

Discrimination and Hate Crimes Against Asian People Under COVID-19: A Possible Correlation and Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Studies on discrimination and hate crime incidence on Asians indicate that the act of aggression and micro-aggression have a direct impact on victim's mental and physical health. So far, however, only a few studies point out the relationship between Asian discrimination and the pandemic of Covid-19. Under this circumstance, it is necessary for research to be done in this field of the impact of emergencies on ethnic minorities, and the root causes of such impact should be understood from what perspectives. By analyzing previous researchers' work, this research aims to find the root cause of Asian discrimination and face discrimination while minimizing the harm to victims. Drawing on Meyer's minority stress model and social theory, the author discussed the implications of the findings and provided suggestions for policy efforts such as publishing laws and further research.

Keywords: *Hate Crime, Asian Hate, Minority.*

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19, as a serious epidemic disease, affected people's daily life and even risks people's life. The number of cases of COVID-19 worldwide reached 118.79 million, as of 11:10 a.m. EST on March 12, 2021 according to data released by Johns Hopkins University. As the first case was found in China (Wuhan), some western countries associated China as the transmitter of this virus and even spread it on purpose in order to destroy their society or economy. Early reports in the United States were often accompanied by stock photos of Asians in masks [1,2]. Many of the first reports labeled the disease as the "Wuhan Virus," or "Chinese Virus," and the Trump administration has also used these terms [3-7]. When the pandemic started, the word that the American media used: "China virus", "kung flu" and all of that, made Asians a target to those who are racist. The New York Times published an article describing the 91-year-old man, Vicha Ratanapakdee, who got slammed by a 19-year-old man. From March 19 to December 13, 2020, the organization of Stop AAPI Hate Reports as this varies, mass media are saying that "Wuhan virus", "Chinese virus", they make memes and jokes about bats and China flooded social

media, including posts by our peers online. These incidents have ranged from robbery and assault to spitting and verbal abuse. The victim's race was cited as the primary reason for the attack in over 90 percent of the 2808 reported cases [8]. What Vicha Ratanapakdee experienced was not by accident. By March 19, 2021, published by the New York Times, eight people were shot dead at three Atlanta-area massage parlors in what was feared to be a crime against Asians. Six of the victims were of Asian descent and two were white [9]. While it has not yet been determined whether the shooting was racially motivated, Stop AAPI Hate, a group set up to prevent anti-Asian discrimination during the COVID-19 epidemic, said it was an "unspeakable tragedy", for the families of the victims and also the Asian community. These reports provide the American public a straightforward narrative that focuses on China as the origin of COVID-19 and also proves that discrimination against Asians is a perpetually accumulated problem left over by history [10]. During the Covid-19 pandemic, hate incidents and crimes were widely reported. In the USA, the FBI warned about the increase in hate crimes against Chinese people [11].

Evidence from previous research suggests that stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a stressful social environment that can lead to mental health problems in people who belong to stigmatized minority groups [12]. Also, hate crime victims experience more severe consequences compared to victims of non-hate crimes [13]. Specifically, McDevitt, Balboni, Garcia, and Gu reported that bias crimes impact victims differently than non-bias crimes in that victims of bias crimes are more fearful and experience intrusive thoughts following their victimization [14,15]. This phenomenon can be described in terms of minority stress [16,17]. The minority group (Asians) face an environment that is prejudice because of their social status. Circumstances in the environment lead to exposure to stressors [18].

This study represents the current situation of hate crime, micro-aggressions, and other extreme measures that brought negative impact mentally and physically toward Asian people. During the pandemic of Covid-19, reports made by media have a nonnegligible responsibility for the discrimination against Asians, owing to the groundless opinions made by media which has an anti-Asian tendency. Both the neutral media and the news reports supporting the Chinese community began to reveal the blame or even discrimination to the Asian community consciously or unconsciously. This, however, provides the general public a viewpoint thinking Asian as the only transmitter of the virus and even treat Asians with violence. Although researchers have traced cases of the virus in the United States to travelers from Europe and to travelers within the United States, some members of the general public regard Asian Americans with suspicion and as carriers of the disease [19,20]. On April 28th, 2020, NBC News reported 30% of Americans have personally witnessed someone blaming Asians for the coronavirus [21]. According to data recently released by California State University, overall hate crimes in the US dropped 7% in 2020 from 2019, while hate crimes against Asians surged 149%. The worst hit was New York City, where hate crimes against Asians jumped 833% last year.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon that Asian people being discriminated against is a long-lasting problem. Under the Hate Crime Statistic Act (28 U.S.C. § 534), hate crime is defined as “crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, gender and gender identity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity” [14]. Back in the late 18th century to the mid-19th century, the word “yellow peril” appears more and more frequently in the mass media, calling eastern countries such as China threat to European countries, which symbolized the Western fear of uncivilized, nonwhite Asian invasion and domination [22,23]. Few people in

China know about this event that killed 200 million people. Generally speaking, the Yellow Peril was not an overt event, and although it was directed at Asians, it was also based on the fear of European countries of Asian invasion, as it was a denigration born of fear.

The Yellow Peril period seems too far from nowadays, but discrimination and stereotype like that will not vanish because of the change of times. For example, although quite a few feminists are calling for equality between men and women, shopping apps still change “Women’s Day” to “Girls Day” or “Queen’s Day” and thus What had been a celebration of women's equality had been transformed into a day of consumption aimed primarily at women. The concept of objectification first appeared in the objectification theory. This theoretical framework places female bodies in a sociocultural context with the aim of illuminating the lived experiences and mental health risks of girls and women who encounter sexual objectification. Although sexual objectification is but one form of gender oppression, it is one that factors into, and perhaps enables, a host of other oppressions women face, ranging from employment discrimination and sexual violence to the trivialization of women’s work and accomplishments [24]. Also, Asian women are often stereotyped as gentle, obedient and clever, which is groundless. But again, it is not an open issue, and people who objectify women do not put their stereotypes out there under the general public, let alone make a confident slogan for objectifying women.

As the pandemic started, the racially charged term that the American media used made Asians a target to those who are racist. These reports provide the American public a straightforward narrative that focuses on China as the origin of Covid-19. During the Covid-19 pandemic, hate incidents and crimes were widely reported. In the USA, the FBI warned about the increase in hate crimes against Chinese people (ABC March 27, 2020). It was reported that during the 8 weeks from March 19, 2020, to May 13, 2020, 1843 cases of hate incidents and hate crimes against Chinese and Asians were reported to the Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center in the USA. These cases included verbal harassment (69.3%) and shunning (22.4%), physical assaults (8.1%) and spitting or coughing (6.6%) as well as other civil rights violations, such as workplace discrimination (4.8%), being barred from establishments (2.9%), and being barred from transportation (1.1%), according to Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center 2020. Meanwhile, the hate crime against Asians in the pandemic of Covid-19 proves that the discrimination against Asian people never stop.

Furthermore, Angela R. Gover has studied this kind of phenomenon before, examining the unfair treatment operated on Asian-Americans, situated in historically entrenched and intersecting individual-level and

institutional-level racism and xenophobia. Result in 265,062 incidents, 67.1% (n=254) were motivated by anti-Asian bias and it increases as time pass by with the vast majority (94%) motivated by the offender's racial or ethnic bias 2014-2018 period.

Meanwhile, Hannah Tessler, Meera Choi and Grace Kao examine the historical antecedents that link Asian Americans to infectious diseases. Their research predicts a reinvigoration of a pan-ethnic Asian American identity and social movement. Proof that the possible upward trend of anti-Asian bias incidents and hate crimes is indicative of the growth of white nationalism and xenophobia. Chinatown restaurants suffered immediately after the first reports of COVID-19, as some restaurants and businesses experienced up to an 85% drop in profits for the two months prior to March 16th, 2020, as to be mentioned by Roberts, far before any stay-at-home orders were given. Also, while there have been numerous anti-Asian bias and crime instances, there have not been similarly patterned anti-European tourist incidents or avoidance of Italian restaurants, suggesting that COVID-19 illuminates the particular racialization of disease that extends beyond this virus, and further back in American history. Overall, since the Covid-19 pandemic is a more political, more targeted, and broader condition, it should be treated as a specific type of hate crime and discrimination.

Additionally, owing to the peculiar circumstances of the epidemic, finding the root cause seems to be of a greater degree of importance. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the negative perceptions of Asian Americans that have long been prevalent in American society and if research can find an accurate reason of what caused the inequality of minority race. Thus, the result of the study may help in the future to minimize the negative impact that stigmatization can have on minority groups and lay a foundation for future study.

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2.1. Crucial Time Nodes of Asian Discrimination

The issue of discrimination against Asians has been around for a long time, to explain this, it is necessary to consider plenty of factors. First of all, what caused stereotype and discrimination during the pandemic.

From Mekelburg's report, China is to blame because the culture where people eat bats, snakes, dogs and things like that, these viruses are transmitted from the animal to the people and that's why China has been the source of viruses like SARS, MERS or the swine flu and now the coronavirus. Reportedly, a fundamental problem is raised to Chinese lifestyle and seldom people are not object to geographically identifying where it is coming from. Starting from the difference between food to eat, the Western media soon build a strong relationship between the transmitter of the virus with meat consuming habit of Asians. Cultural factors, to a certain extent, lead to discrimination against Asians.

During the pandemic, the Trump administration repeatedly referred to "China virus" "Chinese virus" and other specific references at his regular White House press briefing. In general, these are comments at a national level. It seems that Trump's government prefers stirring up the controversy around a racial problem rather than working out a costly solution. Due to the cultural difference, the American media conduct vigorous propaganda and the media's point of view can be divided into three standpoints: Neutrality, hostility, and unconsciousness. The hostile media create the public an emotional behavior irritation. Besides, wearing a mask also has different meanings in Eastern and Western cultures. Americans considered Asians with masks to carry the Covid-19 and naturally, and hence Asians become the transmitter of Covid-19 even without and factual basis.

2.2. Countermeasures against discrimination

The current researches pay a lot of attention to the life quality and well-being of Asians. Those who is discriminated against and their resultant physical and mental performances are always understood as products of significant factors such as being treated unfairly and stigmatized. Therefore, it is consequential for the research to go beyond descriptions about the life quality or state of being stigmatized. In the future, it will be equally important to understand the influence hate crime has on people's lives. As it can be seen from the previous studies, the occurrence of hate crimes is closely related to the physical and mental health of the discriminated groups. No one can have a healthy body and mind, let alone protect themselves from the virus under the circumstances of being scolded, satirical or even physically insulted without any reason. The trends of this research field shall promote the understanding of hate crime and racism, its causes and impacts, and helping in the making of measures by the governments that are effective in its management among races. Besides, laws or regulations can be made to supervise and urge people to treat all races equally. The good news is, after two weeks of the first edit of this study, new President Joe Biden signed a series of executive

actions on racial equality in his first week in office, condemning the fight against racial discrimination against Asian-Americans.

Additionally, the discriminated Asian groups should also know the reasons why they are unfairly treated, and if the reasons are due to their own defects that can be improved, there is no harm in improving themselves. At the same time, even if they cannot change this situation, they can also minimize the impact of discrimination through other ways.

3. CONCLUSION

This study represents the current situation of hate crime, micro-aggressions, and other extreme measures that brought negative impact mentally and physically toward Asian people while the main reason for the appearance of Asian hate during the pandemic of Covid-19. This research identified the term “minority stress” used and related to the discrimination situation and the perpetually accumulated problem of Asian hate. It is qualitatively agreed with the hypothesis and statement. History has a non-negligible responsibility to cause minority discrimination which has been long left by the records without reaching any solution. The possibility of defining discrimination through the aspect of sociology and referring to the minority stress model enables a fundamentally new approach to experimentally examining the social issue that could be applied to study the stigmatization and stereotype and other correlated phenomena. In the future, this study's proper method and conclusion could be utilized to examine minority stress of other groups apart from minority ethnic such as rural migrants which scholars have been paying little attention to. The title “Conclusion” should be in all caps and should be placed above the reference.

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