

## The Fear of COVID-19 Pandemic in Triggering Tourists' Material Deprivation, Social Rights, Social Participation, and Cultural Integration: The Mediating Role of Bullying

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### Abstract

The paper investigated the impact of the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourists' social exclusion in terms of material deprivation, social rights, social participation, and cultural/normative integration, through the mediating role of bullying, in the early days of COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on social exclusion theory, we adopted a quantitative approach and an integrative model to collect data from 473 tourists through a web-based survey from 5th March to 17th June 2020. The results demonstrated that the fear of COVID-19 has a significant influence on tourists' social exclusion, and in turn, has led to bullying. Besides, bullying has a significant influence on material deprivation, social rights, social participation, and cultural/normative integration of social participation. In addition, this study determined that the effect of the fear of COVID-19 on tourists' social exclusion is partially mediated by bullying. This study also draws attention to the importance of upholding the values of humanity and positive human transactions in times of crisis and pandemics.

**Keywords:** Fear of COVID-19 pandemic, tourists' social exclusion, bullying, international tourists

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a destructive impact on the international economic development, global tourism, travel, and air transport industry (International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), 2020). Hence, countries have taken various measures to limit the spread of the disease, including social distancing, travel and mobility bans and restrictions, self- or

mandatory-quarantine and lockdown (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020; Turnšek Turnšek, Brumen, Rangus, Gorenak, Mekinc & Štuhec, 2020) which placing tourists under a total travel ban, while not allowing travel inside or outside cities (The Economist, 2020). At the same time, some economic factors (e.g., business closing/uncertainty, work loss, lower-income) and behavioural factors (e.g., health anxiety, fear of travel, and unease with new travel/restrictions) have affected global tourism demand (Turnšek et al., 2020).

Fear is one of the main travel barriers (Fennell, 2017), however, tourism research on fear is lacking (Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006). Previous studies have not highlighted the role of fear or anxiety in making travel decisions (Carson & Liburd, 2007). Health-related risks were examined through the fear of becoming ill while vacationing. It was just after the foot and mouth disease (Frisby, 2003), and SARS and the bird flu pandemics (Mao, Ding & Lee, 2010). The health threats and pandemics have emphasized the importance of analysing the risk perception in travel research (Yang & Nair, 2014).

Sigala (2020) demonstrated that many early studies are trying to measure the economic impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, and others aim to predict and measure when tourists start traveling again and when we can reach the state of global tourism and travel before the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussions and research are based on trading between economic benefits and losses in the exchange of human rights, life, morals and morals. Thus, COVID-19 transformed from a biological viral infection into a contagious financial crisis. Concerning health concerns, the impact of fear related to COVID-19 on tourists' behaviour has not been studied yet, however, several tourism studies indicated that risk perception highly influenced tourists' intentions to visit a destination (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011; Giusti & Raya, 2019). Bloom Consulting (2020) argued that Fear of COVID-19 pandemic infection takes precedent over travel desire. This dilemma becomes the climax challenge for tourists and destinations. Wen, Wang, and Kozak (2020a) have found that fear and Perceived threat from COVID-19 is a significant predictor variable of willingness and avoid travel.

During the first days of the closure, we saw and read some forms of exclusion, bullying and discrimination against some tourists were practiced in many countries around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which drew our attention to study this dangerous phenomenon. Hence, important questions arise, namely: Does the fear of COVID-19 pandemic affect tourists' social exclusion at the local and international levels? And how can bullying intervene in such a relationship?. To the knowledge of the researchers no studies have tested the impact of COVID-19 on the tourist's social exclusion. Therefore, based on social exclusion theory (Vrooman & Hoff, 2013) and in order to seeks to bridge the research gap by focusing on the social and ethical dimension, the present research attempts to answer these two questions by investigating the relationship between the fear of COVID-19 pandemic and Tourists' social exclusion dimensions (namely: material deprivation, social rights, social participation, and cultural/normative integration) through the mediating role of bullying in the early days of lockdown. This research explored this issue in the global community. As fear may be a pivotal basis in explaining these negative individual and societal consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to better understand the extent to which fear of COVID-19 pandemic will affect the social exclusion of tourists and to make relevant predictions. Hence, the paucity of tourism research examining the fear and its consequences related to COVID-19 pandemic provides the motivation for this paper. Therefore, the aim of the research is to investigate the extent to which fear of COVID-19 affects tourists' social exclusion, and how bullying towards tourists affects this. This paper is structured as follows: the next section outlines the consequences of the threat and fear of COVID-19 pandemic on the tourists. Thereafter, the theoretical framework and hypotheses are developed, followed by an overview of the research methods and findings. Finally, the results are discussed and conclusions drawn.

## **Theoretical background**

### ***Threat, Fear of COVID-19 Pandemic***

Global tourism and travel have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as a global security threat. Security threats may result in a decrease in the number of inbound or domestic tourists (Turnšek et al., 2020). Perceived safety and security risks, including health-related issues, negatively influence the perspective of tourists (Loureiro & Jesus, 2019). Therefore, destinations should strive to protect tourists from public health concerns while travelling (Wen et al., 2020a). The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed unprecedented measures of distancing and social contact, which could greatly affect tourists experience (Sigala, 2020). When fear is too excessive, this might have harmful impacts both at the individual level (e.g., phobia and social anxiety) and the societal level (e.g., panic shopping or xenophobia) (Mertens, Gerritsen, Duijndam, Salemink & Engelhard, 2020). This also may lead to the social exclusion of tourists at the local and international levels.

In the presence of threat, fear is an adaptive response (Pappas, Kiriaze, Giannakis, & Falagas, 2009). However, when the threat is continuous and vague, as in the case of COVID-19 pandemic, fear can become chronic and exhausting (Mertens et al., 2020). The uncertainty and fear of infection may result in travellers dropping down their travel plans (UNWTO, 2009). This poses a great challenge to the local, regional, and international tourism industry in the future regarding social exclusion. According to international pools, the virus has caused a significant rise in fear and anxiety (Asmundson & Taylor, 2020). People with COVID-19 may feel anxious that they will be a nuisance to others or will be rejected, which may exclude them socially. As a social race, humans tend to enjoy being in groups. Some people might be worried about being rejected (Greene, 2015).

Infectious diseases have been always a source of fear to people and governments, as it is transmitted quickly, imminently and invisibly (Pappas et al., 2009). This may lead to the expression of adaptive or protective behaviours to escape from the fear source or danger (Steimer, 2002). Infection is often treated as a social issue that indirectly leads to stigmatization, as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pappas, Sozopoulou, Saplaoura, Vasiliou, Christou, Akritidis & Tsianos, 2007). Whereas, strong fear arousal may lead to discrimination and prejudice, as well as unwanted behaviour (Parady, Taniguchi, & Takami, 2020). Moreover, reports indicate an increase in negative attitudes towards citizens of the countries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Sorokowski, Groyecka, Kowal, Sorokowska, Białek, Lebuda, Dobrowolska, Zdybek & Karwowski, 2020). Wen, Aston, Liu, and Ying (2020b) claimed that Asian tourists should be cautious when choosing where to travel in the future. This is discriminatory and may negatively affect the well-being of individuals, which can lead to social isolation and by extension; it will lead to tourist's social exclusion.

## **Hypotheses development**

In 1974, the social exclusion term was introduced in France. The term was used to describe some categories of people who were stigmatized as social troubles and were not secured by social insurance. This includes single parents, the elderly, people with disabilities, and delinquents (Rodgers, Gore & Figueiredo, 1995). The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (1997) stated that social exclusion is an abbreviated term that includes what can happen when people or regions suffer from a range of challenges such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, weak housing, high prevalence environments for crime, poor health, and family disintegration. Drawing on social exclusion theory, it contributes a comprehensive framework for investigating the associations among different common distressing cases. Precisely, social

exclusion theory seems to be a basic intersection within social anxiety, jealousy, loneliness, and depression (Leary, 1990).

Based on Jehoel-Gijsbers and Vrooman (2007), the current study proposes a conceptual model of social exclusion which is based on four main dimensions as follows (1) material deprivation, (2) inadequate access to social rights, (3) a low degree of social participation, and (4) the absence of normative integration. Material deprivation means that people are not able to meet basic amenities, having problems with their debts, and payment arrears. Insufficient access to social rights refers to unequal access to government services; long waiting lists, obstacles attached to access education, health service, housing, social care, legal aid etc. While a low degree of social participation refers to social isolation, limited participation in social networks, and inadequate social involvement. Finally, lack of normative integration means that people do not commit to the society core values for instance work ethics, rights and responsibilities of men and women, delinquent behaviour (Van Bergen ,Hoff, Schreurs, van Loon & van Hemert, 2017). The theoretical framework and hypotheses are presented in Figure 1.

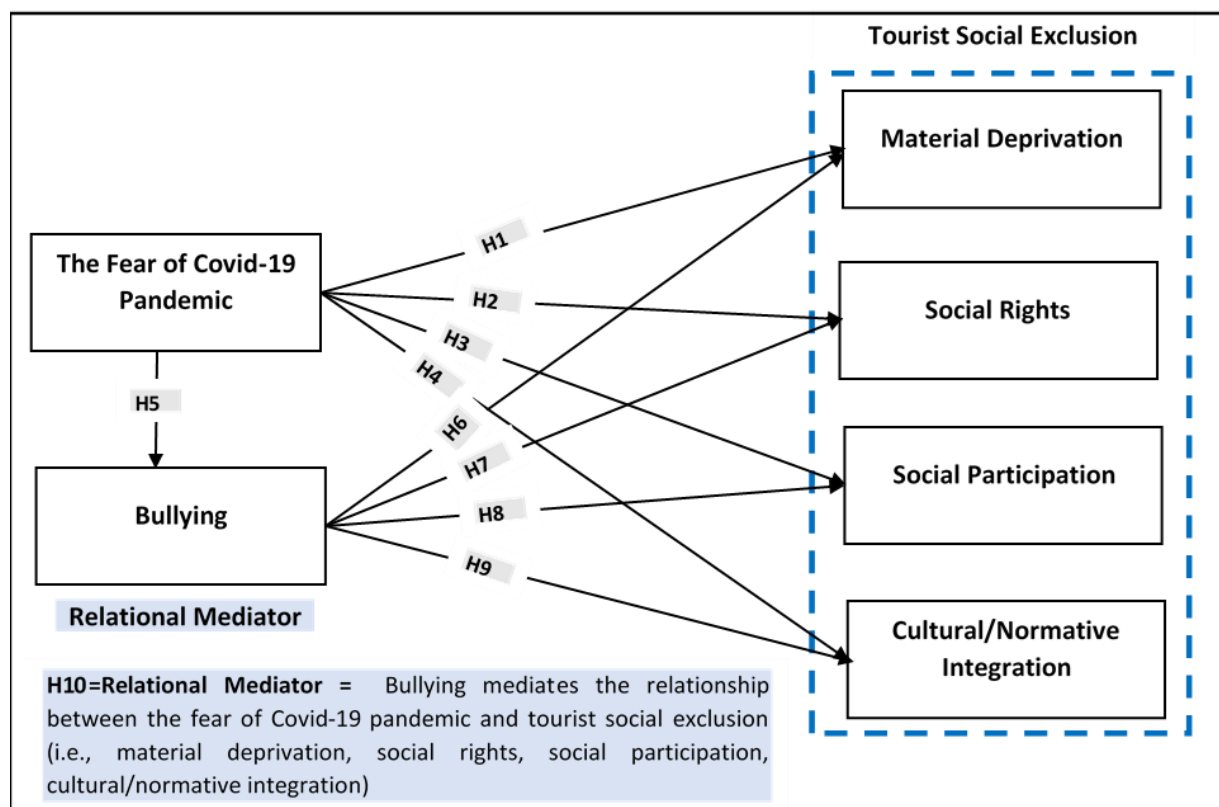


Figure 1. The proposed conceptual framework

### ***The fear of COVID-19 Pandemic and Material Deprivation***

The fear of pandemic, and the uncertainty attached may lead to anxiety, and irrational behaviour (Pappas et al., 2009). The feeling of insecurity and uncertainty pushes people to panic buying and collecting things. People do that to minimize the fear and frustration of losing control over the situation (Dholakia, 2020). He and Harris (2020) indicated that consumer decision-making is currently driven by self-interest and emotions, such as fear, anger, and anxiety, as evidenced by the storage of food, medicine, hygiene, sanitation products, and even toilet paper all over the world. This behaviour leads to disruption in the businesses supply chain (Shou, Xiong & Shen, 2013), and many businesses struggle to keep up with demand. In

addition, people suffered a massive decrease in income. Consequently, the financial system has been disrupted for instance; an increase in non-performing loans, insolvency filings, unnecessary liquidations, and asset fire-sales” (Menezes, Muro & Uttamchandani, 2020:1). Based on the aforementioned discussions, we proposed:

*Hypothesis 1: The fear of the COVID-19 pandemic is positively associated with material deprivation.*

### ***The fear of COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Rights***

The United Nations (2020) announced that the world is facing an unprecedented crisis. This crisis created a global public health emergency on a scale not seen in a century, which requires a global response and solidarity to limit the negative consequences that this crisis may have on our economic, social and political life in the long run. Mertens, Gerritsen, Duijndam, Saleminck, and Engelhard (2020) argued that people still concerned about the effects of the COVID-19 on the healthcare system, environment, religion, losing their job and changes in everyday routines. The United Nations (2020) declared that the main priority for all countries during COVID-19 is to save people’s lives. Consequently, to control the situation, there might be an infringement of individual’s rights, for instance, different levels of lockdown, restrictions on movements, etc. these measures influence people’s lives, security and their accessibility to health services, social care, work, education, and leisure (United Nations, 2020). In that sense, the infectious disease is considered a foreigner invasion (Pappas et al., 2009). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*Hypothesis 2: The fear of the COVID-19 pandemic is positively associated with social rights.*

### ***The fear of COVID-19 pandemic and social participation***

Fear is a human response towards any threat or danger, and it may lead to individuals take their own precautions to protect themselves (Pappas et al., 2009). Many countries applied the lockdown approach. Consequently, people were asked to stay at home (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020), and many restrictions on people’s mobility have been put forward by the governments. For example, these restrictions include keeping social distancing (2m distance from each other) to reduce the risk of infection (Biana & Joaquin, 2020) and imposing social isolation on crowded public and private gatherings (Campedelli, Aziani1 & Favarin, 2020; Bruns, Kraguljac, & Bruns, 2020).

Bulley, Miloyan, Brilot, Gullo, & Suddendorf (2016) explained that social exclusion is one of the main drivers of fear and anxiety. Because humans desperately need to belong to groups and form relationships with each other, the occurrence of social exclusion of individuals leads to feelings of stress. Social anxiety and phobias influence relationships and social interactions, which can among other things, isolate people from the world (Greene, 2015). The World Bank declared that 90% of coronavirus economic impact, is derived from fear which led to transform human behaviour and reduce human interaction (Vinhas, 2014). Therefore, it is hypothesised:

*Hypothesis 3: The fear of the COVID-19 pandemic is positively associated with social participation.*

### ***The fear of COVID-19 pandemic and cultural/ normative integration***

Part of the fear that people have towards COVID-19 is engendered intentionally by governments. Some governments used some scare tactics to control people's behaviour during the outbreak. In Cainta (Manilla, Philippines), a massive alarm is used to start the curfew (Biana & Joaquin, 2020), while in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Philippines, and many other countries, fines are used in case of breaking the curfew, that can be extended to be jailed. This is known in the literature as fear appeal which is a tool to convince people to behave or act in a certain way (Leventhal, 1971). However, there is a concern if using these scare tactics is ethical and appropriate (Biana & Joaquin, 2020). Campedelli et al. (2020) claimed that the restrictions followed by countries to minimize the risk of COVID-19 influence the crime rate. Based on their study, in Los Angeles, the overall crime rate is reduced dramatically.

The collective threat of COVID-19 is likely to drive a shift in societal values, including independence and strong control (more conservatism) (Jeronimus, 2020). Besides, this epidemic can reduce the tolerance for individual behaviour, increase the need for affiliation through which people focus more on their nation rather than others, and more hesitation in risk (i.e., government orientation towards safety, protection, and security) and the need for a lockdown (Orehek, Fishman, Dechesne, Doosje, Kruglanski, Cole, Saddler, & Jackson, 2010). In this vein, the middle class feels economic weakness and will seek social and cultural protection, while conservatives focus on protecting their culture through closing borders and stemming migration that threatens the national culture (Jeronimus, 2020). Thus, the researchers proposed:

*Hypothesis 4: The fear of the COVID-19 pandemic is positively associated with cultural/ normative integration.*

### ***The fear of COVID-19 pandemic and bullying***

Pearce and Thompson (1998:528) defined bullying as “the deliberate use of aggression to cause physical pain and/or emotional distress”. Infectious diseases lead to fear, denial, bullying, and discrimination among the people who got infected (Bruns et al., 2020). In 1993, during the outbreak of the Hantavirus in the United States of America, the Native Americans with Indian background were getting bullied and stigmatized by the term ‘Navajo disease’. However, this virus was infecting non-Navajo's people as well (Garrett, 1995). Another case is the AIDS pandemic, despite that the AIDS is developed over years not days as other pandemics, patients diagnosed with AIDS get stigmatized, and this discrimination/ stigmatization still exists (Pappas et al., 2009). Discrimination is always attached to pandemics like the case of Ebola and SARS (Person, Holton, Govert & Liang, 2004). Even some politicians used to refer to COVID 19 at the start as the Chinese virus, and many racists and discriminatory behaviours have been reported towards Asian people and patients diagnosed with COVID-19. As a result, the WHO (2020) announced that COVID-19 may affect people worldwide, and people should not attach the virus to any particular geographical area or ethnicity. Sovran (2013) highlighted the importance of understanding the role of culture in perceiving infectious diseases and avoiding correlating these diseases with a certain culture or country as this may lead to stigmatization of bullying towards certain groups. Thus, we proposed:

*Hypothesis 5: The fear of COVID-19 pandemic may lead to bullying*

### ***The relationship between Bullying and material deprivation***

Infectious diseases are always attached to fear, bully, and discrimination. This has been reported in the case of SARS (Person et al., 2004), and HIV (International Centre for Research

on Women, 2005). An example has been given by the International Centre for Research on Women (2005) on the material deprivation attached to HIV stigma. HIV stigma may have an impact on income loss, poor health care services, and limited access to housing services. Wolke and Skew (2012) argued that increasing the level of household material deprivation may lead to being a victim of bullying. The diseases and epidemics environment provides a good example of the physical environment (i.e., lack of material goods) interacting with the social environment (i.e., low genetic and attachment relationships) to maximise the conditions that generate bullying (Ireland, 2002). Therefore:

*Hypothesis 6: Bullying is positively associated with material deprivation.*

### ***The relationship between bullying and social rights***

The United Nations Human Rights (2020) reported that many racist groups and politicians are using the fear of COVID-19 to scapegoat minorities. On the one hand side, millions of people, and minorities in particular start suffering from denied access to health services in some places (United Nations, 2020). On the other hand side, many infected people do not want to get stigmatized, and bullied because of COVID-19 as a result they may delay seeking medical support until they have severe symptoms, with some of them may not seek help at all. UNESCO (2020) mentioned that its chairs in Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Greece, and Denmark reported scenarios of discrimination against Asians which represent stigmatization, bullying, business boycotting, and sometimes problems with getting access to educational institutions. Thus, we proposed:

*Hypothesis 7: Bullying is positively associated with social rights.*

### ***The relationship between Bullying and social participation***

Person et al (2014) reported that during the SARS outbreak, Asians were getting bullied and stigmatized. Consequently, many people were avoiding Asians regardless of having any symptoms of the virus or their country of origin, and they were expecting all Asians to be quarantined. Anti-Asian and anti-Chinese xenophobia has also been documented in the United States, Europe, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Malaysia. Chinese hotel guests in Indonesia have been forced to flee the country; many Chinese customers in Japan, Vietnam, and South Korea have been refused access to restaurants (Amnesty International, 2020). Somoy News (2020) reported that the fear of infection, social avoidance, alongside people's behaviour towards a suspected case of COVID-19, led to committing suicide. Mamun and Griffiths (2020) explained that the main reason for committing suicide by this Bangladeshi man is prejudice by the people in his residential area who believed that he had COVID-19. This means that the people in his village were xenophobic towards him. Xenophobia is the fear of strangers or foreigners, in that case, the foreign or the strange thing is COVID-19, not the ethnicity of the person. Hence, we proposed the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 8: Bullying is positively associated with social participation.*

### ***The Relationship between bullying and cultural/ normative integration***

Bruns et al. (2020) reported that stigmatization may lead to violence against those who are infected or belonging to affected areas. Williams, Forgas, and Von Hippel (2005) explained that bullying has a direct influence on violence. As the feeling of social rejection by a group of people may lead to many inappropriate reactions which include depression, committing suicide, and violence. The fear of COVID-19 has not only resulted in bullying against certain

minorities but also many countries including Egypt, Canada, America, and the UK reported hate crimes and racism where Asians got insulted, abused, and spit at in public places (Cheung, Feng & Deng, 2020). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 9: Bullying is positively associated with cultural/ normative integration.

### ***The mediating role of bullying***

Incorporating the debates of H1 to H9, the current research suggests that bullying serves as an ideal mediator on the link between the fear of COVID-19 pandemic and tourists' social exclusion in terms of material deprivation, social rights, social participation, and cultural/normative integration. This hypothesis is based on the notion that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic leads to bullying, and in turn, bullying is significantly and associated with tourists' social exclusion. Hence, in the current study we recommend the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 10: Bullying mediates the link between the fear of COVID-19 pandemic and tourists' social exclusion in terms of material deprivation, social rights, social participation, and cultural/normative integration.*

### **Methods**

To test the research hypotheses, the researchers surveyed 473 international tourists. Since the first case was reported late last year in China, COVID-19 pandemic possible social consequences remain vague, this poses a threat to the tourism industry, regardless of the region, nationality, or culture of the tourists. Thus, international tourists are the sampling frame for this research. Given many tourists and the geographical spread of countries around the world, this can involve significant costs, time, and difficulties in communicating and collecting questionnaires from all over the world. The data was collected using a non-probability convenience sampling method (Buelens, Burger & Brakel, 2018). In early days of lockdown, the research was conducted using an online questionnaire to evaluate tourists' response globally from 5th March to 17th June 2020. The online survey link was circulated and sent through social media platforms, and tourists' forums. A total of 620 participants agreed to take part in the survey. However, 147 participants did not finish the survey. As a result, 473 individuals were included in the final survey (76.2 percent). Based on Kock (2021), the minimum required sample size is 160. Hence, collecting 473 usable questionnaires is acceptable in the current study.

Table 1 shows the tourists who participated in the sample were mostly 26-35 years old (34.7%), followed by 18-25 years old (30.7%). Regarding gender, a great percentage of males were recorded (55.6%), and most of them were married (52.9%). In terms of education, two-third of respondents have a bachelor's degree (65.6%). Ultimately, a third of the tourists work in the private sector (37.2%) followed by non-work (27.7%).

### **Measures**

The social exclusion scale has been employed using indicators adopted from Jehoel-Gijsbers and Vrooman (2007). The latent variables for the measurement of material deprivation and cultural/Normative integration were primarily developed by Bayram, Bilgel, and Bilgel (2012), whereas items for social participation were extracted from van Bergen et al. (2017). Measures for social rights were adopted from van Bergen et al. (2017). Similarly, the fear of COVID-19 pandemic was analysed employing a 5-item scale, which was validated by Ahorsu, Lin, Imani, Saffari, Griffiths & Pakpour, 2020). Finally, measures for Bullying were adapted from Shaw, Dooley, Cross, Zubrick and Waters (2013). Bullying behaviour has been measured based on





Underwood (2002). In this regard, all of these indicators were gauged on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”. While bullying indicators were measured on a Likert scale of five points, they ranged from “1 = never” to “5 = almost always”.

Table 1. Sample profile  
(n=473)

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Marital Status</b>	
Female	44.4%	Single	42.1%
Male	55.6%	Married	52.9%
		Widowed	0.6%
		Divorced	4.5%
<b>Age Group</b>		<b>Work Type</b>	
18-25	30.7%	Government	21.1%
26-35	34.7%	Private	37.2%
36-45	22.8%	Semiprivate	3.4%
46-55	8.2%	Free	10.6%
More than 55	3.6%	Non-Work	27.7%
<b>Educational Level</b>			
Bachelor's degree	65.6%		
Postgraduate	23.6%		
Others	10.8%		

### Data analysis results

In the present study, the variance based-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (WarpPLS 7.0) was used to test the research hypotheses (Kock, 2021). The PLS-SEM technique has been generally used in published journal articles relating to Tourism and Hospitality Management (Al-Romeedy, Moosa, Elbaz, 2021; Salem, Elbaz, Elkhwesky & Ghazi, 2021; Mekawy & Elbaz, 2020; Elbaz, Salem, Elsetouhi & Abdelhamied, 2020; Elhoushy, Salem & Agag, 2020). Salem & Mobarak, 2019; Elbaz, Haddoud, Onjewu, 2019; Andalhamied & Elbaz, 2018). Based on Hair, Howard and Nitzl (2020), the PLS-SEM method is recognized as appropriate for the following reasons: this technique is suitable when the study requires building a conceptual model. In this regard, the current study aims to add to existing knowledge of tourism and hospitality management by examining the extent to which the fear of COVID-19 pandemic leads to tourists' social exclusion. Besides, what is the intervening role of bullying in the link between the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic and tourists' social exclusion? (see Figure 1). Besides, the PLS-SEM approach addresses non-normality and requires the estimation of two different models, namely: (1) the measurement model and (2) the structural model (Henseler, Hubona & Ray, 2016). In summary, it can also be said that the measurement model relates to the correlation between underlying latent variables and their elements, while the structural model focuses on the relationships between latent variables (MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2011). Therefore, the next section is to estimate these two models. Also, PLS-SEM is preferred in the case of complex model, thus WarpPLS 7.0 was used (for more details see Kock, 2021).

### Measurement model

To estimate the quality of the measurement of the main latent variables adopted in the research, we tested both the validity and reliability of all constructs. In this vein, the instruments' internal consistency (e.g., composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha) was tested (see Table 2). On the other hand, instruments' convergent validity was tested through Average Variance Extracted (AVE) as shown in Table 2. Also, to check the collinearity issues the Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) for all latent variables were estimated.



Table 2: CR, Cronbach’s alpha, AVE and VIFs coefficients

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach’s Alpha	AVE	Full collinearity VIFs
Fear of COVID-19	0.858	0.751	0.670	1.435
Bullying	0.856	0.776	0.599	1.146
Material Deprivation	0.868	0.796	0.622	1.195
Social Rights	0.797	0.660	0.500	1.491
Social Participation	0.849	0.762	0.586	1.160
Culture Integration	0.867	0.796	0.621	1.127

Based on Ruiz, Gremler, Washburn and Carrión (2008), to test instruments' reliability, both Alpha Cronbach and CR are preferred above 0.7 for appropriate reliability, 0.80 for particularly good and 0.90 for excellent. In this vein, Table 2 shows that CR and Alpha Cronbach values for all latent variables are sufficient. Besides, multicollinearity assessments confirmed that all variables had variance inflation factor (VIF) values of lower than 5, signifying that there are no collinearity problems in the measurement model (MacKenzie et al., 2011). As for the AVE (ranging from 0.500-0.670), the overall amount of variance in the items estimated for by the latent variables exceeded the tolerable level of 0.5.

Finally, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) rate of associations is adopted to test the constructs’ discriminant validity (Henseler, 2018). This new test was employed to confirm discriminant validity. According to Kock (2021), if the HTMT value is lower than 0.90, then discriminant validity is good. Thus, all latent variables are less than 0.90, which demonstrating appropriate discriminant validity. Consequently, all these test results signify appropriate discriminant validity.

Table 3. The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT)

HTMT						
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Fear of COVID-19						
(2) Bullying	0.379					
(3) Material Deprivation	0.350	0.152				
(4) Social Rights	0.705	0.271	0.475			
(5) Social Participation	0.318	0.304	0.310	0.375		
(6) Culture Integration	0.251	0.255	0.287	0.358	0.234	

Based on Armstrong and Overton (1977), non-response bias was tested. Therefore, a t-test was used to assess the variances between the early and late respondents. In this regard, 411 early respondents and 63 late respondents are documented. At the 5% significance level, the analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the early and late responders. Consequently, in this study, the likelihood of nonresponse bias is excluded. In conclusion, the post-hoc statistical test was used as Harman's one-factor to verify the common bias method. The value of first factor is 22.194% of the variances, which is lower than 50% critical. Hence, no serious sign of common bias has been recognized.

### Results of hypotheses testing

The following section provides the study model path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), the p values, and the R<sup>2</sup> values (see Figure 2). The results reveals that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic had a beneficial influence on tourists’ material deprivation ( $\beta = 0.27$  and  $p < 0.01$ ,  $Q^2 = 0.09$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.045), social rights ( $\beta = 47$  and  $p < 0.01$ ,  $Q^2 = 0.27$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.044), social participation ( $\beta = 21$  and  $p < 0.01$ ,  $Q^2 = 0.11$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.045), and cultural/normative integration ( $\beta = 19$  and  $p < 0.01$ ,  $Q^2 = 0.10$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.045).

This means that tourists' fear of the COVID-19 pandemic slightly leads to tourists' social exclusion of visiting the host destination related to material deprivation, social rights, social participation, and cultural/normative integration. Hence, H1, H2, H3, and H4 are supported. Furthermore, the findings indicate that fear of the COVID-19 pandemic has a positive effect on tourist bullying. ( $\beta = 0.29$  and  $p < 0.01$ ,  $Q^2 = 0.08$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.045). Thus, H5 is accepted. Overall, the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic weakly explained 9% of the variance of bullying ( $R^2 = 0.09$ ).

In the other side, the results show that bullying has a positive influence on tourists' material deprivation ( $\beta = 0.08$  and  $p = 0.04$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.05), social rights ( $\beta = 0.12$  and  $p < 0.01$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.05), social participation ( $\beta = 0.20$  and  $p < 0.01$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.045), and cultural/normative integration ( $\beta = 0.22$  and  $p < 0.01$ , small effect size ( $f^2$ ) = 0.045). Thus, H6, H7, H8, and H9 are supported. Overall, the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic weakly explained the variance of tourists' social exclusion in terms of material deprivation ( $R^2 = 0.13$  and  $Q^2 = 0.13$ ), social rights ( $R^2 = 0.27$  and  $Q^2 = 0.27$ ), social participation ( $R^2 = 0.11$  and  $Q^2 = 0.11$ ), and cultural/normative integration ( $R^2 = 0.12$  and  $Q^2 = 0.12$ ).

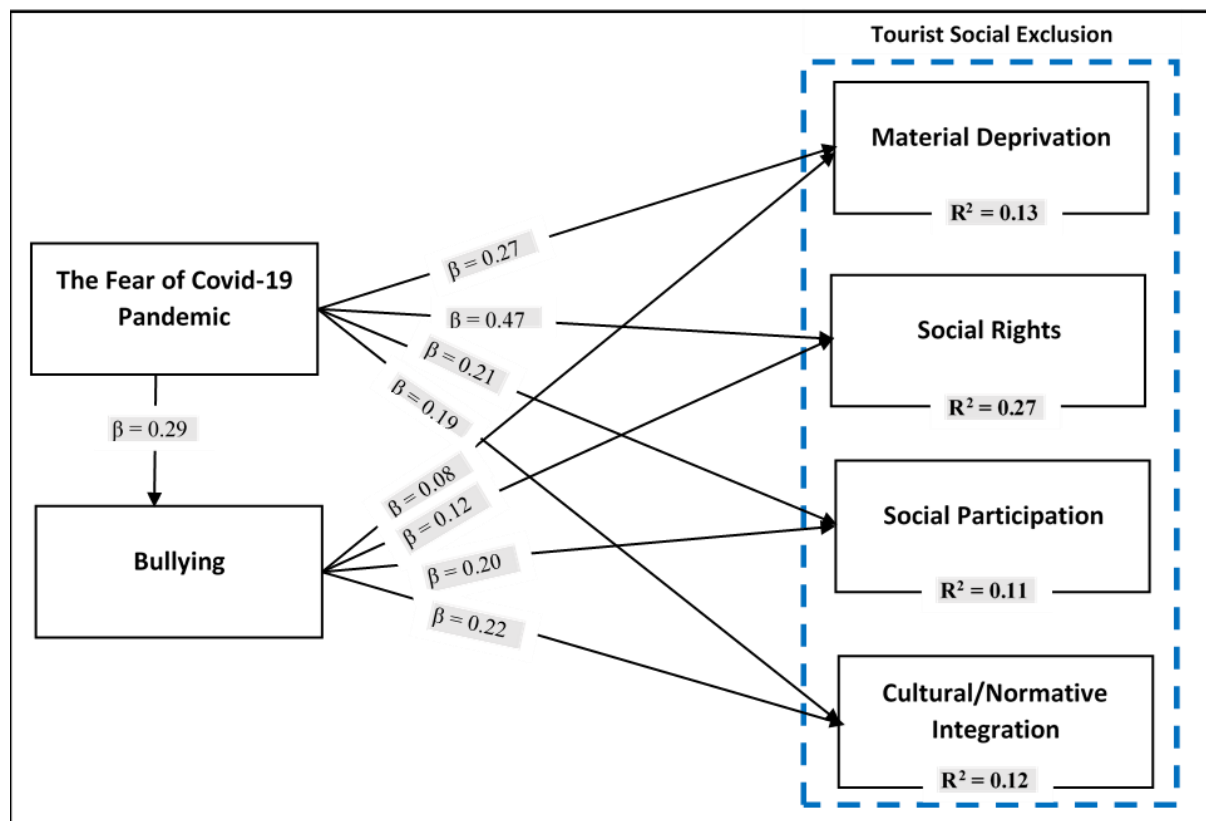


Figure 2. The research structural model and p values

The current study hypothesizes that the influence of the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourists' social exclusion is subject to the intervening role of bullying. In this vein, the present study results confirmed that bullying has a positive and significant influence on tourists' social exclusion. Moreover, results have established an indirect link between (partial mediation) the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic and tourists' social exclusion (social material deprivation, social rights, participation, and cultural/normative integration) through bullying. Hence, this research concluded that the influence of the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourists' social exclusion is partially mediated by bullying (see Table 4).



Table 4: Indirect effects results

Paths	Significance		Confidence Intervals		Outcome
	Direct effect	Indirect Effect <i>via Bullying</i>	2.5%	97.5%	
The fear of COVID-19 pandemic on Material Deprivation	$p < 0.01$	$P = 0.02$	0.182	0.358	Partial Mediator at 5%
The fear of COVID-19 pandemic on Social Rights	$p < 0.01$	$p = 0.03$	0.190	0.347	Partial Mediator at 5%
The fear of COVID-19 pandemic on Social Participation	$p < 0.01$	$p = 0.06$	0.126	0.303	Partial Mediator at 10%
The fear of COVID-19 pandemic on Cultural/Normative Integration	$p < 0.01$	$p = 0.06$	0.101	0.279	Partial Mediator at 10%

## Discussion and conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a feeling of fear and anxiety in all countries around the world. Therefore, it is important to research the effects of this fear on human behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic was an unexpected occurrence that rocked the global tourism industry. The current research offers an idea of how world visitors feel in the early days of the covid-19-related lockdown. As a result, the study's primary importance is in its analytical insight into the perceived threats to tourists due to fear of the Covid-19 pandemic, and how this affects their social exclusion due to fear of infection and bullying. As a result, the research has a methodological advantage, as far as the researchers know, this is the first study to produce a measure of covid-19 fear on the social exclusion and mediating role of bullying in it. The researchers drew on existing research on fear arousal in pandemics to create a scale that has proven to be accurate and comprehensive. The social exclusion of tourists is a measure of what we expect about the future in relation to COVID-19, not a measure of the actual future behaviour of societies. As a result, it cannot be used as an accurate measure of real future situations. Nonetheless, it will illustrate crucial early considerations that can emerge as a result of pandemics.

The findings reveal that the fear of the COVID-19 has a direct significant influence on material deprivation, social rights, social participation, and cultural/normative integration of social participation. Principally, the findings demonstrate that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant influence on material deprivation. This may be due to the feeling of insecurity and instability during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome is congruent with former research showing people during this pandemic are also enduring a sharp reduction in income as unemployment grows (Menezes et al., 2020). Besides, the findings indicated that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant influence on social rights. The potential explanation is the foremost precedence for all nations during COVID-19 pandemic is to protect people's lives as there is a global public health emergency (United Nations, 2020). This means there might be a breach of a person's rights, for example, various levels of lockdown, constraints on movements, etc. these types have an impact on individual's lives, protection and their accessibility to health aids, social care, work, education, and leisure (United Nations, 2020). Moreover, it is concluded that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant influence on social participation. This may be explained by there are two main ways of COVID-19 pandemic transmission; direct contact with infected subject or droplets (Luisetto, Almkthar, Mashori, Abdul Hamid, Rafa, Fiazza & Latyshev, 2020). Therefore, numerous countries employed the lockdown strategy. This conclusion is congruous with other studies affirming that people were demanded to stay at home (Bakar and Rosbi, 2020), keeping social distancing (Biana & Joaquin, 2020), social isolation (Bruns et al., 2020), and constraints on crowded public and private gatherings (Campedelli et al., 2020). Likewise, it is remarked

that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant effect on Cultural/ Normative Integration. This may be due to the feeling of the individuals the importance of crucial situations during the COVID-19 pandemic to comply with the necessary criteria and values of the community. These insights determine support earlier studies focusing on protecting community culture through closing boundaries and preventing the immigration that is endangering the national identity of the host destination. (Jeronimus, 2020). All in all, social exclusion dimensions are congruent with social exclusion theory that implies that the threat may be more distant, triggering worries about one's worthiness for remaining a member of gatherings. Anytime a person appears before others, he or she encompasses the risk, however slight, of being ignored or rejected (Leary, 1990).

In this context, it is concluded that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to bullying. Because of this fear, people may exclude or ignore tourists and this discrimination may be also a result linked to the countries central to the outbreaks. Hence, bullying will lead to the deliberate use of aggression to cause physical harm and/or emotional suffering against tourists. This is also in line with Person et al. (2004) who noticed that prior pandemics, such as SARS and Ebola, have produced prejudice and deception also associated with the countries central to the outbreaks. On the other hand, it is affirmed that bullying has a significant influence on all elements of social exclusion.

On the other hand, it is noted from the results that bullying has a significant influence on material deprivation. This conclusion is agreeable with an earlier study that argued that increasing levels of household material deprivation were significantly linked with a higher opportunity of being a victim of bullying (Wolke & Skew, 2012). In this vein, our results affirmed that bullying has a direct significant influence on social rights and an indirect link between (partial mediation) the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic and social rights through bullying. This may be due to an increment of discrimination and bullying towards people who are coming originally from infected places. This is in line with the United Nations (2020) and Das (2001) findings which reported that many infected individuals do not want to get stigmatized and bullied because of COVID-19. Therefore, people fear getting socially stigmatized and bullied during a disease outbreak, which may lead to their rejection of soliciting medical support when necessitated. Besides, our findings showed that bullying has a significant influence on social participation. This is because the suspected cases of COVID-19 are getting bullied, which led to the fear of infection, social avoidance towards people's behaviour. This signifies that individuals encountered quarantine are getting stigmatized, bullied, and reporting social refusal which comprises obtaining foolish comments, withdrawn of social invitations, and social avoidance (Brooks, Webster, Smith, Woodland, Wessely, Greenberg, & Rubin, 2020). Moreover, the research findings found that bullying has a direct significant influence on cultural/ normative integration and an indirect link between (partial mediation) the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic and cultural/normative integration) through bullying. This may be explained as individuals do not want to get bullied because of COVID-19, some of the people are not sharing the related information with authorities, which led to the infection of others which is unethical (Espresso, 2020). Overall, these results signify that the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic may be stressful for both the people of the host destination and the tourists who have the intention to visit. Hence, this fear and anxiety about what could happen can be overwhelming and cause bullying of tourists and social distancing which makes people feel isolated and not welcomed.

### ***Research implications***

This research contributes to the literature on the tourism and hospitality industry through proposing a conceptual model to examine whether bullying mediates a significant impact in

the link between COVID-19 global pandemic and the tourist's social exclusion. The application of this model may improve the tourism decision-makers understanding of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the social exclusion of tourists, whether at the local or international level. Governments and official tourism agencies should provide full protection and attention to health matters, hygienic procedures, and sterilization at means of transportation, accommodation, tourist facilities, etc., which provide a safe environment for tourists.

Furthermore, the findings of this study reveal that to support the tourists' travel decision, all factors that may result in the exclusion of tourists due to fear of COVID-19 pandemic must be immediately dealt with. In early days of Pandemics, local's awareness must be enhanced to reduce the negative effect of the fear of COVID-19 pandemic on tourists. In addition, the findings enlighten marketers in planning their marketing strategies. Destination Marketing Organizations 'DMOs' will have to clarify the extent of government interest in applying precautionary and preventive measures, hygienic and health standards in the tourist destination, which will have an impact on the destination image. Also, DMOs will have to provide more information regarding the quality of tourism services provided and health safety measures and try to correct any defects and create more positive experiences and take corrective actions to improve the service quality which reduce anxiety and uncertainties related to these procedures. Overall, our findings indicate that tolerance and flexibility in controlling the ethical climate during epidemics are crucial to the rejuvenation of the tourism industry activities.

### **Research limitations and future directions**

The current study acknowledges limitations to call future inquiries. Firstly, the study explored the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourist's social exclusion by the mediating role of bullying. On this point, further studies may attempt to extend the proposed framework by including tourists' intention to travel as the outcome of tourists' exclusion. Second, while the novel findings of our study compared to previous studies are attributed to the sudden contemporary pandemic, we call for further qualitative studies to uncover other different factors or for more explanation. The main concern with the present study is that the findings are very dependent on the specific circumstances surrounding the travel and tourism environment in relation to the impact of COVID-19 given the global environment at that point in time of collected data. The COVID-19 environment is evolving and changing constantly. Therefore, the present findings probably have a very short shelf-life. Besides, future research will be extended into a longitudinal study to see how findings evolve and change through the coronavirus crisis depending on how governments and health agencies succeed or fail in addressing the problem. Travellers' behaviours will evolve and change accordingly. Finally, the study focused on the point of view of the international tourists, hence, we encourage researchers to examine the tourism organizations' point of view on mitigating the negative influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, owing to a significant drawback, this study has a significant limitation due to the non-probability sampling method. The key explanation for this was that we decided to research the phenomena as near as possible to real-time circumstances (in the early days of the shutdown). Using the probability sample may take months, and a retrospective study of behaviour may have led to various biases and behavioural variations. As a result, more research is required to back up our findings. Additional research is also needed to the extent to which the results are repeated in different social and cultural contexts. Regardless, the results presented in this article provide some insights into the influence of fear of COVID-19 on the behavioural changes of tourists during the COVID-19 pandemic associated with social exclusion and bullying.

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