IRSTI 13.01.29 | Research Article

DIGITAL DISCOURSE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE «OTHER»: HATE SPEECH IN THE MEDIA SPACE OF KAZAKHSTAN

J.M. Doskhozhina[1], **Y.B. Toktarov**[1,2]

ABSTRACT

This article examines the problem of the escalation of interethnic "hate speech" within Kazakhstan's digital discourse, with a particular focus on the Instagram platform. The central research problem lies in the destabilization of social consensus as social media transform into spaces of uncontrolled transmission of symbolic violence and the dehumanization of the "Other." The author argues that contemporary digital platforms function not only as means of communication but also as instruments of "identity policing," where strategies of internal exclusion (stigmatization based on linguistic and cultural markers) deepen existing sociocultural divides.

The author's theoretical and methodological framework is grounded in an understanding of hate speech as a systemic discursive process of reality construction. Drawing on the concepts of Benedict Anderson and Pierre Bourdieu, the author contends that aggressive speech acts in the digital sphere reflect ongoing struggles for social domination and the legitimation of exclusive forms of identity within a multiethnic society.

As possible solutions to the identified problem, the article proposes a shift from reactive technical moderation toward the implementation of a comprehensive socio-political strategy. The author substantiates the need for the systematic reduction of social frustration factors, which serve as primary triggers of aggression in the digital environment, the introduction of preventive mechanisms for fostering a new digital ethics and media literacy, and the adaptation of state policies on social cohesion to the conditions of rapid technological transformation of the media landscape.

Keywords: Hate Speech, Symbolic Violence, Ethnicity, Identity, Social Alienness, Digital Discourse, Instagram, Kazakhstani Society.

[1]Institute for Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the CS MES RK, Almaty, Kazakhstan

[2]Narxoz University

Corresponding author:
Y.B. Toktarov,
toktarov.yermek@gmail.com

Citation:
Doskhozhina J.M., Toktarov Y.B. Digital Discourse in the Construction of the «Other»: Hate Speech in the Media Space of Kazakhstan // Adam Alemi. – 2026. – Vol. 28. – No. 3 (109). – P. 20–35. – DOI: 10.48010/m5fsv116

Open Access
© The Author(s), 2026
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Received: 12/05/2026
Accepted: 05/07/2026
Published online: 30/09/2026

Сандық дискурстағы «Өзге» бейнесін қалыптастыру: Қазақстанның медиакеңістігіндегі өшпенділік тілі

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада Қазақстанның цифрлық дискурсында, әсіресе Instagram платформасында, этносаралық «өшпенділік тілінің» өршу мәселесі қарастырылады. Зерттеудің негізгі ғылыми мәселесі әлеуметтік медианың символдық зорлық-зомбылық пен «Басқаны» дегуманизациялаудың бақылаусыз таралу кеңістігіне айналуы салдарынан қоғамдық консенсустың тұрақсыздануында жатыр. Автор қазіргі цифрлық платформалардың тек коммуникация құралы ғана емес, сонымен қатар «бірегейлікті полицейлік бақылау» тетігіне айналғанын атап өтеді, мұнда ішкі жатсыну стратегиялары (тілдік және мәдени белгілер бойынша стигматизация) қолданыстағы әлеуметтік-мәдени жіктерді тереңдете түседі.

Автордың теориялық-әдіснамалық ұстанымы хейтспичті шынайылықты құрастыратын жүйелі дискурсивтік процесс ретінде түсінуге негізделген. Б. Андерсон мен П. Бурдьенің тұжырымдамаларына сүйене отырып, автор интернеттегі агрессивті сөйлеу актілері көпэтносты қоғамда әлеуметтік үстемдік үшін күрес пен ерекше бірегейлік формаларын заңдастыру үдерістерінің көрінісі екенін алға тартады.

Аталған мәселені шешу жолдары ретінде техникалық модерацияның реактивті шараларынан кешенді әлеуметтік-саяси стратегияға көшу ұсынылады. Автор цифрлық ортадағы агрессияның бастапқы триггері болып табылатын әлеуметтік фрустрация факторларын жүйелі түрде азайту, жаңа цифрлық этика мен медиасауаттылықты қалыптастырудың превентивті тетіктерін енгізу, сондай-ақ қоғамдық келісімге бағытталған мемлекеттік саясатты медиакеңістіктің жедел технологиялық трансформациясы жағдайларына бейімдеу қажеттілігін негіздейді.

Түйін сөздер: өшпенділік тілі, символдық зорлық-зомбылық, этникалық тиесілік, бірегейлік, әлеуметтік жатсыну, цифрлық дискурс, Instagram, қазақстандық қоғам.

Цифровой дискурс в конструировании образа «Другого»: язык вражды в медиапространстве Казахстана

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается проблема эскалации межэтнического «языка вражды» в цифровом дискурсе Казахстана, сфокусированная на платформе Instagram. Центральная научная проблема

исследования заключается в дестабилизации социального консенсуса вследствие превращения социальных медиа в пространство неконтролируемой трансляции символического насилия и дегуманизации «Другого». Автор констатирует, что современные цифровые платформы выступают не только средствами коммуникации, но и инструментами «полицейского надзора за идентичностью», где стратегии внутреннего отчуждения (стигматизация по языковому и культурному признакам) углубляют существующие социокультурные разломы.

Теоретико-методологическая позиция автора базируется на понимании хейтспича как системного дискурсивного процесса конструирования реальности. Опираясь на концепции Б. Андерсона и П. Бурдье, автор утверждает, что агрессивные речевые акты в сети являются отражением борьбы за социальную доминацию и легитимацию исключительных форм идентичности в многонациональном обществе.

В качестве путей решения выявленной проблемы предлагается переход от реактивных мер технической модерации к реализации комплексной социально-политической стратегии. Автор обосновывает необходимость системной минимизации факторов социальной фрустрации, выступающих первичным триггером агрессии в цифровой среде, внедрения превентивных механизмов формирования новой цифровой этики и медиаграмотности, а также адаптации государственной политики общественного согласия к условиям ускоренной технологической трансформации медиапространства.

Ключевые слова: язык вражды, символическое насилие, этничность, идентичность, социальная отчужденность, цифровой дискурс, Instagram, казахстанское общество.

Introduction

In the context of accelerating digitalization of public communication in Kazakhstan, the media landscape is undergoing profound transformations that affect not only the production and circulation of information but also the nature of social relations within the digital sphere. One of the most pressing consequences of these shifts is the growing prevalence of hate speech, particularly in the context of interethnic interactions. Although a substantial body of research addresses hate speech in social media, most studies focus either on quantitative content monitoring or on general ethical and normative dimensions of digital communication, while insufficiently addressing the discursive mechanisms through which the "Other" is constructed in specific national contexts.

This study proposes a different analytical and theoretical approach by shifting the focus from isolated manifestations of hateful content to understanding hate speech as a systemic discursive process involved in the production and reproduction of symbolic boundaries between ethnic groups. In contrast to existing literature that predominantly treats hate speech as individual acts of aggression, this article conceptualizes it as part of a broader structure of symbolic power operating within digital environments.

The relevance of this research is determined by the high level of social media engagement in Kazakhstan. As of early 2025, Instagram has over 12.4 million users in the country, with the most active user segment (aged 18 - 34) demonstrating strong engagement in discussions related to ethnicity, religion, and identity [1, 2]. Instagram's visual-textual format enables the analysis of both linguistic and visual expressions of hostility, including memes and symbolic content [3]. Furthermore, the platform's algorithmic structure and hashtag ecology facilitate the amplification and diffusion of such discursive practices [4]. The nationwide geographic reach of Instagram across all regions of Kazakhstan also allows for comparative analysis of regional variations in hate discourse.

Particular attention in this study is given to comment sections under social media posts as a key source of empirical data reflecting spontaneous public reactions. Despite their significant analytical value, comment sections remain underexplored in academic research, which creates an additional space for scholarly investigation and highlights the novelty of this study.

The theoretical significance of this work lies in its shift from empirical monitoring of media content to the analysis of social power mechanisms. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities", the author examines how media in the digital age participate in redefining national identity through the symbolic exclusion of the "Other" [5]. Additionally, using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic violence", hate speech is interpreted not as a mere expression of individual intolerance but as an instrument for legitimizing social and symbolic domination, through which certain discursive practices normalize prejudice [6].

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach combined with elements of critical discourse analysis to examine the

manifestations and structures of interethnic hate speech in Kazakhstan's digital media space. The methodological framework is grounded in the analysis of user-generated content on the Instagram platform.

The empirical base consists of comment sections under selected Instagram posts related to socially resonant conflict situations that triggered public discussion. A purposive sampling strategy was applied to identify cases that generated significant user interaction and contained observable instances of interethnic tension. Four case studies were selected for in-depth analysis, each representing different types of conflict dynamics, including both interethnic and intra-ethnic tensions.

The analysis is based on a coding system adapted from existing research on hate speech classification [7], which distinguishes between three levels of hate speech: hard, medium, and soft, according to the intensity of aggression and communicative intent. Comments were manually coded and categorized based on linguistic markers, tone, and implied meaning, taking into account both explicit and implicit forms of hostility.

In addition, the study incorporates principles of critical discourse analysis to interpret hate speech not only as isolated expressions but as part of broader discursive practices that construct the "Other" and reproduce symbolic power relations. This approach allows for the identification of recurring narrative patterns, mechanisms of normalization, and the role of digital platforms in amplifying exclusionary discourse.

Main part

Conceptual Framework of Hate Speech Analysis

To systematically analyze interethnic hate speech, this study adopts a multi-layered definition. Hate speech is not merely an expression of personal prejudice but a tool of symbolic power. "Hate speech in the context of interethnic relations typically manifests through the communicator's use of lexical and other means, the nature of which allows one to identify the communicator's goals, tone, and intentions - revealing attitudes aimed at insult, humiliation, threats, as well as incitement to violence, hatred, and discrimination against specific ethnic groups, their subgroups, or particular categories or groups of citizens" [8]. Strictly destructive forms of media activity in the field of interethnic relations include the promotion of one-sided and biased portrayal of conflicts based on ethnic, racial, or religious grounds, and the use of words and expressions with accusatory, intimidating, mocking, or degrading connotations.

In the Kazakhstani digital space, this often takes the form of "symbolic violence". By using specific linguistic markers, commenters establish a hierarchy where the "Self" (the dominant or "native" group) is positioned as the legitimate owner of the social space, while the "Other" (the ethnic minority or "assimilated" individual) is marked as an intruder or a threat.

For the analysis of the following case studies, the author employed a coding system developed by domestic scholars Nyssanbayev A.N., Dunayev V.Yu., Kosichenko A.G., Kurganskaya V.D.:

I. Hard Hate Speech - High Level of Aggression - Hostile Tone

– Direct and explicit calls for violence;

– Calls for violence in the form of general slogans;

– Direct and explicit calls for discrimination;

– Calls for discrimination in the form of general slogans;

– Veiled calls for violence and discrimination (e.g., promoting "positive" examples of violence or discrimination).

II. Medium Hate Speech - Medium Level of Aggression - Negative Tone

– Justification of historical instances of violence and discrimination;

– Publications and statements that question widely recognized historical facts of violence and discrimination;

– Claims about historical crimes committed by a particular ethnic group as a whole;

– References, with the aim of discrediting, to the connections of ethnic groups with domestic or foreign political and state structures;

– Claims about the criminality of a particular ethnic group;

– Discussions about the disproportionate dominance of a particular ethnic group in terms of material wealth, representation in government, etc.;

– Accusations of negative influence by a particular ethnic group on society or the state;

– Calls to prevent migrants belonging to a particular ethnic group from settling in a region.

III. Soft Hate Speech - Low Level of Aggression - Neutral Tone

– Creating a negative image of an ethnic group;

– Mentioning the name of an ethnic group in a derogatory or offensive context;

– Claims about the inferiority (lack of cultural refinement, intellectual ability, or capacity for constructive work) of a particular ethnic group as a whole;

– Claims about the moral shortcomings of a particular ethnic group;

– Quoting clearly xenophobic and nationalist statements and texts deliberately taken out of context [7].

Mostly interethnic conflicts which are reflected in the Kazakhstani media space appear in the comment section under the posts which are not dedicated to the question of ethnicity at all. Nine times out of ten hate speech are used in some everyday issues posts. The following case studies are examined below.

Analytical Case Studies

Case Study 1. On the Instagram account of Kazakh blogger under the name of "alpamys.okey" who has 239 thousand followers published video reels on 10th June 2025. In this video he showed a conflict of his wife with their neighbor in a humoristic way. However, comments under this reel turned out to be aggressive by the reason of nationality of person who his wife had a conflict with.

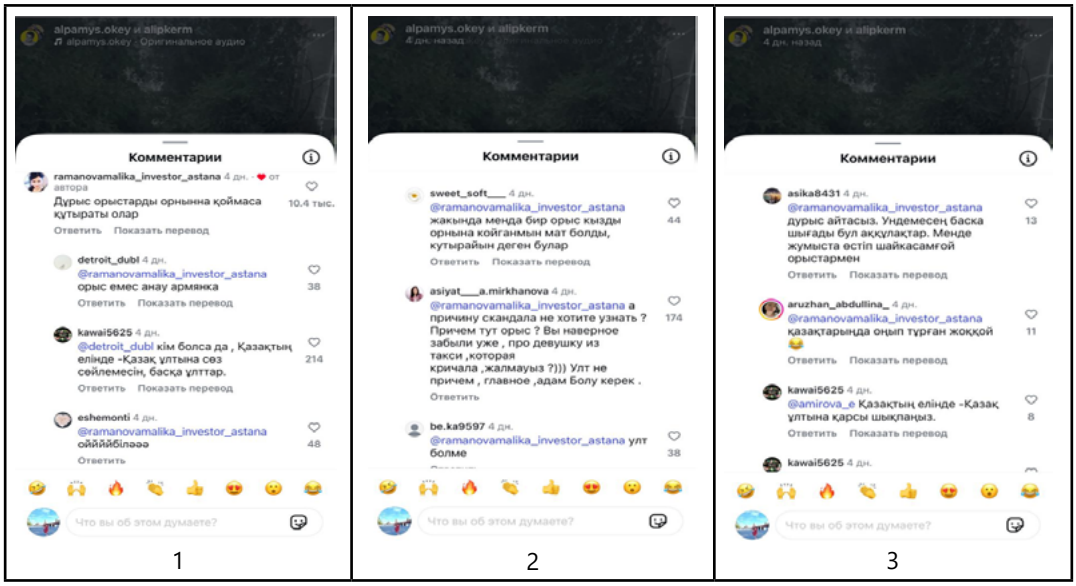


Figure 1 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "alpamys.okey"

For ease of analysis, the screenshots in Figure 1 were numbered.

On the screenshot 1 the first comment which got more than 10 thousand likes says the next: "It is right. If Russians are not put in their place, they start to become impudent". Become impudent is not a fully correct translation for the word "құтыру" (qutyru), mostly this word has a highly negative humiliating meaning in Kazakh language, because is used for animals, who are getting mad. As a response to this comment the other one by user "kawai5625" wrote: "whoever that person is, he has no right to tell anything to a Kazakh person on the land of Kazakhs", this respond as we can see got a lot of likes too, which means supporting from the society.

On the screenshot 2 the user "sweet_soft___" wrote: "Recently I put one Russian girl in her place by using swear words because they are becoming impudent". Again, we see the using of "qutyru" word relative to Russian people.

On the screenshot 3 the user "asika8431" supports the main comment on the picture 1 and writes the next: "You are totally right. If we will not be saying anything, these "white ears" will sit on our heads. On my work I also conflict with Russians like you". These "white ears" phrase is quite popular aggressively negative addressing to Russian people.

Later this video reel was deleted by the author, reasons were not explained, but apparently, he made it because he didn't expect such types of chauvinistic comments, despite we can see that he liked the first comment on the picture 1, which shows his position.

But after several days he posted a continuation of that conflict in the form of video, where his wife explained the conflict's reasons. Still, the comments under that video were quite aggressive.

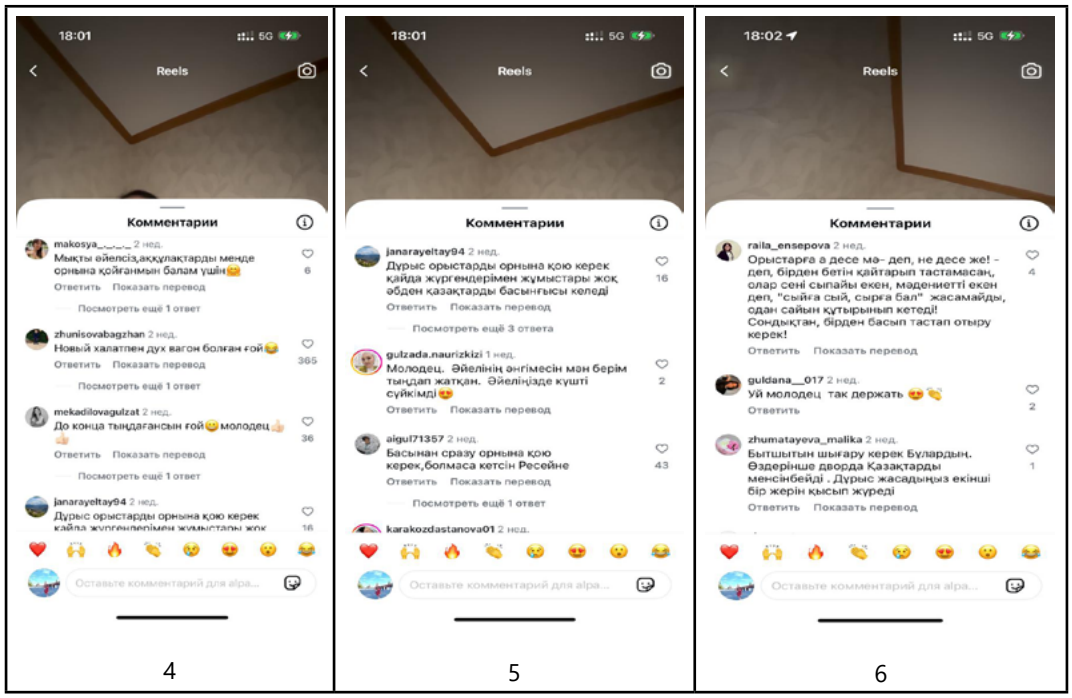


Figure 2 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "alpamys.okey"

On the screenshot 4 the first comment says: "You are a brave woman. I put "white ears" in their place too for my son". On the picture 5 the user "janarayeltay94" wrote: "That's right what you did, Russians must be put in their place, they must understand where they live, they want to obey Kazakhs so much". On the screenshot 5 the user aigul71357 left the next comment: "From the start they must be put in their place, if no, then they must go back to their Russia".

On the picture 6 the first comment is fully aggressive with using a lot of specific Kazakh words which are difficult to translate quite correctly, it says: "If Russians tell you something, just answer immediately and shut their mouths, if you don't back their stupidity to their faces right away, they start to think that you are weak, they don't appreciate your cultural level and they don't understand respect, they become even more impudent. That's why they must be pressured without delay". The comment of "zhumatayeva_malika" on the same picture says: "These people must be destroyed. Who do they think they are to hold themselves like this with Kazakhs. You did it right, now they gonna hold their one place tight".

On the screenshot 7 the first sentence of the first comment is full of low words relative to Russians, it can't be translated by ethical reasons, the second sentence says: "...the more we will be silent, the more they gonna sit on our heads". The user "danagul4499" wrote the next: "Great job! I'm just like you. I would beat up Russians".

The first comment on the screenshot 8 says: "They write an application, they are snitches". On the screenshot 9, the user "dinara.aitkozhanova" wrote: "These types of bad Russians exist in every neighborhood".

Code analysis

According on this case the most hate speech sentences were:

1. Put Russians on their place

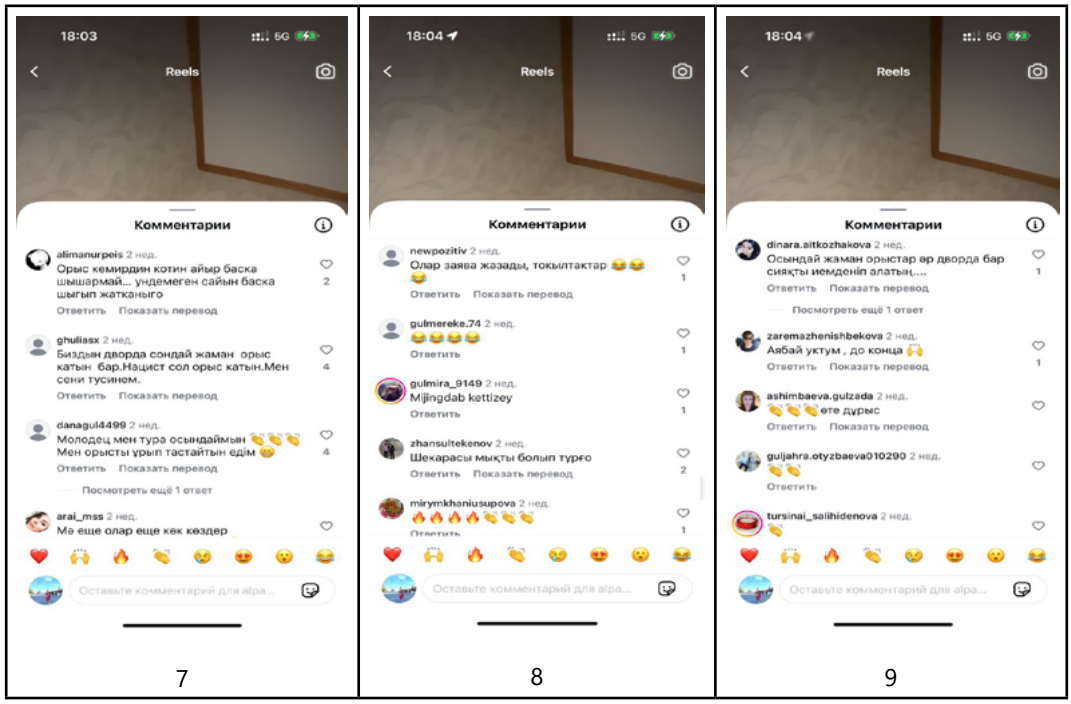


Figure 3 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "alpamys.okey"

2. Russians are becoming impudent (like animals)
3. "White ears"
4. They must back to their Russia
5. Russians must be pressured
6. Russians must be destroyed
7. Russians are snitches
8. Russians must shut their mouths
9. Russians must be beat up

Table 1 - Word-Based Categorization for Case Study 1

Word	Word in Kazakh	Level of agression	Hate speech categorization
their place	орнына қою керек	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
impudent	құтырады	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
"White ears"	аққұлактар	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
their Russia	кетсін Ресейне	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
pressured	басып тастау керек	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
destroyed	бытшытын шығару керек	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
snitches	тоқылдақтар	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
mouths shut	а десе - мә, не десе - же	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
beat up	ұрып тастау	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech

Case Study 2. On 23th June, 2025 the popular Instagram account in Kazakhstan "astana_new_kz" which has 138 thousand followers published a conflict between women in one of the restaurants. And if in previous example, the conflict was not about an ethnicity at all, but raised ethnic hatred problem in the comment section, in this case one of the Kazakh women putted her attention on the nationality of another one, who was Russian. Let's consider some of the comments under this post.

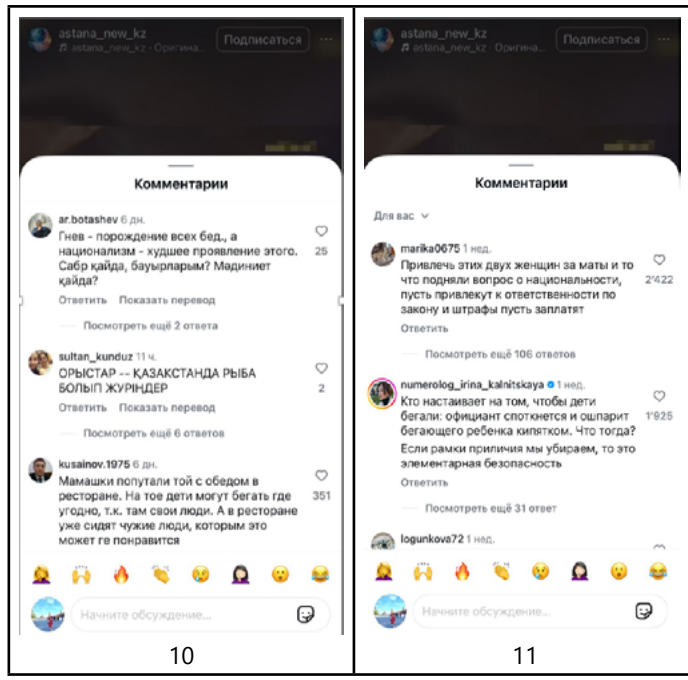


Figure 4 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "astana_new_kz"

It is necessary to note that most of the comments as in Kazakh and in Russian languages were against ethnic conflict in general and judged this situation as a provocative one. So, on the picture 10 the user "ar.botashev" wrote: "Anger is the cause of all ills, and nationalism is the worst manifestation of it. Where are patience and brotherhood? Where is culture?". On the screenshot 11 the user "marika0675" left the next comment: "Bring these two women to justice for what they did and what they said about their nationality, let them be held accountable by the law and let them pay the fines", this comment was liked 2422 times. However, some users still left comments against Russians, like on the screenshot 10, the user "sultan_kunduz" wrote in a commanding tone: "Russians, behave yourself as fishes in Kazakhstan" meaning that Russians must be quiet and speechless.

Despite of some negative comments, the analysis of this example shows that the majority in Kazakhstani society is not oriented toward fostering ethnic conflict and generally condemns such tensions.

Case Study 3. One of the last resonance cases that received much publicity on the Instagram platform in Kazakhstan and was published by many public accounts is a domestic conflict in the bus of Shymkent, which then escalated into inter-ethnic one. On the video, one of the conflict's participators is screaming about that she is only Turkish woman in that bus and everyone is against her, because of her nationality. She is acting very aggressively, using a lot of swear words and after getting into a physical fighting with some woman.

Comment section under this publication is very varied. So, on the screenshot 12, the first comment by "batimaeszhanova" is saying: "This woman's jawbone must be crushed". The next comment, which got 348 likes is claiming: "It is a failure of our government, which put outsiders on top of our heads", but the user "8681.isa" wrote: "It's a cry from the heart. She already has hysterics; we should watch the vid-

eo fully. Nazism is flourishing in KZ". This comment also has a lot of likes.

The screenshot 13 presents the next comments: "These people are becoming impudent"; "Scream as much as you want in your country"; "If you don't like Kazakhstan, get the hell out of here without hysterics" and the last one: "One Turkish woman with the lion heart".

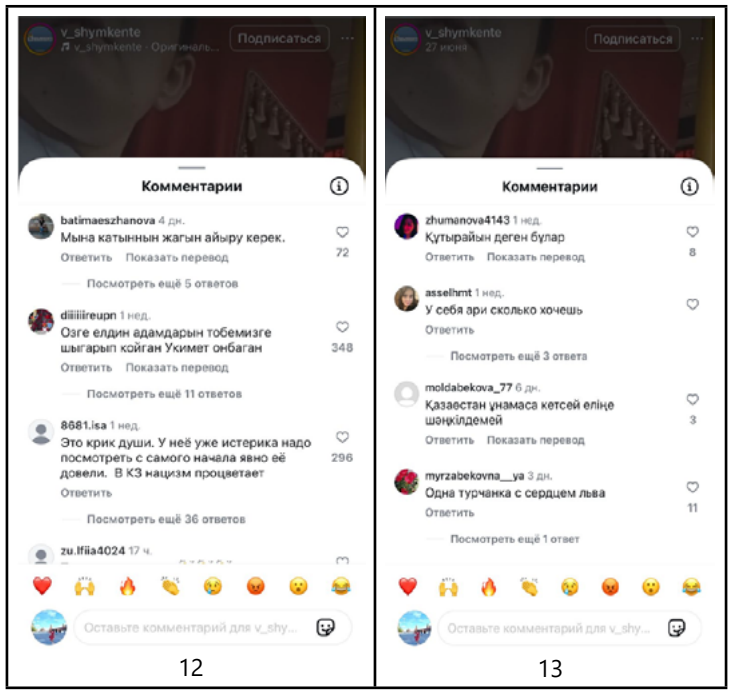


Figure 5 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "v_shymkente"

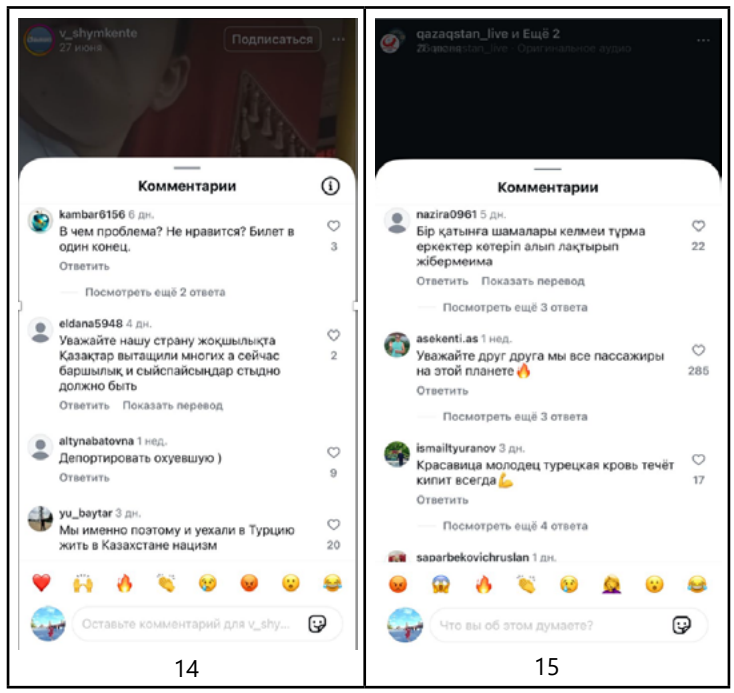


Figure 6 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "v_shymkente" and "qazaqstan_live"

The screenshot 14 presents the next comments: "What is the problem? You don't like? Then, there is a one-way ticket for you"; "Respect our country, when you didn't have nothing, Kazakhstan saved you, and now, when you have everything, you don't get along. You should be ashamed of yourselves"; "Deport that insolent woman" (in this case, the translation was adopted to academic style, in original, the user wrote a swear word); "That's why we moved to Turkey, because it is a Nazism in Kazakhstan".

There are the next comments on the screenshot 15: "They can't handle one woman, men had to kick her out"; "Respect each other, we all are just passengers on our planet", this comment got 285 likes; "What a wonderful woman, Turkish blood boils".

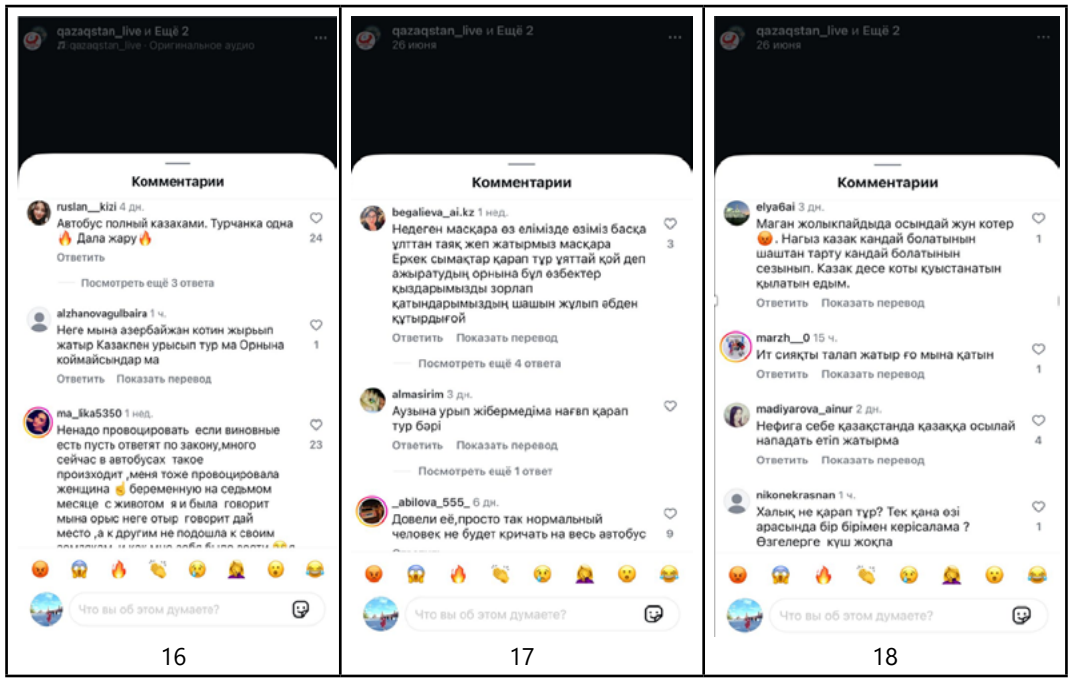


Figure 7 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "qazaqstan_live"

Comments on the screenshot 16 saying the next: "The bus is full of Kazakh people, but one Turkish woman brought the heat"; "Why this Azerbaijanian is... (the comment employs sexually explicit and degrading language as a form of verbal aggression, which cannot be translated for ethical reasons). Is she fighting with Kazakhs? She must be put in her place".

The screenshot 17 presents the next comments: "What a shame. We are being beaten by strangers on our own land. Those pathetic so-called men are just looking instead of to stop her. These Uzbeks rape our girls and tear our women's hair out. They became totally impudent"; "Has someone struck her in the face? Why are they just watching?".

The screenshot 18 presents the most aggressive comments: "If only I met such types of hairy... (the comment employs sexually explicit and degrading language as a form of verbal aggression, which cannot be translated for ethical reasons), then they would see the real Kazakh people, I would tear their hair out, so next time they would clench their ...(the comment employs sexually explicit and degrading language as a form of verbal aggression, which cannot be translated for ethical reasons)"; "This woman is pressing as a mad dog"; "No way, are Kazakhs really getting attacked like this in Kazakhstan?"; "What are the people doing, just watching? Are they only fighting among themselves? Do they have no power against others?"

Code analysis

According on this case the most hate speech sentences were:

1. They became totally impudent
2. Tear they hair out
3. Her jawbone must be crushed
4. Outsiders climbed on top of our heads
5. Scream in your country
6. Get the hell back to your country

7. Quit barking
8. A one-way ticket for you
9. Deport this insolent woman
10. It is a Nazism in Kazakhstan
11. Kick her out
12. She must be putted on her place
13. Pathetic so-called men
14. Rape our girls
15. Struck her in the face
16. Hairy …
17. Pressing as a mad dog

Table 2 - Word-Based Categorization for Case Study 3

Word	Word in Kazakh/Russian	Level of agression	Hate speech categorization
impudent	құтырады	medium level of aggression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
tear hair out	шашын жұлып	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
must be crushed	айыру керек	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
outsiders	өзге ұлт	low level of aggression/neutral tone	soft hate speech
on top of our heads	төбемізге қойған	low level of aggression/neutral tone	soft hate speech
scream	ори (у себя ори сколько хочешь)	medium level of aggression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
get the hell back to your country	кет еліне	medium level of aggression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
quit barking	шанқылдама	medium level of aggression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
a one-way ticket	билет в один конец	low level of aggression/neutral tone	soft hate speech
insolent	*original word can't be written by ethic reasons*	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
Nazism in Kazakhstan	нацизм в Казахстане	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
kick out	лақтырып жіберу	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
put on her place	орнына қою керек	medium level of aggression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
pathetic so-called men	еркек сымақтар	medium level of aggression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
rape	зорлау	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
struck	ұрып жіберу	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
hairy…	жүн…	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech
mad dog	ит сияқты талап	high level of aggression/hostile tone	hard hate speech

Case Study 4. Another case, which raised interethnic discussion in the comment section on Instagram platform was a conflict between two women in the bus of Almaty, where one of them called another: "Қазақбайқа, мамбетка!" (Kazakbayka, mambetka). The word "kazakbayka" is used to mock or criticize a certain stereotype of a person and typically refers to a rural-minded or "aul mentality" figure who resists modern values. "Mambetka" is a slang, which refers to a rural person, with a "village mentality" and is perceived as uncultured and uneducated. This case presents intra-ethnic insult, since two participators of the conflict are Kazakhs. It is necessary to note, that these types of abusive words are mostly used between Kazakhs in a negative way, since these slurs carry a social class bias, expressing urban disdain towards rural newcomers. Let's review several comments under this post.

The first comment on the screenshot 19 is saying: "Why each bum is walking all over us? They eat the poor Kazakh's bread, drink his water, and then call him "mambet". Bums who weren't even accepted in their own country".

On the screenshot 20, the user "bibigul_izguttinova" wrote: "She needs to be punished by law. Living in Kazakhstan and still dares to insult us. Shala Kazakh". "Shala Kazakh" is a derogatory term for an assimilated or culturally detached Kazakh person.

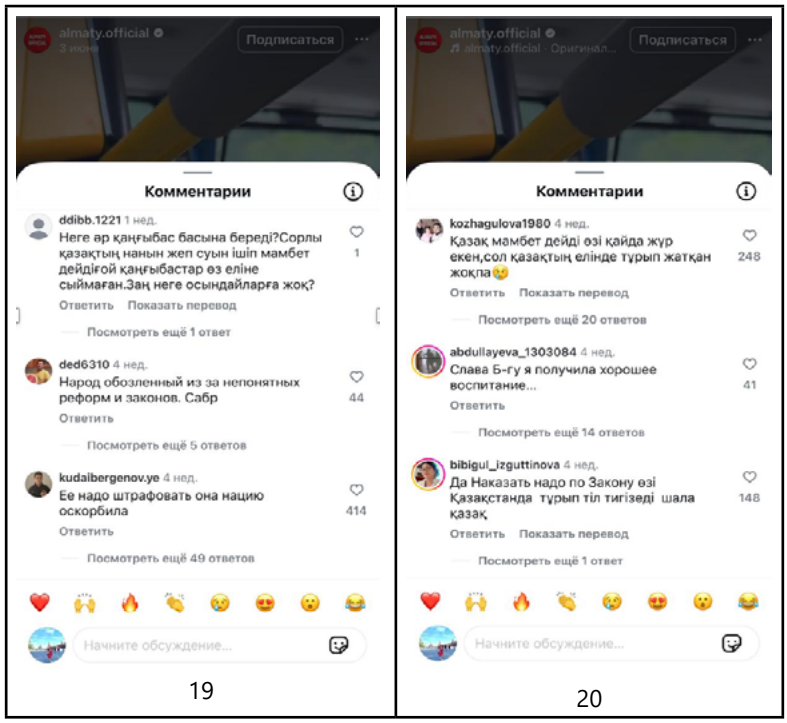


Figure 8 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "almaty.official"

The screenshot 21 presents the next comments: "Go back to your Russians, you pitiful thing. No language, no pride - a miserable, worthless woman"; "Charge her for nationalism and that's it"; "How can they just keep vomiting that filth like it's totally normal? Why don't they hold responsibility?"; "Once they put on a mini skirt or shorts, they instantly start behaving like city girls".

The screenshot 22 shows the next comments: "A girl who curses in Russian is an animal"; "I can't call her Russian, because she doesn't look like one, but I can't call her Kazakh either, because of her behavior"; "Look who is talking"; "Two rotten, stinky mindless slaves calling each other mambet. People get disgusted just looking at their faces". It is necessary to underline, that in original comment, the last user on the screenshot 23 uses the word "mankurt", which is a very strong Kazakh insult with deep cultural roots. In Kazakh folklore and history, a "mankurt" is a person who has lost his memory, abandoned own roots and traditions, someone who has lost connection with

his homeland and culture - a kind of "soulless", "unconscious", or "clouded" person. So, the user "oralgan_tegi" wrote: "A slave of the Russians worships them, because there are a lot of mindless slaves". In the next comment the same user wrote: "Just another product of mindless slaves' breed. Such people are enemies of the Kazakhs". This comment got 507 likes.

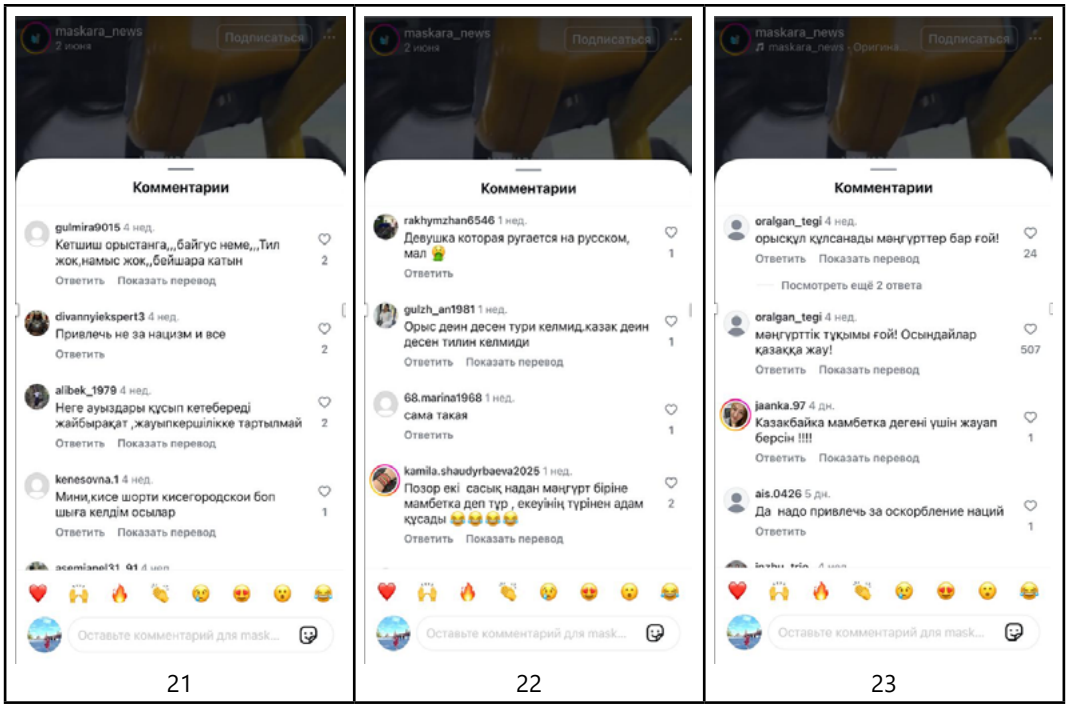


Figure 9 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "mascara_news"

On the screenshot 24 the user "erzhanbaigunysov87" wrote: "Calling someone kazakbayka, what an animal. Let her go to Russia and become a complete animal". The user "erlanmukhamedzhanov777" left the next comment: "Grab this one and punish her!". The translation of this comment doesn't fully convey the aggressive tone of its, since in the original, it is written: "Мынаны ұстап алып, жазала!" ("Mynany ustap alyp, zhazala!"). The context of this phrase is threatening and expressing call for vigilante justice.

The screenshot 25 presents the next comments: "Poor thing (pejoratively) – she wants to be Russian but doesn't have the looks, she wants to be Kazakh but doesn't have the language. A pitiful half-wit, she thinks, that speaking Russian will make her one of them. But Russians don't even consider you as a human"; "That shala Kazakh, albasty must be prosecuted". Earlier the word "shala Kazakh" have been explained as a derogatory one, applying for a culturally detached Kazakh person. The word "Albasty" - in Kazakh mythology, is an evil female demon. It is used as a severe insult directed at women, implying that the woman is cursed or monstrous. The term carries strong misogynistic and dehumanizing connotations when used in modern language.

There are the next comments on the screenshot 26: "I am a descendant of Mambet Batyr. I am a Mambet, and I take pride in it"; "Who is that albasty calling someone kazakbayka and mambetka? She should apologize to this woman and to all Kazakhs"; "A slave of the Russians, suckled from a pig's teat, now snorting back at her own people"; "This is exactly what they mean when they say a bad Kazakh can never become Russian. The Russians are probably laughing at the Kazakhs right now".

Code analysis

According on this case the next hate speech sentences were used mostly:

1. Each bum is walking all over us
2. Bums who weren't even accepted in their own country
3. Shala Kazakh
4. Go back to your Russians, you pitiful thing
5. A miserable, worthless woman

6. Keep vomiting that filth like it's totally normal
7. A girl who curses in Russian is an animal
8. Two rotten, stinky mindless slaves calling each other mambet
9. People get disgusted just looking at their faces
10. A slave of the Russians
11. There are a lot of mindless slaves
12. Another product of mindless slaves' breed
13. Enemies of the Kazakhs
14. What an animal
15. Become a complete animal
16. Grab this one and punish her!
17. Poor thing (pejoratively)
18. A pitiful half-wit
19. That shala Kazakh, albasty must be prosecuted
20. That albasty
21. A slave of the Russians, suckled from a pig's teat, now snorting back at her own people
22. They say a bad Kazakh can never become Russian

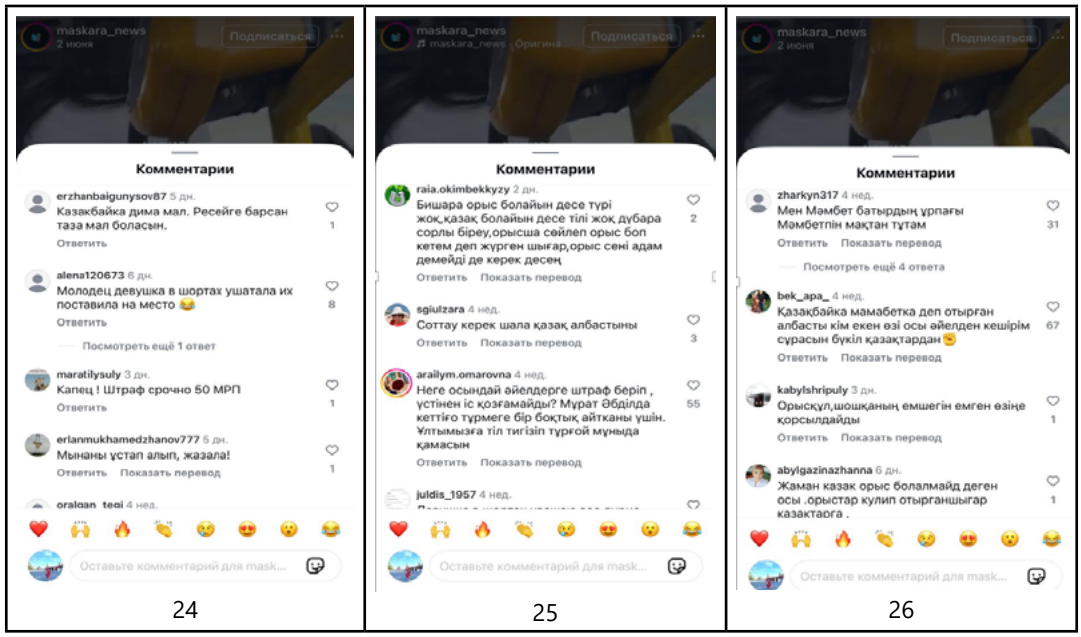


Figure 10 - Screenshots from the Social Media Page "mascara_news"

Table 3 - Word-Based Categorization for Case Study 4

Word	Word in Kazakh/ Russian	Level of agression	Hate speech categorization
bum	қанғыбас	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
shala Kazakh	шала қазақ	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
go back to your Russians	кетші орыстанға	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
pitiful thing	байғұс неме	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
miserable, worthless woman	бишара қатын	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
animal	мал	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech

rotten, stinky mindless slaves	сасық надан манкурттар	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
get disgusted	адам құсады	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
slave of the Russians	орысқұл	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
mindless slaves	манкурттар	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
mindless slaves' breed	манкурттық тұқымы ғой	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
enemies of the Kazakhs	осындайлар Қазаққа жау	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
complete animal	таза мал	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
grab this one and punish her!	мынаны ұстап алып, жазала!	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech
poor thing (pejoratively)	бишара	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
pitiful half-wit	дубара сорлы бірею	low level of agression/ neutral tone	soft hate speech
albasty	албасты	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
suckled from a pig's teat	шошканың емшегін емген	medium level of agression/ negative tone	medium hate speech
bad Kazakh	жаман қазақ	high level of agression/ hostile tone	hard hate speech

Discussions

The empirical analysis of the four case studies reveals that interethnic hate speech in the Kazakhstani digital space is not merely a collection of isolated aggressive acts, but a structured discursive mechanism for renegotiating national identity and social hierarchies. The philosophical and cultural interpretation of these findings, viewed through the conceptual frameworks of Benedict Anderson [5] and Pierre Bourdieu [6], allows for a deeper understanding of how the digital sphere facilitates the construction of the "Other."

Following Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" [5], Kazakhstan's digital space of, particularly Instagram, functions as a modern platform where the nation is continuously "re-imagined". In Case Studies 1, 2, and 3, we observe a clear process of discursive boundary-making. The construction of the "Other" (Russians, Turks, "outsiders") serves as a necessary antithesis for the consolidation of the "Self". By labeling ethnic minorities as "impudent" or "guests" who must know "their place", the commenters perform a symbolic act of reclaiming the national "home".

The "Other" is constructed through several discursive strategies:

— *Territorialization of Identity:* Phrases such as "on the land of Kazakhs" or "get back to your country" (Case Studies 1 and 3) transform the digital space into a contested physical territory. This reflects Anderson's idea that the community is imagined as limited and sovereign; the "Other" is perceived as a threat to that sovereignty.

— *Dehumanization:* The frequent use of animalistic metaphors, such as "qutyru" (becoming rabid/impudent) or "animal" (Case Studies 1 and 4), strips the "Other" of political and social agency, justifying their exclusion from the moral community.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic violence" [6] is essential for interpreting the "Hard" and "Medium" levels of hate speech identified in the analysis. Hate speech in the Kazakhstani media space operates as a tool of symbolic domination, where the dominant group imposes its definitions of "legitimate" behavior on others.

The command to "put them in their place" (Case Studies 1 and 3) is a classic manifestation of symbolic violence. It presupposes a natural-

ized social hierarchy where some groups possess the "right to speak" and others are expected to remain "speechless as fish" (Case Study 2). This is not just linguistic aggression; it is an exercise of power aimed at forcing the "Other" to acknowledge their subordinate position within the social field.

Case Study 4 presents a unique culturological phenomenon: the construction of an "Internal Other" through the labels "Shala Kazakh" and "Mankurt". Here, the conflict is intra-ethnic, yet it utilizes the same mechanisms of symbolic exclusion. "Mankurt", a person who has lost their cultural roots and identity, represents the ultimate "Other" within the "Self".

Aggressive discourse toward "Shala Kazakhs" (culturally detached individuals) functions as a form of "identity policing". By using dehumanizing language ("mindless slaves", "animal"), the commenters attempt to enforce a rigid, monolithic definition of Kazakhness. This demonstrates that the digital construction of the "Other" in Kazakhstan is not only directed outward toward ethnic groups but also inward, aimed at purging the "imagined community" of those who do not conform to traditional or linguistic norms.

The analysis confirms that digital discourse in Kazakhstan has become a primary site for "symbolic struggles" over the definition of national identity. Through the lens of Anderson and Bourdieu, hate speech is revealed as a systemic process of "Othering" that seeks to stabilize the "Self" by drawing sharp and often violent symbolic boundaries. While the majority of the Kazakhstani audience often condemns explicit nationalism (as seen in Case Study 2), the persistent presence of "Soft" and "Medium" hate speech suggests that the hierarchical construction of the "Other" remains a deeply embedded feature of the digital discursive landscape.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive and timely analysis of the mechanisms through which interethnic hate speech is disseminated and normalized within Kazakhstan's digital landscape, specifically on Instagram. By examining the comment sections of diverse posts, the research demonstrates that ethnic hostility is not a series of isolated incidents but a pervasive element of everyday online communication that reflects deeper societal anxieties.

The research highlights several critical dimensions of this phenomenon:

The Discrepancy Between Content and Reaction: A major finding is the sharp contrast between the often neutral or apolitical nature of original Instagram posts and the highly charged, ethnicized discourse that emerges in the comments. This suggests that digital platforms act as "venting spaces" where latent social tensions are triggered by even the most mundane content, transforming lifestyle or news updates into battlegrounds for national identity.

The Multi-Layered Map of Hostility: The study identifies that hate speech targets a broad spectrum of "Others". While much of the aggression is directed toward ethnic minorities, a significant and equally intense portion is intra-ethnic. The hostility between urban and rural populations, manifested through labels like "Shala Kazakh" or "Mambetka", reveals deep-seated cultural and socio-economic divisions within the ethnic majority. This finding challenges binary "majority vs. minority" frameworks and calls for a more nuanced understanding of social fragmentation in Kazakhstan.

Normalization and Dehumanization: The frequent use of dehumanizing metaphors, such as comparing individuals to "animals" or "slaves", indicates a worrying trend toward the normalization of aggressive nationalism. The dominance of exclusionary rhetoric over calls for tolerance suggests that the digital environment currently favors loud, polarizing voices, which can effectively silence moderate discourse and shift the boundaries of what is considered acceptable public speech.

In conclusion, online hate speech in Kazakhstan serves as a digital mirror, reflecting and magnifying real-life social and political frictions. Instagram has evolved beyond a mere social networking tool into a powerful platform that actively shapes the national conversation and dictates the parameters of "belonging".

The findings of this study underscore the need for a more sophisticated approach to digital social policy. Understanding these patterns of "everyday nationalism" is essential for developing effective strategies for conflict prevention, platform moderation, and the promotion of a more inclusive digital citizenship. Ultimately, addressing digital hate speech is not just a matter of technical moderation but a fundamental challenge for maintaining social cohesion in a rapidly digitalizing multi-ethnic society.

Funding

This research was funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (BR28713047: "Artificial Intelligence and the Ethics of Social Justice: A Conceptual Reflection on Opportunities and Risks in the Processes of Modernization of Society in Kazakhstan").

References

1 DataReportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Kazakhstan*. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-kazakhstan

2 NapoleonCat. (2024). *Instagram users in Kazakhstan – April 2024*. https://napoleoncat.com/stats

3 Matamoros-Fernández, A. (2017). Platformed racism: The mediation and circulation of an Australian race-based controversy on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. *Information, Communication & Society, 20*(6), 930–946. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1293130

4 Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press.

5 Anderson, B. (2001). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.

6 Bourdieu, P. (2007). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Polity Press.

7 Нысанбаев, А. Н., Дунаев, В. Ю., Косиченко, А. Г., & Курганская, В. Д. (2010). *Роль СМИ в консолидации казахстанского общества*. Компьютерно-издательский центр Института философии и политологии МОН РК.

8 Казаков, Ю. (2002). Между «что делать…» и «что делать?»: Пресса и общество в ситуации повышенного риска. В А. М. Верховский (сост.), *Язык мой… проблема этнической и религиозной нетерпимости в российских СМИ* (с. 127). РОО «Центр «Панорама»».

Transliteration

1 DataReportal. (2024). *Digital 2024: Kazakhstan*. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-kazakhstan

2 NapoleonCat. (2024). *Instagram users in Kazakhstan – April 2024*. https://napoleoncat.com/stats

3 Matamoros-Fernández, A. (2017). Platformed racism: The mediation and circulation of an Australian race-based controversy on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. *Information, Communication & Society, 20*(6), 930–946. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1293130

4 Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press.

5 Anderson, B. (2001). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.

6 Bourdieu, P. (2007). *Language and symbolic power*. Polity Press.

7 Nysanbaev, A. N., Dunaev, V. Yu., Kosichenko, A. G., & Kurganskaya, V. D. (2010). *Rol' SMI v konsolidatsii kazakhstanskogo obshchestva* [The role of mass media in the consolidation of Kazakhstani society]. Komp'yuterno-izdatel'skiy tsentr Instituta filosofii i politologii MON RK. (In Russian)

8 Kazakov, Yu. (2002). Mezhdu «chto delat'…» i «chto delat'?» Pressa i obshchestvo v situatsii povyshennogo riska [Between "what should be done…" and "what should be done?": The press and society in a situation of heightened risk]. In A. M. Verkhovskiy (Ed.), *Yazyk moy… problema etnicheskoy i religioznoy neterpimosti v rossiyskikh SMI* [My language… the problem of ethnic and religious intolerance in the Russian media] (p. 127). ROO "Tsentr 'Panorama'". (In Russian)

Author Contributions

J.Doskhozhina - conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing - original draft, and writing - review and editing. *Y.Toktarov* - supervision, validation, writing - review and editing, and correspondence with the journal. Both authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

INFORMATION ABOUT AUTHORS

Jannat Doskhozhina	Leading Researcher, PhD, Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the CS MSHE RK, Almaty, Kazakhstan, email: zhanatdoskhozhina@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1416-8600
Yermek Toktarov	Chief Researcher, PhD, Adjunct Associate Professor of the School of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies, PhD, Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies of the CS MSHE RK, Narxoz University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, email: toktarov.yermek@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8691-5222
Жаннат Мэлсқызы Досхожина	жетекші ғылыми қызметкер, PhD, ҚР ҒЖБМ ҒК Философия, саясаттану және дінтану институты, Алматы, Қазақстан, email: zhanatdoskhozhina@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1416-8600
Ермек Бауыржанұлы Тоқтаров	бас ғылыми қызметкер, базалық және пәнаралық пәндер мектебінің қауымдастырылған профессоры, PhD, ҚР ҒЖБМ ҒК Философия, саясаттану және дінтану институты, Narxoz университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан, email: toktarov.yermek@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8691-5222
Жаннат Мэлсовна Досхожина	ведущий научный сотрудник, PhD, Институт философии, политологии и религиоведения КН МНВО РК, Алматы, Казахстан, email: zhanatdoskhozhina@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1416-8600
Ермек Бауржанович Токтаров	главный научный сотрудник, ассоциированный профессор Школы базовых и междисциплинарных дисциплин, PhD, Институт философии, политологии и религиоведения КН МНВО РК, Университет Narxoz, Алматы, Казахстан, email: toktarov.yermek@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1416-8600