Research article

Students' Attitudes and Perceptions on Xenophobia: A Study of a University in Durban

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Abstract

The recurrence of xenophobic violence in South Africa has been attributed to the proliferation of anti-migrant sentiments that stems from social, political, economic and cultural misconceptions and cleavages. The study presents the results of a survey undertaken at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of DUT students on xenophobia in South Africa. A questionnaire was designed and employed to collect data from 547 registered students of a university in Durban. The result reflects the existence of satisfactory awareness on xenophobia and low levels of anti-migrant sentiments which show that the majority of the students are not xenophobic. Traces of xenophobic perceptions and attitudes were observed in the responses of entry-level students from low-income areas, thus pointing to entry-level students and younger students as being more disposed to xenophobic tendencies. This trend echoes normative conceptions concerning xenophobia in South Africa, particularly, as a phenomenon deeply ingrained in socioeconomic inadequacies. However, the positive disposition of most students towards xenophobia reaffirms the importance of educational institutions in intercepting negative ethnic/racial sentiments as well as calls for intensified integration programmes and the extension of such into the communities.

Keywords

attitudes; migrants; perceptions; stereotypes; violence; xenophobia

Introduction

The end of apartheid marked the beginning of a new trend of aggression in South Africa, this time between local populations and the growing migrant population. The upsurge in cases of these forms of aggression and violence are deepened in the permeation of particular perceptions and attitudinal patterns which have brought to the fore a lot of questions on the nature and manifestation of such traits (Crush & Pendleton, 2004; Ogunyemi, 2012). The transfer of such sentiments beyond the immediate sites of xenophobic violence to other places, such as institutions of learning, has warranted concerns. This is especially

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relevant in cities that have experienced incidents of violence against foreigners. Since 1990, various degrees of coordinated attacks have been orchestrated mainly against African migrants in provinces such as Gauteng, Western Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal (Choane, Shulika & Mthombeni, 2011; Crush, Ramachandran & Pendleton, 2013). Most prominent of these outbreaks is the 2008 pogrom that started in Alexandra and later spread to cities around Durban and Cape Town (Hickel, 2014). The study seeks to undertake a contextual investigation on the existence and nature of xenophobic sentiments amongst university students in Durban University of Technology (DUT).

Background

Since the 2008 widespread aggression against foreign nationals (mainly of African descent) which culminated in the deaths of over 60 people, xenophobia has assumed prominence in discourse as a recurrent cause of social unrest in different parts of South Africa. In 2015, Durban was a flashpoint for xenophobic violence with over five people killed and thousands more rendered homeless in a spate of violence that lasted about two weeks (Asakitikpi & Gadzikwa, 2015, p. 227). Anti-migrant sentiments and stereotypes that stem from social, political, economic and cultural misconceptions and cleavages have been commonly identified as driving forces for this kind of aggression. A number of studies have confirmed the existence of high levels of stereotypes and anti-migrant sentiments amongst the South African population, more openly displayed by the black population mainly due to their engagements with migrant populations (Crush & Pendleton, 2004; Laheer, 2009; Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh & Singh, 2005, p. 8; Tshishong, 2015). These anti-migrant sentiments are deeply rooted in social misconceptions and political/economic cleavages; identifying and understanding such sentiments is crucial for ameliorating the tensions and violence associated with xenophobia in South Africa.

Inequality and poverty have been identified as the major precipitators of the proliferation of anti-migrant sentiments. This position becomes more apparent in the face of economic downturn, inadequate social amenities and an unstable political climate. Consequently, the quest for ownership and control of limited resources strengthens, resulting in an articulation of identity differences and the emergence of exclusionary measures for eradicating more 'vulnerable' competitors. Central to this approach is the scapegoating of foreign black Africans who are perceived as direct threats to job security and also blamed for the shortfalls of governance (Tella, 2016, p. 144). Solomon and Kosaka (2014, p. 5) explain that "xenophobia basically derives from the sense that non-citizens pose some sort of a threat to the recipients' identity or their individual rights, and is also closely connected with the concept of nationalism: the sense in each individual of membership in the political nation as an essential ingredient in his or her sense of identity". A new wave of nationalism born out of the complexities of increased migration, economic inequalities and underdevelopment has pitted local groups against external groups, depicting them as opportunists and threats to the economic security of indigenous groups. Xenophobic attitudes are mainly influenced by a sense of deprivation which is aptly captured by the "relative deprivation" theory.

Xenophobia has been commonly analysed through the constructs of relative deprivation (Dassah, 2015; Ejoke & Ani, 2017; Hopstock & De Jager, 2011; Human Sciences Research Council, 2008). Relative deprivation affirms the connection between violence and economic inequalities. It holds that discrepancies between expected economic conditions and reality fuel the feeling of frustration that precipitates violence (Džuverovic, 2013, p. 3). Psychological stress and tensions are triggered when individuals perceive their inability to access their entitlements in terms of goods and living conditions. The tensions are released through aggressive actions against those responsible for the situation or other accessible target. In South Africa, antagonistic sentiments towards foreigners are underlined by a sense of deprivation and driven by anger. The deprivation comes from the widespread inequality, poverty and also the deplorable nature of service delivery mainly experienced by the local population who had high expectations of the post-apartheid regime (Hopstock & De Jager, 2011). The frustration and emergent violence are directed towards accessible groups such as African migrants who are perceived as opportunistic and a hindrance to the attainment of an ideal society.

In cases where the media portrays foreign nationals negatively, it plays a crucial role in the creation of a derogatory image of foreigners and fosters the xenophobic discourse. The print media has frequently been accused of utilising labels and metaphors that foster the creation of a homogenous identity for African migrants in South African (Danso & McDonald, 2001; Pineteh, 2017; Tella, 2016). Most often, migrants are framed as smugglers, drug traffickers and fraudsters, thereby fostering the classification of African migrants into different criminal groups as well as affiliating individual countries with a specific crime (Solomon & Kosaka, 2014, p. 12). Pineteh (2017, p. 10) points to the negative influence of local print media coverage of the 2008 and 2015 xenophobia incidents which encouraged the reinforcement of negative sentiments and the escalation of more violence. On one hand, this draws attention to the positive potential of the media in altering the pro-xenophobic narrative through constructive news reportage. Other factors, such as perceived cultural supremacy and provocative statements, also occupy prominent spots as drivers and triggers of anti-migrant sentiments and violence. The long years of colonial occupation coupled with a detachment from the rest of Africa have contributed to the development of an exclusive cultural identity that disregards alien cultures and values (Tella, 2016, p. 144). The emergent identity particularly perceives other African cultures as inferior and threatening, thus lending credence to the 'afrophobia' hypothesis (Dassah, 2015, p. 134). Added to this are inflammatory and controversial remarks from political office holders and traditional leaders which legitimise exclusionary narratives and trigger aggressive actions against immigrants. This was evidenced in the 2015 outbreak of violence in Durban which was ignited after the Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelithini, made a call for migrants from other African countries to return to their home countries (Saleh, 2015, p. 304).

There have been a number of investigations into the perceptions and attitudes of South Africans towards xenophobia. The results of these studies are varied, but overall indicate the existence of anti-immigrant sentiments amongst South Africans. This position was affirmed by SAMP (South African Migration Project) in Rukema and Khan (2013, p. 178)

when they pointed to South Africa as being one of the most xenophobic countries in the world. The nature and expression of these sentiments take different forms. For example, in institutional settings such as universities, xenophobic sentiments are more likely to be expressed in subtle ways but with demoralising impacts on the subjects, thereby raising concerns about the nature of xenophobic perceptions in such settings (Singh, 2013). Overall, the general persistence of xenophobic violence in the face of increasing globalisation has had dire implications for the status of South Africa on the international scene (Kang'ethe & Duma, 2013), thereby justifying the need for extensive exploration of issues of migration and attitudes towards migrants.

The nature and manifestations of xenophobic violence have drawn attention to the impact of certain intervening factors in the construction and reinforcement of anti-migrant sentiments and behaviours. Xenophobia has been commonly described as a phenomenon rooted in the micro politics of townships and informal settlements (Misago, 2009, p. 3). This is mainly because the majority of the violence starts from these areas, thereby raising questions on the level of inequalities and poverty being experienced by the inhabitants of informal settlements. The correlation between xenophobic sentiments and individual level of life satisfaction becomes apparent. Kayitesi and Mwaba (2014, p. 1128) further explain that "the targeting of African migrants living in these poor communities may be explained by the perception of black South Africans that the migrants exacerbate their dissatisfaction with poor government service delivery".

Kayitesi and Mwaba (2014) and Coetzee (2012), in their studies on perceptions and attitudes towards xenophobia, revealed the existence of a minimal level of xenophobic attitudes amongst some university students and workers while a similar study conducted in Limpopo and the Western Cape revealed a high level of xenophobic practices amongst university students (Ritacco, 2010; Singh, 2013). From the foregoing, it can be deduced that people's perceptions and attitudes towards xenophobia are not static; they vary from province to province and are influenced by key factors such as the nature of study, participants' status, participants' demographics, and location, amongst others, thus elevating the need for a robust body of literature on the subject. By engaging a broader sample size, this study investigates perceptions on and attitudes towards xenophobia, and interrogates the influence of mediatory factors such as gender, age and location on xenophobic attitudes. A study of this nature will contribute in developing a pool of information which could help in identifying the patterns associated with xenophobia. This could serve as a foundation for broader engagement on the impact of xenophobia on the tertiary education landscape. This engagement is pertinent in view of the multi-cultural nature of South African tertiary institutions. In line with the pervasive notion of global consciousness, South African universities attract a considerable number of students from other African countries, thereby encouraging the internationalisation of the university environment. Understanding the impact of such trend on culture and constructions of realities could assist student affairs practitioners to devise appropriate strategies to improve the learning experiences of students (foreign and local).

Rationale

The study is driven by the pervasive nature of anti–migrant sentiments and its impact on different sectors of the society. By exploring students' knowledge and attitudes towards xenophobia in Durban University of Technology, the study aims to contribute to an emerging body of knowledge on attitudes towards xenophobia in South African tertiary institutions. In addition, a number of social and economic initiatives have already been instituted by the government and civil societies to curb the violence and improve the relationship between immigrants and locals. Prominent amongst these is the introduction of stiffer migration policies, security reforms and reconciliatory/healing programmes (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2014, p. 245; Asakitikpi & Gadzikwa, 2015, p. 229). An inquiry into the nature of the dispositions towards xenophobia will provide valuable insights on the impact of such measures. In this vein, the study sought to investigate through a survey the knowledge and attitudes of Durban University of Technology (DUT) students on xenophobia. The objectives of the study include:

- To investigate the awareness and disposition of DUT students on xenophobia and examine the level of xenophobic sentiments and attitudes amongst DUT students;
- To examine the link between their perceptions on xenophobia and their conduct; and
- To investigate factors influencing their perceptions on xenophobia in South Africa.

Methodology

The research was conducted at the Durban University of Technology, Durban, where the student population is set at approximately 26 000. Two of the researchers are postgraduate students of the university whilst the third is a senior lecturer at the same. Data was collected using a closed–ended questionnaire which was designed in line with the objectives of the study. The research instrument was approved by the Institutional Research Ethics committee and administered to 547 registered students of South African descent from all races and course levels. The respondents were voluntarily drawn from six faculties of the university located at the M.L. Sultan, Steve Biko, Ritson and City campuses. Stratified random sampling was employed to recruit respondents. Stratified random sampling involves partitioning the target population into strata and randomly selecting respondents from each stratum to make up a single sample (Salkind, 2010). For this study, stratification was done according to the faculties in order to facilitate fair representation of the faculties. In total, 547 questionnaires were retrieved from respondents above the age of 18 selected from undergraduate, bachelors and postgraduate levels. Willingness to participate and being of South African origin formed the basis for recruiting respondents.

Research Ethics

The study was approved by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee of the university (Ref: REC 70/60). Questionnaires were administered directly by the researchers at locations such as lecture rooms, residences and laboratories amongst others. In most cases, approval was sought from lecturers to administer the questionnaires during classes. During the distribution, a brief yet detailed introduction of the study was relayed after which verbal

dissent or assent to participate was elicited. The questionnaires were anonymously filled in and therefore did not expose the identity of the respondents. No incentives (monetary or otherwise) were offered for participation. The responses were handled confidentially and were analysed by the researchers using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Research Instrument

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first section features questions that investigate the demographics of the respondent and their basic knowledge on xenophobia in South Africa. The second section investigates the attitudes of the respondents towards xenophobia through hypothetical questions that juxtapose the knowledge of the respondents with their attitudes. Short scenarios were created where respondents were asked to choose their potential responses from a list of options ranging from 'definitely not', 'probably not', 'probably yes', 'definitely yes' and 'don't know'.

Results and Discussion

Of the 547 respondents, 67.1% were females and 32.7% males with 76.2% aged between 18 to 24 years. In terms of enrolment, 81.7% were studying for diploma programmes, 9.6% for Bachelors, 7.6% for master's whilst only 1.1% were studying for a PhD. 39.7% of the respondents came from urban townships with 36.6% coming from urban suburbs whilst the remaining 23.6% came from rural farming and mining communities. 77.5% of the respondents were black, 16.4% Indian with only 4.1% and 1.5% being white and coloured respectively.

The first part of the study involved asking respondents about their knowledge of xenophobia. 94% indicated that they were aware that xenophobic attacks had occurred within South Africa. The majority of the respondents, 57.9%, relied solely on the media for information on xenophobia, while 37.9% depended on all sources which included the media, family/friends, community meetings and university/college. It is worrying to note that only 0.9% of the respondents relied on the university as a source for such information. Furthermore, only 29.8% of the respondents were aware of the National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances. NAP was introduced by the government in March 2016 with a central focus on raising awareness as well as collecting crucial information on xenophobia and other related intolerances (BBC Monitoring Africa, 22/03/2016). The lack of awareness of this policy reflects a significant gap in the circulation of the policy which could imply that tertiary education populations were not adequately covered during the public consultation processes of this policy. Such omission could have implications for the articulation of often silenced yet crucial narratives on racial and inequality issues.

Cross-tabulation analysis was used to determine if age, location or ethnicity influenced the level of awareness on xenophobic issues (see Table 1). There were no significant differences between these variables concerning the level of awareness. We observed, though, that the respondents from rural mining areas scored highly – 100% and 75% on the two questions – in comparison with the other groups.

Table 1: Cross-tabulation of awareness by age, location and ethnicity (per cent)

Awareness					
by age	**18-24**	**25–30**	**31–35**	**Above 35**	
• of recent xenophobic attacks	93.5	93.3	100.0	96.4	
• of NAP	30.0	22.7	40.0	37.0	
by location	**Urban suburbs**	**Urban townships**	**Rural farming**	**Rural mining**	
• of recent xenophobic attacks	93.4	96.3	90.3	100.0	
• of NAP	29.8	31.5	26.3	75.0	
by ethnicity	**Black**	**Indian**	**White**	**Coloured**	**Other**
• of recent xenophobic attacks	95.2	92.0	86.4	87.5	66.7
• of NAP	30.9	22.1	40.0	12.5	66.7

To investigate the disposition of DUT students towards xenophobia and the link between their perception on xenophobia and their conduct we posed four short scenarios (listed in the left-hand column of Table 3). We asked (1) whether the student regarded the described behaviour as xenophobic, and (2) whether the student would engage in the activity. The results are reported in Tables 2 and 3 respectively. Many of the scenarios drew on cases of possible xenophobia reported in the South African media during 2015 when the attacks resurfaced. Prominent amongst these were reports of foreign-owned spaza (small) shops being looted, of King Zwelithini being alleged to have sparked fresh xenophobic attacks by calling for foreigners to be sent back to their countries, and of foreigners being mocked in public places such as taxis and being called derogatory names.

Table 2 indicates that all four scenarios were judged to be very xenophobic or fairly xenophobic by half or more of the respondents. The average proportion of respondents who rated a scenario as very or fairly xenophobic was 69.6 per cent. This implies that the majority of the respondents are knowledgeable on the manifestation of xenophobic attitudes.

Table 2: Perceptions of xenophobic attitudes in the four scenarios (per cent)

Scenario	Xenophobic				
	No	Not sure	Little bit	Fairly	Very
Leader makes a call for foreigners to leave the area	5.1	16.6	8.7	17.3	52.4
Group mocks foreigner for inability to speak local language	7.9	8.6	15.2	19.2	44.8
Mob loots foreign-owned spaza shop	4.6	10.6	8.8	13.5	58.3
Taxi driver calls a foreign commuter a "kwere kwere"	5.9	9.0	8.6	14.8	58.1

On the conduct of respondents in specific xenophobic scenarios, the majority of the respondents indicated that they would not be involved in any of the listed activities (see Table 3). The average proportion of respondents who indicated that they would definitely or probably not participate in a xenophobic activity was 81%. This indicates that a large proportion of the respondents are not disposed to xenophobic attitudes, possibly indicating a disapproval of xenophobic violence by DUT students. This finding is congruent with a similar investigation undertaken at the University of Johannesburg which reported a widespread condemnation of xenophobic violence by students (Naidoo & Uys, 2013, p. 20). In terms of the link between the perception and conduct of the respondents, a significant positive correlation is observed between the responses on their perception and their conduct with a slightly higher proportion of respondents not willing to engage in xenophobic attitudes.

Table 3: Willingness to engage in xenophobic activity depicted in the four scenarios (per cent)

Your possible response in that situation	Definitely not	Probably not	Probably yes	Definitely yes	Don't know
Would you ask foreigners to leave?	41.5	31.6	8.2	4.2	11.3
Would you mock a foreigner for not speaking your local language?	73.1	16.5	3.3	0.5	3.1
Would you loot a foreign–owned spaza shop?	69.5	14.8	2.7	1.5	7.5
Would you call a foreigner a "kwere kwere"?	59.6	17.4	12.2	4.0	0.5

The third aim of the article was to examine the factors influencing the disposition of the respondents towards xenophobia. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the influence of gender, location, age, enrolment and ethnicity. Cross-tabulations were carried out to investigate how these played out across age, location, enrolment levels as well as the respondents' ethnic background (see Tables 4 and 5). A small proportion of the respondents (16% male and 17% female) would engage in certain xenophobic activities (calling a foreigner a 'kwere-kwere') regardless of the fact that a majority (79.7% males and 86.8% females) regard such behaviour as xenophobic. This discrepancy presents a gap in knowledge that could be further interrogated through Focus Group Discussions to identify drivers behind xenophobic tendencies. One plausible explanation could be that those calling foreigners a 'kwere-kwere' do so innocently because it is a norm within the places they come from and they do not realise that it is xenophobic. We must highlight that understanding the reasons for xenophobic dispositions was not the aim of the study although the traits manifested by some students would call for further investigations into this. This is therefore one of the limitations presented by this study and it creates room for additional data to be collected using qualitative methods.

There were no significant differences across all variables concerning these four scenarios. However, Indian and white respondents were significantly more likely than African respondents to regard scenarios 1 and 2 as xenophobic. As indicated in Table 6, 85.2% and 95.2% compared to 75.4% respectively for scenario 1, whilst for scenario 2, it was 94.2% and 90.5% compared to 79.8% respectively. It should be noted that a small proportion in all groups were most likely to engage in all four xenophobic activities. Interestingly, the students who came from rural mining locations were most significantly likely to engage in scenario 1 and 2 in comparison with those from other locations (Table 5). The findings imply variations (most likely racial/geographical) in the respondents' disposition and conduct towards xenophobic scenarios. The differences in perceptions and attitudes challenge normative notions that xenophobic sentiments are prevalent across all socioeconomic groups in South Africa (Neocosmos, 2010, p. 2; Solomon & Kosaka, 2014, p. 9). None of the PhD students were likely to engage in any xenophobic activity at all. This could be as a result of the correlation between higher levels of education and increased ethnic/racial tolerance (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007, p. 400; Hjerm, 2001, p. 40).

Table 4: Cross-tabulation of gender against the four scenarios (per cent)

Scenario	Xenophobic		Engage	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Ask foreigners to leave	72.3	81.0	14.9	11.9
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	86.4	86.3	6.6	2.8
Loot foreign–owned spaza shop	77.1	87.4	6.0	3.6
Call a foreigner a "kwere–kwere"	79.7	86.8	16.6	17.0

Cross-tabulation was further used to analyse the gender, age and enrolment level of those who had reported xenophobic perceptions and were likely going to engage in one of the four scenarios under review (see Tables 6 and 7). It was discovered that female respondents, 57.8%, 66.7% and 65.7 %, constituted those who were likely to engage in the xenophobic behaviours in scenarios 1, 3 and 4 respectively. This discovery is in sharp contrast with previous reports that associate females with more positive dispositions towards diversity and other migration–related issues (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Naidoo & Uys, 2013, p. 11). However, the gender composition of the sample population must also be taken into account as females constituted 67.1% of the total number of respondents. Table 7 shows the observation that students aged between 18 and 24 as well as those studying at Diploma level constituted the greater majority of those who would engage in xenophobic behaviour across all four scenarios. The display of xenophobic sentiments by younger and entry-level students suggest this population is more disposed to xenophobic sentiments and less tolerant of racial diversity and multiculturalism. This finding re-echoes the relationship between education levels and racial tolerance. The economic undertones to this factor must not be ignored as the majority of these respondents were from communities (rural mining) synonymous with high levels of socioeconomic inadequacies.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation of age, location, enrolment level and ethnicity against the four scenarios (per cent)

	Xenophobic				Engage			
By age	18–24	25–30	31–35	Above 35	18–24	25–30	31–35	Above 35
Ask foreigners to leave	79.7	71.2	74.0	81.5	12.6	9.5	18.5	12.0
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	85.3	71.2	76.9	80.8	3.7	4.2	11.1	0
Loot foreign-owned spaza shop	84.0	82.0	82.3	84.6	4.8	2.8	7.4	0
Call a foreigner a "kwere–kwere"	85.3	81.9	84.6	81.5	15.1	20.5	22.2	22.2
By location	Urban suburbs	Urban townships	Rural farming	Rural mining	Urban suburbs	Urban townships	Rural farming	Rural mining
Ask foreigners to leave	82.8	78.0	71.7	50.0	7.3	14.3	18.5	50.0
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	85.9	81.7	78.7	100.0	2.1	4.3	6.7	0
Loot foreign-owned spaza shop	90.0	81.7	78.9	50.0	3.2	4.3	5.9	0
Call a foreigner a "kwere–kwere"	84.8	87.6	78.1	100.0	10.1	23.2	16.7	25.0
By enrolment level	Diploma	Bachelors	Master's	PhD	Diploma	Bachelors	Master's	PhD
Ask foreigners to leave	77.2	81.7	85.0	100.0	13.9	8.5	7.5	0
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	83.7	73.0	82.1	100.0	3.5	8.2	2.6	0
Loot foreign-owned spaza shop	83.8	81.7	89.5	100.0	3.9	8.4	2.6	0
Call a foreigner a "kwere–kwere"	84.7	78.0	84.7	100.0	16.5	22.0	13.2	0
By ethnicity	Black	Indian	White	Coloured	Black	Indian	White	Coloured
Ask foreigners to leave	75.4	85.2	95.2	100.0	15.7	2.3	4.8	12.5
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	79.8	94.2	90.5	87.5	4.9	1.2	0	0
Loot foreign-owned spaza shop	81.6	94.2	95.3	87.5	5.5	1.2	0	0
Call a foreigner a "kwere–kwere"	85.1	83.7	81.0	87.5	24.7	3.5	5.0	25.0

Table 6: Gender composition of respondents who would engage in xenophobic activities (per cent)

Scenario	Probably yes		Definitely yes	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Ask foreigners to leave	42.2	57.8	26.1	73.9
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	55.6	44.4	33.3	66.7
Loot foreign–owned spaza shop	33.3	66.7	62.5	37.5
Call a foreigner a "kwere-kwere"	34.3	65.7	22.7	77.3

Table 7: Age composition and enrolment level of respondents who would engage in xenophobic activities (per cent)

	Probably yes				Definitely yes			
Age composition	18–24	25–30	31–35	35+	18–24	25–30	31–35	35+
Ask foreigners to leave	82.6	8.7	4.3	4.3	72.7	11.4	9.1	6.8
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	66.7	16.7	16.7	0	100.0	0	0	0
Loot foreign–owned spaza shop	80.0	6.7	13.3	0	87.5	12.5	0	0
Call a foreigner a "kwere-kwere"	66.7	19.7	7.6	6.1	77.3	9.1	4.5	9.1
Enrolment level	Dipl	B	M	PhD	Dipl	B	M	PhD
Ask foreigners to leave	88.9	8.9	2.2	0	90.9	0	9.1	0
Mock foreigner for not speaking local language	70.6	23.5	5.9	0	100.0	0	0	0
Loot foreign–owned spaza shop	71.4	21.4	7.1	0	87.5	12.5	0	0
Call a foreigner a "kwere-kwere"	80.0	12.3	13.2	0	86.4	13.6	0	0
Dipl = Diploma; B = Bachelors; M = Master's								

Discussion

The results will be discussed in accordance with the key themes that emerged from the study.

Education and xenophobic sentiments

The findings presented in the study reaffirm the popular conception of a negative correlation between xenophobic sentiments and education, especially higher education (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007, p. 405). The display of negative dispositions towards anti–migrant sentiments and attitudes by the majority of the students cannot be disconnected from the role of higher institutions of learning as venues of cultural, ethnic and racial convergence. This is especially relevant in the South African higher education system which is known to attract a high number of foreign students (Kalpana, 2015). The belief is that increased positive contact between different groups in the school system tends to ameliorate racial/ethnic polarisation (Kayitesi & Mwaba, 2014). University systems,

through their academic and non-academic programmes, provide ample opportunity for intercultural education and cohesion between divergent social groups. Interestingly, the widely acknowledged correlation between economic status and enrolment trends also offers plausible explanations for the low levels of xenophobic sentiments. Student populations at higher education institutions are marked with poor representation of students of low economic status (Frempong, Ma & Mensah, 2012; Nel, Kistner & Van der Merwe, 2013; Thomas & Quinn, 2007). This implies that the majority of the registered students are likely from economically stable backgrounds and therefore less exposed to the economic irregularities that drive xenophobic sentiments. Other factors that could account for low levels of xenophobic sentiments amongst higher education students include: individual values, enlightenment, exposure to apartheid and life expectancy. Further inquiry into the subject will provide more insights on the influence of these mediating factors. Further inquiry is also required to shed more light on the link between gender and xenophobic sentiments. Whilst appraising the place of education in ameliorating xenophobic sentiments, a reconsideration of the centrality of competition for limited socioeconomic opportunities and amenities to the xenophobia discourse is pertinent. Aggressive responses to migrants' residency have been frequently linked to a competition for limited jobs, housing and business spaces (Pineteh, 2017; Solomon & Kosaka, 2014). This suggests that the emergence of certain conditions, such as limited scholarships and job opportunities, could trigger extreme notions of group rights and claims to spatial ownership even in the university.

The economic factor

The results confirm the assumptions of the relative deprivation theory which essentially relates violence to economic inequalities. What this implies is that respondents from disadvantaged areas are more likely to display anger or negative sentiments about migrants. This was confirmed by the study as most of the xenophobic responses were traced to students from a disadvantaged location (rural mining). The possession of xenophobic sentiments by students from a particular location (rural mining) is generally reflective of the patterns of xenophobia in South Africa with a high concentration of aggressive anti-migrant stereotypes in specific areas. Low-income areas such as informal settlements, townships and other underdeveloped areas have been identified as 'hotspots' for the expression of xenophobic attitudes and eruption of violence (Kersting, 2009, p. 16). This trend is widely connected to the high levels of poverty and socioeconomic insufficiencies prevalent in such locations, thus lending some credence to Misago's (2009, p. 3) conceptualisation of xenophobia as a phenomenon peculiar to informal settlements and underdeveloped areas. The informal settlements are typically inhabited by a large population of low-income earners comprising mostly natives and migrants of African descent who all compete for meagre economic opportunities and social services. To limit threats to livelihoods and bolster claims to amenities and services, social distinctions are accentuated and projected through what has been described as a new wave of nationalism. Central to this form of nationalism is a narrow conception of citizenship and indigeneity as exclusive to persons with identical historical, cultural, geographic and ethnic inclinations

(Solomon & Kosaka, 2014, p. 8). Foreigners (those who fit specific descriptions) are thus labelled as threats (job stealers, criminals, opportunists, disease agents) to the acquisition of the socioeconomic benefits that accompanied the end of apartheid.

Apartheid and ethnicity

Not directly linked to the findings but crucial for understanding the construction of xenophobic sentiments are the concepts of apartheid and ethnicity. The history of separatist notions of nationalism and migration is rooted in discriminatory immigration policies inherited from apartheid which stratified immigrants into two groups – the white migrants and the black African migrants. The former were seen as investors and therefore enjoyed more favourable immigration treatments than the latter who were collectively seen as a dispensable source of cheap labour (Harris, 2001). This partly explains the lop-sided nature of xenophobia in South Africa. Also contributing, though not widely explored, are perceptions on white supremacy vis-à-vis racial inferiority complex (subordination of blackness to whiteness). This flows from internalised prejudices regarding the exceptionalism of the white race and the self-acceptance of unflattering notions regarding disadvantaged races. The consequences of this go beyond a diminished sense of self-worth to an increased devaluation and intolerance towards people of similar racial orientation (Vincent, 2008, p. 1442). This partly explains the skewed conceptions about outsiders and intolerance towards other Africans.

In addition, there have been references to the centrality of ethnicity to the xenophobic discourse although not widely discussed in the literature. During the outbreak of violence, the status of foreigners was determined by superficial factors such as physical features and mastery of certain local languages, suggesting the existence of deeper rivalries. Individuals without these typical traits were tagged as foreigners or outsiders, explaining why locals from minority groups have also been affected by xenophobia. In 2008, a third of the people killed were South Africans from minority groups who were not fluent in the main languages and had different skin tones (Sharp, 2008). This draws attention to pre-existing antagonisms and fissures between local ethnic groups, responsible for a number of violent outbursts in the 1990s (Kynoch, 2005, p. 500; Steinberg, 2008), thus, positioning xenophobia as partly rooted in deeper cultural constructs and power tussles. In this realm, ethnicity is influential in determining belongingness, resulting in a blurry distinction between foreigners and outsiders. Zegeye (2012, p. 335) makes reference to a precolonial period where authentic Zulu identity served as the basis for a politics of exclusion.

Recommendations

To disrupt the circulation of this antagonistic/pro-xenophobic discourse, there is a need to revitalise the education system and institutions at all levels to further accommodate multiculturalism, tolerance and diversity (Matunhu, 2011). Emphasis could also be placed on enlightenment on the state of affairs in other African countries especially on refugee dynamics and other migration-related issues. Entrepreneurial education may also be given some consideration to lessen the adverse effects of the current economic downturns on

unemployed persons. For widespread impact, this form of education could be extended beyond the formal institutions to communities, especially those with heterogeneous features. The media could also play an important role by embarking on aggressive campaigns against the proliferation of negative anti-migrant stereotypes. The strong correlation between socioeconomic inadequacies and xenophobic sentiments reflects the need for extensive and continuous interventions aimed at disrupting the negative legacies of apartheid. The persistence of poor living conditions in the rural areas and informal settlements replicates the legacies of an oppressive regime that must be broken before sustainable change can occur. This suggests a multi-level approach for tackling the widespread scourge of xenophobia. The psychological component aspect also deserves more attention, particularly the impact of long years of oppressive rule on internalised prejudices about race. Most importantly, the wind of change should commence with a transformation of the authorities' controversial stance on xenophobia, evidenced through discriminatory policies and a mostly lackadaisical outlook on xenophobic violence.

In the study context, there may be intensification of integration programmes for entry-level students; more attention should be focused on engaging younger students in constructive discourses on migration issues. Dialogue sessions using the community of inquiry format (Spiteri, 2013) where students (local and foreign) are given the opportunity to openly articulate their perceptions about specific issues and also freely ask questions of one another can be encouraged for entry-level students and extended to all students. Further qualitative investigation on the disposition of both local and migrant students towards xenophobia will provide valuable insights on topic. This is especially relevant in view of the methodological risks associated with a study of this nature where there's a possibility of collating more socially desirable (expected) responses than factual responses. The emergent comprehensive study could provide useful background information for the design of a future intervention.

Conclusion

From the results presented it can be concluded that DUT students have satisfactory levels of awareness on xenophobia. However, the lack of knowledge on the NAP (National Action Plan) reflects a significant gap in this regard. This calls for more concerted approaches in engaging the discourse on xenophobia in university environments. Those concerned with students' welfare such as the Student Affairs Department need to engage more with the issue of heterogeneity and how it impacts the social and formal systems on campus. The establishment of interactive forums for engagement and enlightenment on immigration-related matters could be instrumental in improving the knowledge of students on such issues. A widespread negative disposition towards xenophobic sentiments was observed as well as a positive correlation between respondents' perceptions on xenophobia and their willingness to engage in xenophobic attitudes. This outcome lends credence to the importance of education in curbing the proliferation of negative ethnic/racial perceptions and stereotypes. However, consideration should also be given to the influence of economic indices on student enrolment trends in tertiary institutions. The expression of anti-migrant

sentiments by students from specific disadvantaged areas reinforces the influence of location and economic factors on the cultivation of anti-migrant sentiments. This calls for the implementation of appropriate programmes on social integration, especially for entry-level students. These programmes should aim at familiarising new students with concepts such as liberal education, global consciousness and tolerance, amongst others. The design of the potential intervention should be driven by qualitative inquiries into the underlying nature and manifestation of xenophobic sentiments.

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