

## **COVID-19 Pandemic and Xenophobia: Case Studies Based on Social Theories**

**Gökdeniz Kalkın**

University of Sıtkı Koçman, Turkey

**Korhan ARUN**

Namik Kemal University, Turkey

**Eser Erdurmazlı**

Gendarmerie and Coast Guard Academy, Turkey

With the COVID-19 Pandemia, there have been many challenges and negative impacts on social, and economic life, including xenophobia. So, this paper strives to describe the contents of the presented xenophobia concepts through the identified sub-concepts and open codes- gathered from media by content analysis method. The paper also provides authentic citations that connect the results and raw data from the media. The performed analysis demonstrated that xenophobia is relative to a country or group of countries' context of a threat to their physical, social, and cultural beliefs. Xenophobia included various aspects, e.g., filtered information, economic threat, and emotional reactions. These can be exemplified through media news and incidents occurring in each country or region .

**Keywords:** Xenophobia, pandemic, COVID-19, social theories, cultural attitudes

With the statement made by the China Office of World Health Organization (WHO) on 31 December 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020a), it has been reported that unknown cases of pneumonia have started to occur in Hubei province of Wuhan city, and the world is left with a big pile of problems that it has never encountered before. This phenomenon, which seemed to be a local

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Korhan ARUN Associate Professor, Business Administration/Namik Kemal University, Turkey, Email: [korhanarun@gmail.com](mailto:korhanarun@gmail.com).

Contribution of Authors:

1. KA, Draft, preparation, and interpretation of results.
2. EE, [akadem06@yahoo.com](mailto:akadem06@yahoo.com), Preparation, and interpretation.
3. GK, [g.kalkin@hotmail.com](mailto:g.kalkin@hotmail.com), Data collection and preparation.

epidemic in its early days, spread to the whole world in a very short time, and on 11 March 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 as an infectious disease that threatened the health of people living around the world, in other words, "pandemic" (World Health Organization, 2020b). By mid-July 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic caused approximately 12 million cases and more than 530.000 deaths in 203 countries or regions worldwide, and these numbers are still growing (World Health Organization, 2020c).

From a historical and anthropological perspective, it is quite common for large outbreaks to cause many economic, social, and cultural changes, which could significantly affect social structures and relationships. The proliferation of fear resulting in erratic behavior among people amidst infectious outbreaks is a common phenomenon (Chakraborty, 2020). This kind of behavior, depending on social disruptions, will result in a xenophobic view or xenophobia. Avoiding external groups and stigmatization during outbreaks are common coping strategies for the threat of epidemics. For example, during the 1853 yellow fever outbreak in America, Irish and German migrants were accused of this outbreak (McKiven, 2007). In the great polio epidemic in New York in 1916, similarly, it was claimed that Italian immigrants brought the outbreak to the United States (Zeng, 2020). With the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, countries sought to close their borders and isolate their countries, respectively. Therefore, it is thought that an increase in fear of and hate attitudes towards foreigners has led countries to policies to close themselves. In this regard, while fear of strangers and hating them, namely xenophobia, is already considered as a social problem of the era in the pre-epidemic period, with the onset of the outbreak, this problem seems to have started to affect individuals, communities, and states more and more. As an example, with the emergence of the COVID-19 epidemic in the USA, an increase in xenophobic attitudes towards the Chinese and Americans of East Asian origin has been observed, the commercial life has decreased by 70% in Chinese neighborhoods, and some people, especially the Chinese, have been called for "go home".

In this context, it is expected that the COVID-19 epidemic that we are going through will continue its effectiveness for a long time, and have similar effects across the globe. Thus, the questions of how and to what extent it may affect the already rising trend of xenophobia and what measures can be taken are very important and urgent problems standing in front of today's societies, which are waiting for their answers. So, the purpose of this study is to provide a conceptual framework for the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic on xenophobic trends worldwide and the necessary precautions that might be taken, considering that any study answering these very new and current problems is not available yet. In doing this, it addresses the concept of xenophobia based on some social psychological theories and evaluates the possible effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on xenophobic attitudes and behaviors in the light of current developments around the world using the method of content analysis based on online media sources during COVID-19 pandemic. In this sense, this study seeks to contribute to the filling of a significant theoretical gap on this serious social issue of xenophobia, and to the efforts which might help to positively guide the policies and actions that will be put forward in the economic, social, and cultural areas.

### **Social Psychological Fundamentals of Xenophobia**

Xenophobia, which is etymologically a joining of Greek words *Xenos* = stranger and *Phobos* = fear, is used to mean fear of and hate strangers (Wicker, 2001). It involves developing prejudiced, ostracizing, and denying attitudes and behaviors, believing that strangers are untrustworthy and 'everybody else' (Darity, 2008). The irregular migration flows that emerged due to the recent

September 11 attacks and instability in various parts of the world have caused the concept of xenophobia to become more popular.

There is a very deep theoretical basis in explaining xenophobic attitudes and behaviors. *Group Conflict Theory* (GCT) is the most widely used theory in explaining those xenophobic behaviors. According to this theory, ethnic predispositions and negative attitudes toward strangers emerge as a defense response as a result of inter-group competition in sharing the limited resources and a threat to the benefits of a social group (Sherif & Sherif, 1953). This supposed danger or risk leads to an unreasonable aversion, biases, and undesirable approaches towards strangers (D'Ancona, 2018). According to *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) (SIT), an individual acquires some of the perception of himself or herself from his/her membership to a social group to which s/he belongs. In this sense, groups believed to menace a nation's distinguishing character will likely form a feeling of animosity. People who are similar to the group are in-group members, and those who strongly identify with their group are more likely to be threatened by outside groups (Bizman & Yinon, 2010; Abrams, 2014). According to another approach, *Threat Theory* (Stephan & Stephan, 1996) (TT), mutual objectives encourage group members to display similar conduct to other groups. The prejudices that emerge in these circumstances are nourished by diverse threats. The first of these; *Real Threat* is related to the rise in the extent of individuals outside the group and this impends the economic and social interests of the people in the group (Oliver & Wong, 2003). As another form of threat, *Symbolic Threat* may arise from values and beliefs based on racialism and religion (D'Ancona, 2018).

"*Epidemic Psychology Approach*" (Strong, 1990) (EPA) suggests that fatal big epidemics create vital troubles that disturb social stability. Some of these are calls for action based on fear, panic, alienation and stigmatization, moral disruptions, and sudden reactions. Societies experience an extraordinary emotional vortex, and for a while, a process occurs in which everyone loses control. Moreover, according to current and potential threat perceptions, the responses of heads of states are affected by this strange situation. Contrary to those who think that such threats are caused by the assumption of irregularity from primitive feelings, Strong argued that these emerging strange behaviors can be fully understood once they understand how they are balanced after outbreaks.

In the present study, conducted within the framework of the above-mentioned theories, it has been suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic increases xenophobic attitudes and behaviors worldwide.

### **Method**

Researchers generally use content analysis to describe human experiences and perspectives. Rather than yielding generalizable results, content analysis can provide meaningful descriptions of people's experiences and perspectives in the context of their personal life settings (Creswell, 2013). Researchers may face problems when performing their first content analysis because there are no systematic, accurate rules for how to analyze qualitative data. Instead, content analysis can be considered a discussion between the researcher and their data. During the analytical process, the researcher will read, organize, integrate and form categories, concepts, and themes by carefully comparing the similarities and differences between coded data. The ultimate aim is to produce abstracts of the raw data that summarise the main categories, concepts, and themes, and provide indications of potential theoretical relationships (Kyngäs, 2020). This type of analysis can reveal the different social worlds and actors, their information behavior, and the conflicts that existed between

them, as well as the power structure between the social worlds and nations which were interacting during the COVID-19 pandemic (Thatcher, Vasconcelos, & Ellis, 2015).

Our first step in data analysis is the selection of a unit of analysis. As discussed above we chose one sentence or meaning however we preferred to select a sentence as the unit of analysis because a sentence is easier to handle than a single word. The paper presents the similarities and differences between the studied contexts. It is also providing a detailed description of the analytical process. We used online media sources without changing the source sentence that way we handled diverse descriptions of experiences and prevent bias. Analysis matrix is developed by main keywords of mentioned theories e.g., attack, anti-foreigner, Chinese virus. More than 150 online news sites have been researched but only 121 of them are considered. As a criterion in the selection of news sites, it has been determined that the news can be confirmed from other sources. In this research, newsworthy events reported during the pandemic are considered, but the incidence of occurrence is considered to be much higher. For example, 49% of people of Chinese origin living in the Netherlands stated that they experienced such events, while more than half of the Chinese origin students studying in Germany stated that they experienced these situations (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). And ethically within the scope of the research, the names of people and other information who took part in the news reflected on open sources were not included. Each keyword is grouped under three main categories of theories.

To assess external validity, we considered the representativeness of the sample incidents (a random/probability sample), as well as ensured that the content analysis measurement process is true to life, a factor that is called ecological validity. So, it is important to ensure replicability that other researchers can repeat the study with a different set of messages. Additionally, we chose social media news (Facebook, Instagram, and Tweeter) which reflects the measure of the full domain of the concept-xenophobia, being measured to ensure content validity.

### **Social Identity defines Cultural attitudes, information filtering**

Identities start with self-categorization, which is the process of categorization, classifying, or naming self, in particular, ways about other social categories or classifications (Stets & Burke, 2000). However, in the xenophobic view, this categorization, classification, or naming form is not concerning others but is in distinguishing from others. In our cases, this distinguished social category is specifically related to Chinese or China. According to SIT, individuals who believe it is important to possess certain traits to be some culture to which they belong (speak the same language, have citizenship, and respect host countries' laws) are more likely to oppose increases in immigration (Bizman & Yinon, 2010). To this view, we can say that it is also possible that individuals who carry some perceived aspects of a specific culture (speak some Asian language-Chinese, Korean) will be the target of in-group members. Because individuals tend to attribute some divergent characteristics (Shin & Dovidio, 2017; Bochatay et al., 2019) some people of Asian origin as a source of prejudice.

In the African country's ethnic predispositions and negative attitudes are generally national specific towards Chinese people. In some cases, Egyptians have been heard yelling out "corona" when passing Japanese (perceived as Chinese) people on the street. Uber driver said to the Chinese passenger, 'The first coronavirus case in Egypt!' (Sherbini, 2020). As investigators have attempted to demonstrate, by altering information inputs, systematic changes may be produced in various behavioral indicators of fear.

In Mainland China, it can be said xenophobic behavior depends on racism instead of COVID-19 grounded beliefs. For example, "Racism is carried out against Africans in China" (Hadavas, 2020) was mentioned by Africans.

In the south-east Asia region (Bukittinggi/ Indonesia, Hong Kong, Indonesia) different than the Chinese view, COVID-19 disease and Chinese people have seemed like a threat. China has increased its power over the region to that extent of Chinese individuals outside the group of south-east Asia region and China's depends to economic and social interests of the people in the group are being seen as a real threat. Furthermore, this region has may see itself as symbolically different than Chinese culture. For example, the demonstration was held in front of the hotel where Chinese tourists stay (Wall Street Journal, 2020).

Racial-based xenophobia seems most common in Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand even if More than 18.000 thousand people have signed petitions to ban Chinese's entry into the country, "Our Kiwi kids don't want to be in the same class with your disgusting virus spreaders" (Lewis, 2020) mail has come to the parents of a Chinese student. This kind of perception proof that new Zealanders coalesce pandemic and chine as one even if the spread of the virus has different national sources.

It can be said that the structure of the collective nations allowed xenophobia to develop. But in this case, rather than the groups believed to menace a nation's distinguishing character will form a feeling of animosity; distinguishing characteristics of Chinese people (look, language, etc.) forms the feeling of animosity by host nations' people.

As discussed above, Identification in collectivist societies can be destroyed because an out-group can become integral to some collectivist in-group identities (Peterson & Stewart, 2020). SIT has tried to explain intergroup relations as a way of the attitudes and behavior of individual human beings are influenced by their identification as members of social groups (Ward, 2017). However, we can see from the cases that social identity theory also studies the behavior of groups toward each other. So, one important contribution to the theory that social identities as implications for collective group behavior can explain xenophobic behaviors towards outer groups.

### **Social-Emotional Reactions**

Avoiding external groups and otherization of them during outbreaks (i.e., stigmatization) is one of the common coping strategies for epidemic dangers (Zeng, 2020). Different than SIT, an extraordinary emotional vortex of nations may cause social-emotional reactions by alienation and stigmatization of any other nation. Interactions between global and local politics are affective on social reactions to the pandemic that health threats can be associated with international migration (Dingwall, Hoffman, & Staniland, 2013). Supra-national organizations, nation-states, and global cities can be seen as a unit of defense that each of these units' defense way social order impacts individuals' behavior and responses (Brunner, 2012), these large social structures and their reaction can also be related to EPA. For example, in Germany "A Middle Eastern family received a letter of the threat related to coronavirus" (Daily Sabah, 2020), and "Eggs were thrown into the houses where the Japanese live."

The fear epidemic, also called the epidemic of anxiety and doubt, is about fear of getting infected with the virus, and therefore, during the epidemic, the suspicion that the disease can infect one's self is always in the subconscious of people. In line with this, when the number of confirmed

COVID-19 disease cases has started to increase, the public anxiety fueled by the feeling of weakness and fragility has also increased. When a threat or danger slowly approaches people, it tends to be scarier for people than it's appearing suddenly, as COVID-19 does. With all this, the fear epidemic tends to spread more with the effect of rumors and false news on social media. In this case, rational thinking mechanisms are replaced by instinctive movements.

The relation between epidemics and contagion has been taken for granted, but for a considerable time the science, the culture, and partly also people's opinion attributed them to other causes. Quite paradoxically, however, the concept of contagion—a transmission of some illnesses from a person to another person (or from animal to person)—is a very old one. Perceptions of contagion causes have been coming from popular fantasies and superstitions, and the religious doctrines (Perini, 2012). So, closing the borders and preventing other nations to come may trigger emotional reactions more than anticipated. Consequently, in many cases in western European nations, emotions turned into reactions. In Italy, many people of Chinese and Philippine origin have been harassed and attacked (Liu, 2020). Another example to support national reaction to other namely Asian rooted people even if Dutch residents of Asian descent can be called coronavirus carriers on social media, in school, or the supermarket (NOS, 2020).

From the middle ages, we could say that both the Church and medicine, by taking on the roles of “managers” of primitive fears of illness, contagion, and death, have established themselves as parallel institutions acting as social defenses against such anxieties, and relying upon these “psycho-social” functions to increase their cultural and political influence and authority. However, these kinds of views make people more proactive with reactions. In other words, modern Europe was caught underprepared for that kind of pandemic. Europe's modern institutions responsible for dealing with contemporary epidemics also inherited, to a great extent, the following functions: to anticipate the outburst of an epidemic, to identify its aetiological agent, to interpret its trend and dangerousness, and to make decisions on what and how things should be organized to face it. However, malfunction of these rational institutions, we can say that, cause fear, panic, alienation and stigmatization, moral disruptions, and sudden reactions. So, societal reactions can climb to a point where Many Chinese stores have been vandalized in the northern cities of Como, Brescia, and Varese (Italy) (Liu, 2020).

These incidents, which are just mentioned here and reflect only a few of the countless cases occurring today, are thought to reveal the relationship between the COVID-19 outbreak and the increasing trend in xenophobia-based events. Thus, this thought perfectly matches the basic arguments of EPA, one of the social-psychological approaches outlined above. According to Strong's approach, when the COVID-19 outbreak is examined, it is seen that three kinds of epidemics develop. These are fear, alienation-stigmatization, and action epidemics. Sociologically, these three psycho-social epidemics have the potential to infect almost everyone in the community. However, among them, fear epidemic and alienation-stigmatization epidemics are considered to be particularly prominent to explain the relationship between the COVID-19 outbreak and xenophobic events.

Epidemic psychology starts with an epidemic of fear. The second phase of epidemic psychology is an epidemic of explanation and then populations start a pandemic of action or proposed action. Any society gripped by a florid form of epidemic psychology may, therefore, simultaneously experience waves of collective panic, outbursts of interpretation as to why the disease has occurred. Another reason for fear itself is social defenses (Krantz, 2010) may also serve as a reassuring and optimistic mechanism for a strong seduction for public opinion. However, these defensive systems can identify dangers, enemies, faults, unhealthy foods, causes of pandemic falsely.

In that sense setting up a rather steady political-by controlling online media in this case, as well as clinical governance of the phenomenon (Perini, 2012) is effective on pandemic reaction so on xenophobia.

### **Economic And Social Concerns**

In the USA, concerns about economic and social factors seem to come to the fore to have an impact on xenophobic behaviors. These economic and social factors are sometimes seen as threats, but they may develop negative stereotypes rather than individual reactions. In this context, with the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the world has witnessed the emergence of xenophobic attitudes, and behaviors believed to exist like societies. The spread of the virus from China to the world and US President Trump's rhetoric like "Chinese Virus" led to the formation of xenophobic attitudes and behaviors in the USA towards people of Chinese and Far Eastern origin (Magnier, 2020). Merchants in Chinese neighborhoods have lost more than 70 % of customers since February. Similarly, with the start of the epidemic in Australia, incidents of discrimination and bad behaviors have started to be reported against people of Chinese and Far Eastern origins. There were incidents where there were people who were dismissed because they were only Chinese and even Australians who refused to be examined by doctors from the far east (Tan, 2020).

There are serious decreases in their business in Chinatown in San Francisco/ California (Kandil, 2020). Another example of the threat to individual entrepreneurs is A Chinese restaurant owner who received phone calls containing racist discourses (Driscoll, 2020). An incident in New York confirms economic threats that "A staff working in a New York State council's office told the public to avoid Chinese's businesses on social media account" (Katinas, 2020).

*Nevertheless, Symbolic Threat* grounded xenophobia may be arising in the USA as well. These incidents generally not individual so they reflect the group beliefs. Scottsdale City council member Guy Phillips made a post on Facebook, saying COVID stands for "Chinese Originated Viral Infectious Disease" (Longhi, 2020), which is an example of a symbolic threat. The more serious threat of this symbolic reaction is an attack on a 60-year-old man with two women who accused him of having the virus, spat at him, and told him "go back to China" (Kang, 2020). To support the predisposition that these threats are coming from group values instead of individual ones an incident which occurs in New Jersey "A group of young 55-year-old Asian women made racial discourses. One of them punched the woman's head (Sheldon, 2020)." "It's from China #chinesevirus" was written on the opposite street of the campus" (Peng, 2020) in Wisconsin represents the belief of racialism against China and Chinese people without warning that there are many Chinese Americans in the USA. However, in Bolivia, The US Embassy in Yaounde has issued Reports of Anti-Foreigner Sentiment to its citizens (U.S. Embassy, 2020), represents ethnic predispositions by Bolivians against other cultures or outside of the group members.

Threat Theory has four major components which are realistic, symbolic, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotyping but negative stereotypes and intergroup anxiety can be relegated to predictors of realistic and symbolic threats (Stephen, Ybarra, & Morrison, 20009). People can prone to expecting threats from outer groups, e.g., economic or beliefs, which in turn fosters prejudice (Makashvili, Vardanashvili, & Javakhishvili, 2018). TT also provides a useful higher-level framework for categorization (Harrison & Peacock, 2010). Of particular relevance to this study are: (1) the number of economic relations increases threat level if perceived, (2) the 'cultural distance' between the home residents and their international counterparts is important, and (3) the extent to which the citizens have a strong identification with their ingroup on economic grounds.

Another aspect of economic concerns rises from limited or hard to reach sources. In short, the GCT predicts that socioeconomically vulnerable individuals are more likely to articulate negative attitudes toward immigration due to a perception of ethnic competition for scarce resources such as jobs, housing, economic benefits, and social services. However, this effect is independent of social class (Lancee & Pardos-Prado, 2013). Different from, TT, the theory has three main dissimilarities: (1) TT may have cultural and economic concerns even if they have different proportions, (2) attitudes are more likely to be intolerant when perceiving a greater threat to the economy and employment from outsiders (D'Ancona, 2018), and (3) cultural threat increases, but only in the case of its effect on discrimination or in other words cultural threat rooted from perceived discrimination. This discrimination can start depending on any cause including culture or not. For example, "A 16-year-old high school student was attacked" (Dettman, 2020) in New York is not depending on economic concerns or lack of resources depend on TT. Nevertheless, Berkeley's University Health Services reported that xenophobia arising from this epidemic is normal. The university was criticized for "normalizing racism" (Asmelash, 2020) and this attitude depends on protecting valuable educational resources for citizens.

## Discussion

### COVID-19 Outbreak's General Manifestations

Infectious disease outbreaks occurring throughout the world have caused important changes on a global scale. However, reactions to global changes can be at regional or national levels. This paper researches the intersection of two or more theories at one level to another to reveal overlaps and inconsistencies among related constructs in xenophobia. Undoubtedly, outbreaks may not be seen as the only reason for these changes, but it can easily be said that they lead the changes that followed. The main reasons for these changes are related to the economic, political, social, scientific, technological, and cultural aspects of the outbreaks. While dealing with outbreaks, heavy responsibilities should be assumed in all these areas (World Health Organization, 2020d). The problems in sharing this responsibility that emerged in the process of overcoming the epidemic may make it necessary to make important changes in the future.

In this context, with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the countries, important changes have started to occur in social life. WHO has recommended various safeguards to people to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2020e). With the introduction of these measures aiming at prevention of the transmission of the epidemic, very important changes have started to occur in the form, frequency, and level of social relationships. People's socialization opportunities, close contact, and intimacy levels have decreased, and psychological and social side effects caused by being at home are also beginning to appear. It is not known whether these emerging complications will continue after the epidemic has passed, but it is anticipated that some habits can lead to changes. In this study, xenophobia, one of the important social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in society, has been examined.

For this purpose, we summarize characteristics across a set of messages from online media research to seek to generate generalizable conclusions from an aggregate of cases. Providing predictions about the relationships among variables within a content analysis, here, four main theories offer a prediction of xenophobia.

When applying content analysis to transcribed text, the researcher is tasked with reading through the raw data sentence by sentence and determining whether each sentence is related to

their research questions (in this paper “Is COVID-19 pandemic triggering xenophobia? And if so how are xenophobic reactions change relative to country context”). Any sentence that is related to the research question is classified as an open code. We proposed four main theories of xenophobia, which are GCT, SIT, TT, and EPA. The key factor about a pandemic is spreading throughout the countries. This spreading process and country differences relatively affect xenophobic behaviors or attitudes. So, we compared the content similarities and differences between open codes to determine which codes can be grouped. Cultural attitudes, information filtering is a proxy of SIT, Social-Emotional Reactions represent EPA, and Economic And Social Concerns can be related to TT.

Before we grouped these open codes into sub-concepts (for example, social-emotional reactions), we returned to the raw data and checked that the issues included in the identified open codes were discussed in the context of the meaning of theories of xenophobia. After the data have been grouped into sub-concepts, we then determined whether the abstraction process can be continued by grouping sub-concepts together based on similarities in the content-in-country context. The presented example formed three main concepts—threat, social identity, and *Epidemic Psychology* from the identified concepts. We processed the data abstraction one step further for groping the main concepts together. The fact that heterogeneous participant groups, countries, or groups of countries- e.g., Western Europe, have such diverse perspectives and opinions may make a different xenophobic approach from the pandemic perspective.

Empirical evidence for the relationship between host country reaction and pandemic level in its coping strategy is, inconclusive. This relationship can be gathered by integrating the social theories with a xenophobic view to examine the moderating effects of cultural and economic factors in the targeted country or region. For example, SIT, from a xenophobic view, is not defining ingroup members’ identity, but a theory that defines outer group members’ differences from the host-country citizen perception. In Europe, emotional reactions that are grounded from historical beliefs- e.g., stigmatization, ignites the xenophobic reactions. In the USA and continental America, the reason for xenophobia can be related to economic terms rather than identity or historical prejudices, even if social factors important; they are more about concerns depending on cultural distance or afraid of an unknown culture. In that sense, cultural differences in Europe and Africa depending on knowing but not wanting or stigmatizing culture. However, in American continental xenophobia forms from not knowing anything about the culture.

In a nutshell, each social theory we discussed above depends on the main aspects that can explain the reasons for xenophobic reactions (Table 1). However, the starting point and the attribution of these main aspects are relative. These main aspects are culture, economy, emotions, information, and institutions.

**Table 1**  
*Relations of Xenophobic Aspects to the Explained Theories.*

Five Factors/ Nomenclature	Relations to Xenophobia or Xenophobic behavior				
	Social Identity Theory	Group Theory	Conflict	Threat Theory	<i>Epidemic Psychology Approach</i>
<b>Culture</b>	Individual Cultural reactions	inter-group cultural reactions		Reactions to outer group culture	National or regional cultural reactions rather than individual

<b>Economic</b>	No relation	Depend on inner group reactions	Economic threats	If institutions or misinformation reactions include economic concerns then individual reactions can be seen
<b>Emotions</b>	No relation	No relation	Relative to the general religion of the nation	Causes nationwide Stigmatization or racism against a particular group
<b>Identity</b>	Perceived identity	Different than the theory outer group identity attribution is more important than perceived intergroup identity.	Symbolic reaction if perceived as against values.	No relation
<b>Information/knowledge</b>	Depends on group attribution to information. Or group filters the information.	Better education decreases xenophobic behavior even if the individual is religious.	Information turns to knowledge so then action by depending on values and beliefs. Simply, selective perception.	If knowledge is perceived as economic or has economic value. Or knowledge workers/industry may show xenophobic behaviors.

Table 1 shows that A universal social theory describes some aspect of xenophobic behaviors that applies to all types of situations, and the theory can be either descriptive or prescriptive. A social theory as descriptive may describe typical functions performed to some extent by all types of individuals for example all kinds and forms of attack, whereas a social theory can be prescriptive that may specify functions, e.g. misinformation, that makes individuals more xenophobic.

Additionally, we can group theories as contingent which describes some aspect of xenophobic behaviors that happens in some situations but not in others, and these theories can also be either descriptive or prescriptive. When we describe a theory as descriptive contingent that may explain how xenophobic behavior varies from one situation to another, whereas a prescriptive contingency theory describes xenophobic behavior in a specific situation for example in a nation or region or cultural aspect.

### Conclusion

Xenophobic sentiments continue to breed internationally, propelled by more recent social and political events. Of course, as mentioned by Turner, Hodson, and Dhont (2020) individual differences can be an important factor in xenophobia, many of these individualistic differences resulted from cultural causes. As a result, even if many individual incidents are seemed to be discrete events, in fact, in the broader context, they are connected or related. So, the main aim of this paper is to study the conceptual constructs of xenophobic behaviors with content analysis. Different xenophobic behaviors from online media are studied from SIT, GCT, TT, and EPA perspectives. We have identified five key points in each theory and formed five clusters as follows: culture, economy, information, identity, and emotions. The clusters were grouped again into independent factors and outcome factors depending on behavioral reactions. So, we defined three main underlying reasons according to the theoretical base: (1) Cultural attitudes, (wrong) information filtering defines social identity, reactions depending on social emotions, concerns (economic or social) with limited resources.

Content analysis showed that conceptual constructs of xenophobia explain the same reactions from different causes (Table 1). The reactions are individualistic or communal; reactions can be economic but for resources or depends on competitions, reactions depend on the information, but it can be false, defined by group or nation, and lastly, identities can be individualistic, group dependent, or just symbolic. So, xenophobic behaviors can be explained due to first according to level: individual, group, nation, or regional, second according to situational determinants: information, institutions, or resources, third according to descriptive or prescriptive view: rational, economic, or symbolic. Additionally, the analysis showed that xenophobic behaviors have national or regional patterns that each continent has distinguished characteristics.

Furthermore, according to Table 1, we can distinguish some reactions and theories as universal or contingent. The distinction between conceptual constructs of general and contingency theories of xenophobia is not a sharp dichotomy. Some theories include both universal and situational aspects. For example, a prescriptive theory may specify that a particular type of culture or identity has an impact on xenophobic behavior but has more impact in some nations than in others. The distinction between conceptual constructs is also a matter of degree because the concepts usually span multiple levels.

The difficulties in managing the COVID-19 outbreak have been good material for populist, far-right politicians in Europe. This outbreak offered the opportunity to persuade Italians that their pro-European governments had failed. *"If Prime Minister Conte cannot defend Italy and Italians, he should stand aside,"* said Italian politician Salvini. He criticized the politicians who defended the European Union. In France, the far-right politician Marine Le Pen criticized Macron for allowing Italian football fans to participate in a game in Lyon at the end of February (Gostoli, 2020). All of this shows how countries that are so close together can become alienated from each other in such a situation. Besides these cultural or institutional reactions, chronic xenophobia has demonstrated severe resistance to the economic activities of outsiders (Zaman, 2020).

Consequently, we argue that the fear and alienation-stigmatization epidemics caused by COVID-19 disease have increased the frequency and severity of xenophobia, which has been already on the rise due to intense migration waves worldwide during the pre-outbreak period. Moreover, given that the prediction of when the COVID-19 epidemic will end is cannot be made for today, and that it may, therefore, affect human life for a longer period, it is highly likely that this disease will continue to increase its impact on xenophobia. Waiting for a cure for the disease to avoid those negative influences does not seem to be a very rational approach in the current situation. For this reason, this paper proposes solutions in the below paragraphs.

*Firstly*, to overcome the fear of COVID-19 in humans, the experts of the field should clearly explain that this disease should not be so afraid of whether individual and social measures determined by the authorities are followed. WHO and many countries have recommended various safeguards to people to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (World Health Organization, 2020e). Some of these recommendations include measures for individual and social life routines such as maintaining a social distance of at least 1 meter, avoiding close contact such as shaking hands or hugging, and not leaving home unless necessary. In this way, the relevant national and international authorities should be able to effectively tell people about the number of cases that the risk of contamination can be reduced. Besides, it should be ensured that people can obtain accurate and reliable information and news, taking into account that uncertainties or contradictory information and news about the outbreak can also cause fear in humans. In connection with this, sharing information about the

presence of a large number of people with COVID-19 who are recovering with other people may contribute to overcoming this fear.

*Secondly*, regarding the alienation and stigmatization epidemic, It is necessary to explain to people with the scientific basis that the COVID-19 outbreak does not have an ethnic origin and a criminal. The COVID-19 outbreak is not the first epidemic the world has ever experienced, and probably will not be the last. Against the outbreak of alienation and exclusion, it should be frequently expressed on various platforms that we need to fight the epidemic instead of fighting people. Undoubtedly, some politicians and some well-known national and/or international people, also contribute to increasing these attitudes towards alienation and exclusion. Such discourses should be avoided, and ill-natured people should not be given the opportunity for their malicious messages.

*Finally*, research shows that education is still the most effective way to reduce xenophobic attitudes and behaviours. In one aspect, education tries to give nationalist values by using the dominant national language and mythological national elements in a country's efforts to strengthen and protect the nation-state. In the second aspect, it helps to respect different cultures, ethnic groups, and cultural beliefs and values of other countries, thereby promoting anti-racist behaviour (Hjerm, 2001). In this respect, the contact theory put forward by Allport is claimed to be useful in reducing xenophobic attitudes and behaviours. According to this theory (Allport, 1954), increased contact with foreigners reduces the feeling of xenophobia. The interaction between different groups pursuing common goals is predicted to break down prejudices and thus promote solidarity, integration, and peaceful relations (Bymann, 1998). Consequently, for an effective fight against xenophobia, witnessing sudden increases in its frequency and severity such as fire spilled gasoline over it with the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic; it is thought that it may be beneficial to support xenophobia programs with the education programs in such a feature just highlighted.

Limitations for this research are: first online media research has its limitations, they depend on the browser or research engine, second online research is limited to the English language, however, there can be many incidents reported in rural or national languages, third online media has limitless fake news, and fourth we have limited our research to find specific incidents like attacks, or economic boycotts.

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