

Understanding Xenophobia in Bangladesh: Social Media Representation of China with Regard to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Early 2020

Harisur Rahman

North South University, Bangladesh
Email: harisur.rahman@northsouth.edu

Zhou Weiwei

Confucius Institute, North South University, Bangladesh
Email: zhouww@ynu.edu.cn

Bulbul Siddiqi

North South University, Bangladesh
Email: mohammad.siddiqi@northsouth.edu

Guo Jianbin

Yunnan University, China
Email: dulong20022002@aliyun.com

Tata Zafar

North South University, Bangladesh
Email: tata.zafar@northsouth.edu

ABSTRACT

With the advent of COVID-19, social media mediated news, misinformation, disinformation, rumors, and viral content related to China and COVID-19 spread to every nook and cranny of the world, including Bangladesh. What types of media content (such as text, video, audio, and meme) associated with China and COVID-19 were circulated on social media in Bangladesh? How effective were the Chinese media outlets and information in countering anti-China rhetoric and propaganda related to COVID-19 in Bangladesh? Drawing on Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA), we analyze Bangladeshi social media content related to China and COVID-19 that surfaced on Facebook and YouTube between January and June 2020 and advance some plausible answers to the above questions. We

maintain that non-Chinese media, especially social media, spread religiously-oriented ethnocentric, xenophobic, and racist behavior against Chinese food consumption practices and culture. We have concluded that the rarity of Chinese media content in Western social media has cemented the propaganda against China.

Keywords: Bangladesh, China, COVID-19, Sinophobia, Social Media, Xenophobia

Background

Between 2020 and 2021, the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was a much-talked-about phenomenon across the world, given the fatality and severity of the disease. The Chinese seafood market was initially thought to be the source of the coronavirus.¹ Though there were various speculations about the exact source of the COVID-19 virus, one hypothesis was that animal-to-human zoonotic² events happened through close contact with animals such as pangolins, snakes, or bats.³ Another rumor surfaced on social media that the COVID-19 virus was created in a lab and intentionally released, while others posited that the Chinese government was hiding the true extent of the outbreak (Nadesan, 2022). Whatever may be the source, video footage containing images of people dying on the streets of China became viral on Bangladeshi social media, thus spreading fear and hysteria about the disease.⁴

The representation of China and Chinese people and their food habits were also being vilified and demonized on social as well as mainstream media in Bangladesh. While negative vibes about COVID-19 and Chinese people and culture might be prevalent among many Bangladeshis, the business sector remained in dire need of Chinese raw materials for garment industries⁵, mobile accessories, or even spice

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/25/world/asia/china-markets-coronavirus-sars.html>.

² Animals can sometimes carry harmful germs that can spread to people and cause illness – these are known as zoonotic diseases or zoonoses.

<https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/zoonotic-diseases.html>.

³ <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/coronavirus-bats-snakes-pangolins>.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8wVKesdqAWM>.

⁵ <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/rmg-notes/news/the-coronavirus-conundrum-bangladesh-apparel-industry-1868374>.

markets, especially for garlic and ginger.⁶ Besides, the Bangladeshi government was concerned about the lingering prospects of Chinese mega-projects being implemented in Bangladesh under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).⁷ Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the portrayal of China, at least in Bangladeshi media, was more or less optimistic; but, after the outbreak, the atmosphere and undercurrent of public perceptions changed. As with the Western media, Bangladeshi media started depicting a gloomy picture of China and its future.

As for the COVID-19 crisis management, allegations against the Chinese government by the non-Chinese media (such as covering up the information on fatalities, which was claimed to be about a million, based on the satellite image of the emission of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) in the sky of Wuhan city, have also appeared in Bangladeshi social media.⁸ Because of the gravity and severity of the virus's impact, as shown by the media, the current image crisis of China across the globe is quite serious, given the Western mainstream and social media campaigns, and rumors spread like wildfire. Bangladesh is no exception, given that its English and Bengali news outlets and social media users cut, copy, paste, and share Western media contents, which then spread through online and offline media channels. The current COVID-19 virus crisis in China is not limited to people's health only; it has been taken up by many Western countries as a bugbear for anti-Chinese propaganda.⁹

The crisis of COVID-19 was not limited to China's health emergency only; it impacted Chinese culture, food habits, and Chinese people across the globe. What types of media content (such as text, video, audio, and meme associated with China and COVID-19) was circulated on social media in Bangladesh at the beginning of the pandemic? How did the social media content on China and COVID-19 form public opinion in Bangladesh? How effective were the Chinese

⁶ <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/impact-of-coronavirus-outbreak-china-onion-garlic-ginger-prices-rise-1863904>.

⁷ <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/236504>.

⁸ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/times-fact-check/news/fact-check-satellite-images-showing-high-levels-of-sulphur-dioxide-indicate-mass-cremations-in-china/articleshow/74130633.cms>.

⁹ https://www.globalresearch.ca/western-anti-chinese-propaganda-exaggerates-coronavirus-danger-creates-panic/5703540?utm_campaign=magnet&utm_source=article_page&utm_medium=related_articles

media outlets and their information in countering anti-China rhetoric and propaganda related to COVID-19? Drawing on Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA), we analyze Bangladeshi social media content related to China and COVID-19 that surfaced on Facebook and YouTube between January and June 2020.

Literature Review

Social media significantly spread racism and xenophobia, including Sinophobia, during the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Research showed that social media use could predict prejudice towards minority groups, such as Chinese Americans, who have been blamed for the spread of the virus. The Web enabled the proliferation of hateful language, and Sinophobia and anti-China sentiments have been prevalent on social media since the pandemic's beginning. These sentiments are fueled by the fact that China is seen as the source of the virus and by the long-standing Sinophobia and Orientalism present in Western society (Chavez-Dueñas & Adames, 2018).

A study of prejudice toward Asian-Americans showing up on social media in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the research areas to examine the extent to which social media use predicts prejudice toward a minority group (Chinese-Americans) blamed for the spread of the virus (COVID-19). The results reveal that social media use has a significant influence on prejudice toward Chinese-Americans. The research shows that the more individuals believe their most-used daily social media are fair, accurate, present the facts, and are concerned about the public (social media belief), the more they see Chinese-Americans as a group as a realistic and symbolic threat. There is a correlation between social media use and prejudice (Croucher, 2020).

The Web has become indispensable for information acquisition, communication, and entertainment (Tahmasbi et al., 2020). The dissemination of hateful content, particularly Sinophobic content, is a cross-platform phenomenon that incubates both on fringe and mainstream Web communities (Tahmasbi et al., 2020). The Web has enabled much of society to keep going, or at least to maintain social connections with others. But, it has also allowed (and potentially encouraged) the proliferation of hateful language at a time when we can afford it the least.

The Chinese government has also turned social media into a battlefield with diplomacy, such as exposing negative news about the

United States on social media and demanding that the United States fairly treat China's efforts. Social media has become a forum for the continuation of the contest between big countries. In these studies, researchers used social media comments, reposts, favorites, emoticons, etc., as research objects to study the conflict between China and the United States (Zhao, 2020). Since the eighteenth century, Sinophobia has dominated the West's conception of China (Zhang, 2008). Indeed, classifying a nation or a regime such as China as authoritarian serves to consolidate the West's power as "a knowing subject," thus defining others and affirming the West's moral authority and superiority (Zhang, 2020).

Sinophobia and anti-China sentiments have been important themes or trends in social media since the pandemic began. This is not only because most of the sources of information point to China as the country that caused this pandemic, but because Sinophobia and anti-China rhetoric have always been present in the ideology of Western society. It is also a manifestation of more generalized xenophobia. Shi's research pointed out that, after the epidemic, fear of China and anti-China attitudes were different from before. Sinophobia is combined with anti-racism, anti-authoritarianism, and Orientalism in the post-COVID-19 era (Shi, 2020). Litam (2020) studied the relationship between xenophobia/Sinophobia and mental health disparities among Asians, Asian-Americans, and Pacific Islanders after the outbreak of COVID-19, describing how public and societal fears related to the coronavirus outbreak impacted the mental health disparities and race-based violence among Asian-Americans living in the USA.

Through the lens of Twitter, Ziems et al. (2020) analyzed the spread of racism, hate, and xenophobia against Chinese and other Asian communities in social media. They worked on a dataset of 2400 tweets and tried to determine the extent of people's engagement in hate speech and countering hate speech during the initial three months of the pandemic. The study showed that hateful users became very active on social media in spreading hate speech during the COVID-19 period as compared to before. They also analyzed bot accounts and found the same compared to non-hate users. The study also found malicious bots against Asians could attract more followers than counter-hate bots. Hence, hate is very contagious, and it proved to be a media contagion during the coronavirus period especially, although counter-hate speech can discourage people from getting engaged in hateful speech.

Hateful and prejudiced social media posts on Twitter against East Asians increased, according to Vidgen et al. (2020). They developed a classifier in a way that other researchers may use to understand hateful language and prejudice against East Asians posted on social media by dividing posts into four categories—“hostility against East Asia,” “criticism against East Asia,” “meta-discussions of East Asian prejudice,” and “neutral class.”

In her study, Wong (2020) explored how xenophobic discourses in social media during COVID-19 triggered the tension between Singaporeans and immigrants in Singapore, though xenophobia in Singapore is nothing new. She also studied how these discourses became more focused on the mainland Chinese population in Singapore due to COVID-19. In her research, Wong examined online petitions against all travelers in Singapore, Facebook posts of religious leaders, and xenophobic posts, comments, and rumors posted on social media that triggered Sinophobia against the mainland Chinese population.

In many studies, Sinophobia and xenophobia during the disease outbreak were examined. However, no known research was found to show how social media triggered or spread Sinophobia/xenophobia among Bangladeshi people. This gap provides a strong rationale for our research, which will significantly contribute to understanding China’s image concerning COVID-19 in Bangladesh.

Analytical framework

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) studies how social power, dominance, and inequality are expressed, reproduced, and resisted through language and discourse in a social and political context. It involves analyzing language at the level of the text, the interpretation of the text, and the larger sociocultural context in which the text is produced and consumed. CDA can also involve analyzing multimodal discourse, which includes using images, film, video, and sound in combination with language to convey meaning. CDA can examine how language and images are used to construct and reinforce ideology, power dynamics, and social relations. It can also be used to analyze how texts and images influence and shape public opinion and attitudes.

According to Teun Van Dijk (2001), “critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political

context” (p. 252). Fairclough’s (1993, 29) critical discourse analysis explains three-dimensional frameworks: linguistic analysis, interpretive analysis, and macro-sociological analysis. The linguistic or textual practice is the production or encoding of texts in television and newspaper, which could be verbal or nonverbal communication—sign, symbol, image, icon, index, sound, word, etc. Interpretivist analysis or discursive practice is the consumption or decoding of the text of television and newspaper, in that it is concerned with who subscribes to what types of things, products, or services, how meanings vary in different socio-economic conditions or backgrounds because of differing knowledge, ideology, and deciphering capacity of the meaning of various codes and texts; and how people interpret other texts in different contexts to create meaning.

Textual meaning is not fixed, as every text as a signifier could represent something else. As Stuart Hall (1997) reminds us, any sign or symbol has its referent or meaning, but that sign or symbol can, at the same time, stand for something else or carry a different meaning or referent. This is also the crux of representation, in which texts, signs, or symbols are used not to reflect reality but to construct the meaning of something anew (Hall, 1997). In the process of representation, texts can create ideology, binary opposition, and power hierarchy, using rhetorical devices and persuasive techniques, which nonetheless might be logically fallacious at the same time. In the case of discursive practice, the producer of discourse influences the consumer and vice versa. In the final process of critical discourse analysis, context is taken into consideration, given that society, culture, politics, or economy influences the producer or author as well as the readers. Socio-cultural contexts or dominant practices, values, and ideologies might influence both the writers and the readers. It could also be vice versa; that is, text, as well as readers, can also influence societal norms and practices. None is mutually exclusive and deterministic (Fairclough, 1993, 29).

Methodology

For this study, we systematically collected secondary data from social media according to the identified research questions and aims. News, videos, meme, and user-generated content related to COVID-19 on Facebook and videos on YouTube linked to COVID-19 since its inception in between January and June 2020 have been analyzed using critical discourse and rhetorical analysis.

The content was selected based on its popularity, reach, and specific themes, such as the food habits of Chinese people and the perspectives of Bangladeshi Islamic scholars on the coronavirus disease. It was gathered using keywords like “COVID-19 in China,” “Chinese food habits,” and “COVID-19 and religion” on Facebook and YouTube search results, with a preference given to content related to Bangladesh or created by Bangladeshi social media users.

Because of social media trending, news, information, and memes that became viral were also considered. Overall, we gathered 60 news texts, videos, memes, and audio from Facebook and YouTube. Based on their category, we analyzed one Facebook meme and three YouTube videos related to COVID-19 on both platforms.

Given that it is qualitative research, we do not claim that our samples are representative or that our findings can be generalized; instead, we sought to understand the unique aspects of each piece of content in terms of its production, circulation, and consumption. Because of the convergence in nature, we had to analyze texts, videos, and audio in tandem. Also, we had to take non-verbal communication such as emoticons, likes and dislikes into account.

One limitation of the research is the difficulty in determining the exact source of information due to the constant sharing, re-sharing, and reproduction of content. Another factor to consider is that we collected some comments from the netizens, but could not accommodate firsthand opinions from the social media users to understand how they spread and respond to content spread by others.

Facebook meme named “Corona”

This Facebook meme falls under the category of Internet memes, which evolved from general memes. It accommodates GIFs (graphics interface format), challenges, viral videos raising awareness by fact-checking through misleading news and propaganda, and viral videos from generic to the specific spread of information on various genres. In their educational research on memes, Laineste and Voolaid (2016, 26) said, “Its increasing pervasiveness has to do with the positive functions that humor is nowadays believed to carry – it is bonding, affiliative and generally beneficial qualities.”

Internet memes can evolve by transforming social commentary, parody, and knowledge-sharing attributes. Memes have changed from sharing basic ideas or parodies to involving intertextuality, which brings

forth a wide-ranging combination of entertainment and culture, education and politics, society, and individuality, in response to the new generation's fast consumption habits.

On 17 April 2020 a Facebook page (Engineer's Diary) posted a meme where the "profile" of the coronavirus is described. The page has 448,523 followers, and 430,398 people liked the page. It is one of the most popular pages on Facebook among tertiary-level students, especially among engineering students from both public and private universities in Bangladesh.

As of 19 April 2020, the meme received over 1.1k reactions, 47 comments, and 37 shares. Among the people who gave a reaction, 659 people gave a "ha-ha" reaction, 147 people gave a "sad" reaction, 14 people gave a "wow," "angry" 6, and 5 people showed a "love" reaction. The post tries to validate the presumed fact that China is the mother and origin of the virus. The virus is like a polygamous woman; she has a boyfriend, a crush, and, an Ex. As the popular belief goes, women destroy men's lives, the same way corona (virus) is destroying countries worldwide. Italy, Iran, and Spain were badly infected before (Ex-BF). Currently (at the time of posting), the USA is dealing with coronavirus (that's why "my current boyfriend"), and in the future, Bangladesh would be infected with the virus ("Crush").

The people who gave "ha-ha" reaction (695), in a way, have agreed with the premise that China is infecting the whole world as a beautiful woman affects the whole world. The six people (0.55%) who have given "angry" reactions seem to disagree with the proposition or do not like that Bangladesh is the next target.

The 36 people who have commented can be categorized into three categories: (a) the people who agreed with the post, (b) the people who think that the post is inappropriate; and (c) the people whose comments are perceived to be irrelevant. First of all, let's analyze the comments that add thoughts to the same proposition. One of the Facebook users commented, "Kungfu _virus," which relates the virus to the martial art kung fu (kung fu originated in China). Here, kung fu is used as a metonymy (metonymy is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is referred to by the name of something closely associated with that thing or concept). Corona (virus) is spreading throughout the world the same way kung fu has spread throughout the world.

Another user commented, "And crush accepts his friend request," meaning that Bangladeshi people have started to get infected. On the

other hand, the majority of the Facebook users who commented spoke against the meme/post. One of the users said, “Stop this type of nonsense jokes...Corona is not a thing to make fun of. Poor show...Please remove this type of writing. A hundred thousand people are dying, millions are affected.... how come you are making fun!!!!.... Bangladesh is suffering, poor people are starving...Please stop this type of cheap jokes/fun.” 13 people reacted to this comment (9 “likes,” 2 “love,” 2 “ha-ha”). The comment is against the meme because it makes fun of the disease, but says nothing related to China per se. Some other users also commented on stopping these kinds of memes.

In our view, this meme is an actual representation of the current scenario and thoughts of people. It was created at a time when Bangladeshi people started to get infected with COVID-19. The USA was dealing with a large number of daily COVID-19-positive cases. And, the curve was flattening in countries like Italy, Iran, and Spain.

However, the meme does not provide any evidence as to the source of the disease, or any socio-political, cultural, or economic contexts of the disease. The message of the joke was taken out of context and juxtaposed with an existing boyfriend-girlfriend joke.

YouTube video: “Interview of coronavirus through a dream that would surprise you!”

The video titled, “Interview of coronavirus through a dream that would surprise you!” by another popular Islamic cleric,¹⁰ was uploaded by a verified YouTube channel “Mahfil TV” on 04 March, 2020. The video has over 1 million views. There were about 18k “likes” and about 1688 people commented on the video (as of 27 December 2022). There is mixed opinion about the video. Some said that the orator is crazy, phony, and fake, and he is misrepresenting Islam. Other people have prayed to Allah to protect Muslims from coronavirus and for protection for Muslims around the globe.

The narrator of the video is a familiar Islamic cleric, educator, and head of the Department of Hifzul Qur’an, Arabic & Islamic Studies at Averroes International School in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has published many Islamic books and is a trendy religious figure in Bangladesh. In the video, the orator claims that he talks with an Italian resident, a Bangladeshi expatriate, who had a talk about the coronavirus in his

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=UXN8bBemeFg>

dream. Then the orator described the incident in his own words. Before he started the story, he clarified that the information could be either true or false, but the dream is real based on the fact that the details are true and the dreams of Mumins¹¹ before the last day (according to Islam the day world will be destroyed or doomsday) will be true, according to prophet Muhammad.

According to the story told by the cleric, Allah sent the coronavirus on 23 October 2019, when Chinese soldiers raped a Muslim woman named Ayesha (who was killed after the rape). Chinese soldiers sealed her mouth during the rape. Two other soldiers worked as watchmen. At that time, Allah sent the coronavirus. In reply to Mamun Maruf's query, it was asked why the coronavirus was given to the Chinese only, given that Muslims have been tortured in Syria, Libya, and as have the Rohingya people. The virus replied that the repression of Uyghur Muslims is concealed from the Chinese world, which cannot be known by other people. That is why Allah listens to the people of those regions directly. The world knows the other persecuted and oppressed Muslims. So, the coronavirus was sent to take revenge against Chinese oppression.

In another video, the cleric claimed to have a remedy for the coronavirus infection in the form of an equation found in a dream by a Bangladeshi expatriate who lives in Italy. The equation is $1.7+6=13$. In another video, the same religious cleric said the coronavirus told the Bangladeshi man that they (Corona) had no plan to attack Bangladesh "because it is the only country in the world where the Qur'an and the Hadith are discussed the most. It, however, also said those who oppose Islam would not be spared."

First and foremost, the orator cleric used a "paralipsis," which is a rhetorical ruse, in that a speaker talks about a subject by denying that it should be brought up. There is no way anyone can blame the cleric for "misinformation," because what he said is based on what is already said in a dream, and he cannot be held responsible for saying that. Delivery is a vital characteristic of these types of speech. The cleric was earnest and confident at the same time. His seriousness and way of delivering the speech make it seem like a true story.

Nevertheless, through the speech, he brought up some crucial aspects of the oppression of the Uyghurs in China. According to a BBC

¹¹ Mumin or Momin is an Arabic Islamic term, frequently referenced in the Quran, meaning ("believer")

news report, a UN human rights committee found in 2018 credible reports that China was holding a million Uyghurs in political “counter-extremism” camps. Committee member Gay McDougall said the Chinese government had “turned the Uighur [Uyghur] autonomous region into something that resembles a massive internment camp.”¹² There are many organizations and sources confirming that Uyghur Muslims are being oppressed. The cleric’s claim about the Chinese oppression of Uyghurs is not supported by a valid warrant, however. His other claims do not come with a warrant or justifier either. He may have said whatever came to his mind in the name of a dream, which nobody can either prove or deny. But, speech like this has consequences. It creates a divide, and clearly, more than a million people have watched his video and perceived it to be accurate, which has undoubtedly contributed to anti-Chinese sentiment in Bangladesh.

YouTube video: “What doesn’t crazy say? What doesn’t the Chinese eat?”

The video titled “What doesn’t crazy say? What doesn’t Chinese eat?” was uploaded from a verified YouTube Channel, “Pinikpai¹³” on 06 March 2020. The video has about 1 million views with 14k “likes.” About 1400 people commented on the video to share their opinion (as of 26 October 2020). Most people who commented on the video showed positive support for the video and disgust about Chinese food habits.

A YouTube user commented, “*Chinese* brother please come to Bangladesh and take all the cockroaches, I am really scared of cockroaches.” Another individual commented, “this is why they [Chinese] are diagnosed with the coronavirus.” So, the content creator and its viewers are on the same page.

The video started with the claim that the coronavirus began in China. And China is the largest exporter of goods globally; among them, only 20% are pure. It goes on to say that it is widely popular whether you like Chinese food or not. The people in our country who love Chinese food and think that Chinese people eat the same thing have a misconception. Chinese people like to eat live animals. If we have to talk about “insane” behavior against animals, then we need to put China first on the list. They take the skin off of live dogs. The narrator then

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vczBGzxKpwk>.

gave a list of bizarre foods that Chinese people eat, such as cockroaches, snake alcohol, sheep's penis, chicken's testicles, and balut.¹⁴ The video showed these foods and described how "nasty" Chinese food habits are. The most intriguing claim the narrator makes is that Chinese people eat food from the dustbin. After talking about all these foods, the narrator talked about the possibility of the origin of coronavirus from bats. The video cuts and pastes various images and clips and generalizes them as examples of Chinese people's delicacies.

The video is inundated with false claims, hasty generalizations, racism, xenophobia, and so on. First and foremost, the claim that 80% of Chinese exports are fake is baseless. And if that were the case, hardly anyone would have bought Chinese goods. Moreover, what is the point of talking about Chinese goods in a video that is supposed to be about Chinese food habits or bizarre Chinese foods? Nevertheless, it may be true that there are many fake goods produced in China. According to a report in the *Harvard Business Review*, counterfeits account for only 12.5% of exported goods.¹⁵

Second, the claims about the foods are mere generalizations. It might be true that some Chinese people eat bizarre food as a diet, but one cannot generalize and say everyone in China eats those kinds of food. According to China highlights,¹⁶ the fifteen most popular Chinese foods are: "Chow Mein, Braised Pork Balls in Gravy, Sweet and Sour Pork, Steamed Vermicelli Rolls, Hotpot, Shrimp with Vermicelli and Garlic, Dumplings, Steamed Vermicelli Rolls, Fried Shrimp with Cashew Nuts, Sichuan Pork, Kung Pao Chicken, Spring Rolls, Ma Po Tofu, Peking Roasted Duck, Wontons, and Yangchow Fried Rice." There is, however, no mention of the above-mentioned foods in the video. The foods that are shown in the videos are primarily bizarre street foods¹⁷ that cannot be generalized as popular Chinese foods.

¹⁴ A balut is a developing duck embryo that is boiled and eaten in the shell. Locals love them. They tell me the best part is when you tip the egg up and sip on the liquid inside. Balut is a typical food in other countries such as the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

¹⁵ <https://hbr.org/2018/05/8-ways-brands-can-fight-counterfeits-in-china#:~:text=Together%2C%20China%20and%20Hong%20Kong,according%20to%20the%20same%20report>

¹⁶ <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/chinese-food/eight-chinese-dishes.htm>

¹⁷ <https://www.thetravel.com/20-street-food-options-found-in-china-no-amount-of-money-would-make-us-try/>

Moreover, even if Chinese people eat bat soup, that does not justify saying they eat dirt from the drainage. The video's narrator also made a *post hoc* fallacy regarding the fact that Chinese people eat from the drain. We can raise questions about food safety and hygiene instead of blaming people's food habits, which are legitimized by their culture.

Videos and content like this are not benign. This kind of content leads to polarization, racism, and other sorts of hatred. In Bangladesh, we have seen the mistreatment of non-Bengali Bangladeshis like Chakma or Marma people. As they look closer to other East Asian countries, hate against Chinese people has also provoked the hate some hold in their hearts against our countrymen. Moreover, the general sense of hatred against the Chinese people is evident in other social media contents.

According to anthropologist Le Gros Clark (1968, 69), "A food habit is not a passing whim or fancy; it is a feature of society and is integrated into a structure of social values that may have nothing to do with the principles of nutrition." Food is also related to prestige and wealth. It creates social relations and communication. Food is also part of a festival, ceremony, tradition, custom, and security (Moran, 1975; Todhunter, 1973, 301). While nutritionists define 'food' as any substance that meets physiological needs and maintains health and well-being, behavioral scientists maintain that any food that is to be edible must be prepared and consumed in line with the beliefs, rituals, and traditions of a particular society and culture. In this relation, what food for a specific society might be treated otherwise in another society (Todhunter, 1973)?

From an anthropological perspective, humans do not eat food based on food value only; instead, they have specific food when their culture legitimizes it to be edible, and then those foods become institutionalized. As Richards (2003, 30 and 8) reminded us, "But if the social values and nutritional dogmas shape a people's food habits, it is their economic institutions that enable them to produce their supplies." The Chinese food habit cannot be generalized, given that there is a diverse food habit prevalent across different ethnic communities. It might be a matter of failure in hygiene that caused the COVID-19 virus to have jumped from animal to human (a zoonotic infection); but, instead of taking hygiene issues into account, many people tend to generalize and stigmatize Chinese food habits, their culture, and way of life.

YouTube video on COVID-19 and China—an Islamic cleric’s speech at a rally

This YouTube video entitled, “You will be surprised to know the current situation of the Muslims in China,” was uploaded on 07 March 2020. More than seven hundred thousand people watched the video, and there were about eight thousand likes as of 27 December 2022. In his sermon at a rally called *waz mahfil*, a religious cleric¹⁸ spoke of the coronavirus situation in China when it was suffering the most, and the rest of the world had yet to feel that in early March 2020. The cleric mentioned that Chinese President Xi Jinping promptly visited China’s Muslim community, intending to know the ways Muslims avoid the virus in China. The cleric’s above statement regarding President Xi’s confession about how the Muslim community outranks any other religious community in the world is reflective of his religiocentric view.

He purposefully said it to create a sense of superiority among the listeners of the program. The cleric’s narration of President Xi’s visit to mosques in Beijing is a video from the year 2018, which is then used in the year 2020 to frame it in the context of the coronavirus situation. The intent is to spread misinformation to the general public for the fulfillment of his agenda. He urged fellow Chinese people to visit and observe Islamic practices in mosques. The cleric then spoke of a series of incidents at the mosque, where the Chinese non-Muslims unthoughtfully mimicked the Islamic purification process called *wudhu* (ablution) and the clothing required for prayer.

He specifies how President Xi approved that the Muslim community outranks any other religious community in the world and how WHO (World Health Organization) approves of the ablution process because it reduces harmful bacteria and viruses from entering the body. He claimed that Bangladeshi Muslims are the most loyal practitioners, according to his visiting experiences in numerous countries across the world. He stated that COVID-19 would not enter Bangladesh because of Bangladeshi Muslims’ faith; and, if the virus does enter the country, then they could blame the political leaders and others who brought the virus by befriending the *Mushriks* (polytheists) of India.

The cleric also went on to say the *Mushriks* are not concerned with our problems and have no worries about our problem (he stated that in view of the Rohingya Crisis). He added that if a friend is not useful in

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sauz8XBuoR0>

such a dire situation, then the friendship is meaningless, which hints toward China being the opponent of the Rohingya Crisis, as it vetoes any policy/solution proposed in the United Nations General Assembly. Lastly, he discusses how coronavirus is a curse of Allah to warn the non-Muslims and Muslims who are actively participating in discriminating against and torturing innocent Muslims across the world.

This video was retrieved from the YouTube channel called *Waz Vision BD*, which focused on uploading videos of recorded Islamic sermons and debates on the channel. The owner of the channel is purportedly residing in the United States. The address was pronounced in the Bangla language by the cleric. The phenomenon came to light with the inspection of publications and health reports based on a “viral pneumonia” of unknown cause on 31 December 2019.¹⁹ The inspection was focused on the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission’s statement and several cases in the media reports of ProMed, as stated on the WHO official website.

Bangladesh confirmed its first COVID-19 cases on 08 March 2020, when three positive coronavirus cases in the capital city of Dhaka were reported by the Bangladesh government.²⁰ This video was uploaded on 07 March 2020, a day before confirming the first COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh.

The fear of not knowing the extremes of an imminent pandemic, together with the lack of credible sources, resulted in widespread false news, rumors, and conspiracy theories. Information and discrepancies in news reports and social media led to ignorance among the general public. The majority of the population of Bangladesh are daily wage laborers with little or no formal education. Their socio-economic and educational status renders them susceptible to accepting false news and unknowingly furthers misinformation in the community.

As they are incapable of differentiating between true and false news due to a lack of credible sources and often fall victim to incitement, there

¹⁹ Md. Kamruzzaman, SM Najmus Sakib |25.03.2020 <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-confirms-first-case-of-coronavirus-/1758924>

²⁰ WHO site reporting first COVID-19 case in Bangladesh at: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline?gclid=Cj0KCQjwzbv7BRDIARIsAM-A6-3942rfmKhr8nzJbHi3sgO46LmLQbty-jle7oG0OD38c1IRWD5u0bIaApzVEALw_wcB#event-115

is ample opportunity for hate speech and hate crimes in society. The sermon targeted regular Muslim listeners and participants. Being a well-known religious leader, his speech holds significant control over the masses. The address attempts to incite the listeners by speaking in an active voice to turn what are merely personal views and opinions into facts. A large portion of the participants thus hear statements that are neither real nor factually grounded. As such, the cleric's arguments suffer from hasty generalization. The opinions expressed and the "information" shared by the cleric are uncorroborated and misleading. For instance, in the video, he refers to Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to different mosques in China that happened in the year 2016,²¹ but the cleric placed the event in the upsurge of COVID-19 in Wuhan, China.

The cleric described the spread of coronavirus in China as "Wholesale." The word "wholesale" refers to the bulk buying of commodities for sale to retailers, but he used the word to mean something like a rampant spread of the virus. The cleric stated that Xi Jinping went to the central mosque of Beijing, where he talked with the Muezzin and confessed how the Muslim community outranks any other religious community in the world. The cleric stated it in an active voice, to turn it into a seeming actuality, despite this being a false claim. It is nowhere mentioned and discussed what the president actually said to Muslims during his visit.

The Chinese president announced that the general population was welcome to visit different mosques in China. Upon the announcement, Chinese people visited mosques on the Jumma (Friday) prayer day. The gathering extended beyond the inner mosque and further covered 4 meters radius across the mosques. The crowd went berserk, as they wore no white "Taqiyya" or the usual Muslim headwear. The Chinese visitors used masks as headgear, placing the masks on top of the head and another cover on the mouth as per the COVID-19 rule. This visual presentation of Chinese behavior is an attempt to ridicule China's people for being unable to heed Islamic traditions, instead of appreciating their newly found Hidayah (an Arabic word meaning "guidance").

According to Islamic belief, Allah provided guidance to humans primarily in the form of the Qur'an. Also, there is a faulty assumption in the above description of the crowd, where they mistook the importance of the "Taqiyya" or the headwear to Muslims. A mask on top of the head

²¹ <https://www.altnews.in/old-video-of-chinese-pres-xi-jinping-visiting-mosque-shared-as-recent-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>

is not equal to the *Mustahabb* (recommendation) of covering one's head during prayer. The cleric's statements reveal his intention to create turmoil, given its reference to religious intolerance in India and the ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas in Myanmar.

Later, the crowd witnessed the prayer's ablution process, which consists of washing the face and arms, then wiping the head, and finally washing the feet with water. Ablution or "*wudu*" is an essential part of ritual purity in Islam. The cleric said, according to WHO (World Health Organization), ablution is a purification process that guarantees safety against germs. Regarding the previous statement, he says the Muslim population as such is immune to the coronavirus due to their commitment to performing ablution five times a day. He then questions why it is that the Bangladeshi community got infected by this virus given that they are immune to it.

The cleric adds that out of all countries he visited the Bangladeshi population is the most God-fearing and the real practitioners of Islam. This statement suffers from the fallacy of anecdotal evidence, according to which the speaker draws on personal experience instead of any local evidence or definitive proof for a claim. And, he said if the coronavirus enters Bangladesh, then the population must believe that it is not because of them; instead, it is because the *Munafiqs* (hypocrites) allowed *Mushriks* (polytheists) to enter our country.

The virus entered Bangladesh because of the *Munafiqs*, who maintained a friendship with *Mushriks*. Yet, as a matter of empirical fact, there is no validated correlation between friendship and viruses. An abstract concept simply cannot open up a virus's passage into the country. In short, the argument suffers from a false cause fallacy.

The cleric calls the *Mushriks* of India to be those who destroyed Babri Masjid, slaughtered thousands of Muslims in the Gujarat riot and bathed in the blood of the slaughtered Kashmiri Muslims. The *Mushriks* of China forced Chinese Uyghur Muslims into internment camps to revise their faith and belief in Islam. These actions are hidden, and the Chinese officials dismiss the allegation by calling it foreign propaganda. It is, in reality, Chinese propaganda against Muslim Uyghurs.

The three ways China is addressed in the sermon are:

First, China is introduced as a friend and then immediately declared to be indifferent to the struggle of Bangladesh with Rohingya refugees, despite being an ally.

Second, China is presented as an ally of Myanmar, since it maintains

silence against Myanmar's oppression of the Rohingya population.

Third, China is introduced as a strong opponent, since it vetoed three proposals presented in the UN General Assembly for the settlement of the Rohingya Crisis.

The cleric used religion's stance to justify his position and statements, thus reasonably deemed to be religiocentric (as it defines how one's faith is considered superior to other religions). The rhetorical device used by the cleric is *pathos*—an appeal to emotion that is centered on religion.

He then alludes to the story of the Persian Layla-Majnun romance. Layla's inquiry about Majnun's starvation leads Layla to decide to send a bowl of milk every day for Majnun.²² It went on for days, but Layla became doubtful of Majnun's intention, so she then decided not to send the milk and instead asked for his blood in the bowl. Her suspicion turned out to be true, as Majnun said that upon her insistence he would never pour his blood into the bowl. Similarly, Bangladesh's friends, for instance, India, are of Majnun's kind, who are ready to devour the food but not prepared to sacrifice anything for Bangladesh's peace. Through the Layla-Majnun allusion, the cleric seeks to imply truth to the friendship between Bangladesh and other countries, specifically India and China. It alludes to India's selfishness and how it serves nothing fruitful to India and Bangladesh's friendship, which further hints toward the probability of a futile friendship between Bangladesh and China (since China is not concerned about solving the Rohingya crisis, which is taking a severe toll on Bangladesh).

The cleric further talks about the clash of Muslim countries against each other, the Muslim Brotherhood being destroyed, how Saudi Arabia and the Arab Emirates are Israel's mouthpieces, and how powerful Muslim countries are silently watching while the weaker ones are getting killed by Jewish and Christian organizations and their politics. He says the coronavirus came as a blessing from Allah to take revenge for the destruction of innocent Muslims across the world.

He also said that coronavirus is a curse to the traitors and those Muslim countries who themselves are causing pain to other Muslims and violate the code of the Brotherhood. For instance, Saudis hires Bangladeshi housemaids, some of whom are physically harmed,

²² The story of Layla and Majnun; link: <https://ums.org/2016/09/23/the-story-of-layla-and-majnun-the-idealization-of-love/>

violated, and tortured, and then sent back home as “living corpses.” The cleric alludes to the Middle Eastern countries’ abuse of domestic workers. He speaks in the sermon emotionally about the victimized, assaulted, and injured workers. He talks about the physical and sexual abuse domestic workers suffer in Saudi Arabia before being sent back home as living corpses.

Discussion

The meme analyzed in the article is termed an Internet meme. It is further evolved than general memes insofar as it accommodates GIFs, Challenges, viral videos raising awareness by fact-checking through misleading news and propaganda, viral videos from generic to the specific spread of information on various genres, etc. Internet memes are expanding in meaning, association, and voice (Laineste & Voolaid, 2016). The pervasive nature of memes extends from pop music to politics. Memes are enriched in intertextuality; the intertextuality is exemplified through the meme constructed on fear of China and concerning the spread of COVID-19. It is explicit in its xenophobia of the Chinese in the context of the spread of the pandemic. The meme discussed above is based on criticism of the food habits of the Chinese population. Chinese eat different varieties of animals as delicacies, both raw and cooked. With the onset of the virus first in China, most blamed the pandemic on China and tagged it as a “Made in China” virus. The critics come from religious and political backgrounds, often with agendas, as seen from widespread postings of hatred on social media.

Most of the COVID-19-related information on social media was mainly from non-Chinese sources, given the barrier to understanding the Chinese language and the lack of visibility of Chinese media in Bangladesh. In addition, Bangladeshi audiences cannot read their newspapers as they are primarily in Mandarin. However, a Chinese newspaper in English, namely *The South China Morning Post*, they sometimes found on Facebook.

In our analysis, we have shown how social media users and people like religious preachers in Bangladesh form their opinions about COVID-19, how their points of view are primarily ethnocentric, even claiming Chinese food habits to be inferior to theirs (Migliore et al., 2021). Interestingly, many people in Bangladesh love Chinese food, and many restaurants serve Chinese food exclusively on their menus. Before the advent of the Western fast-food chains in Bangladesh, Chinese or

Thai foods were popular and thought to be prestigious food by many middle-class Bangladeshis in urban settings such as Dhaka (Mahmud, 2019). Interestingly, the foods which have been shown in the video are mostly street foods and not a popular food in China. The video has cut and pasted various images from various sources and framed them so that any person who does not know anything about Chinese street food can generalize it negatively. Many social media posts about Chinese people's food habits represent an internalized racism many Bangladeshi Facebook users have in view of Chinese food habits. However, racism against China and Chinese people were not entirely new. Chinese people faced racism in Chinatown in the USA during the SARS epidemic (AsiaSource, 2003 cited in Mason 2015).

COVID-19 has made social media the hotbed for conspiracy theorists, racists, xenophobes, and religious fanatics alike (Theocharis et al., 2021). Much is discussed on YouTube, Facebook, and other social media, from the novel coronavirus's origin to the new world order's ideal food habits. Overall, the content in all the social media outlets shows a similar pattern in their assertions and mode of argument, but most of them come without a warrant or rational justification.

Our CDA-based analysis shows that there are several findings upon which we could form our opinions on many Bangladeshis' reactions toward China in general and concerning COVID-19 in particular. By analyzing social media content related to COVID-19, we have discovered several facts. First, we found that many social media users create or share content that is hardly based on authentic sources. The content creators or sharers (such as preachers) hardly use fact-checkers to verify any information found on the internet. Instead, it seems they take things for granted and use biased interpretations to justify their point disregarding all other arguments, facts, and interpretations. This is evident from the way religious clerics interpret the cause of COVID-19 and China, specifically connecting Islam and food habits from an ethnocentric point of view.

Second, as with Western countries,²³ in Bangladesh, there is a general vibe among social media users that China is known for censoring the expression of the general public and the available media. As a result, there is a perception that the Chinese media cannot be trusted. However, some social media users believe that to know about

²³ <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/2021-03-17-restrictions-online-freedom-expression-china-moynihan-patel.pdf>

China's situation we can only rely on the Chinese media. Nevertheless, this perception also poses a problem in identifying truthful information, viz., the language barrier, given that the language used by most of the Chinese media is the Chinese language.

Third, traditional Islamic preachers of Bangladesh have a great deal of influence over ordinary people in Bangladesh. They have a great influence in shaping the perceptions about the origin of COVID-19 and China in general. Many preachers propagated the view that the virus came to Earth because of sinners, particularly the sins of the Chinese population in their mistreatment of the Uyghur Muslim community. The use of religion in interpreting pandemics is not a new phenomenon, of course. It was evident in many societies during all major pandemics historically, for example, plague (Robertson 2020; Buchillet, 2007), cholera, and smallpox (Buchillet, 2007). Jews were blamed for spreading the plague; thus, they were restricted in their participation in the social and political spheres (Buchillet, 2007). Besides, it has also been common among many Islamic preachers to see COVID-19 as a punishment from God, primarily targeting non-Muslims and Muslims who are sinners. Video clips of such speeches are available online as shared on popular social media platforms.

Similarly, the Christian community blamed Native Americans who suffered from smallpox for committing a crime against nature (Buchillet, 2007). The plague was also seen as an example of punishment for a crime committed by the Greeks (Robertson, 2020). Thus, the example of COVID-19 in Bangladesh can be seen as a continuation of a religious manner of interpretation of the pandemic situation. This view was considered particularly true when people understood there was no cure for the disease. Thus, COVID-19 is also seen by many religious leaders as a message from God (Tervanotko, 2020)

Many Islamic preachers converse from an unbiased perspective, however. They say that we cannot blame anybody in particular, because Allah is all-wise and Allah alone has the right to have an opinion about other people's actions, especially if some try to shift the focus from finding out the source of COVID-19 scientifically to comments and reactions about the disease in relation to Chinese food habits.

Though Bangladeshi mainstream electronic²⁴ and print media²⁵ have remained comparatively neutral when reporting discussions and news on

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvIM93ESs84&t=18s>

²⁵ <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/world/article1742191.bdnews>

Chinese food habits,²⁶ social media users have been caught up in a persistent dilemma of being respectful towards Chinese food habits or expressing social criticism. Some blamed the Chinese food habits, some opined it is not right to criticize anyone's food habits, and others remarked that the virus had to happen, if not in China, then any other country (just like any other flu or pandemic). They also added that it is not wise to blame the disease on China, given that throughout history, there have been many other viruses that have been transmitted at the scale of a pandemic, but no particular country was ever held responsible for causing it. However, various communities (for example, Jews and Christians) were scapegoated in the past (Buchillet, 2007).

In the case of COVID-19, various religious groups were blamed for spreading COVID-19 in different country contexts, for example, Tablighi Jamaat in India²⁷ and a Christian community in France²⁸. International media have been exceedingly negative in their portrayal of China and the coronavirus. For instance, former US President Donald Trump resents China and encourages Americans to hate speech. He dubbed the coronavirus a "Chinese virus" or "China virus" and blamed his failure to contain the virus on China.²⁹ In terms of religion, as we have seen from the examples discussed above, some religious preachers actively blame the spread of coronavirus on Chinese food habits because the Chinese population engages in eating haram (forbidden) food. This perception is not only evident among the Muslims in Bangladesh; the Catholic church of Asia also blamed China in early 2020 for spreading the coronavirus.³⁰ This shows the global tendency to blame China.

On the other hand, some preachers opine that it is not right to comment on anyone's practices, including food consumption, as Islam is

²⁶ <https://cutt.ly/4Rd6SRI>

²⁷ <https://qz.com/india/1828919/delhis-tablighi-jamaat-event-becomes-indias-coronavirus-hotspot/> and <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/22/india-muslims-coronavirus-scapegoat-modi-hindu-nationalism/> accessed in 18 October 2021.

²⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-church-spec/special-report-five-days-of-worship-that-set-a-virus-time-bomb-in-france-idUSKBN21H0Q2> accessed in 18 October 2021.

²⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/20/coronavirus-trump-chinese-virus/>

³⁰ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/head-of-asia-s-catholic-church-blames-china-for-coronavirus-pandemic-1.4219895> accessed on 18 October 2021.

against hypocrisy, degrading talks, and other such actions. Also, some participants in media postings speak against the rampant number of alleged conspiracies involving China. A few of them said there are always baseless allegations and unproven conspiracies created against the powerful or the dominant countries.

Evidence from the research engaged here suggests that China is facing an image crisis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, findings also suggest that a positive Chinese image was on the path of being dismantled due to numerous allegations about mistreatment of the Uyghur Muslim community, censorship of media, barring free expression of Chinese citizens, and not being transparent about official numbers, be it the currency rate or the coronavirus mortality rate. The coronavirus's spread reduced China's credibility even further, as is evident in social media postings such as those reviewed here.

We think Chinese media should come forward to reach the Bangladeshi people clarifying the actual scenario. If the misinformation is not cleared, and if Bangladeshi people do not hear from the Chinese side, the propaganda and misinformation will keep piling up, creating more sociopolitical division and hatred.

Conclusion

The pandemic, which originated in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, has had a significant impact on Bangladesh, as it has on many countries worldwide. One of the leading causes of xenophobia and Sinophobia in Bangladesh was the spread of misinformation about the virus on social media. There were numerous false or misleading claims about the virus and its origins, including conspiracy theories that the virus was a bioweapon created by China or that it was not as severe as authorities were making it out to be. These claims were widely shared on social media platforms and contributed to mistrust and hostility toward China.

Another factor contributing to xenophobia and Sinophobia in Bangladesh was that China was seen as the country of origin for the virus. This led to a negative perception of China and Chinese people in Bangladesh, with many people blaming China for spreading the virus and viewing Chinese people as carriers of the disease. This perception was partly fueled by the fact that China was the first country to be hit by the virus and that it had initially tried to cover up the scale of the outbreak.

There were also deeper-seated issues that contributed to xenophobia and Sinophobia in Bangladesh. For example, some people in Bangladesh felt threatened by China's growing economic and political influence,

which fueled resentment and fear of Chinese people. Additionally, there may have been cultural and linguistic differences that contributed to misunderstandings and mistrust.

Unless there is a mechanism for curbing misinformation, disinformation, or fake news on social media and promoting tolerance and cultural relativism from the government and other organizations, xenophobia like Sinophobia during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue. Anthropologically speaking, ethnocentrism is the root cause of xenophobia. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture is superior to others, and xenophobia is the fear or hatred of people from other countries or cultures. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, ethnocentrism and xenophobia surfaced on social media in Bangladesh in early 2020 as many people began to blame China for the spread of the virus. This led to a rise in Sinophobia, or fear and hatred of Chinese people, on social media platforms in Bangladesh.

The practice of cultural relativism can prevent people from being ethnocentric or xenocentric (judging their own culture by the standards of foreign cultures) by recognizing that different cultures have unique beliefs, values, and customs and should be understood and appreciated within their own cultural context. This means acknowledging that no culture is inherently superior to others and that respecting and understanding the diversity of cultures worldwide is essential.

By practicing cultural relativism, people can become more open-minded and accepting of others rather than judging or discriminating against them based on their cultural differences. This is especially important during times of crisis, when people may be more prone to fear and mistrust others due to misinformation and propaganda. By being more understanding and accepting of other cultures, we can help to reduce the spread of xenophobia and ethnocentrism and create a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Norman Kenneth Swazo and Dr. Robert Wallace Vaggan for their valuable comments, suggestions, and editing help in this article. We also accept helpful advice from Dr. Mark Busse for his valuable comments and suggestions.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

- Anderlini, J., & Hornby, L. (2014). China overtakes US as world's largest goods trader. *Financial Times*, 10, 2014. https://relooney.com/NS3040/000_New_357.pdf
- bdnews24.com. (2020). China's Shenzhen has stopped eating cat and dog. April 2. <https://bangla.bdnews24.com/world/article1742191.bdnews>
- BBC. (2020). Who are the Uyghurs and why is China being accused of genocide? May 24. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-22278037>
- Bhorerkagoj. (2020). What a strange Chinese food! February 28. <https://cutt.ly/4Rd6SRI>
- Buchillet, D. (2007). Epidemic Diseases in the Past: History, Philosophy, and Religious Thought. In *Encyclopedia of Infectious Diseases* (pp. 517–524). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Doi:10.1002/9780470114209.ch31.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2021). Zoonotic diseases. July 1. <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/zoonotic-diseases.html>
- Chatzky, A. & McBride, J. (2019). *China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative* (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>
- Chaudhury, P. (2020). Old video of Chinese pres Xi Jinping visiting mosque shared as recent amid coronavirus outbreak. 5 February. <https://www.altnews.in/old-video-of-chinese-pres-xi-jinping-visiting-mosque-shared-as-recent-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>
- Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y., and Adames, H. Y. (2018). #Neoteriacism: exploring race-based content in social media during racially charged current events. *Rev. Interam. Psicol. Interam. J. Psychol.* 52, 3–14. doi: 10.30849/rip/ijp.v52i1.493. Doi: [10.3389/fcomm.2020.00039](https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2020.00039)
- Chen, L., Yue, T., & Zhao, X. (2018). 8 Ways Brands Can Fight Counterfeits in China. May 10. <https://hbr.org/2018/05/8-ways-brands-can-fight-counterfeits-in-china#:~:text=Together%2C%20China%20and%20Hong%20Kong,according%20to%20the%20same%20report>
- Chiu, A. (2020). Trump has no qualms about calling coronavirus the 'Chinese Virus.' That's a dangerous attitude, experts say. March 20. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/03/20/coronavirus-trump-chinese-virus/>
- Clark, W. E. Le Gros. (1968). Food habits as a practical nutrition problem. *World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics* 9:56-84.
- Croucher, S. M., Nguyen, T., & Rahmani, D. (2020). Prejudice toward Asian Americans in the COVID-19 pandemic: the effects of social media use in the United States. *Frontiers in Communication*, 5, 39. Doi:10.3389/fcomm.2020.00039.

- Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and text: Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 3(2), 193-217. Doi: 10.1177/0957926592003002004.
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language* (2nd ed., pp. 128-138). London, UK: Routledge.
- Hall, S. (1997). The Work of Representation. In S. Hall (Ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1st ed., pp. 13-74). London: UK: Sage and The Open University.
- Ho. M. (2022). The 15 Most Popular Chinese Dishes, Tasty Chinese Food. January 20. <https://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/chinese-food/eight-chinese-dishes.htm>.
- Iraj, S. (2020). The impact of coronavirus on Bangladesh's economy. February 12. <http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/236504>.
- Laineste, L., Voolaid, P. (2016). Laughing across borders: Intertextuality of internet memes. *European Journal of Humor Research*, 4 (4), 26–49. Doi: 10.7592/EJHR2016.4.4.laineste.
- Litam, S. D. A. (2020). Take your kung-flu back to Wuhan: Counseling Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders with race-based trauma related to COVID-19. *The Professional Counselor*, 10(2), 144–156. <https://tpcjournal.nbcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Pages-144-156-Litam-Take-Your-Kung-Flu-Back-to-Wuhan.pdf>.
- Macnamara, J. R. (2005). Media content analysis: Its uses, benefits and best practice methodology. *Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal*, 6(1), 1.
- Mahmud, J. (2019). *Factors Affecting The Selection of Cuisine: A Study on The Restaurant Sector of Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation). The University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Mason, K. A. (2015). "H1N1 Is Not a Chinese Virus: The Racialisation of People and Viruses in Post-SARS China." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 50(4):500–518. Doi: 10.1007/s12116-015-9198-y. <http://repository.library.du.ac.bd:8080/bitstream/handle/123456789/1567/Thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L., (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176-187. 10.1075/asj.1.2.02mcc.
- McGarry, P. (2020). Head of Asia's Catholic Church blames China for coronavirus pandemic. April 3. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/head-of-asia-s-catholic-church-blames-china-for-coronavirus-pandemic-1.4219895>
- Migliore, G., Rizzo, G., Schifani, G., Quatrosi, G., Vetri, L., & Testa, R. (2021).

- Ethnocentrism Effects on Consumers' Behavior during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Economies*, 9(4), 160. Doi: 10.3390/economies9040160.
- Moynihan, H. & Patel, C. (2021). Restrictions on online freedom of expression in China. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/2021-03-17-restrictions-online-freedom-expression-china-moynihan-patel.pdf>.
- Moran, E. F. (1975). Food, development, and man in the tropics. In M. L. Arnott, (Ed.). *Gastronomy: The Anthropology of Food and Food Habits*, (pp. 169-186). The Hague: Mouton Press.
- Nadesan, M. (2022). Crises Narratives Defining the COVID-19 Pandemic: Expert Uncertainties and Conspiratorial Sensemaking. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642221085893>.
- New York Times. (2020). China's Omnivorous Markets Are in the Eye of a Lethal Outbreak Once Again. January 25. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/25/world/asia/china-markets-coronavirus-sars.html>.
- News24. (2020). The question after spreading the virus in China: What do the Chinese eat? February 3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvIM93ESs84&t=18s>.
- Neuendorf, K. (2002). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- O'Kane, R. (2018). 20 Street Food Options Found In China (No Amount Of Money Would Make Us Try). May 14. <https://www.thetravel.com/20-street-food-options-found-in-china-no-amount-of-money-would-make-us-try/>.
- Richards, A. I. (2003). *Hunger and work in a savage tribe; a functional study of nutrition among the Southern Bantu*. London: Routledge.
- Robertson, D. J. (2020). *Socrates and the Plague of Athens: What can ancient Greece tell us about pandemic?* May 7. <https://medium.com/stoicism-philosophy-as-a-way-of-life/socrates-and-the-plague-of-athens-9c9a04481df0>.
- Sakib, S.M.N. (2020). Bangladesh confirms first case of coronavirus. March 8. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-confirms-first-case-of-coronavirus-/1758924>.
- Salaün, T. (2020). Special Report: Five days of worship that set a virus time bomb in France. March 30. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-france-church-spec/special-report-five-days-of-worship-that-set-a-virus-time-bomb-in-france-idUSKBN21H0Q2>.
- Shi, D. (2020). Sinophobia will never be the same after Covid-19. *Made in China*, 5(2), 176-183. Doi: 10.22459/mic.05.02.2020.22.
- Sharma, N. (2020). A religious congregation in Delhi could be the coronavirus hotspot India was trying to escape. March 31. <https://qz.com/india/1828919/delhis-tablighi-jamaat-event-becomes-indias-coronavirus-hotspot/>.

- Tahmasbi, F., Schild, L., Ling, C., Blackburn, J., Stringhini, G., Zhang, Y., & Zannettou, S. (2021). "Go eat a bat, Chang!": On the Emergence of Sinophobic Behavior on Web Communities in the Face of COVID-19. ArXiv: 2004.04046 [Cs]. Retrieved from: <http://arxiv.org/abs/2004.04046>.
- The Times of India. (2020). Fact check: Satellite images showing high levels of Sulphur dioxide indicate mass cremations in China. February 22. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/times-fact-check/news/fact-check-satellite-images-showing-high-levels-of-sulphur-dioxide-indicate-mass-cremations-in-china/articleshow/74130633.cms>.
- Tervanotko, H. (2020). *How the ancient Israelites dealt with epidemics — the Bible*. April 14. <https://theconversation.com/how-the-ancient-israelites-dealt-with-epidemics-the-bible-tells-of-prophecy-and-rituals-135803>.
- The Daily Star. (2020). Impact of coronavirus: onion, garlic, ginger prices rise. February 5. <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/impact-of-coronavirus-outbreak-china-onion-garlic-ginger-prices-rise-1863904>.
- Theocharis, Y., Cardenal, A., Jin, S., Aalberg, T., Hopmann, D. N., Strömbäck, J., ... & Štětka, V. (2021). Does the platform matter? Social media and COVID-19 conspiracy theory beliefs in 17 countries. *New Media & Society*, Doi:14614448211045666.
- Todhunter, E. N. (1973). Food habits, food faddism and nutrition. *World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics* 16:286-317. Doi: 10.1159/000393595.
- Yasir, S. (2020). India Is Scapegoating Muslims for the Spread of the Coronavirus. April 22. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/22/india-muslims-coronavirus-scapegoat-modi-hindu-nationalism/>.
- YouTube. (2020). Interview of coronavirus through a dream that would surprise you! March 4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=UXN8bBemeFg>.
- YouTube. (2020). What doesn't crazy say? —what doesn't Chinese eat? March 6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vczBGzxKpwk>.
- YouTube. (2020). You will be surprised to know the current situation of the Muslims in China. March 7. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sauz8XBuoR0>.
- Uddin, M. (2020). The coronavirus conundrum for Bangladesh apparel industry. February 16. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/rmg-notes/news/the-coronavirus-conundrum-bangladesh-apparel-industry-1868374>.
- UMS. (2016). The story of Layla and Majnun: The idealization of love. September 23. <https://ums.org/2016/09/23/the-story-of-layla-and-majnun-the-idealization-of-love/>.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Schiffrin, P. Tanne & H. Hamilton (Eds.). *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 352-371). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Vidgen, B., Botelho, A., Broniatowski, D., Guest, E., Hall, M., Margetts, H., et al. (2020).

- Detecting east asian prejudice on social media. *arXiv[Preprint].arXiv: 2005.03909*.
- Vltchek, A. (2020). Western Anti-Chinese Propaganda Exaggerates Coronavirus Danger, Creates Panic. February 14. https://www.globalresearch.ca/western-anti-chinese-propaganda-exaggerates-coronavirus-danger-creates-panic/5703540?utm_campaign=magnet&utm_source=article_page&utm_medium=related_articles.
- Weiss, S. (2020). Bats, snakes or pangolins? Inside the hunt for the animal behind the coronavirus outbreak. February 16. <https://www.wired.co.uk/profile/sabrina-weiss>.
- WHO. (2020). WHO's COVID-19 response. May 10. https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline?gclid=Cj0KCQjwzbv7BRDIARIsAM-A6-3942rfmKhr8nzJbHi3sgO46LmLQbty-jle7oGOOD38c1IRWD5u0blaApzVEALw_wcB#event-115.
- Wong, Y. (2020). COVID-19 and Sinophobia in Singapore. Nanyang Technological University. Retrieved from <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/10356/143012/2/CO20046.pdf>.
- Zhang, Y., & Xu, F. (2020). Ignorance, Orientalism and Sinophobia in Knowledge Production on COVID-19. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 111(3), 211-223. Doi: 10.1111/tesg.12441.
- Zhao, X. (2020). How China's state actors create a "Us vs US" world during Covid-19 pandemic on social media. *Media and Communication*, 8(2), 452-457. Doi: 10.17645/mac.v8i2.3187.
- Zhang, C. (2008). From Sinophilia to Sinophobia: China, History, and Recognition. *Colloquia Germanica*. 41(2), pp. 97-110. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/8165433/From_Sinophilia_to_Sinophobia_China_History_and_Recognition.
- Ziems, C., He, B., Soni, S., and Kumar, S. (2020). Racism is a virus: anti-asian hate and Counter-hate in social media during the covid-19 crisis. *arXiv[Preprint].arXiv: 2005.12423*.