

The Effect of Xenophobic Attacks on Migrant Nigerians in South Africa and Nigeria-South Africa Diplomatic Relations

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Abstract

Relations among Nations is expected to be mutual, peaceful and beneficial to the countries involved but the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and South Africa in recent times has suffered setback as a result of xenophobic attacks on migrant Nigerians, which have become a common phenomenon in recent years in South-Africa. This paper therefore, explored how xenophobic attacks on migrant Nigerians in South-Africa have impacted on Nigerians, and Nigeria-South Africa diplomatic relations. It is exploratory in nature and used secondary source to gather data, while relative deprivation theory was used as theoretical underpinning. This review paper upholds some perceived reasons for xenophobic attacks against migrant Nigerians in South Africa ranged from suspicion of the out-group's actions, fear of losing one's identity, desire to preserve an assumed purity, drug dealing, running of brothels and cyber-crime. Other causes of xenophobia attacks are poverty, fraud, unemployment, and political cum economic considerations amongst South Africans. There are many implications of xenophobic attacks on Nigeria in South Africa paramount among which are political and economic considerations. The paper observed that though both countries belatedly made efforts to resolve the crisis and the ugly drift in diplomatic relations between the two countries and it is envisaged that the restored normalcy should be sustained.

It concluded that the two African nations stand to lose a lot if the situation persists and must therefore do what is required for peaceful friendly relations to be enhanced. It is recommended that Nigerians in South Africa should respect the law of the land and desist from criminal activities while the Nigerian embassy should be more pro-active in warning Nigerians and guarding them as to what is diplomatically accepted. In addition, the citizens of both countries should be advised to restrain from uttering unguided and inciting statements that could cause rancour.

Keywords: Attack, diplomatic relations, migrant, xenophobia, xenophobic attacks.

Introduction

By standard practice, diplomatic relations among and between nations is expected to be cordial for meaningful and mutually beneficial relations to be achieved. Though the relations between Nigeria and South Africa since inception have been cordial, the crisis of xenophobic attacks on migrant Nigerians in South-Africa in recent times has made it to be sour (Ogunnoiki & Adeyemi, 2019). South African xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals, especially Nigerians occurred on multiple occasions between 2015 and 2017. The majority of the victims in such attacks were Nigerian nationals (Babalola, 2019; Salau, 2017). Attacks of 1998, 2000, 2008, 2009, and 2013 had been well documented. In order to strengthen diplomatic ties and stop further attacks, the governments of Nigeria and South Africa signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013. However, such efforts appeared to be futile as the events of 2016 and 2017 have evidently demonstrated. The question has been raised as to why these attacks are frequent in South Africa (Akinrinde, Babalola & Tar, 2021).

Several explanations have been canvassed to explain why foreign nationals like Nigerians have been singled out for attack. A lot of these factors revolve around economic and social considerations. To many South-Africans, foreigners, especially Nigerians are perceived to be responsible for their unemployment and by extension, apparent poverty. Another accusation levied against many Nigerians is that they were involved in many fraudulent activities such as drug dealing, running of brothels and cyber-crime, among others, which impact on the South-African economy. The most hilarious of these is the assertion that the attackers, the South Africans were motivated by the absurd notion that foreigners, including Nigerians, were stealing their jobs and women (Babalola, 2019) due to the fact that the pool of people in the labour market readily made labour cheap and thus deny them gainful employment.

In the course of these xenophobic attacks, a lot of Nigerians were injured while some lost their lives while their properties were wantonly destroyed. Many business premises, shops and stalls belonging to Nigerian traders and

businessmen were attacked while valuables running into several millions of naira were wantonly vandalised and destroyed (Babalola, 2019; Ismail & Sakariyau, 2017). Apart from the attacks on businesses, the homes of Nigerians in South-Africa were equally bitterly touched. This development brought a strain on Nigeria-South Africa relations. This scenario has prompted many Nigerians to mobilise themselves and organise counter attacks on the South Africans with a view to retaliating and stopping them from embarking on further xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa (Ogunnoiki & Adeyemi, 2019).

In the midst of this complication, which is not nascent but have lingered for long, the government of Nigeria made swift diplomatic moves to dose the tension by opening up diplomatic dialogue with the South African government while the South African government also reciprocated this gesture by reaching agreement with its Nigerian counterpart. This joint intervention of the government assisted in no small measure in checkmating the skirmishes, settling the crisis and bringing at least a temporary sigh of relief for Nigerians in South Africa to continue their various businesses in the country without any further molestation or attack. This somewhat limited success gave the indication that the South African xenophobic attacks have reasonably subsided and that the hitherto cordial relations between the two countries have thus been restored. The question could still be raised: To what extent does one think that these xenophobic attacks will not persist in spite of the diplomatic efforts made by the two governments to resolve this issue?

Against the foregoing explication, this paper examines the effect of migration and xenophobic attacks on diplomatic relations with a specific reference on Nigeria-South Africa relations. In order to accomplish the task of this discourse, the paper is divided into five sections. The first section treats the conceptual clarification and gives a theoretical framework to explain the discourse, while the second section delves further into the evolution and causes of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The third section evaluates the manifestations and impacts of xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa, and Nigeria-South Africa relations. The fourth section examines diplomatic efforts at addressing xenophobic attacks and restoring Nigeria-South Africa relations while the last section offers the conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Framework

Migration is conceived as a form of relocation involving permanent moves to new locations. In other words, it is a change of residence which could either be permanent or temporary which is necessitated by various push or pull factors (Oni, Onafowokan, Ayal, Olayide & Mohammed, 2020). At the international level, the term “migrant” lacks a commonly agreed definition. Ordinarily, the term refers to any situation in which an individual or group of individuals chooses to migrate freely, free from external compulsion, guided by the need to promote their personal well-being. Therefore, the phrase is used to describe

people and their families, who relocate to a different nation or area in an effort to better their social and economic circumstances as well as their future chances for themselves and their families (Kartozia, 2023; Tataru, 2019). A migrant is someone who relocates temporarily or permanently, from their customary place of residence across an international border, and for specific number of reasons. It refers to a wide range of individuals and groups, such as minors and those without legal status, economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, and smugglers (Khudoliy, 2022).

Invariably, it is an all-encompassing phrase that is not defined by international law, representing the general concept of a person who relocates for a number of reasons, whether temporarily or permanently, within a nation or across an international border. It encompasses a variety of clearly defined legal categories of individuals, including migrant labourers, those whose specific forms of movement are legally defined, like smuggled migrants, and those whose status or mode of mobility are not expressly defined by international law, like foreign students (International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2019).

In terms of significance, much value is attached to the phenomenon. Migration has symbiotic gains for both parties involved in the interaction. It remains beneficial and critical for both home and destination countries for national progress and prosperity (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2009; The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2012). Immigrants' contributions in destination countries are getting recognised in the provision of vital labour, services, and skills to their new land or their role in the reproduction of workforces including their sustenance, housing, education, and training in countries around the world (Schiller, 2009) though not very publicised. Shain and Barth (2003) noted that migrants now form Diaspora communities who turn out to be political actors in their destination countries. Similarly, the source countries benefit as immigrants contribute so much to the growth and development of their home countries as they remit their accumulated financial, and human capital, resources, and influence in various works of life: governance, politics, and journalism, among others.

The word xenophobia is derived from the Greek words “Xeno,” which means stranger or foreigner, and “phobia,” which means fear (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015; Ilson & Ayto, 1978). Although the definition of xenophobia is just "fear of a foreigner," the word has more connotations. The hate of immigrants or those who are different from oneself is referred to as xenophobia. Therefore, the term “xenophobia” refers to a plethora of discriminatory beliefs, societal stereotypes, and prejudices that are often covered up by the nationalism phenomena (Onyido, 2018). The fear or dislike of something viewed as alien or weird is known as xenophobia. Fear of losing one's national, ethnic, or racial identity can be linked to xenophobia, which can involve perceptions of an in-group or toward an out-group. It can also show itself as distrust of other

people's actions and a desire to remove them from one's environment in order to preserve a presumptive purity (Ezeji & Joan, 2021). Another way that xenophobia manifests itself is through the uncritical exaltation of another culture, wherein a civilisation is given an unreal, stereotyped and exotic quality (McMichael, 2019). Extremely hostile attitudes and actions that target non-citizen groups because of their nationality or place of origin abroad are known as xenophobia (Alaga & Udoh, 2023). In the context of this discourse therefore, xenophobic attacks are attacks that are based or caused by fear, dislike and animosity toward outsiders as a result of rivalry or competition among social groups and in this case against migrant Nigerians in South Africa.

This paper adopted relative deprivation theory as its theoretical underpinning. The theory was propounded by Samuel Stouffer (1949) and Merton (1957) but was later expounded by Runciman (1966) and Gurr (1970). The basic assumption of the theory is that people who believe they are deprived of something essential to their society economically, politically and socially compared to others as a standard will likely start to organise themselves in an effort to reclaim the things they believe they are deprived of. Relative deprivation theory thus holds that people act for social change in an attempt to obtain opportunities, prestige, or riches that they feel others have and should be entitled to as well; the awareness of a negative disparity between reasonable expectations and present realities. Relative deprivation is the state in which people or groups believe they are objectively inferior to others and that they have the same qualities and should receive the same benefits (Alaga & Udoh, 2023).

Runciman (1966) argued that a person who feels deprived of something that they know another person possesses is said to have specific preconditions of relative deprivation. The person fervently desires the thing they have been denied and thinks they can realistically acquire it, regardless of the methods or strategy. At that point, those who are denied what they believe they are entitled to may take collective action to make their demands known. The theory further maintained that a person's subjective evaluation of their status rather than only their objective status is the cause of unpleasant emotions like resentment, wrath, and discontent. It also stresses the fact that those who believe they are not contented with what they already have will be unhappy with their circumstances (Robert, 2021).

People who lose out on items that society values, such as money, justice, prestige, or privilege, join social movements in the hopes that their complaints will be addressed, which is attributed to the reasons behind people joining social movements. Deprivation feelings are relative because they are based on comparisons to social norms, which are relative and typically vary across time and space (Kendall, 2005). Relative deprivation theory is used to justify the cause of social disorder situations such as looting, terrorism, civil wars, and rioting. Hence, social movements and the disruptive behaviour they are linked

to are frequently the result of complaints from individuals who believe they are not receiving resources to which they are legally entitled. Gurr (1970) argued that conflict between what one ought to have and what one does have might breed frustration and turn men violent. Gurr held that a revolutionary state would arise as a result of what people believed to be real as actual deprivation to them.

The theory has however been criticised by a few scholars such as Walker and Pettigrew (1984) and Bernstein and Crosby (1980). They argued that the theory failed to provide an explanation for why certain individuals, while being denied resources or rights, choose not to participate in social movements that aim to achieve those goals. More so, it is often pointed out that not all those who participate in any collective or social movement are deprived of one thing or the other. In this situation, participants behave more out of sympathy than out of a sense of relative lack. The theory is highly applicable to this discourse in the sense that the South African citizens perceive that immigrant Nigerians in South Africa are denying them the opportunity of getting gainful employment that could enable them live a meaningful life.

Evolution, Manifestations and Perceived Causes of Xenophobic Attacks on Migrant Nigerians in South Africa

As an international phenomenon, xenophobia has its roots in prejudice and antagonism against migrants and transcends all societies and cultures. The origins of xenophobia can be gleaned from human history with emphasis on when non-natives migrating to Greek city-states were viewed as inferior by the Greeks. From North to South, xenophobia and daily prejudice against fellow African migrants based on race, religion, and colour are on the rise throughout the continent (Ibrahim, Dele & Ukeaja, 2019).

Xenophobia is not a new phenomenon; in fact, it has been around for generations, especially in Africa, where there is evidence of instances of discriminatory behavior against Nigerians in Ghana. There is ample evidence that Ghanaians have also been the target of similar acts in Nigeria, particularly in relation to President Shehu Shagari's 1983 deportation of Ghanaians from the country on the grounds that they were there just to profit from its abundant resources. But South Africa, which has been noted to have the greatest prevalence of violent, xenophobic attacks against other African nationals, is a country where xenophobia is notably prevalent and pervasive (Tafira, 2018). In the 20th century, xenophobia caused South Africa to bar immigrants from other African nations, including the Congolese, from accessing medical facilities in 1994, 1995, and 1997 (Human Rights Watch 1998; Oni & Okunade, 2018).

According to Hanekam and Webster (2009), apartheid's legacy and the inability of succeeding administrations to accept foreigners are the root causes of South Africa's history of xenophobic violence. South Africa is still seen in the twenty-first century as a hotbed of xenophobic violence. African immigrants have been the victim of xenophobic attacks in South Africa in the twenty-first century. In

May 2008, there was the first known international attack on immigrants in modern times, which happened in Johannesburg, South Africa. Two persons were killed and forty injured in widespread violence against foreigners, mostly migrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Malawi. Later, the attacks expanded to neighboring towns, leaving thousands of people injured and over sixty dead (Ezeji & Joan, 2021).

After attacking immigrants from Nigeria, South African assailants also turned their attention to attacking citizens of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Malawi. Some Nigerians residing in South Africa argued that the attacks in South Africa were motivated by envy and jealousy of Nigerians' achievements and well-being. The phenomenon became orchestrated during the peak of the xenophobic attacks, when the intensity was high, resulting in massive burning, the vandalisation of houses worth millions of naira, and fatalities (Misago, 2019). These incidences were portrayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Manifestations of Xenophobic Attacks on Nigerian Immigrants in South Africa.

S/N	Date of Attack	Place of Attack	Causalities	Source
1	August 16, 2017	Western Cape Province	One Nigerian was killed by South African police	Vanguard
2	October 3, 2017	Parking Lot of Doornfontein, Gauteng Province, Johannesburg	One Nigerian Cellular phone technician was shot dead	Vanguard
3	October 10, 2017	Vaal Vreneging, Johannesburg	One Nigerian students was killed by South African police	Vanguard
4	January 10, 2018	Rustenburg, South Africa	Six houses belonging to some Nigerians were burnt	Vanguard
5	January 18, 2018	Campbell Street, Durban	One Nigerian was killed by South African police	Vanguard
6	April 24, 2018	Rustenburg, North Province South Africa	One Nigerian was mobbed and set ablaze	Vanguard
7	June 26, 2018	Mabopane Station, near Pretoria	One Nigerian was shot dead by unknown gunmen	Vanguard
8	July 6, 2018	10 Koppe, Middleburg, Mpumalanga, South	Unknown gunmen shot a Nigerian	Vanguard

		Africa		
9	July 12, 2018	Yeoville, Johannesburg	One Nigerian was killed	Vanguard
10	August 25, 2018	Rietondale Park, Pretoria	One Nigerian was shot dead on a football field	Vanguard
11	August 26, 2018	Essellen Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria	One Nigerian was shot dead	Vanguard
12	March 15, 2019	Troye Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria	One Nigerian was killed in a drive-by shooting	Vanguard
13	April 5, 2019	Bellville Stadium Parking Lot, Cape Town	One Nigerian was stabbed to death	Vanguard
14	April 6, 2019	Turf Road, Turffontein	One Nigerian was killed	Vanguard
15	April 27, 2019	White River Town	One Nigerian was killed while another was left in critical condition	Vanguard
16	April 28, 2019	South African Police Custody, Cape Town	One Nigerian was mobbed and killed by South African police	Vanguard
17	May 3, 2019	Mpumalanga Province	One Nigerian was stabbed to death	Vanguard
18	June 14, 2019	Ladysmith, Kwazulu Natal Province	One Nigerian was killed by South African police	Vanguard
19	July 20, 2019	Johannesburg, South Africa	One Nigerian teenage was shot dead	Vanguard
20	July 11, 2021	Gauteng and KZN Province, Jeppetown, Jules Street, Vosloorus areas in Johannesburg	Five businesses belonging to Nigerians looted and destroyed	The Guardian
21	December 12, 2021	Highway Park, Johannesburg	One Nigerian was attacked and killed by hoodlums	All Africa News
22	February 11, 2022	Vereeniging taxi rank, near Johannesburg	Two Nigerians were killed while one was badly injured	The Punch
23	February 12, 2022	Kimberly in South Africa's Northern Cape	One Nigerian was mobbed and killed	The Guardian
24	January 28, 2023	Midrand Hyper, Johannesburg, South	Two Nigerians were shot dead	The Punch

		Africa		
25	May 17, 2024	Danielskuil, Northern Cape	One Nigerian was killed by South African police	The Punch

Source: Adapted from Usman and Ojelu (2019) and updated by authors

Many factors have been advanced as the root causes of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. For example, the director of the Lawyers for Human Program on Migrant and Refugee Rights claims that the underlying causes of these attacks are poverty and apartheid (Ekambaram, 2019). Although many people attribute the growth of xenophobia in South Africa to the post-apartheid era, the phenomenon actually began decades earlier. According to legend, South Africa passed a number of legislation in the early 1900s to stop immigration, such as the Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913, which permitted the expulsion of "undesirables," which included Native Americans. This effectively put a halt to Indian immigration. Deprive Indians of the municipal franchise was the stated goal of the Township Franchise Ordinance of 1924 (Mills, 2018; Chukwu, 2021).

One may argue that xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in South Africa are fueled by social difficulties. For example, Dodson and Oelofse (2000) noted that rivalry between male African migrants and their South African counterparts over women, gender, and sexuality frequently resulted in xenophobic violence. Among the challenges the post-apartheid government has faced are other societal issues such as unemployment (Everett, 2011). Foreign nationals in South Africa have a tendency to aggravate this problem by being widely employed in numerous industries across the country in preference to South Africans, owing to their inclination to constitute a pool of cheap labor (Nyar, 2011). Because they are less expensive for their employers, overseas workers in this case usually outbid disadvantaged Black South Africans for jobs (Everatt, 2011). For instance, foreign nationals with formal qualifications are more likely to get hired in South Africa because their skill sets are generally seen as being exceptional (International Labour Organisation, 2019).

The charge of drug use and related offenses is another element taken into consideration by South Africans for the increase in xenophobic attacks. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) in South Africa announced the indictment of about eighty Nigerians involved in fraud schemes. Following the wave of violence, President Buhari dispatched a special envoy to speak with South African authorities. The envoy's report may be found here:

President Cyril Ramaphosa and senior officials of his government insisted to Buhari's envoy that the widespread attacks were not xenophobic, revealing that although between December 2017 and September 2019, 89 Nigerians were killed in the country, 39 of them were slain by their

compatriots over drug-related disputes. However, South African authorities acknowledged that 19 of the deaths were caused by police brutality and violence, with the remaining deaths coming from other sources (Ogunmade, Okocha & Akinwale, 2019, p.21).

In a different report, South African officials said that between 300,000 and 400,000 Nigerians are living in South Africa. 10,860 of these are serving varied sentences in jail; nonetheless, 60% of these inmates are there due to drug-related charges (Babalola, 2019).

From an economic perspective, Konanani and Odeku (2013) contend that the apartheid economy of South Africa significantly contributed to the development and entrenchment of the issue of xenophobic relations in the nation today. The apartheid economy was cohesive because it employed all societal forces at its disposal to further the objectives of the South African apartheid regime. Due to the fact that mining involved primarily black labor relations and gold was the primary driver of economic growth in South Africa during the apartheid era, the industry attracted a sizable migrant labor force from Southern African nations, primarily Malawians, Mozambicans, and Zimbabweans. Due to the fact that black South Africans were consistently subjected to apartheid's repressive policies and the foreign labor force began to gain social mobility in the gold industry, social tensions grew in the state's political economy and have persisted as a dominant feature of social relations in the post-apartheid South African state (Chidozie, 2014).

In an effort to contain the rising rates of unemployment and poverty among South African Blacks, successive administrations implemented economic measures after apartheid ended. Policies like the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Programme (GEAR) and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) demonstrated the government's sincere intervention to address racial misrepresentation in the nation's political economy, even in the face of harsh criticism, particularly from South Africa's white minority (Edigheji, 2012). Unfortunately, it appeared that many of these initiatives had very modest success, which led to dissatisfaction among South Africans who were already struggling.

According to some accounts, the government's failure to reduce economic disparity and promote economic growth has been a major contributing factor to xenophobia in South Africa (Mamabolo, 2015). The Democratic Alliance (DA)'s then-parliamentary leader, Mmusi Maimane, asserted that the government's failure to reduce South Africa's extreme inequality and promote economic growth is the primary cause of this issue. The inability of the government to provide for the aspirations of impoverished black South Africans, who continue to witness the opulent lifestyles of some black South African elites, is attributed by Pillay (2008) to the phenomenon of xenophobic attacks in South Africa. These individuals

believe that foreigners are preventing them from having a meaningful life, and as a result, they have turned to violent attacks against them.

Hence, xenophobic attacks manifest through series of violent attacks against foreign nationals, resulting in killings and the stealing of their properties (Hayem, 2013). This perception is corroborated by Sempijja and Mongale (2022) who argues that during South African protest actions, foreign nationals are often attacked to steal their belongings. The avalanche of these attacks, which is demonstrated in many manifestations and has resulted in many consequences for both sides, is treated in the next sub-heading.

Perceived Consequences of Xenophobic Attacks on Nigerians and Nigeria-South Africa Relations

One in every fifty people is an immigrant, migrant worker, or refugee seeking asylum in a "foreign" nation. Approximately 150 million people, or 2.5% of the world's population, are estimated by the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration to be either temporarily or permanently resident outside of their country of origin (IOM, 2000). Between 80 and 97 million of them are thought to be migrant laborers and their families (International Labour Office, 1999). Twelve million more people are refugees who are not in their home country. According to UN statistics from 2019, these numbers do not account for the estimated 20 million internally displaced people who were forced to flee their own country, nor the tens of millions of additional internal migrants who moved from rural to urban areas in various nations across the globe. Migration will inevitably result in a rise in racial and ethnic variety in societies (Ijisakin & Fakanbi, 2019).

Growing migration suggests that more and more States have become, or are becoming, more multiethnic, posing the problem of accommodating people from various racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Finding political, legal, social, and economic means to uphold respect for one another and to mediate relationships across differences is necessary in order to address the realities of growing diversity. However, racism and xenophobia have surfaced in certain communities that have welcomed a sizable immigrant population, either as workers or as asylum seekers. In some nations, internal conflicts over national identity have turned the migrants into their targets (Odiaka, 2017).

Attacks by South Africans that are xenophobic against foreign immigrants, particularly those from Nigeria, have a significant negative impact on Nigerians and diplomatic ties between South Africa and Nigeria. In addition to the fact that these attacks resulted in the deaths of some Nigerians, many others were injured and some lost possessions valued at millions of naira. Due to the substantial economic and investment linkages that exist between South Africa and Nigeria, it always had a detrimental influence on both countries' economies. To put it another way, these attacks have targeted Nigerian companies in South

Africa, resulting in financial losses and damaged trade ties (Oni & Okunade, 2018; Friebe, Gallego & Mendola, 2013).

Tensions in the two nations' diplomatic ties resulted from these xenophobic acts. Nigeria has continuously demanded the protection of its nationals residing in South Africa and denounced attacks on its citizens there. Furthermore, the xenophobic attacks against Nigerian immigrants have had an impact on regional dynamics in Africa. It is important to remember that both nations have important responsibilities in regional organizations like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for South Africa and the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for Nigeria. During the crisis, tensions between the two nations undoubtedly worked to impede efforts at regional collaboration and to erode African unity (Ogunnoiki & Adeyemi, 2019).

Attacks driven by xenophobia have gradually ingrained fear in Nigerians' minds. Many of them in South Africa no longer interact freely with the locals as fellow African brothers and sisters with a shared history, traditions, conventions, etc., because they fear being attacked, if not killed. Many of the surviving Nigerian victims of anti-foreign violence are today suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many Nigerians back home are rethinking their plans to travel to South Africa for business, tourism, shopping, first degrees, postgraduate studies, and other reasons in light of the sad news of the deaths of Nigerian residents in South Africa that they have been hearing or reading about in print and electronic media (Alaga & Udoh, 2023; Ogunnoiki & Adeyemi, 2019).

Affected culturally and interpersonally were attacks motivated by xenophobia between South Africa and Nigeria. During the deadlock, these occurrences contributed to foster animosity and mistrust among the residents of both countries, impeding efforts to promote tourism, cultural exchanges, and educational cooperation. For example, before, during, and after both countries' 2023 AFCON semi-final, the Nigeria High Commission advised Nigerians living in South Africa to exercise caution (Eludini, 2024).

Diplomatic Efforts at Addressing Xenophobic Attacks and Restoring Nigeria-South Africa Relations

Nigeria and South Africa have a lengthy history of diplomatic relations (Ojukwu, Mbah & Osuchukwu, 2019). Nigeria had its first opportunity, after the Sharpeville massacre on March 21, 1960, to launch an anti-colonialist foreign policy. The episode, which happened prior to Nigeria's independence, marked the beginning of Nigeria's conflict with the apartheid South African white government. Nigeria has provided significant financial support to the African National Congress (ANC) in its fight to end apartheid, in support of South Africa's efforts to do so (Kwaghe & Okoli, 2020).

In response to the xenophobic attacks in April 2015 by South Africa against Nigerians, the UN Security Council condemned and repudiated the crimes that went along with the attacks quite quickly (Dickson, 2020). Xenophobia is strongly denounced in Africa, especially the hostility between Africans (Brobbe, 2018). Nonetheless, several African nations voiced serious concerns on the prevalence of xenophobia in South Africa. Attacks against foreign residents in Johannesburg's Alexandra Township that started in 2008 claimed 64 lives, forced thousands to flee, and injured many more seriously (Tafira, 2018).

Nigeria vehemently denounced these attacks and demanded that the South African government take immediate steps to safeguard the lives and belongings of Nigerians residing in South Africa. In order to address the underlying problems fueling the violence, requests for diplomatic interventions and communication were also made. President Muhammadu Buhari's call for a stronger emphasis on people-to-people relations between South Africa and Nigeria to evolve a bond that will be of benefit to both countries and the African continent during President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa's visit to the State House, Abuja, is an example of how he responded to calls for diplomatic interventions and dialogue (Sunday, 2021). As another example, consider the recent bilateral talks between Presidents Bola Tinubu and Ramaphosa of South Africa and Nigeria, which aimed to fortify their diplomatic ties and further the continent's growth (Egobiambu, 2024).

Big-Alabo and Big-Alabo (2020) assert that responses to the xenophobic attacks in South Africa have come from a variety of places, emphasizing that various groups and individuals in Nigeria have publicly responded to the threat and have blamed the Nigerian government for not acting swiftly enough to address this issue. Since South Africa's days of apartheid, the country and Nigeria have enjoyed a cordial relationship. According to history, Nigeria supported them in their struggle against the apartheid regime at the time, acting as a big brother. Notably, Nigeria contributed financially to the struggle against the apartheid regime, and ultimately, success was achieved. It is regrettable to report that Nigerian residents of this same South Africa have consistently been attacked. According to available data, when it comes to xenophobic incidents in South Africa, Nigerians consistently suffer the most. Over sixty Nigerians lost their lives in the 2017 attacks, and the government of Nigeria failed to provide a satisfying answer to the populace. It appears that the administration is repeating its previous approach (Big-Alabo & Big-Alabo, 2020).

What the government has done in reaction to the recent xenophobic attacks that have occurred in South Africa between August and September 2019 is the key question at hand. At the onset of the attacks, the Nigerian government called the South African Ambassador to voice their disapproval of the way their compatriots were being treated in South Africa. They also proceeded to arrange the sending of a special envoy. During the height of the crisis, a number of Nigerians took to social media to demand that the Nigerian government boycott

South African businesses including MTN, DSTV, and retailer Shoprite in order to express their outrage over the cruel and dehumanising treatment that Nigerians have endured there (Kwaghe & Okoli, 2020).

One of the countries that provided South Africa with a substantial quantity of help is Nigeria, whose residents have regularly been the focus of xenophobic statements and actions (Matsinhe, 2011). According to Steenkamp (2019), South Africa's isolation during the apartheid era is to blame for the development of afrophobia in the nation today. Anti-immigrant attitude was not noticeable prior to South Africa's democratic transition because of the limited number of non-citizens; nevertheless, it became noticeable following the end of apartheid and the arrival of a large number of African migrants. The surge in xenophobic attacks in 2015, which began in Durban and swiftly spread to Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg, provided as a sobering reminder of how widespread xenophobia is in the nation, despite the fact that these attacks weren't especially frequent in South Africa. It seems that the xenophobic incidents of 2015 were sparked by a speech delivered by Goodwill Zwelithini, the Zulu ruler. During his speech, he is reported to have encouraged foreigners to pack up their bags and leave South Africa since they were exploiting the country's resources at the expense of its residents.

It's enough to say that the Nigerian government did not take full disciplinary action in reaction to xenophobic attacks on its people in South Africa. Nigerians attempted, but were unable, to get sanctions against South Africa. Many Nigerians and South Africans held out hope that Presidents Buhari and Ramaphosa would act quickly to mend the deep rift in their nations' relations caused by the widespread incidents of xenophobia against Nigerians in South Africa. Nigeria didn't have the military power, intelligence capabilities, or political influence to pursue sanctions against a regional power like South Africa, despite her early attempt to do so. Abuja's vulnerabilities, which it had been concealing while assuming the persona of the "Giant of Africa," have come to light due to the diplomatic deadlock with South Africa (Dutse& Bello, 2017).

The government of Nigeria encouraged its citizens residing in South Africa to take advantage of a free flight back home. Nevertheless, the public authority alerted its citizenry to the possibility of reprisals following attacks on multiple South African-affiliated organizations in Lagos and other locations. Nigeria insisted on getting paid for the property and lives of its inhabitants that were lost as a result of the xenophobic crimes. Nigeria has asked South Africa for an improved security system to ensure that such attacks don't occur again. Following the 2008 attacks in Nigeria that were motivated by xenophobia, ties between South Africa and Nigeria have deteriorated. The attacks seriously damaged South Africa's reputation in the eyes of countries whose residents travel overseas in quest of work or better prospects, whether temporarily or permanently. Reportedly, the Nigerian government investigated the damages

incurred by its citizens and requested compensation from the South African authorities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper has explored the evolution, manifestations and consequences of xenophobic attacks on Nigerian immigrants in South Africa. It has equally assessed diplomatic efforts made to address xenophobic attacks and restore Nigeria-South Africa relations. Apart from the negative effect of xenophobic attacks on migrant Nigerians in South Africa, the phenomenon impacts significant implications on the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and South Africa. The paper is of the view that managing these challenges effectively requires concerted efforts from both governments to address underlying socio-economic factors, strengthen diplomatic ties, and promote mutual respect and co-operation. In the light of the above situations, the paper recommends thus:

- (i) Nigerians living in South Africa should respect the law of the land and desist from fraudulent and criminal activities;
- (ii) Nigeria's embassy should be more pro-active in warning Nigerians and guarding them to do what is acceptable under the law, just like they did warn them not to celebrate openly if Nigeria wins South Africa in the recently concluded African Cup of Nations.
- (iii) The citizens of both countries should be guided against making unguarded and provocative statements, or inciting comments, especially on the social media.
- (iv) There is need for collective action from diverse organisations, employers and business associations and community groups including concerned NGOs to ensure that a levelled- playing ground is created to enhance mutual understanding and interaction among all.
- (v) Efforts to address these challenges require comprehensive approaches, including promoting tolerance, addressing socio-economic inequalities, strengthening law enforcement, and fostering international cooperation.
- (vi) Both countries have a vested interest in maintaining positive relations and resolving these tensions to ensure the safety and well-being of their citizens and promote regional stability and cooperation in Africa.

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