Should Hate Speech Laws Be Made Stricter on Social Media?

Student Name

Institution

Instructor

Course Number

Date

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Social media hate speech has been a growing social issue of concern and begs the question of the moral duty of online platforms, and governmental involvement in policing online speech. Though the concept of social media is to enable people to connect globally and use freedom of expression, it has also given room to harassment, extremism, and discrimination that targets particular individuals. Existing policies and digital control measures have not been effective in curbing harm over the internet. As such, legal restrictions against hate speech should be tightened on social media in order to increase the safety of users, decrease polarization in the society, and safeguard minority communities.

A major argument to enforce hate speech laws is the fact that a relationship has been reported between hate speech and violence in the real world. The digital platforms enable the proliferation of bad content at a pace so fast that it may reach millions before it is stopped by the moderator. According to recent studies, inflammatory language used online can predict violence against migrant and LGBT communities, which reflects a tangible channel through which online rhetoric develops to harm the offline (Arcila Calderón, 2024). Extremist language that is highly visible fuels social conditions where hostility towards marginalized groups is a matter of normality. Tougher legal requirements would require platforms to step in sooner and more regularly, so the possibility of hate speech turning into real-world violence is limited.

The weak platform-based moderation is another reason why more stringent regulations should be implemented. The social media companies usually use automated tools that cannot see contextual or subtle hate speech that results in over-censorship and under-enforcement. Intervention and moderation strategies studies demonstrate that the response on platform level is usually not consistent and that having policy and legal responses working together ensures

effectiveness (Windisch et al., 2022). More stringent laws would bring about consistency in expectations of all platforms and companies would not be able to enforce policies to suit their bottom line. In addition, companies would be forced to invest in more efficient monitoring technologies and multilingual moderator personnel by legal responsibility.

In addition to minimizing harm, more rigorous hate speech laws would also help create a healthier digital public environment. The social media has immense power over the political communication and hate speech can disfigure the democratic process when unregulated. Unfriendly websites deny engagement, particularly in women, members of the LGBTQ community, and racial or religious minorities. In case of negative speech and overwhelming constructive dialogue, the opinion of the citizens is polarized and misinformation is disseminated more easily. Respectful discussion can be facilitated by governments placing legal limits to allow individuals to talk respectfully.

Another argument that critics usually use is that the tightening of the hate speech law will jeopardize the freedom of speech. Although free speech is an important building block of democracy, it is not unconditional and most legal systems recognize restrictions when speech directly leads to the harm of others. Stricter regulation is not meant to curb unpopular opinion but rather to create a better demarcation between acceptable expression and directed abuse. Securing people against harassment, discrimination as well as violence is a required element of ensuring democratic participation and equality.

To sum up, it is necessary to create more stringent hate speech policies in social media to advance the societal safety, serve as an effective means of civic participation, and safeguard vulnerable groups. This can be achieved by imposing legal responsibility on platforms to allow society to have a digital environment that is both free to express and responsible. The tighter

rules would not completely prohibit all the evil speech, but they would decrease its scope and influence significantly, which would eventually lead to a more tolerant and respectful internet community.

References

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