

# New study finds increase in anti-Hindu disinformation

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Members of the Network Contagion Lab at Rutgers University-New Brunswick (NC Lab) have found evidence of a sharp rise and evolving patterns of hate speech directed toward the Hindu community across

numerous social media platforms, according to a new report.

"Anti-Hindu Disinformation: A Case Study of Hinduphobia on Social Media" details how white supremacist and 4chan genocidal Pepe memes about Hindus are being shared prolifically within extremist Islamist web networks on messaging service Telegram and elsewhere.

Researchers at the Rutgers NC Lab used artificial intelligence to better understand the development of a disguised and coded language pattern shared on social networks. According to their analysis of 1 million tweets, Iranian trolls disseminated anti-Hindu stereotypes to fuel division as part of an influence campaign to accuse Hindus of perpetrating a genocide against minorities in India.

Student analysts like Prasiddha Sudhakar worked with high school students from the New Jersey Governors' STEM Scholars program to assemble and analyze the data. They taught them about cyber-social threat detection through machine learning, open-source intelligence gathering and the dimensions of anti-Hindu [disinformation](#).

"I appreciate the opportunity to bring awareness to this underrepresented subject matter," said Sudhakar, who graduated from Rutgers in May with a double major in computer science and economics and minor in critical intelligence studies.

"Educating young people on how to detect open-source hate messaging is a vital first step in helping vulnerable communities prepare for and respond to emerging threats," said Joel Finkelstein, chief data scientist at the NCRI and a senior research fellow at the Miller Center, who directed the student research.

In July the signal on the Hinduphobic code words and memes reached record highs that could inflame a spill-out to real world violence,

especially in light of escalating religious tensions in India and the recent beheading of an Indian shopkeeper. Social media platforms largely are unaware of the code words, key images, and structured nature of this hatred even as it is surging.

"There is, unfortunately, nothing new to the bigotry and violence faced by the Hindu population," said John J. Farmer Jr., director of both the Miller Center and the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. "What is new is the social media context in which hate messages are being shared. Our prior work has shown a correlation between the intensity of hate messaging over social media and the eruption of real-world acts of violence."

"Our hope is that the report serves as a timely warning before the hate messaging leads to real-world violence," said Denver Riggleman, former U.S. congressman and Miller Center Research fellow and visiting scholar.

The analysis follows a series of reports that NCRI and Rutgers Centers have released since 2020 that examine the use of conspiracy theories and [social media](#) networks to instigate widespread, real-world violence. The NC Lab is a cyber-social threat identification and forecasting center developed through a partnership between the Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI), the Rutgers Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience and the Rutgers Center for Critical Intelligence Studies. The NC Lab's next report, expected in August, will focus on reciprocal radicalization. All reports are available [here](#).

**More information:** Prasiddha Sudhakar et al, [Anti-Hindu Disinformation: A Case Study of Hinduphobia on Social Media \(2022\)](#).

Provided by Rutgers University

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