Critical Analysis of Xenophobic Attacks in South Africa

Oluwasegunota Bolarinwa PhD**, Francis O. Olaniyi** PhD**, Tobi Abayomi Anthony**

Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This research is a critical analysis of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Xenophobia is a fear of strangers or foreigners. The discrimination and unfair treatment against foreigners is as old as the history of the World. This controversial issue of xenophobic attacks has attracted scholars who attempt to find a lasting solution to the issue. We exist at a time where government and authorities look away when such matters arise. We exist at a time where government and authorities look away when such matters arise. The foreigners are to face stigmatization and even death threat, without protection from relevant authorities. Our objective here is to find out what normally trigger xenophobic attacks on foreigners? What can be done to stop xenophobia and xenophobic attacks around the World? We deploy qualitative method, using critical conceptual analysis and speculative approach; consulting textbooks, journals, newspapers, and surfing the internet for available relevant materials. The study concluded that the issue of xenophobia can be put to rest by educating people through enforcement of educational policy with action plans that include the revision of history and civil education curriculum to accommodate some moral contents.

KEYWORDS: Xenophobia, foreigners, discrimination, stigmatization

INTRODUCTION

"The frequency at which people migrate from one clime to another has continued to attract scholarly attention."' The reality of the global order explains the migration of people either temporarily or permanently.

Various reasons *have been* offered for such movements and *these include* economic, social, political *and environmental.* However, economic *and social considerations are* the greatest motivations for migration. Economically, people migrate for improved *livelihood,* employment opportunities or realization of carrier- *objectives which* may be more lucrative or enterprising *in the newly found destination. Furthermore, globalization* has *increased the demand* for labour in *industrial countries. In respect of* social factors, people move to other *locations* to enjoy better quality *of* lives *in* terms *of* access to *infrastructure, education and healthcare which may he elusive in their home of origins.*[-2]

Having emphasized the fact that diverse factors explain migration, *"it is* important to basically categorize them as *'push' and 'pull'* factors. In respect *of* the `push' factor, migrants are *forced* to move out *of* their- homelands due to civil war, famine, poverty, religious, *ethnic,* political, racial (aid gender persecution, *but* in the case of the pull' classification, migrants are attracted by opportunities *offered by new* locations or territories"[3]

However, citizens of most host countries display hostilities and hatred against migrants based on the assumption that they may increase competition for resources. The hostility may often degenerate into violent attacks against foreigners. The nationals are not only culpable for the attacks, their governments are complicit through anti-foreigner's dispositions and laws. Ballyn alluded to this possibility when she observe that "if we move back through history, we will find multiple examples of violent expulsion of people from their homelands often going hand in hand with persecution and genocide."4 Observably, while citizens are persecuted an d displaced from their homelands, they are also subjected to such heinous acts in foreign countries as migrants. "As a matter of fact, South Africa during the apartheid regime caused a massive removal of African people from the cities into black townships. Worst still,

many leading freedom fighters and opposition figures were exiled within or deported from South Africa, tortured, executed or murdered."[5] Simply put, this was, an attack on race perpetuated by the ruling whites who subjected the blacks to every form of human degradation on their own soil.

On the other hand, local population often find it difficult to cope with foreigners, who migrates in search of greener pastures, and willing to accept lower remuneration for their labour and services, thereby leading to job loss for the natives. This often sparks a frosty relationship between the natives and the immigrants, leading to xenophobic attacks as a medium of communicating their discomfort and disapproval against foreigners. Xenophobic incidents which is a recurring phenomenon in many African countries with attendant consequences for lives and properties,, have threatened diplomatic relations between governments and nationalities. The crux of the argument is that the borders between countries are increasingly becoming loosened and multiculturalism taking centre stage of global human interactions, ethnic and identity consciousness exacerbated by xenophobia still define the basis of such cross-border and global human interactions. Therefore, this research analyses incidents of xenophobia in South Africa and the manifestation of xenophobia in South African against the backdrop of the 2008 and 2015 violent attacks against foreigners.

Conceptualizing Xenophobia

Xenophobia is more or less a global phenomenon. Moreso, it is not limited to one-continent affair. Rather, it has been experienced in one form or the other across continents of the world. However, there are no adequate works on its dynamism, nature and divergent manifestations in Africa. According to Smelser and Baltes, "the term originates from the Greek words *(xenos),* meaning `foreigner,' or `stranger,' and *(phobos),* meaning `fear'."[7] It is based on existing racist, ethnic, religious, cultural or national prejudice. Yakushko defines "xenophobia as a form of attitudinal, affective, and behavioral prejudice toward immigrants and those perceived as foreigners."[8] Reynolds and Vine maintain "that xenophobia is a psycho-logical state of hostility or fear towards outsiders."[9]

Observably, "xenophobia is intricately tied to notions of nationalism and ethnocentrism, both of which are characterized by belief in the superiority of one's nation-state over others. Furthermore, Watts hypothesize that "xenophobia is a 'discriminatory potential' which is activated when ideology such as ethnocentrism is connected to a sense of threat on a personal or group level."" For instance, there is a

cultural perception that foreigners are snatching jobs meant for local workers, Watts further suggested that this prejudice produces political xenophobia, which results in the desire to create and apply public policies that actively discriminate against foreign individuals. Similarly, Radkiewicz postulated that "xenophobia is related to an ethnocentric 'syndrome' with two separate dimensions: beliefs about national superiority, and hostile, reluctant attitudes toward the representatives of other countries."[12]

According to the Centre for Human Rights; "Xenophobia is the perceived fear, hatred or dislike of a non-native or foreigner in a particular country."[13]

Marsella and Ring explained that "xenophobia is often associated with times of economic and political instability. National economic inequality lures individuals toward countries that guarantee prospects for improved labour conditions, higher earnings or sheer survival."[14] This explains why at some point, there was mass migration of Ghanaians into Nigeria and Southern Africans like the Malawians, Zimbabweans, and Zambians and so on into South Africa. When such mass migration occurs across borders, it is often natural for the most affected host communities to react negatively. As opined by Esses et al. the migration of large groups of people across borders can threaten the security (physical and economic) of the local population because of perceptions of economic strain or of cultural dissimilarity."[15]

According to Akande, Musarurwa and Kaye (2018), factors such as wide inequality and abject poverty have been identified as the major drivers of xenophobic attitudes in many African countries. This is evident in the face of economic slump, dwindling state of infrastructure and an erratic political system on the continent. Xenophobic attacks are generally destructive to life and property; and they cause stress and depression to the survivors. The attacks are expensive in that they erode the material gains that mightyhave been acquired by the survivors prior to theviolence. On the part of the South African state, the attacks forced the government of South Africa to spend money to quell the violence and to provide relief for the displaced survivors. Also, the attacks put pressure on the judiciary which suddenly find themselves with an enlarged list of cases to be tried. Xenophobic attacks destroy trust, fuels cold wars, and can become the root cause of criminality on both the survivors and the perpetrators. Xenophobic attacks send a bad image of a country around the world and scare away potential tourists and investors.

The aim of the study is to contribute in the creation of a society where human life and dignity are respected irrespective of individuals' nationality. The objectives of the study is to participate in the search for a solution to the problem of xenophobia in South Africa and to invoke appropriate national policies and procedures by which further attacks might be avoided in future.

The South Africans who engaged in this act, defended their actions by claiming that:

1. The foreigners are being gainfully employed while the indigenous people of South Africa are roaming without jobs. Chimanikire opine that "Immigrants have also taken jobs in the skills shortage strategic sectors such as engineering, survey, nursing, teaching and medicine which are critical in the development of a nation."[16]

2. The foreigners are acquiring the lands.

3. The foreigners are marrying their Ladies, because their Ladies want Men that are financially stable.

4. The South Africans feel unsafe with inflow of foreigners in their Country and are now left with the mindset that the foreigners will destroy their economy that seem to be the best in African continent.

5. South Africans also claim that major crimes are perpetrated by the foreigners.

In order to gain a comprehensive insight into xenophobic attacks in South Africa, qualitative method was deployed with critical conceptual analysis and speculative approach. Data were collected from the- internet, newspapers and textbooks on, xenophobia.

Research Findings

The 2008 xenophobic attacks were lined to several causes. Most of the causes point to the failure of both the governments in South Africa and those outside of South Africa to manage society. Hence, we analyze some of the causes of the attacks.

South Africa is one of the most developing countries in Africa. According to Nyawo- Shava "the country is regarded as the "Europe" of Africa."[17]However, there is a high level of racial inequality between blacks (the majority in the country) and whites (the minority in the country). "Over 72 percent of the black South African citizens live under extreme poverty, which is a result of colonialism and apartied."[18] Extreme poverty is defined as people's inability to meet the basic needs for human survival. The basic needs include water, clothes, food and shelter.

Some South African men are unemployed, for this reason their women would rather fall in love and marry the African immigrants that are employed and financially stable. This has also lead to the xenophobic attacks on foreigners.

Trends and forms of xenophobic attacks in Africa

In Africa, some of the evident manifestations of xenophobia have been the threat of expulsion of foreign nationals, unjust deportation, and in many instances, violent attacks against non-nationals which have forced many to return to their countries. These manifestations dated as far back as the 1960s.[9]Romola distinguishes different forms of xenophobia in Africa. In Ghana, Nigeria, Angola, Uganda and South Africa, xenophobic reactions were majorly ignited by economic considerations. In Chad and Kenya, xenophobic prejudices were informed by the war against terrorism. In Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, politics as well as economic considerations triggered xenophobic expulsions. In Tanzania, Burundi and Congo Brazzaville, xenophobic actions were largely spurred by the rhetoric that foreigners were committing crime. In Congo Kinshasa, the expulsion of Angolans was political. Although, xenophobia takes different dimensions, they all have a unified goal which is hatred for foreigners.

In November 1969 in Ghana, forty-nine days after Kofi Busia occupied thePrime Ministerial position, he introduced the Aliens Compliance Order (the Aliens Order), aimed at expelling undocumented aliens. Specifically, "the Aliens Order required that aliens who lacked work permit to get them within a period of two weeks or leave the country"[20]. Prior to the introduction ofthe order, "there had been an emerging general perception of foreigners as the cause of large-scale unemployment that had befallen Ghana"[21] However, the composition of the foreign population in Ghana comprised of nationals from other West African states such as Togo, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and C6te d'Ivoire. However, in 1931, Nigerians constituted the majority of foreign population due to the successes recorded by those that initially immigrated to the country, especially the buoyancy of their businesses. Therefore, the increasing entry of foreigners and the subsequent socio-economic conditions of Ghanaians gradually raised tensions in the country. M.,Peil captures this thus:

"They (Nigerians) are target workers; immediately they get a fewCedes they go into retail trade and they prosper too. They don't part with their money easily; then are unfriendly and do not help friends when they

are in financial difficult. They are impatient with buyers, arrogant and difficult to come to terms with. They are thrift, and clannish. They don't seem to trust Ghanaians and confide in them.[22]

In Kenya, there has been a display of forms of xenophobia. The waves of terrorists attack by the Somali al-Shabaab group spurred up negative reactions against Somalis in Kenya. This reaction spilled over to the Somali refugees in Kenya. "The Westgate attacks in 2013, prompted the Kenyan government authorities to threaten to shut the Dadaab camp which catered for about half, a million Somali refugees."[23] This was based upon the discovery that al-Shabaab group was mainly dominated by Somalis. "In 2014, approximately 4,000 Somalis were arrested in Operation Usalama Watch initiated by the government under the counter-terrorism policy to address the security challenges in the state."[24]

There has also been a demonstration of xenophobia in Angola. This reflected in several mass expulsions of Congolese from Angola as a result of perceived theft of natural resources that belonged to Angola. "In 2004, the Angolan government expelled an estimated 100,000 Congolese from Angola."[25] It did not stop there; over 160,000Xongolese were expelled between December 2005 and December 2009."[26] Angolan government reiterated. its stand through its Foreign Minister who stated that: Angola will never give up its right to protect its natural resources and its right to repatriate citizens who are acting in a way which do not benefit the country".

In response, "the Congo Kinshasa government in 2009 expelled 50, 000 Angolans in retaliation to the mass expulsion of Congolese from Angola."[27] This was done amid a rising wave of popular anger over the humiliating treatment of those expelled by Angola.'[28]One reducible observation from the foregoing is that competition over resources and space has threatened or, in some instances, eroded the idea of multiculturalism and global citizenship upon which globalization is anchored.

Experiences of xenophobia in Nigeria and South Africa presented contrasting dynamics in the West African and Southern African countries respectively. By way of summary, the political economy of oil boom in Nigeria in the early 1970s through the early 1980s and the prosperity that followed was a major factor that attracted other nationals into Nigeria, particularly Ghanaians who took up menial jobs and occupied the small and medium enterprises sector in Nigeria. Again, the mismanagement and inherent contradictions of the oil glut of the 1980s as well as

its attendant economic disarticulation led to job loss and inadvertently precipitated Nigeria's xenophobic attitudes against her neighbouring immigrants, particularly Ghanaians to reduce competition for scarce resources. This invariably led to the formulation of the tag, 'Ghana must go' and its introduction into Nigeria's sociopolitical discourse.

Xenophobia in South Africa
South African case offers a contrasting reality. Xenophobia is a function of a longstanding life of domination and oppression orchestrated by a white minority rule system and white-black segregation which subjected the black majority to every form of suffering, denial, subjugation, oppression and repression. Freedom from apartheid regime meant that black South Africans would put in place resistance .strategy against whoever intends to subject them to another form of neo-apartheid experience. However, this resistance has often targeted the African race, considered to be `brothers and sisters', and not the whites who subjected them to the repressive Apartheid regime. It is thus important to ask, who is a foreigner in South Africa - Africans or Europeans? Who should be feared - African brothers and sisters that vehemently fought apartheid or whites that propagated it? How can we conceptualize the hostilities towards foreigners from Africa descent, Adam and Moodley explained that "xenophobic violence in South Africa is arguably rooted in the legacies of apartheid and the failures of successive post-apartheid governments in effectively accommodating foreigners"[29]. Xenophobic attacks date back to 1995 when immigrants from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique living in the Alexandra township were "physically assaulted over a period of several weeks in January 1995, as armed gangs identified suspected undocumented migrants and marched them to the police station to `clean' the township of foreigners."[30]

Chimbga and Meier (2014:1692), while cautioning the perpetrators of xenophobia in South Africa, asserts that:

There is evidence of xenophobic attacks on people of foreign origins in South Africa specifically those from other African countries from the onset of democracy in 1994, which makes it a matter of concern that needs solutions before it escalates to levels that are even more deadly than the scenes of 2008.

The 2008 xenophobia attacks had a social, political and economic effects on South Africa. The attacks sent negative signals to the organizers of the 2010 world cup. Despite the attacks, South Africa managed to host a successful FIFA world cup

tournament. Xenophobic attacks tarnished the image of South Africa in the eyes of the sending nations. The government of Nigeria was reported to have assessed the damage incurred by its nationals with the intention of demanding compensation from the government of South Africa.

➢ Another look at Xenophobia and some ethnical considerations

➢ All actions embarked upon have certain moral implications. The ethical implications of xenophobic attacks are obviously undeniably. The following principles are considered for a sound argument against xenophobia. The xenophobic attacks ought not be seen or practiced in any human community.

The Principle of Fairness
Xenophobia is an act that is unfair to humanity. Any person in his/her right senses will not exercise power arbitrarily nor do they use overreaching or indecent means to gain or maintain any advantage nor take undue advantage of another's mistakes.

They ought to manifest a commitment to justice, the equal treatment of individuals, tolerance for and acceptance of diversity.

The Principle of Caring
The As Humans, we are supposed to care for one another, demonstrate compassion and a genuine concern for the well-being of others. Xenophobia does not give credence to well-being of fellow humans.

The Principle of Respect for Others
As Humans it is expected that we treat everyone with equal respect and dignity regardless of sex, race, or national origin. The golden rule is striving to treat others the way they would like to be treated.

The Principle of Law Abiding
Those engaged in xenophobia do not have regards for rules and regulations, they are not law abiding, and it give room for lawlessness and a chaotic state like the primitive age. Xenophobic attacks can lead to civil unrest which can translate into a cold war between nations.

Recommendation
No amount of investment in any anti-xenophobic behaviour is likely to succeed without the situation that the immigrants face in their home countries. The education system may need to target the public so that it understands the support of an education system. The anti –xenophobic moral instructions and entrepreneurship education should be part of the school curriculum right from primary school to university level. People must

also educated through the media, conferences, workshops, seminars and through hreligious organizations laying emphases on the need to coexist in peace such that the idea and act of xenophobia should be jettisoned. South Africa, like any other part of the -world faces corruption. The practice of corruption has negative connotations both in South Africa and in the neighbouring nations. In many instances, corrupt ion is regarded as a breach of morality. Some politicians and bureaucrats forge a dependent patron/client relationship through which administrative decision making occurs for the benefit of the cronies themselves. The very people who are supposed to defend the poor have instead been responsible for institutionalized looting. Corruption exacerbates poverty which engender xenophobia. The South African Police Service has not been very helpful to foreigners, whom they have regarded as moving banks from which they can extort bribes (Landau, 2004).

The impact of corruption extends beyond the specific actions of the perpetrators. The overt result of the practice is unfinished roads, political and social turmoil, crumbling schools and crippled health systems. These negatives culminate into a depressed community. Hence, it has triggered the xenophobic attacks it certain areas of South Africa. A successful elimination of corruption in the development equation may result in reduction in poverty in the informal settlements. In legislative, bodies, corruption suspends the rule of law. Jails and prisons are for the poor. For those that are rich, it is their money that is convicted and not them. Some rich people defeat the course of justice by corrupting-the judges and the police force while the poor are convicted of crimes that they possibly have not committed. Corruption also undermines the legitimacy of government and such democratic values as trust and tolerance. A robust education system is the main vehicle for fighting corruption in the country.

Conclusion
This research has examined the context of xenophobic attacks in South Africa and noted that it is a social ill that is caused by many factors which are. political, social and economic in nature. t South African experiences are associated with violent attacks, resulting in the loss of lives and wanton destructions of properties belonging to foreigners.

However, the historical trajectory of xenophobia in South Africa is situated within the rhetoric of apartheid which predisposes South African nationals to violently attack foreigners whom they see as agents

of nee- apartheid. i The situation in South Africa is often citizens-driven with deep expression. of aggression. However, there is similarity in the motivating factor, which is, attempts to reduce competition with nationals over socio-economic benefits.

South African people and governments need to rethink the basis of their relations and come to the realization that the phenomenon can negatively impact their politics, economy and society. If xenophobia in South Africa is not put to an end) t can pave way for sanctions being imposed South Africans.

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