

Addressing Xenophobia in South Africa

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Addressing Xenophobia in South Africa: Drivers, Responses and Lessons from the Durban Untold Stories

BY

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List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NATJOINTS	National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure
PROVJOINTS	Provincial Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure
ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
CSVSR	Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
SWOP	Society Work and Development Institute
CPF	Community Police Forum
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SANCO	South African National Civil Organisation
SASCO	South African Students Congress
SAMP	Southern African Migration Programme
ACC	African Centre for Cities
GCRO	Gauteng City-Region Observatory
IDRC	International Development Research Centre.
SAPS	South African Police
WHO	World Health Organization
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Commission
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
MEC	Member of Executive Council
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
DMC	Disaster Management Centre
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal

SRG	Special Reference Group
GoTG	Gift of the Givers
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
CAR	Central African Republic
COGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
UCT	University of Cape Town
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
CCGs	Clinical Commissioning Group
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
POP	Public Order Policing
NAP	National Action Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

About the Authors

Bethuel Sibongiseni Ngcamu holds two PhDs in Education and Public Management. He started his career as a Geography Teacher in a secondary school and joined the eThekweni Municipality as a Consultant to the City Manager on Research and a Management Advisor where he managed a myriad of projects and conducted change management interventions. He has a vast experience in universities as a manager, consultant and an academic where he has taught and published a number of empirical studies in different disciplines. His specializations include knowledge management, service delivery, performance management, disaster management, organizational development in universities and xenophobia. He has published peer-reviewed journal articles, three book chapters and seven peer-reviewed conference papers. He has won various best researcher awards at different universities.

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He has published eight full scale books in English and Greek, 30 peer-reviewed chapters in books (with four in press), over 80 journal articles, 12 peer-reviewed International Conference Proceedings, and has presented papers in over 70 national and international conferences.

He has completed 14 National Research Foundation, Human Science Research Council and university funded research reports, and over 30 technical reports for Provincial Government Departments, municipalities and NGOs.

He is a National Research Foundation Rated Researcher.

He has done research and completed reports on stokvels and banking, asset allocation in the stockbroker industry, interest rates and repercussion on the British pound, general and specialized funds, international fund allocation and unit trusts, liquidation and estates in the private sector.

Introduction

Chapter One: Localizing and Locating the Hidden Causes of Xenophobia and its Ramifications

This foundational chapter details the underlying causes of xenophobia and the xenophobic violence in South Africa by unraveling a myriad of triggers. For instance, the book chapter provides a background on how the media reporters in local newspapers drive a particular narrative which is anti-immigrants. The inadequate and less active government's contingency plans available to deal proactively in preventing, mitigating the impacts, and responding proactively to the xenophobic violence are cemented in this chapter. The economic competition which is mostly linked to the causes of the attacks against the foreign nationals is questioned in this chapter and further provides the empirically proven causes which are multidimensional. For instance, the role of the patriarchal mindset where there is a competition involving the local women as they prefer the foreign nationals as compared to the locals. Furthermore, the spontaneous occurrence of xenophobia is overlooked by scholars who have published books in this multidisciplinary field of study. The chapter concludes by providing the conflicting statistics on the presence of the undocumented immigrants in the country.

Chapter Two: Associating Xenophobia with Criminality: Is it a Fallacy?

A paucity of empirical data on the government's and media reporters' perceptions and their viewpoints regarding the media's falsified, negative and biased reports on xenophobia in Durban is a major theme in this chapter. Moreover, xenophobic populism by politicians and traditional leaders is explored. In addition, factors and dimensions that have been overlooked by the media feature in this chapter. Several interviewees who have been directly involved before, during and after the xenophobic attacks, including government officials, media reporters and civil society groups, have been interviewed using open-ended questions. Furthermore, print and electronic media articles are analyzed, in order for the tone of reporting to be determined. The extent to which the rhetoric, inflammatory and negative tone of reporting by media platforms – considered to have contributed to the xenophobic attacks – is articulated in this chapter study.

Chapter Three: Xenophobia, Media and the “Forgotten Dimensions”

The truth of the existence of the “third force” narrative and material conditions that influence xenophobic attacks against migrants is extensively examined. We examine the understanding underpinning xenophobia and the government’s apparatus aimed at detecting and responding to it. Furthermore, informal but crucial businesses in the townships and informal settlements are investigated. The country’s porous borders are a serious consideration and a contributing factor to many undocumented and illegal immigrants, which is also examined in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Media Reporting of the 2015 Xenophobic Attacks in Durban

This book chapter touches on the untouched and hidden dimensions of xenophobia at a local level and examines sections of the print media, the role this plays in social cohesion programs and the resultant impacts. It also provides insight into government agencies and their role and impact on local neighborhoods before, during and in the aftermath of xenophobia. A void in the literature will be filled by the rationale of why xenophobic attacks occur mostly during elections. We also conduct an investigation into the security cluster, and journalists’ contribution and impact on the catastrophe.

Chapter Five: Biased and Falsified Reporting: The Government’s Perspectives

A plethora of viewpoints are assessed, mostly in relation to security agencies, and print and electronic media’s inaccurate and inciteful reporting and misrepresentation of the facts by certain media houses and platforms. Furthermore, the falsified information and omissions concerning the conditions in the shelters for displaced migrants will be reported on by a host of stakeholders. The security personnel’s perceptions of hostile and unethical reporting – influenced by bribery, corruption and careerism – are shared in this book chapter. Finally, we consider how media houses overlook accurate government communications and how journalists exclude this from their reporting.

Chapter Six: Inter- and Intra-Governmental Response: Unreported Government Response Capabilities

This chapter will focus on the toxic climate that was experienced in the townships that were regarded as hotspots of xenophobia and the militarization of both the locals and the foreign nationals. The processes including screening and acceptance of the victims of xenophobia in the displaced shelters will be analyzed, and challenges and solutions exposed. Different sectors and governments and other professional collaborators’ roles and responsibilities will be identified and analyzed in conjunction with other contributions and impacts in the shelters

for the displaced migrants. The intergovernmental relationship challenges will be espoused in this chapter together with the negative impacts in the shelter coordination. The SAPS strategies and responses during and in the aftermath of the shelters will be explored. The intelligence-gathering processes, local communities' involvement and migrants' leadership consultation on the possible reintegration will be further analyzed. Humanitarian initiatives at a local level by the municipality, NGOs and CBOs, as well as community involvement in the fight against xenophobia will be assessed. Open-ended interviews will be conducted with the government officials in different spheres and sectors, SAPS, NGOs, CBOs and migrants' organizations.

Chapter Seven: A Multi-Stakeholder Response on the 2015 Xenophobic Attacks: The Hidden Government Perspectives

This book chapter sought to determine the effectiveness of security agencies' overt and covert strategies in fighting the xenophobic attacks against migrants from African countries. Given the multiplicity of agencies and security apparatus involved in different aspects of actions before, during and after the attacks, this is a very crucial research issue. It was inevitable that different agencies would follow their own courses of action, which could lead to new problems and challenges. There were overt and covert practices undertaken in a number of fronts, including at police stations, in informal settlements ("squatter camps"), townships and shelters for foreigners and during the course of repatriation processes and outcomes.

Chapter Eight: Managing Shelters for the Displaced

This chapter focuses on the toxic climate that was experienced in the townships regarded as the hotspots of xenophobia and the militarization of both locals and foreign nationals. The processes included analyzing the screening and acceptance of victims of xenophobia into shelters for the displaced, during which challenges and solutions were identified. Different sectors, governments and other professional collaborators' roles and responsibilities are identified and analyzed in conjunction with other contributions and impacts in the shelters for displaced migrants. The intergovernmental relationship challenges are analyzed in this chapter together with the negative impacts experienced in terms of the management and operations of the shelters. We explore the strategies and responses of the South African Police Service (SAPS) during and after the attacks. We further analyze intelligence-gathering processes, local communities' involvement, and consultations with migrants' representatives in terms of possible reintegration with the communities. We assess humanitarian initiatives at a local, municipal level, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), as well as community involvement in the fight against xenophobia. Open-ended interviews were conducted with a number of government officials in different spheres and sectors, SAPS, NGOs, CBOs and professionals representing migrants' and refugees' organizations.

Chapter Nine: Social Cohesion and Social Justice: Can They Solve Xenophobic Attacks?

Government's systems, processes and structures in the shelters for the displaced are extensively covered in this chapter, in addition to the functions, challenges and solutions of government agencies and civil society. Representatives from civil society, NGOs and CBOs have been interviewed as they are perceived as playing a pivotal role in disaster response and recovery. Civil society groups are considered to be competent and advanced as compared to other key stakeholders in responding to xenophobic attacks in South Africa. These groups' strategies, processes and systems in shelter management and coordination are succinctly presented. Their relationship with government departments and agencies, victims' representatives and other interested groups is analyzed. Civil society groups' representative viewpoints and government agencies' perceptions of the pertinent role played by such groups are gleaned through qualitative in-depth interviews.

Chapter One

Localizing and Locating the Hidden Causes of Xenophobia and its Ramifications

This scholarly work is aimed at empirically espousing and assessing the hidden root causalities and dimensions of the attacks that were directed at refugees, asylum seekers, legal and illegal immigrants in Durban in 2015. These sporadic attacks against foreign nationals have been popularly termed by scholars, media platforms, civil society groups and foreign governments as “xenophobic attacks.” The underlying root causes and actions related to xenophobia are interrogated thoroughly in this book. We examine certain sections of the media and their tone, descriptions and analyses, in addition to considering the influence of journalists’ reporting in instigating attacks against immigrants. Furthermore, we assess the effectiveness, efficiencies, responsiveness and pro-activeness of the state’s intelligence apparatus in detecting, preventing, responding to and mitigating the effects of xenophobia.

In addition, the contingency plans of the South African Police Service (SAPS) are analyzed in relation to their operations, activities and general attitudes in dealing with the xenophobic attacks in Durban. *Localized Xenophobia in South Africa* further intends to investigate the humanitarian crisis brought about by xenophobia, and the planning and actions of government agencies, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their efforts to avert the situation. The roles, responsibilities and impacts of the leading actors – including the police, the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS), civil society, NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and government departments – are analyzed and dissected. Finally, we extensively assess the financial implications resulting from xenophobic violence.

There is a dire need for this scholarly work to be published as xenophobic attacks in South Africa are caused by a multiplicity of factors which have not been thoroughly and deeply researched through the utilization of empirical and scientific methods. The most common and unhidden causes of xenophobic attacks against immigrants can be categorized according a host of facets. These are mainly socio-economic, political and cultural in nature. The attacks against

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black foreign nationals cannot be linked solely to economic competition or based on biases and (mostly untested) perceptions that are central to patriarchy. For instance, South African black men tend to believe that they own and are entitled to South African women and that women should not be romantically involved with foreign nationals. Foreign nationals, meanwhile, are perceived to outperform South African men economically. In addition, it is alleged that they have larger sex organs, allegedly making them more attractive to South African women. South African citizens have the belief that foreign nationals use strong traditional medicine (or *muti*) against their spouses which makes women vulnerable to foreign nationals. Another issue is that immigrants use money to entice teenage girls and their spouses to become sexually involved with them, which can result in them becoming involved in prostitution and human trafficking.

Macro and micro businesses, media platforms (both print and digital) and political and cultural leaders have been associated with the scourge of xenophobia in South Africa. Meanwhile, the scholastic writing on xenophobia in South Africa and beyond tends to be dominated by foreign nationals. Their writing can be interpreted as anti-state and biased and leads to South African citizens being labeled as the instigators, while the immigrants are the victims only. The plethora of “scholarly studies” currently published has not pinpointed the core causes of xenophobic attacks and its dimensions; rather, these are speculative writing mostly informed by the media. This has been confirmed by the fact that most of these studies have overlooked reliability and validity testing, although the authors deem them to be empirical. It has been made clear that the Government of South Africa and its agencies have been complicit in the attacks on foreign nationals. The stalemate between these spontaneous warring groups (locals and immigrants) is exacerbated by the porosity of South Africa’s borders; the bribery of security agencies and Home Affairs officials; inadequate intelligence apparatus in local communities where attacks are prevalent; corruption; and a lack of enforcement of the country’s by-laws.

A common view shared by commentators regarding the 2008 attacks is that they were caused by local business people attacking migrant shopkeepers in Cape Town. The attacks in 2015 in Durban, meanwhile, were allegedly triggered by a labor dispute in one of the supermarkets in Isipingo, south of Durban although it is widely shared that it triggered the Zulu King through his anti-immigrants sentiments.

It has been widely disseminated that the 2019 xenophobic attacks were sparked by the death of a minibus taxi driver in Johannesburg who was allegedly killed by drug dealers who were migrants. However, the Durban 2015 attacks, which led to the looting and vandalizing of a number of foreigners’ shops and people being attacked, had the lowest death rate – seven fatalities. Nevertheless, the xenophobia had multiple causalities which scholars, the media, government agencies and interested key stakeholders have failed to point out. In retrospect, the available data are mostly from journal articles and there is no evidence in published books. There are few works (Adam and Moodley, 2013; Akinola, 2018; Crush and Chikanda, 2015; Crush and Tawodzera, 2017; Harris, 2001; Kupe et al., 2008; Nyamnjoh, 2006; Tafira, 2017) that have been published on xenophobia in South Africa and touch on other dimensions.

There is a number books (Adam and Moodley, 2013; Crush and Chikanda, 2015; Crush and Tawodzera, 2017; Harris, 2001; Kupe et al., 2008; Landau, 2012; Nyamnjoh, 2006; Tafira, 2017) that have been published on xenophobia, but they are not scholarly and lack published empirical evidence. The latter recently published books by leading scholars in this discipline have overlooked local areas (mostly townships) which are the hospots to xenophobia and are susceptible to violence. Furthermore, the dimensions that the current work explores remain unexplored by scholars; available data are anecdotal and vague. The host of published data (mostly journal articles) that have been published focus on stories of xenophobia released by the popular media, which qualifies as anecdotal and unscholarly.

The primary data in the public domain lack research designs and methodologies and focus on well-known causes of xenophobia (i.e., economic competition). The current book is unique as it is based on empirical evidence: qualitative interviews conducted with carefully selected and knowledgeable respondents, with results triangulated using documents and media articles. The in-depth interviews targeted the government officials, civil society groups, community activists, victims and the alleged perpetrators.

Localized Xenophobia in South Africa sets out to test and develop theories on xenophobia in the attempt to fill the existing gaps of data in the discourse. The work provides evidence-based knowledge regarding the nature and extent of economic competition among foreigners themselves as well between foreigners and local people. Different stakeholders' perceptions are tested to uncover new dimensions, which have not previously been discovered and explored.

The current published literature (Chenzi, 2020; Hendricks and Mati, 2020; Makhado and Tshisikhawe, 2020; Masikane et al., 2020; Tewolde, 2020) has failed to acknowledge that xenophobic attacks occur spontaneously in local areas. The alleged perpetrators' viewpoints have not been heard on the issues, facts and realities. The majority of the published data are dominated by what is reported in the popular media, which is anecdotal, generalized and anti-government, with the success stories of state agencies and government departments going unreported. As a result, this study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on this subject, to influence policies, to invent new concepts and to upskill managers with proactive strategies to deal with the realities and challenges of xenophobia.

To understand the real historical and social roots of xenophobia across the world is never easy, for many different reasons. It is even more difficult to understand these roots in South Africa because the vast majority of victims of such acts are fellow Africans. One hour in an African township shebeen (tavern) will convince you of this reality because the relations between locals and "amakwerekwere" (a derogatory term referring to foreigners of African descent) are generally strained. This is due to perpetual tensions that are caused by social and ethnic stereotypes, rumors and innuendos, politicians' outbursts, false and manufactured news distributed through printed and social media, and socially and politically created myths.

Listening to the conversations, debates or arguments in social gatherings anywhere in South Africa will convince even the most doubtful person that in most cases "amakwerekwere" is but an ethnic, racial category that is nothing less than

a political and social construct. As will be later shown, the xenophobia attacks and their aftermath have resulted in a number of empirical research efforts in South Africa, Africa and elsewhere in the world. Given the social, economic, political, national, continental and international significance of the attacks, it was an urgent necessity for academics, professional researchers, journalists, state and continental authorities and security services to investigate not only the details related to the deaths, injuries, damage and destruction of infrastructure, houses and shops, but also the foundations, main actors, community and state relations as well as the outcomes. Structural persistence of discrimination and xenophobia in South Africa society is severe – the result of implicit and explicit biases which are informed by mostly untested perceptions. The discriminatory and xenophobic attitudes and stereotypes appear to be mentally and physically driven. Society opposes and ill-treats people who look and think differently: this could be race, gender, creed, ethnicity, tribe, sexual orientation or locale. Families and societal structures in South Africa do not have the strategies in place to reduce implicit biases toward others.

Different groups in a society oppose and ill-treat people who look and think differently. Such acts could be based on “race,” gender, ethnicity, tribe, sexual orientation or locale. *Families and societal structures in South Africa do not have the strategies in place to reduce implicit biases towards others.*

In undertaking the exercise of establishing the root causes of xenophobia, there could be the possibility of the irrefutable reality being discovered. One possibility is that xenophobia comes about as a result of actions that have been caused by a multiplicity of social, political, financial and economic factors, which this work aims to confirm. Much of the research on xenophobia, but not all, has not been thoroughly undertaken empirically and scientifically. The gaps need to be filled so that new knowledge can be produced and new ideas surface. The filling of the gaps can be instrumental on planning and implementing thorough and systematic action against future attacks.

There cannot be a serious understanding of *Localized Xenophobia in South Africa* without a brief but useful and adequate picture of the demographics of the two groups: the South Africans and the foreigners.

The Demographics: A Brief Overview

The latest official statistics indicate that South Africa’s population in mid-2019 was 58.78 million, with the 18–34 group (17.84 million) making up one third of the population. The provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal have the highest populations of youth (28.6% and 19.4%, respectively). Of them, 13% are graduates, with the rural provinces being highly disadvantaged (KwaZulu-Natal). The unemployment among the youth in the country stands at 39.5%, with the members of this group being categorized as illiterate, unemployed and unemployable. A quarter of the youth (28.8%) have tertiary education. In the Living Conditions Survey report of 2014/2015, a total of 33.4% of South Africans were regarded as poor. The previous report revealed that a fifth of those in the youth categories are living below the poverty line of R664 per person (per month). The majority of