CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM | RESEARCH ARTICLE

An unabating challenge: Media portrayal of xenophobia in South Africa
Kudzayi Savious Tarisayi1* and Sadhana Manik1

Abstract: Xenophobia is a phenomenon currently permeating migration discourses worldwide. Whilst there has been growing scholarly attention in the Global North, the causes, nature and magnitude of xenophobia in countries the Global South remains underrepresented in the literature. After the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa became an attractive destination for Africans from numerous countries in the continent (Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Somalia and Zimbabwe). Indeed xenophobic violence in major cities of South Africa has become a regular feature since the first major incident in 2008. This study unpacks the narratives in the media portrayal of the recent outbreaks of afrophobia in South Africa. The authors focused on online-published articles of South African media in one month (September 2019). A content analysis of online-published articles which were sampled from a google search yielded a number of narratives. The study established that the violent attacks on foreigners in South Africa were portrayed as afrophobia. Afrophobia

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kudzayi Savious Tarisayi is a postdoctoral scholar in Geography Education within the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He obtained his PhD at UKZN. His doctoral research focused on the social capital influences of the land reform beneficiaries in Zimbabwe. His research interests include land reform, teacher migration and xenophobia. His current research is titled: Zimbabwean Teachers in South Africa: A Social Capital and Social Network Perspective within Xenophobic Space.

Sadhana Manik is Associate Professor in Geography Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. She undertakes Geography lecturing in Norway as part of several institutional mobility projects. She is the South African project leader for two internationalization of higher education institutional projects wherein UKZN’s School of Education is a partner. She is the co-ordinator of SANORD’S Teacher Education Partnership thematic group for the global south. She is known for her pioneering work and publications on international teacher migration in the South African context and she continues to research and supervise postgraduate research in this growing field. She has also published in the field of student access, success and support in higher education institutions in South Africa.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Globalization has reduced the physical distance between different countries and resultanty increased migration. There has been an increase in migration attributable to improvements in communication and transport networks that have reduced the world into a global village. The increase in migration has brought to the fore challenges of xenophobic prejudice and discrimination directed to migrants. Xenophobia includes dislike, fear or hatred of foreigners. A worrying trend has however been noted in some countries like South Africa where foreigners are attacked leading to their premature deaths, maiming and displacement. Additionally, some of the attacks have specifically targeted black foreigners from other African countries, indicating racism and hence our decision to use the term “afrophobia”.

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entails the stereotyping and hatred of foreigners from other parts of Africa and portraying them as criminals. The findings also established that there was denialism and government’s (in)action which has contributed to xenophobia being perceived as an unabating challenge. It was also noted that the instigators have contributed to the recurring outbreaks of violence in South Africa leading to reputational damage for the nation of South Africa.

**Subjects:** Social Sciences; Anthropology - Soc Sci; Social & Cultural Anthropology

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1. Background

There has been a growth in the literature on xenophobia in South Africa and other parts of the world (Kerr et al., 2019; Miller, 2018; Ogunnoiki, 2019) which is expected due to the world now being a global village and international migration being a feature of this. The term xenophobia has been widely utilized to describe violent attacks on foreigners around the world in general. However, contemporary discourse on the recurring violent attacks on foreigners in South Africa has questioned the use of “xenophobia” as an adequate descriptor of the occurrences that have unfolded. Traditionally, xenophobia entails hatred and fear of foreigners (Manik & Singh, 2013; Tarisayi & Manik, 2019). However Masenya (2017, p. 81) extends this definition and states “xenophobia can be viewed as attitudes, prejudices, and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity.”

Tagwirei (2019) argues that there is a need for a new word for the violent attacks on foreigners in South Africa especially after the September 2019 violent outbreaks in parts of the country. The phenomenon of xenophobia has a longer history than the recent violent outbreaks in some parts of South Africa. However, the violent outbreaks in South Africa in recent years have elucidated the component that there is a targeting of black foreign nationals that is there is black-on-black violence suggesting a racial dimension to the xenophobia. Even though there were indeed violent attacks on blacks by blacks in South Africa, the phrase black-on-black violence does not highlight that the victims were foreigners. However, Tarisayi and Manik (2019, p. 7) are very specific about the racial categorization and they argue, “the concept of afrophobia which has been highlighted as a peculiarity with predominantly Africans targeting other Africans.” Mbeke (2015, p. 74) had stated that “xenophobic attacks in South Africa target mostly Africans, thus the use of the term “afrophobia” to mean the dislike or fear of Africans by South Africans.” To unpack the nuances and peculiarities presented by the violent outbreaks in South Africa, Waiganjo (2017) rather suggested the phrase “xenophobia-afrophobia”. The use of “xenophobia-afrophobia” while acknowledging that there was hatred, fear and attacks on foreigners, these attacks were targeting foreigners from other African countries. In this paper, we utilize the term “afrophobia” to interrogate the nature of violence unleashed by black South Africans on mainly black foreigners from other African countries. Long et al. (2015) suggest that afrophobia may well be the most appropriate term considering that the recent violent outbreaks in South Africa have targeted mostly fellow black Africans from other parts of the continent. Drawing from the above literature, the authors concur that the violent outbreaks in South Africa despite being a form of xenophobia are afrophobic, depicting a distinctly racial caveat.

Most research on afrophobia (& or xenophobia) in South Africa has been focused on its causes and consequences. It is interesting to note that a wide range of narratives do interrogate the causes of afrophobia. Long et al. (2015, p. 510) attribute afrophobia to the colonial-apartheid legacy, persistent socio-economic inequalities, a history of anti-social behavior among the perpetrators and the “effects of foreign entrepreneurship on township economies.” However, Mbeke (2015, p. 75) argues that “three main reasons contribute to the persistence of afrophobia in South Africa and these should be
reversed: the non-implementation of policies and strategies addressing xenophobia; the role of the media; and, the absence of citizenship education, civic and political culture." Therefore, the causes of afrophobia are more nuanced than the simplified single factor arguments sometimes proffered in the literature. Ukwandu (2017, p. 1) characterizes afrophobia as an “oasis of unfulfilled dreams.” Frustrations by black South Africans due to lack of economic freedom and unfulfilled promises of democratic transition are blamed for the sporadic outbreaks of violence in the country (Ukwandu, 2017). Additionally, Ukwandu (2017, p. 50) elaborates that “instead of blaming their government for not delivering on the promises of 1994, some South Africans blame foreign black African immigrants for taking their jobs, resources, women, space and even their houses.” Thus, essentially, a multiplicity of factors are at interplay in contributing to afrophobia in South Africa. However, very little is known on the portrayal of the afrophobic outbreaks in September 2019 in online-published articles of South African media. From the preceding background, it can be noted that there are several dimensions to understanding afrophobia in South Africa.

1.1. “An invasion by aliens”: media portrayal of immigration

A plethora of studies in recent years have engaged in how the media portrays migration in both globally and locally. For example, Danilova (2016) revealed from a study of the British press that language used in the mainstream media contributes to the scapegoat image of migrants. Additionally, the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford established that the most common word used about “migrants” in the print media was “illegal” (Danilova, 2016). Essentially, Danilova (2016) viewed the nomenclature and metaphors utilized by the media as contributing to the scapegoating of migrants. Thus, it follows from the findings of the Migration Observatory that the language used by mainstream media perpetuates stereotyping as well as “othering” of migrants. It then follows that due to stereotypes such as migrants as “illegal,” the media can reinforce particular perceptions and prejudices about migrants. Hence, the media coverage of migration has the ability to influence public opinion on migrants in general and stereotypes on migrants in particular. Blinder and Jeannet (2018) who noted that media coverage of immigration provided a foundation for the individual construction of views on the social and political order further this argument. Resultantly, it can be argued that the media is instrumental in shaping the “pictures in our heads” (Blinder & Jeannet, 2018, p. 1444). Similarly, Musaro and Parmiggiani (2017) aver that the media shapes perceptions and thus the policies related to migration in Italy.

One of the most dominant threads in the media on migration focuses on the size of the immigrant populations in host countries. Blinder and Jeannet (2018), Gallagher (2014), and Sides and Citrin (2007) state that there was an apparent public overestimation of the size of the immigrant population which is attributable to media coverage of migration. Visuals and accompanying texts collectively stain the mind with readership being inundated by vivid images of boats which are overcrowded with migrants crossing the Mediterranean into Italy accompanied by narratives of “invasion” by foreigners (Musaro & Parmiggiani, 2017). Much earlier, it was reported that the vivid images and media coverage of migrants crossing the Mediterranean into Italy accompany by narratives of “invasion” by foreigners (Musaro & Parmiggiani, 2017). Much earlier, it was reported that the vivid images and media coverage of migrants leading to a crisis narrative (Moore et al., 2012). Moore et al.'s (2012) reference to a crisis narrative suggests that there is an invasion by migrants into Europe. α. The crisis narrative argues that the economies of the host countries are under threat from this invasion by migrants. The crisis narrative has a political thrust and it has been pursued by political parties pushing anti-immigration agendas (Moore et al., 2012). Herda (2015) similarly revealed that perceptions in the British media focus “on asylum seekers and workers rather than students (or family members of British residents)” (as cited in Blinder & Jeannet, 2018, p. 1446). Essentially, the media can deliberately influence public opinion by focusing their articles on certain classes of migrants namely illegal immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. It is rare for the media to focus on the brain gain with highly skilled professionals in critical skills areas (such as in science, medicine, teaching and information technology) immigrating to fill specific needs and boosting the economies of host countries.
Another equally dominant narrative centres on the characterization of immigrants. Tevera and Crush (2010, p. 01) noted the overarching categorization of migrants as “aliens”, “illegals” and “foreigners” in the media. While, Mawadza and Crush (2010) established that the arrival of immigrants in South Africa was reported as being on “influx”, in “waves” and “hordes”. Similarly, Kariithi (2017) reported from a quantitative study that media narratives in South Africa characterized immigrants as “illegal immigrants” “undocumented” or a “dangerous threat” and foreign-owned shops as “fronts to conceal drug-dealing and other illicit activities”. Hence, it is not surprising that Wasserman (2010), Maharaj (2010), and Kariithi (2017) have argued that the media in South Africa is the culprit in promoting sensationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment and “even give unlimited freedom to xenophobic reporters”. Therefore, it can be noted that both international and local scholarship converge on the framing of immigrants using disparaging concepts such as “illegals”, “dangerous threats” among other terms. Essentially it can be argued from the contemporary literature that some media articles are alarmist and sensationalist in their construction of migration stories.

2. Theoretical framework
The interrogation of the portrayal of afrophobia in online-published articles of South African media outlets involves harnessing the insights drawn from three theoretical avenues: Gerbner’s cultivation theory (1972), the agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and collective violence theory (Mattaini & Strickland, 2006). These three theories contributing to creating the theoretical framework that guided the analysis evident in this article and they are expounded below:

2.1. The cultivation theory
Cultivation theory was originally conceived from a broader “cultural indicators” project conducted by George Gerbner a seminal author. The “cultural indicators” project was focused on:

i. institutional process analysis, which explored how media messages are formulated and distributed; message system analysis, which explored what those messages conveyed as a whole; and cultivation analysis, which explored how media messages impact the way the consumers of media messages perceive the real world.” (Vinney, 2019, p. 1)

Essentially, the cultivation theory interrogates three aspects: the packaging, distribution and impact of journalistic content. Punyanunt-Carter (2008, p. 244) expounds “The cultivation hypothesis offers an explanation for the way individuals organize social reality and make social judgements of the world …”. Informed by the cultivation theory, we argue that the reality and views of South Africans concerning African immigrants are shaped by the media. Additionally, Alitavoli and Kaveh (2018, p. 1) elucidate that “the media shapes people’s reality and their views on the world around them.” Hence, it follows that “our perceptions of reality are ‘cultivated’ or developed by what we view in the media” (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008, p. 245). Therefore, guided by the cultivation theory, the authors in this article unpack the unabating challenge of afrophobia in South Africa. The unabating challenge of afrophobia is thus partly explained by the media continued portrayal of African immigrants in negative ways. Furthermore, cultivation theory was utilized to analyse online-published articles of South African media outlets that demonstrated the potential to exacerbate intolerance and afrophobia by virtue of the manner in which the article was crafted. We adopted this lens as studies have indicated that media portrayals have ramifications on the perceptions created of immigrants globally (Blinder & Jeannet, 2018; Danilova, 2016; Shrum, 2017).

2.2. Agenda-setting theory
The study also draws from the plethora of agenda-setting scholarship to unpack the portrayal of afrophobia in online-published articles of South African media outlets. A multiplicity of narratives have emerged on agenda-setting theory, however we restrict our analysis to the conception articulated by McCombs and Shaw (1972). Neuman et al. (2014, p. 193) explicate “The basic causal model posits that correlations between aggregated measures of media issue coverage and public
opinion survey measures of issue importance at a single point in time represent evidence of media agenda-setting.” At the epicenter of the agenda-setting theory is the view that the media influences “what to think about” among the audience. The media coverage of a phenomenon, such as afrophobia in this article, influences the importance that the audience ascribes to it. Wanta and Alkazemi (2017, p. 2) hold the view that “the frequency of media coverage that issues receive can influence the public’s perceptions regarding how important these issues are.” The agenda-setting theory assists with questions revolving around the influence of the media in South Africa on “what to think about” related to afrophobia.

2.3. The collective violence theory
Collective violence theory stems from the work of Mattaini and Strickland (2002). Krug et al. (2002, p. 115) define collective violence as “the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group—whether the group is transitory or has a more permanent identity—against another group or set of individuals, to achieve political, economic or social objectives.” Mogapi (2011) argues that collective violence theory stems from the notion of collective trauma. At the core of the conceptualization of collective trauma and collective violence are notions that a society has a mind of its own sometimes referred to as “group mind”. Mogapi (2011, p. 120) avers “collective trauma, therefore, refers to a state similar to a group mind where the collective is traumatised as an entity, independent from the sum of the traumatised individuals within the group.” The above argument holds that South Africa due to her apartheid past is yet to recover from collective trauma. Additionally, the unabating outbreaks of violence in South Africa are viewed as emanating from the long-term effects of collective trauma that manifests as collective violence. Mogapi (2011, p. 125) asserts “Mattaini’s model of collective violence provides a useful framework for highlighting the role of collective trauma in collective violence.” In this paper, collective violence theory is utilized to unpack the causes of afrophobic attacks and the chronology of events as portrayed in the media in South Africa.

3. Research methodology
This study falls under the interpretivist worldview or paradigm. Leovy (2017, p. 13) states that the interpretivist paradigm “emphasizes people’s subjective experiences, which are grounded in social–historical contexts.” This study utilized content analysis to unpack the portrayal of afrophobia in online media in South Africa. Content analysis is a fast-growing technique in the analysis of media articles (Macnamara, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002; Riffe & Freitag, 1997). Neuendorf (2002, p. 9) views content analysis as “the primary message-centred methodology.” The authors followed a sub-set of content analysis referred to as media content analysis. Media content analysis is “a well-established research methodology.” (Macnamara, 2005, p. 1) which can be traced to the seminal work of Harold Lasswell (1927). Lasswell as cited in Saraisky (2015, p. 27) explains that it comprises “who says what through which channel to whom with what effect.” Stone et al. (1966, p. 5) expound that “content analysis is any research technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics within text.” Additionally, Saraisky (2015, p. 27) elaborated that it is “a general set of techniques for analyzing collections of communications.” We, the authors, carried out a content analysis of articles sieved from a Google search using the keywords “xenophobia + September 2019 + South Africa”. Google search was selected for this study because it is the most used search engine (Lievonon, 2013). The researchers focused on articles published in September 2019 because of the afrophobic outbreaks in that particular month. Additionally, the researchers wanted to interrogate the media portrayal of the violent attacks at the time of the outbreaks. The search yielded 2 410 000 results and we selected articles in the South African media which appeared in the first three pages which accounted for data saturation. Lievonon (2013) explains Google ranks the most relevant articles first in a search. Hence, it follows that the first page displayed in search contains links to the most relevant articles. Therefore, the researchers selected 30 articles that appeared in the first three pages. Each page yield 10 articles which were relevant to the phenomenon. International media articles on afrophobia that appeared in the search were excluded from the sample because the study sought to interrogate the portrayal of afrophobia specifically in South Africa. Thus, the researchers used
purposive sampling that identified the most relevant articles guided by the Google algorithm. Thematic analysis was utilized to present and discuss the findings. Thematic analysis entailed identifying emerging themes from the articles. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 6) state that, “thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.” Hence, emerging themes in the articles such as the portrayal of immigrants in the afrophobic incidents were identified and discussed.

4. Findings and their discussion
The authors analysed, coded and grouped the findings from this study into themes. The main themes that emerged from the analysis of articles in the online media in South Africa are presented in this section.

4.1. Chronology of events
The dominant narrative in the portrayal of violent attacks on foreign nationals in September 2019 focused on chronicling the events. The articles in this narrative reveal that the September 2019 outbreak was triggered by the alleged shooting of a taxi driver by a foreign national in a drug-related incident. Pijoos (2019) in an article titled Joburg CBD [Central Business District] violence claims second life as a woman is shot revealed the identity of the slain Tshwani taxi driver as Jabu Baloyi. The circumstances surrounding the shooting incident involved taxi drivers trying to chase alleged drug lords from the Pretoria’s CBD. Additionally, Jabu Baloyi is portrayed as a hero who died fighting the scourge of drug dealing in the streets of Pretoria by foreign nationals. This is evident in an article in the Sunday Times, where Mvumvu (2019) writes, “slain taxi operator was a hero fighting scourge of drugs.” Other articles went further to report that due to Jabu Baloyi's being a martyr, a street and a taxi rank were going to be renamed in his honour (Maromo, 2019). The outbreak of violence is constructed as a retaliation to the death of a hero who was cleaning the streets of Pretoria of drug lords. In essence, the outbreak of violence against foreign nationals in September 2019 mainly in some parts of Gauteng province is portrayed as a product of a singular incident, the shooting of Jabu Baloyi. Jabu Baloyi was allegedly shot while trying to stop drug dealers from selling drugs to school children. However, Burke (2019) in an article entitled We are a target: wave of xenophobic attacks sweeps Johannesburg in The Guardian newspaper points out that the violent attacks on foreigners were not erratic but had long term causes. Burke (2019) reports “According to community leaders, the attacks last week had been building for several weeks” and the Jabu Baloyi incident was a trigger. Thus, Burke's article disputes the narrative that the outbreak of violence against foreigners in September 2019 was solely a response to the murder of a taxi driver by a foreign national in a supposed drug-related incident. Furthermore, the article by Burke (2019) reports that anti-immigrant rhetoric had been circulating on social media for some time alleging that “immigrants cheat their customers with out-of-date produce in their shops, take jobs from locals and defraud the state.” Hence, the article explains the outbreak of violence on foreign nationals to be a product of anti-immigrant rhetoric. The portrayal of the outbreak of violence in South Africa as due to anti-immigrant rhetoric confirms findings by Danilova (2016), Blinder and Jeannet (2018), and Blinder and Jeannet (2018) argue that print media contributes to the growth in anti-immigration public opinion by stereotyping immigrants as criminals. Essentially while this narrative offers a chronology of events, it also portrays foreign nationals as criminals engaged in drug-related crimes. Additionally, the narrative portrays Jabu Baloyi as a martyr in the fight against the peddling of drugs by foreign nationals. Hence, the audience of the online-published were informed by the narrative that foreign nationals are responsible for drug-related problems in South Africa.

4.2. Dynamics of afrophobia
The other narrative portrayed the violent attacks on foreign nationals in September 2019 as afrophobia. Dadoo (2019) disputes the use of the term xenophobia concerning the September 2019 violence against foreign nationals arguing for the inclusion of race as a key variable in the violence on an article titled South Africa is guilty of afrophobia, not xenophobia. Dadoo (2019) writes “South Africa does not have a xenophobia problem. I say this because there
are thousands of immigrants from European countries in South Africa. These mainly white-
foreigners have never been attacked in my country, and probably never will. South Africans don’t
rage against all foreigners—just the poor, black ones from Africa. We are guilty of afrophobia, not
xenophobia.” Essentially the article argues that the violence in South Africa targeted only foreign
nationals from Africa. Foreign nationals from Europe were not targeted in the violent attacks.
Hence, the violence in September 2019 was portrayed in the online-published articles as afrophobia.
Hence, it can be argued from the article that the outbreak of violence in South Africa in
September 2019 was essentially afrophobia merging of xenophobia and racism (foreigners who
are African). The narrative questioning the appropriateness of portraying the violence on foreign
nationals in South Africa as xenophobia is consistent with arguments by Chiliza and Stein (2015)
and Tarisayi and Manik (2019). Chiliza and Stein (2015) and Tarisayi and Manik (2019) suggest the
term afrophobia which captures the essence that the violence targets foreign nationals from other
African countries while sparing white foreign nationals.

4.3. Instigators
The instigator narrative focuses discourse on the role of incitement on the outbreak of violence on
foreign nationals. The narrative attributes the outbreak of violence to the agitation by instigators.
Bornman (2019) in an article entitled The people who sparked the xenophobic violence which
appeared in The Sunday Times attributes the outbreak of violence against foreigners to instigators.
The article attributes the outbreak of violence in September 2019 in Gauteng to an offensive flyer
authored by Zweli Ndaba (Chair of the Sisonke People’s Forum). Additionally, the article alleges
that Ndaba created and circulated a flyer which called for the shutdown of the country. The flyer
read ““Sisonke People’s Forum … invite all the residents of this country … to come together as
South Africans with one voice of ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, on selling of drugs, on property theft, and
our work taken by foreign nationals.” Furthermore, the flyer called for the blocking of access to
communities and industrial areas “until our voices are heard”. It concluded with: “South Africa for
South Africans. This is not xenophobia but the truth.” “Awahambe amakwerekwere, awabuyele
emuva. [Foreigners must go, they must go back.]” Essentially, the flyer was couched in anti-
immigrant rhetoric and stereotyping of foreign nationals as criminals who are thieves and drug
dealers as all three concepts (foreigners, robbers and drug dealers are included in the same
sentence indicating an affiliation between all three concepts). According to the narrative the
Sisonke People’s Forum flyer rode on the people’s anger over the murder of a taxi driver in a drug-
related incident. The death of the taxi driver provided an opportunity for afrophobic instigators to
attack foreigners. Therefore, the death of the taxi driver was manipulated by the instigators to
incite citizens to vent their anger on foreigners in their vicinity. The role played by instigators in
inciting South Africans to attack foreign nationals can be explained utilising collective violence
theory which explains the instrumental use of violence by members of a group. The perpetrators of
the violence on foreign nationals can be viewed as victims of collective trauma and as they were
manipulated by the instigators.

4.4. Denialism
Another interesting narrative in the online-published articles focuses on the denialism within the
South African government of the gravity of the incidents. The narrative argues that there was gross
denialism within government circles on magnitude of afrophobia. Tagwirei (2019) in an article
titled A new word is needed for xenophobia, but it’s not criminality portrays the September 2019
violent outbreaks as government denialism. Tagwirei (2019) explains “African migrants have once
again been targeted for looting, violence and displacement in SA. Not only are the events reminis-
cent of 2008, 2015 and 2017, the narratives explaining them and the measures suggested to deal
with them are more or less the same. In 2008, when public attention to attacks on African migrants
became global for the first time, then-president Thabo Mbeki declared that South Africans were not
xenophobic. In 2015 his successor Jacob Zuma echoed similar sentiments. The explanation was that
criminal elements were hiding behind xenophobia to disguise their actions … ” The article draws
similarities amongst the 2008, 2015, 2017 and 2019 violent attacks as well as the discourse
stemming from the denial by the presidency. Thus, the failure by the presidency to acknowledge
the existence of afrophobia is utilised to explain the recurring violent outbreaks in South Africa. Hunter (2019) wrote in an article titled SA pushes back against xenophobia fury, “As the diplomatic fallout from the xenophobic violence intensifies this week, the South African government remained steadfast in its denial of xenophobia, opting instead to condemn violent attacks.” The article revealed that South African diplomats across the African continent were instructed to deny any xenophobic attacks but instead portray them as violent attacks. Another article by Umraw (2019) titled Xenophobic attacks: ANC’s top brass wants answers adds to the denialism narrative. Umraw (2019) writes “The officials were inconsistent that all acts of violence be condemned, including criminal acts directed at foreign nationals living in South Africa. The ANC is deeply concerned at what appears to be criminal elements sowing discord in several Gauteng communities by exploiting grievances around unemployment, crime, drugs and migration.” According to the article the ANC leadership opts to view the violence targeting foreign nationals as criminality. However, this in essence, is denialism according to Umraw’s article. Fundamentally, the narrative argues that the government of South Africa was in denial. Additionally, the government denial was blamed for the recurring outbreaks of afrophobia.

4.5. A Correlation between poverty and the outbreak of violence

Another thought-provoking narrative proffers a link between poverty and the outbreak of violence in Gauteng in September 2019. The narrative adds a poverty dimension to the afrophobia discourse. Lwandle Bhengu (2019) in an article titled Hunger, not xenophobia the cause of violence in SA, argues chief justice in The Sunday Times draws from a speech by Chief Justice, Mogoeng Mogoeng to correlate hunger and the violent attacks. Mogoeng is quoted by Bhengu (2019) saying “South Africans are not xenophobic, they are just hungry.” The Chief Justice adds “South Africans are not xenophobic, it’s not denialism. Let me explain to you what I am talking about. Why is it that it was in 2008 that the largest African-on-African attack happened and why is it that a large-scale attack of that nature is happening in 2019? Is there something that correlates?” In the same speech, Mogoeng poses the question, “Why are intellectuals who are South African not attacking other intellectuals from other African countries. Why are executives in the corporate sector not attacking other Africans in the corporate sector?” The article poses interesting questions on the geography of the violent outbreaks on foreign nationals. The victims of the attacks are mainly in the townships and neighbourhoods of limited means. Thus, the article portrays the violent outbreaks of September 2019 as largely a result of poverty in particular neighbourhoods with South Africans being hungry. Dadoo (2019) in another article concurs that the violence “is fuelled by exclusion, poverty and rampant unemployment. This isn’t black-on-black violence. This is poor-on-poor violence.” Consequently, it can be argued that the unabating violence on foreign nationals in South Africa in September 2019 was being portrayed as a result of poverty. The contribution of poverty also explains the territorial targeting of poor black foreigners. Affluent white foreigners are not targeted because they are not considered a threat to jobs by the poor.

4.6. Government (in)action

Closely related to the denialism narrative, another perspective unpacks government (in)action. The argument holds that the South African government did not take action because it denies the existence of afrophobia. Mthombathi (2019) in an article entitled Xenophobia tarnishes us, and the government’s irresponsibility is criminal in The Sunday Times bemoans the South African government’s inaction in finding a solution to the recurring problem of xenophobia. Mthombathi (2019) writes “The mess we are in should be laid at the door of the government. It is feckless, cowardly and incompetent.” The article opines that the unabating outbreaks of violence on foreigners were largely due to the government’s inaction and incompetence. Bhengu (2019) in an article titled “Absent father”: Ramaphosa slammed for “ignoring” xenophobic attacks and spate of killings in The Sunday Times also attributes the recurring violent attacks on the foreigners on government’s failure to act. Bhengu (2019) inscribes “President Cyril Ramaphosa is being slammed from all fronts on social media for “going about as if it’s business as usual” amid attacks on foreigners and the killing of women and children.” Bhengu (2019) drawing from the views expressed on various social media platforms argues that the recurring violent outbreaks were due to the president “burying his
head in the sand hoping the problem will go away” attitude. Hence, it can be noted from this narrative that the unabating violence outbreaks against foreigners were portrayed as evidence of government’s lack of acknowledgement of the problem and government’s incompetency in addressing it.

4.7. South Africa’s reputational damage
Another thread that emerged from the articles in the media on the violence perpetrated on foreign nationals in September 2019 focused on the damage caused by South Africa’s reputation continentally and globally. Mthombothi (2019) laments “The idiots and scoundrels baying for foreigners’ blood, burning and looting their businesses, have trashed the country’s good name, perhaps irrevocably. All the extraordinary accomplishments by this young democracy will now be sullied and overwhelmed by the stench of xenophobia.” This narrative widens the discourse on the impact of the violent attacks on foreign nationals in South Africa to include implications on foreign policy. The narrative also portrays the attacks on foreign nationals in South Africa as endangering South African citizens in other African countries. Fabricius (2019) in an article titled Anger at xenophobic attacks spreads across Africa as SA-owned firms are targeted, chronicles the retaliation by citizens in various African countries to violent attacks on their fellow citizens in South Africa. Fabricius (2019) writes “The backlash across Africa to xenophobic violence against Africans in South Africa is spreading and becoming more violent.” The article chronicles retaliatory strikes against South African-owned chain stores (for example, Checkers and MTN) and trucks in Nigeria, Zambia and Mozambique. Articles focusing on the reputation of South Africa as well as retaliatory actions can be understood using the agenda-setting theory.

5. Conclusions
From the foregoing presentation and discussion of findings, it can be concluded that the media in South Africa portrayed the violent attacks on foreign nationals in a multiplicity of ways. The main narrative in the media describes the violent attacks on foreign nationals as afrophobia. Essentially the articles analysed in this paper disputed the conceptualization of the violence against foreigners in South Africa as xenophobia. The narrative exposes the inadequacy of the term xenophobia to characterize the violent attacks of foreign nationals in September 2019. The September 2019 violent attacks of foreign nationals were afrophobia because there was a targeting of black foreigners from other African countries. Additionally, it was revealed from the articles reviewed that white foreign nationals from Europe and other parts of the world were not targeted by the violence which give credit to the afrophobia conceptualisation. Fundamentally, the articles noted that there was an apparent exclusion of white foreigners by the perpetrators of the violence against foreigners in South Africa. Also key in the portrayal of the outbreak of violence on foreign nationals was the implicit view that attacks on foreign nationals were unabating. It was established that the outbreak of violence on foreign nationals in September 2019 was similar to other outbreaks in 2008, 2015 and 2017.

Another narrative revealed that there denialism within the South African government of the magnitude of afrophobia. Resultantly, there was government inaction and incompetency in addressing the grave problem of afrophobia. The government was portrayed as failing to respond to the unabating challenge of violence on foreign nationals effectively. The articles also revealed that the death of taxi driver, Jabu Baloyi sparked the outbreak of the violence in September 2019. Jabu Baloyi is further portrayed as a martyr in the war against peddling of drugs by foreign nationals. It was also noted that the media in the reviewed articles portrayed foreign nationals as criminals engaged in drug-related crimes. From the articles reviewed it was also noted that instigators capitalised on the growing discontent against foreign nationals from other African countries. It can also be concluded from the findings in this study that violence on foreign nationals has been damaging to the reputation of South Africa, within the African Union which will have implications for foreign policy and tourism.
It can also be noted from this study the portrayal of the violence against foreigners in South Africa was more nuanced than the simplified narrative of competition for jobs. The articles reviewed revealed the centrality of the role of instigators in the violent attacks on foreigners. The instigators were blamed for being opportunist and capitalizing on the grievances of the perpetrators of the violence. Despite this apparent role of the instigators in inciting the violence, it was also noted that the violence was unabating, suggesting underlying and yet to be addressed grievances. Additionally, the murder of Jabu Baloyi was portrayed by the articles as the immediate cause of the September 2019 outbreak. Essentially, the contribution of the murder of Jabu Baloyi reveals that the grievances had already been simmering waiting for a trigger.

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Author details
Kudzayi Savious Tarisayi1
E-mail: kudzayit@gmail.com
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0086-2420
Sadhana Manik2
E-mail: manik@ukzn.ac.za

1 Geography Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

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