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# Moral foundations are better predictors of belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories than the Big Five personality traits

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Upon the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, various conspiracy theories regarding the virus proliferated in the social media. This study focused on the sociodemographic, personality, and moral predictors of these beliefs. More specifically, we asked whether moral values predict belief in COVID-19 conspiracy theories over and above sociodemographic variables and the Big Five personality traits. According to Moral Foundations Theory, five cross-cultural moral foundations are more broadly categorized under individualizing (Care & Fairness) and binding (Loyalty, Authority, & Sanctity) foundations. A sixth moral foundation was Liberty which we included along with binding and individualizing foundations. Participants were 227 Iranians (mean age=31.43, SD=12.61, 75.3% female) who responded to Moral Foundations Questionnaire and Liberty items, a range of COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs, and the 10-Item Personality Measure of the Big Five. Among demographic variables, religiosity and socioeconomic status were the strongest determinants of conspiracy beliefs regarding the origin of Coronavirus. Among the Big Five, only extraversion predicted these beliefs in a positive direction. Moral foundations, most notably Authority and Sanctity, showed incremental predictive power over both demographic variables and the Big Five personality traits. Findings are discussed in light of the role of social media in dissemination of conspiracy beliefs regarding the pandemic. They point to the more relevance of moral foundations, particularly binding foundations, than the Big Five in the context of pandemic-related conspiracy beliefs, and add to the literature on the unique contribution of moral foundations to socio-political attitudes across cultures.

## KEYWORDS

Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), Liberty, conspiracy beliefs, COVID-19 pandemic, Big Five, personality

## 1. Introduction

In December 2019, the world was shocked by the news on emergence of a cold-like disease in Wuhan, China, and the subsequent lockdown due to that. The World Health Organization published the first announcement about the virus, named as COVID-19, on January 3, 2020, and declared it a pandemic on March 11 (World Health Organization, 2020). The first deaths in Iran were reported on Feb 19, followed by a rapid spread of the disease, such that in April, 2020 it ranked sixth among world countries in total COVID-19 deaths (Ghajeraghdam et al., 2020).

The pandemic led to a substantial increase in information seeking concerning the disease (e.g., Casero-Rigol et al., 2020), with certain beliefs spreading through the social media, and giving rise to an "infodemic" in parallel to the pandemic (Infodemic, 2020). Examples include a

## Moral Conspiracy A

**R Bogdan**

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**Disinformation in Open Online Media** Mike Preuss, Agata Leszkiewicz, Jean-Christopher Boucher, Ofer Fridman, Lucas Stampe, 2024-08-30 This book constitutes the refereed proceedings of the 6th Multidisciplinary International Symposium on Disinformation in Open Online Media MISDOOM 2024 held in Münster Germany during September 2-4 2024 The 8 full papers presented in this book were carefully reviewed and selected from 15 submissions The symposium tries to integrate the scientific process of multiple communities and offers a proceeding publication track as well as the submission of presentation proposals as extended abstracts

**In the Name of Morality** Tianlong Yu, 2004 There is presumably a trend toward depoliticization of character education as character educators claim to teach universal values and engage in community based decision making However as Tianlong Yu argues in this book under the umbrella of universality character educators define virtues based on neo conservative ideologies In the name of community they trivialize issues of gender race class and culture and promote the interests of dominant social groups In the Name of Morality Character Education and Political Control traces the historical origins of character education and stimulates readers to look critically into the social interests power relations and political agendas that have shaped the character education movement in the United States This challenging yet engaging book reaffirms the crucial relationship between moral education and politics It is a must read for anyone who is concerned about students character building and moral education in schools

**Ethical Dilemmas and Future Implications of COVID-19** H. Russell Searight, 2024-03-19 The COVID 19 pandemic has ushered ethics to the forefront of both medical education and public discourse In addition to illuminating persistent moral questions about fairness access to healthcare and citizens responsibilities to one another s well being the pandemic emerged within the context of profound social divisions and disagreements regarding core values This book explores subjects that have been accorded less attention such as the implications of surveillance the moral dimensions of conspiracy theories and the moral distress and injury that have led many healthcare professionals to rethink their vocation Each chapter of the volume presents the background and research surrounding specific moral dilemmas e.g. school closures rationing privacy and surveillance These issues are subsequently examined within the context of various ethical models including utilitarianism deontology virtue ethics moral foundations theory principlism Rawls s theory of justice and communitarianism The book will be beneficial to students of health professions philosophy bioethics and for those who value informed citizenship

**Plutarch, His Life, His Parallel Lives, and His Morals** Richard Chenevix Trench, 1874 [The Ethical World](#), 1909 **Immersed in the Life of God** Paul L. Gavrilyuk, Douglas M. Koskela, Jason E. Vickers, 2008-11-03 In this volume honoring William J. Abraham noted theologians philosophers and historians offer erudite analysis of various aspects of the faith Scripture conversion initiation liturgy confession reconciliation and more and explore how those elements can serve to effect healing in broken lives Brilliantly highlighting the therapeutic function of the means of grace available in Christian tradition Immersed in the Life of

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