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Framing Xenophobia on Social Media: An Analysis of Xenophobic Attacks on Nigerians Living in South Africa

Emeka Umejei

Abstract

This study examines mis- and disinformation concerning xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa in 2017 and 2019. The study uses narrative theories and netnography involving thematic content analysis and focus group discussions with undergraduate university students, youths and adults across the three dominant regions of Nigeria. The study answers the question: what motivates Nigerians to share mis- and disinformation concerning xenophobic attacks against Nigerians living in South Africa on social media? The findings of this study suggest that national solidarity is an overriding motivation for sharing mis- and disinformation about xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa on social media.

Keywords: Xenophobia, national solidarity, social media, Nigeria, South Africa, reprisal attacks, tensions

1. Introduction

The Nigerian rumour mill is usually on overdrive. It is an industry that is resilient and immune from the vagaries of the Nigerian political and economic climate (Odunfa [1]). The affordances of digital technology have, in no small measure, contributed in weaponizing the Nigerian rumour mill. Now, rumours, misinformation, disinformation and half-truths travel at the speed of light and reach a wider audience. This is the case of xenophobic attacks against Nigerians living in South Africa in 2017 and 2019 in which rumours, mis- and disinformation resulted in reprisal attacks on South African businesses in Nigeria. A typical example of how the Nigerian rumour mill works is the story of a Nigerian, who was among those that attacked South African-owned Shoprite at The Palms Mall in Lagos, Nigeria. When the young man was asked why he joined others to attack Shoprite and other South African businesses in Nigeria, he responded that xenophobia, a Nigerian living in South Africa had been killed by South Africans. Hence, attacking South African businesses was the only way he could get even with the death of xenophobia in South Africa. Even though this story has not been verified, it goes to show the potency of mis- and disinformation and how it could have adverse impact on the government-to-government as well as people-to-people relations between two countries. For instance, mis- and disinformation has been identified as factors

responsible for reprisals attacks against South African businesses in other African countries (Osuagwu & Elebeke [2]; Somdyala [3]). Chenzi [4], p. 3 explained that “foreign nationals residing in South Africa share content with their relations who reside outside South Africa about their xenophobic experiences.” He emphasised that the social media content these foreigners often share about xenophobic violence in South Africa at times, turn out to be misinformation, leading to reprisal attacks [4]. However, there is limited academic investigation into the motivation for sharing mis- and disinformation concerning xenophobic attacks against Nigerians living in South Africa on social media. This chapter provides an insight into factor (s) influencing Nigerians to share mis- and disinformation concerning xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South. The finding has both academic and policy relevance for the literature on mis- and disinformation as well as South Africa-Nigerian relations.

2. Background

Xenophobia has attracted widespread attention within and without the academic community. The reason is obvious; it is considered an anomaly that foreigners, particularly Africans, would face the magnitude of hatred that Xenophobia spews. The first major xenophobic outbreak in post-1994 South Africa happened on 11 May 2008 and there have several other outbreaks of violence against foreigners in South Africa. While recent incidents may not be of the same magnitude as the incident of 11 May 2008, its recurrence points to a troubling relationship between locals and foreigners. For instance, on 30 May 2013, 25-year-old Abdi Nasir Mahmoud Good, was stoned to death in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The violence was captured on a mobile phone and shared on the Internet.¹ Again, on 7 June 2014, a Somali national was stoned to death and two others were seriously injured when an angry mob of locals attacked their shops in Mamelodi, South Africa. Three more Somalis were wounded by gunshots and their shops were looted.² In April 2015, there was an upsurge in xenophobic attacks throughout the country. The attacks started in Durban and spread to Johannesburg. Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini was accused of igniting the attacks with his remarks that foreigners’ resident in the country “should go back to their countries.”³ In October 2015 the serene town of Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape recorded an outbreak of xenophobic attacks on foreigners. According to the news report, more than 500 people were displaced and more than 300 shops and homes looted. Muslims were identified as the target of the attacks.⁴ While South Africa witnessed a modicum of peace after the Grahamstown xenophobia outbreak, it ruptured in February 2017 when another xenophobia outbreak was recorded in Pretoria, South Africa. The incident took a new turn on 24 February 2017 when a large-scale anti-immigration protest suspected to have official approval, according to the Nelson Mandela Foundation, erupted in the capital city of Pretoria.⁵ The Protesters marched to the Foreign Ministry and handed a petition to government representatives. Protesters accused immigrants of taking jobs from South Africans, causing crime

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/06/2013638213294187.html>

² <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/138539/two-dead-in-xenophobic-attacks-in-s-africa>

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32372501>

⁴ <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-10-27-where-poverty-meets-xenophobia-grahamstown-a-city-in-crisis/#.WzJ0a9IzbIU>

⁵ <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/anti-immigration-march-is-march-of-hatred-nelson-mandela-foundation-20170224>

and complained that “they are arrogant and they don’t know how to talk to people, especially Nigerians.” The February xenophobia outbreak affected many Nigerians resident in Pretoria, who the locals accused of being “arrogant and don’t know how to talk to people.”⁶ However, xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa escalated in 2019 resulting in the repatriation of more than 600 Nigerians, who were flown home aboard Nigeria’s Air Peace.⁷ Both incidents resulted in reprisal attacks in Nigeria but it was more fatal in 2019 resulting in the closure of the South African High Commission, South African-owned Telco, MTN, Shoprite and other South African businesses in Nigeria.⁸ Even though the repatriation of Nigerians from South Africa incited reprisal attacks, it was mis- and disinformation on social media that worsened it and stoked tensions between South Africa and Nigerian relations. Hassan and Hitchen [5], p. 3 show that in Nigeria, disinformation is most effective when it draws on existing narratives and contexts to sharpen existing social divides and aimed at “delegitimising institutions, groups or personalities, glorifying a leader or, during elections, confusing voters, instigating apathy or marginalising women and other vulnerable groups.”

3. Xenophobia or Afrophobia?

The occurrence of xenophobic violence has become a feature of the lived realities of foreigners who reside in South Africa. Xenophobia has been defined as a hatred for foreigners (Steenkamp [6]; Williams [7]). However, Harris [8], p. 2, contends that Xenophobia extends beyond hatred; rather, it should be redefined to “incorporate practice” because it is not just a “dislike or fear of foreigners but a violent practice that results in bodily harm and damage” [8].

The South African Migration Project (SAMP) identified several factors responsible for the outbreak of xenophobic violence. Some of these include isolation, relative deprivation, Nation Building, Public and official discourse, Legislative and policy Frameworks, Human Rights Education, Data and Information, Public and Officials Discourse, Opportunities for Interaction, Going beyond the Debate(s), Peer Education, and Establishing a Network (Crush et al. [9]). For his part, Harris [8] identified three hypotheses responsible for the occurrence of xenophobia in South Africa including the Scapegoating hypothesis; the isolation hypothesis and the biocultural hypothesis. However, the perception of African migrants as the economic threats has been identified as a major causative factor in the occurrence of xenophobic violence [9]. This was highlighted in the SAMP survey of 2006, which noted that attitudes towards foreigners as a national threat to the economic well-being of South Africans have hardened. For instance, the survey result showed that “the proportion of South Africans arguing that foreign nationals use up resources grew by 8% from 59% in 1999 to 67% in 2006. Furthermore, the survey also highlighted that migrants are being increasingly associated with crime rising from 45% in 1999 to 67% in 2006 as did the idea that migrants bring disease 24% in 1999 to 49% in 2006” [9], p. 3.

On the other hand, xenophobia does not apply to all categories of foreigners in South Africa. Black Africans bear the brunt of xenophobic violence outbreak in South Africa. Steenkamp [6], p. 442 explains that xenophobia is carried out along

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/24/south-african-police-use-force-anti-immigration-protest-pretoria>

⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/nigeria-begins-repatriate-nationals-south-africa-190911074310949.html>

⁸ <https://www.voanews.com/africa/nigerians-attack-south-african-businesses-retaliation>

certain categories. The major targets of xenophobic attacks in South Africa are black migrants, who are perceived as economic threat to black South Africans. Therefore, the incidences of xenophobia in South Africa could be majorly considered as “Afrophobia” because it is majorly targeted at African migrants’ resident in the country.

Unfortunately, this contradicts the role of other Africans nations during the apartheid era when South African exiles were accommodated and educated in other African countries [6]. During this period, several high profile South African political leaders took shelter in other African countries, where they were accommodated, supported and encouraged to sustain the struggle against the Apartheid government in South Africa. For instance, Thabo Mbeki was posted to Nigeria as Deputy head of the ANC’s Department of Information and Propaganda. Additionally, many Nigerians were taxed to provide assistance to the ANC-led struggle against apartheid. In fact, it is estimated that the Nigerian government provided an annual subvention of \$5million to the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) to aid the struggle against the Apartheid regime at the time.

4. Theoretical framework

Prinsloo [10], p. 130, explains that narrative is universal because it is “recognised as crossing all social and cultural divides.” Narrative is, therefore, a sense-making mechanism for understanding the real world (Fiske [11]; Wigston [12]). This study draws on structuralist approach to narrative analysis, which combines the syntagmatic and paradigmatic. Prinsloo [10], p. 133, explains that “the syntagmatic type of analysis identifies and describes the structure of formal organisation of the text following the chronological order or the linear sequence of the narrative while a paradigmatic type of analysis seeks to identify the deeper latent patterns or organisations which underpin the story.” Hence, a combination of syntagmatic and paradigmatic “approaches enable questions of positioning and power to be posed” (Prinsloo [10], p. 157). Also, structuralism “relies on binary opposition in order to transfer meanings in the easiest way because we make sense of concepts and ideas by contrasting them with their opposites [12], p. 142. Levi-Strauss explains that when “two characters are opposed in binary structure, their symbolic meaning is virtually forced to be both general and easily accessible because of the simplicity of the difference between them” [12], p. 152. Explaining further, Wigston [12], p. 154, pointed out that Levi-Strauss is not “interested in the sequential development of the narrative, but rather in the relationships between the various characters and their settings and hence, binary opposition then provide us with a means of undertaking a paradigmatic analysis of a text where we can determine these relationships.” Therefore, by analysing the binary oppositions in a text we can “uncover the ideological and manipulative structure of the values embodied in that message” as well as “reveal deep structures below the surface of the message that are not immediately clear but are implied in every opposition” [12], p. 172.

This study draws on Propp and Todorov narratives theories. Propp’s model like Todorov’s provides a means of identifying the conventional narrative structure in a text. While Propp and Todorov models are useful for comparing text, other analytical devices such as Levi-Strauss binary opposition is needed to gain deeper insight into the structure of a text [13]. Hence, this study combines Propp and Todorov narrative theories to analyse the framing of the February 2017 and August 2019 xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa on social media. This chapter is concerned with the narrative of xenophobia on social media and how it influences emotion, rational and sentiments among Nigerians [10], p. 130.

4.1 Social media and fake news

The affordances of digital technology have resulted in the rise of mis- and disinformation with dire consequences for truth and credibility of the media (Wasserman [13]; Schifferes et al., [14]). Wasserman and Benequista [15], p. 35, explain that the “ease with which media can be produced online has made it possible for rumours, untruths, and disinformation to spread and threaten the credibility of the news media.” The use of social media to manipulate public opinion has become a global challenge and sub-Saharan Africa is not an exemption. The role of Cambridge Analytica in election manipulation in Kenya and Nigeria is a pointer to this reality (Granville [16]). For instance, it is estimated that “organized social media manipulation has more than doubled since 2017, with 70 countries using computational propaganda to manipulate public opinion” (Howard and Bradshaw [17]). This has adversely impacted the average level of trust in the news across all countries (Nielsen et al. [18]). Even leading religious leaders such as Pope Francis of the Catholic Church has acknowledged fake news is a “very serious sin.”⁹ Chenzi [4] explained that “fake social media content about the xenophobic violence in South Africa is one of the triggers of reprisal attacks against South African businesses and nationals in other parts of Africa [4]. This is because most the content they share with their loved ones back in their home countries are likely to be “fake news leading to reprisal attacks” (Chenzi, [4], p. 3). This study examines the motivations for sharing mis- and disinformation concerning Xenophobic attacks against Nigerians living in South Africa on social media.

5. Methodology

This study is a netnography involving a thematic analysis and focus group discussions. It uses narrative theories, thematic content analysis and focus group discussions with undergraduates and postgraduate students, adults under 40 and adults above 40. The two complementary methodologies enabled the author to collect comprehensive information on the motivation for sharing mis- and disinformation concerning xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa (Sade-Beck [19], p. 49). In a netnography three categories of data are recognised including archival data, elicited data, and fieldnote data (Kozinets [20], p. 4). This study uses archival data from messages posted on xenophobic attacks against Nigerians living in South Africa on Twitter and Facebook. First, the study developed a codebook for categorising Propp’s seven characters (see **Table 1**). Second, a total of 581 Facebook posts were harvested manually in relation the xenophobia outbreak of February 2017. Furthermore, the study focused on Facebook accounts with more than 2000 followers. This reduced the number of Facebook accounts to 100. These accounts were further coded using Google form. The Twitter analysis focused on the tweets of @JJ Omojuwa, who is regarded as a social media influencer in Nigeria. @Omojuwa is a known public opinion moulder, who also works as a consultant and runs a foundation. He is highly regarded within the Nigerian social media space. His Twitter account is also verified evincing his status as a social media celebrity in Nigeria. @Omojuwa has 560,000 followers on Twitter, which makes him a major influencer of events in Nigeria and Africa at large. The Twitter analysis is focused on the debate ignited on Twitter by @Omojuwa’s tweet on the February 2017 Xenophobia outbreak. @Omojuwa’s tweets were also selected because he travelled to South Africa within the period of the February 2017 xenophobia outbreak and was

⁹ <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2016/1208/Why-Pope-Francis-says-fake-news-is-a-sin>

Entries	Categorisation
South Africans are evil, south Africans are jealous of Nigerians, South Africans are lazy, they are ungrateful for the role Nigerians played in ending apartheid	Villain
Nigerians are victims of South African wickedness, jealousy	Princess
Seeks peace and reconciliation between Nigeria and South Africa	Hero
Portrays themselves as the hero seeking for the betterment of Nigerians but they are fuelling the conflicts by posting fake news	False hero
Calls on the Nigerian government to rescue Nigerian citizens leaving in South Africa	Dispatcher

Table 1.
Code book.

asked for detailed identification by South African border police, which resulted in his being delayed for a few hours. Rather than frame his tweet on this incident as an immigration issue, @Omojuwa framed it as a continuation of xenophobic attacks on Nigeria.

Second, A total of eight focus group discussions were held across the three dominant regions of Nigeria. Each of the focus group discussions lasted between 50 and 90 minutes and were conducted in English. In instances where the Nigerian colloquial English was used it was translated to English language. A total of 68 participants joined the discussion in groups ranging from 8 to 10. The discussion guide was structured around five sections, each containing a list of key questions to be asked in all focus groups, and a set of additional questions to be asked at the discretion of discussion facilitator.

6. Analysis

An analysis of the Facebook posts and tweets suggest there are five broad themes that dominated social media framing of xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa. The themes are: *Retaliate, Lazy and ungrateful, Jealous and inhuman, Irresponsible government, South Africans are barbaric.*

7. Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis focused on a few accounts on Facebook and Twitter. The accounts were selected for relevance and reach. Three accounts were selected purposively including @Engr.Chris Moore, AY COMEDIA, and YAW on Facebook and @JJ Omojuwa on Twitter.

Engr. Chris Moore's profile on Facebook describes him as a former system administrator, who lives in Milan, Italy. He is followed by 2138 people on Facebook. On 18 March 2017, he posted the following message on his Facebook wall:

Fellow Nigerians please, stay away from South Africa because of their xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in their country. Please, travel to countries that can at least protect your human right. Please, keep sharing to keep our citizens from travelling to such country.

This post was accompanied by five gory pictures. Four of the pictures were from the 2008 xenophobic violence in South Africa. The fifth picture was from a scene

of *necklacing*¹⁰ in Nigeria. This post was shared by 1596 people, liked by 82 people and attracted 124 comments on Facebook. While responding to comments to this message, @Engr.Chris Moore sustained this narrative with another post that “South African government is not doing anything to arrest the situation” but this is not true because about 136 South¹¹ Africa protesters were arrested by the South African police on February 24 during the anti-immigrant protest in Pretoria.

The post by @ Engr. Chris Moore ignited widespread debate on Facebook about xenophobic attacks on Nigerians resident in South Africa. However, most of the debates were informed by alternative facts and stereotypes. This is because most of the participants in the debate are not resident in South Africa (see **Figure 1**) and relied on secondary sources. This was highlighted by some of the respondents, who pointed out that the pictures posted by @Engr. Chris Moore were old pictures that had been used elsewhere. For instance, @Ehis Ese confirmed that one of the pictures was that of an armed robbery perpetrator that was *necklaced* in Warri, Delta State, Nigeria: “Dis guy was a thief and was burnt last year in estate *roundabout* in Warri, Delta state. I mean this particular guy but I don’t know about the rest” (Sic). @Oscarpedro Osagie also noted: “Wrong. This photograph was on before this incident”. Another respondent, @Mountain Omobaorun Ododo Omoleye, who is resident in South Africa also pointed that the pictures were not a true reflection of the incident of February 2017: “Hello people this post and the pictures, I have not seen this picture and the news here in South Africa, pls which path of South Africa did this happen” (Sic). A South African @Mapie Mhlangu queried why @Engr. Chris Moore was spreading fake news on Facebook: “But Why are you spreading fake news?”

AY COMEDIAN is a celebrated Nigerian comedian, whose Facebook account is a community. AY COMEDIAN lives in Lagos Nigeria and his Facebook community is followed by 4, 718,434 people. On 23 February 2017 AY COMEDIAN posted a picture of a man being mobbed by an angry crowd with the following message: “Xenophobia: Angry South Africans Mob Brutally Attack a Nigerian Man in SA.” The man that was being attacked cannot be identified through the picture because his face was not visible. How AY COMEDIAN knew that the man being attacked was a Nigerian demystifies human knowledge but the picture helped promote the narrative that South Africans were attacking Nigerians that are resident in South Africa. The source of this picture was given as *gistvilla.co* but this is a non-existent news site. This particular post was shared by 433 people, liked by 1400 and attracted 1200 comments. Another post by YAW, a leading Nigerian comedian and radio host also promoted the same narrative of xenophobia. YAW is a community on Facebook followed by 241, 455 people. On 27 February YAW posted a video on Facebook with the following message: “Another video of South African youths shooting a young man to death in the xenophobic attack has emerged. Watched the video below.” The source of the video was given as <http://yawnaija.tv/xenophobic-attacks-south-africa-2017/>. First, the video in question was not produced in South Africa because the actors in the video spoke the Arabic language, which suggests it could have been in any of the Arabian countries in Africa. Secondly, the source of the video was traced to Yaw’s online news site which goes by his own name, <http://yawnaija.tv>. However, this video was used to promote the xenophobic narrative that

¹⁰ Necklacing. This is an approach to summary execution and torture by forcing tyre round the neck of victims. It is a common practice in Nigeria. For further detail, See <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/world/2012-11-28-necklacing-murder-of-students-shocks-world/>

¹¹ <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/p2-136-arrested-in-pretoria-during-xenophobic-violence-phahlane-20170224>

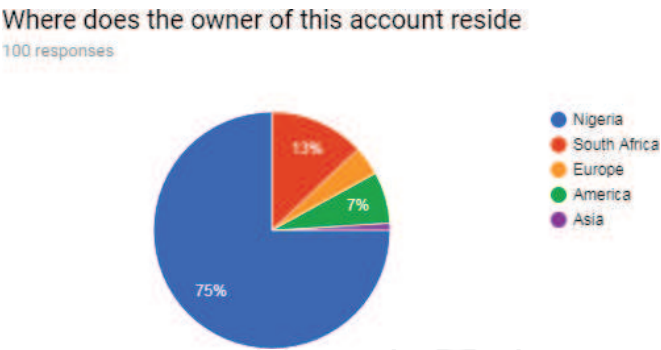


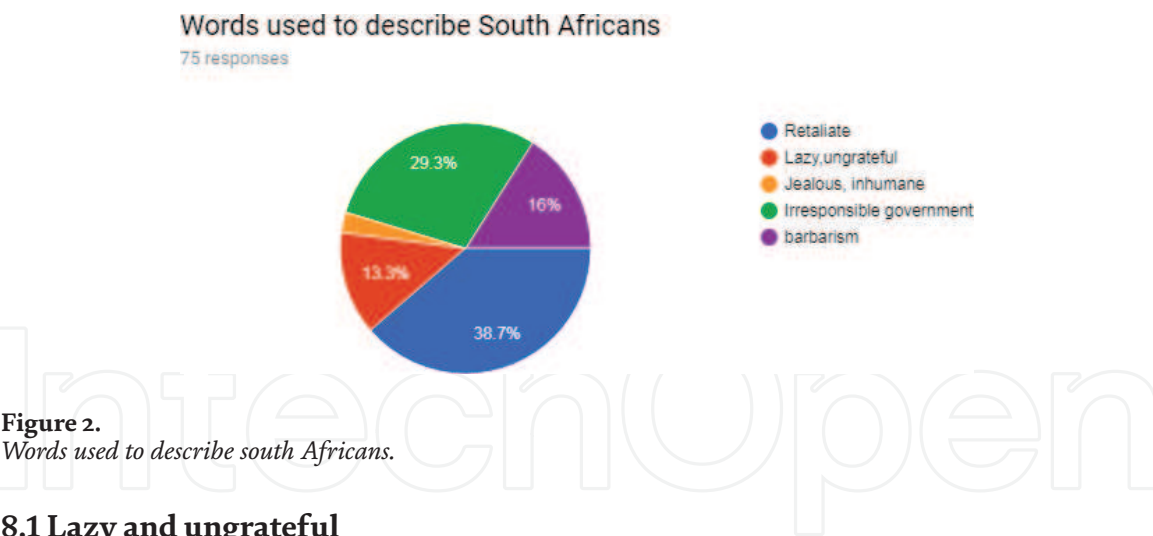
Figure 1.
Geographic location of social media handles.

South Africans were attacking Nigerians resident in their countries. This post was shared by 46 people, liked by 54 and attracted 20 comments. Furthermore, YAW posted another three pictures with the message: “We are all foreigners somewhere.” Two of the pictures were from the 2008 xenophobic outbreak in South Africa but were used to frame the incident of February 2017.

On Twitter, the analysis is focused on @JJ Omojuwa’s tweet in response to the outbreak of xenophobia in South Africa. Omojuwa tweeted about the February xenophobia outbreak in South Africa on March 2 to his followers: “Xenophobia: Stop being ingrates-Thabo Mbeki.” This was former President Thabo Mbeki’s message cautioning South Africans to replicate the friendliness that other African countries showed to South Africans during apartheid. The tweet attracted 62 retweets and 29 likes. After this post was made on March 2, @Omojuwa travelled to South Africa on March 4 and was asked by South African border Police to provide further details about his trip, which he could have done without attracting attention but it presented him an opportunity to promote the xenophobic narrative about South Africans. However, there were a few of @Omojuwa’s followers who saw through the attempt to frame an immigration issue as xenophobia. One of his followers with the handle @LuamboJT replied that it was all about Omojuwa’s arrogance: “my man, your arrogance will put you in danger some other days, last time I checked, no Nigerian has been killed in SA.” In another tweet, @LuamboJT cautioned @Omojuwa that “the big issue to be addressed is your attitude my man, you don’t go to a foreign country and say things you were saying.”

8. Retaliate

The responses in this category urge Nigerians to retaliate against South Africans by either attacking their businesses in Nigeria such as MTN, Shoprite or attacking South Africans that are resident in Nigeria. A Facebook post by @Aniebonam Rusky Lotachukwu captures the majority of framing in this category. He responded to AY COMEDIAN’s post with the following message: “I swear the war has just begun..... Nigerians gonna burn down any shop or business owned by South Africans since South Africans seem to be wise.....soon South Africa will fall like an ass and will be one of the poorest country because no country now is happy with their devilish behaviour” (Sic). Another Facebook response by @Juliet Nganwaozuzu reproduced the same narrative: “We should start killing all the South African people that are in Nigeria without mercy please enough is enough” (Sic). This category comprised 38.7% (see **Figure 2**) of social media posts on the February xenophobia outbreak in South Africa. This suggests that Nigerians are in support of a reprisal attack in the face of xenophobic violence against Nigerians resident in South Africa.



8.1 Lazy and ungrateful

Messages in this category suggest that South Africans are ungrateful for the help rendered to them by the Nigerian government during apartheid, when some of their citizens were sheltered in Nigeria. For instance, @Omoabass Kafayat Anifowose responded to AY COMEDIAN’s post that: “Just South Africans are ingrate so easy to forgetting the favour Nigeria did for them. We stood by their side and we fought for them. So to kill Nigerians is what to pay them back?” (Sic). Messages in this category comprise 13.3% (see **Figure 2**) of social media posts on the xenophobic violence of February 2017.

8.2 Jealous and inhumane

In this category, South Africans are framed as being jealous of Nigerians because they are hardworking and attract the attention of South African women. A Facebook post by @Allan Donann is representative of the framing in this category. He posted in response to @AY COMEDIAN’s post that: “I just can’t believe how a fellow black man will treat his fellow black man like this. This is absurd and inhuman. The lazy mind is a frustrated mind. Why blame your failures on hardworking people” (Sic). Another Facebook post by @Jayne Bahanack Betow responded thus: “I will say this loud and clear without mincing words and in all confidence.... These very lazy South Africans are super jealous of hardworking Nigerians....I am a Cameroonian and I witness how hardworking, consistent, smart and intelligent Nigerians are when it comes to business and other essential and lucrative things.... And we Cameroonians admire and respect them for that. Guess what? Many Cameroonians are beginning to learn from them.....so please South Africans enough of this hatred and jealousy instead try to learn from them” (Sic). This category comprises 2.7% (see **Figure 2**) of social media post on the xenophobic attack of February 2017.

8.3 Irresponsible government

The responses in this category frame the South African government as is responsible and doing nothing to arrest the attacks on foreigners living in the country. For instance, @Olufemi Obembe posted that: “I feel that South African authorities are not responsible. They are supposed to protect lives and properties of everyone living in their territory, most especially foreigners” (Sic). This category comprises 29.3% (see **Figure 2**) of social media posts on the xenophobic outbreak of February 2017. This suggests that many Nigerians think that the South African government tacitly support xenophobic violence on Nigerians resident in their country.

8.4 South Africans are barbaric

In this category, South Africans are framed as barbaric and wicked. For instance, @Tee Jay responded to AY COMEDIAN's post that: "Being confronted by two South Africans before on the street and they said all Nigerians must die without saying anything to them; had to run for my life because they hold knife". In the same vein, @YemmyOcean Ige responded to @Engr. Chris Moore thus: "Why are d South Africans bad minded as dis, it's not right oooo, let all Nigerians there come back home oooo, Abeg" (Sic). This category comprises 16% (see **Figure 2**) of social media posts on the xenophobic violence of February 2017.

9. Interview analysis

9.1 Southwest under 40

The majority of participants in this category are likely to share misinformation on social media platforms if it involves the mistreatment of Nigerians in the diaspora as a means of group solidarity. This is evinced in the xenophobia outbreak in South Africa in 2019 when videos from the 2008 xenophobia attacks in South Africa were shared as that of 2019. This resulted in reprisal attacks on South African business interests in Nigeria. One participant in Lagos, Nigeria mentioned that she felt that sharing misinformation about xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa amounted to doing good. This suggests that Nigerian youths are likely to share mis- and disinformation about xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa as a way of expressing national solidarity with Nigerian victims.

9.2 Northeast under 40

In the northern part of Nigeria, Participants under the age of forty are also likely to share fake news to show solidarity with Nigerians being maltreated in the Diaspora. One participant said he shared fake videos on the 2019 xenophobic attacks against Nigerians living in South Africa to make Nigerians know what was happening to fellow Nigerians in South Africa.

9.3 Northeast above 40

Also, for participants above 40 years of age in the northeast of Nigeria did not share misinformation on Xenophobic attacks against Nigerians because they felt it could result in reprisal attacks. So, most of the people in the age bracket of 40 years and above in the northern part of Nigeria are not likely to share such videos.,

9.4 Southeast above 40

In the southeast, the view that Nigerians are likely to share mis- and disinformation concerning xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa as a form of national solidarity is valid. Some participants said they shared videos from the xenophobia outbreak of 2008 when it reoccurred in 2019 leading to reprisal attacks in parts of Nigeria. One participant mentioned that he shared misinformation concerning Xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa but pulled it when he found out it was false:

I have been a victim of sharing false news/information from people like the xenophobia in South Africa. I got pictures of events that happened before that xenophobia. I went as far as sharing it, but when I came back to verify the authenticity of the news, I discovered that those events had already happened long ago. So, it is false from my side, I pulled it down.

9.5 Nigerian students

Nigerian undergraduate students are also likely to share trending misinformation that has elements of patriotism and emotions. For example, participants shared fake news on the July 2019 xenophobic attacks on Nigerians resident in South Africa without verifying it. This is because the xenophobia outbreak in South Africa was the trending news on social media especially Twitter at the time. So, for undergraduate students sharing videos of xenophobic attacks from 2008 as that of 2019 was part of trending on Twitter and garnering more followers. One participant said he did not care to verify the videos he shared on social media when he saw someone that someone was being burnt alive; it angered him and he shared it on social media but he later realised that it was from the 2008 xenophobic attacks in South Africa:

When I saw the video of someone who was burning; and there was someone adding fuel to the fire, I was angered and has to share it on Twitter. Later, I started seeing on Twitter that the video was from the 2008 xenophobic attacks. I deleted it and put up the link to where they said it is fake news.

This student was one out of many undergraduate students who found it responsible to delete a misinformation posted on social media and also put up link showing it was fake news. This could be considered an isolated instance not the norm among undergraduate students in Nigeria. Another undergraduate student regurgitated a Nigerian stereotyping of South Africans of being lazy people who are jealous of hardworking Nigerians. This stereotyping happens on both sides of the divide. While South Africans tar Nigerians with the label of drug peddlers, Nigerians retort that South African men are lazy and jealous of Nigerian men, who are winning over their women:

If you look at a typical South African man, he is lazy, no offence...he is actually a very lazy person and people come into your country to help you, just like Chinese people come into our country to help us build airport, did we kill them?

This view correlates with one of the themes identified in the framing of xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa on social media, Lazy and ungrateful. There is a perception among Nigerians that South Africans are lazy and ungrateful for the role Nigeria played in bringing an end to apartheid in South Africa.

On the other hand, for postgraduate students, most of them said that they only share contents that are verified. Hence, they did not share fake videos on xenophobic attacks on Nigerians because they were unable to verify the authenticity of such content. The findings in this segment suggest that Nigeria youths are more likely to share mis-and disinformation concerning xenophobia as a form of national solidarity especially when it involves the 'mistreatment' of Nigerians in the diaspora such as the incident of Xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa in 2017 and 2019.

10. Conclusion

This chapter answers the research question: What is the motivation for sharing mis- and disinformation on xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa on social media? The chapter answered this question through an analysis of social media-Facebook, Twitter framing of both incidents as well through focus group discussions across the three dominant regions of Nigeria. The findings suggest that the framing of the February 2017 xenophobic outbreak in South Africa was based mis- and disinformation and reproduction of stereotypes on social media platforms (see **Figure 3**). Alternative facts accounted for 65% of the framing while 35% was based on fact. For instance, 80% of the posts on social media-Facebook and Twitter- framed South Africans as villains while 16% were framed as the false hero (see **Figure 4**). An analysis of the geographic location of the social media accounts-Facebook and Twitter-suggests that majority of them are domiciled in Nigeria (see **Figure 1**). For instance, 75% of the social media accounts are resident in Nigeria and relied on secondary sources, to frame xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa; 13% are resident in South Africa and 7% are resident in America (see **Figure 1**). Consequently, the framing of the xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa in 2017 and 2019 were based on rumours, untruths, mis- and disinformation emanating from the Nigerian rumour mill. Also, analysis of interview suggests that there is a general consensus among Nigerians that sharing mis- and disinformation about xenophobic attacks on Nigerians living in South Africa amount to some form of national solidarity; a show of patriotism to save

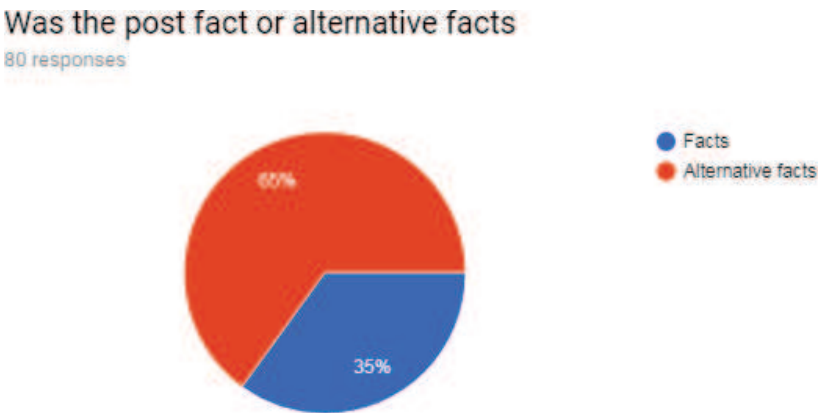


Figure 3.
Category of social media posts.

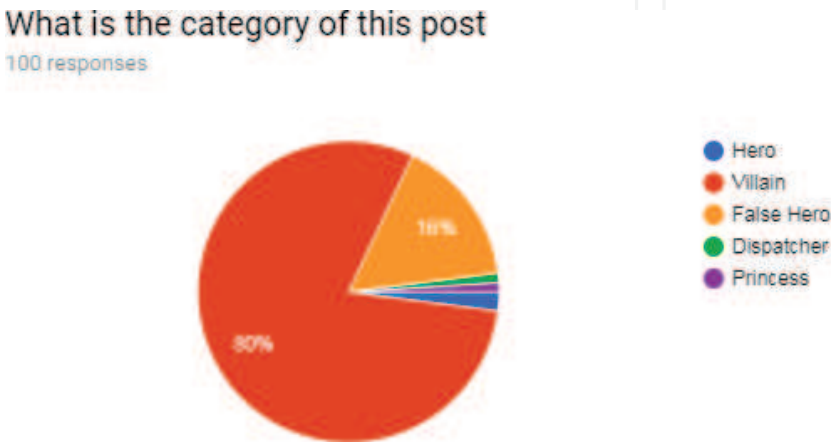


Figure 4.
Categorisation of social posts.

Nigerians from the dangers of living in South Africa. This point is validated across the three dominant regions of Nigeria as well as among undergraduate students. Consequently, this results in reprisal attacks and diplomatic tension between the Nigerian and South African governments. For instance, the Senior Special Adviser to the President on International Affairs, Honourable Abike Dabiri rebuked South Africa's Minister of Home Affairs, Malusi Gigaba's that "it appears that Mr. Gigaba would rather dwell on and entertain himself with diplomatic niceties when the welfare of Nigerians resident in South Africa are at stake now more than any time in recent history. His response to the xenophobic attacks, which has now become a recurring decimal on Africans, most especially Nigerians living peacefully in their host country of South Africa was, indeed, unfortunate."¹² Additionally, the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs followed up with a summon on the South African High Commissioner to Nigeria: "The High Commissioner of South Africa to Nigeria is being summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during which government's concerns on this matter will be brought to his attention."¹³ The findings correlate with Chenzi's [4] that mis-and disinformation about xenophobia on social media is a leading factor for reprisal attacks on South African businesses in Nigeria and diplomatic tension between Nigeria and South Africa.

¹² <http://www.pulse.ng/news/local/xenophobia-abike-dabiri-erewa-slams-sa-minister-id6287420.html>

¹³ <http://www.pulse.ng/news/local/xenophobia-foreign-ministry-summons-south-african-envoy-over-attacks-on-nigerians-id6255692.html>

Author details

Emeka Umejei

Department of Communication and Multimedia Design, American University of Nigeria, Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria

*Address all correspondence to: mosieds@gmail.com

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