

# GEN Z ANTI-SOCIAL ONLINE BEHAVIOUR (ASOB): THE CASE OF HATE SPEECH AND FAKE NEWS

## INTRODUCTION

- The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the rising trend of antisocial behaviour on social media by pushing much social communication online (Vogels, 2021; Barlett et al, 2021).
- The feature of social media: Anonymity (Soler & Roos, 2022)
- Following Donald Trump's two electoral victories, the issue of "digital populism" has become increasingly significant (Sulzer, 2018; Violi, 2019).
- Antisocial online behaviour continued normalization
- Need for the implementation of effective policies

## DEFINITION OF ANTI SOCIAL ONLINE BEHAVIOURS (ASOB)

- Any deviant behaviour (or the purposeful absence of any expected behaviour)
- Including cyberbullying, online harassment, cyber-aggression, cyberstalking, trolling, technology facilitated sexual violence, hate speech, fake news. (Moor, L., & Anderson, 2019)

## TYPOLGY OF BEHAVIOURS

Combined Framework of Antisocial Online Behaviors

### 1. Active Antisocial Online Behaviors

- Active antisocial online behaviors involve direct engagement in deviant actions that disrupt the online community or harm individuals.

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### 2. Passive Antisocial Online Behaviors

- Passive antisocial online behaviors involve observing and enabling deviant actions without direct engagement.

## SAMPLING

### Target Respondents:

Gen Z (1997–2012) social media users

### Sampling Size:

- Survey: 165 participants
- In-depth interview: 10 participants
- Content Analysis: Two cases will be taken out in recent half a year
  - Case: Donald Trump and Iced water man (in HK)

## RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the difference with different social media and it's user behavior?
- What are the factors that cause active or passive antisocial online behavior?
- How do social media motivations influence different types of engagement behaviors in hate speech online ?
- How do psychological factors influence online dissemination and belief in fake news?
- How do passive audiences perceive their transition into active participants in different forms of anti-social behaviors based on their personal experiences?

## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The plenty of “antisocial online behaviour” research focused in other country. Hong Kong scholars focusing on:

- Specific social media platform usage (Chow, 2020; Au, 2022; Chen et al., 2022)
- Social movement (Lin, 2016; Wang, 2019; Shen et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2020)

Not enough study related to micro deviance behavior

## DEFINITION OF FAKE NEWS

- It has no universally accepted definition
- News reports that are purposefully and provably false and intended to mislead readers

2 key components:

- Truthfulness: Include information that can be proven to be false
- Purpose: Formed with the dishonest intent to deceive readers (Shu et al., 2017)

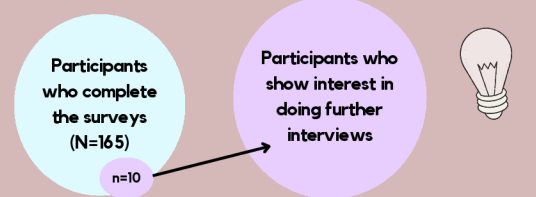
## DEFINITION OF HATE SPEECH

Speech that targets individuals or groups based on characteristics like race, religion, or ethnicity, often aimed at incitement or intimidation (Guiora & Park, 2017).

## RESEARCH METHOD

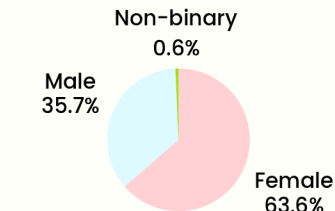
### Mixed Method

- Survey, in-depth interview, and content analysis



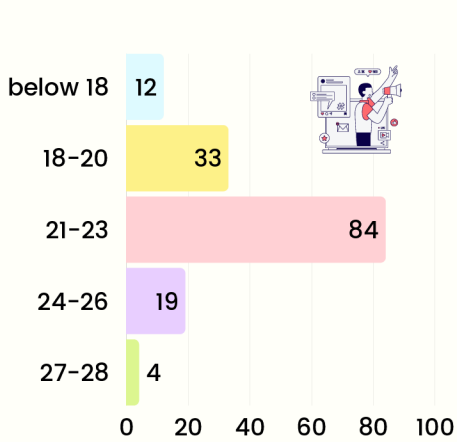
## RESULTS (SAMPLE INFO)

### 1. Gender (%)



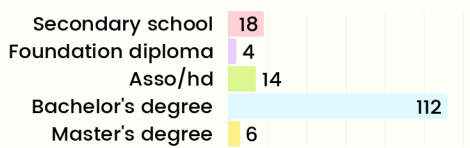
- Female: 63.6% (98) highest proportion
- Male: 35.7% (55)
- Non-binary: 0.6% (1) lowest proportion

### 3. Age (Frequency)



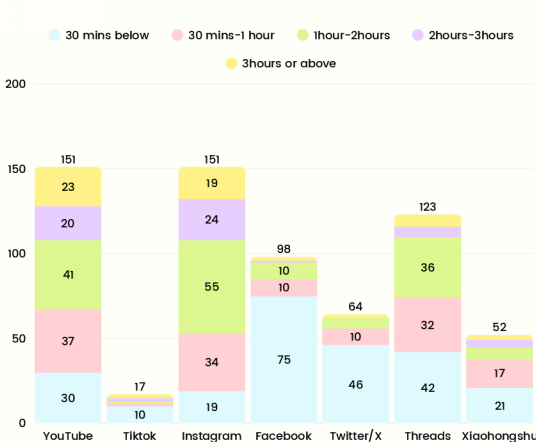
- The age group with the highest proportion: 21–23 (84)
- The age group with the lowest proportion: 24–26 (19)

### 2. Education (Frequency)



- The education level with the highest proportion: Bachelor's degree (112)
- The education level with the lowest proportion: Foundation diploma (4)

### 4. Social Media Platform (Frequency)



- YouTube (151) and Instagram (151) have the highest social media usage.
- 3 hours or above per day: YouTube (23)
- 30 mins below per day: Facebook (75)

## SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM, CONTENT CREATOR AND COMMENTS

	Twitter	LIHKG	Instagram	Threads	Facebook
Active Monitoring	Community notice	/	Moderator	Moderator	Moderator (Soon to be Community notice)
Fake News monitoring	Community notice	/	Fact checked by third parties	Fact checked by third parties	Fact checked by third parties
Hate Speech Monitoring	/	/	Post Removed	Remains	Post removed
Types of Fake News	Political related, Ad related (e.g. Vaccine, 5G)	General	General, Ad related	Personal life, Ad related	Ad related, fake headline
Types of Hate Speech	Race, political figure, Personal Attack	General	Race, Personal attack	Personal attack, Taunting	Taunting, Personal attack
Content Creator (On Fake News)	discourse/narrative +fake prove	hearsay	Videos + fake prove	hearsay	Pictures, AI
Content Creator (On Hate Speech)	Use of #	Use of foul language	Use of memes in pictures	Use of foul language	Use of foul language
Comments (On Fake news)	Divided	Disagreeing	Divided (some would debunk)	Divided (some would debunk)	Divided (some would debunk)
Comments (On Hate Speech)	Divided	Agreeing	Agreeing	Divided	Agreeing

With different types of social media, content creator tends to use different tactics to lure people to look into their post But the rationale and feeling for them to act or see ASOB posts requires further investigation.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### ACTIVE OR PASSIVE ANTISOCIAL ONLINE BEHAVIOUR

- Machiavellianism: characterised by manipulation, cynicism, and a willingness to exploit others (Christie & Geis, 1970).
- Marcusiasm: a personality trait where individuals have an inflated sense of self-importance, crave attention and admiration, overestimate their achievements, and react poorly to criticism (Heber et al., 2009).
- Psychopathy: a neuropsychiatric disorder characterized by reduced emotional responses, lack of empathy, poor self-control, and a tendency toward persistent antisocial and criminal behavior (Anderson & Kiehl, 2014).

	View controversial content				Active Controversial Content seeking				Active anti-social online behavior			
	M2	M3	M4	M2	M4	M5	M2	M4	M8	M8	M8	M8
Constant	0.194	0.659	0.433	-0.277	0.399	-0.395	-0.82	-0.191	-1.121			
Age	0.052	0.055	0.057	0.059	.071*	0.064	0.061	0.079	0.019			
Gender	-0.147	-0.137	-0.199	-0.24	-.349*	-.345*	0.386	0.389	0.457			
Education level	-0.034	-0.039	-0.044	-0.059	0.031	-0.02	0.037	0.003	0.052			
Local status	-0.237	-0.249	-0.207	-0.078	-0.016	-0.008	0.27	0.144	0.108			
Total usage time	.086***	.084***	.081***	.054**	0.042	.048*	0.078	0.059	0.012			
Machiavellianism	.213*			.494***	.456***	.648***			0.248			
Narcissism		0.082							-0.168			
Psychopathy			0.214		.437***	.327*			.816***			
view controversial content									0.479**			
Active Controversial Content seeking										0.323		
R2 (adj)	0.115***	0.087**	0.102**	0.180***	0.106**	0.202***	0.093**	0.092**	0.235***			

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

### HATE SPEECH

- Self-expression: Asserting identity, sharing views, or expressing opinions (Shao, 2009; Whiting & Williams, 2013).
- Entertainment: Hate speech for humour, trolling, or shock value (Nikolaev et al., 2023; Faigouset et al., 2022).
- Connection: Seeking group belonging, validation, or responding to peer influence (Mathew et al., 2019; Faigouset et al., 2022).

	View hate speech				Produce hate speech			
	M2	M3	M5	M3	M4	M5		
Constant	-1.958	-4.45	-4.65	-2.441	-1.862	-2.386		
Age	.394***	.427***	.416***	.129*	.126*	.132**		
Gender	0.348	0.339	.649*	0.329	0.258	0.25		
Education level	-.335**	-.428***	-.273**	-0.093	-.117*	-.131*		
Local status	-1.267	-0.986	-1.266	0.177	0.167	0.251		
Total usage time	0.062	0.04	-0.012	-0.02	0.004	-0.008		
Self-expression	-0.293		-.420*			0.113		
Entertainment	0.379	1.077***	.320**			0.156		
Connection		-.575**			.252**	0.123		
R2 (adj)	0.275**	0.278**	0.468***	0.127*	0.129*	0.148*		

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

### Fake News: Fact-checking as a tool to against the opposite site

- Echo Chambers: Digital areas where people's opinions, knowledge, or beliefs are reinforced through frequent interactions with peers or equivalent sources (Beauvais, 2022).
- Selective Exposure: The phenomenon wherein individuals preferentially select news that aligns with their thoughts and beliefs while avoiding content that contradicts or challenges their viewpoints (Sporh, 2017).
- Fact-checking: Verifying the veracity of publicly distributed information, is frequently regarded as an essential remedy for misinformation (Mahl et al., 2024).

	Fact check frequency				Share fake news			
	M7	M8	M9	M5	M7	M11		
Constant	7.802**	8.460***	4.467	2.376***	1.847**	1.635**		
Age	0.014	-0.039	-0.032	-0.038	-0.035	-0.036		
Gender	0.214	0.417	0.196	-0.027	-0.063	-0.058		
Education level	0.148	0.231	0.156	0.094	0.019	0.016		
Local status	-1.179	-1.298	-0.801	-0.09	-0.061	-0.031		
Total usage time	-0.084	-0.016	-0.061	-0.005	-0.009	-0.006		
echo chamber effect (+)	0.183		0.108		-0.049	-0.054		
Illusion of truth effect	-0.523		-0.22		0.066	0.062		
Third person effect	0.521		.516*		0.09	0.08		
selective exposure	0.351		0.411	.273**	.271***	.265**		
echo chamber effect (opposite site)	.553*		.559**		0.078	0.067		
Knowledge about fact-check tools		1.830***	1.846***			0.03		
Fact check frequency						0.02		
R2 (adj)	0.098*	0.147	0.219	0.153***	0.188***	0.145***		

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001

## POLICY INSIGHT



### Active Bystandership Education

Integrate skills into programs on cyberbullying and digital citizenship.

**Strategy:** Use assemblies and training to teach micro-interventions against racism and prejudice (Awad & Connors, 2023).

### Enhance Digital Literacy Programs

**Digital Literacy:** Promote skills for active bystandership and intervention in online incidents (Otrell-Cass & Fasching, 2021).

**Information Management:** Build skills to identify and counter fake news.  
**Opinion Management:** Educate on algorithms and echo chambers.  
**Identity Management:** Reflect on evolving online and offline identities.

### Peer Support Groups

Offer accessible avenues for victims to share their experiences and receive empathy.

Counseling services, or online forums moderated by trained professionals.



## IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW RESULTS

Nick Name	FB	Threads	IG	LIHKG	Tiktok	Xiaohongshu
Marcus, 21 (M), Public Policy and Politics	V	V	V	V		
Tom, 22 (M), Integrated Envir. Management	Active ASOB		V	Active ASOB	V	V
Ben, 21 (M), Sociology	V	V	V	Active ASOB		
Angus, 19 (M), Economics			V			
Edward, 25 (M), Digital media	V		V		V	
Jacky, 20 (M), Game Design and Animation	V		V			
Eva, 26 (M), Psychology	V	V	V	Active ASOB		
Jenny, 21 (F), Fashion and Textiles		Active ASOB	V		V	V
Gina, 20 (F), Social Policy and Social Entrepreneurship			V			V
Abby, 19 (F), Social Policy and Social Entrepreneurship			V			

### The Motivations for Transition from Passive to Active ASOB

PERSONAL INTEREST AND DIRECT IMPACT	PROFESSIONAL /KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN DRIVE	GROUP IDENTITY DRIVE	EMOTIONALLY TRIGGERED PARTICIPATION	POLITICAL EVENTS CAN DRIVE PARTICIPATION
Tom: "Maybe when I have personal experience with something, or when it directly affects me, that's when I might speak up"	Ben: "But for those trivial things, or those football discussions, if there's a real chance to convince someone, I would really spend more time"	Interviewees mentioned about KOL fan, football fan, Kpop fan, citizenship (Hongkongers) identity, etc.	Jacky: "I would say that basically, it's the other person who first provokes me or starts being irrational. Then I might use a bit of foul language to criticize their thinking as problematic and disrespectful."	Marcus: "During the 2019 social movement, everyone was more emotional"

Three interviewees who frequently engage in anti-social online behavior agree that they have a 'double standard' situation.

Ben: "I laugh at Jewish hell memes, but I can't accept people being transphobic. I'm pretty sure I'm being double standard."

Hate speech" was employed by three respondents to suppress "hate speech.

Jenny: "A man commented that if you haven't gained enough feminist benefits, you're weak, try patriarchal benefits, and you can have the best of both worlds. So my comment was, 'Classic misogynistic remark, what does feminism have to do with genitalia, or are you saying you hate feminism because you're not a woman and can't use it to benefit from both sides?' I feel that my attack was very on point, and he couldn't refute me at all."

Only one interviewee pointed out that bystander support can be confrontational to ASOB when asked about the recommendation.

Tom reflected on his behaviour: "I occasionally leave these hateful comments, but I believe they should never be expressed. Hidden behind a screen doesn't mean anybody can say anything. I regret that occasionally my emotions compel me to post such remarks."

## CONCLUSION

## CONTRIBUTION

- Sheds light on the complex factors driving Gen Z's engagement in anti-social online behaviors, particularly hate speech and fake news dissemination.
- Provides a comprehensive framework on active and passive anti social online behaviour, for understanding the platforms features, motivations, psychological factors, and contextual drivers of anti social online behaviors.

### Future Research Direction

- Investigate the effectiveness of specific interventions in reducing ASOB.

- Explore how psychological factors like empathy-building, emotional regulation, and critical thinking can reduce belief in fake news and participation in hate speech.

- Examine how intersecting identities (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status) influence ASOB patterns and motivations.