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Xenophobic Activities and Its Impact on African Peace and Development

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Abstract

Africa is noted for peaceful coexistence and cooperation among member states in the pursuit of development of both the citizens and the continent. However, in recent time, African peace and development is threatened by xenophobic activities, thereby giving Africa a negative image in the international system. This prompts our study, which is aimed at identifying the causes of xenophobic activities in Africa, and examining its impacts on African peace and development. Documentary sources were used to generate data for the study and content analysis used to interpret the data. Bio-cultural theory is the framework used to give theoretical explanations to xenophobic activities in Africa. The study's findings indicated that there are issues of xenophobic activities in different African States at different times, and such activities have significant impact on African peace and development. The study made advances on the modalities to manage xenophobic activities in Africa.

Key Words: Violence, activities, development, peace, xenophobia

Introduction

African States are noted for their peaceful quest for development, as clearly demonstrated in their contributions to the political freedom of member states such as South Africa, Mozambique, Angola etc, and restoration of peace in member states. This is prominently displayed in the activities of African peace mission like ECOMOG in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, Rwanda, etc. The essence of which is to enhance effective integration and regional cooperation among states in the continent as contained in the African Union Charter. However, it appears that African peace and development is threatened in recent time by the forces of internal and external violence

orchestrated by the rising wave of xenophobic activities in Africa. Consequently, it is upon the above premise that this study is aimed at identifying the causes of xenophobic activities in Africa and its implications on African peace and development. The study is carried out within the period of 1980 to 2017 in Africa, and secondary data is used with content analysis as the tool to analyse the data to achieve the objectives of the study.

Conceptualization: Xenophobia in Africa

The issue of xenophobia has become major concern in Africa, especially as it affects foreign relations and development of African States. Xenophobia is occasioned by social and economic circumstances, arising from both local and international factors and has become a destabilising force against African cooperation and development (Tshishonga, 2015, p.163). Moge kwu (2005) explains xenophobia within the context of fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers: it is embodied in discriminatory attitude and behaviour, and often culminates in violence, abuses of all types and exhibitions of hatred. The notion by the citizens of a state that foreigners are better placed and enjoy better status than them creates room for perceived deprivation resulting in “deep dislike” and “discrimination” against the foreigners, and culminating in violence, killing, looting and destruction of properties of the later and total disorder in the state. Freeman (2015) identified xenophobia as a prominent issue in many African states including Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Mozambique, Libya, Senegal, Egypt etc. which led to severe discrimination by the indigenes of the state against fellow Africans, who they perceive as foreigners, the result of which is unhealthy international relations among African States. Similarly, Solomon and Kosaka (2013, p. 6) state that xenophobia has altered the peaceful co-existence, good governance and social cohesion of African States, and encouraged violation of human rights in Africa, as experienced in different African states.

Xenophobia has occurred in different African States at different times. In 1983, the people and government of Federal Republic of Nigeria developed discriminating attitude towards Ghanaians in Nigeria, and consequently, over 700,000 Ghanaians were forced to leave the country Nigeria against their will. In Libya, black Africans were discriminated against by the Libyans and were the target of the violence carried out on 13th January, 2016 at Tripoli, Libya, killing over 50 black Africans. The story is not different in South Africa, where xenophobic activities have been prominent since 1994, as noticed in the discrimination, several killings, destruction of properties and violation of human rights, with the black Africans being the principal casualties. The irony of the xenophobia in Africa is that it is centred on Africans discriminating against Africans, Africans abusing, violating and killing fellows Africans in Africa; and Africans looting and destroying properties of Africans in Africa, thereby distorting the peace and development of Africa. This prompts Kumah (2017) to state that the xenophobic violence and attack on foreign nationals, who are Africans in African states was carried out by Africans in their indigenous homes.

Theoretical Explanation of Xenophobic Activities in Africa

Scholars within the context of social sciences and humanities have explained xenophobia from different perspectives based on their understanding of the concept. The concept of xenophobia has its origin in two Greek words – *xenos*, meaning stranger or guest, and *phobos*, meaning fear or fight. Historically, xenophobia as a concept

became prominent first in the Western part of the world, particularly in Ancient Greece, where distinction was made between the natives and the foreigners. In Ancient Greece, foreigners were classified as “barbarians” because to them, the indigenes are superior to the foreigners and are meant to be slaves to them, indigenes (Harrison, 2002, p. 3). Similarly, the same view holds in Ancient Rome, where the Ancient Romans see themselves as superior people to all other people within the Ancient Roman Empire as claimed by a Roman General and consular of Roman Republic in 191 BC. In Ancient Rome, the Macedonians, Thracians and Illyrians were seen as people of superior race over the Syrians and Asiatic Greeks, who are meant to be slaves (Isaac, 2006, p. 317).

In Africa, xenophobic activities have become prominent in both political and socio-economic relations of African states, thereby prompting scholars to explain xenophobia from different perspectives. This study explains xenophobic activities in Africa using biocultural theoretical explanations.

Bio Cultural Theory - According to Carrol, J., Clasen, M., Jonsson, E., Kratschmer, A.R., McKerracher, L., Riede, F., ... Kiaergaard, P. (2017, p. 1)

biocultural theory is an integrative research program designed to investigate the causal interactions between biological adaptations and cultural constructions. From the biocultural perspective, cultural processes are rooted in the biological necessities of the human life cycle: specifically, human forms of birth, growth, survival, mating, parenting, and sociality. Conversely, from the biocultural perspective, human biological processes are constrained, organized, and developed by culture, which includes technology, culturally specific socioeconomic and political structures, religious and ideological beliefs, and artistic practices such as music, dance, painting, and storytelling.

The above scholars thus see social activities as a product of complex interaction between the biological and cultural processes in the society. This implies that the actions of people in the society are influenced by both their biological background (human behaviour) and cultural background (way of life).

In their views, Ramphele (2008) and Akinola (2014) described xenophobia as extreme “dislike” or “hatred” by the indigenes directed at those who are not indigenes of the given state, this hatred on the people is on account of the fact that they are foreigners in the state and hence easily identified by the indigenes due to their colour or race differences. Nyamjoh (2006, p. 149) explained xenophobia in Africa from the perspective that Africans dislike or hate fellow Africans due to cultural and biological differences such as colour and race. The indigenes identify the foreigners easily due to their physical features and unleash out discriminatory activities against them (the foreigners) with the intention of forcing them (the later) out of their country. The xenophobic activities in Libya, Senegal, Egypt and South Africa are clear indications of cultural and biological differences, where the indigenes who are white in colour easily identify the black nationals such as Nigerians, Congolese, Ghanaians, Togolese etc and carry out all forms of discriminatory and violent activities against them. Maina, Mathonsi, Williams, & Mcconnell, (2011) corroborated the above views, when they stated that xenophobic violence in South Africa is not meted out to all foreigners, but to mainly black foreigners. In this case, colour and race are the sources of concern in xenophobic activities in Africa. Similarly, Human Rights Watch (1998) adds that the black Africans are prone to the risk of violence and discrimination in African States,

where cultural and biological background of the foreigners determines the rate of hatred and discrimination they receive from the indigenes of the state.

Isolation and scapegoating are also issues in biocultural explanation of xenophobic activities in Africa. Harris (2002, p. 174) explained that foreigners are isolated and made scapegoat for social ills in foreign country, and the result is xenophobic violence in some African states. The biocultural theory further explains the unequal relationship and discrimination against the foreigners in African states due to cultural and biological differences. The indigenes see the foreigners as people who have come to struggle over the acquisition of the relatively scarce resources in the state with them. The foreigners are marked out, and with the perceived anger, the indigenes carry out violent attacks on them (foreign nationals), forcing them to leave the states. This scenario was visible in Nigeria in 1983 with the popular Ghana must go case, which forced Ghanaians out of Nigeria. In Libya, the same case repeated itself in 2006 where the black Africans were easily identified and forced to leave Libya. The same happened in Egypt, Senegal and South Africa at different times. Indeed, all these xenophobic activities were carried out in Africa due to the perceived cultural and biological differences in African states, with its attendant effects on African peace and development.

The Causes of Xenophobic Activities in Africa

This section of the study identifies the causes of xenophobic activities in African state.

1. Increase in Number of African Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Other African States

The incessant civil wars and communal crisis in African States are contributing to the increasing number of African refugees and asylum seekers all over the world including African States, in search of where there is relative peace and security. The refugees and asylum seekers are treated as foreigners with all forms of discrimination and violence against them. The nationals deprive the foreigners' access to their human rights and basic infrastructure in the state, and treat the foreigners as second-class citizens. This violation and deprivation of the refugees and asylum seekers result in violence and attacks in the state forcing the foreigners to demand for their rights, with severe resistance from the state nationals. In 2008, African refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa were the most discriminated and violated against by the South Africans, and in an attempt to resist the latter, the foreign nationals were attacked and killed helplessly by the South Africans.

2. Poverty and Economic Crisis in Africa

The issues of poverty and unemployment arising from the prevailing economic crisis and forces of international economic order have widened the inequality gap in African states. In search of good living and employment opportunity, many Africans now migrate to other states for economic protection. The nationals of the recipient states, who are also not too comfortable due to the relative scarce resources in the state, see the migrants as people who have come to compete for the available scarce resources, thereby depriving them (nationals) exclusive access to the available economic opportunities in their homeland. With this perceived economic deprivation, the state nationals become aggressive on the migrants, including Africans and demand for their

forceful deportation back to their states, and in most cases, the situation results in violent attacks, killings and different forms of xenophobic activities. In 1983, the people of Nigeria perceived the Ghanaians in Nigeria as people who are depriving Nigerians access to greater economic opportunities and demanded for immediate deportation of all Ghanaians in Nigeria back to Ghana and even provided sag backs popularly called “Ghana must go” for the Ghanaians to bag their luggage out of Nigeria. The actions of Nigerians were initially resisted by the Ghanaians and it attracted violence in the process. In 2006, Libyans saw the black migrants as people who are depriving them of the few available Libyans economic opportunities in their land and asked the migrants, particularly black Africans, to leave. This attracted violence in attempts to resist the Libyans.

3. Cultural and Biological Differences in Africa

Africa is a continent blessed with people of different biological and cultural background, resulting in the presence of different colours, race, languages and physical body features. These physical body features, speech and colour become sources of identification among Africans, resulting in opportunities for the white- colour Africans to discriminate against the black-colour Africans. This discrimination leads to deprivation of human rights of the black-colour Africans in white-colour states. Harris (2002) corroborates the above facts and opines that biological and cultural differences in Africa accounts for the physical demeanour of other foreign Africans, as the foreign nationals are easily identified and discriminated against. In South Africa, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Mali etc., the blacks are easily spotted out, violated, and sometimes forced to go back to their states. This accounts for the constant xenophobic activities in some African states.

4. The contest for Religious Superiority in Africa

Many African states and their citizens see themselves as people of superior religious practice, while others are seen as inferior practitioners, and therefore not worthy to live with or work together with in an organisation. This is manifest in the activities of Muslims in Islamic states against their Christian brothers and Christian states in Africa. This religious contest results in discriminations against each other and subsequent violent attack on each other. This is evidence in the violent attacks carried out against Christians, particularly the foreigners and reprisal attacks in Mali, Sudan, Libya etc. The situation has degenerated to the extent that people of different religions in the same state invite their counterparts from other states to assist them in the fight against their fellow nationals. The issue of “Boko Haram” in Nigeria is a clear case, and it is spreading to other African countries like Chad, Cameroon, and Togo, thereby increasing the rate of xenophobic activities in Africa.

5. Drugs Trafficking and Criminalities in Africa

Scholars including Musuva (2014) and Akinola (2014) postulated that xenophobic activities in Africa are attributed to drug trafficking and criminal activities of foreign nationals including Africans. The indigenes accuse the foreigners of corrupting them and carrying out drugs business in their state. This accusation graduates to dislike for the foreigners and subsequent discriminations. In an attempt by the foreigners who were accused to exonerate themselves of the accusations and prove that the indigenes are the ones involved in the ill practices, both the indigenes and foreigners engage in

violence against each other, resulting in xenophobic activities in such African state. This situation occurred in South Africa in 2006, 2008 and 2017 and warranted the South Africans to carry out violent attacks and killing of Nigerians, Togolese, Sudanese, Ivoirians, Ghanaians and Cameroonians.

6. Discriminate actions of the State Security Agents in African States.

State security agents all over the world are charged with the responsibility of securing life and properties of the people of the state, irrespective of their socio-cultural and political differences. Unfortunately, in some African states, the security agents provide discriminate services, as the state nationals are given adequate security services at the detriment of the foreigners, thereby exposing the foreigners to security challenges in the state. In their views, Solomon and Kosaka (2013) stated that the security agents including the police in South Africa are more concerned with the security of the indigenes than the foreigners in the face of the on-going violence in the state, thereby exposing the foreigners to the risk of violent attacks by the indigenes. In most cases, the security agents harass, intimidate and accuse the foreigners innocently in order to arrest and detain them at the instance of the indigenes. In Egypt and Libya, the story is not different, as the security agents provide more security for indigenes than the foreigners. This discriminate security services in African states have resulted to discrimination and perceived oppression against the foreigners, and graduated to several violent attacks and counter attacks between the foreigners and indigenes of the state.

7. Unguided Approach of Some African Leaders

Some African leaders make provoking comments in their leadership activities against the foreigners in their state, and such comments are capable of causing xenophobic violence in the state. Patel (2016) attributed the xenophobic activities in part of South Africa to the unguided and discriminate comments credited to King Goodwill Zwelithini at Pongola, Northern KwaZulu-Natal in March, 2015 against the foreigners in the state. In his words, the King said “we urge all the foreigners to pack their bags and leave South Africa” This statement of the King escalated the violence against the foreigners in Johannesburg that led to the death of many foreigners including Africans. This same situation took place in Nigeria in 1983, when the people and government of Nigeria declared that the Ghanaians in Nigeria must go back to Ghana and it led to xenophobic activities in Nigeria.

8. Mismanagement of Information by Media Houses in Africa

Some media houses in Africa in an attempt to promote news and attract attention, mismanage information involving relationship between the indigenes and foreigners in the state. The mismanagement of information is in the areas of misplacement and misrepresentation of facts about activities of the foreigners in the state, painting the foreigners in bad light before the indigenes and international community, and it gives rise to xenophobic activities in the state. Patel (2016) states that the mismanagement and misrepresentation of facts about the government report on the causes and effects of the xenophobic violence in KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa in 2015 led to another round of the violence against the foreigners in the state. This became possible because the media houses, both local and international blew the reports out of proportion, which provoked more violence and subsequent reprisal attacks in the state.

The Effects of Xenophobic Activities on African Peace and Development

This section of the study examines the effects of xenophobic activities on African peace and development.

1. Loss of Revenue from Tourism in the State

Xenophobia presents the impression of dislike and discrimination against foreigners in the state, and therefore creates the notion that the affected state is hostile to foreigners including tourists. This notion scares the tourist for the fear of possible violence and discriminatory policies against them, and therefore forces the existing tourists to vacate the state, while intending tourists divert their tourism interest to other violence-free states. This was evidenced in South Africa in 2015, when the Mozambicans avoided the tourism in Indaba, Durban, and in 2017, when Nigerians declined interest for tourism and holiday in South Africa due to xenophobic violence in the state. The effect is that the affected state in particular and Africa at large loss the revenue target from tourism within the period.

2. Increase in Death Rate and Loss of Manpower in Africa

The xenophobic violence in Africa accounts for the increase in death of Africans in Africa, implying that Africans are the main casualties of the xenophobic violence in Africa. In 1983, Nigerians and Ghanaians were killed in violence attacks and reprisal attacks in Nigeria, forcing the Ghanaians to leave Nigeria back to Ghana. Similarly, in Libya, Senegal and South Africa, the black Africans were targets of the violence and killed in the process. These deaths in Africa account for loss of manpower and capacity development, and negatively affect African peace and development.

3. Insecurity, Violation and Abuse of Fundamental Human Rights in Africa

Violation and abuse of fundamental human rights of citizens in Africa is on the increase due to xenophobic activities. The locals violate the rights of the foreign nationals in the state, forcing the foreigners to leave the state. In some cases, state security agents and state legal framework are employed to deprive the foreigners' equal opportunity in the state. Worse still, the indigenes call the foreigners abusive names and violate their rights. Bekker (2010) added that xenophobia contributes to the political instability in African states, due to the regular violence.

4. Poor Inter-State Relations in Africa

Xenophobia in Africa has forced African states to develop phobia against each other and severe their inter-state relations. In those states where xenophobic activities are carried out, the people and government of the affected foreign nationals plan reprisal attacks and discriminations against the nationals of the earlier xenophobic state. Frohlich (2017) stated that Nigerian National Assembly expressed dismay over the discrimination, killing and abuse of Nigerians due to xenophobic violence in South Africa, and Nigerians threatened to launch reprisal attacks on South Africans and their investments in Nigeria. The cumulative effect is strained relationship between and among African states and continued violence and under-development in Africa.

5. Restriction of Mobility in Africa

The emergence of xenophobic activities in Africa has resulted in the introduction of certain immigration policies by some African States, restricting certain African citizens, particularly the black Africans from accessing white-colour African states, thereby restricting labour, social and economic mobility in Africa. According to Solomon and Kosaka (2013, p. 6) “the manifestation of xenophobia undermines social cohesion, peaceful co-existence and good governance, and constitutes a violation of human rights”. The implication of the above is antithetical to African peace and development.

6. Economic Crisis and Loss of Capital Investment

African States with xenophobic activities witness economic crisis and loss of capital investment, because during the violence, the properties and investments of the foreign nationals are looted or destroyed, and the foreign investors tortured with harsh economic policies of the host state. This results in loss of investment and economic activities in such state, with the overall effect of forcing the foreigners to close down their investments and relocate their investments to other peaceful states, leaving such xenophobic state with increasing number of unemployed citizens, less capital investment and economic crisis.

7. Poor International image of Africa

Xenophobia expresses dislike and hatred for the foreign nationals by the local nationals in the state, and is prevalent in Africa. This notion has attracted global attention and giving bad impression about Africa, as a hostile continent to foreigners. The implication is that it makes the world to see Africa as a place without rule of law, full of political and economic instability with inhuman practices, and deprives African states the needed foreigners and their investments in Africa for African development.

Managing Xenophobia in Africa

This section of the study proffers necessary modalities for managing xenophobia with a view of reducing the prevalence in Africa.

1. African States should first identify the causes of the previous xenophobic activities in their states, with the view guiding against future occurrence of same in future.
2. The right and privileges of the foreigners should be protected in Africa, to reduce discrimination and violence against the foreigners to encourage peaceful co-existence and development.
3. Cultural disparity should be discouraged in Africa in order avoid the issue of colour and race differences. This will make Africans first to see themselves as people of one race, historical background and as brothers irrespective of colour. This philosophy of brotherhood will enhance the expected peace and cooperation among Africans.
4. The contest for religious superiority in Africa should be addressed using the necessary state policies to ensure that every citizen enjoys religious freedom in the state. This will reduce religious conflict and violence and encourage African and development.

5. States should provide equal security opportunity for all citizens in the state irrespective of their nationality. This will enable the foreigners to enjoy the same capacity of freedom like the indigenes and reduce discriminations.
6. There should be public orientation, using various public media on the need for peaceful co-existence of Africans in Africa to ensure African development.
7. African leaders should be conscious of their comments, particularly when it involves the foreigners and diplomatic relations in Africa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is obvious from our discussion above that many issues gave rise to xenophobic activities in Africa, and these activities have significant effect on African peace and development. Hence, the recommendations of this study are paramount and if put into practice by government functionaries, African leaders, and relevant institutions, the issue of xenophobia will be reduced in Africa, and African peace and development will be enhanced.

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