"Hate Speech on Social Media"

Highlights of 2018 in Lebanon

A study prepared by Maharat Foundation

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First: Overview

With the increased number of social media users that became 3 billion, pressures are arising on social platforms to review their policies concerning hate speech. Facebook stated recently that they haven't done enough to limit incitement on violence and hate speech in Myanmarwhich witnessed ethnic violence.

Facebook responds to hate speech by pending ability to access or removes accounts of people who always share content inciting on hatred, other measures can be taken like turning off posts or removing the account completely. Twitter laws and policies also bans accounts that aim at inciting harm against others based on race, gender, origin, belief or sexual identity. Twitter never tolerates violent threats, and bans any content that includes threat to a person or group of people and removes permanently such accounts. Twitter alsoprohibits targeting people with recurring insults.

Second: Objectives:

This analytical study of hate speech in relation to political and social events, aims at identifying hate speech, its size, type, and its impact on public life according to the following:

- Choosing a sample of political and social events that raised a public debate
- identifying hate speech around these events on Facebook and twitter during a certain time period
- Defining the size of hate speech, its type, and its source
- Defining a list of hate speech terminologies used
- Analyzing the speech content: background, context, impact, and implications

Third: Defining hate speech

Hate speech is a form of biased expression against a person or a group on the basis of their belief, religion, ethnicity, race, nationality, orientation, or gender. In general, this speech leads to incitement of violence, conflict, discrimination, and racism.

Forth: Research Sample and Analysis
- The following events were chosen from 2018 to be monitored and analyzed

    1- From 29th of January till February 5th 2018
    Violent Debates and behaviors resulted from a leaked video of a private gathering of the minister of foreign affairs Gibran Bassil describing the speaker of parliament as a thug "Baltaji" and promising to break his head before he breaks ours.

    2- From the 2nd till the 5th of August 2018
    Sectarian debate among Christians and Druze started with an offensive post by the political activist Naji Hayek insultingthe Progressive Socialist Party fighters who fell during the war; this coincided with arresting a political activist Rasheed Joumblat for a series of controversial and offensive posts on facebook directed to the president Aoun and the minister Bassil.

    3- From the 17th till the 19th of September 2018
    A violent debate with a sectarian political background after naming one of Beirut streets in the southern suburb after Mustafa Bader El Dinwho is accused in the assassination of Rafic Hariri

Fifth: Monitoring Methodology and Analysis
The monitoring methodology adopts a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data in addition to content analysis.
The quantitative analysis is based on data gathering according to the following indicators and variables:
- Monitoring social media platform facebook or twitter
- Monitoring and analyzing the comments, tweets and posts that have more than 20 engagements
- Classifying the monitored data
- Defining the type of hate speech that was divided into four main types:
- a- Incitement on violence

b- Direct threat of abuse

c- Recall of civil war

d- Defamation

- Defining the source of hate speech, that was divided into three main sources: politicians, journalists, social media activists
- Defining the type of multimedia file used and its source
- Defining the language of speech used and its terminologies

The methodology is based on qualitative indicators aiming at highlighting the analysis elements of speech content. The elements of qualitative analysis that were adopted in this methodology were defining the tone of speech, terminologies, and photos used, in addition to defining the speech background, impact, and implications on the stability and civil peace.

In the process of research and data gathering, we searched several Hashtags for every subject in specific dates as following:

Topic 1: Bassil describing Berri as a "thug" Baltaji.	Topic 2: Naji Hayekoffensivepost and arrest of Rasheed Joumblat because of Facebook posts	Topic 3: naming a street after Mustafa Bader El Din who is accused in the assassination of Rafic Hariri
#a_thug_and_a_half #Gebran_Bassil #Gebran_the_thug #Thug_Gebran #Elf_of_the_era #Nabih_berri_isa_red_line #We_love_you_nabih #Gebran_bassil_represents_me	#We_are_Rasheed_Joumblat #Rasheed_joumblat #Freedom_for_rashedjoumblat #Naji_hayek	#Street_of_terrorist_mustafa_bader_eldin #Mustafa_bader_eldin #International_court #Street_of_martyr_mustafa_bader_eldin

Specific dates were also searched on Facebook and Twitter through videos and photos related to these hashtags and events.

Sixth: Main Highlights of Hate Speech on Social Media for 2018 in Lebanon

98 samples of tweets, posts, and comments were monitored and analyzed according to the criteria and conditions specified by the monitoring methodology, mainly those related to the three political events chosen over the specific period of time, and those that have a minimum of 20 engagements. The samples were gathered from search engines of Twitter and Facebook based on key words and hashtags, and factchecking photos and videos shared with the public.
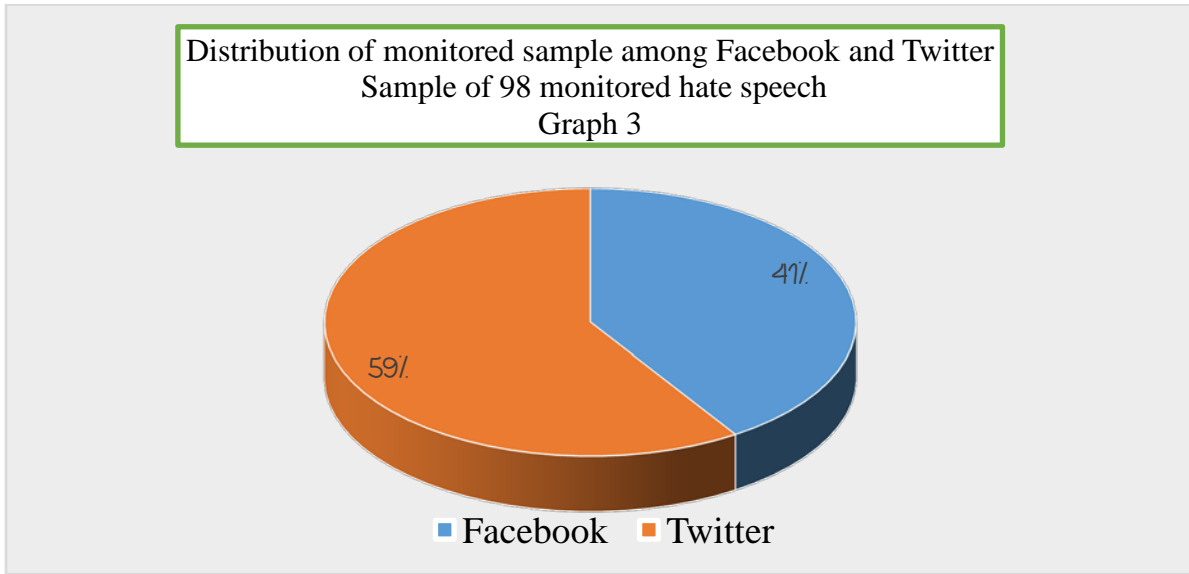
- Graph one shows the distribution of hate speech samples among the different types of accounts, where the majority of hate speech appears on personal accounts.
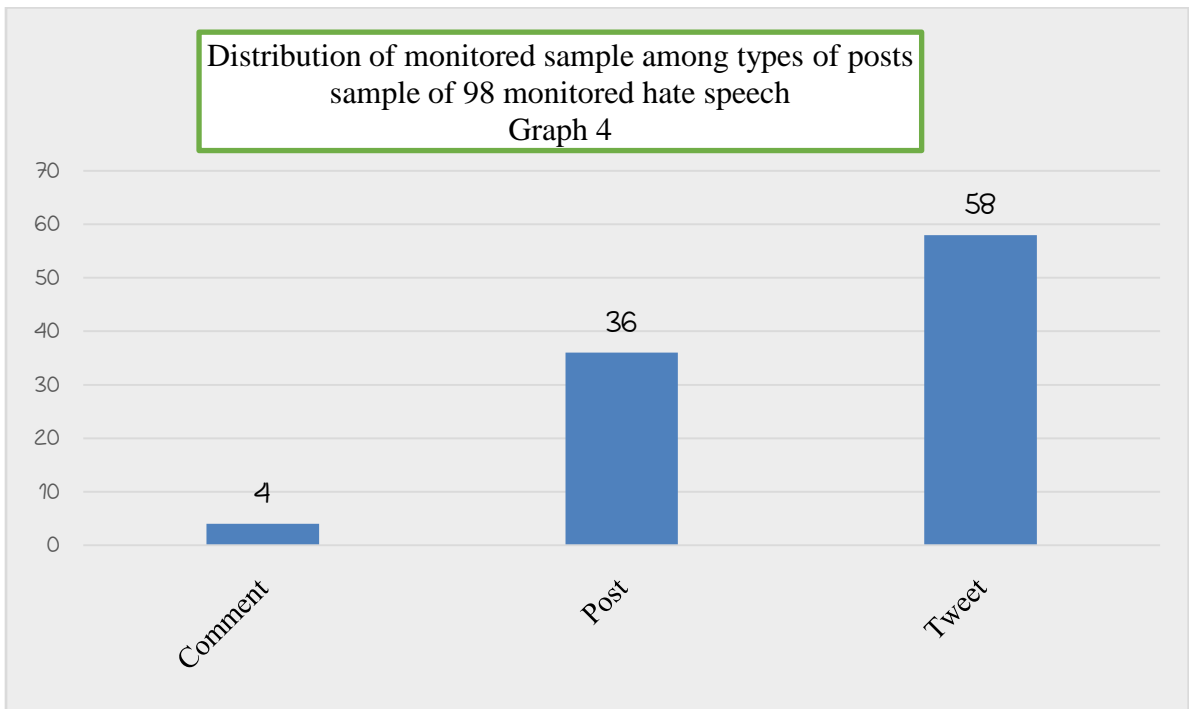

Distribution of Hate Speech Sample Among Different Types of Accounts
Sample of 98 hate speech
Graph 1
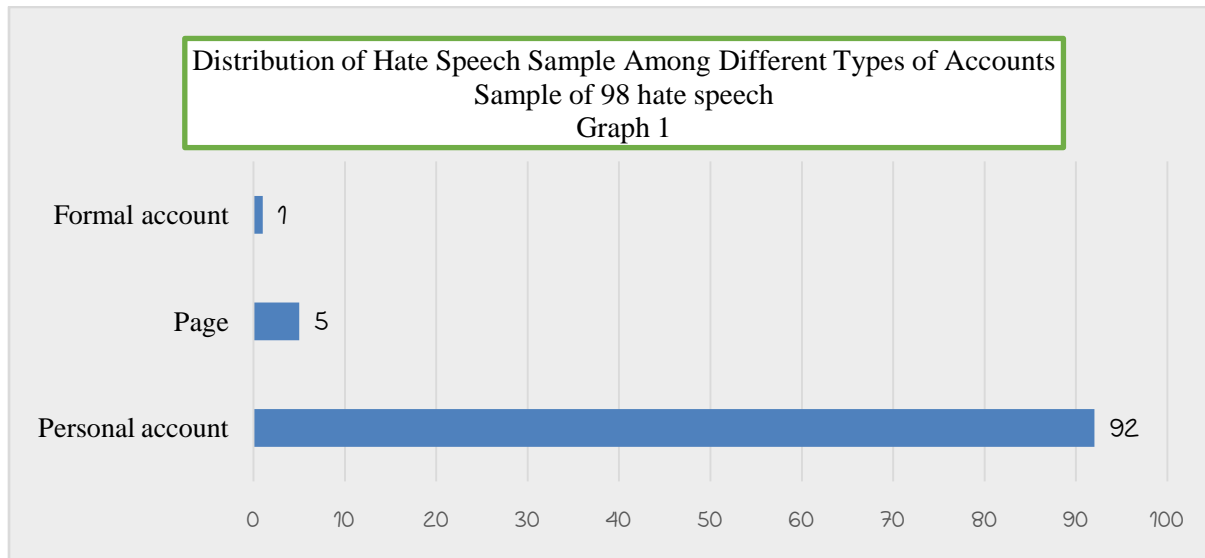
- Table 2 shows the distribution of hate speech in the monitored media platforms (Facebook or Twitter) and the varied account types.

Distribution of Hate Speech Regarding Accounts Types (Graph2)				
Medium	Formal Account	Page	Personal Account	Grand Total
Facebook		5	35	40
Twitter	1		57	58
Grand total	1	5	92	98

- 41% of the analyzed hate speech sample is from Facebook and 59% comes from Twitter. (graph 3)

Distribution of monitored sample among Facebook and Twitter
Sample of 98 monitored hate speech
Graph 3

41%

59%

■ Facebook ■ Twitter

Graph 4 shows the hate speech sample distributed among 58 tweets on Twitter, 36 posts and 4 comments on Facebook

Distribution of monitored sample among types of posts
sample of 98 monitored hate speech
Graph 4

58

36

4

Comment   Post   Tweet

The media monitoring results and analysis of the 98 hate speech sample from the monitored social media platforms showed that the main source of hate speech are regular users consisting of 94% whereas the other 4% of the sources of hate speech came from journalists, and 2% from politicians.
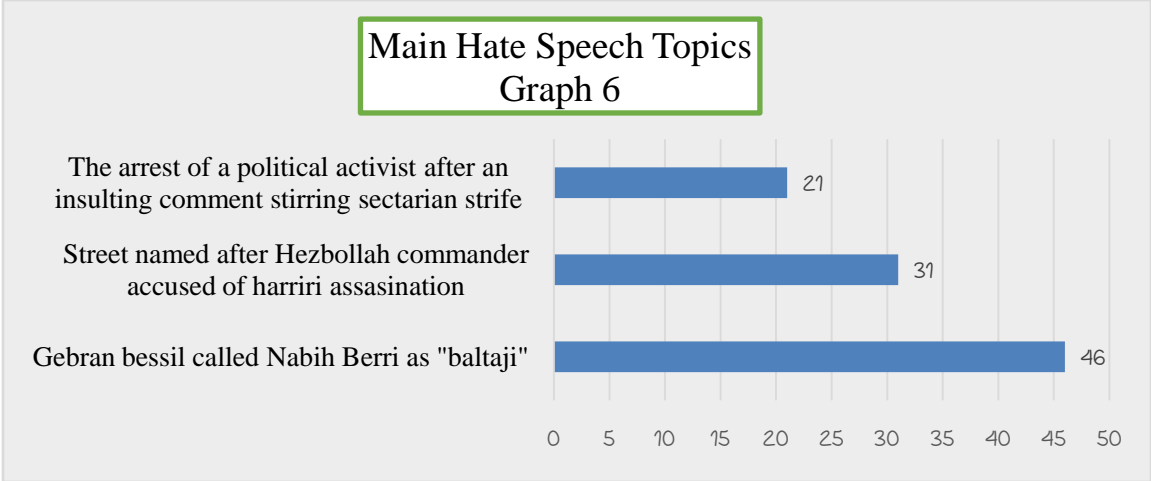

Hate speech sources
98 monitored samples
Graph 5
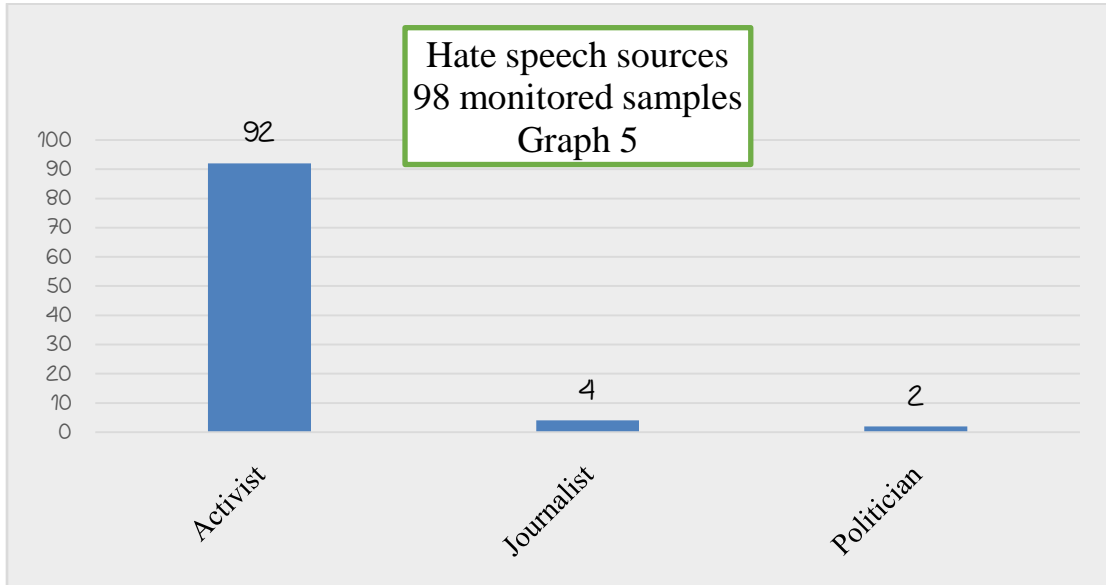
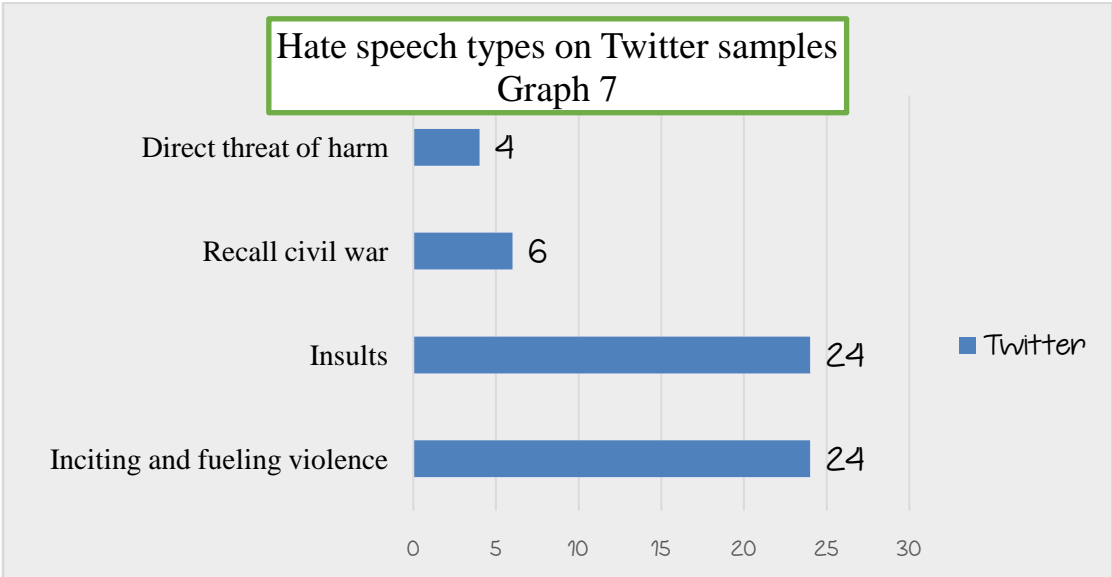Graph 6 shows the distribution of hate speech samples among the three monitored topics as follows:
 -46 posts concerning the debate around the description of the parliament speaker as a thug by the minister of foreign affairs.
 -31 posts resulted from naming the street in Beirut suburb after one of the commanders accused of Assassination of the former prime minister Rafic Hariri.
 -21 posts about the offending of the Druze sect by a political activist from the Free Patriotic movement, and the arrest of another political activist for insulting the president Michel Aoun and the minister of foreign affairs Gebran Bassil one of Christian prominent leaders.

Main Hate Speech Topics
Graph 6

Topic	Value
The arrest of a political activist after an insulting comment stirring sectarian strife	21
Street named after Hezbollah commander accused of harriri assasination	31
Gebran bessil called Nabih Berri as "baltaji"	46

(Scale: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50)

Graphs 7 and 8 show the types of monitored hate speech on personal accounts of Facebook and Twitter users. Hate speech was categorized into four types, and the results showed that the mostly spread type was inciting on violence which is considered the most dangerous type of hate speech. There were 25 posts on Facebook under this category, and 24 on Twitter. As for the second type of monitored hate speech was the recurring insults against certain people or groups, with 24 posts on Twitter and 8 on Facebook. In addition to using photos and statements related to sectarian violence and recalls of the civil war with all the crimes committed on sectarian and religious basis; the number of posts under this category were 6 on Twitter and 3 on Facebook. The direct threat of harm category included 4 posts in each of Twitter and Facebook.

Hate speech types on Twitter samples
Graph 7

Type	Twitter
Direct threat of harm	4
Recall civil war	6
Insults	24
Inciting and fueling violence	24

(Scale: 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30)

58 tweets were gathered from Twitter and were classified into 4 main categories as follows:
- Direct threat of harm 4 tweets
- Recall of civil war 6 tweets
- Defamation and insults 24 tweets
- Incitement on violence 24 tweets

Hate speech types on facebook samples
Graph 8
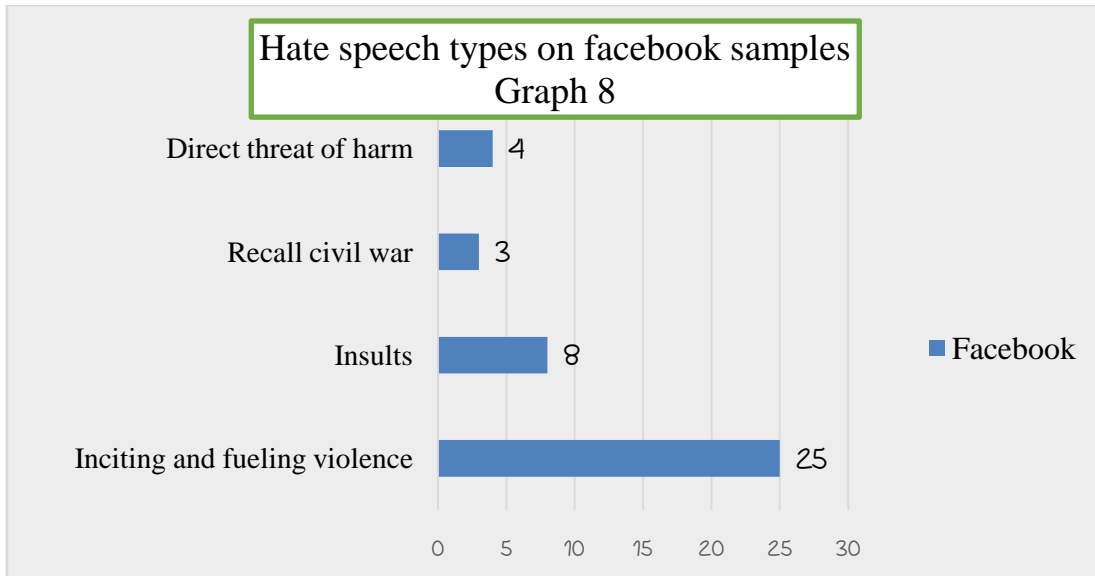
40 Facebook posts and comments were gathered and classified into four main categories as follows:
- Direct threat of harm 4 posts
- Recall of civil war 3 posts
- Defamation and insults 8 posts
- Incitement on violence 25 posts

Facebook and Twitter posts included audio visual media materialinciting on hatred. It has been found that the main source of this type of media is modified materials that includes offensive description to certain people and groups repeatedly and systematically that reached the extent of dehumanizing these categories.

Hatred Materials Graph 9

	value
Manipulated Materials	81
Archive	11
News	6
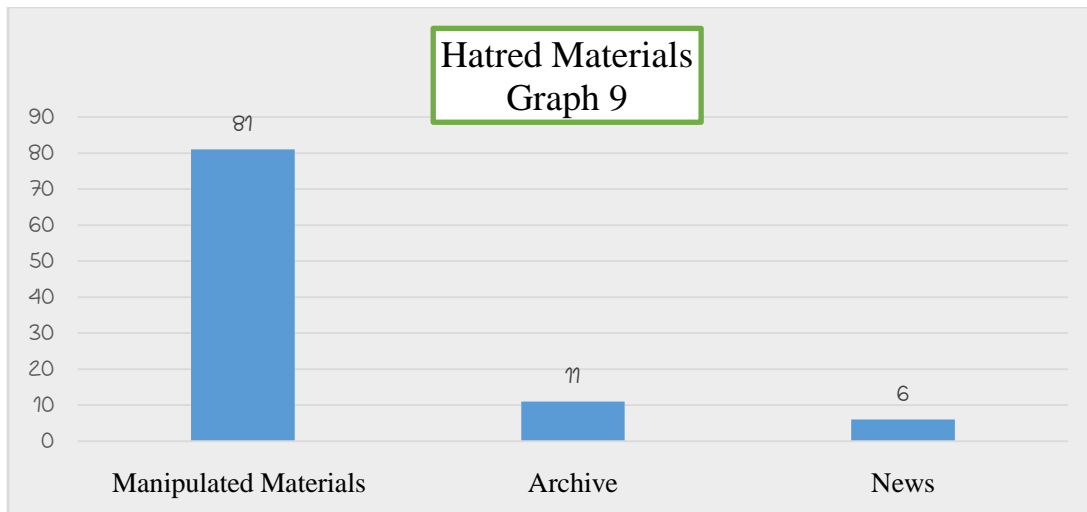
Seventh: Speech Content Analysis

A video including scenes of war and destruction with a voice over modified to include recordings "Sawt El Jabal"that belonged formerly to the Progressive Socialist Party echoed the terms of retaliation accompanied by text words thriving victory on the enemies saying that "our hands drew victory, and dug your graves and dismay" and threatening the enemy saying "we will come back when you do, and if we will we won't have any mercy". This video includes audio visual effects inciting on violence and conflict and threating of killing and harm. "we won't have mercy" "dug your grave" statements that includes direct inciting speech and threat of harm that can lead to violence.

The terms "victory" and "defeats" in the general context in which they were mentioned aimed at promoting the language of incitement and to evoke the atmosphere of civil war, which the Lebanese agreed to close and start a new page of coexistence, reconciliation and state building that guarantees equal rights for all and non-discrimination and respect for the privacy and diversity of Lebanese society.

This violent scene did not result out of nowhere, but it resulted from reactions and recall of civil war in its worst memories. What was publish by the member of political office of the Free Patriotic Movement Naji Hayek, even if it was a reply on a tweet for the Druze leader Walid Joumblat, but he did not respect the political discourse, and he recalled the civil war and described the Druze who were killed in Souk El Ghareb Battle as "monkeys", dehumanized and despised them saying that "10 days from now

we will recall the monkeys you sent to Souk el Ghareb on August 13th 1989 and Michel Aoun returned them to you in bags".

Many people replied on the tweet posted by Naji Hayek that despised the martyrs of Druze sect during the civil war. Besides the video published for one of the members of the progressive socialist party looking in the hospital for Naji Hayek where he works wanting to teach him a lesson for insulting the Druze sect and the martyrs (he didn't find him in that hospital), photos of fighters were published through a twitter account with a caption "The forces of the martyr the master Kamal Joumblat, popular liberation army, Beirut forces", this account holder commented "if we should go to this animal naji hayek who is insulting our martyrs in their graves, we can go tonight and burn him in his house…", another account published a photo for the Druze leader Walid Joumblat from the archive of one of the newspapers saying "the fight is long and fierce and we will break their necks".

Rasheed Joumblat is active on Facebook and shared many posts, one of them was referring to Gebran Bassil as Sharon and Michel Aoun as Ben Gurion, describing them as enemies and saying "if I was a Muslim cleric, I would have issued a fatwa to kill them", and in this statement a direct incitement on killing and hatred. The post is also considered an insult for Muslim cleric since it states that every Muslim cleric can advise on killing.

The replies and interactions on the posts of Rasheed Joumblat and his arrest were many. people were supporting him for he should not be arrested because of his opinion. Many hashtags were launched like #we are Rasheed Joumblat, or #freedom for Rasheed Joumblat. On the other hand, opponents were saying that Prisons are for dogs, and posting edited photos for a shoe on a cockroach with the hashtag #Rasheed_Joumblat.

As for the leaked video of the minister of foreign affairs Gibran Bassil describing Nabih Berri the speaker of the parliament as "Baltaji" saying that we should "break his head and not let him break ours" which caused chaos and personal threating for Gibran, and incitement on violence and conflict.

This video caused a series of incitement on violence including a military convoy saying that "president beri is the red line of Shiite"; in addition to other videos for amal movement allies shooting, and one of them screaming "oh_Hussein" or parading with weapons, some of them warning "don't try

the Amal movement because the reply would be painful", others describing Berri as a prophet and that with one word or sign from him the Amal army responds immediately, "for you we can destroy Baabda", "the Amal movement flag will rise in Baabda Palace".

Many monitored posts responding on the 'baltaji" description came insulting the minister of foreign affairs Gibran Bassil like the elf the era, or the sissy son in law, even photos of his wife were published and she was insulted; and this photo is offensive and deploring for women in general before being offensive to Gibran Bassil, his wife, and the president.

What drew attention the most was the integration of children in scenes inciting on violence, especially in a video showing children holding weapons in front of Amal Movement flag saying for Gibran that "you are a child of adultery, we will step on you, we will cut your tongue, you are going to hell you filthy dog". On the other hand, some activists described these children as little Isis members.

TheGhobeiry municipality called one of the street in Beirut suburbs leading to Rafik Hariri Hospital after Mustafa Badr El Din one of Hizballah military leader accused in the assassination of Rafik Hariri with a sign saying the street of the martyr Mustafa Badr el Din; this caused severe hate speech on social media with a hashtag #the terrorist Mustafa Badr el din, and the speech ascended to insulting Badr el Din and all citizens of the suburb, and all the dead describing them as terrorists and not humans. One of the Facebook posts stated "I thought that Hizballah allies were not Lebanese it seems they are not even humans", "it is clear that the suburb and other Shiite regions are full of terrosits", "same Persian terrorists" "cunning and malice_the terrorist Hizballah", "we call for changing the names of waste landfills in Lebanon and call them after the dead from the party of evil"; other recalled the historical conflict between Sunnite and Shiite where one said "what is the difference between you and those who shoot on majales el Aza (mourning)" and another one said "hatred of more than 1400 years".

On the other hand, some activists launched a personal campaign against the interior minister Nouhad Machnouk who asked to remove the sign and was described an Israeli agent. Some of the posts stated "the animal Al machnouk is implementing the orders of his masters in Tel aviv", "if you remove the name of the martyr we will remove you ministry and we call it the ministry of martyr Mustafa Badr el din" some recalled the incidents of

May 7th and said "I am sensing you need another slap, be calm or the name of the airport will become Imad Mughniyi international airport", and a video went viral for a PM with Hizballah saying to machnouk "you are an agent and we know your price".

Below some of the terminologies used to incite hate speech on Twitter and Facebook in regards of the three topics monitored in this study.