



Report

Gender-Based Hate Speech in Kosovo's Media

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1. Introduction

Hate speech has become a pressing concern in the digital age, affecting communities and individuals worldwide. In Kosovo as in many societies the media landscape has witnessed an alarming rise in hateful rhetoric, particularly against women and girls. Gender-based hate speech, whether in news reporting or on social networks, not only harms its direct targets but also reinforces harmful stereotypes and contributes to an atmosphere of discrimination. Globally, studies estimate that over half of young women have experienced online harassment or abuse, underscoring that this is not just a local issue but a worldwide trend. Kosovo's experience reflects these global challenges: from online comment sections flooded with misogynistic remarks to sensationalized news coverage that implicitly blames female victims, gendered hate in media is a real and urgent problem. This report provides an analytical look at **gender-based hate speech in Kosovo's media**, exploring what it is, how it differs from other forms of discrimination, common misconceptions about it, and how it spreads (often unconsciously). It will examine concrete examples from Kosovo's media including problematic reporting on femicide cases and discuss the role of social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok in amplifying hate. Finally, the report offers recommendations for key stakeholders such as the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK), the Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo (NWJK), the Independent Media Commission (IMC), and the Press Council (PCK) on how to combat gender-based hate speech and foster a safer media environment.

2. What is Hate Speech?

Hate speech refers to any form of expression, be it spoken, written, or online content, that deliberately attacks, insults, or incites violence or prejudice against a person or group based on certain characteristics. These characteristics typically include aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other protected traits. The core element of hate speech is that it targets someone for “who they are” (or who they are perceived to be) rather than because of individual actions. For example, derogatory slurs or calls to harm directed at an ethnic minority group, purely because of their ethnicity, would constitute hate speech. The intention behind hate speech can range from stirring up hatred and fear to reinforcing stereotypes or justifying discrimination. In many jurisdictions, including Kosovo, such speech is not protected as mere “free expression,” but is recognized as a harmful phenomenon that can lead to real-world violence and societal division. Hate speech often serves as a precursor to hate crimes: when hateful words escalate into harassment, assault, or worse. For this reason, international human rights standards and Kosovo’s own laws condemn and in some cases criminalize the most extreme forms of hate speech (particularly those that explicitly call for violence or hostility). In sum, hate speech is distinguished by its focus on group hatred: it is not just insulting language, but language that targets a community and seeks to demean or harm members of that community.

3. What is Gender-Based Hate Speech?

Gender-based hate speech is a subset of hate speech that is directed at someone because of their gender. In practice, this term most often refers to hateful or derogatory speech against women and girls essentially, misogynistic speech. (It can also encompass hatred against people who defy traditional gender norms, such as transgender or non-binary individuals, though in Kosovo's context the most common form is misogyny.) Gender-based hate speech includes any expression that spreads contempt, stereotypes, or calls for violence based on gender. Examples can range from explicit slurs and insults (using demeaning names for women), to broad statements like "women are inferior" or "women should know their place," to graphic threats of sexual violence aimed at a female public figure. What makes these instances *gender-based* is that the target is being maligned because she is a woman (or because they are not conforming to someone's idea of appropriate gender behavior).

Just like other forms of hate speech, gender-focused hatred serves to dehumanize its targets and justify their mistreatment. It is rooted in sexism and patriarchal attitudes. For instance, dismissive remarks in the workplace like "she got that job just because she's pretty" or online comments telling a woman politician to "go back to the kitchen" both exemplify gendered hate speech they all reduce an individual to sexist stereotypes. Even seemingly mild phrases can contribute to this hostile environment: consider a public official addressing a female journalist as "sweetie" or "darling" instead of treating her with the same respect given to male colleagues. Such language, while perhaps not intended as an insult, undermines and belittles women in professional contexts, reflecting an ingrained patriarchal mindset.

Gender-based hate speech can have serious consequences: it discourages women from speaking up or participating in public life, it normalizes discrimination and violence against women, and it inflicts psychological harm on those targeted. In the media context, when gender hate speech goes unchecked whether in a talk show, in a news article's comment section, or through viral social media content it sends a message that misogyny is acceptable or even mainstream. Combating this form of hate speech is especially challenging because some people mistake it for "traditional values" or humor, rather than recognizing it as the dangerous prejudice it really is.

4. Hate Speech vs. Other Forms of Discrimination

Hate speech is one specific form of discriminatory behavior, and it's important to understand how it differs from (and relates to) other forms of discrimination. Discrimination in general means treating someone unfairly or denying them opportunities and rights because of who they are (their ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.). For example, gender discrimination might involve paying women less for the same job or refusing to hire a qualified woman simply because of bias. Such discrimination is an action or policy. Hate speech, on the other hand, is an expression it's about words, images, or symbols that convey hatred. Here are a few key distinctions and connections between hate speech and other forms of discrimination:

- Hate speech primarily manifests in words (or artistic depictions), whereas many other forms of discrimination manifest in actions or institutional policies. For instance, a newspaper column filled with anti-woman rhetoric is hate speech; by contrast, a company promoting only men to management is discriminatory behavior. One is about what is being said, the other about what is being done.

- Hate speech is often overt it's usually quite clear when someone uses a slur or openly states a hateful opinion. Other discrimination can be more covert or subtle, hidden in systems and habits (like biased hiring practices or unequal laws). A TV commentator loudly insulting women is a blatant act that we can label as hate speech. But if female experts are never invited to speak on that TV program (effectively silencing women's perspectives), that is a discriminatory practice that might not announce itself as openly, yet still stems from prejudice.
- Hate speech targets groups (or an individual as representative of a group) and tries to make them seem inferior or threatening. Other forms of discrimination target individuals in practical scenarios for example, one specific woman being passed over for a job. However, that individual discrimination often arises from group-based prejudices. In short, hate speech is a way of broadcasting prejudice widely, whereas discrimination often plays out in one-on-one or structural settings.
- Despite these differences, hate speech and discriminatory actions reinforce each other. Hateful words can create an environment that justifies or encourages discriminatory acts. For instance, if media outlets or public figures constantly spew misogynistic hate speech, it can normalize the idea that women are inferior possibly making it easier for an employer to rationalize not hiring women, or for an abuser to feel society won't care if he mistreats his wife. Conversely, widespread discriminatory practices can embolden people to voice those prejudices publicly. Both ultimately contribute to marginalizing the targeted group.

5. Misconceptions and Unintentional Spread of Hate Speech

Hate speech is not always straightforward to identify. Many misconceptions exist about what constitutes hate speech, and these misunderstandings can lead to people spreading hateful content without realizing it. Let's explore some common misconceptions and how hate speech often spreads unconsciously:

- **“It’s Just a Joke / Just an Opinion”:** A prevalent misconception is that as long as something is framed as humor or personal opinion, it cannot be hate speech. In reality, a statement can be couched as a joke and still be deeply hateful or harmful. For example, making a “lighthearted” comment that women are “too emotional” to be leaders might get laughs from some, but it reinforces a stereotype and fosters disrespect. Labeling hateful remarks as humor doesn’t erase their impact. Similarly, saying “I have a right to my opinion” is true but if that “opinion” claims a whole gender or ethnic group is bad or undeserving of rights, then it crosses into hate speech territory. Free speech does not protect incitement of hatred. Misunderstanding this leads people to excuse outright misogyny or racism as just personal views or comedy.
- **Thinking Only Slurs Count as Hate Speech:** Another misconception is that hate speech only refers to extremely foul language or obvious slurs. In fact, hate speech encompasses a broad spectrum of negative discourse. Often, it’s more insidious: it might be a seemingly civil statement like “I don’t think mothers should be bosses because they can’t focus on work,” which is not a profanity-laced rant, but still propagates harmful bias against women. Hate speech can be subtle, hidden in implications and tone. Because of this misconception, some individuals engage in or share hateful ideas phrased in polite words, not recognizing it as hate speech. For instance, an online article might never use an insult, yet if it argues that one gender is inferior or ridicules a group, it’s spreading hate. People may unintentionally spread such content thinking “it’s not hateful, it’s just a viewpoint,” especially if they don’t see obvious vulgarity.
- **Blurring Hate Speech with Other Criticism:** It’s important to note that not all criticism or negative comments are hate speech. One misconception is on the other side some believe any negative remark is “hate.” That’s not true either: if someone criticizes a specific person’s actions (say a politician’s policy) without attacking their identity group, that’s not hate speech. But confusion arises, and sometimes genuine warnings about hate speech are dismissed by others as “overreacting” because they think advocates are trying to ban all negative speech. This misconception can hinder addressing real hate speech, as people accuse each other of censorship. Clarity is needed: hate speech targets identity, not behavior. Unfortunately, bad-faith actors sometimes claim their hateful statements are just criticism or “telling the truth,” which muddies the waters.

- **Unconscious Bias in Language:** Hate speech can spread unknowingly through everyday language due to ingrained biases. Many people have absorbed sexist or racist phrases growing up and might repeat them without malicious intent, not realizing their origin or impact. For example, making a blanket statement like “women are naturally bad drivers” might be said casually, perhaps even by someone who doesn’t truly hate women, but it still perpetuates a harmful myth. In Kosovo (as in other countries), certain proverbs or common sayings might carry sexist undertones when media or individuals share these, they might inadvertently be reinforcing prejudice. This is how hate can propagate **under the radar**, woven into culture and humor.
- **Social Media Sharing Without Thought:** In today’s fast-paced online environment, **misinformation and hate speech can go viral** before anyone stops to fact-check or reflect. A user might share a provocative post or meme on Facebook without fully reading it, just because the headline was shocking. If that post contains hateful content say, blaming women for a societal problem with no evidence the user may have just helped spread hate speech to hundreds of others “without thinking.” This unconscious spreading is fueled by algorithms that reward engagement: the more a post is shared or commented on (even with arguments), the more it appears in others’ feeds. People might add an outraged comment and share it, intending to criticize the hateful message, but ironically they amplify it further. In Kosovo, where Facebook is widely used, it’s common to see a sensational claim or derogatory story get thousands of shares quickly. By the time it’s debunked or removed (if it violates policies at all), the damage is done the hateful idea has embedded itself in many minds.

In summary, **a lack of understanding about what hate speech truly is** contributes to its unintentional spread. Many individuals do not consider themselves bigots, yet they might laugh at a sexist video, repeat a stereotype, or forward a misleading article that targets a group. Each of these acts, however small, feeds into a larger culture of normalized hate. Combating this requires education and awareness: people need to learn to recognize subtle hate speech, question the content they consume, and understand the weight their words carry online and offline.



6. Media Coverage and Gender Narratives in Kosovo

Media holds a mirror to society, but it also powerfully **shapes societal attitudes**. In Kosovo, the way media covers gender-related issues can either challenge stereotypes or unwittingly reinforce them. Unfortunately, there have been instances where coverage of violence against women and other gender-sensitive topics has missed the mark, perpetuating harmful narratives or failing to provide the necessary context.

One glaring example is the coverage of **femicide cases** the murders of women because of their gender, often at the hands of current or former partners. Kosovo has witnessed several high-profile femicides in recent years, which rightly sparked public outrage and protests. However, media reporting on these tragedies has not always been as responsible or sensitive as it should be. Frequently, news outlets cover the immediate event in a sensationalist manner but then move on quickly, without deeper investigation or follow-up. As a journalist observed (speaking generally about Kosovo media), "it's usually only talked about when something happens... for a day or two, but as a topic, it is not present enough." In practice, this means that a woman's murder might grab headlines like a dramatic incident, yet media organizations often fail to use the opportunity to examine *why* it happened the patterns of domestic abuse, the failures in institutions that should protect women, and the societal attitudes that enable such violence. The reporting can be **superficial**, treating each femicide as an isolated "tragedy" rather than part of a systemic problem of gender-based violence.

Moreover, the tone of coverage can at times be problematic. Instead of clearly identifying a femicide as *gender-based violence* or a result of an escalating pattern of abuse, some articles have framed these crimes in euphemistic ways like "crime of passion" or "family drama." Such framing unintentionally softens the brutality of what is actually happening the targeted killing of women because they are women. It can also feed into a narrative that maybe the perpetrator was provoked by emotion or personal circumstances, rather than emphasizing the broader issue of misogyny and control. In Kosovo's media environment, there have been cases where details irrelevant to the crime were highlighted in reports about murdered women for instance, mentioning the victim's alleged behavior or personal life in a way that readers could interpret as casting blame on her. While not overtly stating "it was her fault," this kind of reporting can **sway public opinion** to speculate along victim-blaming lines (e.g., "What did she do to make him angry?"), rather than focusing squarely on the perpetrator's accountability and the society that enabled him.

It's also worth noting that ethical standards sometimes get compromised in the rush to report dramatic news. There have been instances of media violating privacy or showing graphic content when covering violence against women. For example, publishing names or photos of victims of domestic violence or sexual assault without consent is against good journalistic practice, yet it has occurred, causing additional trauma to families and survivors. On a positive note, in some recent femicide cases, families of the victims refused to give statements or allow certain details to be public, which actually helped prevent the media from crossing some ethical lines (as noted in monitoring reports). But we shouldn't have to rely on grieving families to enforce journalistic ethics newsrooms should have their own strong guidelines to handle such stories with care and respect.

Beyond cases of violence, the general representation of women in Kosovo's media can reflect gender bias. Female public figures whether politicians, activists, or journalists themselves often face different treatment in coverage. It's not uncommon to see media commentary on a woman politician's appearance, attire, or family life where a male counterpart's coverage would focus purely on his policies or statements. For instance, a woman minister might get asked in an interview how she balances her job and children (implying a mother can't fully dedicate to a high-profile job), a question rarely posed to male ministers. Or a news portal might run a story about a woman MP's "emotional reaction" in parliament, subtly feeding the stereotype of women as overly emotional, whereas men raising their voices in the assembly might be framed as "assertive debate." These nuances in reporting reinforce the message that women are somehow out of place in leadership or need to meet a different standard.

On a brighter side, Kosovo has many conscientious journalists who do strive for fair reporting. For example, when an influential figure recently used patronizing, sexist language toward a female journalist, both the Association of Journalists and the Network of Women Journalists publicly condemned it highlighting that such behavior is unacceptable. This shows awareness within the media community that sexism in media interactions needs to be called out. Furthermore, some media outlets and independent organizations have begun **monitoring hate speech and divisive language** in content. Recent monitoring found that gender-based hateful incidents were the second most frequent type of hate incident in Kosovo's media sphere, right after ethnic-based hatred. This means that alongside ethnic tensions (which have historically been a major issue in the Balkans), misogyny and anti-LGBTQ narratives are a significant part of the hate speech problem in media. Identifying this is the first step now media must work on reducing it.

In summary, while the media in Kosovo plays a crucial role in informing the public, it also at times mirrors the patriarchal biases present in society. Poorly framed reporting on femicides and other gendered issues can inadvertently perpetuate victim-blaming or downplay the seriousness of the violence. A lack of sustained coverage means the public quickly forgets, and the chance to educate and prevent future tragedies is lost. Changing these media narratives is essential: instead of fleeting, sensational coverage, media should provide context *Why did this femicide occur? How could it have been prevented?* and treat each case as a rallying point to discuss reforms and societal change. Similarly, ensuring that women are portrayed respectfully and equally in all news coverage (and not subjected to sexist double standards) will help chip away at the biases that feed hate speech. The media's words matter: they can either challenge the culture of gender-based hate or inadvertently contribute to it.

7. Social Media: A Double-Edged Sword in Spreading Hate

In the modern media ecosystem, social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube have become dominant channels for news and information distribution in Kosovo. Virtually all major media outlets in Kosovo share their content on Facebook, and a majority also maintain YouTube channels and even TikTok accounts. This online reach has benefits news spreads faster and farther than ever but it also comes with significant downsides. Social media has proven to be a double-edged sword: it amplifies content (including hate speech) to wide audiences, and it often lacks the moderation controls present in traditional media. These factors have contributed to the unchecked spread of gender-based hate speech on online platforms.

First, consider the reliance of Kosovar media on platforms like Facebook. A very high proportion of the population uses Facebook (with roughly over a million Kosovan users, in a country of under 2 million people). News outlets know that to engage readers, they must be where the readers are which is on social networks. In fact, many media organizations derive a good portion of their web traffic and advertising revenue through social media. Tech giants Meta (Facebook's parent company) and Google effectively fund a lot of media content indirectly: Facebook offers ad revenue sharing and drives clicks to news sites, while Google (through tools like AdSense or YouTube monetization) provides crucial income streams. This creates a strong incentive for media outlets to tailor their content for maximum engagement on these platforms. Unfortunately, on social media, what generates the most engagement is often the most inflammatory or emotionally charged content. Posts that provoke anger or shock even negative reactions tend to get more comments and shares, which in turn makes the platform algorithms spread them even more widely.

This dynamic has led to a proliferation of sensationalist or provocative posts by media on social channels. A particularly concerning outcome is the tolerance (and sometimes tacit encouragement) of hateful comments because they drive "engagement metrics." If a news page posts a story about, say, a woman who achieved some success, and dozens of users respond with sexist remarks, those remarks unfortunately boost the post's visibility (the platform sees lots of commenting activity). Unless the page administrators actively moderate and delete such comments, the algorithm will keep pushing that post to more people, snowballing the exposure of the very misogynistic comments fueling the activity. Many Kosovo media pages do not have dedicated moderators constantly filtering comments some due to lack of resources, others perhaps due to negligence. The result is comment sections filled with hate speech, which remain live for anyone to read. For instance, after news of a domestic violence incident or femicide, one can often observe Facebook comment threads where some users blame the victim ("She must have done something to anger him" or "Women nowadays don't respect their husbands, that's why this happens"), while others spew general misogynistic statements ("All women are the same..."). These comments not only add to the trauma for victims' families if they see them, but also spread and normalize hateful attitudes among the community. The platform rarely intervenes content moderation in Albanian (and other local languages) is notoriously limited. Unless comments explicitly contain globally recognized hate symbols or the most obvious slurs, they often slip past Facebook's automated filters. And with thousands of comments posted, human moderation by the company is virtually non-existent for a small-market language.

TikTok presents a different but related challenge. This video-sharing platform has exploded in popularity, especially among younger Kosovars. TikTok's algorithm is designed to show users an endless feed of videos tailored to what engages them again, often meaning sensational or extreme content rises to the top. Around the world, TikTok has been a conduit for misogynistic and other hateful content, sometimes in very subtle forms. In Kosovo, one can find TikTok videos that, for example, mock women in stereotypical roles or spread "advice" that is basically sexist (such as instructing men on how to be "dominant" over women in a relationship). Some content features popular international misogynists for instance, clips of controversial influencers known for their anti-women rhetoric dubbed or subtitled in local languages, getting thousands of views and shares. These ideas penetrate the local youth culture, emboldening some young men to adopt derogatory attitudes and perhaps even to harass women online. The issue with TikTok is that its moderation of hate speech is inconsistent: while they claim to ban hate, the sheer volume of content means many borderline or coded hateful messages slip through. And because videos are short and viral, a toxic message can reach a huge audience before anyone even notices. By the time a blatantly misogynistic video might be reported and taken down, it could have been seen (and shared) by tens of thousands, effectively spreading the hate and possibly spawning copycat content.

YouTube plays a slightly different role. Many Kosovo media outlets upload TV segments or news videos to YouTube, and some run live streams. YouTube has comment sections as well, though they are less central than on Facebook. However, the platform's recommendation engine can create "rabbit holes" where viewers who watch one video laden with sexist or hateful commentary might be recommended another, and another, reinforcing a certain worldview. Additionally, independent YouTube channels (outside traditional media) can push narratives that are anti-feminist or hostile to women's rights (for example, videos ranting that laws protecting women are "unfair to men" or conspiracy theories that gender equality is a plot against society). These niche channels can accumulate significant followings and spill their content back into mainstream discussions.

A critical point is that **the boundaries between formal media and social media have blurred**. A news story might break on a TV channel or news site, but it gains real traction through sharing on Facebook/Twitter and being discussed in those arenas. If the discourse on those platforms becomes hateful, it taints the entire information environment. The media outlets in Kosovo, by actively engaging on these platforms, are in a sense part of that ecosystem and bear some responsibility for moderating their piece of it. To date, however, moderation has been lax. Few outlets in Kosovo consistently hide or delete hateful comments on their posts or block users who repeatedly post hate speech. Some journalists have admitted that newsrooms lack the staff or clear policy to manage online comments. Others might fear that heavy moderation will reduce user engagement and thus their reach a short-term thinking that ends up giving free rein to toxic speech.

8. Clickbait and Its Consequences

One specific phenomenon linking media and social media deserves special attention: clickbait. Clickbait refers to the practice of using sensational, misleading, or exaggerated headlines and social media captions to attract clicks and views. While it might boost web traffic in the short term, clickbait can seriously distort public understanding and fuel unhealthy discourse including hate speech. In Kosovo's media scene, the competition for readers' attention online is fierce, and unfortunately this has led some outlets to favor eye-catching presentation over accuracy or nuance. The consequences have been especially problematic when the topics involve gender issues or violence.

How does clickbait contribute to the spread of gender-based hate? Consider a typical scenario: A news site publishes an article about a domestic violence case with a responsible, factual write-up. However, when sharing the piece on Facebook, they choose a caption or thumbnail text that emphasizes a shocking or scandalous element perhaps hinting that "a wife's secret led to tragedy" or some wording that invites speculation. The actual article might not blame the victim at all and might explain the context fairly, but many people on social media won't click through to read it. Instead, hundreds will form an opinion solely from that tantalizing snippet. If the snippet implies, however subtly, that the woman did something to cause her own fate, then readers may run wild with that assumption. The comment section will fill up with heated reactions: "She cheated on him, I bet!" or "Women like her are why these things happen," even if the article did not say anything of the sort. The misleading preview essentially planted a seed of a narrative that isn't fully accurate, and those who don't actually read the full story will spread that narrative.

This pattern happens not only with violence-related news. For example, an outlet might post a video interview with a female public figure under a title like, "Watch so-and-so's controversial statement about men!" People may flock to argue in comments about it perhaps attacking her character based on the few words in the title while in reality her full comment in the video was nuanced or taken out of context by the title. The "TL;DR" (too long; didn't read) culture on social media means that the initial framing by media is incredibly powerful. If that framing is done irresponsibly (to generate curiosity or outrage), it can easily mislead large audiences.

In Kosovo, media organizations often rely on Facebook posts and YouTube video titles to bring in traffic, and the more provocative the phrasing, the more clicks they expect. Some headlines are written as open-ended questions or cryptic statements that practically beg the reader to click ("You won't believe what this husband did..." or "Is this the most shocking reason ever for a divorce?"). The trouble is, many users feel they *already* know the answer or they jump to conclusions, and they start commenting without further information. This creates entire debate threads built on half-truths or false impressions. When the subject of the story is a woman or a gender-related issue, those threads often devolve into sexist commentary and confirmation of biases. Essentially, clickbait can act as a spark in a room full of flammable material the material being existing prejudices among some readers.

The consequences extend beyond just one Facebook post. If misinformation or a biased idea catches on (thanks to a clickbait hook), it can spread to other groups and conversations, and even into offline discussions. People might start referencing “that story where the wife was at fault” without ever having read the actual reporting. Thus, clickbait not only undermines the quality of public discourse but can also **tarnish reputations** and deepen social divides. For the woman who was the victim in the above scenario, not only did she suffer violence, but now she’s being vilified in the court of public opinion due to a misleading headline. For women as a whole, each such episode reinforces the notion that “the public will judge you unfairly,” contributing to a chilling effect where women feel even less safe or respected in society.

It’s important to note that not all media in Kosovo engage in egregious clickbait, and some outlets do take care to craft informative headlines. However, the overall trend of sensationalism is a concern. The economic pressure to get clicks is real media outlets struggle financially and feel compelled to chase engagement. But when engagement is achieved at the cost of truth and social harmony, the damage can outweigh the gains. **Responsible journalism** calls for accurate, context-rich headlines and social media posts, especially on delicate topics like gender-based violence. There are ways to be interesting without being misleading. Ultimately, reducing the use of clickbait is part of creating a media environment where important issues are discussed on the basis of facts, not rumors and where hateful knee-jerk reactions are less likely to be triggered among the audience.

9. Recommendations for Combating Gender-Based Hate Speech

Tackling gender-based hate speech in media requires a joint effort from various stakeholders: journalistic associations, regulatory bodies, self-regulatory councils, and civil society networks. Below are eight key recommendations aimed at the Association of Journalists of Kosovo, the Network of Women Journalists of Kosovo, the Independent Media Commission, and the Press Council of Kosovo. These recommendations seek to foster a more ethical media culture, strengthen oversight, and promote gender equality in and through the media:

- **AJK** – Continue strengthening and enforcing gender-sensitive reporting guidelines: Keep updating and promoting clear guidance on reporting gender-based violence and women’s issues (language to avoid, context, dignity), and keep monitoring coverage so outlets that repeatedly breach standards are called out consistently.
- Continue regular training and newsroom capacity-building: Keep running practical trainings for journalists/editors on recognizing gender-based hate, avoiding bias, responsible framing, and handling sensitive interviews—plus concrete skills for moderating online comments and avoiding gendered disinformation.
- **NWJK** – Continue protecting and supporting women journalists: Keep the support mechanisms active for women journalists facing online harassment (safe reporting channels, peer support, legal/psychological referral pathways), and keep pushing for accountability from media employers and institutions when attacks occur.
- Continue public awareness work on gender hate: Keep producing and distributing short, accessible awareness content (social media, radio/TV, community events) that explains why misogynistic “stereotype talk” is harmful and encourages audiences to challenge hate instead of amplifying it.
- **IMC** – Continue oversight and enforcement on licensed broadcasters: Keep monitoring TV/radio for sexist hate speech and discriminatory narratives, and keep applying proportionate measures (warnings, corrective actions, sanctions where needed) to build a predictable standard of accountability.
- **PCK** – Continue strengthening self-regulation and accountability: Keep refining ethical standards on hate speech and sexist framing, and keep issuing timely, public decisions on complaints, so outlets feel real reputational pressure to correct and improve.
- **All** – Continue pushing ethical distribution and stronger comment moderation: Keep jointly promoting non-clickbait framing (especially for GBV/femicide coverage), and keep improving comment management (clear rules, active moderation, limiting/closing comments when risk is high) so social posts don’t become hate “magnets.”

Examples of Gender-Based Hate Speech Toward Women

Direct insults, slurs, and degrading labels

- Demeaning names for women (misogynistic slurs)
- Statements like:
 - “Women are inferior”
 - “Women should know their place”

Sexist stereotypes used as hate speech

- “Women are too emotional to be leaders”
- “Women are naturally bad drivers”
- “She got that job just because she’s pretty”

Discrediting through gender stereotypes

- “Too emotional to report objectively.”
- “Women exaggerate everything.”
- “She’s biased because she’s a feminist.”

Attacks on professional credibility

- “Why is she on TV dressed like that?”
- “Pretty face, empty head.”
- “Stick to fashion or lifestyle topics, not serious news.”

Role-policing and exclusion from public discourse

- “Women shouldn’t report on politics or war.”
- “Go take care of your family instead of interfering in men’s issues.”
- “Journalism is not for mothers.”

Coordinated online harassment language

- Insults using misogynistic slurs
- Memes degrading women journalists


10. Conclusion

Gender-based hate speech in Kosovo's media is a multifaceted problem, deeply intertwined with societal attitudes, the economics of media, and the global rise of online toxicity. As we have seen, it ranges from explicit misogynistic slurs in comment sections to subtle biases in news reporting. This hate speech not only tarnishes our public discourse but also has real consequences: it intimidates women, deters them from equal participation in society, and in the worst cases, can contribute to an environment that excuses violence against them. Addressing this issue is not about censoring free expression it's about **fostering a more respectful and fact-based public dialogue** where criticism and debate can happen without descending into hate.

Kosovo's media community and regulators stand at a crucial juncture. The country has made significant strides in freedom of expression and press development since the war-torn years, but now it must confront the darker undercurrents that have emerged in the digital era. The good news is that awareness is growing: journalists, activists, and institutions are increasingly recognizing the harms of unchecked online hate and unethical reporting practices. The recommendations provided from training journalists, to enforcing ethical codes, to pressuring social media giants form a roadmap of possible actions. Implementing them will require commitment and collaboration. Journalists must be willing to reflect on their own work critically; media owners must balance profit motives with social responsibility; regulators must be vigilant and impartial in clamping down on violations; and civil society must keep the conversation alive, demanding better from all sides.

Crucially, ordinary citizens also have a role. Media literacy among the public can act as a line of defense: a society that is savvy about clickbait and conscious of bias will be less easily misled or inflamed. Thus, education and awareness campaigns targeting the public (especially youth) about online hate, respectful communication, and critical consumption of news are equally important accompaniments to the measures discussed.

In the end, curbing gender-based hate speech in media is part of the broader pursuit of gender equality and human dignity. By purging hateful language and perspectives from the mainstream, Kosovo can ensure that its media truly serves the public good informing citizens without discrimination, holding power to account without sensationalism, and reflecting the voices of all people, women and men, with respect. Such a media environment would not only benefit women (who would no longer be subject to routine hostility when they appear in news or online), but would enrich democracy and social cohesion for everyone. It is an achievable goal, and with concerted effort, Kosovo's media can evolve to become a force that combats hate, rather than a conduit for it. The time to act is now, before more harm is done, and before divisive voices further erode the values of tolerance and equality that should underpin a modern democratic society. Let us move forward with a clear message: **hate has no place in our media, and by extension, no place in our society.**



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