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Afrophobic Disorder in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Straddling between "Ubuntu" and the You-Bunt-Us Divide

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Abstract

Notable questions such as why Afrophobic disorder persists in post-apartheid South Africa despite its democratic foundations, and how this contradicts the ethos of Ubuntu and African solidarity, remain central to understanding contemporary socio-political tensions within the country. While the democratic transition of 1994 under the leadership of Nelson Mandela was a clear symbol of reconciliation and continental unity, the recurrent incidences of violence towards African immigrants from nations such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe show the existence of structural inequities, identity insecurity and economic frustrations. This study defines Afrophobic disorder as a social and political ideology based on postcolonial history and in-group versus out-group relations. Using Social Identity Theory and Postcolonial Theory, the study uses a qualitative approach through secondary materials which include literature review, media and policy reports. Analysis of thematic patterns as well as discourse analysis were used to explore the experiences of exclusion, violence and political ideologies of African immigrants. It emerges from the findings that the phenomenon of Afrophobia is not episodic but rather structural, appearing both during violent incidences and normal incidences of exclusion leading to the concept of "You-Bunt-Us." The study concludes that there are established evidence of clashes between Ubuntu and the exclusionary logic of " You-bunt-Us" portraying an unresolved crisis of African solidarity in the postcolony and this calls for a rethinking of belonging and inclusive citizenship.

Key Words: Afrophobic Disorder; Xenophobia; Post-Apartheid; Ubuntu; You-Bunt-Us.

Introduction

One of the most persistent and controversial socio-political challenges confronting post-apartheid South Africa is the recurring wave of Afrophobic violence directed toward African migrants residing within the country. South Africa, after the demise of apartheid in 1994, has been hailed worldwide as an example of democratic transition, reconciliation, and constitutionalism. The birth of a new democratic government led by Nelson Mandela represented the victory of justice over racism, and there were aspirations for a new nation based on equality, respect, tolerance, and African unity[1]. Ubuntu played a crucial role in this democratic rebirth as a philosophy that focused on a shared sense of humanness, harmonious coexistence, compassion, and collective responsibility. Ubuntu became an ethics of healing and reconciliation after decades of racist separation and violence[2]. Nevertheless, in spite of all the high moral values related to Ubuntu and Pan-Africanism, post-apartheid South Africa has turned into a land of violence against fellow Africans.

Anti-African attitudes in South Africa were made more manifest during the democratic era through sporadic acts of violence committed against migrants from other African nations[3]. The first such act of post-apartheid xenophobia happened in January 1995 in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg when young and heavily-armed gangs started what was called Operation Buyelekhaya ("Go back home"), which aimed at targeting immigrants from other African countries by accusing them of stealing South Africans jobs, houses and economic opportunities[4]. Despite getting little international media coverage, the act symbolized the birth of exclusive nationalism shortly after the democratic change in South Africa. Exclusive nationalism is an extreme form of nationalism which identifies belonging to a nation in a very

[1] *Christopher K. Adonis, The Crown without the Jewels: South Africa s Flawed Transition and Its Implications for Social Justice and Equity in Post-Apartheid South Africa," Memory Studies 18, no. 6 (2025): p.1617*

[2] *Desmond Tutu, No Future without Forgiveness (New York: Random House, 1999).*

[3] *Adonis, The Crown without the Jewels," p. 1627.*

[4] Morris, A. (1998). Our fellow Africans make our lives hell: The lives of African immigrants in Johannesburg. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.

strict way and excludes those perceived as outsiders like migrants or minorities. Other acts of violence took place occasionally within different communities in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

However, the most destructive case of Afrophobia-related violence took place in May 2008 as numerous attacks broke out in the Gauteng Province and spread further into other regions of the country[5]. As a result of such attacks, more than sixty people died, hundreds were injured, and about 100,000 migrants became homeless and lost their businesses[6]. Among those who were victimized by such violent acts were migrants from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and Malawi. Photos and video clips showing migrants being beaten, burnt, and forced to flee spread all around the world and ruined the image of South Africa internationally, earning criticism on the entire continent of Africa. Among the cases that were widely publicized was the killing of Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave, a Mozambican migrant who was murdered and set on fire in the Ramaphosa informal settlement in Johannesburg[7].

In spite of the outrage felt all around the nation in the aftermath of 2008 attacks, anti-African violence persisted in the following years. In 2015, yet another big wave of attacks took place in Durban and further in Johannesburg following the statements by Goodwill Zwelithini, who apparently said that the foreigners must pack their bags and leave. Although the statements were refuted later on, they only added fuel to the already present anti-immigrants sentiments among local population[8]. The shops of African migrants were robbed, some people lost their lives while thousands had to flee the place.

Similarly, in September 2019, an outbreak of violence occurred against African businesses and migrants in Johannesburg and Pretoria. As a result of the violence, people lost their lives and

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[5] Olofinbiyi, S. A. (2022). Anti-immigrant Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa: Untreated Malady and Potential Snag for National Development. Insight on Africa, 14(2), 193-211.

[6] Jonathan Crush, The Perfect Storm: The Realities of Xenophobia in Contemporary South Africa (Cape Town: Southern African Migration Programme, 2008).

[7] Olofinbiyi, Anti-Immigrant Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa," p. 201

[8] Jean-Pierre Misago, Xenophobic Violence in South Africa: Reflections on Causes, Consequences and Responses (Johannesburg: African Centre for Migration & Society, University of the Witwatersrand, 2016).

property was destroyed. Some African nations protested against the violence, while others removed their nationals from South Africa for safety reasons. The 2019 events showed the lack of effectiveness of the post-apartheid government in dealing with the recurring issue of Afrophobia in the country. The fact that Afrophobia occurs repeatedly suggests that Afrophobia in South Africa is not just mob violence, but is rather a structural problem embedded within the society.

Despite the fact that these attacks are normally termed xenophobic attacks, Matsinhe (2011) noted that there is agreement among a number of scholars that the term Afrophobia should be used because the aggression shown towards these people is not directed against foreign nationals but against Blacks Africans. Europeans, Asians, and westerners living in South Africa are normally treated differently and do not normally experience the violence shown to African migrants. It is important to note that African migrants are normally considered criminals, drug pushers, thieves of jobs or simply an economic drain. Thus, any frustration caused by high levels of unemployment, poverty, poor service delivery and inequalities is often channeled towards migrants who serve as scapegoats to all these problems[9].

Interestingly enough, the growing problem of Afrophobia is in direct contradiction to the fact that many African nations played a vital role in supporting the struggle against apartheid in their history. Such nations as Zambia, Tanzania, Angola, and Nigeria were providing financial aid, training camps, political support, and a safe haven for the movements fighting for liberation in South Africa, especially the African National Congress during the time of apartheid[10]. Therefore, the increasing hostility towards African immigrants demonstrates how the reality of South Africa differs from its history in terms of its struggle for freedom.

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[9] Olofinbiyi, Anti-Immigrant Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa," p. 201

[10] Mahmoud Patel, Tawffeek A. S. Mohammed, and Raymond Koen, Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Educational, Cultural and Philosophical Considerations," Philosophies 9, no. 1 (2024): 21, https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9010021.

In light of the above background, this research attempts to critically analyze Afrophobic disorder within the context of post-apartheid South Africa through an examination of the contradictions between the philosophy of Ubuntu and the newly created You-Bunt-Us split. The paper seeks to discuss the factors that have led to the development of Afrophobia as well as the effects thereof.

Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations

Afrophobia has attracted growing academic interest in the analysis of the politics of migration and identity struggles in post-apartheid South Africa. While acts of violence towards foreigners have been widely categorized under xenophobia, it has been pointed out by some academics that South Africa's case can best be captured in the concept of Afrophobia since the acts of violence are mainly committed towards black Africans and not foreigners as such[11]. In most cases, black immigrants from countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Somalia and Mozambique face discrimination, stereotyping, mob attacks and economic marginalization, while very few Western expatriates encounter such experiences. It is significant for analysis because it highlights the racial and hierarchical dynamics of belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, Afrophobia goes beyond the normal phenomenon of fear towards foreigners to reflect a serious crisis of African identity, citizenship and socio-economic insecurity in the democratic country[12]. Very much associated with this discussion is the philosophy of Ubuntu, an African communitarian world view that promotes compassion, solidarity, co-existence and humanity. The philosophy of Ubuntu can be best captured in the saying "I am because we are".[13]

Nonetheless, the recurring violence meted out to African immigrants points to a conflict between the ideal moral framework of Ubuntu and its reality. This conflict is framed within the

[11] David M. Matsinhe, Africa s Fear of Itself: The Ideology of Makwerekwere in South Africa, Third World Quarterly 32, no. 2 (2011): 295 313, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2011.560470

[12] *Michael Neocosmos, The Politics of Fear and the Fear of Politics: Reflections on Xenophobic Violence in South Africa," Journal of Asian and African Studies 43, no. 6 (2008): 586 594, https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909608096655*.

[13] *Tutu, No Future without Forgiveness, p. 36*.

scope of this research as the You-Bunt-Us gap, a theoretical approach to understanding how Ubuntu evolves into selective humanity defined by exclusionist nationalism and xenophobia towards other Africans.

The study is built mainly on the Social Identity Theory proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner. The theory is used to understand how people construct their social identities based on their group affiliations and how they tend to create divisions into in-groups and out-groups [14]. In the case of South Africa, post-apartheid citizenship and nationalism have led to the creation of an out-group comprising of migrants who are competing against the locals for scarce economic gains and social resources. Hardships, unemployment, poverty, and poor service delivery have heightened the notion that African migrants are posing dangers to the wellbeing of the locals. As a result, the migrant becomes an alien other, who is responsible for the troubles in marginalized communities. Therefore, the importance of Social Identity Theory lies in the way it explains the link between identity insecurity and socio-economic anxieties that result in discriminatory practices against African migrants.

Aside from Social Identity Theory, Postcolonial Theory will also be used in this study in order to understand the structural and historical aspects of Afrophobia in South Africa after the end of apartheid. Postcolonial scholars contend that colonialism and apartheid produced permanent institutions of racial hierarchies, geographical segregation, socio-economic inequalities, and psychological fragmentation that persist to define social relations in the contemporary African societies[15]. Despite the end of apartheid regime in 1994, the majority of socio-economic inequalities that resulted from the apartheid have yet to be addressed and have caused frustrations that are then redirected against more vulnerable migrant communities. Postcolonial Theory is particularly important because it places Afrophobia in the wider context of colonial heritage, identity crisis, and incomplete process of decolonization. Furthermore, the

[14] *Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations, ed. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33 47.*

[15] *Achille Mbembe, On the Postcolony (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).*

colonial boundaries and nationalist ideologies helped to undermine the Pan-African identity through creating a rigid sense of citizenship and territoriality. It can be concluded that the framework of Postcolonial Theory helps to understand the reasons for hostility of a country that benefited a lot from the solidarity of African community in their fight against apartheid.

Methodological Framing

This study follows a qualitative research design that is based on an interpretivist and critical approach to investigate the phenomenon of Afrophobic disorder in post-apartheid South Africa with special attention paid to the conflict between the philosophy of Ubuntu and the rising You-Bunt-Us dichotomy. Qualitative methods appear to be the most appropriate due to the complexity of Afrophobia being not only a quantifiable social issue but also a socio-political and ideological one that is entrenched in history, identities, economic disparities, and social practices[16]. This research uses secondary sources of data only, namely peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, official policy documents, reports of regional and international institutions (African Union, for instance), as well as the information about the violent episodes that took place in 2008, 2015, and 2019. Furthermore, the digital media materials, such as social media posts, online news, videos, and discourses published on various platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and YouTube, are utilized as part of the data set owing to their increasing importance as the means of Afrophobia and migrant identity narrative formation and dissemination in modern-day South Africa.

Such media outlets are particularly useful in providing real time feedback on how public sentiments are formed in relation to migrant-related violence and political responses in times of violent acts. Methodologically, the research will use thematic and critical discourse analysis techniques to examine recurring themes around the construction of identities, economic frustrations, political rhetoric, and social exclusions as well as how the language used in

[16] *W. Lawrence Neuman, Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, 7th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2014).*

conventional and online media plays an important role in either normalizing or contesting anti-African sentiments[17]. Such a methodology is necessary due to the need to analyze more than just acts of violence but to look into deeper ideological structures that perpetuate Afrophobia in a society that ostensibly upholds the values of Ubuntu and African unity. In addition, the research will be informed by the historical context of the problem being studied, thus making it possible to diagnose the phenomenon from a critically reflective and historical perspective[18].

The Ideological Contradiction between Ubuntu and You-Bunt-Us

The ideological conflict between Ubuntu and You-Bunt-Us is a deep moral and political contradiction in South Africa since the end of apartheid (Patel et al., 2024). As a traditional African ethical philosophy, Ubuntu relies on relational ontology and communal humanism based on the idea that a human being reaches its humanity through other people. This philosophy encourages unity, empathy, mutual recognition, and the moral responsibility to grant dignity to people regardless of their ethnicity and nationality (Tutu, 1999). According to the post-apartheid narrative, Ubuntu was not only an ethno-cultural tradition but also a tool for building a nation capable of overcoming racial divisions and promoting reconciliation under democratic rule headed by Nelson Mandela[19]. Nevertheless, acts of Afrophobia and discrimination against African migrants reflect a substantial gap between the ideological construct of Ubuntu and the reality of this philosophy. The gap can be clearly discerned through the processes of exclusion based on the preference for South African identity at the expense of other African nationalities.

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[17] Norman Fairclough, Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language (London: Longman, 1995).

[18] Mbembe, On the Postcolony.

[19] Mahmoud Patel, Tawffeek A. S. Mohammed, and Raymond Koen, Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Educational, Cultural and Philosophical Considerations," Philosophies 9, no. 1 (2024): 21, https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9010021.

The use of the You-Bunt-Us metaphor in the present analysis refers to the critical metaphor, which describes the distortion of the notion of Ubuntu, which turns into a selective ethical system, where the condition of humanness is contingent and no longer universal. This transformation can be described as the move from the notion I am because we are to the notion you are excluded because you are not us. This change reveals the restructuring of membership based on narrow definitions of national and socioeconomic characteristics. According to Francis Nyamnjoh, many postcolonial African states face challenges associated with the phenomenon of insiders-outsiders, which results from colonial frontiers and imbalanced development and defines the notions of those who deserve the right for recognition and inclusion in society. In this regard, You-Bunt-Us can be viewed as a product of structural exclusion, where economic vulnerability, historical ignorance, and political language come together to define exclusionary identities. Migrants from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Somalia become outsiders in the African internal space.

Crucially, this paradox highlights the weaknesses inherent in nation-building after apartheid, as well as in Pan-African solidarity. While Ubuntu emerged as a framework for a discourse of reconciliation, it did not adequately translate into transformation structures necessary to solve inequalities relating to housing, employment, and resources[20]. Postcolonial scholars like Achille Mbembe maintain that the postcolony ends up reproducing exclusions from colonial times even as it rejects them in rhetoric. In this situation, Afrophobic violence is symbolic of socio-economic paradoxes that lead marginal members of society to vent their frustrations on even more marginal immigrants. The You-Bunt-Us ideology functions in this scenario as a coping doctrine, which reinterprets belonging in such a manner that fellow Africans become competition rather than family within the continental identity.

The tension that arises between Ubuntu and You-Bunt-Us is more than just a matter of philosophy, but a matter of politics and materiality. This tension speaks to the failure of ethical

[20] *Patel, Mohammed, and Koen, Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Africa," p. 21.*

universalism in relation to development and citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa. The existence of Afrophobia indicates that while Ubuntu may be a compelling moral doctrine, it needs to have its strength buttressed by institutions, namely good governance, sound economic policy and Pan-Africanist consciousness. Otherwise, Ubuntu will remain only a discourse while You-Bunt-Us will continue to be its reality.

The Genealogy of Afrophobic Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa

The history of Afrophobia in post-apartheid South Africa is characterized by a long and evolving history of discriminatory violence targeted at African immigrants which stems from colonial history, apartheid planning and social and economic injustices that remain unresolved after liberation[21]. While the transition to democracy in 1994 under Nelson Mandela brought hopes of racial reconciliation and solidarity between blacks, the inequalities left over from the apartheid period ensured that competition over housing, jobs and other urban resources would continue. Within this context, there were some early indicators of Afrophobic tendencies just years after democracy was achieved[22]. The forced expulsion of African immigrants from the township of Alexandra in 1995 as part of Operation Buyelekhaya was one of the earliest cases of Afrophobic violence in post-apartheid South Africa[23]. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, similar instances of discrimination and violent attacks on immigrants from countries like Mozambique and Zimbabwe became more prevalent in urban shanty towns due to poverty and unemployment fueling survival competition.

Perhaps the best documented cases of escalation happened in May 2008, when violent episodes occurred simultaneously in Gauteng province and other regions, leading to more than 60 fatalities, relocation and destruction of business belonging to migrants. Among the victims,

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[21] Casper Lötter and Gavin Bradshaw, Reconceptualising Afrophobia in Postapartheid South Africa: A Conflict Transformational Perspective," Acta Academica 54, no. 2 (2022): 53 79, https://doi.org/10.18820/24150479/aa54i2/3.

[22] Lötter and Bradshaw, Reconceptualising Afrophobia in Postapartheid South Africa," pp. 59-63.

[23] Alan Morris, Our Fellow Africans Make Our Lives Hell: The Lives of African Immigrants in Johannesburg," Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 24, no. 6 (1998): 1117 1136.

there were citizens from several African countries such as Nigerians, Malawians and Zimbabweans, among others[24]. It appeared that besides the evident socio-economic grievances, the violence highlighted the fragility of nation building after apartheid in managing diversity and inequalities[25]. Although the state condemned the attacks, further waves of violence occurred again in 2015 and 2019, mostly in Durban and Johannesburg, where shops belonging to migrants were looted, people were killed or relocated. Such periodicity indicated that Afrophobia was not an exception but rather structural phenomenon which had to do with unemployment, problems of the informal sector and politically constructed notion of stealing jobs . By the early 2020s, scientific literature started to mention organized vigilante groups and exclusion campaigns initiated by communities as another reason for xenophobic discrimination, with incidents registered in several provinces of South Africa, both in urban and peri-urban settings, especially in times of economic hardship and political tensions.

From 2020 to 2024, the problem of Afrophobia was further complicated by issues related to online mobilization, the spread of false information, and vigilantism through organizations such as Operation Dudula, which portrayed Africans as the cause of unemployment, crime, and burdening the public service[26]. Human rights research and studies on migration pointed to the consistent cases of harassment, forced closure of stores and denial of access to services, showing that there was a move from spontaneous acts of violence to organized acts of exclusionary activism.

In early 2026, the problem was not going away; rather, it evolved in response to socio-political changes. The persistence of poverty and high levels of unemployment, together with poor service provision, created the basis for continuing scapegoating of African migrants, along with instances of physical intimidation and violence in places like Johannesburg and Durban. In 2026, reports of new diplomatic protests by several African countries in response to migrant

[24] *Olofinbiyi, Anti-Immigrant Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa," pp. 199-205.*
[25] *Jonathan Crush, The Perfect Storm: The Realities of Xenophobia in Contemporary South Africa (Cape Town: Southern African Migration Programme, 2008).*
[26] *Lötter and Bradshaw, Reconceptualising Afrophobia in Postapartheid South Africa," pp. 59-61.*

harassment and attacks showed a continuation of Afrophobic practices. This example shows that Afrophobia in South Africa is an ongoing postcolonial issue, which transformed from post-apartheid exclusion into social and political chaos[27]. It continues to be a manifestation of the contradiction between the principles of African solidarity and Ubuntu on one side, and the realities of life on the other side.

Structural Drivers and Lived Expressions of Afrophobic Disorder

The Afrophobic disorder in the post-apartheid South Africa is best explained as an intricate socio-political phenomenon arising from structural inequity, contestations in identities, and shifts in the definition of belonging in a nation still coping with the impact of its apartheid history. The democratic dispensation in 1994 in the leadership of Nelson Mandela was indeed a landmark break with institutionalized racism; however, it could not address the fundamental socio-economic inequalities arising from spatial disparity, unemployment, and unequal distribution of resources. These structural issues represent the main root cause of Afrophobic disorder as they breed insecurity in the lives of disadvantaged individuals, leading to the perception that African immigrants are competing for available resources. In terms of Social Identity Theory, such structural factors serve to enhance group solidarity while at the same time heightening group conflict, whereby foreign Africans emerge as symbolic outsiders whose presence represents a threat to their survival[28].

Economic aspects aside, the problem of Afrophobia is directly connected to what could be called competitive survival fears arising in the context of the economies of poor and informal cities (Tshishonga, 2015). The existence of high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth, creates an environment where Africans who migrate from countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Somalia are seen as unfair competition in informal business ventures and unskilled labor. These views are not necessarily based on objective economic displacement but

[27] *Olofinbiyi, Anti-Immigrant Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa," pp. 200-205.*

[28] *Tajfel and Turner, An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict".*

on relative deprivation whereby frustration arises due to the difference between expectations and reality. In this regard, as argued by scholars like Neocosmos (2010), such frustrations get redirected politically against vulnerable migrant communities instead of economic restructuring.

On the political front, the Afrophobia disorder finds its sustenance in the idea of instrumentalised populism regarding who belongs[29]. In some cases, politics and informal leadership systems construct immigrants as threats to the sovereignty, security, and economic stability of the nation. Such ideas gain momentum especially during elections or any kind of social upheavals when migration emerges as a tool for explaining any kind of governance failure. Postcolonial theorists like Achille Mbembe have pointed out that in many postcolonial nations, exclusions that are based on the legacy of colonial governance are practiced despite the rejection of such exclusions officially[30]. This makes Afrophobic discourses a part of political communications, and they help in excluding through implicit construction of moral and civic boundaries. Thus, it can be said that there is a formation of selective citizenship where African migrants remain outside the moral boundaries of the nation despite their shared continentality[31].

From a sociological perspective, the emergence of Afrophobic disorders is marked by episodes of violence and processes of social exclusion. The most common forms of Afrophobia include violent acts of vandalism and assaults against migrant property owners, as seen in incidents occurring in 2008, 2015, and 2019, in which there was looting of stores owned by migrants, assault on individuals, and forced community displacement. However, besides these incidents, there are more subtle instances of Afrophobic practices, including discriminatory behaviors in the allocation of residential space, limited access to public facilities, verbal aggression, and

[29] *Ndwakhulu Stephen Tshishonga, The Impact of Xenophobia-Afrophobia on the Informal Economy in Durban CBD, South Africa," The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa 11, no. 4 (2015): 163 179, https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v11i4.52.*

[30] *Gilbert Shang Ndi, A Question of the Body: Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Imaginaries of Power in African Literary Texts," International Journal of English and Literature 7, no. 9 (2016): 143 151, https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL2016.0929.*

[31] *Tshishonga, The Impact of Xenophobia-Afrophobia on the Informal Economy".*

neglect. These processes show that Afrophobia is not just an incident but rather an everyday practice of discrimination entrenched in society. In addition, Afrophobic stereotypes circulating within media and digital networks portray African migrants as criminals, sources of infections and diseases, and an economic threat.

Theoretical framework Postcolonial Theory offers an important perspective in examining the above situation in light of the fact that Afrophobic disorder can be seen in the context of the ongoing decolonization process. As stated by Mbembe (2001), the postcolonial society experiences what he calls a crisis of belonging, whereby national identity is unstable and contested. In the case of South Africa, this crisis of belonging can be observed in the conflict that arises from the notion of Ubuntu as a moral philosophy based on universal humanity and the fact that people exclude Africans. This gives rise to the You-Bunt-Us dichotomy, a symbolic negation of the idea of Ubuntu through its selective application, whereby solidarity among people is replaced with conditional belonging. The structural drivers of Afrophobic disorder and their corresponding lived expressions are summarised in Table 1.1

Table 1.1: Structural Drivers and Lived Expressions of Afrophobic Disorder in Post-Apartheid South Africa

High unemployment and labour market saturation in urban informal economies	**Violent competition between locals and African migrants over small businesses, street trading, and casual jobs**	**Competitive Survival Anxiety**
Persistent inequality and spatial exclusion inherited from apartheid geography	**Attacks in townships and informal settlements where migrants are concentrated**	**Spatialized Exclusion Regimes**
Weak migration governance and inconsistent border policy enforcement	**Harassment of undocumented migrants and periodic mass deportations or informal expulsions**	**Governance Vacuum Policing**
Political rhetoric framing migrants as economic threats	**Public justification of anti-migrant sentiment and selective citizenship attitudes**	**Instrumentalized Belonging Narratives**
Historical amnesia	**Rejection or minimization of African solidarity**	**Amnesic Pan-African**

regarding African support during apartheid liberation	**contributions from countries such as Zambia and Nigeria**	**Consciousness**
Media stereotyping and digital misinformation	**Viral posts linking African migrants to crime, drugs, and unemployment**	**Networked Xenophobic Imaginaries**
Socio-economic frustration in marginalized communities	**Mob violence, looting of foreign-owned shops, forced displacement**	**Displaced Grievance Economy**
Weak social cohesion and fragmented national identity	**Everyday discrimination, exclusion from housing, and social segregation**	**Fragmented Civic Belonging**
Post-apartheid identity insecurity and nationalism	**Construction of foreign Africans as internal outsiders despite continental identity**	**Internal Outsider Syndrome**
Failure of Ubuntu as a lived ethical system	**Contradiction between moral discourse of Ubuntu and real exclusionary practices**	**Ubuntu Erosion Paradox**

Source: Developed by Authors

Table 1.1 above offers an exhaustive model through which Afrophobic disorder in post-apartheid South Africa can be viewed from the perspective of structural factors at the macro-level as well as their manifestation at the micro level. The analysis shows that Afrophobia is not a form of prejudice, but a phenomenon shaped by a number of socio-economic, political and historical factors that contribute to perceptions of inclusion and exclusion. One of the key lessons learned from the table is that of economic insecurity. Unemployment, labor market saturation, and socio-economic inequalities lead to a situation in which African migrants are seen as competitors. This becomes more pronounced in slums and townships where poverty and resource scarcity make social friction worse. The concept of Displaced Grievance Economy goes on to provide another explanation of how grievances resulting from structural deprivation are redirected against immigrants rather than the structures causing socio-economic inequalities.

The role of governance and politics is also emphasized through this table. Poor migration management generates a Governance Vacuum Policing context where undocumented migrants

are susceptible to victimization and exclusion. On the other hand, politically generated narratives of migrants as economic danger result in Instrumentalized Belonging Narrative that emphasizes the divide between citizens and non-citizens. According to the historic pattern, Amnesic Pan-African Consciousness plays a pivotal role here. Despite the strong support from various African states during the fight against apartheid, there is an erosion of collective memory, resulting in weakening of ties between Africans[32]. The phenomenon of Internal Outsider Syndrome reflects the exclusion of African migrants despite their African identity. But most importantly, the Ubuntu Erosion Paradox explains the paradox between the Ubuntu philosophy of South Africa and the exclusionary behavior. All these factors explain Afrophobic disorder as a complex problem.

In all, what can be established on the causes of Afrophobic disorder according to the table presented above is that the condition has emerged as a result of the interaction between structural inequality, politics, history, and identity insecurity. The forms of the condition mentioned above indicate that there exists tension in the society that tries to reconcile its emancipation and reality. This indicates that the issue at hand is not an anomaly but rather a systemic aspect of South Africa since apartheid.

Socio-Political and Economic Implications of Afrophobic Disorder

The socio-political implications of Afrophobic disorder in South Africa following apartheid era have been great because they have exposed the weakness in unity and contradictions that have existed in the democratic identity of the country[33]. Through the Ubuntu and constitutional equality of Nelson Mandela s administration in the country, recurrent attacks on migrants from the African continent have diminished the credibility of South Africa s democratic regime because of its association with Pan-Africanism. Recurring instances of Afrophobia have reduced trust among community members as well as social cohesion because of the conflict in

[32] *Ndi, A Question of the Body,".*
[33] *Patel, Mohammed, and Koen, Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Africa,".*

interaction between locals and migrants in the country. According to Achille Mbembe, post-colonial politics in South Africa is characterized by the contradiction of postcolony in which democracy is expressed in both formal and informal means, in which the latter is expressed through social violence against the immigrants. Politically, Afrophobic attitude has led to strained diplomatic relationships between South Africa and other countries in the African continent including Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, especially when violent attacks have occurred in 2008, 2015 and 2019. The emergence of vigilante groups and exclusionary policing strategies also suggests a worrying trend towards alternative governing mechanisms, in which citizenship is more and more questioned locally rather than provided by the government.

Economically speaking, the consequences of Afrophobic disorder become apparent in its negative impact on migrants economic activities as well as in the disruption of local economies[34]. The economic activities of migrants in terms of their businesses significantly help townships economies in creating jobs and providing affordable products. Nevertheless, the constant threat of being attacked and robbed makes their contribution less and less effective since capital is moving out, there is less and less entrepreneurship and investment. Therefore, we can speak of a cycle of economic shrinkage that is created by the disorder itself. Additionally, Afrophobic tendencies increase precarity of informal labour since trust relations are undermined between the employers and migrants coming from countries like Somalia and Nigeria. The fragmentation generated by the economics of such a situation helps entrench the poverty trap and increases competition for scarce resources. From an economic perspective, the Afrophobic disorder also affects the regional economic position of South Africa because it discourages international trade, discourages tourism and deters the country from being seen as a good place for investment. In sum, the political and economic ramifications of Afrophobic disorder are self-reinforcing and create a structural situation whereby exclusion leads to instability and vice versa.

[34] *Mahmoud Patel, Tawffeek A. S. Mohammed, and Raymond Koen, Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Arica: Educational, Cultural and Philosophical Considerations," Philosophies 9, no. 1 (2024): 21, https://doi.org/10.3390/philosophies9010021.*

Rethinking African Solidarity in the Shadow of Afrophobic Disorder

The idea of African solidarity, both historically and normatively, has always been based on Pan-Africanist ideals of collective support and resistance against colonial subjugation[35]. Within the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the idea of African solidarity was supposed to strengthen after the 1994 transition to democracy in the country, under the charismatic leadership of President Nelson Mandela who represented ideas of reconciliation and unity with other nations of the continent. At the same time, the existence of Afrophobic disorder shows how the gap between rhetorical African unity and exclusion of one's own African migrant compatriots can become apparent. Acts of discrimination and violence towards migrants from countries like Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Somalia show that African solidarity cannot always be guaranteed in practice due to economic instability and identity struggles. Thus, the concept of African solidarity needs to be reconsidered not as a given phenomenon, but as a social process.

The weakening of African solidarity in South Africa can be explained by a notion of selective continental belonging. While the rhetoric of solidarity is practiced in the realm of diplomatic relations, in everyday life, it faces some limitations due to the dynamics of social relationships[36]. Despite continuous efforts of the African Union to integrate and unite the continent and provide freedom of movement, many localized experiences of migrants negate such ambitions of the union. In general, migrants tend to be in a vulnerable situation, where they are welcomed only because they are beneficial for the community from an economic point of view, while being marginalized socially (Hirsch, 2021). As a result, such paradoxical situation reflects deeper opposition between national citizenship and African continent identity, where belonging is defined not by commonality of the continent identity, but through the competition of its resources. Some researchers, such as Francis Nyamnjoh, suggest that African mobility is often based on insider-outsider logic of exclusion even within the context of unified African

[35] Akindoyin

[36] Akindoyin

territories. Likewise, the postcolonial theory stresses the existence of contradictions in the postcolony.

A critical re-examination of African solidarity thus calls for a move from symbolism towards a more realistic approach to coexistence. Continued Afrophobic violence indicates that solidarity can not only be maintained on the basis of historical memories of anti-colonial struggles, but needs to be buttressed through socio-economic transformations, development, and governance[37]. Without tackling issues of unemployment, inequality, and marginalization, appeals for unity may remain merely idealistic rather than materializing into practice. Moreover, the continued existence of informal settlements, unemployment among youth, and disparities in access to public facilities still contribute to situations where migrants are seen as rivals in development rather than partners. This notion is further perpetuated through political language that regularly paints Africans as outsiders as a liability or a threat, hence making discrimination acceptable within the communities. Besides, inadequate responses from institutions towards acts of violence have led to an environment where perpetrators of Afrophobia go unpunished.

Such a weakness in institutions makes the relationship between migrant communities and the government even more tenuous, increasing the sense of vulnerability and alienation on the part of migrant communities. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the role played by civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, and community associations in the mediation process between the host community and the migrants. It is evident that such an approach illustrates that it is possible to rebuild solidarity bottom-up with the help of initiatives based on the commonality of human nature and everyday cooperation. In this regard, it is necessary to note that imagining African solidarity in light of the Afrophobic chaos requires an integrated approach.

[37] *Patel, Mohammed, and Koen, Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Africa,".*

Equally important is the role of education systems in constructing the African identity of the future. Educational curricula that place emphasis on national stories rather than on Pan-African history and struggles could result in the construction of a very narrow sense of belonging amongst young people[38]. Conversely, educational methods that construct a sense of interconnectedness and a common history of struggles amongst Africans may be helpful in constructing more inclusive identities that will help in resisting xenophobia/Afrophobia. The media is another very important source for how the general population views migrants through the way it constructs their image. Sensational reporting can easily lead to the reinforcement of stereotypical views and fears surrounding foreign nationals. Hence responsible journalism and counter-narratives become crucial in this respect. On a policy front, regional organizations such as the African Union and Southern African Development Community need to be praised for their efforts in creating free movement and protection framework for all member countries. However, the success of such frameworks is hampered by ineffective implementation in various member countries.

The longevity of Afrophobic disorders shows how the symbolic commitment to unity is not enough without structural changes aimed at dealing with the issues of inequality, poverty, and spatial segregation in South Africa. Until these problems persist and the opportunity structure is divided among the citizens and migrants, the conflicts between them will be used as a tool in the local political economy[39]. It is necessary to have the development strategy that would include both citizens and migrants into one developmental space, not competitors. In terms of practice it means the reinforcement of local government, better service delivery, and increased social protection systems for everyone.

Added to this, fostering trust between the migrant community and the host population entails engaging in an ongoing dialogue mediated by both state and non-state actors to dispel any

[38] *Akindoyin*

[39] *Alan Hirsch, The African Union s Free Movement of Persons Protocol: Why Has It Faltered and How Can Its Objectives Be Achieved?" South African Journal of International Affairs 28, no. 4 (2021): 497 517, https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2021.2007788.*

misconceptions and relieve tension caused by the contestation for the limited resources. The dialogue should be based on mutual recognition and vulnerability and not exclusionary moralism and hierarchical citizenship regime which favours some people at the expense of others. Further, the long-term sustainability of African solidarity involves reconceptualizing urban areas as places of inclusion where diversity is regarded as an asset and not a danger[40]. Urban policy that ensures mixed communities and access to housing and other infrastructures can go a long way in addressing spatial segregation through creating conditions for interaction to foster social cohesion among various people. Finally, the evolution of African solidarity from an ideological concept to practical reality calls for political will, institutional change, and civil society action aimed at challenging exclusionary practices. Herein lies the importance of continuous effort in achieving policy coherence, continental integration, and civic engagement as a way of resolving the existing contradictions that threaten the unity of Africa and paving way for a better future where justice and equality prevail for everyone in the continent.

Conclusion

From this study, it has been determined that Afrophobic disorder in post-apartheid South Africa is characterized by contradictions in the principles of Ubuntu against the reality of exclusion of African migrants. In spite of the democratic transition of South Africa in 1994 led by Nelson Mandela, which aimed at reconciling the population, being inclusive, and fostering Pan-African solidarity, continued assaults against migrant populations in South Africa coming from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Somalia indicate that there exist deep socio-economic and political issues in the country[41]. The results prove that Afrophobia is not an indication of individual prejudice but a complex issue based on structural factors, economic insecurity, poor migration policy, identity issues, and historical legacies. Using Social Identity Theory and Postcolonial Theory, the research reveals how economic competition and identity constructions affect the status of migrants in post-apartheid South Africa (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It should be

[40] *Ndi, A Question of the Body," pp. 147-149.*
[41] *Lötter and Bradshaw, Reconceptualising Afrophobia in Postapartheid South Africa," pp. 69-74.*

noted that the legacy of colonialism and apartheid is the factor that affects the current situation related to citizenship, belonging, and exclusion (Ndi, 2016). The combination of these elements has led to a situation whereby migrants have been stereotyped and labeled as outsiders who become targets of socio-economic grievances.

The study also explores the concept of the You-Bunt-Us divide to describe the growing disparity between the philosophy of Ubuntu as well as its implementation in modern South African society. As a matter of fact, interactions among people no longer involve the values of humanity, brotherhood, and respect but rather practices of exclusion, which destroy unity and cohesiveness of Africans[42]. In summary, it is essential to recognize the Afrophobic disorder as a multifaceted challenge involving identity, governance, social justice, and belonging.

[42] *Patel, Mohammed, and Koen, Ubuntu in Post-Apartheid South Africa,"*.

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2. Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests

3. Ethics Declaration

Not applicable.

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