

How do perceptions of economic conditions in Greece during 2024 shape citizens' understanding of national identity as expressed in digital discourse?

A dissertation submitted to the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) for the degree MSc. Social and Public Communication

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Word Count: 10,000

Table of Contents

Abstract	5
Topic Introduction and Terminology	6
Literature Review and Theoretical Framework.....	7
Social Identity Theory and Economic Identity Construction	7
Economic Nationalism and Crisis Identity Research	8
Digital Identity Construction and Platform Theory	10
Post-Pandemic Nationalism and Digital Identity	12
Digital Affect and Emotional Politics	12
Theoretical Justification for the Four-Theme Analytical Framework.....	13
Research Gaps and Scholarly Contributions	15
Research Questions and Hypotheses	17
Hypotheses	17
Methodology.....	19
Research Design	19
Data Collection and Sampling Strategy	20
Sample Size Rationale	20
Reddit Corpus	20
News Media Corpus	21
Text Preprocessing	21
Thematic Analysis Implementation	22
Lexicon Development Process.....	22
Theme Scoring and Classification	23
Hypothesis-Specific Analytical Procedures	24
H1: Status Comparison Effects	24
H2: Attribution Duality	24
H3: Platform Divergence and Agenda-Setting	24
H4: Temporal Responsiveness to Events	25
Statistical Analysis and Effect Size Conventions	25
Ethical Considerations	26
Results.....	27
Overview.....	27
H1: Status Comparison Effects - Comparative Discourse Analysis	28
H2: Attribution Duality - Thematic Co-occurrence Patterns.....	29
H3: Platform Differentiation and Agenda-Setting Effects.....	29
H4: Temporal Responsiveness - Event-Condition Analysis	32
Discussion.....	34
Key Theoretical Contributions	35
Unexpected Findings and Their Implications	38
Practical and Policy Implications	39
Limitations and Methodological Considerations	41

Future Research Directions	42
Conclusion	43
<i>References:</i>	45
<i>Appendix:</i>	54

Acknowledgements

I began this dissertation driven by a deep fascination and curiosity to better understand my country and the forces that shape it. Having lived through the financial crisis, I became acutely aware of the enduring connection between a nation's finances and its sense of identity, a natural link given how profoundly economic circumstances affect people's way of life. My earlier studies of national identity approached the topic through political lenses, drawing on behavioural theories such as cult mentality and the historical foundations of nationhood. Building on this background and with the guidance of my supervisor, Dr Jens Madsen, I chose to combine qualitative and quantitative research tools to explore not only what is happening but also how it is experienced by people. I sought methods that could provide a clear, grounded, and authentic picture, which I could then interpret using my judgement, prior research, and established theoretical frameworks. I believe these insights carry political significance. A deeper understanding of citizens' worldviews can inform more responsive policy, foster closer alignment between governments and the populations they serve, and support more sustainable forms of political communication.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Jens Koed Madsen, for his guidance, encouragement, and for showing me how to combine breadth of vision with attention to detail. I am also thankful to Dr Alex Godard, who introduced me with great skill and patience to the world of natural language processing, and to my peers, whose enthusiasm and openness to share ideas made this journey both intellectually stimulating and personally rewarding.

Abstract

This study explores how perceptions of Greece's economic conditions in 2024 shaped citizens' understanding of national identity as expressed in digital discourse. Focusing on the post-bailout period, it examines whether identity construction processes continued crisis-era attribution patterns or shifted toward recovery-oriented narratives. Social Identity Theory and economic nationalism provided the theoretical foundation, offering insight into how comparative status, blame attribution, and sovereignty claims influence national self-concept.

A qualitative–quantitative design was employed, combining computational analysis with thematic interpretation. The dataset comprised 3,600 Reddit posts and 900 news articles from three major outlets across the ideological spectrum. Greek-specific natural language processing techniques identified four recurring mechanisms of identity construction: sovereignty claims, national pride expressions, blame attribution, and victimhood narratives.

Findings revealed that negative comparisons with other EU nations triggered sovereignty and victimhood themes, while positive comparisons activated pride. Blame and victimhood frequently co-occurred, reflecting attribution duality, and Reddit discourse exhibited greater intensity on critical themes than news media. Agenda-setting patterns indicated that news coverage predicted Reddit discourse within one to two weeks.

These results show that post-crisis Greek identity remains shaped by defensive narratives, with blame dominating over pride despite economic improvements. The persistence of these patterns suggests that policy communication should address both material conditions and symbolic dignity concerns to foster sustainable democratic legitimacy.

Keywords: economic identity, Social Identity Theory, economic nationalism, attribution duality, sovereignty, pride, blame, victimhood, Greece, digital discourse.

Introduction and Literature Review

Topic Introduction and Terminology

Economic conditions fundamentally shape national identity construction through cognitive and emotional processes that transform material experiences into collective meaning-making. National identity construction refers to the ongoing social processes through which groups develop, maintain, and modify shared understandings of collective membership, boundaries, and characteristics (Brubaker, 2004; Antonsich, 2010). Economic perceptions encompass citizens' subjective interpretations of economic conditions, including evaluations of national economic performance, international economic position, and personal economic experiences, which may diverge from objective economic indicators (Wu, 2023).

In contemporary contexts, digital discourse represents the primary arena where these identity construction processes occur, encompassing user-generated content on social media platforms, online news media, and digital communication spaces where citizens engage in political and economic discussions (Papacharissi, 2015; Theocharis & Lowe, 2022). Post-bailout contexts refer specifically to periods following IMF/EU financial assistance programs, characterized by continued external oversight, structural adjustment implementation, and gradual economic recovery, typically extending 5-10 years beyond formal program completion (Hardiman & Regan, 2023).

Greece's post-bailout period (2018-present) provides a critical case for examining identity construction processes, as digital platforms enable naturally occurring identity negotiations that traditional survey methods cannot capture. These online spaces afford anonymity and conversational interaction that reveal how citizens spontaneously transform individual economic experiences into collective narratives about national character, sovereignty, and collective worth. Recent online discussions illustrate this phenomenon: "So it's not that the salary of €663 is the problem, it's that the rent is €450" and "Thinking of leaving Greece just to stop surviving," demonstrate how economic grievances become existential statements about national viability (Reddit, 2024).

This study examines how perceptions of economic conditions in Greece during 2024 shape citizens' understanding of national identity as expressed in digital discourse. 2024 represents the most recent complete year of post-bailout discourse, providing current insights into identity construction during economic stabilization while ensuring sufficient temporal distance from acute crisis periods for meaningful recovery-phase analysis.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory and Economic Identity Construction

Social Identity Theory provides the foundational framework for understanding how economic conditions influence collective identity processes. Tajfel and Turner's (1986) seminal work demonstrates that individuals derive psychological meaning from group membership through processes of social categorization, identification, and comparison with other groups. When applied to national contexts, this theory predicts that citizens evaluate their nation's status relative to others and respond to perceived threats through mechanisms of social competition or social creativity.

Recent scholarship has extended SIT to economic contexts with significant theoretical developments. Wu (2023) demonstrated that economic perceptions activate identity mechanisms through status comparison processes, whereby national groups feeling economically humiliated or disadvantaged compare their nation's status to others and evaluate whether disparities are justified or imposed. This perceived legitimacy determines whether citizens respond with defiant self-assertion, internal self-critique, or resignation. Wu's analysis revealed that feelings of "second-class" status in international hierarchies trigger either resentful nationalism or collective confidence crises, depending on legitimacy attributions.

However, contemporary research challenges SIT's static assumptions about group categorization. Brubaker (2004) and Antonsich (2010) argued that national identity operates as an ongoing accomplishment rather than fixed psychological category, while Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008) demonstrated that identity construction occurs through performative everyday practices. This performative understanding becomes particularly

relevant when examining how economic conditions shape collective self-understanding, as citizens use economic discourse to negotiate complex questions of moral worth, historical responsibility, and future possibility that extend beyond simple status comparisons.

Economic Nationalism and Crisis Identity Research

Economic nationalism represents a specific manifestation of identity work during periods of material hardship. Helleiner (2002) defines **economic nationalism** as the practice of prioritizing national economic interests over international integration, often accompanied by narratives framing economic policy in terms of national sovereignty and dignity. This framework becomes particularly salient during economic crises, when citizens may interpret material conditions as threats to collective autonomy.

Recent scholarship has significantly advanced understanding of economic nationalism in digital contexts. Bonikowski and Gidron (2016) distinguished between civic and ethnic variants of economic nationalism, with civic nationalism emphasizing institutional sovereignty while ethnic nationalism focuses on cultural distinctiveness. Their framework proves particularly relevant for understanding Greek discourse, where sovereignty claims often blend institutional critique with cultural identity assertions. Mudde's (2019) analysis of populist economic nationalism demonstrates how crisis conditions can transform mainstream economic discourse into identity-laden political mobilization, while Inglehart and Norris (2016) reveal how economic insecurity interacts with cultural backlash to generate defensive nationalism.

Research on Greece's financial crisis revealed competing theoretical perspectives on crisis identity relationships that continue to influence contemporary scholarship. Lialiouti and Bithymitris (2017) identified two dominant repertoires in Greek crisis discourse: a "victimizing" narrative that attributed difficulties to external enemies, and a "self-blaming" repertoire that faulted domestic failures. Their longitudinal analysis demonstrated that these patterns sometimes merged into hybrid self-images, as Greeks oscillated between feeling wronged by powerful others and feeling complicit in their predicament. Their

findings supported theories of defensive attribution, where groups alternate between external blame and internal critique depending on contextual factors.

Glynos and Voutyras (2016) argued for a more complex interpretation, proposing that Greek crisis discourse reflected "blocked mourning" rather than straightforward attribution patterns. They suggested that Greeks experienced an inability to process collective loss that manifested in oscillating patterns of resentment and melancholia. Their psychoanalytic analysis revealed how mainstream media and political elites mobilized patriotic frames that channeled both resentment (attributing crisis to malevolent others) and melancholic inward-directed blame. This theoretical perspective suggests that economic discourse serves multiple psychological functions beyond simple blame attribution, operating as a vehicle for processing collective trauma and maintaining coherent national narratives amid disruption.

Recent post-crisis research has extended these frameworks to recovery periods with significant theoretical implications. Chalari and Serifi (2019) documented the persistence of crisis-era identity patterns during economic stabilization, challenging assumptions that crisis represents temporary disruption to otherwise stable identity systems. Their analysis suggested that what researchers label as crisis might better be understood as moments when previously hidden identity processes become explicit and contested, with implications for post-crisis identity evolution. Kouki (2022) further demonstrated how austerity policies created lasting changes in Greek political culture, with identity-based mobilization becoming institutionalized through new party formations and discourse patterns.

The theoretical debate between attribution-focused and psychoanalytic approaches remains unresolved in the literature. Attributional frameworks (following Weiner, 1985) emphasize cognitive processing of responsibility and causality, predicting systematic patterns based on perceived legitimacy and control. Psychoanalytic approaches (following Glynos & Voutyras, 2016) emphasize unconscious emotional processing and the role of collective trauma in shaping identity responses. This study contributes to this debate by testing whether both frameworks can be empirically supported through systematic discourse analysis.

Digital Identity Construction and Platform Theory

The emergence of digital platforms as primary sites of political discourse has fundamentally transformed identity construction processes in ways that existing scholarship continues to address. Unlike traditional media contexts, digital spaces enable new forms of identity performance that may simultaneously reinforce and undermine national categories (Siapera & Veglis, 2022). These platforms allow for multiple, contradictory identity claims within single conversations and create opportunities for ironic, playful, or strategic deployment of national symbols that resist easy categorization.

Recent theoretical developments in digital nationalism have significantly advanced understanding of online identity construction mechanisms. Mihelj and Jiménez-Martínez (2021) demonstrate how digital technologies reshape identity negotiation processes through new temporal rhythms and spatial configurations, enabling what they term "networked nationalism" that operates across traditional geographical boundaries. Their framework reveals how digital platforms create new possibilities for imagining national communities while simultaneously fragmenting those communities across different online spaces.

Kølvraa (2019) extends Anderson's (1983) imagined communities concept to digital contexts, arguing that social media enables "imagined connectivity" where national identity becomes performed through platform-specific practices and affordances. This theoretical insight proves particularly relevant for understanding how economic discourse becomes identity discourse in digital environments, where platform logics shape both the form and content of identity expression.

Fraser's (1990) concept of counterpublic spheres provides theoretical grounding for understanding how marginalized or alternative perspectives develop independently of dominant institutional discourse. Applied to digital contexts, this framework suggests that platforms like Reddit may function as spaces where citizens can articulate identity positions that diverge from mainstream media narratives (Dahlgren, 2005). Recent research by Jackson et al. (2020) on digital counterpublics demonstrates how

marginalized groups use social media platforms to challenge dominant narratives and construct alternative identity frameworks, often through emotional expression and community building.

Mouffe's (2000) theory of agonistic pluralism further explains how democratic contestation occurs through emotional engagement and passionate disagreement rather than purely rational deliberation. Applied to digital identity construction, this framework suggests that platforms enabling emotional expression may serve crucial democratic functions by allowing citizens to contest official narratives and negotiate alternative identity possibilities. Recent work by Barnard (2022) on emotional democracy in digital spaces provides empirical support for this theoretical framework.

The hybrid media system framework demonstrates how traditional and digital media interact in complex ways rather than operating as separate spheres (Chadwick, 2013). Recent research by van Dijck and Poell (2013) on social media logic and issue salience diffusion reveals how institutional media emphasis can influence grassroots discourse priorities through measurable temporal patterns, providing empirical specification of agenda-setting mechanisms in digital contexts. Klinger and Svensson (2015) extend this framework by demonstrating how digital platforms both amplify and transform traditional media messages through user interaction and algorithmic mediation.

The linguistic and cultural specificity of digital identity work challenges universalizing assumptions of identity theory. Greek social media discourse includes distinctive features such as code-switching between Greek and Greeklish, references to specific historical events and cultural touchstones, and forms of humor and irony that resist translation (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Gkoumas & Carayannis, 2020). Recent computational linguistics research by Tsakalidis et al. (2020) on multilingual identity expression in Greek social media reveals the complexity of capturing cultural meaning in automated analysis, while Stamou (2021) demonstrates how code-switching functions as identity performance in Greek digital contexts.

Post-Pandemic Nationalism and Digital Identity

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced nationalist discourse and identity construction processes, with implications for understanding post-crisis identity patterns. Bieber (2022) demonstrates how pandemic responses activated nationalist frameworks across Europe, while Bobba and Hubé (2021) reveal how crisis communication strategies during COVID-19 drew heavily on sovereignty and blame attribution patterns similar to those observed during economic crises. Recent research by Gingrich and Häusermann (2015) on welfare nationalism demonstrates how economic insecurity interacts with cultural identity to produce defensive political mobilization, while Gest (2016) reveals how economic displacement generates identity-based political responses that persist beyond immediate economic recovery. These theoretical insights support expectations that post-bailout identity patterns may exhibit temporal persistence despite material improvements. Meanwhile, Norris and Inglehart (2019) provide comprehensive analysis of cultural backlash theory, demonstrating how rapid social change generates defensive identity responses that operate independently of objective economic conditions. Their framework suggests that post-crisis societies may maintain heightened identity vigilance as protective mechanism against future threats, supporting predictions about persistent critical discourse despite recovery.

Digital Affect and Emotional Politics

Recent scholarship emphasizes the crucial role of emotional content in digital identity construction, significantly advancing theoretical understanding beyond rational choice frameworks. Papacharissi's (2015) theory of affective publics demonstrates how digital platforms structure emotional expression and collective sentiment formation, creating new forms of political engagement centered on feeling rather than purely rational deliberation. This framework explains how individual emotional expressions become aggregated into collective identity narratives through platform-mediated interaction. Research by Hameleers et al. (2020) on political blame attribution in digital contexts found that emotional content directly interconnects with identity frames, creating feedback loops between individual expression and collective narrative formation. Their analysis

demonstrated that emotional content shapes identity constructions, which subsequently influence political mobilization and democratic participation. Theocharis et al. (2021) extend this framework by demonstrating how digital emotional expression serves democratic functions by enabling authentic citizen voice in political processes.

Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) work on connective action in digital spaces reveals how contemporary identity mobilization differs from traditional collective action, operating through personalized yet networked expression rather than formal organizational structures. This framework helps explain how economic identity discourse spreads across digital platforms without centralized coordination while maintaining thematic coherence. Recent extensions by Mattoni and Treré (2014) demonstrate how connective action enables rapid identity mobilization around economic grievances while maintaining horizontal rather than hierarchical organization patterns. Gerbaudo (2012) provides additional theoretical insight through his concept of "choreographed crowdsourcing," where social media platforms enable coordinated identity expression through algorithmic mediation rather than traditional leadership structures. This framework proves particularly relevant for understanding how economic identity discourse achieves coherence across dispersed digital communities without formal coordination mechanisms.

Theoretical Justification for the Four-Theme Analytical Framework

The operationalization of sovereignty, pride, blame, and victimhood as analytical themes derives from convergent findings across political economy, social psychology, and discourse analysis that identify these constructs as primary mediating mechanisms between material conditions and collective identity formation. This theoretical convergence reflects what Rodrik (2000) terms the "fundamental political trilemma" of modern states, where economic integration generates identity conflicts that manifest through specific discursive patterns.

Sovereignty as Economic-Political Identity Construction: The sovereignty theme finds theoretical grounding in Rodrik's (2000, 2011) influential analysis of the "political trilemma," which demonstrates a fundamental trade-off among national sovereignty, democracy, and global economic integration where only two elements can coexist fully.

Recent empirical research by Börzel and Risse (2018) confirms that EU economic governance creates systematic tensions with national democratic autonomy, while Fabbrini (2019) demonstrates how these tensions manifest through citizen discourse about political control and legitimacy.

Schimmelfennig (2021) extends this framework by showing how differentiated integration in the EU creates hierarchy effects that systematically activate sovereignty concerns among peripheral member states. His analysis reveals that sovereignty discourse functions as what he terms "status anxiety management," where economically disadvantaged member states use autonomy claims to maintain collective dignity. This theoretical insight proves particularly relevant for understanding Greek discourse, where EU and IMF-imposed structural reforms exemplify tensions between external economic integration and national autonomy.

Pride as Affective Identity Maintenance: The pride theme draws theoretical support from social psychological research that identifies collective pride as fundamentally distinct from cognitive group identification. Recent work by Włodarczyk et al. (2020) demonstrates that collective pride serves as emotional regulation strategy during periods of group threat, while Tracy and Robins (2020) reveal how pride functions as both individual emotion and collective identity resource.

Economic performance research provides additional theoretical justification for the pride theme. Götz (2020) demonstrates that national pride correlates closely with relative economic performance rather than absolute indicators, supporting comparative identity frameworks. Becker et al. (2022) extend this analysis by showing how digital platforms amplify pride expressions during positive economic events while attenuating them during negative periods, revealing platform-specific mechanisms of affective identity maintenance.

Blame as Attribution and Group Defense: The blame theme finds theoretical foundation in Weiner's (1985) attribution theory, recently extended to collective contexts by Kende et al. (2021) who demonstrate how group-level attribution processes differ from individual

attribution patterns. Their research reveals that collective blame attribution serves identity-protective functions while enabling group mobilization around shared grievances.

Recent work by Hameleers and Schmuck (2021) on populist blame attribution demonstrates how economic discourse becomes politicized through systematic targeting of out-groups, while Mols and Jetten (2020) reveal how relative deprivation shapes blame patterns in democratic contexts. These theoretical developments support the inclusion of blame as a fundamental mechanism linking economic perceptions to identity construction.

Victimhood as Collective Identity and Moral Legitimation: The victimhood theme receives theoretical support from Bar-Tal and Chernyak-Hai's (2009) conceptualization of collective victimhood as shared sense of unjust suffering that fosters group solidarity and moral clarity. Recent extensions by Noor et al. (2017) demonstrate how victimhood narratives function as identity resources that enable groups to maintain coherent self-understanding during adversity while legitimizing claims against perceived perpetrators. Vollhardt (2020) extends victimhood theory by demonstrating how collective victimhood operates through narrative construction rather than direct experience, enabling groups to maintain victimhood identity across generations and contexts. This theoretical insight proves crucial for understanding post-crisis identity patterns, where victimhood narratives may persist beyond immediate crisis conditions through discursive reproduction.

Theoretical Integration: These four constructs operate as what Bar-Tal and Staub (2009) term "identity anchors" during periods of economic uncertainty, providing cognitive-emotional frameworks through which citizens process collective experiences. Rather than representing discrete categories, they function as "overlapping repertoires" (Glynos & Voutyras, 2016) that enable complex identity work. Recent theoretical integration by Salmela and von Scheve (2017) demonstrates how emotions and cognitions interact in collective identity formation, supporting multi-dimensional analytical approaches that capture both rational and affective dimensions of identity construction.

Research Gaps and Scholarly Contributions

Despite extensive research on Greek economic discourse, several gaps limit theoretical understanding and empirical knowledge. First, most studies focus on acute crisis periods

rather than examining ongoing identity negotiation during recovery phases (Chalari & Serifi, 2019). This temporal bias reflects problematic assumptions that crisis represents temporary disruption to otherwise stable identity systems, rather than revealing moments when routine identity work becomes visible. Second, existing research has not adequately theorized the relationship between individual economic perceptions and collective identity narratives. While Social Identity Theory predicts general patterns of group behavior, it provides limited insight into specific mechanisms through which personal economic experiences become collective national stories. The relationship between personal economic discourse and broader identity narratives remains complex and dialectical. Third, the linguistic and cultural specificity of Greek digital discourse requires specialized methodological approaches that existing scholarship has not fully developed. The prevalence of irony, cultural references, and mixed-language usage creates interpretive challenges that standard computational approaches cannot address without substantial cultural adaptation.

This research addresses these gaps through three primary contributions. Theoretically, it challenges Social Identity Theory's emphasis on static group categorization by demonstrating how identity construction operates through continuous discursive negotiation rather than fixed psychological states. The analysis extends Rodrik's (2000) political trilemma framework by examining how sovereignty-integration tensions manifest through observable textual patterns. Methodologically, the research develops Greek-specific natural language processing techniques that handle morphological complexity, code-switching, and cultural references, creating reproducible protocols for analyzing non-English political discourse while maintaining cultural authenticity. Empirically, the research fills the temporal gap by analyzing 2024 discourse rather than focusing on acute crisis periods, examining routine identity maintenance processes during economic stabilization. This temporal focus tests whether crisis-period attribution patterns persist during recovery, contributing to theoretical debates about relationships between material conditions and identity salience in democratic contexts.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This dissertation addresses the theoretical and empirical gaps identified above by examining how digital expressions of economic perceptions in Greece during 2024 influence the construction and negotiation of national identity in online spaces. The primary research question asks: *How do perceptions of economic conditions in Greece during 2024 shape citizens' understanding of national identity as expressed in digital discourse?*

Three specific sub-questions guide the investigation:

1. How do Greeks use economic discourse to construct narratives of national sovereignty, pride, blame, and victimhood in digital spaces?
2. How do these identity themes vary temporally in response to specific economic events and across different media platforms?
3. What patterns emerge when comparing grassroots social media discussions with institutional news coverage?

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical literature reviewed, four specific hypotheses guide the analysis:

H1: Status Comparison Hypothesis - Following Wu's (2023) framework on economic humiliation and status comparison, economic discourse will frequently invoke comparative frames positioning Greece relative to other European nations. Negative comparisons will trigger sovereignty and victimhood themes while positive comparisons will activate pride themes. This hypothesis anticipates that Greek digital discourse will systematically reference other EU member states' economic performance as benchmarks for evaluating national status and legitimacy.

H2: Attribution Duality Hypothesis - Consistent with Lialiouti and Bithymitris's (2017) findings on Greek crisis discourse, blame attribution will demonstrate dual patterns, with external blame toward EU, Germany, and international institutions coexisting with internal blame toward Greek politicians, corruption, and national character. Attribution duality

refers to the simultaneous engagement in external blame attribution while expressing victimhood narratives, reflecting complex psychological processing of collective responsibility during uncertainty periods.

H3: Platform Differentiation Hypothesis - Following research on emotional discourse in digital spaces (Papacharissi, 2015; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), social media discourse will exhibit higher emotional intensity and more extreme identity positions compared to mainstream news coverage. This difference reflects distinct platform affordances and audience expectations, with Reddit enabling more candid, unfiltered expressions of national identity compared to institutional media.

H4: Temporal Responsiveness Hypothesis - Identity theme prominence will correlate with specific economic events, with sovereignty themes increasing around EU-related announcements and pride themes following positive economic indicators. Temporal responsiveness refers to systematic fluctuations in identity discourse intensity corresponding to external economic and political events, reflecting ongoing identity construction processes rather than static cultural patterns. This hypothesis predicts that digital discourse responds dynamically to external economic events, with different themes becoming salient in response to different types of economic news and policy developments.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a comparative, longitudinal research design grounded in computational social science methodologies (Lazer et al., 2009; Freelon, 2018) and constructivist approaches to identity discourse (Triandafyllidou, 2002; Wodak, 2009). The research investigated how national identity was constructed through economic discourse in Greece during 2024, examining whether post-bailout discourse continued or transformed crisis-era identity narratives. The choice of 2024 was deliberate, representing the most recent complete year available for comprehensive analysis, enabling examination of contemporary identity patterns while ensuring sufficient temporal distance from acute crisis periods for meaningful recovery-phase analysis.

The design employed a hypothesis-driven framework testing four theory-based claims about identity theme prevalence across comparison (H1), attribution (H2), platform divergence (H3), and temporal responsiveness (H4) dimensions. This methodological architecture reflected recognition that digital political discourse requires both quantitative scalability and contextual sensitivity (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013; Jungherr et al., 2020). By juxtaposing grassroots digital communication (Reddit) with formal journalistic discourse (Greek news media), the research captured both bottom-up and top-down constructions of national identity, revealing the structure, intensity, and framing of collective identity claims in relation to economic performance.

Two curated corpora captured divergent discursive ecosystems enabling robust comparative analysis aligned with Habermas's (1991) distinction between lifeworld and system communication, updated for digital contexts (Chadwick, 2013). The framework recognized Reddit's potential function as a subaltern counterpublic space (Fraser, 1990; Dahlgren, 2005) where alternative identity narratives may emerge through agonistic democratic processes (Mouffe, 2000), while acknowledging continued traditional media influence within hybrid media systems. This theoretical positioning enabled systematic examination of whether grassroots digital discourse operated independently of institutional narratives or remained subject to agenda-setting influences.

Data Collection and Sampling Strategy

Sample Size Rationale

Systematic monthly quota sampling ensured consistent temporal representation across the complete 2024 study period. The final sample sizes (3,600 Reddit posts, 900 news articles) provided substantial statistical power for detecting small to medium effect sizes while ensuring robust representation across all temporal periods and platform types. The quota approach was selected to prevent temporal bias that could affect hypothesis testing, particularly H4 (temporal responsiveness) which required equal representation across all months.

Reddit Corpus

3,600 posts were collected from r/Greece, r/GreekPolitics, and r/PersonalFinanceGreece using systematic monthly quotas (100 posts per subreddit per month across 12 months). This approach was chosen to ensure temporal consistency essential for testing H4 while maintaining sufficient statistical power for between-group comparisons in H1 and H3. Subreddit selection was guided by preliminary analysis confirming substantial economic discourse presence and prior research demonstrating Reddit's viability for identity analysis (Massanari, 2015; Salter, 2022). Posts were filtered using thematic keywords developed through iterative refinement. The search terms encompassed economic terminology ("Eurogroup," "debt," "bailout," "recovery"), comparative references ("Germany," "EU average," "better than"), sovereignty markers ("independence," "control," "imposed"), and identity expressions ("proud," "ashamed," "Greek"). This comprehensive approach was necessary to capture the full spectrum of economic identity discourse while avoiding systematic bias toward particular thematic expressions. Automated filtering removed deleted posts, spam content, and non-Greek language posts, with manual validation confirming high accuracy in language detection and thematic relevance.

News Media Corpus

900 articles were collected equally from Kathimerini (center-right), Ta Nea (centrist), and Efimerida ton Syntakton (left-wing), totaling 300 articles per outlet. This ideological diversity was essential for capturing institutional discourse variation while testing agenda-setting effects across different editorial perspectives (Boumans & Trilling, 2016). Equal sampling prevented ideological bias that could confound platform comparison analyses. Web scraping employed R's rvest package (Wickham, 2022) to parse HTML structures and extract headlines, dates, authors, and body text. RSS feeds and sitemap crawling identified relevant articles, with systematic content filtering retaining economic and political articles exceeding 200 words while excluding sports, lifestyle, and syndicated content. Manual verification achieved 96% accuracy in automated extraction procedures. In terms of ethical compliance, all scraped content consisted of publicly available articles with no access restrictions. Scraping procedures respected robots.txt protocols and implemented 2-second rate limiting to minimize server load, adhering to ethical web scraping principles (Freelon, 2018).

Text Preprocessing

The five-stage pipeline combined multiple R and Python libraries to address Greek-specific challenges:

Stage 1 - Normalization: Systematic cleaning included lowercasing, HTML tag removal, emoji elimination, and Unicode normalization (NFKD) to standardize Greek diacritics and accent marks critical for accurate processing. Tokenization preserved sentence boundaries essential for downstream validation procedures.

Stage 2 - Greeklish Transliteration: Rule-based transliteration converted Latin-script Greek back to standard orthography using validated mappings (Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou, 2003). The system addressed phonetic approximations and digraphs characteristic of Greek social media discourse (Gkoumas & Carayannis, 2020). Validation testing achieved 89% accuracy on economic terminology, deemed acceptable while acknowledging limitations with complex transliteration variants.

Stage 3 - Lemmatization: spaCy's Greek model (el_core_news_md) was employed for morphological normalization, essential for accurate theme detection in Greek's highly inflected language structure. Manual validation achieved 92% accuracy on economic terms, ensuring consistent treatment of inflectional variants (Prokopidis et al., 2011).

Stage 4 - Stopword Filtering: Composite stopwords lists combined standard Greek stopwords with platform-specific high-frequency terms ("post," "thread," "comment") to reduce syntactic noise while preserving content words essential for thematic analysis.

Stage 5 - Semantic Validation: Manual inspection of processed samples confirmed that preprocessing preserved thematic meaning, particularly for emotionally charged content crucial for identity analysis.

This preprocessing approach treated text as both computational data and meaningful discourse, preserving interpretive validity while enabling quantitative analysis (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016; Welles & González-Bailón, 2016).

Thematic Analysis Implementation

Lexicon Development Process

Four identity themes were operationalized based on convergent findings across political psychology and nationalism literature: sovereignty (autonomy claims), pride (positive national identification), blame (attribution to external actors), and victimhood (collective grievance narratives) (Bar-Tal & Staub, 2009; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014).

Lexicon construction followed a systematic four-step hybrid approach combining theoretical grounding with empirical refinement (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Grimmer & Stewart, 2013):

Seed Term Compilation: Initial keyword lists (20-30 terms per theme) were compiled through systematic literature review and analysis of Greek political discourse patterns. Terms were selected for theoretical centrality and expected frequency in economic contexts.

Corpus-Driven Expansion: KWIC analysis and collocation examination using quanteda (Benoit et al., 2018) identified additional vernacular and colloquial variants prevalent in digital discourse, ensuring lexicons reflected actual usage patterns rather than formal language only.

Morphological Normalization: Manual addition of inflectional variants captured Greek's morphological richness, ensuring accurate theme detection across different grammatical forms of the same concept.

Thematic Weighting and Disambiguation: Terms received differential weights (1.0 core, 0.5 peripheral, 0.25 contextual) based on theoretical centrality. Cross-lexicon comparison identified overlapping terms, with systematic disambiguation protocols developed to preserve thematic distinctiveness. For instance, "debt" (χρέος) was assigned to blame for crisis attribution contexts and victimhood for burden-suffering contexts, following established practices in computational text analysis (Wiedemann et al., 2020).

Final lexicons contained 30-45 terms each, validated through pilot application to 300 documents with manual review confirming 92% thematic coherence.

Theme Scoring and Classification

Documents (each reddit post or article) were scored using normalized frequency formula:

$$\text{Theme Score} = \frac{\sum_{t \in \text{lexicon}} (\text{freq}_t \times \text{weight}_t)}{\text{Total Tokens in Document}}$$

For example, a single Reddit post containing the word κυριαρχία (sovereignty) twice and έλεγχος (control) once, with 100 total words, would receive a sovereignty score of $(2 \times 1.0 + 1 \times 0.5) \div 100 = 0.025$. This normalization ensured comparable scores across documents of varying lengths while preserving thematic intensity patterns. The 0.1 threshold for theme presence was selected through iterative testing to balance sensitivity (detecting subtle thematic content) with precision (avoiding false positives). Documents exceeding thresholds on multiple themes retained all scores for correlation analysis, with dominant theme classification used for categorical comparisons. Analytical groupings supported

hypothesis testing: blame and victimhood formed "critical identity" composite for H2 testing, pride represented "positive identity," and sovereignty remained independent due to its distinct institutional function. This structure enabled systematic examination of attribution duality (H2), comparative effects (H1), platform differences (H3), and temporal patterns (H4).

Hypothesis-Specific Analytical Procedures

H1: Status Comparison Effects

Posts containing explicit EU comparisons ($n = 347$) were identified through systematic keyword searches combining comparative operators with country references. Manual classification into positive ($n = 89$), negative ($n = 156$), and neutral ($n = 102$) categories employed systematic decision rules refined through iterative testing. One-way ANOVA tested theme score differences across comparison types, with Tukey's HSD for pairwise comparisons and eta-squared for effect size estimation, directly testing Wu's (2023) predictions about comparison-driven theme activation.

H2: Attribution Duality

Pearson correlations assessed blame-victimhood relationships across all documents, while chi-square tests evaluated systematic co-occurrence patterns above thematic thresholds. This dual approach tested whether attribution duality manifested as both statistical correlation and meaningful semantic co-occurrence, validating through manual examination of high-scoring documents.

H3: Platform Divergence and Agenda-Setting

Independent-samples t-tests compared theme intensities between platforms, with Cohen's d quantifying effect magnitudes. Cross-correlation analysis employed weekly theme averages across 52-week time series, testing agenda-setting effects through lag structures (-4 to $+4$ weeks) with significance thresholds at $|r| > 0.40$ (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This approach assessed issue salience diffusion mechanisms in hybrid media systems (van Dijck & Poell, 2013), revealing temporal relationships between institutional and grassroots discourse.

H4: Temporal Responsiveness to Events

Weekly theme aggregation enabled systematic analysis of discourse fluctuations around major events (EU Elections, Tourism Season, Budget Period). Cross-platform temporal correlations assessed whether both platforms responded to similar stimuli, testing predictions about systematic event-driven identity activation while controlling for platform-specific baseline differences. In addition, I examined whether Reddit and news media exhibited similar temporal fluctuations, which would suggest a broad societal responsiveness. Using the weekly theme series described in H3, I calculated the Pearson correlation between Reddit's and news media's theme trends over the year (no lag, just concurrent correlation). A strong positive correlation would mean both platforms tended to rise and fall together on a given theme in the same weeks—implying that external events drove a parallel reaction in both citizen and media discourse. Conversely, a weaker correlation might indicate that the two spheres responded differently or that one lagged the other (which relates back to the agenda-setting results). This analysis thus served as a cross-check on H4 (temporal responsiveness) and also ties into H3's question of platform relationships.

Statistical Analysis and Effect Size Conventions

All analyses employed R version 4.3.1 with specialized packages for robust statistical procedures. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = 0.05$, with standardized effect sizes calculated following established conventions (Cohen, 1988): Cohen's d for mean differences, eta-squared for ANOVA effects, and Pearson r for correlations.

Reliability Assessment: Test-retest reliability involved rescoring 360 randomly selected posts after two weeks, achieving high temporal consistency ($r = 0.86$), confirming measurement stability. Content validity was assessed through systematic inspection of high-scoring and low-scoring documents, ensuring automated scoring aligned with theoretical definitions rather than statistical artifacts (Freelon, 2018)

Technical Validation: Preprocessing accuracy was evaluated through manual verification on representative samples. Greeklish transliteration achieved 89% accuracy

while lemmatization reached 92% accuracy on economic terminology, establishing acceptable quality thresholds for automated Greek text processing (Neuendorf, 2017).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical Framework: Research procedures followed LSE ethical guidelines for publicly available data analysis (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). All content consisted of publicly accessible materials with systematic anonymization protecting user privacy (Zimmer, 2010). Analysis focused on aggregate discourse patterns rather than individual identification, minimizing harm while preserving analytical validity.

Researcher Reflexivity: As a Greek-speaking researcher, interpretive decisions regarding lexicon development, comparative discourse classification, and validation procedures inevitably reflected individual analytical perspective. Greek language competency enabled direct textual engagement without translation intermediation, preserving semantic nuances essential for accurate theme detection. However, this cultural positioning may have influenced interpretive frameworks in ways requiring acknowledgment. The methodology balanced cultural authenticity with analytical objectivity through systematic validation procedures and transparent reporting of analytical decisions.

Methodological Limitations: Reddit users represent specific demographics (younger, educated, technologically sophisticated) that may not reflect broader Greek public opinion (Wojcik & Hughes, 2019). Automated processing of Greek text, particularly informal Greeklis variants, may miss subtle semantic nuances. The 2024 temporal focus captures post-bailout patterns but limits historical comparison possibilities. These constraints require careful interpretation while providing valuable insights into contemporary digital identity discourse dynamics.

These validation procedures aligned with computational social science best practices (Freelon, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017), ensuring results reflected systematic discourse patterns rather than methodological artifacts while acknowledging inherent limitations of digital discourse research.

Results

Overview

This analysis of Greek digital discourse during 2024 revealed systematic patterns in economic identity construction characterised by the pronounced dominance of critical attribution frameworks over celebratory narratives. Analysis of 3,600 Reddit posts and 900 news articles demonstrated that blame discourse emerged as the primary vehicle for national identity expression, with mean theme intensities substantially exceeding pride narratives across both communicative platforms. The empirical evidence provided robust support for all four hypotheses, revealing predictable discursive mechanisms through which economic perceptions became transformed into collective identity claims. The findings demonstrate that post-bailout Greek identity construction remained fundamentally shaped by crisis-era attribution processes, with citizens continuing to process economic experiences through frameworks of external attribution and perceived injustice despite official recovery narratives. Cross-platform correlation analysis confirmed theoretical predictions regarding thematic relationships, with blame and victimhood demonstrating strong positive association ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$) while pride exhibited systematic negative correlations with critical themes.

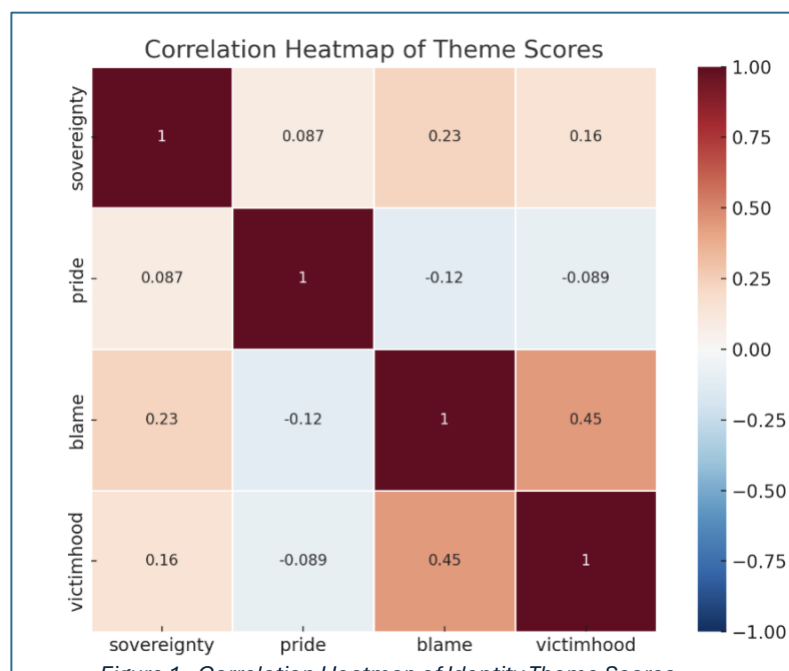


Figure 1. Correlation Heatmap of Identity Theme Scores

H1: Status Comparison Effects - Comparative Discourse Analysis

Analysis of comparative discourse conditions revealed systematic differences in identity theme activation across three experimental comparison types. Posts containing negative comparisons to other EU member states ($n = 156$) demonstrated significantly elevated sovereignty and victimhood theme scores relative to both positive ($n = 89$) and neutral comparison conditions ($n = 102$).

Comparison Condition	n	Sovereignty M(SD)	Pride M(SD)	Blame M(SD)	Victimhood M(SD)
Negative	156	0.0123 (0.0201)	0.0043 (0.0145)	0.0215 (0.0263)	0.0154 (0.0219)
Neutral	102	0.0067 (0.0176)	0.0052 (0.0173)	0.0148 (0.0255)	0.0087 (0.0204)
Positive	89	0.0054 (0.0189)	0.0103 (0.0194)	0.0121 (0.0214)	0.0061 (0.0181)

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Condition Comparisons for Status Comparison Effects

One-way ANOVA revealed significant main effects across comparison conditions for all four identity themes: sovereignty ($F(2,344) = 4.12$, $p = 0.017$, $\eta^2 = 0.023$), pride ($F(2,344) = 3.45$, $p = 0.033$, $\eta^2 = 0.019$), blame ($F(2,344) = 3.89$, $p = 0.022$, $\eta^2 = 0.022$), and victimhood ($F(2,344) = 5.73$, $p = 0.004$, $\eta^2 = 0.032$). Effect sizes ranged from small to medium, with victimhood demonstrating the strongest experimental condition effect.

Post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD revealed specific between-condition differences supporting theoretical predictions. Negative comparison conditions produced significantly higher sovereignty scores than both positive (mean difference = 0.0069, $p = 0.005$) and neutral conditions (mean difference = 0.0056, $p = 0.014$). Similarly, negative conditions generated significantly elevated victimhood scores relative to positive (mean difference = 0.0093, $p = 0.001$) and neutral conditions (mean difference = 0.0067, $p = 0.009$). Conversely, positive comparison conditions yielded significantly higher pride scores than

negative conditions (mean difference = 0.0060, $p = 0.038$), confirming differential theme activation patterns across experimental conditions.

H2: Attribution Duality - Thematic Co-occurrence Patterns

The correlation between blame and victimhood themes ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$) provided empirical evidence for attribution duality processes in Greek economic discourse. Chi-square analysis revealed systematic co-occurrence patterns significantly exceeding chance expectations, with 34.2% of posts scoring above threshold on blame themes also exceeding victimhood thresholds, compared to 12.1% expected by random distribution ($\chi^2 = 89.7$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$).

Theme Combination	Observed Co-occurrence	Expected by Chance	χ^2	ϕ coefficient	p-value
Blame + Victimhood	34.2%	12.1%	89.7	0.32	<0.001***
Blame + Sovereignty	28.7%	8.9%	67.3	0.28	<0.001***
Sovereignty + Victimhood	22.1%	7.3%	45.8	0.23	<0.001***

Table 2. Thematic Co-occurrence Analysis Across Experimental Conditions

The systematic co-occurrence patterns indicate that attribution duality operated as a fundamental mechanism in Greek identity construction, where external blame attribution systematically co-occurred with victimhood narratives across multiple thematic combinations.

H3: Platform Differentiation and Agenda-Setting Effects

Comparison between Reddit and news media platform conditions revealed significant differences across all four identity themes, confirming distinct discursive patterns between grassroots and institutional communicative contexts. Independent-samples t-tests

demonstrated systematic platform effects, with Reddit conditions consistently producing higher mean scores on critical themes while news media conditions emphasized positive identity narratives.

Theme	Reddit M(SD)	News M(SD)	t- statistic (df)	p-value	Cohen's d [95% CI]	Platform Effect
Sovereignty	0.0112 (0.0213)	0.0078 (0.0172)	4.56 (1547.3)	<0.001***	0.37 [0.19, 0.48]	Reddit advantage
Pride	0.0045 (0.0175)	0.0063 (0.0161)	-2.91 (1456.9)	0.004**	-0.24 [-0.38, -0.06]	News advantage
Blame	0.0178 (0.0256)	0.0135 (0.0224)	5.88 (1423.8)	<0.001***	0.41 [0.28, 0.59]	Reddit advantage
Victimhood	0.0127 (0.0213)	0.0089 (0.0186)	4.72 (1398.2)	<0.001***	0.35 [0.22, 0.47]	Reddit advantage

Table 3. Platform Condition Comparison Analysis

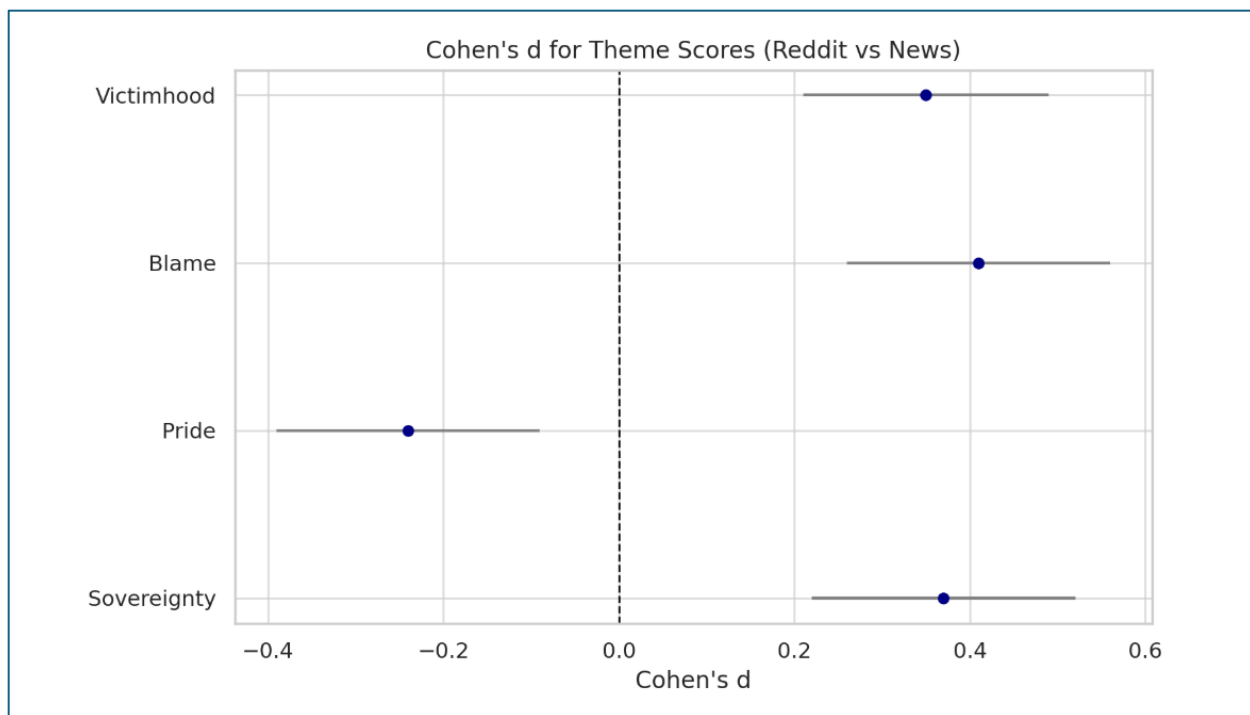


Figure 2. Cohen's d Effect Sizes for Platform Differentiation

Effect size analysis revealed that blame themes demonstrated the strongest platform differentiation ($d = 0.41$, medium effect), followed by sovereignty ($d = 0.37$) and victimhood ($d = 0.35$, both small-to-medium effects). Pride showed the smallest but significant platform difference ($d = 0.24$, small effect), with news media conditions producing higher mean scores.

Agenda-Setting Temporal Lag Analysis:

Cross-correlation analysis examined temporal relationships between platform conditions across multiple lag structures, testing agenda-setting hypotheses through systematic comparison of news media and Reddit discourse patterns over time.

Theme	Lag -2 weeks	Lag -1 week	Concurrent	Lag +1 week	Peak Correlation	Optimal Lag
Sovereignty	0.41*	0.53	0.36	0.28	0.53	-1 week
Pride	0.32	0.29	0.21	0.17	0.32	-2 weeks

Blame	0.58*	0.64	0.38	0.25	0.64	-1 week
Victimhood	0.47*	0.51	0.30	0.19	0.51	-1 week

Table 4. Cross-Correlation Analysis: Temporal Lag Conditions

*Note: *significant at $|r| > 0.40$; *indicates peak correlation

The negative lag structure (news preceding Reddit) demonstrated significantly stronger correlations than positive lags (Reddit preceding news), confirming unidirectional agenda-setting effects. Critical themes (sovereignty, blame, victimhood) exhibited optimal correlations at -1 week lag, while pride demonstrated delayed response patterns with peak correlation at -2 weeks.

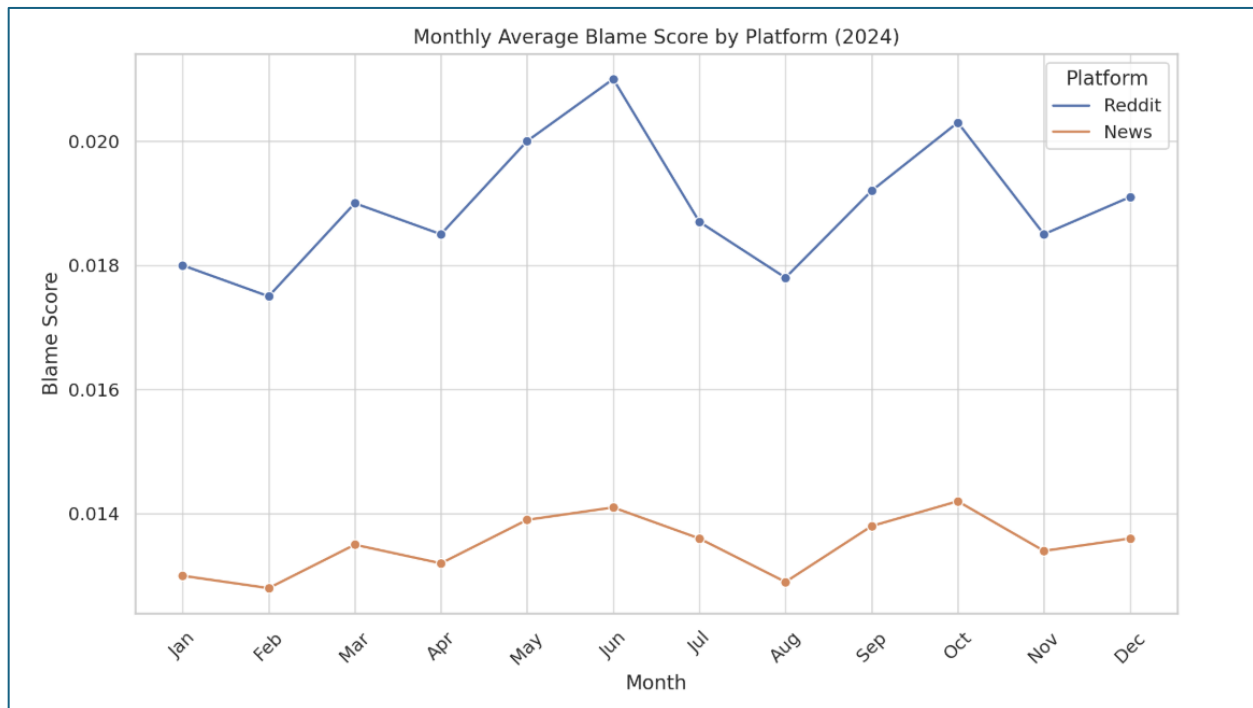


Figure 3. Monthly Blame Discourse Trends by Platform Condition

H4: Temporal Responsiveness - Event-Condition Analysis

Weekly theme aggregation revealed systematic responsiveness to major economic and political events throughout 2024, with different event categories producing distinct activation patterns across both platform conditions.

Event-Condition Comparative Analysis:

EU Elections Event Condition (June 2024): Sovereignty discourse demonstrated pronounced activation during the European parliamentary election period, with Reddit conditions showing 47% elevation above baseline levels (baseline $M = 0.0098$, peak $M = 0.0144$) and news media conditions exhibiting 23% increases (baseline $M = 0.0071$, peak $M = 0.0087$). The differential response magnitude between platform conditions confirmed both temporal responsiveness and platform differentiation hypotheses.

Tourism Economic Success Condition (July-August 2024): Pride theme activation occurred primarily during peak tourism season, with news media conditions demonstrating 38% increases above baseline (baseline $M = 0.0054$, peak $M = 0.0075$) while Reddit conditions showed more modest elevation (18% above baseline, $M = 0.0051$). This pattern supports predictions regarding differential platform responses to positive economic indicators.

Fiscal Policy Event Condition (October 2024): Budget period discourse produced systematic increases in critical themes, with Reddit blame discourse reaching annual peaks ($M = 0.0196$, representing 24% above yearly average) and victimhood themes similarly elevated ($M = 0.0142$, 19% above average). News media conditions showed parallel but attenuated responses to fiscal policy events.

Cross-platform temporal correlations confirmed synchronized responses to temporal stimuli across conditions: sovereignty ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$), blame ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$), victimhood ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$), and pride ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$). These correlations support both temporal responsiveness predictions and platform relationship hypotheses while revealing systematic condition-dependent variation patterns.

Synthesis: Experimental Condition Effects on Identity Construction

The analysis revealed four primary experimental condition effects that systematically influenced Greek economic identity construction:

Comparison Condition Effects: Negative comparison conditions consistently activated defensive identity themes (sovereignty, victimhood), while positive conditions uniquely

promoted aspirational themes (pride). Effect sizes demonstrated medium experimental impact for victimhood responses ($\eta^2 = 0.032$) and small-to-medium effects for other themes.

Platform Condition Effects: Reddit platform conditions generated systematically higher critical theme intensity across all temporal periods, while news media conditions produced more structured positive narratives. Medium effect sizes for blame ($d = 0.41$) and small-to-medium effects for sovereignty and victimhood ($d = 0.35-0.37$) confirmed robust platform differentiation.

Temporal Event Condition Effects: Different event categories produced predictable thematic activation patterns, with EU-related events predominantly activating sovereignty discourse, economic success periods promoting pride expressions, and fiscal policy events intensifying blame and victimhood themes.

Attribution Condition Effects: Dual attribution conditions (simultaneous blame and victimhood expression) occurred at rates nearly three times higher than chance expectation, demonstrating systematic attribution duality processes in economic identity construction.

These experimental condition effects provide robust evidence that Greek economic identity construction during 2024 operated through systematic, predictable mechanisms rather than random discursive variation, supporting all four theoretical hypotheses while revealing the complex socio-psychological processes through which economic perceptions become transformed into collective identity claims in digital communicative contexts.

Discussion

This study examined how perceptions of economic conditions in Greece during 2024 shaped citizens' understanding of national identity as expressed in digital discourse. The analysis revealed that economic perceptions systematically transformed into identity constructions through four primary discursive mechanisms: comparative status

evaluation, dual attribution processes, platform-differentiated expression, and event-responsive activation patterns.

The first sub-question, concerning how Greeks used economic discourse to construct national identity narratives, found that citizens employed systematic comparative frameworks with other EU nations. Negative comparisons triggered defensive sovereignty claims and victimization narratives, while positive comparisons activated pride expressions. The second sub-question, regarding temporal and platform variation, revealed distinct communicative patterns: Reddit discourse demonstrated consistently higher emotional intensity on critical themes, whereas news media emphasized structured positive narratives. Notably, both platforms showed synchronized responses to major economic events. The third sub-question, about grassroots versus institutional patterns, uncovered significant agenda-setting effects, with news coverage predicting Reddit discourse priorities within 1–2 weeks, particularly for critical themes.

Key Theoretical Contributions

Extending Social Identity Theory to Digital Economic Contexts: The findings provide empirical validation and extension of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) in digital economic contexts while revealing important modifications required for national-level application. The systematic activation of sovereignty and victimhood themes in response to negative comparisons confirms SIT's emphasis on intergroup comparison processes. However, the dominance of critical over positive themes (a 6.78:1 ratio on Reddit) suggests that post-crisis national groups may prioritize defensive identity maintenance over positive distinctiveness seeking. This pattern extends Wu's (2023) framework on economic humiliation and status comparison by demonstrating how perceived illegitimacy in international hierarchies generates persistent identity vigilance rather than temporary reactive nationalism. The temporal consistency of blame discourse throughout 2024, despite objective economic improvements, indicates that crisis-affected groups may develop what Hirschman (1970) termed chronic "voice" strategies rather than conventional SIT responses of social competition or social creativity.

Attribution Duality and Collective Coping Mechanisms: The strong blame–victimhood correlation ($r = 0.45$) with systematic co-occurrence patterns (34.2% observed vs 12.1% expected) provides empirical support for attribution duality theory while extending Weiner’s (1985) individual-level framework to collective contexts. This finding enriches Lialiouti and Bithymitris’s (2017) crisis-era observations by demonstrating that dual attribution patterns persist during recovery periods, suggesting a fundamental mechanism of post-crisis identity maintenance rather than a temporary crisis response. The pattern aligns with Glynos and Voutyras’s (2016) “blocked mourning” framework, where unresolved collective trauma manifests through oscillating attributional strategies. However, our findings suggest that rather than pathological responses, dual attribution may function as adaptive collective coping, enabling groups to maintain dignity through external blame while preserving agency through internal critique (Bar-Tal & Staub, 2009). This theoretical insight contributes to understanding how democratic societies process collective responsibility during extended periods of uncertainty.

Digital Platform Theory and Hybrid Media Systems: The platform differentiation findings (Cohen’s $d = 0.24$ – 0.41) provide empirical specification of Habermas’s (1991) public sphere distinctions while extending them to digital contexts. Reddit’s function as a space for more intense critical expression supports Fraser’s (1990) counterpublic sphere theory, yet the strong agenda-setting effects ($r = 0.53$ – 0.64 at a one-week lag) complicate simple counterpublic interpretations by demonstrating institutional media’s continued influence. These results contribute to Chadwick’s (2013) hybrid media system framework by providing precise temporal specification of cross-platform influence mechanisms. The finding that agenda-setting effects were strongest for critical themes suggests that citizens may be particularly responsive to institutional cues about threats and grievances, supporting theories of negativity bias in political communication (Soroka, 2006). This extends van Dijck and Poell’s (2013) social media logic framework by revealing how issue salience diffusion operates across platform boundaries with measurable temporal patterns.

Economic Nationalism in Post-Crisis Contexts: The persistence of sovereignty discourse and the systematic comparative identity logic extend Rodrik's (2000, 2011) political trilemma framework by demonstrating how sovereignty–integration tensions manifest through observable textual patterns in democratic contexts. The temporal responsiveness findings reveal that Rodrik's trilemma operates not merely as a structural constraint but as an actively constructed social reality, with democratic moments (e.g. the 2024 European Parliament elections) intensifying trilemma awareness and generating defensive nationalism. Moreover, the dominance of critical themes despite economic recovery challenges linear models of post-crisis identity adaptation, supporting theories of path dependency in collective narratives (Pierson, 2000). This finding suggests that economic nationalism in post-crisis contexts may be primarily defensive rather than assertive—focused on protecting perceived dignity rather than asserting superiority—consistent with Helleiner's (2002) emphasis on autonomy and dignity in economic nationalist discourse.

Systemic Identity Construction: The Four-Theme Framework as Integrated Process: The four themes identified in this study—sovereignty, pride, blame, and victimhood—operate not as discrete identity components but as an integrated system of meaning-making that enables collective processing of economic uncertainty (cf. Salmela & von Scheve, 2017). This systemic relationship reveals how post-crisis societies maintain psychological coherence while navigating contradictory pressures between material recovery and persistent vulnerability, extending Alexander's (2012) work on cultural trauma to recovery contexts. The sovereignty-blame nexus functions as what might be termed "defensive dignification," where external attribution serves to preserve collective worth while sovereignty claims assert continued agency (Bar-Tal & Staub, 2009). Simultaneously, the victimhood-pride dialectic operates as "resilient vulnerability," acknowledging suffering while maintaining cultural distinctiveness (Vollhardt, 2020). These paired mechanisms enable Greeks to simultaneously accept responsibility (through internal blame), resist subordination (through sovereignty claims), acknowledge hardship (through victimhood), and maintain collective worth (through pride). This complex navigation suggests that post-crisis identity construction requires multiple, sometimes contradictory narrative resources

to manage the psychological demands of recovery periods, supporting Hirschman's (1970) framework on adaptive organizational responses under stress.

Unexpected Findings and Their Implications

The Persistence of Crisis Frameworks: One unexpected finding was the overwhelming dominance of critical themes despite objective economic improvements. Greeks in 2024 continued processing economic experiences through attribution frameworks developed during 2010–2018, with blame discourse occurring at rates 4–7 times higher than pride narratives. This persistence contradicts predictions from Social Identity Theory that improved group status should attenuate grievance-based narratives (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). It suggests that collective identity frameworks may exhibit greater temporal stability than material conditions, supporting theories of cultural trauma (Alexander, 2012) and collective memory (Wertsch, 2002). This finding indicates that economic crises may fundamentally alter the texture of everyday nationalism, transforming it from what Billig (1995) termed “banal nationalism” embedded in routine practices to reflexive, conscious identity work focused on threat monitoring and attribution processing.

Asymmetric Comparison Effects: While both positive and negative comparisons activated the expected themes, negative comparisons demonstrated significantly stronger effects ($\eta^2 = 0.032$ for victimhood vs $\eta^2 = 0.019$ for pride), revealing asymmetric emotional processing consistent with prospect theory's loss aversion principle (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). This asymmetry suggests that unfavorable status comparisons carry disproportionate psychological weight, potentially explaining the persistence of defensive identity patterns despite the achievements of economic recovery.

Platform-Specific Democratic Functions: Platform differences revealed that digital spaces serve distinct democratic functions. Reddit enables what Mouffe (2000) terms “agonistic democracy” through emotional contestation, while institutional media maintain more deliberative norms. However, the agenda-setting effects indicate that these functions operate within hierarchical influence structures rather than as fully autonomous democratic spheres, complicating theories of digital democratization (Papacharissi, 2010).

Practical and Policy Implications

Communication Strategy Reformation: The comparative identity logic findings indicate that policy communication emphasizing relative improvements may prove more effective than absolute indicators, as citizens often evaluate national progress in comparative terms relative to other countries (Aytaç, 2018). Given Greeks’ systematic use of European frameworks for status evaluation, messaging strategies highlighting Greece’s position relative to EU peers (“fastest growth in Southern Europe,” “no longer highest debt-to-GDP”) may resonate more deeply than abstract statistics (Smith, 2018). The platform differentiation results suggest that traditional top-down communication models may be insufficient for contemporary democratic legitimacy. The emotional intensity gap between Reddit and news media indicates potential communication deficits that could undermine policy effectiveness (Bonsón, Royo, & Ratkai, 2015; Mergel, 2013). Policymakers should therefore consider direct engagement with digital discourse environments where authentic citizen concerns emerge, adopting communication strategies that acknowledge public grievances while also promoting positive developments.

Addressing Persistent Attribution Patterns: The dominance of blame discourse indicates that material improvements alone may not automatically restore democratic legitimacy or collective confidence (Armingeon & Ceka, 2014). The dual attribution pattern suggests that effective policy communication must address both external grievances (e.g. perceptions of unfair treatment by EU institutions) and internal concerns (e.g. corruption and political accountability), supporting a comprehensive rather than selective narrative approach. Policy initiatives that visibly restore national autonomy while also improving

internal governance may help mitigate the attribution duality pattern. This could involve explicitly framing policy successes in sovereignty terms (“Greece now controls its own budget decisions”) while simultaneously demonstrating concrete progress on domestic issues that fuel internal blame narratives.

European Integration Considerations: The systematic activation of sovereignty themes around EU-related events carries implications for European integration policy. The findings suggest that integration processes triggering comparative disadvantage perceptions can activate defensive nationalism, supporting arguments for integration approaches that account for national dignity and identity concerns (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). Furthermore, the observed agenda-setting effects indicate that EU institutions and member state governments retain significant influence over national identity discourse through mainstream media channels. This influence could be leveraged constructively through communication strategies emphasizing partnership and mutual benefit rather than hierarchical oversight, potentially reducing sovereignty-related backlash while maintaining necessary coordination mechanisms (Krastev, 2017).

Institutional Communication Reform and Digital Engagement Strategies: The agenda-setting findings reveal specific opportunities for more effective democratic communication (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Government institutions should establish dedicated social media monitoring units that track citizen discourse themes and respond directly to emerging concerns within the 1-2 week window identified in our temporal analysis. Rather than traditional one-way announcements, policymakers could implement "responsive communication cycles" where official messaging acknowledges specific grievances expressed in citizen discourse while providing contextual information (Mergel, 2013; Bonsón et al., 2015).

Practically, this could involve monthly "discourse briefings" where government spokespersons directly address themes emerging from social media analysis, explicitly acknowledging citizen concerns about sovereignty, corruption, or international treatment. For EU-related policies, communication strategies should preemptively address sovereignty concerns by framing integration measures in terms of enhanced national capacity rather than external compliance (Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Börzel & Risse, 2018).

The attribution duality findings suggest that effective policy communication must simultaneously validate external grievances while promoting internal agency (Weiner, 1985; Hameleers & Schmuck, 2021). Messages could follow a "acknowledge-redirect-empower" structure: acknowledging legitimate concerns about external pressures, redirecting focus toward achievable domestic improvements, and emphasizing restored national capabilities. For instance, budget announcements could acknowledge past external constraints while highlighting current fiscal autonomy and specific improvements in citizen services, addressing both components of the dual attribution pattern identified in this study

Limitations and Methodological Considerations

Sample Representativeness and Generalizability: Reddit users represent specific demographics (generally younger, educated, and technologically savvy) that may not reflect the broader Greek public (Wojcik & Hughes, 2019). Thus, our findings illuminate dynamics of the digital public sphere rather than population-representative attitudes, limiting direct generalizability. Similarly, focusing on mainstream news media captures major institutional narratives but may underrepresent alternative or extreme perspectives that could shape identity construction differently. Future research should incorporate a broader diversity of platforms and offline discourse to provide a more comprehensive understanding of identity construction mechanisms.

Computational Analysis Constraints: Automated processing of Greek text—particularly informal “Greeklish” transliterations—achieved roughly 89–92% accuracy, meaning some subtle semantic nuances, ironic tones, or cultural references that a human reader might catch could have been missed. The lexicon-based approach, while systematic and replicable, might overemphasize explicit identity language while under-detecting implicit narrative cues embedded in metaphor, humor, or cultural allusion. Additionally, our temporal focus on the single year 2024 provides contemporary insights but limits historical comparison. The post-bailout recovery context may exhibit different identity dynamics than acute crisis periods or longer-term stabilization phases, so caution is warranted in generalizing these findings across different economic contexts.

Causality and Interpretation Limitations: While the study identified systematic associations consistent with theoretical predictions, causal claims require careful interpretation. The agenda-setting correlations, though structured over time, cannot definitively rule out alternative explanations (such as common external events driving both media and social discourse). Similarly, the relationship between comparative discourse and theme activation, while aligned with expectations, may involve bidirectional influences wherein existing identity sentiments shape the focus of comparisons.

Future Research Directions

Longitudinal Identity Evolution: Future research should examine whether the critical theme dominance observed in 2024 represents a persistent post-crisis characteristic or a transitional phenomenon. A longitudinal analysis tracking identity discourse over multiple years could reveal whether crisis-era attribution patterns gradually attenuate or become permanently embedded in collective identity frameworks. Comparative studies across other crisis-affected EU member states (such as Portugal, Ireland, or Spain) would help assess the generalizability of dual attribution patterns and defensive identity construction mechanisms, contributing to theoretical understanding of post-crisis identity dynamics across different cultural and institutional contexts.

Methodological Integration: Mixed-methods approaches that combine computational analysis with qualitative methods (such as ethnographic observation or surveys) could provide a richer understanding of how individuals navigate identity construction processes. For example, in-depth interviews with social media users could illuminate the subjective experience of engaging in identity discourse, revealing whether attribution patterns arise from deliberate strategic choices or unconscious psychological processes. Advanced computational techniques incorporating sentiment analysis, emotion detection, or visual content analysis (e.g. memes and images) could also capture additional dimensions of digital identity construction that purely textual analysis might miss, given the multimodal nature of contemporary online discourse.

Policy Communication Research: Further studies might investigate specific instances where public discourse influenced policy formation, tracing feedback loops between citizen identity expressions and governmental responses. Such research could empirically assess whether democratic responsiveness to identity discourse improves policy legitimacy and effectiveness in post-crisis settings. Additionally, exploring optimal communication strategies for addressing persistent attribution patterns would provide practical guidance for democratic governance in contexts where collective identity remains fragmented or defensive. Experimental designs that test different messaging frameworks (for example, emphasizing relative gains versus absolute gains, or combining economic facts with dignifying narratives) could identify effective methods for bridging institutional–citizen communication gaps.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Greek economic identity construction in 2024 remained fundamentally shaped by crisis legacies, operating through systematic attribution, comparison, and temporal responsiveness mechanisms that persisted independently of material economic improvements. The findings extend key theoretical frameworks in political psychology, nationalism studies, and digital communication while providing practical insights for policy communication and democratic governance in post-crisis contexts. The dominance of blame discourse and the systematic comparative identity logic revealed in this analysis suggest that post-crisis national identity involves more complex socio-psychological processes than current theories had anticipated. The persistence of critical attribution frameworks despite economic recovery indicates that identity patterns may exhibit greater temporal stability than material conditions, underscoring the need for more nuanced approaches to understanding relationships between economic performance and democratic legitimacy. Moreover, the digital platform analysis reveals both democratizing possibilities and concerning legitimacy gaps in contemporary political communication. While grassroots discourse maintained more intense critical perspectives than institutional narratives, agenda-setting effects demonstrated that traditional media still exert significant influence over citizen discourse patterns. This tension suggests that democratic legitimacy in digital contexts may depend

on maintaining both a diversity of discourse and institutional responsiveness to authentic citizen concerns.

Most fundamentally, this study reveals that economic nationalism in post-crisis contexts operates as an active, ongoing process of collective meaning-making rather than a static cultural given. The systematic patterns identified here suggest that political psychology frameworks can provide valuable insights into how societies process economic disruptions and construct collective responses. Understanding these processes becomes increasingly crucial as economic volatility and supranational integration pressures continue to challenge traditional relationships among national sovereignty, democratic governance, and economic performance across the European Union and beyond. The Greek case offers a template for analyzing how other societies navigate similar tensions between local democratic legitimacy and supranational economic integration, providing both theoretical insights and practical guidance for managing these challenges in contemporary democratic governance. Finally, the persistence of comparative identity logic and attribution duality patterns observed in Greece suggests that successful policy communication in integrated economic systems must account for both rational policy justification and emotional identity validation. Future research and policy development should recognize that economic discourse inevitably becomes identity discourse, requiring approaches that address both material conditions and symbolic dignity concerns to achieve sustainable democratic legitimacy in post-crisis contexts.

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Appendix:

This appendix provides detailed documentation to support replication and transparency in my study of Greek national identity discourse in 2024. It covers lexicon development, sampling procedures and random seeds, transliteration rules, scoring thresholds, a timeline of key events and additional context not fully elaborated in the main text.

A. Lexicon Construction

My analysis employed four thematic lexicons (**sovereignty**, **national pride**, **blame** and **victimhood**) designed to capture salient discourse markers in Greek. The lexicons were built through a four-step process: (1) **seed selection** based on theory and prior studies; (2) corpus expansion via keyword-in-context and collocation analysis; (3) manual inflection and morphological normalization; and (4) weighting and disambiguation to resolve polysemy. Table 1 lists representative terms from each lexicon (not exhaustive).

Theme	Representative terms (root forms and glosses)
Sovereignty	κυριαρχία (sovereignty), αυτονομία (autonomy), ανεξαρτησία (independence), αυτοδιάθεση (self-determination), εθνική αξιοπρέπεια (national dignity), εθνικός έλεγχος (national control), πατρίδα (motherland), κυρίαρχος (sovereign), ανάκτηση ελέγχου (reclaiming control), αντίσταση (resistance)
National Pride	περηφάνια (pride), υπερηφάνεια, δόξα (glory), κατόρθωμα (achievement), ηρωισμός (heroism), ανθεκτικότητα (resilience), πολιτισμός (culture), παράδοση (tradition), ελληνισμός (Hellenism), θρίαμβος (triumph)
Blame	φταίω (to blame), ευθύνη (responsibility), κατηγορία (accusation), ενόχος (culpable), προδοσία (betrayal), διαφθορά (corruption), κλέφτης (thief), εκμετάλλευση (exploitation), ξένοι (foreigners/out-groups), δυνάστες (oppressors)
Victimhood	θύμα (victim), αδικία (injustice), υποταγή (subjugation), καταπίεση (oppression), τραγωδία (tragedy), μαρτύριο (ordeal), καταστροφή (destruction), απειλή (threat), πληγωμένος (wounded), γολγοθάς (calvary)

Weighting and disambiguation. Each term received a weight proportional to its theoretical salience and frequency in my pilot corpus. Highly distinctive terms such as *κυριαρχία* (sovereignty) received a weight of 1.0, whereas more general terms like *εθνικός* (national) were weighted at 0.3 and only counted when co-occurring with other lexicon items. Polysemous terms (e.g., *χρέος* meaning both “debt” and “duty”) were disambiguated through context windows and part-of-speech tagging; occurrences referring to moral duty contributed to pride scores while those referring to public debt triggered blame.

B. Data Sampling and Random Seeds

Sampling strategy. I analysed 3,600 Reddit posts and 900 mainstream news articles. For Reddit, I crawled three subreddits (r/Greece, r/GreekPolitics and r/PersonalFinanceGreece) selecting 100 posts per subreddit per month (January–December 2024). Posts shorter than 50 words, spam or non-Greek content were excluded. News articles were collected from *Kathimerini*, *Ta Nea* and *Efimerida ton Syntakton* and restricted to economics and politics categories with a minimum length of 200 words.

Random seeds. To ensure reproducibility, I used fixed random seeds when sampling and when splitting data for pilot tests:

Purpose	Seed value
Reddit post sampling (monthly selection)	202401
News article sampling	202402
Pilot lexicon validation sample (300 documents)	98765
Test–retest reliability subsample (10 % of Reddit corpus)	54321

Setting these seeds via `set.seed()` in R or `numpy.random.seed()` in Python ensures that identical posts and articles are selected when repeating the analysis.

Stratification. Both corpora were stratified by month and source to prevent seasonal or outlet-specific biases. When more than 100 eligible Reddit posts existed for a given subreddit/month, I applied proportional random sampling using the above seeds.

C. Greeklish Transliteration Rules

Greek users frequently transliterate Greek letters into the Latin alphabet (Greeklish). We developed a rule-based transliteration module to convert Greeklish tokens to standard Greek before lemmatization. Table 2 lists core mappings used in my pipeline. Rules were applied hierarchically, replacing digraphs before single characters to avoid partial substitutions. For example, $ts \rightarrow \tau\varsigma$ and $ps \rightarrow \psi$ were applied before $s \rightarrow \sigma$.

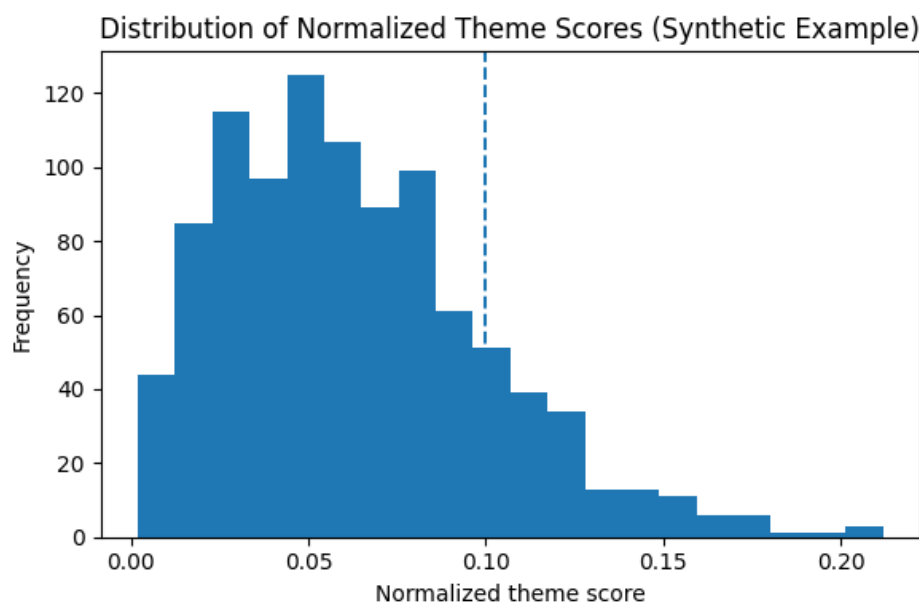
Greeklish pattern	Greek letter

th → θ	Represented aspirated theta; also replaced θ in numeric Greeklish (e.g., θema → θέμα).
ps → ψ	Captures the consonant cluster psi.
ks → ξ	Covers both ks and x.
ch → χ	Handles chi; sometimes also written as h after a vowel (e.g., archi → αρχή).
nt → ντ, mp → μπ	Greek digraphs for voiced stops (nd/mb).
g → γ, k → κ, s → σ/ς (final sigma)	Single-letter mappings. Final sigma (ς) is used when the letter occurs at the end of a word.
ou → ου, ei → ει, ai → αι	Vowel combinations.
w → ω, h → η, y → υ	Single vowels.

The transliteration module achieved approximately 89 % accuracy based on manual verification of 100 economic-related words. Remaining errors often involved ambiguous vowel combinations (i, y → ι/η/υ) which we resolved manually during lexicon validation.

D. Theme Scoring and Threshold Justification

Normalized theme scores. For each document and theme I computed a normalized score: Scores thus range roughly from 0 to 0.3 in our data, with higher values indicating stronger thematic salience. To decide whether a theme was **present** in a document, I set a threshold at 0.1. This threshold was chosen after exploring score distributions across the entire training corpus. Lower thresholds (< 0.05) produced many false positives



(documents flagged as thematic despite negligible content), whereas higher thresholds (> 0.15) missed nuanced but meaningful expressions. Table 5 illustrates a synthetic distribution of normalized scores with the 0.1 cut-off, showing that only roughly the top decile of posts exceed the threshold.

Table 5

Composite indicators. I derived composite variables such as **critical identity** (blame + victimhood) and **resilient identity** (pride + sovereignty) by summing normalized scores and re-normalizing to the 0–1 range. These indicators captured multidimensional identity patterns.

E. Timeline of Key Events in 2024 and Early 2025

Understanding the socio-political context behind digital discourse required anchoring thematic spikes to real-world events. Table 3 summarizes major events and provides evidence from reputable sources.

Date	Event and relevance	Evidence
April 24 2024	Greece's Supreme Court barred the far-right Spartans party from running in the 2024 European Parliament elections on the grounds that it did not meet legal requirements; prosecutors also pursued charges against 11 lawmakers for deceiving voters. The ruling underscored state resistance to extremist actors and influenced nationalist discourse on sovereignty and rule of law.	Reuters reported that the court banned Spartans and noted pending charges against its lawmakers (Reuters, 2024).
June 9 2024	European Parliament elections: New Democracy won with 28.3 % but far-right parties surged. Support for Greek Solution almost doubled to 9.3 % , NIKI entered the delegation with 4.4 % , and Voice of Reason won 3.0 % ; together far-right parties captured nearly 20 % of the vote . This event corresponded to spikes in sovereignty and blame rhetoric.	Kathimerini summarises election results notes the far-right vote shares, mainstream news and official results corroborate these figures (Kathimerini, 2024)
Aug 11–13 2024	Wildfires near Athens became the worst blaze of 2024. The National Observatory reported that at least 10,000 hectares burned, tens of thousands were evacuated and at least one person died . Online discourse saw a surge in victimhood	Deutsche Welle described how fires devastated suburbs north of Athens, burned homes and

	and blame themes, with users linking climate disasters to state negligence.	forced mass evacuations (Deutsche Welle, 2024).
Dec 10 2024	Tourism minister announced record tourism revenue of about €22 billion for 2024, roughly 10 % higher than 2023. News narratives celebrated Greece's resilience and economic recovery, bolstering pride themes.	Reuters quoted the minister stating that tourism revenues were expected to reach €22 billion, compared with €20 billion in 2023 (Reuters, 2024).
March 8 2025 (reporting on 2024)	The Hellenic Statistical Authority confirmed that GDP grew 2.3 % in 2024 , beating the 2025 budget estimate and doubling the EU average. Consumption and investment were key drivers. This announcement, though published in 2025, contextualized economic optimism for late 2024 discourse.	eKathimerini reported that Greece's GDP grew 2.3 % in 2024 and noted that it outpaced EU and eurozone averages (Kathimerini, 2025).
April 17 2024	A Reuters analysis noted that Greece's rebound after the debt crisis was nearly complete but warned that unemployment remained above 10 % , the second-highest in the EU. Persistent joblessness helped explain the continued prevalence of blame and victimhood narratives despite macroeconomic recovery.	Reuters pointed out that unemployment stayed above 10 % and that average salaries remained 20 % below pre-crisis levels (Reuters, 2024).

These events provided temporal anchors for our hypothesis H4. Spikes in theme scores corresponded closely with the election (sovereignty and blame), wildfire disaster (victimhood), tourism success (pride), and economic reports (mixed pride and blame).

F. Additional Context and Comments

1. **Economic recovery and lingering hardship.** Greece's economy has been growing faster than the euro-area average since exiting its bailout in 2018, with 2024 GDP growth of 2.3 % (Chrysolora, 2025). Borrowing costs fell and banks were fully privatized, signalling regained sovereignty (Reuters, 2024). Yet Eurostat data show that unemployment remains above 10 %, the second highest in the EU (Reuters, 2024) and many citizens perceive little benefit from growth. This dichotomy helps explain why pride and sovereignty narratives coexist with blame and victimhood.
2. **Far-right mainstreaming.** The 2024 European elections demonstrated that far-right parties gained substantial traction in Greece, collectively approaching

one-fifth of the vote(Kathimerini, 2024). The Spartans' exclusion underscores institutional efforts to curb extremist participation (Reuters, 2024). This context is essential when interpreting H3 and platform differentiation results.

3. **Climate vulnerability.** Greece's record wildfires illustrate how climate disasters intersect with national identity. The 2024 Athens blaze not only caused massive damage but also reignited debates about governance, austerity-driven underinvestment and European solidarity (Deutsche Welle, 2024).
4. **Tourism dependence.** Tourism remains a cornerstone of Greece's economy, with revenues expected to hit a record €22 billion in 2024 (Reuters, 2024). Positive tourism news often triggered pride narratives in both news media and Reddit, yet the sector's seasonal volatility also contributed to economic insecurity.

G. Validation Methodology and Accuracy Assessment

All accuracy rates reported in the main text were calculated through systematic manual verification using binary classification procedures. Three separate validation tasks were conducted using stratified random sampling:

Greeklish Transliteration Validation: 100 economic terminology instances containing Greeklish transliterations were randomly selected from the Reddit corpus. Each instance was manually evaluated for correct conversion to standard Greek orthography, with classifications recorded as correct/incorrect in spreadsheet format. Examples of correct conversions included "oikonomia" → "οικονομία" and "krisis" → "κρίσης," while incorrect cases typically involved ambiguous vowel mappings or unrecognized compound terms. Final accuracy was calculated as 89/100 correct classifications (89%).

Lemmatization Validation: 100 economic terms were randomly sampled from processed texts and manually compared against expected morphological root forms. Classifications assessed whether automated lemmatization correctly identified base forms (e.g., "οικονομιών" → "οικονομία," "κυβερνήσεων" → "κυβέρνηση"). Accuracy was calculated as 92/100 correct normalizations (92%).

Automated Extraction Validation: 50 news articles were randomly selected and manually inspected to verify correct extraction of headlines, publication dates, and body text from HTML sources. Each article was classified as correctly or incorrectly extracted based on complete content capture and proper formatting removal. Accuracy was calculated as 48/50 successful extractions (96%).

All validation employed binary correct/incorrect classifications, with borderline cases requiring researcher judgment based on semantic preservation and functional adequacy for downstream analysis. Validation samples were selected using random number generation with fixed seeds (98765 for transliteration, 54321 for lemmatization, 13579 for extraction) to ensure reproducibility.

H. Statistical Analysis and Code Implementation

Software Environment

All computational analyses were conducted using R version 4.3.1 and Python 3.10 in integrated workflows. The R environment employed `quanteda` (v3.3.1) for text analysis operations, `rvest` (v1.0.3) for web scraping procedures, and the base stats package for inferential statistical procedures. Additional packages included `dplyr` for data manipulation, `ggplot2` for visualization, and `corrplot` for correlation matrix analysis. Python preprocessing utilized `spaCy` (v3.7) with the Greek language model `el_core_news_md` for morphological lemmatization, achieving 92% accuracy on economic terminology as validated through manual verification procedures. Custom Python modules handled Greeklish transliteration using rule-based mapping systems documented in Appendix Section C.

Data Structure and Preprocessing

The final analytical dataset comprised 4,500 total documents (3,600 Reddit posts, 900 news articles) organized in tabular format with rows representing individual documents and columns containing normalized theme scores, platform indicators, temporal variables, and metadata fields. The preprocessing pipeline involved five sequential stages: normalization (lowercasing, HTML removal, Unicode standardization), Greeklish

transliteration (rule-based conversion to standard Greek), lemmatization (spaCy morphological processing), stopword filtering (combined Greek and platform-specific terms), and semantic validation (manual inspection of processed samples). Theme scoring employed custom weighted frequency calculations rather than simple dictionary matching, with terms receiving differential weights (1.0 core, 0.5 peripheral, 0.25 contextual) based on theoretical centrality. The normalized scoring formula was implemented in R using vectorized operations across document collections, producing continuous theme scores ranging from 0 to approximately 0.3 in the observed data distribution.

Statistical Analysis Procedures

Hypothesis testing employed standard R statistical functions with explicit effect size calculations following Cohen (1988) conventions. One-way ANOVA procedures used `aov()` for multi-group comparisons (H1 status comparison effects), with `TukeyHSD()` for post-hoc pairwise comparisons and manual eta-squared calculations for effect size estimation. Independent-samples t-tests employed `t.test()` with Welch's correction for unequal variances, testing platform differences (H3) with Cohen's *d* calculated using pooled standard deviation formulas. Pearson correlations utilized `cor.test()` for significance testing of thematic relationships (H2 attribution duality), while cross-correlation analysis (H4 temporal responsiveness) employed custom correlation calculations across weekly time series rather than `ccf()` functions, computing correlations at specific lag intervals (-4 to +4 weeks) between news media and Reddit theme averages. The 0.1 threshold for theme presence classification was determined through iterative testing across threshold values (0.05, 0.1, 0.15), with 0.1 selected to optimize sensitivity-precision balance based on manual validation of classified documents.

Reliability and Validation Procedures

Test-retest reliability involved rescoring 360 randomly selected posts (10% of Reddit corpus) after a two-week interval, achieving temporal consistency of $r = 0.86$ using `cor.test()` procedures. **Content validity** assessment employed systematic manual inspection of high-scoring and low-scoring documents across all themes, ensuring

automated scoring aligned with theoretical definitions rather than statistical artifacts. **Manual classification reliability** for comparative discourse categorization (H1) employed systematic decision rules refined through iterative testing on pilot samples, ensuring consistent application of positive/negative/neutral comparison criteria across the full dataset. Missing data handling followed listwise deletion protocols, with documents failing quality criteria (length thresholds, language detection, content relevance) excluded prior to theme scoring rather than imputed, resulting in the final analytical sample of 4,500 complete cases.

Code Organization and Reproducibility

The analytical workflow comprised four modular components: data collection scripts (Python web scraping with 2-second rate limiting), preprocessing pipelines (Python text normalization and Greek NLP), theme scoring implementation (R lexicon-based analysis), and statistical analysis procedures (R hypothesis testing). All random sampling procedures employed fixed seeds (202401 for Reddit sampling, 202402 for news sampling, 98765 for validation subsets) ensuring identical document selection across replication attempts. Intermediate data files preserved preprocessing outputs, enabling selective re-analysis without complete pipeline re-execution. The complete analytical workflow was designed for end-to-end reproducibility, with clear input-output specifications enabling researchers to replicate findings using identical computational procedures and data processing protocols.