

Exploring the Phenomenon of Hate Speech Among Cameroonians: Manifestations, Impacts and Recommendations¹

Nelson Akeh Temesas

University of Yaoundé 1, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

The advent of numerous social media platforms has exacerbated hate speech among Cameroonians. Hiding under the banner of freedom of expression, most Cameroonians tend to use foul language which greatly poses a threat to peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and tolerance. The paper therefore examines the manifestations of hate speech among Cameroonians within the social and conventional media space, evaluates its effects and provides recommendations for addressing it. Drawing from Austin's (1962) Speech Act theory, and using the descriptive method of approach, the data for this study will be collected using a checklist, observation, and interviews. It is hoped that the data, which will be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively, will shed more light on the phenomenon of hate speech as well as give recommendations on how to tackle it, so as to ensure peace, National Unity and the spirit of living together.

Keywords: *Hate Speech; Cameroonians; Manifestations; Impacts; Recommendations*

Résumé

La multiplication des plateformes de médias sociaux a exacerbé les discours de haine parmi les Camerounais. Se cachant sous la bannière de la liberté d'expression, la plupart des Camerounais ont tendance à utiliser un langage grossier qui constitue une menace pour la coexistence pacifique, le respect mutuel et la tolérance. Ce document examine donc les manifestations du discours de haine chez les Camerounais dans l'espace médiatique social et conventionnel, évalue ses effets et fournit des recommandations pour y remédier. En se basant sur la théorie du Speech Act d'Austin (1962) et en utilisant la méthode d'approche descriptive, les données de cette étude seront collectées à l'aide d'une liste de contrôle, d'observations et d'entretiens. Nous espérons que les données, qui seront analysées à la fois quantitativement et qualitativement, permettront de mieux comprendre le phénomène du discours de haine et de formuler des recommandations sur la manière de le traiter, afin de garantir la paix, l'unité nationale et l'esprit de coexistence.

Mots-clés: Discours de haine, Camerounais, Manifestations, Impacts, Recommandations

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the universe is seeing an extraordinary upsurge in the use of hate speech. Elsewhere like in Cameroon, the situation has been further exacerbated by the advent of numerous social media platforms. Hate speech according Rene Sadi (2023:02), is “amplified by the extraordinary development of the internet and social media, and significantly undermining democratic values, social peace and, therefore, the stability of States”. It has been defined by UNESCO as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, 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, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor”. So many critics and observers believe that hate speech undermines the core values of democracy, the rule of law, peace, unity and the spirit of living together. Cameroon is a complex country with over 250 ethnic groups and indigenous languages. (Ethnologue 2001). In this complex nature, Cameroon must join forces with other stakeholders to fight hate speech in order to maintain peace, unity and the spirit of living together. According to Rene Sadi (ibid), the most noticeable indicators of hate speech lately contain ethnic and social discrimination, stigmatisation, tribalism, irredentist claims, calls for insurgency and occasionally genocide, gender violence and violence against a minority group. Antonio Guterres (2023) holds that “hate speech is an alarm bell- the louder it rings, the greater the threat of genocide. It precedes and

¹ *How to cite the article:* Temesas N.A. (2023); Exploring the Phenomenon of Hate Speech Among Cameroonians: Manifestations, Impacts and Recommendations; *Multidisciplinary International Journal*; Vol 9 (Special Issue), 307-314

promotes violence”. In an effort to counter hate speech around the world, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on hate speech on June 18, 2019. Apart from international conventions against hate speech which Cameroon is a party to, there exist so many laws in the Cameroon’s Penal code against hate speech.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hate speech has received a lot of attention from scholars in recent times. Brown (2017) observes that significant attention has been paid on presenting and evaluating critical arguments for and against hate speech and little has been done on conceptually analysing the term. He therefore brings out the imbalance which goes beyond legal texts and judgements. Using conceptual method of analysis, Brown (2017) explores the myth that emotions, feelings or attitudes of hate or hatred are central part of human nature. Brown (2017:420) puts that “hate speech is best conceived as a family resemblance concept”. He thus posits that, it is not just to reject hate speech laws on the basis that they are effectively in the business of criminalising emotions, feelings, and attitudes of hatred. Paz et al (2020) did a systematic review of the phenomenon of hate speech which extended to determining the debates, lines of work of great interest, and the theories used. Their literature is included in defining hate speech and hate crime for the purpose of applying criminal sanctions. Paz et al (2020:01) maintained that “From the communication standpoint, the analysis of hate speech in the media is key to understanding the type of message used, its emitter, the way in which the message rallies supporters, and how they interpret the message. Spanish studies mostly fall within the legal area, in which they focus on cases of insult directed at the Catholic religion”. They looked at the significance of interdisciplinarity and transversality and purpose of a planning against hate speech.

Nazmine et al (2021) hold that with the advent of new media technologies, the process of communication has become very easy. Its flexibility has given rise to new forms of hate, foul language and many other vices. Nazmine et al (2021) put “With the rise in the usage of social media, the phenomenon of online hate speech also draws the attention of researchers towards itself.” Their study also revealed that due to the presence of anonymity in the social media, the use of hate speech has increased over time.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

This paper focuses on exploring the phenomenon of hate speech among Cameroon, with special focus on manifestations, impacts and recommendations. Its purpose can be summarised in the following questions:

- 1) Are Cameroonians exposed to the use of hate speech in their daily interactions?
- 2) What are the words or phrases use by Cameroonians that do project hate speech?
- 3) What are the consequences of the use of hate speech by Cameroonians to the cultural, and the socio-political life of the nation?
- 4) What can be done to curb the upsurge of hate speech among Cameroonians?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper uses Austin’s 1962 Speech Act theory and later developed by Searle (1969). It should be noted that this theory was proposed by John Austin in his paper “*How to Do Things with Words*”. According to Temesas (2022:46), speech act theory is the study of meaning which is at the heart of pragmatics. According to Van Dijk (1980:176), Speech Act is also called an illocutionary act; it is a social act accompanied by the utterance of a meaningful expression in a given context. Searle (1978:16) holds that:

Speaking a language is performing speech acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises and so on, and more abstractly, acts such as referring and predicating and secondly that these acts are in general made possible by and are performed in accordance with rules for the use of linguistic elements.

Searle (1969) developed the theory supplementarily and came up with five categories of the illocutionary force, otherwise known as Searle’s typology of speech acts. They are; assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative. Our analysis is tailored towards words or phrases that do contain assertiveness, declarativeness, expressiveness, commissiveness and directiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Drawing from Austin's (1962) Speech Act theory, and using the descriptive method of approach, the data for this study will be collected using a checklist, observation, and interviews. We talked randomly to 100 Cameroonians in the streets of Yaoundé, the Capital of Cameroon. Four key questions were asked to determine their understanding of the topic under discussion.

- 1) What do you understand by Hate speech?
- 2) Do you know any words, phrases or sentences that can be considered to be hate speech in nature?
- 3) Have you or your ethnicity been attacked with derogatory language before? If yes, what were the words that were used in such a case?
- 4) What do you think are the negative impacts of hate speech on the Cameroonian society?
- 5) What can you propose as solutions to curbing the phenomenon of hate speech among Cameroonians?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

It is obvious from our discussion with Cameroonians that they do understand what hate speech is all about. What is more disturbing is the fact that they in their large majority accept that there is an upsurge of hate speech in the country. Hate speech poses a serious threat to the peaceful coexistence and the spirit of living together. One tribe or region sometimes feel entitled to some extra national privileges than others. They in this case, consider the other tribes or ethnic groups as 'second class' citizens. Currently, tv and radio debates are flooded with hate speech and quite often, those who promote this negative energy do so with impunity. The advent of social media sites has compounded the issue further. A zoom at Cameroonian social media blogs and platforms, one is made to believe that we are not happy living together.

Below are words, phrases or sentences which Cameroonians use to refer to other people from a different tribe derogatorily.

Table 1: Some 30 selected hate speech expressions among Cameroonians

| No | words | observation |
|----|---|--|
| 01 | Bami anglo | Refer to someone who is a Bamileke but who speaks English |
| 02 | Anglofou | To refer to English Speaking Cameroonians from the North West and South west regions of the country. The promoters of such offensive word believe that Anglophones are fools, idiots etc |
| 03 | Les anglo la | To refer to Cameroonians from NW and SW regions. |
| 04 | les ennemis dans la maison | To refer to those who do not share the same political vision like that of their party |
| 05 | Individus sans foi ni loi | To refer to those who do not align with them in thoughts especially an opposition party |
| 06 | Rentre chez vous | This was used by a certain individual on Tv to mean that those who are not in their regions of origin should go back |
| 07 | francofou | Refer to Cameroonians from the French speaking regions of Cameroon |
| 08 | Les porcs | To refer to a Bamileke person from the West Region |
| 09 | Les moutons | Refer to persons from the Northern Regions of the country |
| 10 | Les anglophones refrechir toujours à gauche | To refer to Persons from NW and SW regions and advocates of such offensive words think that anglophones do not think, and when they do, they think wrongfully |
| 11 | Chop broke pot them | To refer to persons from the Centre, East and south regions of the country. The promoters of such think that people from these three regions do not have any sustainable lifestyle. They spend all they have without means of preserving anything for the future |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 12 | Sale type | To refer to those from the West regions especially Bamileke people |
| 13 | On n'épouse pas les Bamileke chez nous | The statement is made by a Cameroonian national football team player on his snapchat and later deleted it. |
| 14 | Les bamenda la | To refer to anybody from the SW region |
| 15 | Les ambazoniens | To refer to anybody from the NW and SW regions who do not share their same line of thought |
| 16 | Kamto ne sera jamais président | Use to indicate that Maurice Kamto will never be president of Cameroon and by extension, anybody from Bamileke land will never be |
| 17 | Le wadjo la | To refer to people from the northern regions of the country |
| 18 | Bamileke, vous êtes de pauvres gens | To refer to Bamilekes as poor people |
| 19 | Les sardinards | Use to describe people from Centre, South and East region and by extension to littoral region too |
| 20 | Blackleg | To refer to persons who do not share the same view on the anglophone crisis |
| 21 | Came no go | Use to refer to persons from the NW region living in the SW region |
| 22 | Les bamilékés | Someone from the West region typically from the Bamileke clan |
| 23 | Francophone style /way | To describe someone who is corrupt especially Francophones |
| 24 | The bulu beti government | To refer to the Cameroon government that is dominated by people from those two ethnicities |
| 25 | Vendeurs de terrains | To refer to people from the centre |
| 26 | Lazy set of people | Referring to persons from the centre, south, east, and some cases those from the south west regions |
| 27 | Les biafras | To refer to an Anglophone |
| 28 | C'est un Bami | To refer to a stingy or selfish person |
| 29 | Serpent à deux têtes | To refer to someone from the Bamoun Clan |
| 30 | Vendeurs du piments | To refer to ladies from a particular tribe or region who are considered to be prostitutes in nature |

From the checklist we have above, it is clear that Cameroonians have one or two words that they do refer to other Cameroonians derogatorily. Sometimes, it is about a region, an ethnic group or a tribe. From the table above, it is observed that “bami anglo” is a Bamileke person who can express themselves in English. Those who tag or promoter this name calling believe that, Bamileke with Anglo-Saxon origin, tend to behave like Anglophones. To them, they are not different from anglophones as they believe that anglophones are not intelligent or forward thinking. Again, there is the famous “anglofou” to refer to persons from the North west and South west regions of Cameroon. To them, Anglophones are fools and cannot think upright as them from the other part of the country. To this effect, it led us to the discovery of another expression of hate speech which, “les anglo la” to denote an anglophone. It is therefore very common to say Francophone discussing about a certain Anglophone especially to the negative, they will refer to him or her as “le anglo la”. In an attempt to counter this, anglophones tended to call francophones as “francofou” to also refer to them as unreasonable set of people.

Furthermore, we have this other expression of hate speech in “les anglophone refrechir toujours a gauche” to mean that Anglophones always ‘think to the left’. To them, Anglophones cannot act rationally because they are not forward thinking. Again, there is the use of this expression, ‘les ambazoniens’ to refer to an anglophone. This word came in existence when the two English regions of the country fell into crisis in what has been termed, the anglophone crisis since 2016. The crisis started with teachers and lawyers began craving for basic demands to be met, had over time turned into an armed conflict where some individuals are canvassing for separation to form a country which they call Ambazonia. To this effect, some Cameroonians when they are not comfortable with certain anglophones, they tend to call them ‘ambozoniens’, meaning people who want to destabilise the country. In this same light, they also refer to

persons from the NW and SW regions of the country as 'les biafras'. Certainly, they have learned of the Biafra war in Nigeria and then think Anglophone want to behave like Biafras.

In the sphere of politics, there exist a myriad of expressions that we have compiled to fall under the category of hate speech. These words are; les ennemis dans la maison, individus sans foi ni loi, Kamto ne sera jamais président, Les sardinards, the bulu beti government.' First, the expression "les ennemis dans la maison" was used in the 1990s with the introduction of multiparty politics. Those who were of the opposition were referred to as 'les ennemis dans la maison' which is literally translated as 'the enemies in the house'. This means that those who promote such usage believe that once someone is not of the ruling party or do not share the same political vision to that of theirs, they are enemies in the house. The house here might be interpreted to mean Cameroon and the enemies the opposition leaders or those who oppose the system. This might make them to feel less Cameroonian than others and it is detrimental to peace and social cohesion. In the same light, there is this particular expression which has become frequent in the outings of some Cameroonian official "individus sans foi ni loi". This is literally translated as 'lawless individuals. This expression started being use often after the 2018 presidential elections where a certain political party claimed that it won and believed that they were cheated. As a result, they went to the streets to protest. In the wake of such protest, government officials came up with communiques and communication which they termed those who were protesting as lawless individual or better still 'individus sans foi ni loi'. Till about the election and protest, there were bitter exchanges on the social media. This led to the expression "Kamto ne sera jamais président". This expression was championed by those who supported the party that won the election and they frequently on their social media outlets, claimed that Kamto, a presidential aspirant will never be president. This is not a good expression to say the least because it makes one think that for someone to be president, he or she must be from a particular tribe or region. As if to say, there are particular regions or clans that are destined to rule. While the promoters of 'Kamto ne sera jamais président' were pushing their agenda through, those of the opposition camp started referring those who supported the winning camp as 'les sardinards' to mean that these are people who have sold their consciences because of bread and sardin. In effect, 'les sardinards' were believed to be persons from the centre, south, east and any other person who supported the system. They are believed to have taken gifts and money from politicians and forgotten about their future which they were to secure through vote cast.

In the social regard, there are numerous expressions that we have considered them to fall under hate speech category. Expressions such as, "rentre chez vous, les porc, les moutons, chop broke pot them, lazy set of people, vendeurs de terrains, les bamiléké, Bamileke, vous êtes de pauvres gens, le wadjo la, les bamenda la, on n'épouse pas les Bamileke chez nous, came no go, sale type, les porcs, Francophone style /way, Cest un Bami, serpent à deux têtes.

In a tv debate show on a certain Tv station in Cameroon, a certain professor who was one of the invitees made a statement which became viral on social media. Discussing on the topic of land crisis in Cameroon, he is said to have asked each Cameroonian to go back to his or her region or village of origin. 'Rentre chez vous' is extracted from his talk to mean that Cameroonians living or who own land out of their place of origin is bad and they should therefore go back to their origins. This statement was not taken lightly because Cameroonians began asking questions on whether it is not allowed to own land or invest in a place you find yourself outside your origin. So many Cameroonians especially the Bamilekes considered that the statement was targeting them in particular because they are the ones who have invested heavily in the centre region and elsewhere. Again, the expression 'les moutons' is used in Cameroon to refer to persons from the northern regions of the country. 'Les moutons' is literally translated as "sheep" with contextual meaning being that of a people who behave like 'sheep', uneducated and not mannered. Whether rightly or wrongly, promoters of such usage think that people from the northern part of the country to not meet up with certain standards of life and are not forward thinking. A sheep is said to be foolish and not reasonable because it does things simply because it has seen others doing so. From a typically dictionary related definition, a sheep is "a domesticated ruminant mammal with a thick woolly coat and (typically only in the male) curving horns. It is kept in flocks for its wool or meat, and is proverbial for its tendency to follow others in the flock". Thus, equating people or a group of persons from a particular region as sheep is bad and demeaning. 'le wadjo la' is sometimes used derogatorily to refer to Northerners. It is common to listens to a conversation especially when it going about the negative, to get people say "le wadjo la" to refer to someone from the Northern part of Cameroon.

'Les porc and sale gens' is used simultaneously to refer to people from the west region of Cameroon. Advocates of such expressions across social media platforms believe that persons from the west especially the Bamilekes, are dirty and since they do a lot of pig agriculture, they believe that they are dirty like pigs. This hatred for this tribe stems from the fact that one of the frontliners of the presidential election hails from this place. In continuation of the hatred for Bamileke tribe, there have been words such as 'les bamiléké, on n'épouse pas les Bamileke chez nous, vous êtes de pauvres gens, Cest un Bami. In this series, 'c'est un bami' is used to mean that the person they are talking about is stingy and not generous in giving. There is this allegation that Bamileke people are selfish. 'les bamileke' is also used derogatorily especially in conversation and advocates for this, equally want to challenge the Bamileke well known

culture of being business minded. This explains why a certain renowned fellow is alleged to have said that “vous êtes de pauvres gens”. This was in a bid to challenge the status quo because by nature, Bamilekes are known to be rich people. Once more, in a private chat involving a Cameroonian international football player, it is supposed that the player said categorically that “on n’épouse pas les Bamileke chez nous”. This became viral on social media not just because he said what he believes in, but because people think that for a public figure to mention such, is bad and discriminatory. ‘Serpent à deux têtes’ is an expression used to describe someone from the Bamoun Fondon or clan. Whether rightfully or wrongfully, some Cameroonians believe that someone from this tribe is cunning and deceptive in nature. ‘Serpent à deux têtes’ is literally translated as “a snake with two heads.”

There are also some expressions that are used in a demeaning manner to refer to people from the centre, south and east regions of Cameroon. Expressions such as ‘Francophone style /way, vendeurs de terrains, chop broke pot them, lazy set of people. Falsely or not, some people believe that people from these regions are not hard working and when they need money for drinks, they are said to sell most of their lands. Hence, the expression “vendeurs des terrains”. Advocates also think that persons from these regions do not think for sustainability as they arrogantly spend what they have today without thinking about tomorrow. This, they are referred to as ‘chop broke pot them’. It should be noted that the expression ‘lazy set of people’ is also referred to persons South west region. While South westerners call North Westerners as ‘came no go’, believing that they are illegally occupying their land, North westerners believe that South westerners are lazy set of people because they cannot work, explaining why north westerners are there to help them. Sadi (2023;05) talking against this phenomenon posits that “In addition, there is the rise of identity-based closures that undermine the sacrosanct principle repeatedly proclaimed and reiterated by THE HEAD OF STATE, a principle according to which every Cameroonian citizen should feel at home wherever he or she is the country”. Thus, calling North westerners ‘came no go’ is a serious threat to social cohesion expected of Cameroonians.

From the above analysis of possible hate speech expressions, it is evident that the spirit of living together, social cohesion is challenged. Hate speech is a serious problem in Cameroon and like any other social problem, needs to be banished as soon as possible if we want to continue to consider Cameroon as a haven of peace. Sadi (2023:10) holds that “We must therefore banish hate speech so that Cameroon, which over the years has become a haven of peace, where a plurality of ethnic groups, cultures and religions coexist in harmony, so remains in the interest of all”. Since more than ten years ago, the internet and social media have grown extraordinarily, amplifying the unprecedented rise in hate speech in public discourse and seriously undermining democratic ideals, social harmony, and consequently state stability. This circumstance creates difficult issues for our societies at a time when the media's ability to disseminate information is being impacted by the digital boom and when new behavioural patterns are emerging as a result of global dynamics. There are prejudices that some races take precedence over others, thus believing that they are entitled to special privileges in the Nation. This might sometimes lead to conflict, even conflict between different ethnic groups who wish that there should be no superior or inferior ethnic group in Cameroon, and that all ethnic groups are equal.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

There have been conscious efforts to create awareness on hate speech and its dangerous impacts to the Cameroonian society. On May 17, 2023, the Ministry of Communication held a joint press conference with the Ministry of Territorial Administration, and the National commission for the Promotion of Bilingual and multiculturalism in a bid to sensitise Cameroonians against the constant upsurge of hate speech among Cameroonians. Again, the National Communication Council has come out severally to preach against hate speech and where applicable, has suspended certain Tv or radio stations or some programs. The National commission for the Promotion of Bilingual and multiculturalism has in its own right, organised severally outings to this effect. But the prime question remains, are these measures enough to curb hate speech in Cameroon? Certainly not.

First, away from sensitisation and the creation of public awareness, there should be a serious implementation of the laws on hate speech. In the past or as of now, promoters of hate speech do so with a lot of impunity whereas there are laws against this. In fact, it is important to evoke that, in addition to the international legal agreements against hate speech that Cameroon has formally accepted, Cameroon also has a number of legislative documents that regular hate speech.

Consider the following laws regulating hate speech and related issues in Cameroon extracted from the Rene Sadi (2023) introductory statement during a joint press conference on hate speech in Cameroon. Law No. 2016/007 of July 12, 2016 on the Penal Code, offers in its Section 241 as follows: Paragraph (1): “Whoever commits a contempt, within the meaning of Section 152 of this Code, of the race or religion of one or many citizens or residents shall be punished with imprisonment from 6 (six) 8 days to 6 (six) months and with fine of from 5 000 (five thousand) francs to 500 000 (five hundred thousand) Francs.” Paragraph (2): “Where the offence is committed by means of the press or wireless,

radio, television or social media or any other means likely to reach the public, the maximum of the fine provided for in subsection 1 above may extend to 20 000 000 (twenty million) Francs.” Paragraph (3): “Where the offence is committed with intent to arouse hatred or contempt between citizens, or residents, the penalties provided by the foregoing subsections shall be doubled.” (Sadi 2023).

SECTION 241-1: (new) on contempt of Tribe or ethnic group holds in: Paragraph (1) “Whoever, by any means, makes hate speech against people or incites them to violence due to their tribal or ethnic origin shall be punished with imprisonment of from 1 (one) to 2 (two) years and with fine of 300 000 (three hundred thousand) francs to 3 000 000 (three million) francs.” Paragraph (2) “Where the benefit of mitigating circumstances is given, the punishment provided for in Subsection 1 above shall not be less than 3 (three) months imprisonment and the fine shall not be less than 200 000 (two hundred thousand) francs. Execution shall not be suspended except in case of diminished responsibility of infancy.” Paragraph (3) “Where the author of the hate speech is a Public Servant as per the provisions of Section 131 of this Code, a leader of a political party, of the media, of a Non-Governmental Organisation or a religious institution, the punishment provided for in subsection 1 above shall be doubled and the benefit for mitigating circumstances shall not be given.” Furthermore, Law No. 2010/012 of 21 December 2010 on cyber security and cyber-crime in Cameroon provides in its Section 77, Subsection 1, that: “whoever, through electronic communications or an information system, commits a contempt against a race or religion, shall be punished with a imprisonment of two (02) years to five (05) years and a fine of 2,000,000 (two million) to 5,000,000 (five million) francs or one of these two penalties only.” (Sadi 2023).

Section 91, paragraph (1) of the same law provides for mutual legal assistance between states in the event of a violation of the rules on cybercrime. In the communication sector, law No. 2015/007 of 20 April 2015 governing audiovisual activity in Cameroon provides in its Section 8, Subsection 3 that: “the content of programmes shall in no case incite hatred, violence or discrimination against a person or a group of persons, because of their origin, sex, membership of a tribe, ethnic group, race or religion...” (Sadi 2023).

These regulating sections of the law have been resonated by the Minister of Territorial Administration in a press Release dated May 22, 2023 and the National Communication Council sanctioned so many actors in the communication section who promote hate speech in its session of June 02, 2023. The creation of awareness by the government structure and the pronouncement of sanctions to actors of hate speech is not enough. In Cameroon, we have witnessed cases where the National communication suspended persons from radio or tv stations and they continue practicing with an air of arrogance. To say the least, there is no follow up and sometimes these sanctions end as soon as the session of the National Communication Council finishes. We need to see a Cameroon where Promoters of hate speech are actually drag to court, judge and condemn to pay the fines mentioned above and consequently serve the prison term. This will serve as a lesson to others not to commit similar civil offenses. By organising a joint press conference to create awareness on the ills of hate speech, the Ministry of Communication did a recommendable job. But the sensitisation should involve all local and community radio and tv stations. This will be in effect, taking the information closer to the people and will create a greater impact.

Cameroonians in their large majority should refrain from making hateful comments especially on social media targeting persons or a group of persons. A people’s identity, race and or origin should not be a subject of ridicule whether online or offline. Cameroonians should learn to live together in love and do not engage in unnecessary hatred and name calling or tagging tribes or regions with derogatorily expressions. Sadi (2023:03) reiterates that “from this perspective, it goes without saying that the fight against hate speech must be perceived as an absolute priority towards safeguarding democracy and the Rule of Law, and preserving the values of peace, unity and living together”.

Away from government action against hate speech, we strongly recommend the creation of an independent body charge with the monitoring and fact-checking the proliferation of hate speech across the country and beyond. With such a body, there will be coordinated action which will be taken against those who think they can say anything in any manner with impunity.

The United Nation came up with eight (08) laudable points to checking the spread of hate speech. These are; pause, fact-check, react, challenge, support, report, educate and commit. Pause means to refrain from making hateful statements, fact-check means to always at all times verify the authenticity of information one sees either online or offline. React is to speak up against hate speech, challenge is to spread one’s counter speech making sure it is not hate speech. Support is related to the taking of stance and standing for those who are victims of hateful expressions, report is to report any act that might jeopardise the spirit of living together of peace to competent authorities or to organisations fighting against hate speech. By educating, we are told to help raise awareness against the ills of hate speech, and by committing ourselves, the UN calls on us to think about collaborating with NGOs or other civil society projects that strive to address the problem of hate speech in our world.

It is clear from the discussions and interactions with the Cameroonian people that hate speech poses a serious problem to the spirit of living together, loving one another, and at most it risks the very foundation of our democracy and peace. According to the UN strategic and plan of action on hate speech, violence and bigotry are encouraged by hate speech. Sadly, there is nothing new about how destructive hatred can be. However, with modern communications technologies, its scope and impact have grown and must be checked. Online hate speech has become one of the most popular means of disseminating polarizing ideas on a wide scale, endangering international peace. Given the that, there is freedom of speech, people sometime go beyond the boundaries of expressing themselves to insult or incite others to violence. In this study, we have identified some key expressions which are common usages but considered to be expressions of hate. We have analysed those expressions, giving their negative impact on the Cameroonian society, and finally, we came up with some recommendations which if implemented, will help curb the upsurge of hate speech among Cameroonians.

REFERENCES

1. Alexander Brown (2017). What is hate speech. Part 1: The Myth of hate, Law and Philosophy, Springer vol 4, 420-467.
2. Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Ethnologue. (2001). http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.cameroon
4. Joachim, C.A. (2017). *The effectiveness of social media marketing in small business performance: A case study of central business district Nairobi.*(Published Master Dissertation, United States International University)
5. Knoblock, N. (2022). The Grammar of Hate: Morphosyntactic Features of Hateful, Aggressive, and Dehumanizing Discourse. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. María Antonia Paz1, Julio Montero-Díaz2, and Alicia Moreno-Delgado (2020). Hate Speech: A Systematised review, Vol 1, 01-12, Sage Publication.
7. Nazmine, Manan Khan Tareen, Hannan Khan Tareen, Sidra Noreen, Muhammad Tariq (2021). Hate speech and social media: A systematic Review. Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry (TOJQI) Volume 12, Issue 8, July 2021: 5285 – 5294
8. Sadi Rene E (2023). The Rise of Hate Speech and Government's Response to Address the Issue
9. Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
10. Searle, John R., (1975). «Indirect speech acts», in P. Cole, J.L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, Academic Press, New York.
11. Temesas N. A (2022). Projection in diplomatic discourse: A pragmatic appraisal of speeches of Cameroonian and Nigerian diplomats. An unpublished PhD thesis, university of Yaoundé 1.
12. United Nations (2023). <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech>