

## An Analysis of Xenophobia Perceptions Among Turkish Female Citizens: The Ankara Case

### *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Vatandaşı Kadınların Zenofobi Algıları Üzerine Bir Analiz: Ankara Örneği*

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#### ABSTRACT

*This research, which aims to examine perceptions of xenophobia among citizens of the Republic of Turkey in the context of increasing immigration over the past fifteen years, focuses on the young female population residing in Ankara. In this regard, face-to-face interviews were conducted with women aged 18-35 in Ankara using semi-structured questions and the collected data was analysed thematically by using the MAXQDA 24 software. Findings indicate that the young women residing in Ankara exhibit a significant degree of xenophobia attitudes. The underlying reasons for this xenophobia attitudes are expressed through rational justifications. It argues that cohabitation under current conditions depends on the effective integration of migrants within the framework of social cohesion. It is understood that xenophobia would significantly diminish if integration and cultural adaptation were successfully achieved. Therefore, the most striking aspect of the participants' views is not the presence of foreigners, but rather the perceived inability of foreigners to integrate into Turkish society.*

**Keywords:** Xenophobia, External Migration, Immigrant Integration, Fear of Crime, Thematic Analysis

#### ÖZ

*Son 15 yıllık süreçte ülkemizdeki artan dış göç ile yaşamakta olan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti vatandaşlarının zenofobi algılarını ölçmek üzere yapılan bu araştırma Ankara'da ikamet eden genç kadın nüfusu odak noktasına almıştır. Bu kapsamda Ankara'da 18-35 yaş arası kadınlar ile önceden hazırlanmış, yarı-yapılandırılmış sorular ile yüz yüze mülakatlar yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler MAXQDA 24 programı ile tematik analize tabi tutulmuştur. Elde edilen verilerin analizine göre, Ankara'da ikamet eden Türkiye Cumhuriyeti genç kadın nüfusunun önemli derecede yabancı korkusuna sahip olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Yabancı korkusunun bulunmasındaki nedenler mantıklı argümanlara dayalı olarak açıklanmaktadır. Mevcut koşullarda birlikte yaşamının göçmenlerin uyum çerçevesinin sağlanması ile sağlanacağı savunulmaktadır. Uyumun sağlanması ve kültüre adapte olunması halinde yabancı korkusunun ciddi derecede ortadan kalkacağı anlaşılmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, katılımcıların düşüncelerindeki en dikkat çekici durum yabancıların varlığı değil, yabancıların topluma entegre olamamasından kaynaklanmaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yabancı Korkusu, Dış Göç, Göçmen Entegrasyonu, Suç Korkusu, Tematik Analiz

## INTRODUCTION

Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Turkey began hosting a significant number of Syrian individuals. Over time, the Syrian population in the country has increased and became an integral part of the demographic structure. In addition to the Syrians, Turkey also hosts many foreigners from different regions, including the Middle East, Africa, Afghanistan, Asia, Russia, and Ukraine. As a result, Turkish citizens now live alongside people from various national backgrounds. While this situation enhances cultural diversity within society, it also poses several challenges for the local population. One of the most notable among these challenges is xenophobia.

Xenophobia is a significant social issue confronting modern societies. Particularly, the increase in external migrations can trigger social unrest in the host countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines xenophobia as "negative attitudes, prejudices, and behaviors towards individuals perceived as foreign to society or national identity" (UNHCR, 2015: 17). This definition shows that xenophobia comes from biases and a tendency to exclude others.

This research aims to examine the perceptions of xenophobia among Turkish women aged 18-35 living in Ankara. It focuses on attitudes towards immigrants, security concerns, economic anxieties, and issues of cultural adaptation, with the goal of understanding how young women perceive immigrants. Employing a qualitative research design, the study seeks to explore participants' experiences and perceptions through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis.

In this context, the study provides significant insights into the sociological dynamics of xenophobia and its effects on social structures, while also offering recommendations for fostering a culture of coexistence with immigrants.

The research questions of the study are as follows:

- How does xenophobia effect young women's perceptions of security in Ankara?
- To what extent do cultural differences contribute to prejudices against immigrants in Ankara?
- How do economic crises in Turkey shape attitudes and behaviors toward the immigrant population?
- What are the effects of xenophobia on social peace and the integration process?

What role does social media in shaping the attitudes of young women in Ankara towards immigrants?

## A PERSPECTIVE ON XENOPHOBIA

Citizens of countries experiencing high level of migration often encounter various challenges. Primarily, concerns about demographic changes, economic strain, and urbanization problems caused by sudden population growth are arised. These anxieties can lead prejudices and fears regarding, leading to the emergence of xenophpobia. Xenophobic attitudes among host country citizens can manifest in discourse, attitudes, and behaviors.

Prejudices against immigrants, who migrate to the host country, may result in negative attitudes and behaviors toward these groups. The main reason for the spread of such prejudices within society is the significant roles of both traditional and social media. In particular, the dissemination of misinformation via social media allows false narratives to reach large audience quickly and without control; thereby reinforcing stereotypes among host citizens (UNESCO, 2020). This study builds upon that discussion by showing how misinformation not only creates stereotypes but also amplifies women's fear of crime, linking xenophobia to gendered insecurities.

Citizens with entrenched prejudices tend to maintain a distance from immigrants and avoid interaction, thereby increasing the social distance between the two groups. The perception of immigrants as a threat leads host citizens to fear harm from them, which can result in behaviors that are violate human rights, such as racism, hate crimes, and acts of violence (Veer et al., 2011: 1430). In society, immigrants who are placed in the "out-group" category may experience distance from others. For example, individuals with different identities may be denied service in certain stores or subjected to or property damage (Choane et al., 2011: 129-130).

Numerous factors contribute to xenophobia, including worsening economic conditions, the rise of extreme nationalist rhetoric, and sociological and psychological causes (Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur, 2003: 307). Additional concerns such as urban overcrowding, environmental degradation, increasing crime rates, inadequacy in education and healthcare services, and erosion of cultural values also shape the minds of host citizens (Yakushko, 2008: 37). While previous research have emphasized these structural and political drivers, the findings highlights how such concerns are articulated in the everyday narratives of young women, an aspect often overlooked in the literature.

One of the initial manifestations of xenophobia is the belief that immigrants increases unemployment or reduces current wage level. The acceptance of lower wages by immigrants in order to survive results in a reduction in market wages. As a consequence, host citizens may lose their job or be forced to work for lower wages, which can fuel negative attitudes and resentment towards immigrants (Chtouris et al., 2014). This study illustrates how women directly link such economic anxieties to household security and daily livelihood concerns, highlighting the intersection of gender and economic perceptions of migration.

Economic challenges arising from unemployment can widen the social gap between the local population and immigrants (Kosic et al., 2005). Meanwhile, extreme nationalist rhetoric in the political sphere may gain traction, encouraging cultural hostility and racism. Such attitudes and beliefs may culminate in the rise of extreme nationalist parties to power (Scheepers et al., 2002: 19-20).

Using immigrants, often labeled as "out-group," as political/electoral tools alongside the intensification racist rhetoric, depends existing prejudices and social division between immigrants and host citizens. This situation undermines social peace and stability, leading to a rapid increase in xenophobia within society. In communities with high levels of xenophobia, incidents of violence

against individuals with different identities may become more frequent (Mudde, 1999: 186-188). While the existing literature provides a strong foundation for understanding xenophobia, this study positions itself by emphasizing how young women interpret structural issues through the lens of insecurity, cultural anxiety, and gendered social experiences.

## METHODOLOGY

To address the research questions, a qualitative research design was employed. Although there is no single definition in the literature, qualitative research is generally regarded as a flexible and interpretive approach that integrates multiple disciplines (Çarpar, 2020). Creswell (2013) describes it as a “fine thread, with many colors, different textures, and various materials,” while Denzin and Lincoln (2018) highlights its strength in capturing social reality through naturalistic inquiry. Drawing on field notes, interviews, and recordings, qualitative research aim to uncover participants’ experiences and provide in-depth insight into complex phenomena.

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants’ perceptions. Interviews continued until data saturation was achieved, resulting in total of 30 female participants. The sample consisted of Turkish women aged 18–35 residing in Ankara, selected through purposive sampling, which is often used to gain insights into specific cultural and sociological context. Both code and thematic saturation helped to determine the sample size, ensuring data depth without redundancy (Morse, 2004).

The choice to focus on young women was based on several considerations. First, xenophobia is a phenomenon that emerges in society as a reaction to migration and the presence of foreign groups. Over the past fifteen years, Turkey has hosted a substantial number of immigrants due to increasing external migration and the immigrants have continued to live in Turkey for many years. Focusing on younger women offers valuable insights into current attitudes of xenophobia while also indicating potential future trends.

Women are widely recognized as vulnerable groups in society. In particular, the fear of crime researches consistently finds that women experience higher level of insecurity than man and one of the most common findings is higher levels of fear of crime among women (Warr, 2000; Stanko, 1995; Robinette, et al., 2024). When these two dimensions are considered together, the investigation of women’s xenophobic attitudes gains further significance. Moreover, since young women are likely to coexist with migrant communities, their views on xenophobia carry particular importance. Due to their active role in education, employment, and social life, they tend to have more direct interaction with immigrants.

For the purposes of this study, participants who met the relevant age criteria were recruited from Ankara’s Çankaya, Yenimahalle, and Keçiören districts. Following ethical approval, fieldwork was carried out over one-month. Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about the research, and audio recordings. Each interview lasted an average of 30 minutes, and none of the participants

wished to terminate their interviews early. On the contrary, most showed their strong interest in the topic.

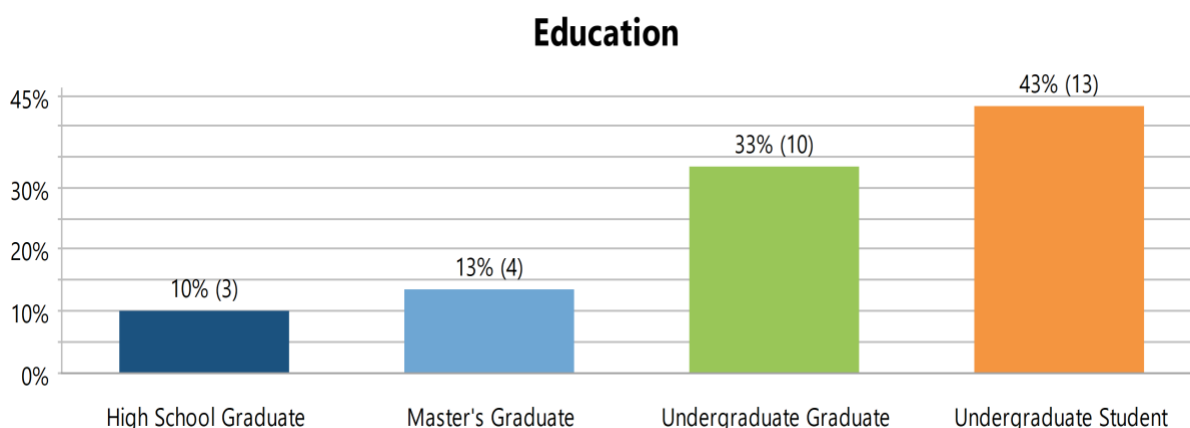
An important factor through of the research process, especially in interpretation of the data, was the researcher's positionality. As a member of the host society, the researcher had the advantage of approaching participant's experiences both insider and observer. Throughout the research process, this dual positioning required continuous reflexive awareness. In order to conduct the interviews in a framework of mutual respect, trust, and voluntariness, special attention was paid to concerns of power dynamics and potential biases during the interactions with participants. By doing this, the analysis aimed to minimize the possibility that the researcher's interpretations would overpower the participants' voices while still accurately representing their voices.

The primary motivation for employing a qualitative design was to document women's experiences of xenophobia comprehensively. While quantitative research offers statistical generalizations, qualitative studies provide rich contextual understanding of the environments in which social issues arise. Although qualitative findings can not be generalized to the entire population, they provide critical insights into both the participant group and the larger social setting.

## FINDINGS

In face-to-face interviews with Turkish women aged 18-35 residing in Ankara, participants were asked about their perceptions of xenophobia. An initial finding was that, although no specific questions about ethnic origins were asked, participants responded as if the questions were about individuals of Syrian and Afghan origin. This indicates that the term "foreigner" is associated with Syrians and Afghans in the participants' minds. Only one of the 30 participants included Russian immigrants in their responses.

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants



**Figure 1:** Participants' Educational Levels

A total of 30 participants aged 18-35 were interviewed. The majority of the participants are undergraduate students and university graduates. These groups are followed by master's graduates and high school graduates, respectively.

**Table 1: Participants' Age Distribution**

Age	Frekans	%
19	2	6,67
20	5	16,67
21	4	13,33
22	4	13,33
23	5	16,67
25	2	6,67
26	2	6,67
27	2	6,67
28	1	3,33
32	1	3,33
33	1	3,33
34	1	3,33
Total	30	100,00

When examining the ages of the participants, it is observed that they are predominantly in their early twenties. There are only three participants over the age of 30.

### **Thematic Analysis**

In the context of xenophobia, the primary themes to be addressed include migration, security, economic issues, nationalist rhetoric, and socio-cultural factors, which form the main framework of the study (Canetti-Nisim and Pedahzur, 2003: 307). The database created has resulted in a thematic analysis within this framework. The issues commonly reported by women were evaluated across a range of topics including security, economy, cultural impact, personal experiences, sources of information on the subject, and perspectives on external migration. Sub-codes were also developed under these main themes.

### **Participants' Perspectives on External Migration**

When examining participants' perspectives on external migration in Türkiye, a negative interpretation is observed. The underlying issues of this negative outlook are often attributed to the uncontrolled or mismanaged nature of migration, leading to unemployment and adverse effects on the demographic structure.

*"I don't think this migration events are managed in a very controlled manner. I believe they come in a very uncontrolled way, and therefore, there is an unnecessary increase in population. I also think this causes our people to gradually assimilate among them."*  
(Participant 7)

*"Both in terms of the negative impact on Turkish labor and the problems they create, it's negative. Additionally, the situation is more problematic because it's so uncontrolled."*  
(Participant 8)

These statements reveal that participants predominantly associate migration with a sense of disorder and lack of control, which intensifies their negative perceptions. Such concerns not only highlight structural anxieties about labor and demographic change but also provide the foundation for their security-related fears discussed in the next section.

### **Participants' Perspectives on Xenophobia**

Participants express that their negative views towards migrants are not actually rooted in racist beliefs. Instead, they attribute these negative perspectives to the problems associated with the current migration policies, which have brought about numerous issues. While conveying their negative thoughts, participants have shown feelings of shame and fear of being misunderstood as racist. They have explicitly stated that they are not racist. This concern was frequently observed during interviews when responding to questions. Participants are extremely cautious about appearing racist or lacking in humanitarian values while discussing their concerns.

*"... I am definitely not racist or anything like that. Do you understand? (Participant 5)"*

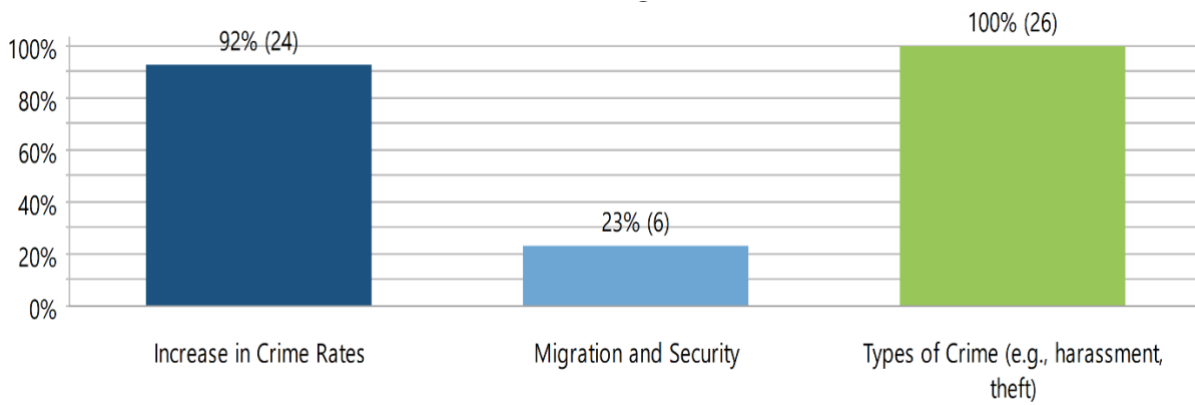
*"I am not racist, but if the behavior of people were positive, there would be no problem. Of course, everyone can live in our country, but when seeing the negative outcomes, no one would want that, of course. (Participant 8)."*

These opinions illustrate how participants carefully rejected racist labeling while still voicing unease about migration. Their emphasis on insecurity and social harmony signals that underlying fears extend beyond prejudice, shaping broader perceptions of risk in everyday life.

### **Theme 1: Migration and Security**

Among the issues arising from external migration, women's most common fears are related to security. Participants believe that crime rates have increased due to migration.

*"Yes, I think crime rates have increased two or threefold. I believe that they see the situation in the country and take advantage of it. I think most crimes are related to harassment and rape." (Participant 11).*



**Figure 2:** Participants' Perceptions of Immigration and Security

Participants' awareness that there is no data on the increase in crime rates is notable. However, they still perceive that crime rates have risen.

*"Well, nothing should be discussed without data on this matter. Because we don't have data. Whether there has been an extra increase in crime rates after they arrived or not, we cannot know without data. But according to what the media reflects, I think there is some perception management going on" (Participant 12).*

Another important point raised by women on this issue is that crime rates in the country were already high and that external migration has exacerbated this situation.

*"Of course, there were crimes before, but now it has increased even more. And in all the crime incidents I hear about, they are now always crimes committed by foreigners or migrants. Generally, the crimes they have committed" (Participant 4).*

Research on fear of crime indicates that women are more likely than men to fear being victims of crime (Beaulieu et al., 2007: 337; Stanko, 1995: 50-51; Warr, 2000). Studies have identified that the types of crimes women fear most often include harassment and similar incidents (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Walklate, 1997; Pain, 2001). This concern extends to women's fears about foreigners. When discussing perceptions of increasing crime rates, nearly all women mentioned that crimes such as harassment, femicide, theft, and robbery have increased. Some participants reported experiencing incidents such as "catcalling" and "molestation" from foreigners, while others noted that their close acquaintances had faced similar experiences.

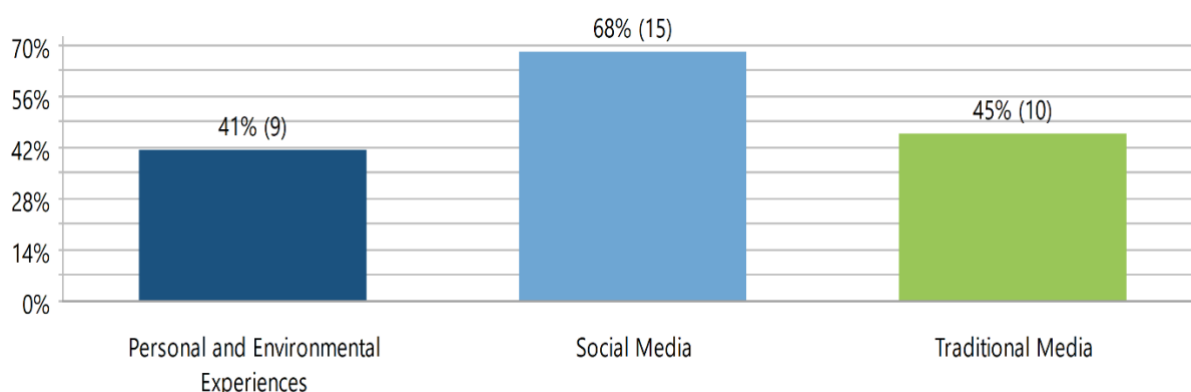
*"There have been many incidents in my surroundings. Especially in the neighborhood where I live, there have been incidents involving people from other neighborhoods. For example, people I know from Şentepe have reported experiencing this a lot. Incidents such as catcalling and assault. I know many who have experienced these problems." (Participant 4)*

Overall, participants' narratives suggest that fears of crime are shaped not only by direct experiences but also by widespread perceptions of risk in their communities. These accounts indicate that



women's security concerns are deeply intertwined with the ways in which information about crime circulates in society, pointing toward the influential role of media representations.

## Thema 2: Impact of Traditional and Social Media



**Figure 3:** Participants' Perceptions of Immigration and Information Sources

Factors influencing participants' perceptions of rising crime rates include social media, traditional media, and personal or acquaintances' experiences. It is observed that information about crimes committed by foreigners is often derived from these three sources.

*“There is already a lot of information about this in the media, but recently, in the neighborhood where my cousin lives, a group of Syrian boys attacked my cousins, hitting them with stones and injuring their heads” (Participant 29).*

*“Well, there is nothing that has happened to me or my close circle, but I think it is due to both traditional and social media” (Participant 28).*

*“There is nothing in my close circle, but I see it a lot on the news every day. Mostly on social media” (Participant 25).*

*“Social media is very influential in this regard. We see a lot of it on social media. Because now everyone can share their comments. Especially on Twitter, it is shared a lot. Therefore, I think it is heavily influenced by social media” (Participant 1).*

Taken together, these reflections reveal that women's perceptions of crime are heavily mediated by both traditional and social media, amplifying fears even in the absence of direct encounters. This climate of mediated anxiety also feeds into broader concerns about the social and economic consequences of migration, which emerged strongly in participants' narratives.

## Thema 3: Migration and Economy

Increased external migration is perceived to negatively affect the economy by participants. They argue that migrants contribute to unemployment and lower wages in the job market. Two noteworthy

factors influencing the economic impact of migration are highlighted. First, it is argued that cheap labor tends to be employed in lower-skilled jobs rather than in higher-skilled professions. It is commonly believed that professions such as engineering, medicine, and law are not affected by unemployment and wage decreases.

*"Yes, somewhat, because employers prefer to hire them as cheap labor, which leads to unemployment. However, they do not affect unemployment among those seeking skilled jobs" (Participant 2).*

Secondly, employers are emphasized as a major factor contributing to unemployment and wage decreases. It is seen that employers often exploit migrant workers by paying lower wages and not providing social security, taking advantage of their difficult living conditions.

*"Yes, I agree because employers generally prefer migrants in order to offer lower wages. This is why the number of locals who are unable to find jobs has significantly increased" (Participant 4).*

*"Migrants contribute to unemployment because they work for lower wages. Our own Turkish people know that these wages are low. In Turkey's conditions, they accept any kind of job just to make a living" (Participant 5).*

*"It could also be due to our own people (employers). They work cheaper and often without insurance" (Participant 8).*

Participants portray migration as a factor that intensifies economic vulnerability, particularly through exploitative labor practices. Yet their concerns extend beyond material conditions, reflecting deeper anxieties about cultural change and the preservation of social values, which shaped the following theme.

#### **Thema 4: Cultural Impacts**

The emphasis on cultural impacts related to external migration is notable. The cultural effects are concentrated on two main themes. First, it is highlighted that the excessive influx of migrants negatively impacts the existing culture.

*"They are trying to settle here completely. When we see that they have settled, I think we will lose our own values" (Participant 10).*

*"Yes, I believe there is an impact, and I think the Turkish lineage is declining due to the high birth rates of migrants. Because currently, Turks are not having many children. The birth rate has decreased" (Participant 11).*

*"There is a cultural clash, a confusion. The communication between foreign nationals and Turks results in a lot of cultural conflict due to the lack of interaction between Turks and them" (Participant 14).*

A second prominent issue is the ongoing adaptation problems that migrants are anticipated to face in the future. There is a notable concern expressed repeatedly that migrants are not making any effort to adapt to our country and are instead attempting to impose their own culture.

*"No, on the contrary, I think we are becoming more like them." (Participant 11).*

*"On the contrary, I think we will have to adapt to them. We should live in harmony with them." (Participant 14).*

*"I think they are starting to dominate us more. They see themselves as superior to our own citizens, to us Turks." (Participant 1).*

*"I don't think there will be harmony in the way of life because I always believe they will reflect their own culture. I think they are already struggling to adapt." (Participant 2).*

These narratives reveal that cultural anxieties are not limited to everyday practices but also shape perceptions of collective identity. Such concerns about preserving national values often intersect with political discourse, fueling stronger nationalist sentiments and doubts about immigrants' loyalty to the host country.

### **Thema 5: Nationalistic Discourse and Immigrants' Loyalty**

The increase in xenophobia in society has led to a rise in racist rhetoric within the political sphere and the ascendance of far-right parties. These political statements find resonance within society and trigger racist sentiments among the public.

Female participants perceive that nationalist rhetoric in our country will increase in the future:

*"Our own race might come to be seen as superior to theirs. Yes, that could happen" (Participant 10).*

*"I think it will significantly increase. Especially in about 5-6 years, every ethnic nation will start forming parties that promote their own race" (Participant 22).*

Another notable theme is the perception that immigrants would not remain in our country to support it during an extraordinary situation or war but would instead flee. This general sentiment and acceptance are particularly striking:

*"...whether it's for holiday visits or any other reasons... Whenever a door is opened, they leave. It is clear that they would not support us in a major event. They do not show loyalty to our country. No, they have no responsibilities. Absolutely not" (Participant 30).*

*"They would definitely show loyalty to their own country. Absolutely. I don't think they would care much about this place. They would return to their own country with indifference" (Participant 29).*

*"They would migrate to a place where there is no war in their own country" (Participant 27).*

These descriptions indicate that nationalist views and concerns about immigrants' loyalty are not isolated opinions; but reflect broader social tensions. This pattern highlights the importance of seeing xenophobia not just as personal bias but as a structural issue rooted in politics and identity.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that young women in Ankara primarily shape their perceptions of immigrants around themes of security, economics, cultural integration, and loyalty. Their negative attitudes are not presented as simple prejudices but are rooted in structural anxieties, demonstrating that xenophobia is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by inequalities, political discourse, and media representations.

Concerns about security align closely with existing research. Studies on fear of crime consistently show that women report higher levels of fear than men, particularly concerning offenses such as harassment and sexual violence (Stanko, 1995; Warr, 2000; Beaulieu et al., 2007). In this study, women's insecurities were reinforced not only by direct experiences but also by indirect narratives circulating through traditional and social media. UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that misinformation and biased reporting often criminalize immigrants, thus deepening social divisions. Therefore, women's tendency to associate foreigners with crime can be understood as a consequence of the structural information dynamics rather than an individual prejudice.

From an economic perspective, participants argued that immigrants contribute to unemployment and wages suppression. However, their narratives suggest that the real source of this problem is the exploitative practices of employers who exploit immigrants' vulnerable position. Similar findings are also found in the literature, indicating that economic crises often exacerbate structurally, rather than individually, generated anti-immigrant sentiment (Kosic et al., 2005; Chtouris et al., 2014). Thus, women's economic concerns can be seen as reflections of broader inequalities in the labor market, not solely xenophobic attitudes.

There was also a strong emphasis on cultural issues. Many participants expressed concern about having to adapt to immigrants' cultural norms or losing their national values. Yakushko (2008) noted that a key element of xenophobia is the fear of cultural regression. The present study illustrates these concerns with stories of cultural conflict and the belief that immigrants do not strive to integrate. These findings show that immigrants are often viewed as "others" both in economically and culturally.

Further examples of xenophobia as part of structural contexts include nationalist messages and questions of loyalty. Participants assumed that immigrants would leave Turkey if circumstances allowed; reinforcing the notion that they remain foreigners. Political rhetoric exacerbates such views by disturbing social ties and increasing segregation (Scheepers et al., 2002).

The results align with the ideas of anti-oppressive practice (AOP) in social work, which emphasizes the importance of uncovering structural injustices and power imbalances (Dominelli, 2002; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). Participants' frequent use of disclaimers such as "I'm not racist, but" illustrates the

tension between rejecting overt racism and maintaining exclusionary views. This ambiguity highlights the need to view xenophobia not merely as a personal prejudice but also as a consequence of systemic oppression manifested in social, political, and cultural structures.

Consequently, xenophobia among young women in Ankara reflects broader structural issues related to security, the economy, culture, and politics, rather than solely individual attitudes. The idea of anti-oppression practices fosters equal inclusion for migrants, challenges biased media coverage, and fosters supportive social relationships. This framework is essential for addressing these issues. By implementing this approach, social work can play a key role in reducing xenophobia and strengthening social cohesion.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined how Turkish women aged 18-35 living in Ankara perceive various dimensions of xenophobia. The findings reveal that a range of factors, including ingrained societal prejudices, media coverage of immigration, and the rapid spread of misinformation on digital platforms, influence negative attitudes toward immigrants. Taken together, these findings help clarify current debates on immigration and the social integration challenges facing Türkiye.

One study found that participants frequently view immigrants as a single, homogeneous group. This view is particularly evident in concerns about Afghan and Syrian communities, which are frequently cited as potential sources of instability. Many linked these perceptions to their own sense of insecurity and vulnerability. Media focus on crime and the intensification of anti-immigrant rhetoric during periods of economic hardship appear to reinforce these views. Furthermore, the rapid dissemination of unverified information via social media has reinforced and normalized such biases within broader segments of society.

Another key finding of this study is that immigrants are viewed as outgroups by the host society. Such views seriously hinder social integration and make it difficult for newcomers to be accepted into society. Many participants characterized immigrants as individuals who fail to adapt to dominant social and cultural norms; undermining the potential for developing mutual trust and a sense of community. Such exclusionary perceptions risks escalating hostile rhetoric, violent crime, and routine behaviors that undermine respect for human dignity over time.

The first recommendation based on these findings is to develop integration policies that consider the needs of both the host society and immigrants. Programs such as language classes, intercultural exchange projects, and vocational training should be prioritized to reduce prejudice and enhance social cohesion. Women's fear of crime also requires special attention. This can be addressed through targeted social service interventions and community-based safety programs. Municipalities and civil society organizations can play a key role by establishing women's centers, counseling services, and support networks that bring together local and immigrant women in shared spaces.

The role of social media and traditional media is the focus of the second recommendation. To prevent stigmatization of immigrant communities, news organizations should adhere to higher ethical standards and have better protections against hate speech. Expanding media literacy programs, especially for younger audiences, can help stop the spread of misinformation and encourage more informed and balanced perspectives.

Finally, because the labor exploitation of migrant creates economic tensions, strengthening oversight mechanisms is essential. In addition to protecting the local workforce, imposing harsher penalties on employers who employ immigrants at unreasonably low wages or without appropriate protections will ensure equitable labor rights. Expanding migrant's access to education and vocational training will improve their qualifications, supporting long-term social cohesion and a more balanced labor market.

The study concludes that migration impacts social life in Türkiye in many ways, affecting relationships, perceptions, and integration processes. Therefore, dispelling myths and reducing discriminatory sentiments within society should be a primary focus of any effort to foster social cohesion. Social projects and educational programs that foster mutual-understanding and create opportunities for bonding between immigrants and locals appear particularly important in this context.

## **ETHICAL INFORMATION ON THE RESEARCH**

Ethical approval was obtained from Isparta University of Applied Science to conduct this research.

Ethical approval date: 06.2024- 196-07

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

There is no potential conflict of interest in this study.

## **GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET**

2011 yılında Suriye’de başlayan iç savaş, Türkiye’yi kısa sürede bölgesel göç hareketlerinin merkezine yerleştirmiştir. Bu süreçte Türkiye, yalnızca Suriye’den değil; Afganistan, Afrika ve Orta Asya’dan gelen farklı göç akımlarıyla da karşı karşıya kalmış ve kısa zamanda çok katmanlı bir göç toplumu hâline gelmiştir. Göçün süreklilik kazanması, ülkenin demografik yapısında, kentleşme dinamiklerinde ve toplumsal ilişkilerinde derin değişimlere yol açmıştır. Özellikle büyük şehirlerde farklı etnik, dini ve kültürel grupların bir arada yaşaması, sosyal uyum, kültürel etkileşim, ekonomik rekabet ve güvenlik algısı ekseninde yeni tartışmaları beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu çok boyutlu dönüşüm, bir yandan kültürel çoğulculuğu teşvik ederken diğer yandan ev sahibi toplumda belirsizlik, ekonomik kırılganlık ve aidiyet kaygılarını artırarak zenofobik tutumların giderek daha görünür hâle gelmesine neden olmuştur.

Bu araştırma, Ankara’da yaşayan 18–35 yaş arası Türk kadınlarının göçmenlere yönelik zenofobi algılarını incelemektedir. Kadınların seçilmesinin nedeni, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri gereği güvenlik algısının daha hassas biçimde şekillenmesi ve suç korkusunun genellikle kadınlar üzerinden daha

yoğun deneyimlenmesidir. Dolayısıyla araştırma, zenofobiyi yalnızca bilişsel bir önyargı değil, toplumsal cinsiyet, ekonomik kırılganlık ve kültürel kimlik algılarının kesişiminde ortaya çıkan bir toplumsal olgu olarak ele almaktadır.

Çalışma nitel bir araştırma deseniyle yürütülmüş, Ankara'nın Çankaya, Yenimahalle ve Keçiören ilçelerinde yaşayan 30 kadın katılımcıyla yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmiş, veri doygunluğuna ulaşıncaya kadar mülakatlar sürdürülmüştür. Görüşmeler ortalama 30 dakika sürmüş, katılımcılardan bilgilendirilmiş onam alınmıştır. Elde edilen veriler MAXQDA 24 programı aracılığıyla tematik analize tabi tutulmuş, araştırmacı sürece refleksif bir yaklaşım sergileyerek kendi önyargılarını minimize etmeye özen göstermiştir. Analiz sonucunda beş ana tema belirlenmiştir: göç ve güvenlik, medya etkisi, ekonomi, kültürel etkiler ve milliyetçi söylemler.

Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu, göçün Türkiye'deki güvenlik risklerini artırdığına inanmaktadır. Kadınlar, özellikle taciz, hırsızlık, gasp ve sokakta rahatsız edilme gibi suç türlerinde artış olduğuna dair güçlü bir algıya sahiptir. Resmî istatistiklere dayalı bir bilgiye sahip olmasalar da, medyada sıkça yer alan suç haberlerinin bu algıyı güçlendirdiğini belirtmişlerdir. Bu durum, literatürde kadınların erkeklere göre daha yüksek düzeyde suç korkusu yaşadığına işaret eden araştırmalarla (Stanko, 1995; Warr, 2000; Beaulieu et al., 2007) paralellik göstermektedir. Bazı katılımcılar doğrudan taciz ya da sözlü rahatsız edilme deneyimlerinden söz ederken, bazıları yakın çevresinde benzer olaylar yaşandığını aktarmıştır. Bu durum, zenofobinin yalnızca bilişsel bir önyargı değil, somut deneyimlerle ve gündelik yaşam pratikleriyle şekillenen bir güvenlik algısı olduğunu göstermektedir.

Medya, katılımcıların göçmenlere dair düşüncelerini biçimlendiren en belirgin araçlardan biridir. Katılımcılar, bilgi kaynaklarının büyük kısmını sosyal medya ve televizyon haberlerinden edindiklerini ifade etmiştir. Sosyal medyada hızla yayılan doğrulanmamış bilgiler, olay görüntüleri ve kullanıcı yorumları, göçmenlerin "tehdit" olarak algılanmasına yol açmaktadır. UNESCO'nun (2020) da vurguladığı üzere, dijital dezenformasyon çağında yanlış bilgi, zenofobiyi besleyen en önemli faktörlerden biridir. Katılımcıların "Aslında çevremde bir olay yaşanmadı ama sosyal medyada her gün görünce insan korkuyor" şeklindeki ifadeleri, medyanın korku üretiminde nasıl merkezi bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda kadınların suç korkusu, doğrudan deneyimden ziyade dolaylı bilgi akışı üzerinden şekillenmektedir.

Ekonomik kaygılar da zenofobik tutumların önemli bir belirleyicisidir. Katılımcıların çoğu, göçmenlerin ucuz işgücü olarak çalıştırılmasının yerli halkın iş imkânlarını azalttığını düşünmektedir. Özellikle düşük vasıflı sektörlerde göçmenlerin tercih edilmesi, katılımcılar tarafından "ekonomik haksızlık" olarak yorumlanmaktadır. Bununla birlikte bazı kadınlar, sorunun göçmenlerden çok onları sigortasız ve düşük ücretle çalıştıran işverenlerden kaynaklandığını dile getirmiştir. Bu görüş, zenofobik tepkilerin yalnızca "yabancı karşıtlığı" değil, ekonomik eşitsizliklere duyulan tepkiyle de iç içe geçtiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Kadın katılımcıların ekonomik bağımsızlık mücadelesiyle güvenlik

kaygısının kesiştiği bu noktada, göçmenlerin varlığı genellikle bir “rekabet” değil, “risk” olarak kodlanmaktadır.

Kültürel temalar ise zenofobinin en görünür alanını oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcıların çoğu, göçmenlerin Türk toplumuna yeterince uyum sağlamadığını ve kendi kültürel normlarını dayattığını düşünmektedir. “Artık biz onlara değil, onlar bize benzetiyor” ifadesi bu kaygının tipik bir örneğidir. Bu söylem, ev sahibi toplumun kültürel kimliğini tehdit altında algıladığını ve kültürel erozyon korkusunun zenofobiye güçlendirdiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, yüksek doğurganlık oranlarının “Türk kimliğinin azalması” şeklinde yorumlanması, göçün yalnızca demografik değil, sembolik bir tehdit olarak da algılandığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Milliyetçi söylemler ve aidiyet algısı da zenofobik duyguların önemli bir bileşenidir. Katılımcıların bir kısmı, göçmenlerin olağanüstü bir durumda Türkiye’ye sadık kalmayacağını, kriz anlarında ülkeyi terk edeceğini düşünmektedir. Bu inanç, göçmenlerin “bizden olmayan” olarak konumlandığını ve toplumsal güven bağlarının zayıf algılandığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca bazı katılımcılar, milliyetçi partilerin önümüzdeki yıllarda daha da güçleneceğini, etnik kimlik temelli siyasetlerin artacağını öngörmektedir. Bu eğilim, zenofobinin siyasal düzlemde yeniden üretildiğini göstermektedir.

Elde edilen bulgular, zenofobinin bireysel düzeydeki önyargılarla açıklanamayacak kadar çok katmanlı bir olgu olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Kadınların göçmenlere yönelik olumsuz tutumları; güvenlik kaygısı, ekonomik kırılganlık, kültürel endişe ve siyasal söylemlerin kesişiminde şekillenmektedir. Bu durum, anti-baskıcı sosyal hizmet yaklaşımının (Dominelli, 2002; Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005) temel argümanlarıyla uyumludur. Zenofobi, bireysel bir ahlaki zafiyet değil; yapısal eşitsizliklerin, bilgi asimetrisinin ve toplumsal korkunun ortak ürünüdür. Katılımcıların sıkça kullandığı “İrkçi değilim ama...” önermesi, bireysel farkındalık ile içselleşmiş önyargı arasındaki gerilimi yansıtmaktadır.

Bu bulgular ışığında, zenofobik eğilimlerin azaltılması için bütüncül politikalar gereklidir. İlk olarak, göçmenlerin dil öğrenimi, mesleki beceriler ve kültürel adaptasyon süreçlerini destekleyen entegrasyon programları yaygınlaştırılmalıdır. Bu programların yalnızca göçmenlere değil, ev sahibi topluma da hitap etmesi, karşılıklı anlayış ve etkileşimi artıracaktır. Belediyeler ve sivil toplum kuruluşları, kadınlara yönelik ortak etkinlikler ve güvenli sosyal alanlar oluşturarak kültürel temasın olumlu biçimlerde gerçekleşmesine katkı sunabilir.

İkinci olarak, medya okuryazarlığının geliştirilmesi ve etik yayıncılık ilkelerinin güçlendirilmesi önem taşımaktadır. Göçmenlerle ilgili haberlerde sansasyonel dil yerine dengeleyici, doğrulanabilir bilgiye dayalı içerikler üretilmelidir. Özellikle sosyal medyada yanlış bilginin yayılmasını önlemek için farkındalık kampanyaları düzenlenmesi, toplumsal önyargıların yeniden üretimini azaltacaktır.

Üçüncü olarak, ekonomik eşitsizlikleri azaltacak düzenlemeler yapılmalıdır. Göçmenlerin düşük ücretle veya sigortasız çalıştırılması, hem emek piyasasında haksız rekabet yaratmakta hem de yerli



halkta ekonomik güvensizlik duygusunu derinleştirmektedir. Çalışma koşullarının denetimi, kayıt dışı istihdamın önlenmesi ve eşit ücret politikaları, ekonomik zenofobinin azalmasına katkı sağlayacaktır.

Sonuç olarak, Ankara'da yaşayan genç kadınların zenofobi algıları, güvenlik endişesi, ekonomik kırılğanlık, kültürel kimlik ve siyasal söylemlerle iç içe geçmiş çok boyutlu bir yapıya sahiptir. Zenofobi, yalnızca “yabancı korkusu” değil; toplumsal eşitsizliklerin, medyatik temsillerin ve politik güvensizliklerin birleşiminden doğan bir süreçtir. Bu nedenle, göçmenlerin topluma uyumunun desteklenmesi kadar, ev sahibi toplumun da kapsayıcı ve eleştirel düşünme becerilerinin güçlendirilmesi gerekmektedir. Sosyal hizmet, eğitim ve medya politikalarının birlikte çalıştığı bir çerçeve, farklılıkların tehdit değil zenginlik olarak algılandığı bir toplumun inşasına katkı sağlayacaktır. Böylece zenofobi, toplumsal korkunun değil, birlikte yaşamının yeniden öğrenildiği bir sürece dönüşebilir.

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