

Illocutionary Acts Used in Hate Speech Comments on Zohran Mamdani's Official TikTok Account

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Abstract

Political discourses on TikTok frequently qualify by short and emotionally charged comments that may serve not just as statements of disagreement but also as forms of hate speech and communicative action. However, studies that have examined the association between hate speech forms and illocutionary act functions in political TikTok comments are relatively restricted. The research intends to identify the forms of hate speech and examine the illocutionary act functions discovered in comments on the official TikTok account of Zohran Mamdani. In this research a qualitative descriptive method with pragmatic approach and qualitative content analysis was applied. The data comprised of 67 selected public comments from ten movies on TikTok released in November 2025. The comments were purposively sampled based on hate speech indicators adopted from the Indonesian National Police Circular Number SE/6/X/2015 and examined using Searle's theory of illocutionary acts. The results demonstrate four types of hate speech: insult, accusation/defamation, provocation and threat. The most dominant type was insult with (27 comments), followed by accusation/defamation (23 comments), provocation (14 comments) and threat (3 comments). The comments performed mainly expressive, forceful and directive acts as illocutionary functions. The results indicate that political comments on TikTok contain hate speech not just to express bad feelings but also to construct negative political images and influence the perspective of the audience. This research contributes to pragmatic studies by demonstrating how short political comments on TikTok function as significant communicative activities in the digital political discourse.

Keywords: Hate speech; Illocutionary acts; TikTok comments; Plitical discourse; Pragmatics

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction of social media has had a huge impact on the way humans communicate with each other. According to Jannah (2024), social media refers to electronic communication systems that allow users to form virtual communities to share ideas, information, personal messages, and various types of content, including videos. It is a digital spot where thoughts, opinions, replies, and critiques can be shared without the limits of place and time. But these freedoms also provide the ground for undesirable communication such as hate speech. In politics, hate speech is defined as the use of negative and abusive language against public people or organizations based upon their identity, religion, nationality, politics, or any other social personality. Castaño-Pulgarín et al. (2021) argue that the internet and social media can be sites where online hate speech appears in different forms, and that hate speech on social media should be understood considering the platform, the social context and the user practices (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Therefore, the study of hate speech in political discourse is crucial since

it is not merely a matter of bad language but a type of communication that can influence the way people understand and judge a public figure. TikTok has emerged as one of the most frequently utilised social media platforms among a variety of digital platforms as a result of its interactive features, which enable public engagement through comment sections and videos (Carlos et al., 2020). In online environments, communication is frequently characterised by terse, expressive, and influenced by context utterances that frequently contain implicit meanings and necessitate pragmatic interpretation to comprehend the speaker's intended message. These reactions are not just language constructs but include communication behaviors influenced by context, intent, and audience awareness. The lack of direct physical clues in online communication exacerbates the difficulty of meaning interpretation, as users depend significantly on textual expressions and implicit signals. This phenomenon underscores the necessity of examining the realization of communicative goals in online discourse. In social media political discussions, comment portions frequently serve as platforms for users to direct their criticism, disagreement, mockery, hostility, and hateful expressions toward public figures or opposing perspectives (Abdurohim, 2023).

But then it is still challenging to understand how convey and evaluate meaning in digital exchanges, and more difficult when such engagement is through short comments. This problem is especially apparent on platforms like TikTok, notably in the comment sections of a public figure such as Zohran Mamdani, where users engage by responding to content with succinct, casual, and contextually specific remarks. Zohran Mamdani's official TikTok account was chosen because it depicts active political engagement between a prominent figure and users in the form of short comments of support, criticism, rejection, mockery, accusation, and aggressive responses. In these interactions, comments serve as both textual responses and communicative actions that reflect the intentions of users. Illocutionary acts contain purposes and functions related to social goals Fauzi et al. (2021), demonstrating that users' comments serve not just as expressions but also as forms of social action. The potential for multiple interpretations is heightened by the absence of facial expressions, gestures, and intonation in online interaction, which is why pragmatic analysis is crucial for comprehending the process of negotiating meaning in digital discourse. This research illustrates the application of pragmatic concepts to authentic language use Keffe et al. (2020). In order to resolve this matter, pragmatics offers a framework for the examination of the construction and interpretation of meaning in context, as elucidated in *Introducing Pragmatics in Use*. Thus, hate speech remarks on Zohran Mamdani's official Tiktok account should be seen not just as negative opinions, but also as illocutionary actions of rejection, accusation, insult, provocation or threat.

Previous research on illocutionary behaviors and hate speech in different digital spaces exists, but it is not without limitations. Studies have examined speech acts on different types of social media. Aluz et al. (2024) investigated the illocutionary behaviors in TikTok live streaming and showed how users produce spontaneous responses through real-time interaction. Sigalingging (2025) studied Instagram posts and comments, and Megarizki and Prayitno (2023) studied speech acts in TikTok comments and discovered that short comments can provide some communication effects. More direct work on hate speech and illocutionary acts in political and social media discourse has been carried out elsewhere. More explicitly, hate speech and illocutionary acts have been addressed in other studies of political and social media discourse. Siregar et al. (2024) studied hate speech remarks against Anies Baswedan, Alfiani, and Musfiroh (2023) investigated hate speech in YouTube comments. Arfiawati and Guntari (2022) also analyzed hate speech and illocutionary acts in Joe Biden's Instagram account, and Gufron et al. (2026) analyzed hate speech in Indonesian presidential campaign discourse on TikTok. These studies illustrate that social media comments are not just plain written answers, but can also be

used as criticism, accusation, rejection, animosity, or political positioning. Most of these studies discuss multiple platforms, live encounters, more generic political narratives, or general types of speech acts. They have not completely explored how hate speech forms function as illocutionary acts in short, asynchronous political TikTok comment sections. Recent research by Saragih (2025) further argues that TikTok comments are a unique form of computer-mediated discourse since meaning is often generated implicitly and supported by user activity, such as replies, likes, and short evaluative comments. In addition, gender and sarcasm could affect the way users express hostility online. Herring (2013) states that gendered communication patterns can still be manifested in online engagement. Mamun et al. (2024) indicate that angry expressions could occasionally be camouflaged by sarcasm. However, gender is not the primary object of analysis in this study because the identities of TikTok users cannot always be verified. It is treated only as a supporting observation if relevant to the interpretation of comments. Therefore, this study addresses the gap by investigating the relation between hate speech forms and illocutionary act functions in short political TikTok comments, especially comments that are directed at the official account of Zohran Mamdani.

Referring to the gap above, this research intends to identify the forms of hate speech and examine the illocutionary act functions in TikTok comments on Zohran Mamdani's official account. The novelty of this study is the try to connect the kinds of hate speech and illocutionary functions in short political remarks on TikTok. Hate speech in this study is an expression that can incite a hostility towards a person or group of individuals based on social traits such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or other identity markers (Fisch, 2002 in (Arfiawati & Guntari, 2022). The examination of illocutionary acts is grounded in speech act theory. Austin (1962) stated that persons, when making an utterance, could be doing a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act. Searle (1979) further expanded this theory and distinguished illocutionary acts into many functions such as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive and declarative acts. Wardoyo (2018) further argues that the categories of speech acts could be employed as the analytical markers to understand the purpose of utterances.

In this research these ideas are utilized to explore how hate speech remarks can serve as rejection, accusation, insult, provocation or threat in digital political interaction. The scope of this research is limited to the selected hate speech comments on the official TikTok account of Zohran Mamdani. While certain comments may show gender-coded patterns, gender is not considered the primary emphasis because the identities of TikTok users are not always verifiable. Thus, this study largely focuses on hate speech indicators and their illocutionary functions in short-form digital discourse, in which interactional dynamics and user engagement are significant (Page et al., 2022). The following research questions guide this study: What kind of hate speech are present in the selected TikTok comments on Zohran Mamdani's official account? and What are the illocutionary act functions of those hate speech comments?

METHOD

Research Design

Qualitative research is appropriate for this investigation because it prioritizes the interpretation of the meaning, context, and communicative intention that are naturally present in language use, as opposed to the quantification of linguistic features (Creswell & Poth, 2018) cited by (Claudine, 2024). The descriptive approach was adopted because the researcher wanted to describe and explain the varieties of hate speech and the illocutionary act functions discovered in TikTok comments. A pragmatic approach was employed since the comments were seen not only as letters published but also as communicational activities that show the intents of the users. This is important as online comments have

often implied connotations that are not grasped only based on the actual wording. Communication in digital contexts such as TikTok is generally brief, implicit, and context-dependent, hence an interpretive and context-sensitive strategy is needed (Herring, 2013). The analysis of illocutionary acts in this study was based on Searle's classification of illocutionary acts which consists of assertive, directive, expressive, commissive and declarative acts (Searle, 1979). Hate speech was defined in the meantime by indications as insult, slander, provocation, incitement, threat, demeaning phrases. The indicators are in accordance with the Indonesian National Police Circular Letter Number SE/6/X/2015 that states that hate speech can include insults, defamation, provocations, incitement, and utterances that can cause social disturbance or discrimination (Abdurohim, 2023). Therefore, the design was considered adequate for this research to explore the meaning and function of hate speech comments.

Research Objects

The data for this study were derived from the written comments that were present in ten specific TikTok videos that were uploaded to Zohran Mamdani's official account in November 2025. The videos were intentionally chosen because they demonstrated Mamdani's direct interaction with New York citizens during his mayoral campaign. This context was deemed pertinent due to the fact that his public activities garnered significant attention on TikTok, not only from local New York users but also from international users who followed and responded to his campaign content. The final data comprised of 67 comments chosen from the ten TikTok videos. The researcher used a purposive sampling since the researcher selected only comments that were related to the research aims. The comments selected for analysis comprised markers of hate speech, negative reactions, sarcasm, rejection, accusations, gender-related expressions, and other statements with obvious illocutionary force. Irrelevant, repeated, confusing, emojis only comments or those that did not demonstrate hate speech characteristics were eliminated from the data. Data were not collected randomly purposive sampling was used because the data were selected on the basis of the particular criteria relevant to the research objectives (Tajik et al., 2024).

Instruments

In this research, the main instrument was the researcher, who was assisted by a theory-based classification sheet. In qualitative research, the researcher is a key aspect of interpreting the data because the meaning of each comment must be understood in its context. For a more methodical approach to data analysis, the researcher created the classification sheet. It consists of numerous sections such as the selected comment, the context of the video, the hate speech indicator, the category of illocutionary behavior, and the researcher's interpretation. The classification framework was founded on Searle's concept of illocutionary acts Searle (1979) which includes assertive, directive, expressive, commissive and declarative acts. Hate speech was also identified through the use of general indicators that are common in cybercrime or police-related contexts, including insults, provocation, threats, defamation, and degrading expressions. By contrast, the present investigation is not aimed at making a legal finding, but rather at assessing the linguistic function of the comments. The validity of the instrument was achieved by the use of known ideas for classification. Reliability all selected comments were classified using the same classification procedure and were checked repeatedly to reduce inconsistency in interpretation. The classification procedure was based on the notion that qualitative data analysis requires sorting data into meaningful categories to understand meaning and to detect trends (Saldana, 2022). In this way, the instrument assisted the researcher to organize the remarks in a straightforward way and interpret them in line with the research focus.

The research method was carried out through a series of processes. First, the researcher selected ten videos on TikTok published in November 2025 from the official TikTok profile of Zohran Mamdani. Second, the researcher collected the comments from the selected videos. Third, the comments were filtered based on the research requirements. The selected data comprised comments that had hate speech components, including mockery, criticism, rejection, accusation, contemptuous language, or an outright negative reaction. Comments that were repetitive, unrelated, ambiguous, or lacking illocutionary force were excluded at the same time. Fourth, the 67 selected comments were sorted into a data classification chart. Lastly, the comments were analyzed using hate speech elements and the definition of illocutionary acts by Searle.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is appropriate for analyzing textual data as it assists researchers in systematically identifying meanings, categories and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The content analysis in this study was conducted in two main stages namely identification of the kinds of hate speech and interpretation of the illocutionary act functions of each selected comment. Siregar et al. (2024) have employed similar indicators in the analysis of hate speech comments on political social media discourse. In this research, hate speech comments were firstly identified based on the markers which are commonly used in cybercrime or police related scenarios such as insult, provocation, threat, defamation and degrading terms. A few comments, including gender-related expressions, were also reported, especially when the comments referred to masculinity, leadership, or gender-based stereotypes. This step was used to separate hate speech comments from general criticism, neutral comments or irrelevant comments.

In the next stage, the selected comments were analyzed for their speech functions. The researcher considered the words used, the context of the video and the target of each comment. Searle (1979) theory of illocutionary acts was used to determine if the comments were statements, commands, expressions of emotion, commitments, or declarations. The research showed how in this process users expressed rejection, anger, accusation or mockery towards Mamdani, including a few comments with gendered meanings. This approach also corresponds to the idea that qualitative content analysis should be done systematically, with categories being the main guide for interpreting textual data (Kamor & Karolina Grzyb, 2023). The analysis in this research was therefore guided by clear criteria to support objectivity, reliability, and validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The researcher has analyzed 67 hate speech comments from ten videos uploaded in November 2025 through the official TikTok account of Zohran Mamdani. The analysis found four main types of hate speech: insult, accusation/defamation, provocation and threat. The categories were to offer a basic method for classifying the data and to highlight the presence of negative commentary in political interaction on TikTok. This was derived from the definition of hate speech as stated in the Indonesian National Police Circular Letter Number SE/6/X/2015, which states that hate speech includes insults, defamation, provocation, incitement, or any form of expression that can trigger conflicts in society (Abdurohim, 2023). In this research, mockery, profanity and insulting expressions were not regarded as different groups as they generally coincided with the primary indicators. For example, the comments with mockery, humiliation, or degrading labels were classed as insult, while the comments with destructive labels or negative allegations were classified as accusation/defamation. Incitement to rejection or influence on the political choice of other users was classed as provocation, and incitement to fear,

danger or future harm was classified as threat. The frequency of each category were provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of Hate Speech and Frequency

No.	Forms of Hate Speech	Frequency
1	Insult	27
2	Provocation	14
3	Accusation/Defamation	23
4	Threat	3
Total		67

Insult was the most common kind of hate speech with a total of (27 comments) as shown in Table 1. It was followed by accusation/defamation (23 comments), provocation (14 comments) and threat (3 comments). This pattern indicates that Zohran Mamdani received mostly adverse replies through ridicule, personal attack and negative labelling rather than direct threats. This finding relates to the work of Schmid et al. (2022) who argue that online hate speech can be of different levels of directness and is influenced by the style and context of social media communication. In this study, insults that directly attacked the target (e.g. 'What a clown', 'virus', 'You idiots') were categorized as insult. Accusation/defamation was in the form of comments that branded Mamdani with derogatory labels such as "terrorist" or "fraud". These statements were not only a sign of disagreement but also created a terrible picture of the political figure. Similar findings were also found by Siregar et al. (2024) which demonstrated that hate speech in social media comments on politics is often done through judgement, accusation, and rejection of a prominent individual. The comments section had a number of incendiary words encouraging other users to vote against Mamdani or for another candidate, such as "don't vote for him." This is consistent with the findings of Andrea and Fatmawati (2023) who found that directive language in TikTok comments can be employed to influence the actions of other users. The least prevalent category was threat which was present in comments predicting harm or damage, such as "be ready for hell" and "Watch the crime rate skyrocket."

Using Searle's concept of illocutionary acts, the hate speech comments were not simply negative comments but communicative acts with specified functions. (Searle, 1979) identifies five types of acts of illocutionary acts, namely assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts. Expressive, assertive and directive acts were the most visible functions in this investigation. The insulting comments such "What a clown", "virus", and "You idiots" were considered expressive acts because they expressed the users' anger, dislike, contempt or rejection towards Mamdani. This is consistent with Marsela and Asnawi (2024) who argue that expressive acts in TikTok comments are widely employed to indicate emotional sentiments. Comments like "terrorist" and "fraud" were classified as assertive act because the users expressed unfavorable judgments as facts. This finding is also important to Siregar et al. (2024) who stated that hate speech in social media politics comments is generally expressed through judgment, accusation, and rejection of a public figure. Meanwhile, comments such as "do not vote for him" and "VOTE FOR CURTIS SLIWA" were classified as directive acts as they sought to influence the political opinions of other users. This also supports the position of (Andrea & Fatmawati, 2023) who argue that directive language in comments on TikTok might be utilized to affect the action of other users.

The analysis of TikTok comments revealed a consistent trend in the way people displayed political disagreement with each other. Most of these comments did not contain any elaborate rationale but instead included short, emotionally loaded statements displaying either dislike or disapproval for Zohran Mamdani. The result was that there

were many more expressive acts, showing anger and contempt towards the subject matter; assertive acts where Mamdani was negatively labeled as a terrorist or a communist; and directive acts where the speaker sought to influence the political behavior of other users. In all, the evidence suggests that hate speech in TikTok is not only objectionable language but an effective means of communication, both as a tool to express emotions, deliver negative judgments, and attempt to shape political behavior.

Discussion

The prevalence of expressive, assertive and directive speech acts in the selected TikTok comments reflects general tendencies in emotional political communication in short social media formats. Previous research has shown that the immediacy and briefness of TikTok's format urge the users to reveal their emotions directly rather than developing lengthy arguments (Li et al., 2025). There is also evidence to show that users engaged in the use of TikTok comment area for emotional reasons such as expressing personal opinion, for example, insulting others. Similarly, the assertive acts described Mamdani with negative labeling coincide with the results that hate speech typically seeks to establish and maintain negative political images in online spaces (Gufron et al., 2026).

More importantly, directive acts aiming to influence other users' political choices represent the usage of online comments as instruments of peer-to-peer political persuasion. This tendency shows that hate speech in TikTok political discourse is not only offensive language but also a multipurpose communicative resource expressing emotion, rating political personalities, and attempting to influence audiences' perceptions and decisions. The findings contribute to a growing body of literature emphasizing the importance of social media sites in amplifying the emotive and rhetorical dimensions of political speech, with consequences for understanding the effects of digital engagement on political polarization and participation. In the next sections each type of speech acts is examined in detail in order to show patterns, functions and social effects.

Insult

Insult was the most dominant form of hate speech found in this study with 27 comments from the selected TikTok comments. This suggests the average user who responded negatively to Zohran Mamdani was more likely to employ direct, emotionally-laden language than reasoned political argumentation. Comments include samples such as:

- @The Naughty Paws: "What a clown"
- @Herry candi: "virus"
- @The Naughty Paws🐾: "You idiots," "freeloaders," and "This clown"

These comments were flagged as insults because they personalized, belittled and targeted Mamdani. Such labels as "clown," "virus" and "freeloaders" are derogatory labelling aimed at damaging his public image. Within Searle (1979) paradigm of illocutionary acts, these utterances serve as expressive acts exposing the speakers' psychological attitudes, such as rage, disgust and hatred. Analytically, the prevalence of insults reveals that political statements on TikTok are frequently driven by a need for quick emotional expression rather than deliberate discourse. This trend also implies that hate speech on the platform does not only offend but functions as a social signal, placing and aligning users with others in the political discourse, and reinforcing emotional solidarity among like-minded commenters. Thus, insult operates as a multifunctional communicative act, indicating the role of expressive acts in constructing political engagement and feeling in short-form social media.

The high frequency of insults in this study is explained by the nature of TikTok comments, which are generally brief, rapid, and emotionally charged. In general, users do not write extensive, reasoned reasons to voice their disagreement but rather rely on short

statements to rapidly reveal their views against a public person. This is in line with Abdurohim (2023) who states that hate speech may be expressed in the form of insults, slander, provocation, or other expressions that can instigate enmity and social conflict. Moreover, it corroborates Siregar et al. (2024) who found that hate speech in political social media comments is often illocutionary force, in the sense that the users' statements do more than hurt, but also convey views and aim to affect perception. In this study, insults are expressive speech acts that show wrath, scorn and rejection of Mamdani. Marsela and Asnawi (2024) further note that expressive behaviors on TikTok are usually short comments that aim to convey emotional attitudes fast. What they have in common is that social media users express thoughts and ideas through brief written remarks. However, the study argues that insults are not merely personal attacks on political TikTok conversations but a technique of signaling political and ideological opposition and constructing how audiences view the target figure.

Accusation/Defamation

Accusation/Defamation came out as the second most common type of hate speech, which occurred 23 times. Here, the participants not only expressed their hate for Zohran Mamdani but also made defamatory remarks about him. Some examples of such remarks are listed below:

- @LouisRussell: "This terrorist of a mayor is kicking white ppl out of society in nyc"
- @willydbag: "Do not vote for this fraud"
- @ya boy: "Why would I vote for a guy who supported 911"
- @Matt: "yes invite the enemy of America to be your leader"

These comments might be analyzed as assertive illocutionary acts in the paradigm of Searle (1979), where the speaker presents negative evaluations as factual statements in order to change the audience's perspective. This trend shows that TikTok users are prone to attack the individual or their identity rather than a reasoned political argument. The predominance of accusation/defamation also mirrors the affordances of the site. The short, fast comments structure on TikTok fosters quick, emotionally loaded words, which allow users to efficiently express disapproval and social judgment. Also, some comments use Mamdani's public identification as a Muslim, immigrant and progressive politician to reinforce skepticism or political rejection. Thus, accusation/defamation is not only an insult but a purposeful communicative instrument that builds negative images, expresses disagreement, and exerts influence on other viewers. This conclusion points to the practical force of these comments, suggesting that online hate speech operates expressively and assertively, which in turn helps to shape the perception of the political in digital environments. The general analysis proves that accusation/defamation is a purposeful communicative act with social, political and emotional components in online debate.

The use of accusation/defamation comments can be considered as a symptom that describes how most political discourses on social media have an offensive character in contrast to the one that analyses policies. Most of the people did not discuss about Mamdani's campaign goals but branded him terrorist, fraud, communist at times referring to religion, nationality. This implies that hate speech on TikTok is a deliberate communicative act in which people evaluate, comment on and name notable personalities. This is hardly the kind of data-driven critique you get from the average reviewer. The comments are built with powerful labels, thus it forms the public's judgment about the individual being mocked. TikTok comments are fast, impulsive and allow people to give a short emotional opinion. This is empirically and conceptually verified by Abdurohim (2023) who mentioned that defamation, provocation, and insults are causes of hate speech which can lead to societal conflict. Siregar et al. (2024) contend that political comments

on social media frequently possess illocutionary force, enacting actions of judging and negatively situating prominent personalities. In this study, accusation/defamation is matched to Searle (1979) forceful illocutionary acts, which frame negative assessments as factual assertions to influence audience perception. Though the data is limited to 67 comments, the data shows the pragmatic functioning of such a hate speech, which affects the political perceptions and confirms the social alignment of like-minded individuals. The biographical detail on Mamdani was kept to a minimum in order to preserve the focus on the communication function, but the reference to his Muslim and progressive identities was kept to account for the emergence of these accusations.

Provocation

Provocation was seen in 14 comments and was mostly used as a directed approach in the selected TikTok political remarks. While insult and accusation/defamation were primarily about expressing scorn or establishing a negative picture of Mamdani, provocation was orientated toward influencing the political opinions and possibly actions of other users. Here are some of the usual comments:

- @Shaft1085: "No to socialism do the right thing New York do not vote this man"
- @DC: "VOTE FOR CURTIS SLIWA... NOT THIS COMMUNIST THAT WILL, DESTROY NYC"
- @ikksy5: "No to communism"
- @mohsen: "don't vote for him."

The comments suggest that the speakers did not merely offer a negative assessment of Mamdani but tried to steer readers in a particular political direction. In the perspective of Searle's illocutionary act theory, these utterances are closely relevant to the directive acts since the speakers strive to make the hearers reject Mamdani, oppose socialism or communism, or favor another candidate. The finding supports Andrea and Fatmawati, (2023) who argue that directive acts on comments on TikTok can be used to influence the actions of other users. It further supports the pragmatic interpretation of political hate speech as a communication act with the ability to convince, not hurtful words.

The provocation in the statistics needs to be read in the politically charged context of Mamdani's appointment. He was attacked by many users not only as a candidate but also as someone associated with socialism, communism, immigration, and religion, indicating concerns about how New York would change under him. Comments often contained urgent, strongly worded messages such as "do the right thing," "do not vote" and "VOTE FOR CURTIS SLIWA." These are not subjective opinions, they are tools to influence other users political choices. Pragmatically, they are consistent with the view of directive actions as proposed by (Searle, 1979), which are acts whose goal is to affect the future behavior of the hearer. This result is consistent with the conclusion of Andrea and Fatmawati (2023) that the directive acts in TikTok comments can be used strategically to direct or stimulate the behavior of other users. This research further shows that provocation in TikTok comments is not only a kind of debate but also a deliberate communication tactic to influence political decision-making and public opinion. Such inflammatory comments tend to be brief, aggressive, and emotionally charged, reflecting the affordances of TikTok's short comment structure, which engenders quick, compelling, and sometimes harsh expression. In addition, the findings are consistent with the Circular Letter of the Indonesian National Police Number SE/6/X/2015 that such statement is categorized as a provocation that potentially creates hostility or friction in society. Therefore, provocation operates as a conscious tactic to sway the political conduct of the readers, exemplifying how social media comments online serve as tools for peer-to-peer political persuasion, sculpting collective sentiments towards politicians and policies.

Threat

Threat was the least represented type of hate speech in this study, with just 3 comments. Although very few, this type should not be ignored due to its higher levels of fear and intimidation compared to other types. Examples of some of the comments are shown below:

- @SOAR238: “this is scary... this guy is gonna do evil things to your city, be ready for hell”
- @divine: “He’s gonna destroy nyc mark my words”
- @Jay DeeMan: “Watch the crime rate skyrocket.”

These comments show that threat is mostly presented as fear-based speech which expects negative consequences from a possible leadership of Mamdani. Pragmatically, they are primarily found in the form of expressive acts, expressing dread, anxiety and hostility. Some also have commissive features, like 'mark my words', which denotes commitment to a predicted outcome (Searle, 1979). The low number of threat comments can be explained by the nature of the TikTok platform and the context of the videos. Most of the content showed the Mamdani campaign activities in public settings, emphasizing interaction with citizens, approachable communication and positive engagement strategies. In the settings, viewers reacted with curiosity, positive comments or normal political dissent, but not with comments that were openly unfriendly or fear-mongering. While not abundant, these threat comments indicate how fear-based language may paint a political figure as a possible menace, and therefore how even a small number of comments can have enormous illocutionary impact in online political conversation. This illustrates the subtle operation of expressive and commissive acts in short-form social media, which retains its social impact and affects audience perception of political figures.

The limited amount of threat comments can be explained by the context of the TikTok videos selected. The majority of the videos focused on Mamdani’s campaign activities in public spaces, showcasing his direct engagement with citizens, his approachable communication style, and his positive interactions, which likely encouraged viewers to respond with curiosity, support, or routine political disagreement, rather than overtly threatening comments. Threat occurred in only three cases, but insult, accusation/defamation and provocation were more common. This trend shows that people are more inclined to deliver negative attitude by labeling, ridiculing, or directed remark as opposed to outright intimidation. This finding is in line with Siregar et al. (2024) who mentioned that online comments with political tensions are mostly done with illocutionary force, but the use of expressive and directive acts is more frequent than direct threats. The low occurrence of threat is also consistent with Indonesian National Police Circular Letter Number SE/6/X/2015 which identifies such utterances as able to produce societal conflict. The discrepancy between this research and other research, which occasionally shows higher frequency of fear-inducing comments, may be due to the public-facing and positive character of the campaign videos, as well as the supportive manner of engagement, which minimized the settings for extreme animosity. However, few threat comments might still portray the target as a possible threat to society. These findings demonstrate that expressive and commissive acts in digital political discourse can alter the audience’s perception and maintain the social effect of online hate speech. This points to the importance of contextual elements and the elusive nature of danger in short social media texts.

Supporting Observation: Gender-Coded Comment Tendencies

Another supportive observation in this study is the distribution of comments according on gender indications. Gender was only assigned if the account name, self-reference, or apparent profile suggested a possible gender identification, as TikTok users

do not necessarily reveal their own gender. It is crucial to code carefully, because online identity might be flexible and not aligned with the user's real social identity (Herring, 2013; Tambunsaribu Teguh, 2025). The statistics showed that comments from male-coded accounts were more direct and stronger, often making allegations or stirring up politics. Male-coded comments included, for example, @LouisRussell: "This terrorist of a mayor is kicking white ppl out of society in NYC," and @willydbag: "Do not vote for this fraud." Pragmatically, these utterances are aggressive acts that put forward negative judgments as factual assertions and, in some cases, directive acts that try to influence the actions of other viewers (Searle, 1979). This suggests that stories with traditional male traits tended to use language that made Mamdani seem unreliable and violent, and hence reinforced negative political perceptions in the audience. The results of the above findings are supported by previous studies that found that online political opinions generally contain elements of illocutionary power and influence the actions and attitudes of the readers (Andrea & Fatmawati, 2023; Siregar et al., 2024). The research that was done was not primarily about gender. However, the trend observed gives an insight into possible interaction between identity indicators and functions of expressive, forceful and directive actions in digital political communication.

Comments from female coded accounts were more evaluative and informative, but still reflected negative attitudes. @MonaLisa said, "I don't like you really it's not because you're Muslim." It's your ignorance of the history of this country... "You're more proud to be an immigrant than you are proud to be an American," and it's a way of condemning Mamdani by tying together his identity, religion, immigration status, and perceived patriotism. @Angie G, for example, said, "COMMUNISM DOES NOT WORK," which expressed an ideological disagreement in a neutral, evaluative way. Pragmatically, these statements work as expressive and forceful acts Searle (1979), not just expressing personal rejection but also making evaluative judgments about Mamdani's political attitude. Female-coded comments were less directive, less accusatory or provocative than male-coded accounts, suggesting variation in engagement strategy that may be driven by socialization, communication style, or online identity presentation (Herring, 2013; Tambunsaribu & Teguh, 2025). However, this pattern should be taken with caution because many TikTok accounts did not clearly identify gender and gender was merely treated as a supporting observation. But these tendencies suggest that perceived gender may interact with the form and function of illocutionary acts in online political discourse. The work contributes to the knowledge of how expressive and aggressive acts differ among gender-coded profiles and provides insight into the intricate ways in which indicators of personal identification shape the tone, directness, and rhetorical techniques of hate speech in short-form digital comments. Although these results are not the primary focus of the study, they offer a glimpse into the nuances of user participation and the social dynamics of political commentary on TikTok.

There may be a lot of contextual factors that may lead to the use of hate speech statements among the acquired TikTok data. First, the comments were made in the context of a political campaign where the level of disagreement tends to escalate since people are not just responding to the political message but also to the personality of the politician. Second, Mamdani being a Muslim, an immigrant-born politician and a leftist contender would leave him subject to being branded as a "communist," "terrorist" or "enemies of America." This suggests that hate speech in the TikTok data was not just tied to political dispute but also related to ideology, religious background and national identity. Third, the architecture of TikTok comment area shaped hate speech. all of the generally short, instant, emotional nature of TikTok comments, the overwhelming majority of users expressed their rejection in the form of short insults, accusations, ideological labels, or provocative statements, rather than elaborate political arguments. This increases the need

to understand hate speech in social media in interaction with platform environment and user practices (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021; Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Moreover, the gender-coded tendency in the data can be considered solely as a supporting observation as many TikTok accounts did not clearly indicate verifiable gender identity. But these should be seen as qualities of context and interpretation that serve to explain the findings, rather than as fixed societal features.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to identify the sorts of hate speech and the illocutionary functions used in the comments on the official TikTok account of Zohran Mamdani. The analysis of 67 comments from ten videos posted in November 2025 revealed four types of hate speech: insults, accusation/defamation, provocation, and threat. Insults were the most prevalent, followed by accusation/defamation, provocation and threat. In terms of illocutionary function, comments mainly functioned as expressive, assertive and directive acts. Insults were expressive acts, conveying anger, contempt, and rejection, while accusations and defamation were assertive acts that cast negative labels as facts. Provocation was one kind of directive behaviors, an attempt to influence the political attitudes or decisions of other users. There were few threats, but there was dread expressed about Mamdani's possible leadership, mostly enacted as expressive or commissive acts.

The results contribute to pragmatic and political communication research in the sense that the hate speech in political comments on TikTok is not only offensive language but also communicative acts that have an influence on public opinion. It has been shown how the short-form digital comments give the opportunity for users to convey emotion, political framing, and audience judgment through these commentaries. Nevertheless, the sample of comments (67) within 10 videos during one month limits the generalizability of the results. More research should examine larger data sets, analyze reply threads, or compare platforms to get a better understanding of the development of hate speech and illocutionary phenomena in political discussion online.

RECOMMENDATION

The outcomes of this study could be used as a reference for students and academics interested in pragmatics, hate speech and digital political discourse. The analysis indicates that TikTok comments are not simply a basic online answer, but also include communicative functions that can be analyzed through the theory of illocutionary acts. Therefore, this study can help readers understand how hate speech arises in short digital comments and how users communicate rejection, accusation, provocation and terror through language.

Future scholars can develop this study employing a bigger number of comments and films from different periods. Future studies could also analyze hate speech comments on different social media platforms such TikTok, Instagram, X or YouTube, as each medium has distinct interaction patterns. Future studies could also examine reply comments or comment threads to explore how hate speech evolves in user interaction. Gender was only handled as a supporting observation in this work. Future researchers may be able to explore gender-coded patterns more thoroughly with better data and more trustworthy markers of user identity.

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