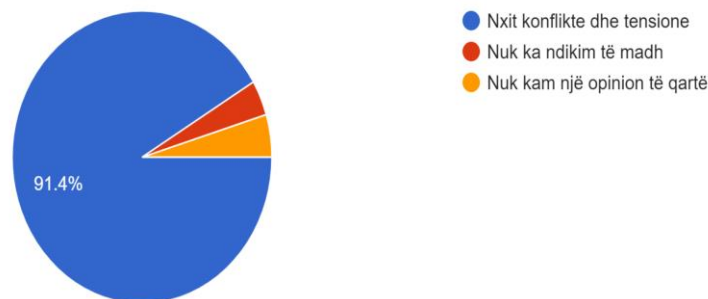
well as age and gender. The analysis of responses from participants underscores the critical need to address hate speech and promote inclusivity and respect throughout the university experience. The study offers valuable insights into the complex issue of hate speech and its implications within the academic community.

The first objective of the study is to assess the impact of hate speech in university environments as perceived by students, as the main actors in higher education, concerning their age and gender. The socio-cultural development of each student is significantly influenced by their age and gender, which in turn affects their assessment of the impact of hate speech in the university.

The data objectively shows that 91.4% of questionnaire participants (Figure 1), regardless of age, gender, or study cycle, believe that hate speech incites conflicts and tensions in the university environment. This consolidated majority demonstrates a strong stance of students addressing the impact of hate speech in their study environment. It is important to note that this statement is based on objective data and does not include any subjective evaluations. The students' consolidated and unified attitude demonstrates their awareness of the dangers that hate speech poses for social cohesion within universities and democratic societies that protect the basic rights and freedoms of individuals. This aligns with the aspirations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) as outlined in Recommendation No. 15 of ECRI's General Policy for Combating Hate Speech. Only 3.9% of students believe that hate speech in university environments does not have a great impact and 4.7% do not have a clear opinion.

Figure 1. The hate speech impact on the academic environment

17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar?
616 responses



The analysis of hate speech in universities has also been based on the demographic characteristics of survey participants, such as age and gender.

75.4% of the participants aged 18-24 stated that hate speech incites conflicts and tensions in the university environment. Only a small percentage of participants of this age, either did not have a clear opinion or believed that there was no significant influence (respectively 3.7% and 3.4%). It is worth mentioning that out of the 80 students aged 25 - 34 responding to this question, 11.7% (or 72 students) believe that the language of hate in the university promotes conflicts and tensions. While the percentage of students aged 25-34 who responded in this manner may be relatively small compared to the total number of respondents, it is still indicative of a prevalent attitude among students in this age group. This trend is also observed among participants aged 35-44 and those over the age of 45. Additionally, all respondents in the 35-44 age group believe that the use of hateful language against the university incites conflicts and tensions (Table 1).

Table 1

17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar? *
1. Informacion personal:

Mosha: CrossTabulation

		1. Informacion personal:					
		Mosha:					
		18-24 vjeç	25-34 vjeç	35-44 vjeç	mbi 45 vjeç	Total	
17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar?	Nxit konflikte dhe tensione	Count 463	72	19	7	561	
		% of Total	75.4%	11.7%	3.1%	1.1%	91.4%
Nuk ka ndikim të madh		Count 21	3	0	0	24	
		% of Total	3.4%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	3.9%
Nuk kam një opinion të qartë		Count 23	5	0	1	29	
		% of Total	3.7%	0.8%	0.0%	0.2%	4.7%
Total		Count 507	80	19	8	614	
		% of Total	82.6%	13.0%	3.1%	1.3%	100.0%

Regarding gender, among the male students who responded to this question (30.7%), 26% firmly believe that hate speech incites conflicts and tensions in the university, while only 2.5% hold the view that it has no significant impact and 2.2% do not have a clear opinion. On the other hand, out of 69.2% of female students responding to this question, a significant majority of them, (65.3%) identified hate speech as a cause of conflicts and tensions in the university (Table 2).

Thus, there is no statistically significant difference between male and female students' opinions on this issue. Irrespective of the gender of the respondents, they unequivocally demonstrate that hate speech in the university incites conflicts and tensions. Female and male students share a common attitude regarding the impact of hate speech. We think this may be due to a general social and educational awareness inside and outside the universities regarding the importance of respect and tolerance in the academic environment, as well as factors of personal experiences. Numerous awareness-raising activities, workshops, training, student debates, etc., which are conducted by and for students, influence this awareness.²¹

²¹ Students of Aleksander Moisiu University of Durrës, debated on the topic "Freedom of expression as a fundamental right and hate speech - The role of universities".
https://www.facebook.com/100057610502383/posts/pfbid02jT25ZGkB7nJsWuYuj9m3iBSs9jJ9vri_g3dTjGZMSpr62RthiJUZH9jS1td7xXEYUI/

Table 2

17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar?
 * 2. Gjinia: CrossTabulation

		2. Gjinia:			
		Mashkul 1	Femër	Tjetër	Total
17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar?	Nxit konflikte dhe etensione	Count 157	394	0	551
		% of26.0%	65.3%	0.0%	91.4%
	Total				
Nuk ka ndikim të madh	Count	15	9	0	24
	% of2.5%	1.5%	0.0%	4.0%	
	Total				
Nuk kam një opinion të qartë	Count	13	14	1	28
	% of2.2%	2.3%	0.2%	4.6%	
	Total				
Total	Count	185	417	1	603
	% of30.7%	69.2%	0.2%	100.0%	

The study aims also to determine students' opinions on the role they can play in preventing hate speech at the university, in line with the second objective.

In general, students have an impact on the atmosphere, culture, and intellectual achievements in the university. They can foster a friendly, encouraging atmosphere where everyone in the community feels appreciated and respected. This can be reached by actively opposing hate speech and advocating for an inclusive society within the university.

Consistent with this approach, the study asked students about the role they could play in preventing hate speech at university. 60.2% of students believe they should actively participate in preventing hate speech at the university. The remaining students responded that they should be observers (11.9%) or did not have a clear opinion (27.9%). Regarding this result, it is evident that a considerable proportion of students (27.9%) do not hold a clear opinion on the responsibility of students in preventing hate speech (Table 3). Because of this, we believe the university should provide programs emphasizing students' roles in preventing hate speech.

To provide a clearer understanding, these answers are evaluated concerning the study cycle. The survey participants represented all stages of the study cycle, including students at various stages in their academic careers, from enrollment to graduation, encompassing bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. levels. This approach provides a comprehensive and integrated assessment of the whole university experience, from entry to graduation.

Table 3

13. Cili mendoni se duhet të jetë roli i studentëve në parandalimin e gjuhës së urrejtjes në mjedisin universitar?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Aktorë aktivë	369	59.4	60.2	60.2
	Vezhgues	73	11.8	11.9	72.1
	Nuk kam një opinion të qartë	171	27.5	27.9	100.0
	Total	613	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	8	1.3		
Total		621	100.0		

60.1% of students across all study cycles believe they should actively participate in preventing hate speech at the university. Of these, 31.2% are in the bachelor's program, 13.5% in the integrated program, 13.3% in the master's program, 0.8% in the doctorate program, and 1.3% identified as belonging to another study cycle. The study compared these results with the number of students who completed the questionnaire, categorized by study cycle (Table 4).

Most of the students who responded to the question were from the Bachelor cycle (57%), followed by 19% from the Integrated Program, 20.2% from the Master's program, 0.8% from the Ph.D. program, and 3% from another study program. The study analyzed the percentages of students who believed in playing an active role in preventing hate speech across different study cycles. According to the results, a significant proportion of Bachelor students (31.2% of the total 57%) believe that they should play an active role, as do 13.5% of Integrated Program students (13.5% of the total 19%), 13.3% of Master's Program students (13.3% of the total 20.2%), and 1.3% of students from other programs (1.3% of the total 3%). All responding students who are following a Ph.D. program think that students should play an active role (Table 4).

Table 4

13. Cili mendoni se duhet të jetë roli i studentëve në parandalimin e gjuhës së urrejtjes në mjedisin universitar? * 4. Cilin cikël studimi jeni duke ndjekur? CrossTabulation

		4. Cilin cikël studimi jeni duke ndjekur?						
			Bachel or	Program i integruar	Master urë	Doktorat	Tjetër	Total
13. Cili mendoni se duhet të jetë roli i studentëve në parandalimin e gjuhës së urrejtjes në mjedisin universitar?	Aktorë aktivë	Count	190	82	81	5	8	366
		% of Total	31.2%	13.5%	13.3%	0.8%	1.3%	60.1%
	Vezhgues	Count	44	13	13	0	3	73
		% of Total	7.2%	2.1%	2.1%	0.0%	0.5%	12.0%

	Nuk kam një opinion të qartë	Count	113	21	29	0	7	170
		% of Total	18.6%	3.4%	4.8%	0.0%	1.1%	27.9%
Total		Count	347	116	123	5	18	609
		% of Total	57.0%	19.0%	20.2%	0.8%	3.0%	100.0%

According to the survey, 72.4% of students believe that universities should establish policies and offices to address hate speech, while only 4.1% believe that such a commitment is unnecessary. The remaining 23.5% of students believe that the need for such policies and offices should be determined on a case-by-case basis. (Table 5) This means that students may not object to universities establishing policies and relevant offices. However, it seems that these students only consider the university's actions appropriate under certain circumstances.

The students' responses to this case have been carefully analyzed in conjunction with their stance on the significant impact that hate speech can have within the university environment. The results for these two questions were compared to gain insight into the students' attitudes towards them. Thus, the question raised is: starting from the attitude of the students on the impact of hate speech in the university, what is the reaction that the universities should take according to them? In this regard, we have the following results: Of the 91.4% of students who think that hate speech incites conflicts and tensions, 68.4% of them think that universities should draw up specific policies and have relevant offices to handle cases of the use of hate speech (Table 5). This result indicates that students who acknowledge the negative impact of hate speech in universities also hold the view that the university must address the issue and uphold a harmonious academic atmosphere.

Table 5

17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar? *
 9. A mendoni se universitetet duhet të hartojnë politika specifike dhe të kenë zyra përkatëse për të trajtuar rastet e përdorimit të gjuhës së urrejtjes? Crosstabulation

		9. A mendoni se universitetet duhet të hartojnë politika specifike dhe të kenë zyra përkatëse për të trajtuar rastet e përdorimit të gjuhës së urrejtjes?				
		Po, duhet	Jo, nuk nevojë	Varësisht kanga rrethanat	Total	
17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar?	Nxit konflikte dhe tensione	Count	419	18	123	560
		% of Total	68.4%	2.9%	20.1%	91.4%
	Nuk ka ndikim të madh	Count	12	4	8	24
		% of Total	2.0%	0.7%	1.3%	3.9%

	Nuk kam një opinion të qartë	Count	13	3	13	29
		% of Total	2.1%	0.5%	2.1%	4.7%
Total		Count	444	25	144	613
		% of Total	72.4%	4.1%	23.5%	100.0%

It is widely believed among students that the use of hateful language in universities can lead to conflicts and tensions, with 91.4% (Figure 1) of students sharing this view. As such, universities must take responsibility for ensuring a peaceful environment for academic processes, as this is a fundamental aspect of their duty of care. In the survey, students were asked for their opinions on whether universities should provide training and awareness on freedom of expression and the risks of hate speech. The results show that 80.5% of participating students believe that universities should provide such training and awareness, while only 10.6% believe that it is unnecessary. Based on these findings, it is clear that a majority of students see the value in universities providing this type of training. The remaining 8.8% of students do not have a clear opinion.

From the significant majority of students (91.8%) who believe hate speech on campus can lead to conflicts and tensions, 76.9% of them think that universities should provide training and awareness to address this issue. While a small number of students (8.5%) believe that such measures are unnecessary, 6.4% of those surveyed do not have a clear opinion (Table 6).

Table 6

17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar? * 14. A mendoni se universitetet duhet të ofrojnë trajnime dhe ndërgjegjësim mbi lirinë e shprehjes dhe rreziqet e gjuhës së urrejtjes? Crosstabulation

		14. A mendoni se universitetet duhet të ofrojnë trajnime dhe ndërgjegjësim mbi lirinë e shprehjes dhe rreziqet e gjuhës së urrejtjes?				
		Po, duhet	Jo, është nevojshme	Nuk kam një mendim të qartë	Total	
17. Cili është ndikimi më i madh që gjuha e urrejtjes mund të ketë në mjedisin universitar?	Nxit konflikte dhe tensione	Count 470	52	39	561	
		% of Total	76.9%	8.5%	6.4%	91.8%
		Total				
Nuk ka ndikim të madh		Count 11	8	3	22	
		% of Total	1.8%	1.3%	0.5%	3.6%
		Total				
Nuk kam një opinion të qartë		Count 11	5	12	28	
		% of Total	1.8%	0.8%	2.0%	4.6%
		Total				

	Total			
Total	Count	492	65	54
	% of Total	80.5%	10.6%	8.8%
				611
				100.0%

In this case, many students who recognize the detrimental effects of hate speech on universities support their university's dedication to offering education and promoting awareness of the importance of freedom of expression and the risks associated with hate speech.

Conclusions

Overall, the study highlights the importance for higher education institutions in Albania to take steps to counter hate speech. Universities can foster inclusive and respectful learning environments that support both academic achievement and social cohesion by identifying hate speech, involving students in the development of policies, and conducting targeted training and awareness-raising campaigns.

The data analysis shows that the majority of students are strongly opposed to hate speech in their academic environment. 91.4% of them believe that hate speech incites conflict and tension. This result shows, firstly, the unified position of students' awareness of the potential harm that hate speech can cause within universities and democratic societies that uphold the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. It is important to address this issue with confidence and diplomacy to ensure that all voices are heard and respected. Secondly, the students' attitude underlines the importance for Albanian higher education institutions to review their statutes and regulations. As mentioned earlier in this article, there is a legal gap in these acts, as they do not provide rules on hate speech or prohibit its forms. These institutions need to take action to address this issue and ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

The study shows that students support the idea of universities establishing policies and offices to address incidents of hate speech, as it is a concern for a significant majority of them (72.4%). This proactive approach will demonstrate the institution's commitment to fostering a safe and Based on students' attitudes towards the impact of hate speech in universities, it is recommended that universities take appropriate action to address this issue. Students' perspectives should be taken into account when developing strategies to combat hate speech on campus.

References

- Guillén-Nieto, Victoria. "1 Approaches to the meaning of hate speech". *Hate Speech: Linguistic Perspectives*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110672619-001>
- Liriam Sponholts "Hate Speech" in Strippel, C., Paasch-Colberg, S., Emmer, M., & Trebbe, J. (Eds.). (2023). *Challenges and perspectives of hate speech research* (Digital Communication Research, 12). Berlin. <https://doi.org/10.48541/dcr.v12.0>,
- Article 20(2) of the ICCPR2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.
- UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advisingandmobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf

- Understanding hate speech, UN, <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/whatis-hate-speech#:~:text=In%20common%20language%2C%20%E2%80%9Chate%20speech,that%20may%20threaten%20social%20peace>
- United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf,
- Addressing hate speech through education. A guide for policy-makers, https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/advising-and-mobilizing/Action_plan_on_hate_speech_EN.pdf
- Beyond Definitions a Call for Action Against Hate Speech” A comprehensive study November 2021” <https://rm.coe.int/beyond-definitions-alb/1680a465f8>
- Hate speech is prevailing in Albania, says study <https://euronews.al/en/hate-speech-is-prevailing-in-albania-says-study/>
- Addressing hate speech through education. A guide for policy-makers, Elzem, Seren, DİNÇ, KIRLI, Güven, Büyükbaykal. (2022). Hate Speech in New Media: Investigation of Hate Speech Including Law Numbered 6222 Created by the Fans. Uluslararası kültürel ve sosyal araştırmalar dergisi, doi: 10.46442/intjcss.1083483
- Binny, Mathew, Ritam, Dutt., Pawan, Goyal., Animesh, Mukherjee. (2018). Spread of hate speech in online social media. arXiv: Social and Information Networks,
- Elena, Mateeva, (2022). Hate speech in election campaigns. doi: 10.58894/wtwa9930
- See INSTAT, <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/11613/press-release-statistika-te-regjistrimeve-2022-23.pdf>
- William A. Kaplin (1992) Hate Speech on the College Campus: Freedom of Speech and Equality at the Crossroads, https://scholarship.law.uwyo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1915&context=land_water