The Impact of Covid-19 Blame Game Towards Anti-Asian Discrimination Phenomena

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to explain how the relationship between foreign policies based on the 'Blame Game' could affect the social conditions of society, especially in terms of discrimination against people of Asian descent. The act of accusing each other by Western countries against China over who should actually be responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic has made international political conditions more tense and heated. China's defensive foreign policy strategy turned out to be aggressive and even creates a distortion of information regarding the truth of the origins of the pandemic. So the result is a Blame Game that is destructive, uncooperative, and actually makes problems unresolved where to deal with a global pandemic requires collective action. This is also leads to the increase of discrimination acts towards Asian community. This paper uses an explanatory-qualitative method, with data collection techniques through literature study. Constructivism theory and the concept of Political Racism are used as an analytical tool to explain how the relationship between the research variable. As the result, political elites create identities through the blaming game on various media platforms especially social media, which impacts on the creation of xenophobic perceptions towards the Asian community.

Keywords: anti-asian discrimination, covid-19 blame game, constructivism, political racism.

Paper type: Research paper

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INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic that occurred in 2020 has caused unstable global conditions both from a political perspective to a social aspect. China, which is the epicenter of the spread of the virus, has become the international spotlight because the outbreak took a toll on 1800 people and infected 75,000 people in just 40 days (Khan et al. 2020). The virus did not only transmit within China but also spread to 186 other countries within a span of 6 months (Ali et al. 2020). With this situation, the international world is in a global pandemic situation due to the vast scale, reach, and scope of the spread of the virus itself.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made the political elites create narrations to blame certain parties/institutions that are accused of being responsible for the current global chaos, often called a ‘blame game’. Political elites (politicians, policymakers, advisers, etc.) have strong control and influence in shaping public perceptions, especially amidst the rapid spread of information flow through social media which now cannot be separated from each individual's life. Moreover, politics cannot be separated from the narrative process which aims to make an idea/value be accepted or rejected by the public. The narrative process itself has become a political tool that can be used to justify the behavior of the political elites, even though it also has a function as a tool to win public perception (Asril 2013). So, both narrations that have positive and negative connotations will have an impact on the formation of public opinion.

Through the practice of the ‘blame game’, political elites could create a certain narration to shift responsibilities onto others; finds a scapegoat, and pinpoints a target. In a broader scope such as international relations, the political elites (politicians, policymakers, advisers, etc.) tend to do a blame game to avoid the accusation of failure by the domestic public for their incompetency in handling the Covid-19. It is these interests that can encourage political elites to create narrations such as blaming each other, and even spreading conspiracy theories to the public so that they can influence many parties to discredit certain parties/countries who are accused of being the cause of this pandemic problem (Flinders 2020).

The stigmatization of the Covid-19 virus carried out by political elites through certain narrations turned out to affect public opinion, either directly or
indirectly. Narrations that carried out by various political elites from various countries in the world, one of which is Donald Trump who calls the Covid-19 virus the "Chinese Virus", "Kung Flu", "Wuhan Virus" and various other negative mentions that are spread through social media and news channel is a form of xenophobic and racist narrative (Benjamin 2021). The speech has connotations that seem to be scapegoating a certain institution or community—which in this case is China and the Asian community as if to be the source of this problem.

After the blaming game carried out by Donald Trump, the negative stigma received by the Asian community shows a significant increase. In March 2020, it was reported that 14% of Asian Americans in the US experienced discriminatory behavior, violence, and racism (Gao and Liu 2021). In addition, 31% of Asian-Americans were also targeted by racist ridicule and 39% of these communities experienced alienation from other communities. According to the AAPI (Asian Americans-Pacific Islanders), there were 4000 reports of hate speech incidents from the start of the pandemic to March 2021, an increase of 149% compared to the 2019 total (Jeung et al. 2021). These numbers indicate that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused (even exacerbated) the level of xenophobia of the local community towards a particular ethnic/community. It can be said that the issue of discrimination against the Asian community or in general is not just a domestic problem, but a global problem that needs to be addressed together.

So it can be seen that Covid-19 is not just a pandemic that only makes an impact in the context of health, but the existence of political segregation between countries and social discrimination in society indicates that this phenomenon is a complex event. This study aims to find out how the impact of the blame game by political elites on the occurrence of discrimination against the Asian community. Therefore, the crucial issue that will be described in this article is "how the Covid-19 blame game could impact the Asian community and create discrimination towards them?".

Based on these research questions, this study will use the concept of Political Racism and the Constructivism theory in analyzing the blame game during the Covid-19 pandemic and its relationship to increasing anti-Asian discrimination behavior, in order to answer the research question. Political racism itself is a term that was born from "Political Elite" and "Racism". There is no
standard definition of political racism, but in understanding it we must first know the two terms. Based on this definition, racism, or what can be called a racist ideology is a perception that classifies races into an implicit racial hierarchy (Howard 2007). The existence of racism will make a group experience oppression both morally and materially. The racial hierarchy of racism can also form a group relationship that influences public policy and political mobilization. This is in line with the argument that social domination is established and maintained throughout the social system. A clear example of this practice occurs in Caribbean society, where the white race is the 'upper class', in contrast to the black race which is considered to be 'lower class', as well as mixed races who belong to the 'middle class'. The existence of this racial hierarchy is a classification with an unclear basis in determining the fate of groups and individuals and can raise problems if used politically (Howard 2007).

Racism can cause various problems, where racial violence or racial discrimination as one example. Racial violence is the behavior of oppressing a person or group based on a racial hierarchy or a justification based on race, both physically and verbally. Racial violence emphasizes the existence of power and strengthening authority over a group having a low and wrong position in some respects, and violence against them means 'natural defense'. The racial discrimination that occurs in society is an emphasis that racism exists at all scales, which is inherent in individuals, groups, and regulations, in everyday life (Howard 2007).

Racism can emerge quickly because of the existence of the political elite. By definition, political elites are politicians and bureaucrats who have a central role in society, such as in terms of policymaking. In this case, the political elite can shape policies or actions against certain immigrants or ethnicities. In dealing with a situation, politicians are the people who should explain the situation to the public. However, this can give rise to problems such as political racism if it is done by marginalizing an ethnicity or race. Actions of politicians toward the public (speeches, news, press releases, etc.) are a form of political discourse that can influence social, mental, ideological, knowledge, action, interaction, and dialogue from the community. Thus, there is a possibility that political elites produce prejudice and racism in society (Van Dijk 1997).
To clarify the explanation regarding the formation of racism by politicians can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.**

The process of forming racism by political elites (van Dijk 1997)

![Diagram of the process of forming racism by political elites](image)

Politicians can form racism when there is political discourse such as topics on race, ethnicity, immigrants, refugees, and other minorities, and provide arguments or responses that they are a source of social problems and threats. This political discourse affects the media so that it spreads to society and leads to the formation of public opinion that leads to hatred (Van Dijk 1997). This research uses political racism in explaining the formation of anti-Asian discrimination during the Covid-19 pandemic so that it can explain the various actors involved and explain the forms of racism that exist against Asian descendants during the pandemic.

Constructivism is a theoretical approach or perspective in International Relations Studies that was popular in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War. Along with the emergence of non-state actors, the development of international issues has also become one of the factors for this approach to look at. The inability of neo-realists and neo-liberals to explain emerging international issues makes constructivists an alternative in explaining these issues. Neo-realists and neo-liberals can only explore how interests can be realized, but cannot explain how interest is formed (Dugis 2016).

According to Alexander Wendt, constructivism is a structural theory based on the assumption that actors are socially coupled. The basic assumptions of constructivists, namely, ideas, norms, and identities, are non-material aspects that can shape the actions of an actor in international relations. Identity is the basis of interest, which will determine action. This explains that the interests of the state are formed according to the identity of the country, where the identity itself is formed by actors within the country through existing ideas and norms.
Constructivists do not ignore the influence and role of material forces (military capability, economy, etc.), but assume that a set of ideas contained in international norms also determines how actors act in the international world. State and non-state actors are considered as ‘agents’ and the international community as ‘structures’, these two aspects cannot be separated, because basically, the actors themselves create the international world order through agreed ideas and norms (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 2001).

Constructivists put forward shared meanings and interpretations as essential analytical components behind the actions of actors. This can be seen from the constructivist assumption that non-material structures can influence the way actors think in determining what actions can be taken and what actions cannot be taken in achieving a goal. For example country A considers country B as an ally, so it doesn't matter to let it produce weapons, but country A considers country C as an enemy, so it prohibits country C from producing weapons because it is considered to be a threat to country A (Reus-Smit 2005). In the case of anti-Asian discrimination, constructivism can explain the actors in constructing public thought and shaping the identity of anti-Asian discrimination.

This study uses several previous studies as a reference for comparison so that it can find research gaps and differences such as the use of theories, concepts, and the results obtained. Regarding the phenomena of anti-Asia discrimination that occured, Cary Wu explains that during the pandemic hate crimes against Asian descendants are increased significantly especially in the United States, where the highest number of cases of discrimination occurred among Asian-American and Asian immigrants who were discriminated against in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic (Wu, Qian, and Wilkes 2021). Tyler T. Reny and Matt A. Barreto supported the explanation that there was a link between the Covid-19 pandemic conditions which led to stigmatization, violence, and discrimination against Asian descendants. In addition, there is evidence that anti-Asian behavior is related to xenophobia and policy preferences (Reny and Barreto 2020). Jianhua Xu also added an explanation regarding the existence of stigma, discrimination, and hate crimes against the Chinese-speaking community, and even there are also cases of discrimination within China itself (Xu et al. 2021). Jakovljevic also describes that Covid-19 is not just a pandemic, but it is also an infodemic because nowadays the information about the virus itself is almost hard
to divide between the truth and false information, and then the politicians with various interests use misinformation and blame games as tools to gain influence among people, leading to an unhealthy and unhappy society (Jakovljevic et al. 2020).

The previous studies also explain how blame game practices have occurred, Binoy Kampmark shows that the blame game of natural diseases in history is a common occurrence, but the Covid-19 blame game has created a pandemic lawfare that erodes China's sovereignty with international investigations and demands for compensation by rival countries (Kampmark 2020). That also explains why the United States is doing such maneuver to China because in research by Chereen Shurafa, the Trump administration wants to hold their reputation and power against the critics and blame the Democrats for their incompetency in handling the increasing Covid-19 cases. To maintain power and electability for the upcoming election, their strategy is by throwing the blame on China as a causal problem and creating conspiracy theories among the public (Shurafa, Darwish, and Zaghouani 2020). The media are also having a significant role in this blame game practice, where the US media outlets such as New York Times tend to have pro-Trump narrations against China, while at the same time the state-controlled media like Xinhua from China are having an opposing narration against Trump’s rhetorics. The media framing of Covid-19 plays a significant role to shape public opinions (Meydianto 2020).

Various statements blaming China for the spread of Covid-19 that were thrown out to the public made a shift in China's narrative and attitude. This is explained by Lye Liang Fook in his research which in the early days of the spread of Covid-19, China's narrative and attitude tended to be more cautious and defensive, but then changed to be offended and aggressive after the Covid-19 blame game on China (Fook 2020). There have been various world responses to the Covid-19 blame game phenomenon, including many world politicians and scholars who demonising China for the origin and spread of Covid-19. But Allan Behm explains that the blame game will not produce the results demanded by the global community, and suggest the key to solved coronavirus problem is through active, confident, and constructive international diplomacy, as well as promoting truth and humanity (Behm 2020).
Previous research has explained how the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society in many countries, such as the emergence of xenophobic phenomena, stigmatization, and discrimination of Chinese and Asian descent. In addition, previous research has generally discussed the blame game phenomenon during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, previous research has not explained in detail the connection between the Covid-19 blame game from world politicians on the emergence of anti-Asian discrimination trends. This is important to know because the phenomenon of anti-Asian discrimination during the Covid-19 pandemic often continues to occur. It is necessary to have an academic study that explains the causes of this phenomenon and then becomes a consideration for solutions that can be taken.

METHOD

This article uses an explanative-qualitative method in explaining the relationship between variables where the X variable is “the Covid-19 blame game” while the Y variable is “anti-Asian discrimination”. This article uses secondary data collection technique based on various literature studies, including collecting data from journals that discussed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society, books or e-books that explains used theories and concepts, various reports on the increase in racism cases in various countries, etc to enrich the findings of Covid-19 and the blame game practices, as well as its impact on social behavior. In addition, literatures on Political Racism and Constructivism approach are used as an analytical tool to link the causes between the construction of discriminating political discourses by several world leaders in media and the impact on the Asian community. The stages of analysis techniques in this research are data collection, data presentation, and concluding.

To understand the research design in this article, the author uses a fishbone model analysis diagram which serves to categorize various potential causes and analyze them to find out the details of an existing process.
The Figure 2. diagram shows that an Anti-Asian discrimination phenomenon is a form of causality process. The combination of factors starting from the existence of Covid-19, which led to the Blame Game practice by political elites from various countries, to the impact on changes in people's social behavior from the negative stigmatization that had been created, is a series of processes that caused Anti-Asian discrimination phenomena. Therefore, it is important to know the linkage between causal and effect factor and explain the empirical impacts that already happened in society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The Covid-19 Blame Game

Blame games during the Covid-19 pandemic were carried out by political elites in various countries. This is because many countries have been affected as a result of this pandemic, making the political elite (as one of the main actors) create narratives that blame certain parties/institutions who are accused of being
responsible for the current global chaos. This practice of cornering parties through narrative/speech is what is called the 'blame game'. The cause of the blame game during the Covid-19 period is due to the unclear origin of the Covid-19 virus. China as the country that was first hit by this virus then did not recognize that the virus came from its territory (Winter 2020). This lack of clarity was followed by the spread of the Covid-19 virus, which is increasingly widespread in various countries and has harmed various areas of life.

Responding to the uncertainty of the source of the Covid-19 virus, political elites in various countries then issued statements that cornered them. The United States through President Donald Trump, cornered China by saying that the Covid-19 virus originated in China and possibly came from a lab leak in Wuhan, so Trump called Covid-19 the "Kung Flu", "Chinese Virus", and "Wuhan Virus" (Benjamin 2021). Donald Trump's statement then made China respond strongly, and in turn blamed the United States as the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus (Davey 2020). Then it continued to other countries that also blamed China, thus provoking China to respond strongly again, until this condition happened again and again. More clearly can be seen in the following image:

**Figure 3.**

**Blame Game during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Based on this Figure 3., it can be seen that the blame game stems from the United States' statement regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which then made China respond firmly and reject the accusation. China, through the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Cui Tiankai, strongly condemned Trump's statement, then explained that what Trump was doing was very dangerous, and could affect the relationship between the United States and China in the future (Winter 2020). Then, the situation was exacerbated by a statement from Zhao
Lijian, a spokesman from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in his tweet saying that the United States army who brought the Covid-19 virus to Wuhan, also said that the possibility of the Covid-19 virus came from the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in the United States (Davey 2020).

The endless debate between the United States and China led to various statements by politicians in various countries blaming China for the Covid-19 virus. Among them is hate speech by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, which is a form of Sinophobic sentiment that aims to create a public narrative to discriminate and corner China. Bolsonaro's views have received support from several political elites in Brazil, such as Brazil's Minister of Economy Paulo Guedes, who said that China was the creator of Covid-19, and also supported by Minister of Education Abraham Weintraub, who supported the theory that the Covid-19 pandemic stems from a virus lab leak in China (Quinan, Araujo, and De Albuquerque 2021).

Politicians from various countries in Europe, namely Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, gave many statements blaming China for the Covid-19 pandemic, thus further clouding the blame game. In Germany, various parties openly blame China for the Covid-19 pandemic, then criticize the improper handling of the spread of Covid-19 in China (Seaman 2020). In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Boris Johnson commented on the subject of the Covid-19 pandemic, in which he stated that: "I think it's pretty clear that most of the evidence pointing to this disease (Covid-19) comes from Wuhan." (Global Times 2021). Then, in Italy, a politician and also the Chair of the Italian Government Opposition Matteo Salvini stated that "If China finds out about the virus, then China can be prosecuted for crimes against humanity" while sharing a video in 2015 which is considered to be a documentation of the origin of the Covid-19 virus (Seaman 2020).

The many responses from various countries that blamed China for the origin and spread of the Covid-19 virus, made China to do a "blame-shifting" strategy, which means removing and changing the stigma of these bad countries from China. The method used in shifting blame is to make reports, research, or news about the true origin of the Covid-19 virus (Verma 2020). It has been noted that the Chinese media have repeatedly blamed other countries as the origin of the
Covid-19 virus, including other than the United States, namely India and Australia. Various local Chinese media reports are saying that Chinese researchers explained that the Covid-19 virus could have originated in India (Indian Times 2020). Then, various reports and investigative reports from the Global Times as the Chinese media blamed Australia as the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which accusations were based on the presence of imported Australian frozen meat in the Wuhan market as the first place where the Covid-19 case was detected (WION Web Team 2021).

The blame game regarding the origin of Covid-19 still continues after all. During the administration of the new President of the United States, namely Joe Biden, the United States again demanded about the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which then resumed the blame game round. President Joe Biden wants further reports on the origin of the Covid-19 virus, one of which is thought to have originated from a leak at the Virology Laboratory in Wuhan, China (Horton 2021). President Joe Biden's request was then supported by the World Health Organization (WHO) to conduct further studies and investigations regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus in Wuhan. But China refused because the request "ignores common sense and goes against science." (CNBC 2021).

**The Blame Game Practices of Political Elites**

We argue that the blame game regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus that has been described above is the result of the product of the political elite which forms political discourse to construct public thoughts/opinions about China as the origin of the Covid-19 virus. On the other hand, China is also doing the same thing where political elites shape political discourse and then together with the Chinese media try to eliminate the image of China as the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus, by rejecting all accusations against it and forming accusations about the origin of the Covid-19 virus, actually from another country.

We also argue that the blame game regarding the origin of the Covid-19 virus, which is mostly targeted at China, has other impacts such as the increasing phenomenon of anti-Asian discrimination. The relationship between the blame game and anti-Asian discrimination can be seen through a study of the theoretical framework of Political Racism and Constructivism, which can be seen in Figure 4.
Figure 4.
The process of the formation of the Anti-Asian discrimination Stigma during the Covid-19 pandemic

Political Elite
Donald Trump, Boborano, Matteo Salvini, etc.

Political Discourse
Chinese Virus, Wuhan Virus, Covid-19 made by China, etc.

Blame Game by U.S.; Other country Political Elites, and China

Media
Online news, social media, newspapers ex: La Pieghe, etc.

Construct Public Opinion in Worldwide

Anti-Asian Discrimination Stigma

and influence in shaping public perceptions, especially in the rapid spread of information flow through social media which is now part of the life of each individual. Political elites carry out a narrative process that aims to create an idea/value so that it can shape public opinion. Narratives or political discourses created by political elites can win public perception, thereby achieving their goals in the formation of these narratives (Asril 2013). Based on this, it can be seen that political discourse from Donald Trump and political elites from other countries has succeeded in forming a stigma that China is the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus, which can be seen from the persistence of this stigma.

The most influential stigmatization of the Covid-19 virus against China is the stigma of Donald Trump. This is because Donald Trump, who is the first political elite to publicly confirm that China is the source of the Covid-19 virus by calling the virus the "Chinese Virus", "Kung Flu", "Wuhan Virus" and various other negative mentions that are spread through the internet. Social media and news channels are forms of xenophobic and racist narrative (Benjamin 2021). The utterance has a connotation that seems to form the image of China as scapegoating the problem of the Covid-19 pandemic which has spread widely.

Donald Trump's political discourse and stigmatization of China is a political maneuver that aims to realize Trump's political jargon, namely "America First" by creating a political discourse that discriminates against and corners certain groups. Moreover, the US mainstream media also serves to serve and promote these political agendas, such as the Wall Street Journal (WSJ), the New York Times, and The Washington Post (Jia and Lu 2021). Then, the agenda/political discourse was further strengthened by the support of political elites from other countries for Trump's statement.
The influence exerted by the political elite that has been described previously has an impact on the formation of community stigma, this is because the political elite has strong power and influence, so that it can construct public opinion. Political discourses that are launched are a strategy to create a public perception that China is a threat to the country's domestic situation, and this is supported by the media framing process (Merrienboer 2020). On the other hand, China is also doing media framing in shaping its image as not the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus. However, the implication of the blame game in various countries is that there is an increase in the stigma and crime of anti-Asian discrimination in various countries in the world.

**Anti-Asian Discrimination Rising Trend**

The narration process carried out by political elites has an impact on increasing racism and discrimination in various countries. Then it also encourages the intensification of violent practices, and the occurrence of public anxiety, especially among those of Asian descent, who become afraid of being discriminated against and feel pressured over their physical appearance which confirms their racial identity (Park 2021). This is related to the political discourse carried out by the political elite, which then creates a racist community condition and attacks based on xenophobics everywhere (Benjamin 2021). Degrading treatment includes prejudice and ridicule based on race, harassment against people of Asian race such as spitting, as well as hateful acts justified by law as the definition of hate crime experienced by Asian communities in various places.

Various cases of racism in various countries increased after the blame game. For example, many Asian citizens in Australia have become targets of hate that occurs both in daily life and in cyberspace, many individuals become victims of hate-based violence which even has an impact on the decline in Chinese restaurant businesses founded by people of Asian descent by 70 % (Zatira and Prakoso 2020). This also has an impact on the Asian community in the US, which often experiences violence which can be seen from the 4000 reports to the AAPI, and the worst was when a shooting occurred in Atlanta which killed 6 (six) people of Asian descent (Lynch and Volcovici 2021).

In addition, in Brazil, after Bolsonaro's anti-Asian rhetoric received support from other political elites, it then had an impact on the lives of the Asian
community in Brazil, where they were also targeted by local people's hatred (Fleck 2021). In Europe, various countries are experiencing an increasing trend of anti-Asian discrimination, one of which is the UK, where the Asian community experienced a 16% increase in hate crime rates in March 2020, compared to February 2020 with only 3-7% (Gray and Hansen 2021).

There are also increasing cases of anti-Asian discrimination in countries such as Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and others. Based on September 2020 data, Canada has more than 600 reports of incidents of racism against Asian descent, of which 70% of the victims are women. The racist behavior that occurs covers 65% of verbal abuse such as racial insults, threats, and negative comments, and 30% includes attacks such as physical violence, spitting, and coughing (Project 1907 2021). In New Zealand, the Human Rights Commission reports that there is 54% racial discrimination against Chinese descent. In the United Kingdom, there has been a sharp increase in hate crimes against Chinese, East Asians, and Southeast Asians, by 300% since the lockdown was imposed in May 2020 (Haynes 2021).

**Media as a Strengthening Factor of the Anti-Asian Discrimination?**

Negative political discourses such as discrimination against certain ethnicity that thrown by the political elite to the public, affecting the creation of anti-Asian discrimination behavior in society. This is even worse because the people who have constructed their thoughts are racist toward Asian descent, and discriminate against them both directly and through social media. Anti-Asian discrimination that is rampant on social media shows how big the influence of racist discourse created and spread by the political elite through various social media. On Twitter, there has been an increase in hate speech against the Asian community, which is marked by an increase in the use of hashtags that say "Kung-Flu" "Chinese Virus" to "Ching-Chong" by 222,221,841 tweets and 16,808,191 posts on Twitter (Litam 2020). Of course, this has an impact on psychological things such as stress, anxiety, and even inhibits someone from seeking medical services to the inhibition of work productivity cycles in the office because they are worried about discriminatory treatment (Gao and Liu 2021).
The increasing trend of anti-Asian discrimination that has been described above is the impact of the existence of racist discourses thrown by the political elite to the public through media as a political tool to form an anti-Asian discrimination identity. This is supported by the research of Azmi, et. al. explain that politicians often use social media to express their opinions to their supporters and to the public in general (Azmi, Sylvia, and Mardhiah 2018). Social media is a tool in a conflict between political actors, thus making the political discourse disseminated to the public wider. If it is applied to the blame game Covid-19 phenomenon, then social media strengthens the spread of the blame game and anti-Asian racist discourse in it, so that the next impact that arises is the spread and formation of racist identities in society which results in anti-Asian discriminatory behavior.

The bonding of social media to the life of each individual makes the use of the media as a political tool to spread various kinds of narratives even more effective. During the current pandemic, the significant role of social media in shaping public perception is an unavoidable situation, especially when information about health and developments related to the pandemic is channeled through the platform. The existence of this moment is used by many media (especially in the West) to label and generalize Asian ethnicity as the Chinese race which is suspected to be the cause of the Covid-19 pandemic. Coupled with the use of repetitive narratives such as the use of the dictions 'Kung-flu' and 'Chinese virus', the negative stigmatization sticks in the public's mind. This habit has made negative labeling of Asian ethnicity is a common thing and impacted people's perceptions of the Asian community which is directly tied to certain stigmatizations.

This is in line with the findings by Ittefaq et al., which state that the mindset of the people (especially in Western countries) has been constructed in such a way thanks to the massive bias information spread by various media channels, both online and conventional media (Ittefaq et al. 2022). The construction of this mindset has led to various unpleasant behaviors towards the Asian ethnic community, ranging from jokes about labeling an individual as a virus, to hateful and violent behavior directed specifically at individuals of Asian ethnicity. Coupled with the existence of racist narratives published in the media by various state leaders such as Donald Trump, which increasingly worsen the
situation. So this strengthens the argument that social media also contributes to the phenomenon of discrimination against the Asian community thanks to the existence of strong negative narratives that shape public opinion significantly.

CONCLUSION

The Blame game about the origin of the Covid-19 virus is a political discourse from the political elite which forms the construct of public opinion towards China as the country of origin of the Covid-19 virus. Prolonged blame games will increase political discourse, increase the construction of public opinion through social media, and will also increase anti-Asian discrimination in various countries. This is because China is the target of many political elites to blame when discussing the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. To stop the increase in anti-Asian discrimination in various countries, the political elites of countries should stop issuing political discourses in the media that could corner China and increase anti-Asian discrimination. In addition, on the other hand, China must also be able to stop acting aggressively by shifting the blame to other countries. This is because that method will not make the blame game situation better, instead the blame game will get worse. So, to solve the problem of the Covid-19 pandemic and anti-Asian discrimination, it should take a collective action to reduce political discourses that can trigger the blame game, and start building neutral communication and working together to deal with Covid-19 problems, both bilaterally, multilaterally, and through WHO. This research has limitations in the scope of the analysis which only covers the behavior of the political elite during the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the increase in anti-Asian discrimination in society. Therefore, further research is expected to be able to explain and analyze the efforts of both state and non-state actors in reducing the level of anti-Asian discrimination, both in the real world and on social media.

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