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Global Tweets, COVID-19 Outbreaks and Xenophobic Discriminations of Africans in China

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ABSTRACT The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global systems, leading to a surge in xenophobic attacks against Africans in China. This study investigates global tweets from January 2020 to June 2020 to understand the pertinent issues and recurring tones of discourse during the incidents. Utilising media dependency theory, the role of x.com as a platform for protest and crisis communication was analysed. Digital ethnography was employed to gather qualitative and quantitative data from purposively sampled tweets. Most tweets addressed the origins and spread of COVID-19, the socio-economic impacts of the attacks, and the responses from various stakeholders. The predominant tones were pessimistic, characterised by distrust, fear, and anger. Furthermore, social media was confirmed as useful for raising awareness and shaping public opinion, particularly during crises. The study recommends the development of media literacy skills, and the implementation of strong local and international policies to address the public health and social crisis.