

**Xenophobic behaviour: A comparative study of Afro American racism and dalits in India**

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**Abstract**

This comparative study examines the manifestations and impacts of xenophobic behavior towards two distinct marginalized groups - African Americans in the United States and Dalits in India. Drawing upon historical records, quantitative data, and qualitative accounts, we analyze the deep-rooted prejudices, systemic discrimination, and socio-economic disparities faced by these communities. The research unveils striking parallels in the perpetuation of oppressive societal structures, denial of fundamental rights, and the psychological toll of prolonged marginalization. By juxtaposing these two emblematic cases, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the universal nature of xenophobia and its detrimental consequences, while advocating for inclusive policies and transformative social change. The findings underscore the urgency of dismantling entrenched prejudices and fostering an ethos of acceptance and equality across all societies.

**Keywords:** xenophobia; racism; discrimination; African Americans; Dalits; social inequality; marginalization; human rights

**1. Introduction**

Xenophobia, the deep-rooted fear or hatred of those perceived as "others," has manifested in myriad forms throughout human history, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural contexts. This insidious phenomenon has perpetuated the systematic oppression of marginalized groups, denying them fundamental rights and impeding their full participation in societal spheres. The present study delves into two emblematic cases of xenophobic behavior towards

African Americans in the United States and Dalits in India, drawing parallels and contrasts to elucidate the universal nature of this pernicious social ill.

The African American experience in the United States is indelibly marked by the historic legacy of slavery, systemic racism, and the enduring struggle for civil rights. Despite legislative advancements and societal progress, remnants of xenophobic attitudes and practices continue to permeate various facets of American society, manifesting in disparities in education, employment, healthcare, and criminal justice systems [1-3]. Furthermore, the psychological toll of prolonged marginalization and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes have profoundly impacted the African American community's well-being and sense of belonging [4,5].

In India, the caste system, an ancient social stratification predicated on notions of purity and pollution, has institutionalized the subjugation of Dalits, formerly known as "untouchables." Despite constitutional reforms and affirmative action policies, Dalits continue to face acute discrimination, economic deprivation, and social ostracization [6,7]. The deep-rooted stigma associated with their caste identity has perpetuated cycles of poverty, limited access to resources, and persistent human rights violations [8,9].

By examining these two distinct yet analogous cases of xenophobic behavior, this study aims to shed light on the pervasive and transcultural nature of prejudice, its manifestations, and its far-reaching consequences. Through a comparative lens, we seek to unravel the complex interplay of historical, socio-cultural, and institutional factors that perpetuate the marginalization of these communities, while also exploring potential pathways towards inclusive societies that celebrate diversity and uphold the inherent dignity of all individuals.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This comparative study employed a mixed-methods approach, triangulating data from diverse sources to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The research design encompassed three primary components:

### **2.1. Historical Analysis**

An extensive review of historical records, scholarly works, and archival materials was undertaken to trace the origins and evolution of xenophobic attitudes and practices towards African Americans and Dalits. This analysis provided crucial contextual insights into the socio-cultural, political, and economic factors that have shaped and reinforced prejudices against these communities over time.

### **2.2. Quantitative Data Analysis**

Relevant statistical data from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and academic databases were compiled and analyzed to quantify the disparities and inequalities experienced by African Americans and Dalits across various domains, including education, employment, health, and access to resources. This quantitative component allowed for comparative assessments and the identification of patterns and trends within and across the two contexts.

### **2.3. Qualitative Inquiry**

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with members of the African American and Dalit communities, as well as subject matter experts and stakeholders. These qualitative accounts provided first-hand perspectives on the lived experiences of marginalization, the psychological and emotional impacts of xenophobia, and the resilience strategies employed by these groups. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent,

confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, were rigorously upheld throughout the data collection process.

The convergence of these three methodological strands facilitated a holistic and multidimensional understanding of xenophobic behavior, its manifestations, and its consequences for the target communities.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

The findings of this comparative study shed light on the pervasive and insidious nature of xenophobic behavior towards African Americans and Dalits, highlighting both commonalities and contextual nuances. The results are organized into three thematic sections: (a) Historical Underpinnings, (b) Systemic Discrimination and Social Inequalities, and (c) Psychological and Emotional Impacts.

#### **3.1. Historical Underpinnings**

The roots of xenophobia towards African Americans and Dalits can be traced back to deeply entrenched belief systems and power structures that have perpetuated the subjugation of these communities over centuries.

##### **3.1.1. African American Experience**

The transatlantic slave trade and the institutionalization of slavery in the United States laid the foundation for the dehumanization and oppression of African Americans. The notion of white racial superiority and the objectification of Black bodies fueled the systematic denial of basic human rights and the perpetuation of violent practices [10]. Even after the abolition of slavery, the legacy of racism persisted through discriminatory laws, such as the Jim Crow segregation policies, and the normalization of xenophobic attitudes within societal fabrics [11].

##### **3.1.2. Dalit Experience**

The caste system in India, with its rigid hierarchical divisions, has historically relegated Dalits to the lowest strata of society. Rooted in religious and cultural beliefs about purity and pollution, this system has institutionalized the ostracization and dehumanization of Dalits, subjecting them to severe social stigma and economic deprivation [12]. The pervasive ideology of "untouchability" has perpetuated the notion of Dalits as impure and lesser beings, justifying their exclusion from mainstream society and denying them access to basic amenities and opportunities [13].

### **3.2. Systemic Discrimination and Social Inequalities**

The historical underpinnings of xenophobia have manifested in perpetuating systemic discrimination and entrenched social inequalities, affecting various aspects of the lived experiences of African Americans and Dalits.

#### **3.2.1. Education**

Both communities have faced significant barriers in accessing quality education, which has contributed to perpetuating cycles of disadvantage. African American students often attend under-resourced schools, experience disproportionate disciplinary actions, and face implicit biases from educators [14]. Similarly, Dalit children confront discrimination, segregation, and lack of infrastructure in educational institutions, impeding their academic progress and perpetuating inter-generational poverty [15].

#### **3.2.2. Employment and Economic Opportunities**

Xenophobic attitudes have translated into limited employment and economic opportunities for African Americans and Dalits. African Americans continue to experience higher unemployment rates, lower wages, and occupational segregation, even when controlling for educational attainment [16]. Dalits, historically relegated to menial and degrading occupations, face

significant barriers in accessing formal employment, leading to chronic poverty and economic marginalization [17].

**3.2.3. Healthcare and Well-being**

The impact of xenophobia extends to the realm of healthcare and well-being. African Americans have higher rates of chronic diseases, lower life expectancy, and reduced access to quality healthcare services, partly attributable to discriminatory practices and implicit biases within the healthcare system [18]. Dalits, similarly, face discrimination in accessing healthcare facilities, leading to poor health outcomes and perpetuating inter-generational disadvantages [19].

**3.2.4. Criminal Justice and Human Rights Violations**

The disproportionate representation of African Americans in the criminal justice system, coupled with discriminatory law enforcement practices and harsher sentencing, exemplifies the manifestation of xenophobia within the legal system [20]. Dalits, too, have been subjected to human rights violations, including violence, sexual assault, and denial of access to public spaces and resources, reflecting deeply ingrained prejudices and systemic oppression [21].

Table 1 presents a comparative overview of the systemic inequalities faced by African Americans and Dalits across various domains.

**Table 1. Comparative overview of systemic inequalities faced by African Americans and Dalits**

| Domain    | African Americans  | Dalits  |
|-----------|--|---|
| Education | Under-resourced schools- Disproportionate disciplinary actions- Implicit biases from educators | Discrimination and segregation in schools- Lack of infrastructure and resources- Perpetuation of inter-generational poverty |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Employment and Economic Opportunities</p>        | <p>- Higher unemployment rates- Lower wages- Occupational segregation</p>   | <p>- Barriers to formal employment- Relegated to menial and degrading occupations- Chronic poverty and economic marginalization</p>    |
| <p>Healthcare and Well-being</p>                    | <p>- Higher rates of chronic diseases- Lower life expectancy- Reduced access to quality healthcare services- Discriminatory practices and implicit biases</p> | <p>- Discrimination in accessing healthcare facilities- Poor health outcomes- Inter-generational disadvantages</p>                     |
| <p>Criminal Justice and Human Rights Violations</p> | <p>- Disproportionate representation in criminal justice system- Discriminatory law enforcement practices- Harsher sentencing</p>                             | <p>- Violence and sexual assault- Denial of access to public spaces and resources- Systemic oppression and human rights violations</p> |

**3.3. Psychological and Emotional Impacts**

Beyond the tangible manifestations of systemic discrimination, xenophobia has profoundly impacted the psychological and emotional well-being of African Americans and Dalits.

**3.3.1. Internalized Oppression and Self-worth**

The pervasive nature of xenophobic attitudes and practices has contributed to the internalization of oppression and negative self-perceptions among members of these marginalized groups. African Americans have grappled with the psychological toll of dehumanization, stereotyping,

and the constant need to prove their worth [22]. Dalits, too, have internalized the stigma associated with their caste identity, leading to diminished self-esteem and a sense of powerlessness [23].

**3.3.2. Trauma and Mental Health Challenges**

Prolonged exposure to discrimination, violence, and marginalization has had detrimental effects on the mental health of African Americans and Dalits. High rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety have been documented within these communities, often exacerbated by limited access to culturally competent mental health services [24,25].

**3.3.3. Resilience and Coping Strategies**

Despite the adversities faced, both communities have demonstrated remarkable resilience and developed coping strategies to navigate the challenges posed by xenophobia. African Americans have drawn strength from their cultural heritage, community support networks, and the Civil Rights Movement's legacy [26]. Dalits, too, have mobilized through social movements, embraced their identities, and fostered collective empowerment initiatives [27].

Table 2 summarizes the psychological and emotional impacts of xenophobia on African Americans and Dalits, as well as their resilience strategies.

**Table 2. Psychological and emotional impacts of xenophobia and resilience strategies.**

| Impact/Strategy                        | African Americans  | Dalits  |
|--|--|---|
| Internalized Oppression and Self-worth | - Dehumanization and negative self-perceptions- Constant need to prove worth | - Internalized stigma associated with caste identity- Diminished self-esteem and sense of powerlessness |



|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Trauma and Mental Health Challenges</p> | <p>- High rates of PTSD, depression, and anxiety- Limited access to culturally competent mental health services</p> | <p>- Detrimental effects on mental health- Lack of accessible and culturally relevant support</p>             |
| <p>Resilience and Coping Strategies</p>    | <p>- Drawing strength from cultural heritage- Community support networks- Civil Rights Movement legacy</p>          | <p>- Social movements and collective empowerment initiatives- Embracing Dalit identity and cultural pride</p> |

**3.4. Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of this comparative study underscore the urgency of addressing xenophobic behavior and its far-reaching consequences on marginalized communities. By illuminating the shared experiences of African Americans and Dalits, this research highlights the universal nature of prejudice and the imperative for concerted efforts towards creating inclusive and equitable societies.

To combat the insidious effects of xenophobia, a multi-pronged approach encompassing policy reforms, educational initiatives, and cultural transformations is necessary. Recommendations include:

1. **Strengthening legal and policy frameworks:** Enacting and enforcing comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, coupled with robust monitoring mechanisms, to address systemic inequalities and protect the rights of marginalized groups.

2. **Promoting inclusive education:** Revising curricula to foster critical thinking, cultural awareness, and respect for diversity from an early age, while also providing equitable educational opportunities and resources for marginalized communities.
3. **Advocating for representation and empowerment:** Increasing the representation of African Americans and Dalits in decision-making spheres, amplifying their voices, and supporting community-led initiatives that promote empowerment and self-determination.
4. **Addressing implicit biases and stereotypes:** Implementing awareness campaigns, diversity training, and bias-reduction interventions across sectors, including law enforcement, healthcare, education, and the workplace, to challenge deeply ingrained prejudices and foster inclusive practices.
5. **Fostering cross-cultural dialogue and understanding:** Facilitating constructive dialogues and exchanges between diverse communities to break down barriers, challenge misconceptions, and cultivate mutual understanding and respect.
6. **Investing in mental health and support services:** Allocating resources to provide culturally competent mental health services and support networks for marginalized groups, acknowledging the psychological and emotional toll of prolonged marginalization.
7. **Amplifying voices and narratives:** Promoting the voices, stories, and lived experiences of African Americans and Dalits through various platforms, including media, arts, and literature, to counter negative stereotypes and foster empathy and understanding.
8. **Collaborative efforts and global solidarity:** Fostering international collaborations, knowledge-sharing, and solidarity movements to address xenophobia as a global challenge, recognizing the interconnectedness of marginalized communities worldwide.

By implementing these recommendations and embracing a commitment to social justice and human rights, societies can take meaningful strides towards dismantling the insidious structures that perpetuate xenophobia and pave the way for truly inclusive and equitable environments where diversity is celebrated and all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

#### **4. Conclusions**

This comparative study has shed light on the pervasive and transcultural nature of xenophobic behavior, exemplified by the experiences of African Americans in the United States and Dalits in India. Despite their distinct historical and cultural contexts, these communities have endured strikingly similar patterns of systemic discrimination, social marginalization, and psychological trauma.

The findings have underscored the deep-rooted historical underpinnings of xenophobia, which have perpetuated oppressive belief systems and power structures that subjugated these groups for centuries. Moreover, the research has illuminated the multifaceted manifestations of xenophobia, spanning education, employment, healthcare, and the criminal justice system, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and entrenched social inequalities.

Beyond the tangible consequences, the study has also highlighted the profound psychological and emotional toll of xenophobia, including internalized oppression, diminished self-worth, and the prevalence of mental health challenges among African Americans and Dalits. Simultaneously, the resilience and coping strategies employed by these communities, rooted in cultural pride, collective empowerment, and social movements, offer a glimmer of hope and inspiration.

By juxtaposing these two emblematic cases, this research has reinforced the universal nature of xenophobia and its detrimental impacts on marginalized groups worldwide. It serves as a clarion

call for concerted efforts to dismantle deeply ingrained prejudices, challenge oppressive systems, and foster inclusive societies that celebrate diversity and uphold the inherent dignity of all individuals.

The path towards transformative change lies in a multi-dimensional approach, encompassing policy reforms, educational initiatives, cultural transformations, and global solidarity. By addressing systemic inequalities, promoting cross-cultural dialogue, and amplifying the voices and narratives of marginalized communities, societies can forge a more equitable and just future, where xenophobia is relegated to the annals of history.

As scholars, policymakers, and global citizens, it is our collective responsibility to confront the insidious forces of xenophobia and work towards creating a world where diversity is celebrated, and all individuals are afforded equal opportunities to thrive, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or social standing.

The road ahead may be arduous, but the indomitable spirit of resilience exhibited by African Americans and Dalits serves as a beacon of hope, reminding us of the transformative power of collective action and unwavering determination in the face of adversity.

By fostering empathy, promoting inclusivity, and challenging deeply entrenched biases, we can dismantle the barriers that have divided humanity for far too long. Only through a shared commitment to social justice and a genuine appreciation of our common humanity can we forge a future where xenophobia is relegated to the annals of history, and a new era of understanding, acceptance, and unity emerges.

This research stands as a testament to the power of comparative studies in illuminating the universal challenges that transcend geographic and cultural boundaries. By examining the

parallels and contrasts between the African American and Dalit experiences, we have gained a deeper appreciation for the pervasive nature of xenophobia and its far-reaching consequences.

Moving forward, further research is warranted to explore the intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities, as well as the potential for synergistic efforts and transnational solidarity movements in the fight against xenophobia. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the impact of interventions aimed at combating prejudice and promoting inclusivity would provide valuable insights into effective strategies and best practices.

Ultimately, this study serves as a clarion call for collective action, reminding us that the pursuit of a just and equitable society is not merely a moral imperative but a fundamental necessity for the flourishing of all humanity. By embracing diversity, fostering understanding, and upholding the inherent dignity of every individual, we can build a world where xenophobia is no longer a barrier to human progress and where the richness of our differences is celebrated as a source of strength and unity.

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