

Populist Rhetoric and Hate Speech: Analyzing Xenophobic Narratives in Vox's 2023 Election Campaign

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Abstract

Under the guise of being “concerned citizens,” populist leaders often feel untouchable when demonizing ethnic minorities or expressing contempt for immigrants. This purported concern places them beyond moral scrutiny. Within this sphere of political (ir)responsibility, parties aligned with the radical populist right seek to polarize society using nativist strategies. This phenomenon significantly affects ethics, democratic principles, and political leadership in Europe. The most recent European elections revealed growing support for radical right-wing populist parties like Vox in Spain, which exploit societal fears and economic insecurity through divisive rhetoric that threatens social cohesion and democratic values. This study analyzes the political discourse of Vox's regional candidates during the 2023 electoral campaign, focusing on racist and xenophobic hate narratives published on their official X accounts. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates descriptive quantitative analysis with critical discourse analysis. Findings reveal regional variations in hate speech, with coastal candidates focusing heavily on Moroccans, while criticisms of unaccompanied minors are more prevalent in Madrid. Vox also violated electoral law by publishing hate messages on the reflection day, May 27. The use of self-defensive discursive strategies—such as victimist, alarmist, and dehumanizing rhetoric—constructs a deliberate binary narrative of “us versus them,” further intensifying ideological polarization. These tactics raise serious ethical concerns within the framework of European integration, which is built upon cooperation, solidarity, and mutual respect. Addressing these challenges requires fostering inclusive, just, and democratic societies capable of resisting populist divisiveness.

Keywords

critical discourse analysis; electoral campaign; hate speech; political candidates; political ethics; political leadership; populism; racism; Vox; xenophobia

1. Introduction

Contemporary democracies face an increasing challenge posed by the rise of populist movements (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), which often undermine core ethical rules and principles of democratic leadership (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). Ethical leadership is critical for building public trust and serves as a cornerstone of good governance (Weinberg, 2020). However, populist leaders often erode this trust through hate rhetoric that targets ethnic minorities, immigrants, women, and other marginalized groups (Dieleman, 2019). These harmful political narratives exacerbate social polarization (Blanco-Alfonso et al., 2022; Fenoll et al., 2024; Pérez-Escobar & Noguera-Vivo, 2021) and corrode the ethical norms that are essential for sustaining democratic institutions and promoting inclusivity (MacKenzie & Bhatt, 2020).

In his “paradox of tolerance,” Popper (1966) questions whether freedom of speech should extend to extremist, violent, and radical individuals, highlighting the inconsistency of tolerating those whose ideologies and hatred endanger democratic coexistence. Given the opportunity, such intolerant individuals would suppress opposing views, thereby eroding mutual respect and social harmony (Popper, 1966, p. 266). Bollinger (1986) further stresses the need to establish appropriate limits to prevent society from accepting extremist discourse under the guise of free speech. Ironically, those who most seek freedom of expression are often those who pursue its extinction (Bollinger, 1986).

Despite the decades since their publications, the arguments of Popper’s (1966) and Bollinger’s (1986) remain highly relevant—particularly given the current wave of hate speech infiltrating both online and offline public discourse (Haugsgjerd et al., 2023; Uyheng et al., 2022; Weber et al., 2020). Detecting such speech is increasingly urgent, especially as political leaders often serve as its main purveyors. Exposing political misconduct—namely, the unethical and manipulative behavior of political actors who employ hate speech to deepen divisions and undermine democratic norms—is thus essential. In this regard, the political elite, often self-proclaimed representatives of “the common people” (Mudde, 2007), not only enables the denigration of those perceived as different but actively frames them as enemies (Emcke, 2019).

According to Emcke (2019), these figures adopt the persona of “concerned citizens” (p. 45), claiming to act in society’s best interest while expressing open contempt for marginalized groups. Shielded by the apparent legitimacy of their concerns, they are often exempt from moral accountability.

The impact of hate speech on democratic processes has been widely examined, particularly in reference to the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom and the 2016 US presidential elections (Inglehart & Norris, 2017; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). Similarly, European democracies are under increasing strain due to the growing influence of populist and extremist parties, which escalate political polarization and radicalize public discourse (Schulze et al., 2020). While populist parties made notable gains in the 2014 (Martín-Cubas et al., 2018; Mudde, 2014) and 2019 European elections (Manucci, 2021; Mudde, 2019; Popivanov, 2022), the 2024 European Parliament elections—held between June 6 and 9—marked a turning point in the EU’s political trajectory (Mudde, 2024). These elections were characterized by the normalization of extreme views within mainstream discourse (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2024) and the increasing power of far-right parties to shape electoral narratives (Picheta, 2024).

In Spain, in particular, Vox emerged in 2013 amidst an economic crisis, institutional fatigue, and the fragmentation of the traditional bipartisan system (Rubio-Pueyo, 2019). The 2008 financial crisis and its consequences—rising unemployment, welfare state cuts, and growing public disaffection—paved the way for the rise of social movements like the 15M and the emergence of new political parties channeling public discontent. While Podemos gained traction on the left, Vox positioned itself as an emergent right-wing party, appealing to sectors advocating for identity-based politics and a strong stance against the Catalan independence movement (Esteban, 2019).

Vox's growing electoral success has reshaped the Spanish political landscape, deepening polarization and altering ideological alliances. The 2023 municipal and regional elections reinforce this trend. Traditionally dominant parties like the Partido Popular are no longer the sole force on the right but now rely on Vox for governability in multiple regions. This shift has expanded Vox's influence on the political agenda and contributed to the fragmentation of the right. As a result, some scholars interpret the regional and local elections of May 28, 2023, as the culmination of a broader political cycle shift (Montabes Pereira et al., 2023).

In this context, analyzing Vox's discourse during the 2023 elections is essential to assess whether the party maintained a unified hate-based mobilization strategy or adapted its rhetoric to reflect Spain's regional diversity. Given the country's complex cultural and territorial makeup—multiple languages, identities, and local concerns—it is vital to examine whether hate speech was similarly fragmented or consistent across regions, as is often the case at the national level. Although the national account (@vox_es) published more frequently, we have decided to include both the official national and regional leaders' accounts for a fuller understanding of how hate rhetoric operates at the local level.

This study, therefore, explores the racist and xenophobic narratives disseminated by Vox's regional candidates on X (formerly Twitter) during the 2023 election campaign. It aims to expose political misconduct and reveal how populist leaders use digital platforms and rhetorical strategies to polarize Spanish society—particularly during crucial electoral periods. Since political misconduct often surfaces in the form of hate rhetoric, this research assesses whether Vox's hate speech during the municipal elections reflects the same pervasiveness and coherence observed in national-level campaigns. In doing so, it contributes to a broader understanding of the ethical responsibilities of political leaders in a territorially and ideologically fragmented democracy.

2. Political Speech and the Ethical Challenges of Racist and Xenophobic Narratives

The previous section mentioned three fundamental concepts that form the foundation of this study: hate speech, populism, and polarization. In the following subsections, we will first define hate speech—see Section 2.1—and explain its impact on democratic systems and societal cohesion. Subsequently, Section 2.2 will explore the concepts of populism and polarization, highlighting their implications and the risks they pose to democratic stability.

2.1. Hate Speech: A Rhetorical Pandemic in Political Discourse

Hate speech is a form of “information disorder” (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017, p. 20), specifically classified as malinformation—information that is based on reality but deliberately used to cause harm. According to the

European Commission (2016) and the United Nations (2019), hate speech includes any expression that incites violence, discrimination, or hostility towards individuals or groups based on identity-related attributes, such as race, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, or disability (Carlson, 2021; Emcke, 2019; Hawdon et al., 2017; Rossini, 2020). Hate speech not only fosters social division but also legitimizes intolerance and undermines democratic principles by restricting inclusive public discourse (European Commission, 2016; United Nations, 2019).

Rieger et al. (2021) outline five key reasons why hate speech is particularly problematic on digital platforms:

- First, continuity is a major concern. Gagliardone et al. (2015) note that even when moderators remove hate-inciting content, it may already have spread to other sites or be reposted shortly afterward (Carlson & Cousineau, 2020; Jardine, 2019).
- Second, hate speech is highly spreadable. Jenkins et al. (2013) argue that participatory culture encourages widespread dissemination of user-generated content. Social media's algorithmic design further amplifies hateful content by prioritizing engagement, often favoring inflammatory or extremist rhetoric over neutral discourse (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021). Combined with the echo chamber effect (Sunstein, 2007, 2017), this environment allows hate speech to spread rapidly and become normalized within certain communities. As ElSherief et al. (2018) note, the emotionally charged nature of hate speech increases its visibility, reinforcing cycles of online hostility.
- Third, anonymity fuels aggression. Online users are more likely to express extreme views when shielded from accountability (Mondal et al., 2017). This disinhibition effect encourages the expression of radical opinions without fear of immediate social consequences (Brown, 2018, p. 298). Mondal et al. (2017) found that anonymous platforms like 4chan or Reddit see higher levels of racial and sexual hate speech. Hsueh et al. (2015) further explain that such anonymity can spark spirals of extremism (Busher & Macklin, 2015), where initial hateful comments lead to increasingly aggressive responses from others.
- Fourth, the lack of interpersonal cues—such as facial expressions or tone of voice—reduces the perceived harm of online hate speech. Perpetrators cannot see the impact on their victims, which increases their sense of detachment and further reinforces disinhibition.
- Finally, hate speech is often “memetized” and disguised as satire or humor. This tactic, common among alt-right communities (Marwick & Lewis, 2017), helps build group identity while marginalizing outsiders (Tuters & Hagen, 2020).

Identifying digital hate speech is difficult due to its linguistic complexity and often covert nature (Rossini, 2020). Explicit hate narratives are relatively easy to detect—such as messages that dehumanize people by comparing them to animals or vermin (Cividanes-Álvarez & Martínez Rolán, 2023; Williams, 2021). However, implicit hate messages are more subtle. These include texts that question women's leadership abilities (Sheckels et al., 2012), promote microaggressions or stereotypes (Rieger et al., 2021), or imply that children raised by same-sex couples may suffer abuse (Strand & Svensson, 2019). These examples demonstrate how language can be weaponized to covertly spread hate. As such, detecting these messages requires a nuanced understanding of rhetorical strategies (Chakraborty et al., 2022).

In line with this, Uyheng et al. (2022) define hate speech as a form of “identity propaganda,” echoing Reddi et al.'s (2021) view of hate speech as a strategic narrative that uses abusive language to manipulate audiences through identity and power dynamics.

Consequently, addressing hate speech requires a multidimensional strategy—legal frameworks, platform regulation, and education that fosters digital literacy and critical thinking. As hate narratives become increasingly sophisticated—masked as jokes, irony, or coded language (Rieger et al., 2021)—further research is needed to improve detection tools. Recent studies are already exploring artificial intelligence and deep learning to analyze lexical patterns with greater precision (Srivastava et al., 2021).

As Van Bavel et al. (2020) and Weber et al. (2020) argue, hate speech is a new social pandemic—especially in the form of racist rhetoric—which spreads rapidly online and often translates into real-world violence (Awan & Zempi, 2016; Lozada et al., 2021; Wachs et al., 2022). Combating hate speech is essential to safeguarding democratic institutions and protecting marginalized groups. Although this study focuses on hate regarding identity and may not capture the full complexity of it (Pohjonen & Udupa, 2017), it provides a valuable framework for examining its social dimensions (Reddi et al., 2021). Moreover, it highlights the ethical shortcomings of regional political leaders, who, through online discourse, contribute to populist narratives that promote racist and xenophobic rhetoric (topics explored in the next subsection).

2.2. Vox's Political Narratives: Populist Leadership, Polarization, and the Ethical Implications of Xenophobic Rhetoric

The Spanish regional elections of May 28, 2023, marked a significant turning point in the country's political landscape, redefining power dynamics at both the regional and local levels. Vox, a far-right party, gained greater influence across multiple territories, resulting in the appointment of controversial figures such as Gabriel Le Senne, the new President of the Balearic Parliament, who has publicly denied climate change, the 2030 Agenda, and multiculturalism in education and immigration policy. Similarly, Juan García-Gallardo, Vice President of Castilla y León, has drawn criticism for his speeches criminalizing immigrants. These examples reflect a broader pattern among Vox's regional leadership, where inflammatory and exclusionary rhetoric plays a central role in their political strategy.

Vox's political communication aligns with the core principles of populism, which construct a binary opposition between “the pure people” and the threatening “outsiders” (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). As Mudde (2004) explains, populism is “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (p. 543). Vox reinforces this logic by framing immigrants, progressive policies, and political opponents as existential threats to national identity and sovereignty. In doing so, it mobilizes public sentiment through fear, resentment, and a rejection of pluralism (Moffitt, 2016; Wodak, 2015).

According to Cáceres-Zapatero et al. (2023), Spain suffers from a weak democratic culture in which ideological diversity is often met with hostility rather than constructive debate. Combined with the erosion of shared civic values and the rise of digital echo chambers (Sunstein, 2017), this creates fertile ground for extremism and hate speech—particularly during election campaigns, when political actors should be upholding democratic norms and addressing real social challenges (Mainwaring, 2003; Sánchez de Dios, 2006, p. 142). Populist rhetoric exacerbates polarization by normalizing discriminatory narratives and presenting certain social groups as a threat to national unity, consistent with Mudde's (2004) notion of “the pure people.”

While political polarization is not inherently harmful to democracy—since the diversity of political views is fundamental to liberal democratic systems—extreme polarization can undermine democratic stability. When ideological divisions become too pronounced, they can lead to social fragmentation, heightened conflict, and an increasingly antagonistic public sphere (Iyengar et al., 2012; McCoy et al., 2018). In such cases, political discourse often devolves into a stark “us versus them” dichotomy (Mudde, 2004), further isolating communities and fueling the spread of hate speech.

In this context, radical right-wing populist leaders (Dai & Kustov, 2022) contribute to this polarization (Lilleker & Pérez-Escobar, 2023b) by employing nativist discourse (Mudde, 2020), emphasizing a divide between “us”—the native righteous population—and “them”—the dangerous outsiders (Mudde, 2004). Vox exemplifies this strategy, especially through its social media presence (Sosinski & Sánchez García, 2022). The party’s nationalist messaging, rooted in far-right ideology (Ferreira, 2019), intensifies polarization and fosters hostility toward immigration (Gutiérrez-Peris, 2018, p. 104). Although Vox presents itself as a “savior movement” (Charaudeau, 2009) defending Spain’s integrity, this overlooks the historical reality that many Spaniards themselves have emigrated due to political, economic, and social hardship (Sosinski & Sánchez García, 2022, p. 153).

Vox’s xenophobic rhetoric resonates with segments of the Spanish population because fear-driven narratives often appeal more to emotion than to rational analysis (Cazorla et al., 2022; Lozada et al., 2021; Montolío Durán, 2019, p. 75). By framing immigrants as dangerous “others” (Mudde, 2004), Vox positions itself as the defender of national traditions. This strategy is not new (Fernández Lagunilla, 1999; García Beaudoux et al., 2005); it has long been used to mobilize “polarized crowds” (Smith et al., 2014). Vox has capitalized on the instability following the 2008 financial crisis—a period described by Laclau (2005) and Mouffe (2003) as a “populist moment”—to shape public opinion through xenophobic discourse.

As Lim (2017) illustrates, hate speech is often employed as a populist tactic to influence voters by reinforcing negative stereotypes. Given Spain’s increasingly polarized political climate (Cristófol-Rodríguez et al., 2024), this study explores how Vox’s regional leaders used xenophobic and racist hate speech during the 2023 elections. The goal is to assess whether their discourse followed a uniform national strategy or was adapted to the specific social and political contexts of Spain’s diverse autonomous regions. Pettersson (2020) emphasizes the importance of continued analysis of racist and xenophobic rhetoric to understand how political discourse constructs hostile narratives that marginalize ethnic and cultural minorities. In this vein, identifying self-defensive discursive strategies (van Dijk, 1993) employed by far-right candidates is crucial.

Pettersson (2020) outlines several common rhetorical techniques used by far-right populists. These include denial of racism—often prefaced with disclaimers such as “I’m not racist, but...” (van Dijk, 1992); empiricist strategies that claim scientific objectivity to justify prejudice (Potter, 1996); deracialization rhetoric (Augoustinos & Every, 2007), which frames xenophobic concerns in economic or neutral terms; and essentialist narratives that recast racism as cultural incompatibility, especially in anti-Islamic discourse.

These self-defensive strategies, when combined with established hate speech taxonomies (Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, 2017; ElSherief et al., 2021; Lava-Santos, 2023), reveal how political figures present themselves as reasonable and impartial while portraying migrants as inferior or undesirable (Capdevila & Callaghan, 2008; van Dijk, 1993). Understanding these rhetorical tools is vital to countering

hate speech in political communication (Völker & Saldivia Gonzatti, 2024), which is the core aim outlined in this study's methodological framework.

3. Methodology

3.1. Objectives

The main objective of this research is to analyze the political discourse of Vox's regional candidates during the 2023 electoral campaign to detect and examine possible racist and xenophobic hate narratives published on their official X accounts. Based on this purpose, the following specific objectives have been formulated:

O1: Identify the main ethnic and racial groups targeted or victimized by the xenophobic narratives by Vox's regional candidates on their X posts during the 2023 electoral campaign.

O2: Classify the intentions behind the racist rhetoric used by Vox's regional candidates in their X posts during the 2023 electoral campaign.

O3: Assess the level of activity and engagement generated by the populist xenophobic speech of Vox's regional candidates on their official X account during the 2023 electoral campaign.

3.2. Method

This study employs a mixed-methods approach integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, a data collection phase was conducted to retrieve all messages posted by Vox's regional candidates on X during the 2023 electoral campaign. Second, a critical discourse analysis—qualitative research—was performed to examine the linguistic and rhetorical patterns of the identified hate speech messages. Lastly, a descriptive quantitative analysis was carried out to assess the activity level and engagement metrics associated with the racist and xenophobic hate speech posts.

Firstly, the data collection phase aimed to gather messages posted by Vox's regional candidates on X between May 1 and May 31, 2023, covering the pre-campaign, election day, and post-campaign periods. According to the Organic Law 5/1985 of June 19, 1985, on the General Electoral System—*Ley Orgánica 5/1985, de 19 de junio, del Régimen Electoral General*—the official pre-campaign period lasts 15 calendar days. However, we have extended the analysis to the beginning of May—rather than starting on May 12—to reflect the widely accepted notion that political campaigns have become permanent (Laza, 2024).

The post-campaign period extends three days beyond election day. This decision is based on two key factors: First, winning candidates recognize that campaigning resumes the day after the election (Laza, 2024); second, elections represent moments of political transition and uncertainty, like crisis situations. In crisis communication management, it is standard practice to analyze communication within three days following a major event to capture immediate strategic narratives and responses (Pérez & García, 2010).

This method aligns with the suggestions of previous authors (Campos-Domínguez, 2017; Diez-Gracia et al., 2023; Guerrero-Solé et al., 2022) for further research into political communication trends and strategies on X,

given its predictive nature and the value of the interactions generated between users and content. To this end, we employed Fanpage Karma—a commercial online tool for social media monitoring—to scrutinize publications on X, as this tool has been validated in previous social media studies (Ferrer-Serrano et al., 2020; Gutiérrez Montoya et al., 2018; Latorre-Martínez et al., 2018; Martínez-Sala et al., 2021).

In total, 15 official Vox accounts on X were analyzed ($N = 15$; see Table 1), including 14 profiles belonging to regional candidates from Aragón, Asturias, Canarias, Cantabria, Castilla La Mancha, Comunidad Valenciana, Extremadura, Islas Baleares, La Rioja, Madrid, Navarra, Murcia, and the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla. Since Vox's communication strategy is highly centralized at the national party level (Morejón-Llamas, 2023; Pérez-Escolar et al., 2023), we included only the official national account (@vox_es) alongside the regional candidates' profiles. This decision ensures that our dataset captures both the overarching party discourse and the individual rhetoric of regional candidates.

It is also important to clarify that Vox does not operate separate official accounts for its regional branches—unlike other Spanish political parties that maintain distinct profiles for each autonomous community. Consequently, to prevent sampling bias, we excluded any accounts representing regional party structures and focused exclusively on the profiles of individual candidates.

Table 1. Vox candidates for the 28M regional elections.

Vox candidate	Region	Profile on X	Followers	Date of joining X
Vox España	—	@vox_es	560,700	November 2013
Rocío Monasterio	Madrid	@monasterioR	343,200	December 2013
José María Figaredo	Asturias	@FigaredoJoseM	40,500	April 2019
Jorge Campos Asensi	Baleares	@jcamposasensi	17,600	March 2014
José Ángel Antelo	Murcia	@JA_Antelo	17,400	February 2011
Carlos Flores Juberías	Valencia	@FloresJuberias	13,600	August 2022
Ángel Pelayo	Extremadura	@_Angel_Pelayo	6,600	February 2012
Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco	Ceuta	@redondo_pacheco	1,838	August 2018
David Moreno Ramos	Castilla-La Mancha	@DavidMoreno_	1,862	December 2022
Alejandro Nolasco	Aragón	@_a_nolasco	1,389	January 2023
Nicasio Galván Sasía	Canarias	@Niky_Galvan	1,182	May 2015
Leticia Díaz	Cantabria	@LeticiaDiazR	778	January 2023
José Miguel Tasende Souto	Melilla	@TasendeMiguel	526	March 2020
Maite Nosti	Navarra	@MaiteNosti	432	March 2023

Source: Author's own collection of information.

After collecting data from the 15 official Vox accounts, Fanpage Karma generated an Excel file containing 4,341 posts ($N = 4,341$). However, not all these messages included hate speech. Thus, to identify hate rhetoric, we utilized Python's Pandas library to read and interpret all the data in the columns and rows of the .xlsx file. Following this initial step, a script was created and the Python's Natural Language Toolkit library was used to analyze the data. From the data obtained in Pandas, this second library employed the SentimentIntensityAnalyzer tool (see the Supplementary File) to assign a polarity score—polarity_score—to each post (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014).

After calculating the `polarity_score` for each post, the messages were classified as positive, negative, or neutral based on the criteria shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Polarity index.

Classification	Polarity index
Positive	Index ≥ 0.05
Negative	Index ≤ -0.05
Neutral	In all other cases

Note: Values of polarity index and classification as introduced in the Python's Natural Language Toolkit.

The process initially filtered the 4,341 posts, resulting in $n = 719$ publications identified as negative, which suggested a potential correlation with hate speech narratives. To ensure the accuracy of this classification, a final manual review was conducted, carefully verifying that each post met the established criteria for hate rhetoric. This step was essential to confirm that the automated classification was reliable and that no relevant messages were miscategorized. After this manual validation, the final sample remained at 719 publications containing hate speech, as no posts were eliminated and no duplicates were detected.

The second phase of this research consisted of a critical discourse analysis of the messages identified as hate speech. This qualitative analysis was conducted following the frameworks established by Fairclough (1992), van Dijk (1998), Charaudeau (2009), and Wilson (2015), allowing for an in-depth examination of the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed in the discourse of Vox's regional candidates on X. Specifically, the 719 posts classified as hate speech were systematically reviewed to identify and categorize racist narratives. Through this process, a subset of $n = 188$ posts was identified as explicitly containing xenophobic content.

To address objective O1, a lexicon was developed based on the categorization proposed by Sosinski and Sánchez García (2022). This lexicon included specific vocabulary and terminology used to refer to different racial and ethnic communities, enabling a systematic identification of racialized discourse. In response to objective O2, the 188 xenophobic messages were analyzed using van Dijk's (1993) framework of self-defensive discursive strategies. Based on this classification, the messages were grouped into three distinct categories according to their rhetorical purpose: victimist narratives—portraying the in-group (native population) as victims of immigration; alarmist narratives—framing immigrants as a threat to national identity, security, or economic stability; and dehumanizing narratives—using language that diminishes the humanity of racial minorities, portraying them as inferior or dangerous outsiders.

The data extraction was conducted in Spanish and the translation was performed using Python software. To ensure a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the original Spanish lexicon, an English translation is also provided. Lastly, to address objective O3, a descriptive quantitative analysis was conducted to evaluate the activity levels and engagement metrics associated with the racist and xenophobic hate speech posts, providing insights into their visibility and audience interaction.

This methodological approach ensured a systematic and theory-driven analysis of the xenophobic rhetoric disseminated by regional candidates during the 2023 Spanish regional elections, providing valuable insights into how far-right populist actors employ hate speech as a tool for political mobilization and polarization.

4. Findings

This section introduces the core findings from the 188 posts containing xenophobic and racist messages. Of the total 4,341 posts collected from the 15 official Vox profiles on X during the 2023 electoral campaign, 16.56% (719 publications) were identified as hate speech. Among these pejorative messages, 26.15% ($n = 188$ posts) contained racial hatred, indicating that xenophobic narratives are present in the political agenda of these regional leaders.

The results are organized around the three specific objectives we have previously formulated. They aim to identify the main victims of xenophobic narratives (O1), classify the intentions behind the racist rhetoric (O2), and assess the level of activity and engagement generated by the populist speech of Vox's regional candidates (O3). To respond to O1 and O2, we employed a discourse analysis method (qualitative research). For O3, we conducted a descriptive analysis of social media on X (quantitative research).

4.1. Ethnic or Racial Groups Targeted by Xenophobic Narratives

As detailed in Section 3, to address objective O1, we developed a lexicon based on the classification proposed by Sosinski and Sánchez García (2022), incorporating terms and expressions used to refer to various identities and racial communities (Table 3).

Table 3. Lexicon related to ethnic and racial groups.

ETHNIC OR RACIAL GROUPS	LEXICAL UNITS	
	Spanish words	English translation
Natives	indígena; indígena; indígenas; indígenas.	native(s); indigenous; indigenous.
Afro-descendants	negro(s); negrata(s); africano(s); África; Africa; áfrica; africa; nigeriano(s).	black(s); nigger(s); African(s); african(s); Africa; africa; Nigerian(s); nigerian(s).
Unaccompanied minors	Mena; mena; MENA.	unaccompanied minor(s); unaccompanied foreign minor(s)
Roma (gypsies)	gitano(s).	gypsy; Gypsy; gypsies; Gypsies.
Arab, Muslim, and Islamic community	árabe; arabe; islam; islamista; islamistas; judío; judío; antisemita; antisemitismo; moro; musulmán; musulman; musulmanes; marroquí; marroqui; marroquíes; marroquies; Marruecos; marruecos; magrebí; magrebi; magrebíes; magrebies; yihadista; Afganistán; Afganistan; afganistan; afanistán; Irán; irán; talibán; taliban; afgano.	Arab; arab; Islam; islam; Islamist(s); islamist(s); Jew; jew; antisemitic; antisemitism; Moor; moor; Muslim(s); muslim(s); Moroccan(s); moroccan(s); Morocco; morocco; Maghrebi; maghrebi; Maghreb; maghreb; Maghrebis; maghrebis; Jihadist(s); jihadist(s); Afghanistan; afghanistan; Iran; iran; Taliban; taliban; Afghan; afghan.
Asian	Asia; asia; China; china; chino(s); amarillo(s).	Asia; asia; China; china; Chinese; chinese; yellow; yellow(s).
General community	Inmigrante(s); refugiado(s); extranjero(s).	immigrant(s); refugee(s); foreigner(s).

A total of 33 publications explicitly referred to a specific ethnic or racial group. This result indicates that 17.55% of the xenophobic messages aimed to accentuate polarization by constructing the “us vs. them” narrative and positioning others as the enemy. Notably, there was a significant emphasis on the Arab and Muslim community ($n = 14$ posts; 42.4%) and MENAS (unaccompanied foreign minors; $n = 13$ posts; 39.4%). References to afro-descendants were minimal ($n = 3$ posts; 9.1%) and a total of 3 publications (9.1%) alluded to immigration in general.

Regarding the criticism of the Arab and Muslim community, the national party account @vox_es was the most vocal, specifically targeting Moroccans and practitioners of Islam ($n = 6$ posts). This profile was followed by Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco, the candidate in Ceuta ($n = 5$ posts); Carlos Flores Juberías, the candidate in the Generalitat Valenciana ($n = 2$ posts); and Jorge Campos Asensi, the candidate in the Islas Baleares ($n = 1$ post).

For attacks on MENAS, @vox_es was also the most active profile, which posted more than half of the messages against unaccompanied minors ($n = 7$ posts). This account was followed by Rocío Monasterio, the candidate in the Community of Madrid ($n = 3$ posts); José María Figaredo in Asturias ($n = 1$ post); Ángel Pelayo Gordillo in Extremadura ($n = 1$ post); and Maite Nosti in Navarra ($n = 1$ post).

4.2. *Typology of Intentions Behind the Racist Rhetoric*

Following the methodological approach described earlier, objective O2 was examined through van Dijk’s (1993) framework of self-defensive discursive strategies. This classification allowed us to identify three predominant types of xenophobic rhetoric within the 188 racist messages: victimist, alarmist, and dehumanizing.

4.2.1. *Xenophobic Speech With a Victim-Oriented Purpose*

This type of racist rhetoric involves techniques of narrative deracialization (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Pettersson, 2020), where the speaker appeals to the protection of national borders and the preservation of a national identity (van Dijk, 1993) to justify restrictions on immigration and asylum requests from refugees or other ethnic minorities. In doing so, the speaker reinforces the idea of cultural incompatibilities between their own culture and other racial or ethnic groups. This form of hate speech allows political leaders to deflect accusations of racism or xenophobia by positioning themselves as defenders of the nation while promoting their values, religion, and culture.

These xenophobic narratives can be categorized as what ElSherief et al. (2021) describe as implicit hate motivated by white grievance, where the speaker feels frustrated, believing that ethnic and racial minorities receive undue privileges, thereby portraying the majority group—Spanish citizens—as the true victims. To analyze this type of hate speech, a compilation of words and vocabulary used by Vox’s regional candidates on X to target various identities and racial communities has been assembled (Table 4):

Table 4. Lexicon related to messages with a victim-oriented purpose.

LEXICAL UNITS	
Spanish words	English translation
blanco; hombre(s); patria; nación; nación; nacionalismo español(es); estado; Estado; supremacía; supremacia; supremacismo; superioridad; superior(es); racista(s); racismo; xenófobo; xenofobia; nosotros; mejor(es); valemos; merecemos; ganamos; colonizar; colonizamos; conquistar; conquistamos; cristiano(s); cristianismo; católico(s); catolico; catolicismo.	white; man; men; homeland; nation; nationalism; Spanish; spanish; state; State; supremacy; supremacism; superiority; superior; racist(s); racism; xenophobic; xenophobia; we better; we best; we worth; we deserve; we win; colonize; we colonize; conquer; we conquer; Christian(s); Christian(s); Christianity; christianity; Catholic; catholic; Catholicism; catholicism.

Source: Author's own collection of information inspired by van Dijk's (1993) framework of self-defensive discursive strategies.

The results indicate that more than half of Vox's messages ($n = 105$; 56%) encompass a victimist intent. Consequently, the rhetoric employed by Vox's regional candidates aligns with nativism (Mudde, 2020), a supremacist political ideology that demonstrates xenophobia towards anything perceived as non-native or foreign to Spanish territory.

Notably, most nativist and white supremacist messages originate from the national-level political group, with 54.29% of the posts ($n = 57$) published by @vox_es. This strategy is less predominant in messages published by individual candidates, but is still particularly evident among certain political profiles, including Carlos Flores Juberías for the Generalitat Valenciana ($n = 9$ posts; 8.57%); Rocío Monasterio for the Community of Madrid ($n = 8$ posts; 7.62%); José María Figaredo for Asturias ($n = 8$ posts; 7.62%); Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco for Ceuta ($n = 6$ posts; 6%); Jorge Campos Asensi for the Balearic Islands ($n = 5$ posts; 5%); José Ángel Antelo for Murcia ($n = 4$ posts; 4%); Maite Nosti for Navarra ($n = 3$ posts; 3%); Ángel Pelayo Gordillo for Extremadura ($n = 2$ posts; 2%); and Leticia Díaz Rodríguez for Cantabria and David Moreno Ramos for Castilla-La Mancha (each with $n = 1$ post; 0.95%).

4.2.2. Hate Speech With an Alarmist Aim

This type of rhetoric has an empiricist connotation (Potter, 1996), as Vox's regional candidates attempt to justify their negative stances toward ethnic and racial minorities by appealing to external facts. In other words, their arguments suggest that the inclusion or asylum of these communities places an excessive burden on society and exploits the social welfare system, portraying racial minorities as a potential threat (Mudde, 2007).

The lexicon used in this study was developed by compiling terms and expressions inspired by the classification proposed by the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration (2017) and Lava-Santos (2023). Additionally, we incorporated the stereotypes and negative attributes identified by ElSherief et al. (2021) and Lilleker and Pérez-Escolar (2023a), which are frequently used to associate these communities with insecurity, terrorism, or crime, among other stigmatizing narratives (Table 5).

The results reveal that a total of 45 posts (24%) aim to create social alarm about the presence of ethnic minorities, immigrants, or refugees in Spanish society and, at the same time, serve as a form of incitement to violence (ElSherief et al., 2021). Again, most of these publications come from the national-level political group

Table 5. Lexicon related to hate speech with an alarmist purpose.

LEXICAL UNITS	
Spanish words	English translation
inseguro(s); insegura(s); inseguridad(es); peligro(s); terrorista(s); terrorismo; cuidado; violencia; violento; golpe(s) de Estado; golpe(s) de estado; dictador(es); dictadura(s); paga(s); paguita(s).	insecure; unsafe; insecurity; insecurities; danger(s); dangerous; terrorist(s); terrorism; care; violence; violent; coup(es); dictator(s); dictatorship; pay(s); payment(s); wage(s); paid.

Source: Author's own collection of information inspired by van Dijk's (1993) framework of self-defensive discursive strategies.

(@vox_es). Specifically, 26 posts (59%) were detected portraying immigrants as terrorists or instigators of violence. Rocío Monasterio published 7 posts (16%) concerning the insecurity allegedly caused by immigrants in Madrid and Spain; Jorge Campos Asensi posted 4 times (9%); Leticia Díaz Rodríguez, Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco, and José María Figaredo each posted 2 times (4%); and finally, Carlos Flores Juberías and José Miguel Tasende Souto each published 1 post (2%).

4.2.3. Dehumanizing Hate Speech

This type of rhetoric represents one of the most explicit forms of hate in discourse. ElSherief et al. (2021) describe these narratives as the "language of inferiorization," meaning the speaker views an individual or a minority group as inferior. The political candidate attempts to strip their antagonists of human attributes, often associating them with diseases or animals (Williams, 2021). To analyze this strategy, a compilation of words and vocabulary used by Vox's regional candidates on X to dehumanize individuals or racial communities has been assembled (see Table 6).

Table 6. Lexicon related to dehumanizing hate speech.

LEXICAL UNITS	
Spanish words	English translation
sabandija(s); alimaña(s); cucaracha(s); animal(es); enfermedad(es); tifus; estiércol; mierda(s); virus; malaria; rata(s); perro(s); perro; puto(s); cabrón; cabrones; plaga(s).	vermin; pest(s); cockroach(es); animal(s); disease(s); typhus; manure(s); excrement(s); virus(es); malaria; rat(s); dog(s); fuck; fucking; bastard(s); plague(s).

Source: Author's own collection of information inspired by van Dijk's (1993) framework of self-defensive discursive strategies.

The results indicate that this type of explicit and denigrating rhetoric is the least frequently used by Vox's candidates. In total, 38 dehumanizing messages (20%) were identified. Most of these publications (69%) are reposts from Santiago Abascal, where he compares immigrants and other ethnic groups to rats. Although there are no significant differences in the frequency of posts among the candidates, it is notable that this strategy has been adopted by certain profiles, such as @vox_es ($n = 8$ posts; 21%), Rocío Monasterio ($n = 6$ posts; 16%), José María Figaredo ($n = 5$ posts; 13.5%), Leticia Díaz Rodríguez ($n = 5$ posts; 13%), Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco ($n = 4$ posts; 10.5%), José Miguel Tasende Souto ($n = 3$ posts; 8%), Carlos Flores Juberías ($n = 3$ posts; 8%), José Ángel Antelo ($n = 2$ posts; 5%), and Ángel Pelayo Gordillo ($n = 1$ post; 5%).

4.3. Level of Activity and Engagement of Messages From Vox's Regional Candidates

As previously outlined in Section 3, objective O3 was investigated through a descriptive quantitative analysis to assess the activity levels and engagement metrics of the racist and xenophobic hate speech posts. Findings show that Vox Spain's official account, @vox_es, is the most active on X, constituting 50.53% of the total sample ($n = 95$ publications; see Figure 1). Rocío Monasterio, candidate for the Community of Madrid, follows with 10.11% ($n = 19$), then Carlos Flores Juberías with 7.98% ($n = 15$), José María Figaredo with 7.45% ($n = 14$), Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco with 6.38% ($n = 12$), and Jorge Campos Asensi with 5.32% ($n = 10$). The remaining candidates posted fewer racist and xenophobic messages: Leticia Díaz at 2.66% ($n = 5$), José Ángel Antelo at 2.66% ($n = 5$), Ángel Pelayo and Maite Nosti each at 2.13% ($n = 4$), and David Moreno Ramos and Alejandro Nolasco both at 0.53% ($n = 1$). Nicasio Galván Sasía from the Canary Islands did not publish any hate rhetoric.

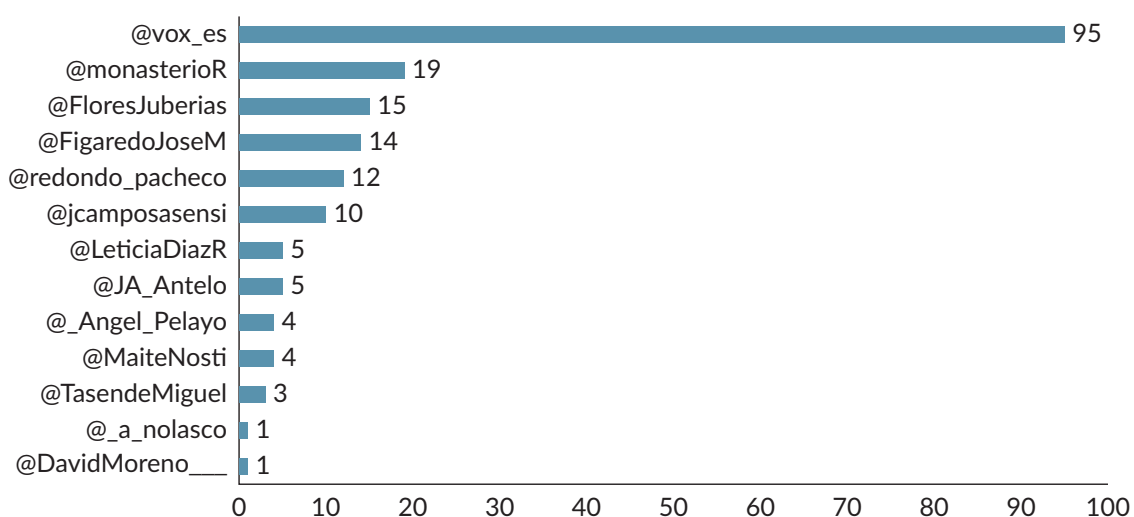


Figure 1. Level of activity of Vox's candidates in the regional elections on X. Source: Information collected by the authors.

Figure 2 illustrates the temporal pattern of racist and xenophobic hate messages, highlighting peaks in activity. On May 5, 15 posts (7.98%) were posted by Ángel Pelayo, Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco, Rocío Monasterio, José María Figaredo, José Ángel Antelo, Leticia Díaz, and @vox_es. These posts discussed topics like bilateral relations with Colombia and disputes with Morocco, using terms such as “rats,” “MENA,” “terrorist,” and “insecurity.” On May 16, 12 posts (6.38%) were published focusing on conflicts with Morocco and expressing hostility towards Moroccans, featuring terms like “violence,” “pay,” “insecurity,” “MENA,” and “immigrant.” May 23 recorded the highest activity, with 17 posts (9.04%) demonizing immigrant assistance and associating MENAs with the insecurity of Spanish society, including terms like “violence,” “Moroccan,” “immigrant,” “pay us better,” “MENA,” and “nation,” and covering the sports controversy regarding insults towards the football player, Vinicius Jr..

The impact of racist and xenophobic hate narratives, as shown in Table 7, is measured by interactions—likes, comments, and shares—per profile's followers (Fernández-Gómez & Martín-Quevedo, 2018). For reposts, interactions are attributed to the original source's followers. On average, posts receive 2,247.07 likes, 172.63 comments, and 913.36 shares. Notably, @vox_es, Rocío Monasterio, and José María Figaredo garner

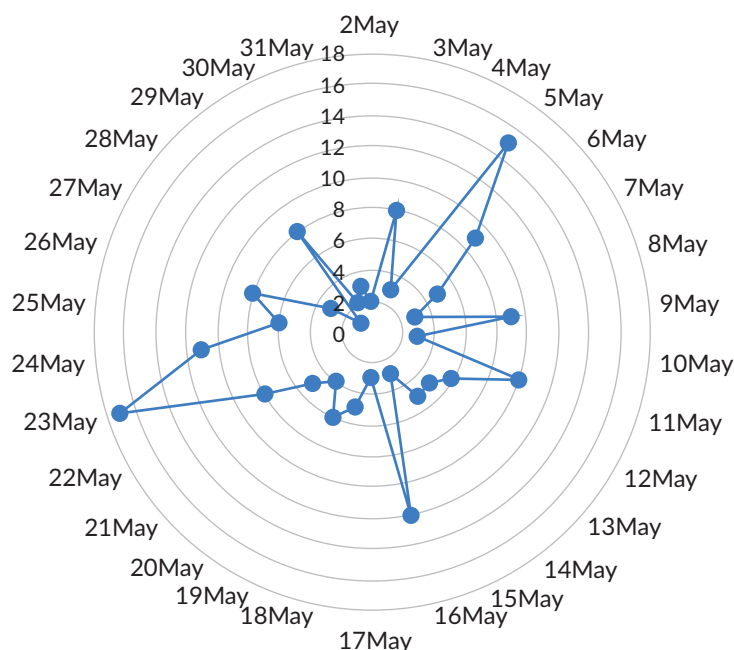


Figure 2. Temporal evolution of posts published by Vox's candidates in the regional elections on X. Source: Author's own collection of information.

Table 7. Reach of the candidates' publications on X during May 2023.

Political candidate	Likes	Comments	Share	Engagement
Alejandro Nolasco	95	2	81	12.81%
José Miguel Tasende Souto	18,387	2,000	6,560	10.36%
Maite Nosti	313	4	128	10.06%
Leticia Díaz	25,120	2,709	10,000	5.47%
Ángel Pelayo	19,016	2,027	6,898	5.15%
José María Figaredo	55,545	3,071	20,984	4.54%
Jorge Campos Asensi	2,713	198	1,682	3.61%
Carlos Flores Juberías	2,669	89	1,332	3.15%
José Ángel Antelo	18,936	2,032	6,855	2.15%
Rocío Monasterio	57,286	5,631	22,982	1.87%
Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco	22,862	2,312	8,718	1.66%
Vox España	199,495	12,380	85,486	1.12%
David Moreno Ramos	13	0	7	1.07%

the most likes and comments. High engagement for José Ángel Antelo and Ángel Pelayo results from reposts rather than their own posts. The overall engagement rate is 2.39%. Alejandro Nolasco (12.81%), José Miguel Tasende Souto (10.36%), and Maite Nosti (10.06%) lead in engagement despite having fewer followers. Remarkably, @vox_es has a lower engagement rate at 1.12%, likely due to the regional elections spotlighting individual candidates over the national party.

Since this study analyzes the drivers of user engagement—comments, likes, and shares—at both the profile and post levels using a multi-level approach, we identified six topics that generated over 15% engagement.

Maite Nosti's post from May 16, in which she suggests that the best baker in Pamplona is attending an event with Vox leader Santiago Abascal (see the original post here: <https://x.com/MaiteNosti/status/1658568063900438535>), received the highest engagement, reaching 39.12%. José Miguel Tasende Souto's post on May 19, featuring the cover of the Melilla newspaper addressing vote-buying, followed with 26.8% engagement. José María Figaredo's repost on May 15, displaying an image suggesting Bildu's campaign with hands stained with ETA's blood, gathered 24.17% engagement. Leticia Díaz's video on May 16, highlighting the plight of Cantabrian farmers due to wolf attacks and holding PSOE and PP accountable, gained 21.46% engagement. José María Figaredo's repost on May 24, showing a video of a State Secretary addressing a journalist pejoratively, garnered 18.68% engagement. Finally, Jorge Campos Asensi's video on May 11, exposing attacks by Maghrebi pedestrians on cars in Palma de Mallorca, recorded 15.1% engagement.

To explain the reason why some candidates present high levels of engagement, we correlated this data with information from the National Institute of Statistics on migrant reception in 2023. According to the report, the regions with the highest intake were Catalonia (240,753), the Community of Madrid (202,894), and the Valencian Community (170,816). Given that Catalonia did not hold elections in 2023, Catalan candidates were excluded from the sample, and cross-referencing was not possible in this case. Nevertheless, it was feasible to cross-reference for the Valencian case—Carlos Flores Juberías—and the Madrid case—Rocío Monasterio. In both instances, engagement levels were low, at 3.15% and 1.87%, respectively, demonstrating no correlation between the two variables.

It is important to note that this comparison is limited to 2023 and does not consider previous migration dynamics. For this reason, although Melilla has a long-standing migration tradition and the candidate from Melilla—José Miguel Tasende Souto—achieved one of the highest engagement rates (10.36%), it is worth highlighting that during the electoral year under study, only 1,612 migrants were received. This was largely due to Spain and Morocco's strict migration policies and their cooperation in controlling migration flows.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Henry Mencken's critique of demagoguery and populism, particularly his characterization of populist leaders as "fools" driven by false doctrines and megalomaniacal ambitions, resonates strongly in the context of Spain's current political climate, especially concerning the rhetoric employed by Vox. This study sheds light on the prevalence of hate speech in Vox's communication strategies, particularly through the posts made by its regional candidates on the social platform X.

The analysis reveals that 16.56% of Vox's regional candidates' posts contain explicit or implicit hate narratives. Specifically, 26.15% of these posts target migrants and ethnic minorities, while the remaining 73.85% focus on other issues or groups. This gap indicates a strong strategic focus on migrant populations but also highlights the broader scope of Vox's hate-driven rhetoric, including gender demonization, attacks on political opponents, climate change denial, and opposition to Agenda 2030. The regional variations in hate speech were also notable. Coastal candidates tended to focus on Moroccans—e.g., Carlos Flores Juberías in the Generalitat Valenciana, Juan Sergio Redondo Pacheco in Ceuta, and Jorge Campos Asensi in the Balearic Islands—while attacks on MENAs were particularly concentrated in Madrid under the leadership of Rocío Monasterio.

Furthermore, in line with objective O3, analysis of the pre-election campaign—May 1 to May 12, 2023—reveals that Vox’s publications containing hate speech increased strategically during key events. One notable example is the spike in posts following the Vinicius Case (see Hedgecoe, 2023), where the party leveraged the controversy to intensify anti-immigration rhetoric, specifically targeting the Arab world. The analysis of Vox’s digital activity revealed a disregard for democratic norms, particularly when the party violated electoral laws during the reflection day of May 27, 2023, by posting hate messages. This pattern suggests a calculated use of polarizing narratives to exploit public debates and reinforce xenophobic discourse during critical moments of the campaign.

This study’s findings align with Mouffe (2003) and Laclau (2005), who describe the “populist moment” as a time of societal fractures that populist actors capitalize on. The analysis shows that Vox’s hate speech intensified during critical moments, suggesting that the party uses such rhetoric as a deliberate tool to manipulate public opinion and deepen societal divisions. The strategic use of hate speech during controversies, like the Vinicius Case, demonstrates how populist movements thrive by exploiting public debates to amplify polarizing narratives, thereby reinforcing their xenophobic agenda. The calculated exploitation of societal fractures emphasizes the need for further research into the evolution of hate speech over time, by tracking the polarity score in discourse. This analysis of how hate speech fluctuates across different political cycles and electoral contexts can offer valuable insights into how populist rhetoric evolves and its long-term effects on public opinion and political polarization.

The use of self-defensive discursive strategies (van Dijk, 1993), such as victimist, alarmist, and dehumanizing rhetoric, demonstrates a deliberate effort to construct a binary opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Mudde, 2004). According to van Dijk (1993) and Mudde (2004), these strategies aim to deepen ideological polarization (Blanco-Alfonso et al., 2022; Fenoll et al., 2024; Pérez-Escolar & Noguera-Vivo, 2021) by portraying migrants and ethnic minorities as existential threats to national identity and social stability. In response to objectives O1 and O2, regarding the main ethnic groups targeted by the xenophobic narratives and the intentions behind this racist speech, the victimist rhetoric, which was present in 56% of the analyzed posts, was especially dominant in posts by the national Vox account (@vox_es), revealing a clear attempt to foster a sense of victimhood and mobilize support based on collective fear.

The use of nativist discourse, seen particularly in posts by regional candidates like Rocío Monasterio and Carlos Flores Juberías, frames Spanish citizens as superior and immigrants as economic and cultural threats. This rhetoric not only reinforces exclusionary ideologies but also erodes democratic cohesion, aligning with the concerns raised by scholars like Popper (1966) and Bollinger (1986), who warn about the dangers of allowing populist ideologies to undermine social cohesion and democratic values. The explicit focus on regional targets, such as Moroccans in coastal areas or MENAs in Madrid, reflects how such hate speech is not only rooted in national politics but also crafted to exploit local fears, thus exacerbating social divides and contributing to long-term political polarization (Blanco-Alfonso et al., 2022; Fenoll et al., 2024).

The regional focus of these hate messages further illustrates the adaptability of hate speech to local dynamics, reflecting the broader strategic goals of Vox, which aims to exploit local fears and grievances. This regional targeting points to a tailored approach that intensifies the political divide on a local level, thereby exacerbating long-term political polarization.

The ethical implications of these findings are significant. The growing prevalence of hate speech, both explicit and implicit, poses a direct threat to the integrity of democratic institutions and social harmony. Vox's strategic use of hate speech erodes public trust in democratic institutions, thereby exacerbating political polarization and further disrupting constructive political dialogue and leading to the marginalization of certain social groups.

As Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) argue, populist rhetoric destabilizes democratic foundations by fostering division and intolerance. Vox's rhetoric exemplifies this concern, as this type of rhetoric contributes to the disintegration of political stability and democratic integrity, highlighting the urgent need for political leaders, legal authorities, and digital platforms to address the proliferation of hate speech.

Given the serious ethical and democratic challenges posed by hate speech, future research should focus on the evolving nature of these narratives, particularly by tracking fluctuations in the polarity of discourse over time. Technological advancements in deep learning and artificial intelligence (Srivastava et al., 2021) could significantly enhance the detection of hate speech, enabling more effective responses and mitigation strategies. Interdisciplinary collaboration across linguistics, communication, psychology, and law will be crucial in developing comprehensive approaches to counteract hate speech and its impact on social cohesion and political stability. Furthermore, political leaders and digital platforms must take concrete steps to combat the spread of hate speech. This includes fostering inclusive governance practices, promoting counter-narratives that challenge xenophobic ideologies, and implementing legal frameworks that penalize harmful political rhetoric. Scholars such as Fernández Lagunilla (1999) and García Beaudoux et al. (2005) suggest that such measures are necessary to restore democratic integrity and social well-being.

In conclusion, this study underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing hate speech in political discourse. The findings emphasize the strategic role of populist rhetoric in fostering division and eroding democratic norms. The ethical concerns raised by the widespread use of hate speech are profound and addressing them requires the concerted efforts of political leaders, legal authorities, and academic communities. Only by creating ethical frameworks and innovative tools to counteract hate speech can we promote a more inclusive and democratic society.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors (unedited).

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