

AN EXAMINATION OF THE XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIVES OF NIGERIANS IN THAT COUNTRY “2015-2019”

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ABSTRACT: The paper was to examine the xenophobic violence and its impacts on socio-economic lives of Nigerian workers in South Africa. This is because the persistent plague of xenophobic violence on Nigerians in South Africa increased drastically and affected Nigerian workers greatly despite a national outcry and crucial national discussions to mitigate it. Specifically, the study was to examine the impact of the xenophobic violence on homes, education, employments and basic needs of Nigerians in South Africa. Intergroup Threat theory was used as the theoretical umbrella. The study was qualitative. A secondary source of data was used. Content analysis was used to analyze data so generated. Findings revealed that the attacks made most Nigerians homeless and education wasn't accessible. Others became unemployed and some could not meet their basic needs. The study recommended for the government to provide adequate housing support services for victims, ensure that Nigerians in South Africa are not denied access to education, device a means for Nigerians to make a living at home, create job via training on skills acquisition and improve basic needs through provision of food, health service, portable water etc.

Keywords: Xenophobic Violence, Socio-Economic Lives, Nigeria, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The recent surge of deadly xenophobic violence against foreign nationals (precisely Nigerians), who are often considered as “threats” by the locals in South Africa and reprisal attacks is so alarming. Xenophobia encompasses all kinds of intolerance, jealousy, hostility and sentiments meted on foreigners. It started in 1994, reoccurred in 1998, 2000 precisely in August when the attacks on Nigerians kicked off and reached a gruesome peak in 2008. Violence flared up again in 2015 which marked a major outbreak that occurred repeatedly in the months of April and October that year. It was followed by 2016, 2017, 2018 and the recent attacks in 2019 respectively. South Africa's robust economy, relatively high standard of living, favourable political and social climate were the pull factors that attracted visitors from various countries, climes in search of jobs and businesses (Dauda, Sakariyau &

Ameen, 2018). Consequently, Akinnaso (2019) established that most Nigerians in South Africa owned formal and informal businesses; some engaged as unskilled and skilled workers in hospitals, universities and others were involved in drug trafficking.

On account of that, Nigerians were perceived to have amassed so much wealth through the jobs and businesses they engaged in out of jealousy (Punch Newspaper, 2019). Therefore, South Africans felt oppressed by their Nigerian counterparts (Adam, 2019). Following the growing perception of economic harm and inequality, immoral politicians pushed the deceitful recitation that foreigners stole jobs, perpetrated high levels of crimes, put a strain on government services, operates illegal businesses and was blamed for all the wrongs in South Africa (Samanga, 2019). Thus, they were perceived as job takers and threat to their country's scarce resources. Circumstantially, workers and businesses faced catastrophic situation in South Africa as the attack intensified and hampered security of lives (Shittu, 2020).

Worthy of note is that, most businesses were stopped and operations altered. Several Nigerians, who contributed to their household consumption through their entrepreneurial activities and hand-to-mouth self-employment, lost their means of livelihood, (Olawajaju, 2020) and streams of financial income were suddenly interrupted when businesses ceased, (Babatunde, 2020). In the same vein, Ijisakin (2019) explained that the continuous vicious attacks, treatments and flare-up on the lives and properties of Nigerians resident in South Africa by the citizens of South Africans in the most despicable manner at places of work, malls, markets and some other public places made living and working in South Africa an arduous task despite a national outcry and important national discussions to mitigate it. To this effect, this paper seeks to examine the xenophobic violence and its impact on socio-economic lives of Nigerians in South Africa 2015-2019.

Statement of the Problem

Xenophobic violence has been associated with numerous negative issues. The major contention was on sentiments and resentment among the locals towards foreigners (precisely Nigerians). The effect of such attitudes and violence was unemployment that resulted as a result of loss of income source, poor border control, lack of education (Onyido, 2018). Despite the educational attainment of Nigerians in South Africa, they found it extremely difficult to be employed and when employed, they go through exploitation in the hands of the locals and integrating into the host society became difficult. Regrettably, several Nigerians who were driven to become skilled, unskilled workers and necessity-based entrepreneurs lost their jobs. In the same vein, people were injured, properties were lost, women were raped, there was political instability, children's rights were abused, businesses destroyed and the nations image was tarnished (Chinomona & Maziriri, 2015).

Stretching further, Matunhu (2008) concurred that, it destroyed lives and properties; destroyed trust, fuelled cold wars, sent a bad image of a nation around the world and investors, workers and potential tourists were scared away from South Africa.. Other challenges include poverty and unemployment, inability to meet basic needs which were the

driving force behind xenophobic violence. Some foreigners suffered homelessness, poor healthcare, social exclusion and marginalization orchestrated by locals and the government, (Shishonga, 2015). Some of these challenges that seeped into Nigerians raised the curiosity to examine the following:

Objectives of the Study

The general objective was to examine the impact of the xenophobic violence on socio-economic lives of Nigerians in South Africa. Specifically, the study was to:

- 1 Examine the impact of the xenophobic violence on the homes of Nigerians in South Africa.
- 2 Investigate the impact of the xenophobic violence on the education of Nigerians in South Africa.
- 3 Find out the impact of the xenophobic violence on the employment (income) of Nigerians in South Africa.
- 4 Ascertain the impact of the xenophobic violence on the basic needs of Nigerians in South Africa.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. What are the impacts of the xenophobic violence on the homes of Nigerians in South Africa?
2. What are the impacts of the xenophobic violence on the education of Nigerians in South Africa?
3. What are the impacts of the xenophobic violence on the employment (income) of Nigerians in South Africa?
4. What are the impacts of the xenophobic violence on basic needs of Nigerians in South Africa?

Conceptual Clarification

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is derived from Greek words (xenos), meaning stranger, foreigner and (phobos), which means fear. It is a dislike or fear of that which is unknown or different from one, (Ibrahim, Dele & Ukeaja, 2019). It expresses the irrational fear developed against foreign element, which manifests in hatred, perceived threats to nationals interest, discrimination and violence against foreigners (precisely Nigerians), (Ozekhome, 2019). Similarly, it is extreme dislike or hatred for strangers and foreigners, or any other person that is perceived to be strangers, outsiders, or a group of people, based on their ethnic affiliation, colour, religion, gender or on any other grounds, (Ijisakin, 2019). By and large, it is an unfriendly attitude, hatred and discrimination of foreigners.

Socio-Economic

Social economics is primarily concerned with the interplay between social processes and economic activity within a society. Those things that bring improvement in everyday life is an indicator of development such as basic needs, good food, shelter, clean water, clothing and household utensils or focus on life expectancy and morbidity statistics. In the same context, certain goods or services may be unavailable to specific socioeconomic classes based on their ability to afford them (as a result of their income). These goods or services can include access to more advanced or complete medical care, educational opportunities, and the ability to buy food that meets specific nutritional guidelines, (Tarver 2020).

Similarly, Arndt (1989) argued that social development includes health, education and nutrition among others. However the salient thing is the improvement of the quality of people's life. This improvement could be achieved directly and indirectly through income and economic resources (economic development). Better health, better education and better nutrition which are the keys to growth (social development). Especially when those actions taken to build positive outcomes and prevent negative social outcomes such as poverty, crime, gang activity, school disengagement, teen pregnancy, poor health and substance abuse adversely affect a community, (Grey, 2011).

Again, economic development is the interrelationship between capital accumulation industrialization, government growth, urbanization, and education. If the basic development processes either do not make the distribution of income more equal or actually worsen the degree of inequality for more than a short period, economic development has not taken place. Improvement in everyday life is an indicator of development such as basic needs, good food, shelter, clean water, clothing and household utensils or focus on life expectancy and morbidity statistics, (Kuper & Kuper, 1996).

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Xenophobic Violence in South Africa 2015-2019

South Africa was seen as a fertile ground shortly after the attainment of her political independence in 1994 under the leadership of the first post-apartheid leader President Nelson Mandela. In the light of that, foreigners migrated to South Africa in pursuit of education; seek for jobs and to flee from fear of political persecution in their countries. When it became evident that South Africa could not provide jobs, housing and good health system, it gave rise to xenophobic attacks enveloped in hatred on foreigners. In the same vein, integration of immigrants with emphasis on blacks into local communities was difficult because of South Africa's diverse policies that intensified the tensions given xenophobia, (Ijisakin, 2019).

Records revealed that, cities like Ethekwini and Johannesburg also witnessed attacks in 2015 because Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini was of the opinion that foreigners should go back to

their countries. On that premise, South Africans descended on foreign nationals who lost their lives and properties. Similarly, in March 2016, South Africans instigated another attack in Katlehong community of Gauteng. The Executive Mayor of City of Johannesburg Herman Mashaba attributed it to the fact that, foreign nationals were criminals who took over the city of Johannesburg. As such, foreigners were baptized “Mekwerekwere” which means foreigners in South Africa with all kinds of condemnation, (Dauda, Sakariyau & Ameen, 2018). That was a replica of the jealousy and hatred they have on Nigerians.

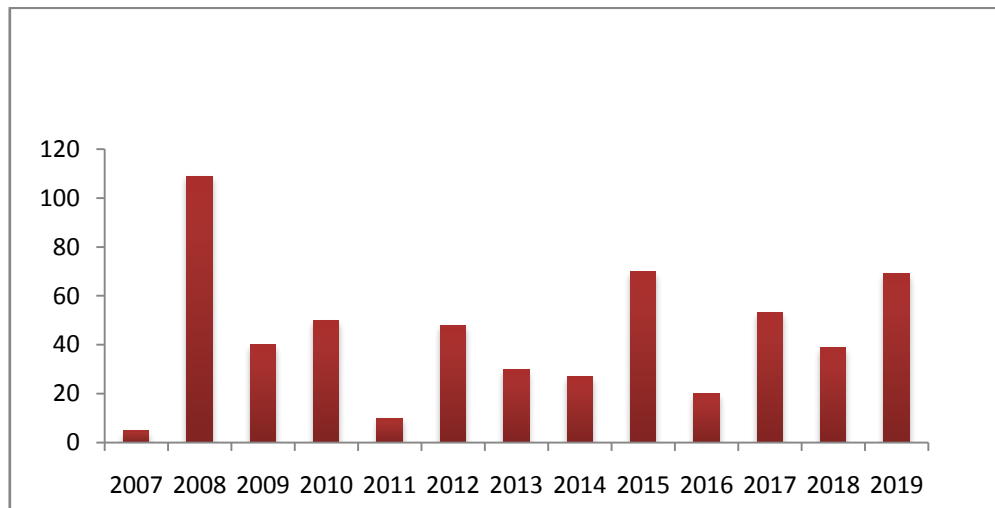
In a similar vein, xenophobic violence was refuelled in February 18, 2017 by the hate filled rhetoric of South African authorities. Nigerians living in Pretoria West were attacked by South Africans as confirmed by the President of the Nigerian Union in South Africa, Mr Ikechukwu Ayene, who submits that, in the course of the attacks, five buildings occupied by Nigerian businessmen, a church belonging to Nigerians, a garage with 28 cars under repair were looted and burnt by South Africans leading to the injuries sustained by a Nigerian pastor. Unfortunately, the attacks on Nigerians were directed at their shops and businesses as they were looted before being set ablaze. On 27th February 2017, the xenophobic attacks resulted to the killing of about one hundred and sixteen Nigerians in South Africa. Apart from the loss of innocent lives, Nigerians lost businesses and properties worth millions of dollars because of the ugly trend of xenophobic violence in South Africa, (Bello & Tunde, 2017). Incidentally, xenophobic violence was regurgitated on May 2018 and shameful demonstrated at Soweto area of Johannesburg. It occurred because a new anti-foreigner political party (African Basic Movement) led by the founder Thembelani Ngubane, marched in Johannesburg demanding that non-South Africans should leave the country (Cassim & Powell, 2018). Similarly, the Voice of America confirmed that, locals insisted on foreigners even legal foreigners should not do business in South Africa alleging that it is constitutional to deported foreigners (Maharaj, 2018). As if that was not enough, xenophobia violence was regurgitated in May, 2018 and shameful demonstrated at Soweto area of Johannesburg. The Minister of Home Affairs Aaron Motsoaledi, insinuated that foreigners in South Africa were accused of burdening the health system, (Mohamed 2019). For that reason, a new anti-foreigner political party (African Basic Movement) led by the founder Thembelani Ngubane, marched in Johannesburg demanding that non-South Africans should leave the country (Cassim & Powell, 2018).

The most recent attacks from the period of study, was the spate of overnight attacks of September, 2019 targeted at foreigners. It was similar to that of 2008 which also took place in Pretoria, Johannesburg (Shabon, 2019). South Africa has a crime related incidence that killed about 21,000 people in March, 2019. Flowing from that, it was alleged that foreigners committed most of the crimes but the police do not publicly release data to substantiate that. Besides, the recent attacks were alleged to have kicked off following the death of a taxi driver who tried to stop drug traffickers (Dahir, 2019). In the course of that, the central business district was greeted with looting and demands by rioters that foreigners should go. By 3rd September, 2019, about 189 were already arrested. The president Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed the death of about 10 people and destruction of a minimum of 50 businesses owned by foreigners to the violence. Several people were killed in Hillbrow, Jeppesstown, Brixton, and Sophiatown. The intensity of the violence led to the speech of Zulu leader

Mangosuthu Buthelezi appealing for calm. The attacks culminated to the loss of several lives to the tune of 680 people, (“2019 Johannesburg riots”, 2019). In the same direction, “South Africa vows crackdown on xenophobic attacks after five die” (n.d) submits that, the attacks had no justification and Nigerians registered their displeasure over the treatment by summoning of South African ambassador. That was a display of arrant nonsense by the locals.

Sadly, the aftermath of the unrest according to Reid (2019) transformed into property damage and associated costs of more than GBP 1.6 million (British Pound Sterling). Given the rising rate of attacks on foreign nationals, hundreds of Nigerians left South Africa as a result of fear of violence. Following that, it was reported that the attacks across South Africa since 1994 from activists, victims and observers brought the following to limelight.

Figure 1: Threats, Attacks and Killings against Foreigners in South Africa



Source: Adapted from Reality Check Team (2019). South Africa: How common are xenophobic attacks. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world/africa,2/7/2020>.

From the above figure, violent attacks peaked up in 2008 and 2015 while the magnitude of attacks in 2019 was almost like that of 2015. The attack of 2017 was not as much as that of 2019 and it was followed by another attack in 2010. Subsequently, the intensity of other attacks ranged from 2012, 2009, 2018, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2011 and 2007 respectively. To substantiate that, the rate of gruesome attacks on foreign nationals in South Africa was statistically represented by province on the table below:

Table 1: Xenophobic Violence Incidents by Province 1994-2018.

Province	No. of Occurrences	Percentage (%)
Gauteng	212	40%
Western Cape	111	21%
Kwazulu-Natal	67	13%
Limpopo	40	8%
Eastern Cape	33	6%
Mpumalanga	22	4%
North West	20	4%
Free State	19	3%
Northern Cape	5	1%
Total	529	100%

Source: Adapted from Reality Check Team (2019). South Africa: How common are xenophobic attacks. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com>, 2/7/2020.

The table showed that Gauteng province that encompasses the largest city of Johannesburg and the capital of Pretoria has the highest rate of violence against foreigners (precisely Nigerians). Western Cape came second with 21%; Kwa Zulu-Natal where Durban is placed took the third position (13%). The fourth position was taken by Limpopo (8%), Eastern Cape fifth (6%), Mpumalanga sixth (4%), North West seventh (4%), Free State eighth (3%) and Northern Cape emerged the last which is ninth place (1%). The figures on the table demonstrated that, xenophobic attacks were at its peak in South Africa.

Theoretical Framework

The study relied on Intergroup Threat Theory. The major proponents of the theory are Walter G. Stephan and Cookie White Stephan (2000). It connotes that, fear arose as a result of competition between scarce resources such as jobs and housing especially when the in-group (locals) felt that their resources were being threatened by the out-group (foreigners). That translated to conflicting goals and in an attempt to protect their resources, it led to prejudice, negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviour towards the out-group, (Ngwayuh, 2017). In other words, the locals felt that, their social, economic, political, physical and material well-being was threatened by an out-group.

Tenets of the Theory: Intergroup Threat Theory has the following tenets:

1. The theory applies to any social group that may feel threatened in some way.
2. False alarms about threat still have real consequences for prejudice between groups.
3. There is an in-group and an out-group.

Application of the theory to the study

Intergroup threat theory is relevant to this study because it applies to any social group that feels threatened in anyway, whether it's a majority or minority group in their society. Again, unemployment and mounting poverty among South Africans at the bottom of the economic ladder provoked fear of competition that better educated and experienced Nigerians would take over their scarce resources, (Ibrahim, Dele & Ukeaja, 2019). Hence, a common belief in South Africa was that every job given to a Nigerian is one less job for a South African. They felt threatened because they had to compete with the out-group who was ready to take up jobs at a cheaper wage compared to their South African counterparts. That gave rise to discriminatory practices and prejudice among themselves, (Kinge, 2016). Similarly, the worsening economic condition led to hostilities between the groups who directly compete over limited number of job opportunities and material resources. That made locals to conjure hatred and resentment towards Nigerians which turned into violence and foreigners was rescued back to their countries, (Ukwandu, 2017). The crisis translated to loss of jobs, businesses, lives were endangered and most Nigerians had to start life afresh, (Hammer, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted qualitative method. Secondary sources of data were employed largely from journals, textbooks, newspapers, web pages and government documents among others. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis through historical and interpretative methods.

DISCUSSION

Several Nigerians living in South Africa experienced diverse attacks by locals and were affected by the destruction of their socio-economic lives such as homes, education, food, health, basic needs, businesses (jobs) and the unlucky ones lost their lives and myriad of others. On that footing, higher education was not attainable for Nigerians who lost their businesses to the violence and insecurity in South Africa. They found themselves living below the poverty level and their children developed low academic skills, (Umezina, 2019). In the same vein, Spectrum Times, (2019) submits that, the experience is unforgettable for a lifetime as the children were threatened in schools. That led to missing of their examinations and eventually withdrawal from schools. In the same perspective, the relationship between Nigeria and South Africa was damaged. It was confirmed by Adebisi, (2017) who pointed out that, the collapse of most businesses belonging to Nigerians and their evacuation from South Africa discouraged them from going to South Africa in pursuit of higher education considering the hostile nature of locals to Nigerians. That attitude of theirs reduced the growth and boost on the economy because the multiplier effect was that most Nigerians changed their decisions and direction from training their children in South Africa to other countries perceived as peaceful. That undermined the economic progress of both countries as jobs, assets and financial resources were lost. Foreign direct investment was discouraged and made investment unfriendly to Nigerians. The estimated goods lost by

Nigeria in 2015 were ₦84million naira which the government of South Africa promised to compensate but never did. All these impaired the economy and transcended to Nigerians.

Worthy of note is that, several Nigerian were made homeless, they lacked acceptable housing, slept on the streets; the fortunate ones ran to friends, relatives for shelter and availed themselves of temporary overnight shelter because they could not afford it. Others lived on daily basis by availing themselves of free food and clothing, (Wright & Rubin (n.d). In the same perspective, Human Right Watch (2009) submits that they took shelter in unsafe and unsanitary camps, abandoned buildings, churches and open grounds where they could not access healthcare and became vulnerable to communicable diseases, substandard living environment, unsafe living conditions and government failure to protect them from arrest and deportation. They were thrown out of the urban, affordable townships into more expensive neighbourhood perceived to be safer but with higher rent. It translated to increased number of roommates and heightened the risk of diseases. Similarly, Kende, (2018) explained that they were threatened by malaria, hunger and became returnees who faced life of destitution. In the same context, their children were impaired because they were forced to give up their close friends as a result of change of school, ("Effects of losing a job, (2020). Again, children exhibited frequent aggressive and anti-social behavior and have a greater acceptance of violence as a strategy to end conflict, (Unanima International, 2019).

Stretching further, unemployment rate increased as most businesses owned by Nigerians in South Africa were destroyed while some were shut down to avoid being destroyed. The effect was that, Nigerians in South African companies were displaced of their jobs leading to the increase in unemployment rate, aside from this reason, many Nigerians in South Africa decided to go back home, which led to increased unemployment as the educated Nigerians among them joined the unemployed wagon in the nation. Life in Nigeria became very hard as it was very difficult to get a job even with their academic qualification (Umezina, 2019). In the same vein, the president of the Nigerian Union in South Africa in the person of Adetola Olubajo, confirmed that, Nigerian businesses in South Africa suffered a lot because they lost millions, signifying negative economic effects on businesses owned by Nigerians, the economy of South Africa and Nigeria (Benson, 2019). Again, it led to the loss of many Nigerian lives, properties, homes and many of the lives lost are breadwinners of their family that left Nigeria because of the current economic problem to search for greener pasture in South Africa. In the same context, Nkwede (2019) submits that, there was economic uncertainty because the hostile environment displaced Nigerians to the neighbouring nations as refugees. Again it dislocated foreign nationals from their source of livelihood (businesses) and isolated them from their business partners. Such denial from economic opportunities made Nigerians unable to access education and own land in South Africa for several years which was responsible for the high poverty levels among the black population. Since development is a function of investment which required domestic savings for growth and development, it had a negative effect on the nation's economy. Furthermore, surplus finance that existed through foreign borrowing as a strategy to strengthen cordial relationship between nations was denied. Such finances that would have complemented domestic savings, destroyed the human dignity of others as well as contradicted the stipulations of Articles 6 and 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Laws which states that

“everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment”. The implication for the overall economy was that, it posed a threat to Nigeria’s fragile economic recovery and development. It’s instructive to note that, attacks on Nigerian businesses in South Africa obviously brought unemployment and made Nigerians who were victims of the attack easy prey to terrorist organization which aggravated the strained security situation in both countries. Presently, in Nigeria and South Africa most of the crimes committed are usually perpetuated by the youths with the high rate of unemployment as a major factor.

Consequently, the violent attacks on Nigerians grew to the point that, Nigerians could not afford to meet their basic needs because they were pushed to seek for assistance from different places. The excessive looting of fashion accessories, clothes, and groceries, destruction of shops before the intervention of security operatives led to the appeal by the affected Nigerians for financial support from the government to enable them return to their businesses, (Eno-Abasi, Gbonegun, Olatunji & Otaru, 2019). Some returned because the attacks assumed a dangerous proportion and all they achieved in South Africa were lost in the attacks. Shops and houses were set ablaze. The damages to the properties of Nigerians are worth 12 million rand, approximately ₦21 million to be sent to the federal government for further action, (Spectrum Times, 2019). Some of the returnees sought for assistance from the federal government while in South Africa they acquired businesses and other skills and even called on the government to tap from their skills, (Aliyu, 2019). Some Nigerians spent weeks asking for money, food from their pastors and others for survival because their business premises were demolished and they had nowhere to get money for survival. Unfortunately, there was no compensation for the losses or offer of assistance to businesses that were destroyed during the attacks. That left victims to continue seeking for assistance from different places. The attackers did not give anyone a chance to collect any valuables; instead they made sure that foreign nationals (precisely Nigerians) ran for their lives, leaving behind their hard-earned possessions for the looters. Nigerians were made to face far reaching physical effects that permanently impaired their ability to practice viable livelihood, (Mothibi, Roelofse, & Tshivhase, 2015). Hence, they relied on public assistance.

Amidst that, there was lack of community security which led to exposure of foreign investors such as Nigerians to abuse, crime and extortion by individuals and community leaders. They therefore relied basically on the authorized institutes of justice and became hindered by lack of trust and faith in the police and courts, intensified by cultural and language barriers, (Ige, 2018). Even the harsh policies regulating the movement of foreign nationals led to social exclusion and marginalization of Nigerians through the implementation of restrictive policies and practices. Generally, it created hate in the minds of Nigerians which translated to negative impression that made them not to have anything with South Africans. Following that, the government of Nigeria on 4th September 2019 boycotted the World Economic Forum on Africa held in Cape Town in condemnation of the violent attacks on Nigerians, (Umezina, 2019).

Concluding Remarks

In a nutshell, xenophobic violence that led to destruction of lives, properties and insecurity significantly affected the lives of Nigerians in South Africa. On account of that, it impacted negatively on them in several dimensions such as inadequate housing, inability to have education, unemployment, basic needs of Nigerians were difficult to meet and there was insecurity of lives and properties. It suffices to say that, to pull out of the aforementioned challenges, the following recommendations should be applied.

Recommendations

- The government should implement housing led initiatives. Provide adequate housing with support services for victims of xenophobic violence to address the challenges of homelessness in an effort to break the cycle of generational homelessness.
- The ensure that Nigerians in South African are not denied access to education, the government should provide identification numbers or passport numbers for the goal of enrollment, backed up with an affidavit from their parents.
- The government's immediate response to the relentless xenophobic attacks on its people should be to devise measures that will make it easier for Nigerians to make a living here. Where jobs are available and the availability of business loans is not an issue, traveling to foreign countries for the purpose of basic economic sustenance and large scale direct foreign investment in the economies of other countries will be reduced.
- A focus on breaking loss cycles and helping people to initiate gain cycles should be considered in both individual interventions, preventive and broad based community efforts. There should be amenable intervention through individual treatment, group and community interventions.
- The government should develop programmes that will work to enhance and foster partnership between local populations and immigrant communities. For example, skills sharing between locals and foreigners could provide a platform to forge relationships, deal with misconceptions about "foreigners", and work to eliminate the fear and distrust that could result in situations of violence.
- Socio-economic infrastructural facilities (like health service, portable water, electricity and good roads etc) should be provided to facilitate effective production and marketing of agricultural produce. Moreover, access to credit and lands should be made easier by the Government in order to make farmers produce at the optimum level.
- To improve basic needs, health service should be made free by the Federal Government for victims and families of xenophobic attack. The National Health Insurance Scheme should be used to take care of Nigerians from South Africa. This would help to improve basic needs of Nigerians on health.

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