Xenophobia Perceptions of Turkish University Students: An Investigation According to Various Variables

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The present study aims to examine the perceptions of xenophobia among students in higher education institutions in Türkiye. In this study, a correlational research design was used. The research data were obtained from 512 Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University students. The convenience sampling technique was utilized to select the participants. The Xenophobia Scale developed by Van Der Veer et al. (2011) and adapted into Turkish by Özmete et al. (2018) was used to collect data. Binary logistic regression was used to analyze the data. The initial findings indicated that the participants exhibited a generally high perception of xenophobia. It is considered that this is a situation that should be taken into consideration in terms of migration policies and the social dynamics of the country. Logistic regression results showed that gender, age, school level, faculty type, traveling abroad, income, the place of growth, migration, multiculturalism, empathy education, being married to a foreigner, and having foreign friend variables did not predict the xenophobia perceptions of the participants. These results show the complexity of xenophobia perceptions of university students in Türkiye and that these perceptions may not be explained only by demographic variables in current research. Therefore, more in-depth analyses and consideration of different demographic variables or sociocultural factors may be necessary in future research.

Introduction

Migrants from different countries seek economic opportunities in developed countries, making migration a common worldwide phenomenon. This is a major source of concern for most of these (such as the European Union [EU] countries) (Hatton & Williamson, 2003). Türkiye's geographical location has also made it crucial for irregular migration routes, especially for migrants/asylum seekers trying to move to the Eurozone (Işık, 2007). Especially in recent years, millions of people have been mobilized regularly or irregularly due to various challenges such as war, civil unrest, and economic challenges. It can be said that this situation is at a level never seen before in history. In the most basic sense, this mobility is

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from east to west. In other words, this mobility includes individuals from undeveloped countries aiming to settle in -relatively- developed countries. The fact that migration involves individuals aiming to leave their countries definitively affects the citizens of the receiving countries and the migrants/asylum seekers. This, which peaked, especially with the Syrian Civil War, caused political, financial, and social problems in the countries along the migration routes and in the receiving countries. Türkiye is also exposed to waves of migration from many countries (e.g., Afghanistan, Pakistan), especially Syria. Problems arising from migrants/asylum seekers have been seriously affecting the country for the last decade.

According to the most recent global estimate provided by the United Nations (UN), the total number of international migrants worldwide in 2020 was approximately 281 million individuals, representing about 3.6 percent of the global population (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). According to these numbers, it is possible to assert that Türkiye is home to 1.4% of the world's total migrant/asylum seekers population. Large numbers of migrants have caused significant social segregation and social, cultural, and even economic conflicts (Önaç & Altunsoy, 2020), which is more than the population of many countries. Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan are the primary host countries for the majority, precisely 80 percent, of Syrian refugees (World Bank, 2021). As a matter of fact, figures show that significant expenditures have been made in public resources to meet the burden brought by migrants/asylum seekers in Türkiye. Some sources say this amount has reached billions of dollars (Karabulut & Mahmut, 2018). It is estimated that US$ 2.13 billion is needed to provide inclusive education to refugees in Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan (World Bank, 2021). These numbers, which are also confirmed by the official authorities (Ministry of Interior General Directorate of Migration Management [MoIGDoMM], 2021), also bring to the agenda the difficulties in education concerning migrants. However, another problem concerns Turks as much as migrants and is increasingly occupying the public agenda: Xenophobia.

Xenophobia is derived from the Greek words xenos (foreigner, guest) and fear (phobia). Xenophobia is the display of exclusionary, abusive behavior against people who do not come from the society in which they live or who do not belong to the national identity of that society (Bordeau, 2010). Millions of people have left their countries due to poverty, local conflicts, climate crisis, and the desire for a wealthy life (McGuire, 2020), and it is estimated that they suffer from xenophobia today. This panorama can become a problem in countries like Türkiye, which receive rapid and continuous migration. The reflections of such a problem, which concerns large masses, can take various forms, and the intensity may vary from time to time.

Xenophobia has essential consequences such as abusive attitudes, ethnic discrimination, and scapegoating (Moagi et al., 2018). Economic opportunities are also willingly given up by migrants leaving violent states to find safety (Atuesta & Paredes, 2016). One study found that the prevalence of violence is significantly higher among migrants than among the native population (Colorado-Yohar et al., 2012). Additionally, individuals with a non-native background exhibit a higher propensity for arrest concerning criminal charges (Holmberg & Kyvsgaard, 2003). When this landscape is considered together with the stress on the demographic structure, educational opportunities, security conditions, and job opportunities in the receiving countries, it can carry special meanings (anxiety, fear, reaction, etc.) for university students. This is also valid for Turkish students.

University students are recognized as the future of their countries. Their education, habits, and attitudes carry important clues about the policies implemented in the past periods and current

trends. Moreover, university students' relations with foreigners and their perceptions of foreigners have the potential to shape many issues. Furthermore, this potential of university students inspires many investments and activities of international organizations (e.g., UN, EU). There have been many studies on this subject in recent years (Allen & Ye, 2021; Kocatürk & Bozdağ, 2020; Mgogo & Osunkunle, 2023). However, it can be said that the literature on this subject in Türkiye has a limited sight. In this respect, it is thought that it would be a suitable scientific activity to address university students' perceptions, whose number is expressed in millions in Türkiye, about foreigners who come to their country with regular or irregular migration. Uncertainties regarding the conditions of Türkiye and the situation of refugees confirm this activity.

The current study aims to decipher the xenophobia perceptions of higher education students in Türkiye, one of the countries hosting the highest number of foreigners/immigrants/asylum seekers in the world, at the level of some variables. Literature reviews show that previous studies have been conducted on adult individuals (Kocatürk & Bozdağ, 2020). In addition, a group of studies were carried out in small samples (Bozdağ, 2020; Çelik & İçduygu, 2019; Karabacak, 2020; Ullah et al., 2020). The current study is conducted at the intersection of higher education students and xenophobia with a relatively robust number of participants. In this respect, it has the potential to make a significant contribution. It is hoped that the findings obtained from the research will increase the awareness of policymakers and researchers in higher education on migration and xenophobia.

Theoretical Background

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is a sentiment characterized by prejudiced attitudes, fear, animosity, or hostility toward individuals of diverse nationalities, values, ancestries, or cultural backgrounds. Xenophobia frequently arises due to various catalysts, including but not limited to ignorance, stereotypes, cultural discrimination, or a perceived encroachment upon one's identity. Frederickson (2002) defines xenophobia as "a term invented by the ancient Greeks to describe a reflexive feeling of hostility to the stranger or other." Xenophobia refers to the fear and hate directed towards individuals perceived as foreign or immigrants, and it shares similarities with racism (Yılmaz & Geylani, 2022). Fundamentally, xenophobia is a desire to keep outsiders out of society (Kim & Sundstrom, 2014). The rise of anti-immigrant prejudice in countries worldwide in recent years has led to a greater awareness of xenophobia (Yakushko, 2018). Racism, discrimination, ethnic cleansing, and genocide are all examples of xenophobia, and they are often fueled by waves of nationalism and political nativism (Miguel et al., 2011). Therefore, xenophobia encompasses all forms of intolerance and hostility directed toward those marked "foreigners," "non-nationals," or "the others." This phobia could take the form of racism, xenophobia (hostility toward people of other races), Afrophobia (hostility between people of different African nationalities), or xenophobia (intolerance of anything foreign) (Akinola, 2017). Thus, racism concerns physical differences in appearance and skin color related to power and privilege. In contrast, xenophobia results in the social exclusion of others based on their cultural or national identity as different from that of the host country (Suleman et al., 2018).

Societies have xenophobic and nationalistic values. There are no signs that these values will disappear soon, even though societies may increase or decrease them (Hjerm, 2001). Therefore, xenophobia is deemed most suitable for identifying and comprehending biases

directed towards newly arrived immigrants (Yakushko, 2009). Many researchers have investigated the xenophobia concept in terms of security, economy, social, and cultural aspects (Inglehart, 2018; Landau et al., 2005; Miguel et al., 2011; Paalo et al., 2022). One of them is education. Studies conducted in countries that receive immigration, especially in Türkiye, suggest that xenophobia should also be addressed comprehensively by Turkish students (Aydın & Kaya, 2020; Bozdağ, 2020; Kocatürk & Bozdağ, 2020).

Xenophobia in Turkish Higher Education in the Context of International Students, Asylum Seekers, and Migrants

Higher education provides individuals with a profession and brings students from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds together to learn and work together. In this way, higher education promotes intercultural dialogue and awareness. Because of this, students can develop a deeper comprehension of and appreciation for the myriad cultures that exist throughout the world. Guillerme (2021) underlines that the landscape of higher education globally continues to change remarkably. Accordingly, post-secondary students worldwide increased by 36% between 2008-2018. Higher education student numbers increased by 68% in China, 100% in India, and 87% in Indonesia. Similarly, an increase of 47% was observed in Brazil, 74% in Mexico, and 62% in Colombia. Some different dynamics are observed in the non-EU countries located in the European continent. The number of students in Russia decreased by 39% to 5,774,913. In Türkiye, on the other hand, the number of students increased by 200% to 7,560,371. As can be seen, the number of students in higher education follows a continuously increasing course. This increase also affects the number of international students in the world. Today, there are "5,571,402 international students around the world" (Guillerme, 2021) and "301,694 in Türkiye" (Council of Higher Education [CoHE], 2023). This phenomenon entails an increasing number of students from diverse cultural backgrounds pursuing higher education within a shared educational setting annually. Türkiye has not been separated from the globally changing landscape and attracts more and more international students yearly. In addition, the Syrian crisis erupted next to Türkiye, and the number of asylum seekers and asylum seekers students in the country has increased even more. Schools in Türkiye have been filled with Syrian students. Kondakci et al. (2023) state that higher education provided a means for the forcibly displaced migrants to begin rebuilding their lives. In this regard, the Turkish higher education system showed dynamism in addressing the issues and making room for Syrians who had been forcibly displaced to enroll in Turkish universities. Syrian refugees who were forcibly relocated to Türkiye face discrimination that makes them question their sense of belonging there because of their shared culture, geography, and religion. Similarly, Forbes-Mewett (2020) states that international students, particularly Chinese ones, have faced new challenges due to the Coronavirus pandemic and its travel restrictions, study implications, visa issues, and community ignorance that breeds xenophobia. The vulnerability of international students is a topic of ongoing concern. Since countries gain so much from international education, everyone has a stake in addressing the plight of international students and helping them achieve their educational and personal goals. Lau (2020) called on universities in Europe, North America, and Australia to do more to protect Asian students and address xenophobia. On the other hand, Allen and Ye (2021) emphasize that such mistrust between countries will descend from the highest levels down to students and individuals. Similar difficulties exist in Türkiye, where there are many asylum seekers, immigrants, and international students (Çelik & İçduygu, 2019; Işık, 2007; Önaç & Altunsoy, 2020; Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2019). Türkiye's large asylum seeker, immigrant, and international student population makes investigating xenophobia on university campuses in the country exciting.

In light of the widespread difficulties encountered by asylum seekers, immigrants, and international students, focusing on a more specific analysis of xenophobia among Turkish university students is essential. This study aims to investigate the levels of xenophobia among university students in Türkiye, taking into account different variables. In order to achieve the intended objective, the inquiry seeks to obtain responses to the subsequent inquiries:

(1) What is the level of xenophobia among university students in Türkiye?
(2) Are xenophobia perceptions of university students in Türkiye predicted by
(i) gender, (ii) age, (iii) school level, (iv) faculty, (v) traveling abroad once, (vi) income (monthly), (vii) where she/he grew up, (vii) migration, multiculturalism, or empathy education, (ix) someone married to a foreigner in her/his family, and (x) having a foreign friend?

Method

The present research was analyzed using the quantitative method. In this context, prediction design, one of the correlational research, was utilized. Prediction allows an understanding of the participants' views about variables. The authors used binary logistic regression since participants' xenophobia perceptions were identified as a categoric dependent variable. Binary logistic regression helps categorical dependent variables predict by categorical or continuous independent variables (Creswell, 2011; George & Mallery, 2022).

Population and Sample

The participants were the students of Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University (NEVU) in the 2022-2023 academic year. The convenience sampling technique was utilized to select willing and available participants (Creswell, 2011). As a result of the calculations, it was concluded that a minimum of 378 students could represent the population of 21417 with α=.05 significance and a 5% tolerance value Saunders et al. (2006, p. 212). However, this population was exceeded by reaching 515 participants during the data collection. The opinions of 3 of these participants were excluded from the analysis because they contained missing data. The study analysis was based on the views of 512 participants. Basic details about the participants are in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Participants

Categories	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	139	27.1
Female	376	72.9
Age		
Between 18-25	501	97.9
≥ 26	11	2.10
School Level		
Vocational School	51	10.0
Collage	461	90.0
Faculty		
Education	355	69.3
Other	157	30.7
Traveling Abroad Once		
Yes	41	8.00
No	471	92.0
Income (Monthly)		
≤ 15.000 ₺	450	87.9
> 15.000 ₺	62	12.1

Where She/He Grew Up		
District or Smaller Places	245	47.9
City	267	52.1
Migration, Multiculturalism, or Empathy Education		
Yes	89	17.4
No	423	82.6
Someone Married to a Foreigner in Her/His Family		
Yes	134	26.2
No	378	73.8
Having a Foreign Friend		
Yes	197	38.5
No	315	61.5
Total	512	100.0

When the data in Table 1 is examined, it is seen that a significant portion of the participants are female (n = 376, 72.9%). A limited number of participants were 26 years of age or older (n=11, 2.10%). Similarly, very few participants are vocational school students (n=51, 10%), and a significant portion study at the education faculty (n=355, 69.3%). Only 41 (8%) of the participants have traveled abroad before. While the participants with a monthly income above 15,000 ₺ are 62 people (12.1%), approximately half of the participants (n=245, 47.9%) grew up in districts or smaller places. A significant portion of the participants (n=378, 73.8%) did not receive training on migration, multiculturalism, or empathy, and a significant portion (n=197, 38.5%) had at least one foreign friend.

Variables and Measures

The dependent variable of the study is xenophobia. The *Xenophobia Scale* (*XS*) developed by Van Der Veer et al. (2011) was used to examine this variable. The original version of the scale is a six-point Likert scale with 14 items. It has been tested in different countries in European and American samples. The original version's Cronbach's α consistency of *XS* was between .77 and .87. It was adapted into Turkish by Özmete et al. (2018) as a one-dimensional, 11-item, six-point Likert scale. During these processes, fit indices are calculated by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for validity as follows: Chi-square/standard deviation (χ^2/*sd.*)=4.09, comparative fit index (CFI)=.96, non-normed fit index (NNFI)=.95, normed fit index (NFI)=.96, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=.07, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR)=.07. The Turkish version's Cronbach's α consistency value was .87. Based on these values, the authors declare that *XS* is suitable for collecting and analyzing data on anti-immigrant sentiment in Türkiye. A section containing demographic information (e.g., gender, age) of the participants was added at the beginning of the scale. The study's independent variables are these demographic variables (Table 1).

Data Collection

An online survey form and WhatsApp application were used during data collection because of difficulties, such as reaching out to students and limited budget/time. Participants were informed that the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. *XS* was filled in on average in 5 minutes after lessons. The data collection process was finished when it was thought that sufficient participants were reached.

Research Ethics

In the current research, the researchers, as the authors, obey the principles of publication ethics. Before collecting the data, permission was obtained via e-mail from the developer of the scale to be used in the study. The ethical permission was obtained from the

NEVU Rectorate Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee on 23.12.2022, numbered 2022.13.427, for implementation.

Procedure

The study analysis was conducted with the program M*Plus* 8.3 and SPSS 25.0. Before the analysis, it was aimed that the skewness and kurtosis values of the data set were within ±1.5, *z* scores were within ±3 (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2012), and there were no survey forms with missing data. During the preliminary examinations, 17 of the forms were excluded from the evaluation due to the inclusion of outliers and incompletions.

In the present study, Cronbach's α reliability coefficient was calculated for the reliability of the research, and α>.60 criterion was adopted (Bryman, 2012). In order to analyze the validity of the study, χ^2, RMSEA, CFI, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and SRMR values were examined. The following requirements were accepted for these values: for χ^2, p>.05 (n<200), RMSEA<.08 (Thakkar, 2020), CFI>.90, TLI>.90, and SRMR<.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). CFA tested for scale validity, and the fit indices are as follows: χ^2=199.71 (degrees of freedom [*df*]=55, p<.001), RMSEA=.073, CFI=.93, TLI=.92, and SRMR=.04. Cronbach's α consistency value of *XS* was calculated at .85. These coefficients indicate that the research data are valid and reliable.

Pallant (2005) suggests multicollinearity checks before binary logistic regression. In this respect, correlations between independent variables should be lower than .90, variance inflation factor should be lower than 10.0, and tolerance value should be higher than .10. Since these assumptions are provided, it is concluded that there is no multicollinearity problem. Furthermore, before binary logistic regression, the participants' responses about xenophobia were grouped using cluster analysis with a two-step procedure. Clustering is a convenient and straightforward type of analysis for grouping similar cases (George & Mallery, 2022, p. 271). Through cluster analysis, xenophobia was organized into low and high categories. During the analysis, these categories were coded as low=0 and high=1. The independent variables' effects examined in the study are as follows: (i) gender (male=0, female=1), (ii) age (18-25=0, ≥26=1), (iii) school level (vocational=0, collage=1), (iv) faculty (other=0, education=1), (v) traveling abroad once (yes=0, no=1), (vi) income (monthly) (≤15.000 ₺=0, ≥15.000 ₺=1), (vii) where she/he grew up (city=0, district=1), (viii) migration, multiculturalism or empathy education (yes=0, no=1), (ix) someone married to a foreigner in her/his family (yes=0, no=1), and (x) having a foreign friend (yes=0, no=1).

Findings

Descriptive Statistics

To answer the first question of the study, the participants' general views on xenophobia were analyzed (Table 2).

Table 2. *Basic Statistics of XS*

No.	Items*	$\bar{x}$	sd.
1	Migration/migration in this country is out of control.	5.36	1.07
2	Borders must be made more secure to prevent migrants from entering this country.	5.54	.98
3	Migrants cause an increase in crime.	5.17	1.10
4	Migrants are taking jobs from people who live here.	5.03	1.23
5	Interacting with migrants makes me nervous.	3.58	1.69
6	I worry that migrants might spread unusual diseases.	4.09	1.68
7	I fear that migrants will remain loyal to their country of origin in case of war or political tension.	4.93	1.36

8	I believe that migrants will support my country in times of crisis.	5.16	1.25
9	I am afraid that my life will get worse with more and more immigration.	5.11	1.25
10	I doubt that migrants will be interested in this country in the first place.	4.72	1.39
11	I fear that our own culture will be lost as immigration increases.	5.12	1.29
	Total	4.59	.76

Abbreviations: $\bar{x}$, Mean; *sd.*, Standard Deviation.
Notes: *All items are six-point Likert, Median=4.72 (*sd.*=.76)

As seen in Table 2, the participants generally have high xenophobia mean scores ($\bar{x}$=4.59, *sd.*=.76). Here, the low *sd.*'s coefficients can be interpreted as the participants having similar views on xenophobia. The highest mean score belongs to the "Borders must be made more secure to prevent migrants from entering this country." item ($\bar{x}$=5.54, *sd.*=.98). In this context, it can be stated that the participants are concerned about the border security of Türkiye. The item "Interacting with migrants makes me nervous." is another noteworthy one ($\bar{x}$=3.58, *sd.*=1.69). The low mean score can be interpreted as the participants not being delighted while communicating with migrants. This also was the item about which participants had the most divergent opinions with a relatively high *sd*.

Logistic Regression Analysis

To answer the second question of research, we performed logistic regression analysis. Before logistic regression, the participants' xenophobia responses were grouped using cluster analysis (Table 3).

Table 3. *Cluster Analysis Results*

Variable	Cluster	f	%	$\bar{x}$	*sd.*
Xenophobia	1 (*Low*)	273	53.3	4.05	.64
	2 (*High*)	239	46.7	5.20	.28

Abbreviations: *f*, Frequency; $\bar{x}$, Mean; *sd.*, Standard Deviation.

As seen in Table 3, the participant's views on the dependent variable were divided into two groups. Here, low ($\bar{x}$=4.05, *sd.*=.64) refers to the category with weak level xenophobia, and high ($\bar{x}$=5.20, *sd.*=.28) refers to the category with strong level xenophobia.

During the logistic regression analysis, we first examined the dataset's iterations and classification results on the baseline model. In the absence of independent variables, results indicate the status of the conceptual model. The change that will occur when the independent variables are added to the conceptual model is understood in this way (Table 4).

Table 4. Model fitting and classification

Iterations			
-2 *LL*[a]	Constant		Sig (*p*)
707.523	-.133		
707.523	-.133		.133
Classification[b] (Block 0)			
	0.00	1.00	%
0.00	273	0	100.0
1.00	239	0	.0
Overall			53.3

Abbreviations: -2 *LL*, log Likelihood; Sig (*p*), Significance.
Notes: *p*>.05*,* [a] Iteration=2, [b] Cut Value=.500.

As seen in Table 4, the conceptual model is not statistically significant (p>.05). In other

words, the results show insignificant relationships between the dependent and independent variables (Pallant, 2005, p. 167). The overall classification value is 53.3%. This rate illustrates the likelihood that participants' xenophobia views are *low* when independent variables are removed from the equation. The significance of the conceptual model is initially deepened by examining the Omnibus Test, Cox and Snell R square (R^2) and Nagelkerke R^2 coefficients. Then, Hosmet and Lemesshow Test and classification results were checked (Table 5).

Table 5. *Omnibus Test, Model, Hosmet and Lemesshow Test, and Classification Results*

Omnibus Coefficients		
χ^2	*df*	Sig (*p*)
10.372	10	.408
10.372	10	.408
10.372	10	.408
Model Summary		
-2 *LL*[a]	Cox & Snell R^2	Nagelkerke R^2
697.151	.020	.027
Hosmet and Lemesshow Coefficients		
χ^2	*df*	Sig (*p*)
12.244	8	.141
Classification[b] (Block 1)		
	0.00	1.00	%
0.00	210	63	76.9
1.00	167	72	30.1
Overall		55.1	

Abbreviations: χ^2, Chi-Square; *df*, Degrees of Freedom; Sig (*p*), significance; -2 *LL*, log Likelihood; R^2, *R Square*.
Notes: [a] Iteration=3, [b] Cut Value=.500.

The Omnibus Test results in Table 5 are also known as goodness of fit. Coefficients indicate that the conceptual model is not as successful as the baseline model (p>.05). This means that the conceptual model cannot be used to make predictions about the independent variable (Pallant, 2005, p. 167). For this reason, there is no need to comment on the model summary, Hosmet and Lemesshow test, and classification results (p. 168). Indeed, B, Wald, and Exp(B) values confirm this finding (Table 6).

Table 6. *Variables in Equation Results*

Variables/Coefficients	B	S.E.	Wald	*df*	Sig.(*p*)	Exp(B) (Odd)	95% CI for (B)	
							Lower	Upper
Gender	.386	.209	3.41	1	.065	1.470	.977	2.213
Age	.497	.652	.581	1	.446	1.643	.458	5.893
School Level	-.317	346	.839	1	.360	.729	.370	1.434
Faculty	-.366	.224	2.67	1	.102	.693	.447	1.075
Traveling Abroad Once	-.022	.350	.004	1	.950	.978	.493	1.941
Income (Monthly)	.007	.286	.001	1	.979	1.007	.575	1.765
Where She/He Grew Up	-.230	.183	1.57	1	.209	.794	.554	1.138
Migration, Multiculturalism, or Empathy Education	-.011	.242	.002	1	.963	.989	.615	1.588
Someone Married to a Foreigner in Her/His Family	.266	.212	1.58	1	.209	1.305	.862	1.977
Having a Foreign Friend	-.304	.194	2.46	1	.117	.738	.504	1.079

Abbreviations: B, Beta; S.E., Standard Error; *df*, Degrees of Freedom; *Sig.* (*p*), Significance; Exp(B), Odds Ratios; CI, Confidence Interval

When the results in Table 6 are analyzed, none of the independent variables of the study has a prediction on the participants' perceptions of xenophobia (p>.05). In other words, the results show that the demographic variables considered within the scope of the research are not effective on Turkish students' perceptions of xenophobia.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

The current research analyzed university students' perceptions of xenophobia towards migrants/asylum seekers in Türkiye and reached important findings. The first finding showed that the participants had an overall high perception of xenophobia. This is a situation that should be taken into consideration in terms of the immigration policies and social dynamics of the country. Discussing the results in more detail may allow us to gain valuable insights from related studies. In their research, Mgogo and Osunkunle (2023) and Akande et al. (2018, p. 16) revealed a widespread negative trend towards xenophobia. In addition, they discovered a positive correlation between respondents' perceptions of xenophobia and their willingness to engage in xenophobic attitudes. This result gives confidence in the importance of education in preventing the proliferation of negative ethnic/racial perceptions and stereotypes. This confirms the current research, highlighting the importance of educational initiatives to combat xenophobia among Türkiye's university students. Bozdağ's (2020) research demonstrates the importance of positive social interactions in reducing the harmful effects of xenophobia, a more extreme form of exclusionary attitude than discrimination and prejudice. This study's findings support the notion that encouraging students from different cultural backgrounds to interact positively with one another is one way to combat the widespread phenomenon of xenophobia. International students experience exclusion, problems arising from language and cultural differences, and integration problems (Güngör & Şenel, 2018). The finding may also be interpreted as the result of xenophobia in some circles. This study sheds light on international students' difficulties while pursuing their education in Türkiye. The authors suggest that addressing these challenges and working toward improved integration may help to reduce xenophobia among the Turkish student population. Zaman (2020) found a negative and significant relationship between xenophobia and project success. This finding highlights the potential negative consequences of xenophobia on various aspects of society, including the outcomes of projects. These further emphasize how important it is to address xenophobia as soon as possible to ensure social harmony and success in various endeavors.

It was observed that the participants who thought that "the borders should be made more secure to prevent immigrants from entering this country" received the highest mean score. This result reflects the participants' concerns about Türkiye's border security, and it can be argued that these concerns may impact the country's immigration policies. It is known that one of the migration policies adopted by Türkiye is the *open-door policy*. Bayır and Aksu (2020) stated that Türkiye declared that it would follow this approach at the beginning of the Syria crisis and did not see the issue as a security problem. However, the *open-door policy* has been faced with negative effects over time. It can also be argued that this policy impacts the border security concerns revealed in this research. It can be said that the *open-door policy* has brought about many negative consequences not only at the higher education level but also at all levels of education. Studies reveal that Syrian students experience difficulties due to insufficient Turkish proficiency and lack of orientation (Ceyhan & Koçbaş, 2011; Karabacak, 2020) because Syrian students attending Turkish public schools have not received any

previous instruction in the Turkish language and Turkish public schools have no language program for Syrian and other refugee students (Aydın & Kaya, 2020). Syrian children experience homesickness, exclusion, intolerant teachers and students, discrimination, loneliness, isolation, trauma, depression, language superiority, social stigmatization, incompatibility, and insecurity (Karabacak, 2020). Syrian parents express that they often feel depressed and alienated because they cannot watch their children and that they often feel depressed and alienated (Çelik & İçduygu, 2019). The idea of loss that drives xenophobic attitudes toward Syrians comes in three different but related forms: (i) loss of economic gains, (ii) loss of urban space, and (iii) loss of national cohesion (Saraçoğlu & Bélanger, 2019).

Some steps can be taken to lessen the impact of homesickness and discrimination on college campuses, especially for international students. One of the priorities should be reducing students' perceptions of discrimination on campus, as this perception is directly correlated with feelings of homesickness (Poyrazlı & Lopez, 2007). Matthews (2008) states that schools are supposed to be a stabilizing element in the restless lives of refugee students. They should provide safe spaces for new encounters, interactions, and learning opportunities. They also offer literacy, which is critical to educational success, post-school options, life choices, social inclusion, and settlement. Education has a dual meaning. It promotes nationalist values using the dominant language and mythologized national tokens to homogenize and preserve the nation-state. It promotes anti-racist behavior by mediating multicultural values of respect and knowledge about other cultures, ethnic groups, and countries (Hjerm, 2001). Central to Hurtado's (1992) research is the idea that racial tension can develop in classrooms where teachers do not seem to care about their students on an individual level. So, campuses should look for ways to reorganize their funding and rewards systems to better serve their student bodies' needs.

Within the scope of the second research question, the authors examined whether xenophobia perceptions of university students in Türkiye are predicted by independent variables such as gender, age, school level, faculty, the experience of traveling abroad, monthly income, place of growing up, immigration, multiculturalism or empathy education, being married to a foreigner in the family and having a foreign friend. However, as a result of the research, the study found that none of the study's independent variables predicted the participants' perceptions of xenophobia. In other words, the results show that the demographic variables evaluated within the research scope are ineffective on the xenophobia perceptions of university students. These results show the complexity of xenophobia perceptions of university students in Türkiye and that these perceptions may not be explained only by demographic variables in current research. Therefore, more in-depth analyses and consideration of different demographic variables or sociocultural factors may be necessary in future research. In addition, considering that education and awareness-raising programs may affect the perception of xenophobia, solution proposals and policy recommendations in this field should also be considered.

In brief, the findings of our study shed light on the high perceived level of xenophobia among Turkish university students. Taking into account the findings of these other related studies makes it abundantly clear that addressing xenophobia through education, promoting positive interactions, addressing the challenges faced by international students, and recognizing the potential negative consequences of this phenomenon are essential steps toward developing a society in Türkiye that is more welcoming of those who are different and more harmonious with one another.

The present study has some limitations. First of all, this study is limited to the views of NEVU students. This can make it difficult to generalize the results of the study. In addition, the results obtained in our study do not include the opinions of students studying at foundation universities. Foundation universities are institutions where international students from different countries and Turkish students are educated together and have the potential to access valuable knowledge on xenophobia. The study does not include organizational, cultural, and social variables that predict xenophobia. This view suggests that Turkish higher education students' xenophobia judgments can be considered in this context in future research. Furthermore, this study examined demographic variables and determined no statistically significant predictors of xenophobia perceptions among university students. However, it is recommended that future research undertake a more comprehensive investigation into the intricacies of this phenomenon by incorporating sociocultural and environmental factors that could potentially impact these perceptions. Moreover, future research can be designed to reveal examples of xenophobia encountered by international students as well as local students. In addition, longitudinal studies can be conducted to investigate how perceptions of xenophobia change over a period of time. Similarly, the effects of social media on the perception of xenophobia can be analyzed. With a comparative analysis, xenophobia of students from different countries and cultures can be examined. Finally, it is believed that it would be eligible to consider a comprehensive subject such as xenophobia within the scope of a phenomenological design.

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