

The Intensified Racism during Covid-19 Pandemic Period

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Abstract: This article focuses on how COVID-19 intensifies racial crises and explores the changing forms of racism. Racist issues have been alleviated in many countries. However, some deep-rooted ideas are implicated in the racial crisis and struck by the pandemic again. The Coronavirus was first identified in Wuhan, China, in 2019, and since then, the Asian community was facing mass discrimination. Some unscrupulous media and even President Trump stigmatized the Coronavirus as the “China Virus” in order to divert attention from the virus itself. Meanwhile, the black community was also suffering and striving for humane treatment. The form of racial discrimination became more violent, and George Floyd's death brought it to a climax. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to find out the role in which racism played during the pandemic and how pandemic intensifies racist behaviors and thoughts. The findings indicated that people's fear led to rampant racial discrimination. Especially this particular time, the battle shouldn't be human against human, but human against the virus, and it is important to ease the intensity of connecting disease with racial minorities. With today's global promotion of multicultural development, there is inevitably mutual cooperation and exchange between different races. Cultural inclusiveness and diversity are also discussed in the article.

1. Introduction

Racism has always been an issue in human history. In the U.S., it starts with slavery and the various Black codes and anti-Black practices - state or federal laws created that codified the inhumane practice into law. After slavery was abolished and Jim Crow segregation was outlawed, more people are embarking on the journey of anti-racism. The fight against prejudice and inequality are experiencing meaningful changes. As anti-racism is making great progress, many people argue that racial discrimination has become tender and less intensive.

However, the outbreak of COVID-19 (or SARS-COV-2) has raised concerns worldwide. It disclosed social and political conflicts within communities, with radicalized and discriminatory responses to fear, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups. The virus was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. On 30 January 2020, the WHO expressed its disapproval or even opposition to a travel or trade ban on China, in particular expressing the hope that people could trust the science and not spread rumors [1]. Slanders toward China soon followed. "I beat this crazy, horrible China virus." President Trump said in a telephone interview on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures" show. Between March and April 2020, there were about 1,500 cases of discrimination against Asian Americans, and this figure represents only 45 states in the United States [2]. It fueled racial resentment about Chinese people and veiled the severity of the epidemic situation. Racism was manipulated as a tool to misguide public attention away from the virus itself.

During this ongoing pandemic, the black community was disproportionately affected not because of biological differences among races but social factors. This brought long-lasting uninsured feeling, stress, and uncertainty to the black and was intensified by the killing of George Floyd. The large-scale demonstrations that took place in the United States created a frenzy. Rampant racism created fear, which nourished racism and xenophobia to thrive. The ongoing protests showed their frustration and desperation about social injustice as they feel weak to react to the treatment and prevention of

pandemic. In order to reduce inequalities and avoid connecting disease to social groups, this article aims to investigate why pandemic exacerbates the intensity of racial discrimination and why the form of racism changes from subtle to destructive. It focuses on the stigmatization of COVID-19 and the death of George Floyd, which are believed to be the two most prominent events that accelerated the racial crisis.

2. Stigmatization

Stigmatization is used to explain the statement that links Covid-19 with Chinese people, which incites racial discrimination. Stigma distorts people's risk perception, which will lead to the fundamental destruction of the positive image of things, people, or institutions. In serious cases, the daily standards of justice, fairness, and safety are irrationally overturned, and most people are only concerned with the anomaly of the event and the meanness of the consequences [3]. At this time, the public will naturally condemn the ability to deal with risks, and even unrest on the legal basis of risk management, resulting in a huge discord socially, economically, and politically [3]. Stigmatized objects are given different and unpleasant characteristics from other objects, and in extreme cases, the object is seen as a very bad and dangerous synonym. This characteristic makes it universally shameful. Based on a particular perception of risk, it can spread quickly before many dangerous outcomes are proven. Besides, under the role of the modern highly developed network, dangerous labels will quickly spread out. The signs of stigma are easy to be recognized. Once this special relationship is formed, it will continue to develop and eventually become a cultural prejudice, and the solidified values are difficult to be eliminated in a short time. In other words, the stigma built up in a society tends to translate into structural cultural fixations. If attention to the object of the stigma becomes part of everyday life, nowhere can escape its influence. In the end, it is hard to justify stigmatized people, even if the institutions involved the use of social, economic, and political power [3].

3. Stigmatization as A Tool by Authorities

Incidents of racism have undoubtedly become the catalyst for this global health crisis. Authoritative roles could easily use racial discrimination as a source of power that creates bias and stigma. In a public interview, President Trump has stigmatized Covid-19 as the "Chinese virus". This act has led to mass racial discrimination. Fox host Jesse Watters came on the news and demanded a formal apology from the Chinese. In addition, he said, "Chinese people are hungry, and there are many markets where they can eat raw bats. The food they eat is raw and unsafe. That's why scientists say the virus came from China." On HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher," host Bill Maher said, "We should call the Coronavirus as Chinese virus because it originated in China. This country has a habit that can kill millions of people. This is not the first virus that has come out of China - SARS, bird flu, Hong Kong flu, Asian flu. All of these authorities say that coronavirus came from bats. However, the source of the virus has not yet been discovered. In the course of our socialization, everyone has the potential to learn discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. The question is whether we can resist that possibility and learn to be rational about others.

4. Black Community Situation

As the epidemic spread across the United States, both health agencies and the media found that a research indicated that the proportion of infections among colored people in the general phenomenon in the United States was completely out of proportion to their share of the population structure [4]. Even found that the difference in infection rates between races was just huge in just twelve states in the States [5]. According to a report from New York City on April 24, 2020, published data showed that known deaths among blacks were essentially twice as high as those among whites [6]. The income disparity, racial discrimination, violence, and institutional racism exacerbate the stress on colored people, weakening their immunity and making them more susceptible to infectious diseases. The American history of public health is inextricably linked to the inequalities in health status between

different racial groups and their social status [7]. In Minnesota, the epicenter of the protests, 16 percent of the roughly 23,000 Covid-19 cases are African American, according to statistics, compared with 7 percent of Minnesota's population. Nationally, African Americans are 2.4 times more likely to die from Covid-19 than whites. According to APM Research Lab, 1 in 735 Black Americans has died (or 136.5 deaths per 100,000), while 1 in 1,030 White Americans has died (or 97.2 deaths per 100,000).

This sudden outbreak of a global racial crisis has exacerbated the spread of the virus, fueled not only by discrimination, but also by the huge disparities caused by inequalities in wealth and job opportunities, thus laying the seeds of the crisis. Racial discrimination does not only occur now, and not just against Chinese or black people. In a globalized society, everyone has the potential to learn discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. The critical issue is whether and how well that possibility is restrained and learn to treat others rationally. Psychologist John Dollard noted that people are more prone to prejudice when they encounter frustration, and blame Scapegoat when they face it [8]. This subconscious mentality is to take out what they see as disadvantaged groups, such as Chinese and blacks, by making unfounded accusations and constantly distributing discriminatory remarks.

Through the overcrowded living conditions and lack of stable health insurance make it even worse for colored people to be hit by epidemics, the result of long-standing racist policies. Allocating health care resources effectively and reducing racial health disparities are important to society [9]. Racial issues are deeply rooted in the country and even in all immigrant countries, and the discrimination experienced by colored people in the US is a matter of concern. Whether due to hygiene, health or living conditions, the black population was more susceptible to chronic diseases, and the lack of health care for the underprivileged was a major concern. In times of pandemics, they are the most vulnerable group.

5. Death of George Floyd

The years of "institutional injustice" suffered by colored people are being exposed in the face of the epidemic, and the George Floyd incident is the trigger for the 2020 racial crisis. This incident inflamed social unrest -- thousands of people came down to the streets to protest Police brutality. The stress is especially severe in the African-American community. The outbreak has not only worsened the economic situation of some African Americans but also put them at greater risk because of their poor access to health care.

The "Black Lives Matter" protest that was sparked by the death of African-American citizen Floyd was racist in nature, but at heart, it was a reflection of the discontent of African-American minorities with the disparities in employment, education, health care, and social welfare that the epidemic has magnified. Floyd's death is more like a rending of the scars of America's racial history and a long-suppressed outburst on human rights in the States.

Under the pandemic, unsettled citizens are all in a panic mood, and they want to release their emotions. Floyd's death seems to become a trigger for anger. Therefore, racism pandemic acts as a catalyst. The Floyd riots will make the epidemic worse and the health problems faced by people of color even worse, before the virus is fully contained; but despite these dangers, the masses continue to fight for equality and freedom, widening the deeper social tensions of race in America. And now this long piled up racial crisis is an infinite panic squeezed underneath the passing of the peace. The outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic was accompanied by a concentration of negative information and psychological stress, which according to experimental studies changed with the degree of the outbreak, with feelings of anxiety, depression, frustration, and irritability all being expressions of the negative effects [10].

The stress is especially severe in the African-American community. The outbreak has not only worsened the economic situation of some African Americans but also put them at greater risk because of their poor access to health care. While there have been many accidental deaths of black people throughout history, this incident was a civil dispute that led to a global campaign against racism, the root cause of which was the discriminatory mentality of a multicultural environment in a country of immigrants, an unequal social system and a history of national development. Despite a history of countless heroes who have fought for equality for people of color, this situation has not been alleviated

and has instead become the trigger for a global event. While the global fight against the new coronavirus is ongoing, there is also a group of people who are fighting for equitable rights and opportunities for colored people, which for many is also a way of downplaying the changes brought about by the epidemic and relying more on the changes brought about by the racial crisis.

6. Conclusion

During the pandemic, racism was used as a political tool and has become rampant and violent. While people do not realize the severity of racism under epidemic conditions, many black people and Asians are impacted both mentally and physically. Through the analysis of the development of stigma and the racial crisis that erupted from ethnic minorities during the pandemic, what really affected race relations can be concluded not only as a result of racial differences but also in the spread and promotion of racial superiority and rumors, rights to education, the gap between rich and poor, social welfare and other covert or even public manifestations. Racism during the pandemic has become more violent, and it is a distraction in this particular period. The evolution of racism's form change is heartbreaking to witness. The pain and stigma experienced by the minorities during this time will be a reminding alert. However, only after painful events can people and civilization make progress. The position of minorities in society will change over time and through numerous struggles. Multicultural society has become synonymous with modern society, representing not only the inclusiveness of the nation but also expressing the goal of a sustainable society for the future. At this particular time, the battle should be between humans and viruses, not between the different races, to promote global cooperation in the fight against the epidemic.

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