



Aljazeera Media Institute
Aljazeera Fellowship – 2021
Research Paper

**Fighting Xenophobia in
South Africa:
Where does the Media Stand?**

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Al-Jazeera Fellowship programme

A programme launched by the Al Jazeera Media Institute aims to encourage academic research as well as to provide journalists and researchers with an opportunity to gain practical experiences and learn about applied practices in an in-depth way that contributes to the improvement of the profession of journalism, with the help of many Arab and international institutions.

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Abstract

South Africa has a history of xenophobic violence, and its media - the digital mainstream media in particular - has been implicated several times in inciting anti-immigrant violence through inflammatory and sensational reporting. Towards the end of last year and the beginning of 2022, there was an increase in hate speech against foreign nationals of African origin by politicians and right-wing groups. The coverage of international migration by the South African digital mainstream media - particularly the Daily Sun - from January 2021 to January 2022 was found to be largely sensational, negative, incomplete, un-analytic and biased.

A sustained and prolonged attack against 'foreign' truck drivers, vendors, tenants, low skilled workers, tuck shop owners and other categories of the immigrant community was launched from January 2022 by members of xenophobic groups and this coverage may have also incited violence. A textual analysis of the articles on immigrants and international migration published by the Daily Sun's digital edition from January 2021 to January 2022 was undertaken. Two (2) refugee leaders were interviewed to get their views on the South African press, in relation to electronic media. To ensure a balance, two (2) leaders of a local anti-immigrant group were also interviewed to understand the influence of the media, particularly the digital mainstream media such as the Daily Sun in the direction that they took.

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Introduction

The study investigated coverage of international immigration in the Daily Sun's online newspaper from January 2021 to January 2022, proving the link between this coverage and xenophobic violence that rocked South Africa starting at the Bara taxi rank on January 17, 2022, led by Operation Dudula, and Soweto Parliament, supported by some politicians in the ruling African National Congress (ANC), ActionSA, All Truck Drivers Foundation (ATDF), Put South Africa First (PSAF), the Patriotic Alliance (PA) and other populist right wing extremist groups. Based on critical discourse analysis and the application of the moral panics theory, the Daily Sun electronic edition's coverage of international migration during the period under review was largely negative and a weapon to unleash terror against African immigrants.

Background

As xenophobia is coursing through the veins of today's world, the demonisation of refugees and immigrants has become a regular feature of the mainstream media causing public distrust and anger towards the most marginalised in society (Kleist, 2017). Instead of curbing anti-immigrant violence and exclusion, the digital mainstream media, particularly the Daily Sun, is implicated as one of the chief culprits in inciting it. Hence they do need to take responsibility for the manner in which they have contributed to where we find ourselves now (Media Monitoring Africa, 2015). Though it is hard to assign specific blame on the media for the unfolding anti-immigrant violence, there is nevertheless evidence that the media

- particularly the electronic mainstream media such as the Daily Sun - play a key role in the ongoing xenophobic violence in most parts of South Africa.

Despite global efforts to end all forms of discrimination and hatred against international immigrants, xenophobia has continued unabated. Numerous studies in countries across the globe, document increasing intolerance, xenophobia, and opposition to immigration and diversity (Crush and Ramachandran, 2009, Misago, et al 2015) and South Africa is not exceptional.

Though South Africa is a signatory to various regional and international protocols safeguarding the rights of refugees and immigrants in its territory (Government Gazette, RSA, 1998) and has launched the National Action Plan to combat Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance (SA Government, 2019) with an arguably progressive constitution, implementation remains a major challenge (Gomo, 2010).

Harris (2002) concurs that despite the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy, prejudice and violence continue to mark contemporary South Africa, and the 'foreigner' has been one such victim, particularly African foreigners - thereby affecting the quality of asylum and directly works against local integration as a durable solution (Misago, et al, 2015). Previously, South Africa experienced xenophobic attacks in 2008 and 2015 and it may experience many more in future; unless the government puts precautionary measures in place (Rasila et al, 2016) and the media adhere to responsible and ethical journalism.

With over 281 million international migrants by 2020, (World Migration Report, 2020), fleeing violence, war, hunger, extreme poverty, because of their sexual or gender orientation or from consequences of natural disasters (Amnesty International, 2022), xenophobia is likely to be a concern and the position of the media, particularly the electronic media, needs to be located. While the overwhelming majority of the media take clear editorial positions opposing and condemning xenophobia, there are also a number of ways in which some contribute to supporting negative stereotypes (Media Monitoring Africa, 2015).

Although the aspiration not to promote or incite hate speech is a cardinal pillar of ethical journalism, some media still become weapons of intolerance and some journalists still make political propaganda (White, 1976) for xenophobic groups. In South Africa, though the minority media is more accommodating and thoughtful in its coverage, the majority media still maintain an anti- foreigner perspective (Danso, 2000). Yet, the International Federation of Journalists principle 7 on the code of conduct of journalists maintains: “The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, and national or social origins.” The South Africa Press Code stipulates that the press should avoid denigrating references to people’s race, colour, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or preference, physical or mental disability, or age (Hadland, 2010) that may incite violence, particularly xenophobic violence. It is our submission that the pen should be used to fight xenophobia and not to incite it.

We maintain that as long as the media remain commercialised and serve an instrumentalist agenda, it will remain captured by right wing extremist groups, and its effort to report factually on international migration will be futile. In our view, the increasing commercialisation of media products especially news may be due to competition, sometimes leading journalists to use extreme words (Mgogo et al, 2020) which ‘sells’, thereby sparking xenophobia. This means that in some cases the media use sensational reporting on international migration as a strategy to capture the attention and emotions of buyers of media products. Kleist (2017) argues, as long as the competition for profits remains the core motivator, we will see more reportage that appeals to people’s fears. This study, besides investigating where the Daily Sun’s online edition stands in the ongoing anti-immigrant violence, will establish how the desire to pursue profit in the global political economy has made it difficult for the Daily Sun’s online newspaper to meet its national and international obligations of fair and complete coverage, in spite of repeated calls to reform.

Despite the objectivity that the media is expected to maintain, there is no denying that the media, whether international or not, has occasionally reported on events and issues in ways that have misled or been misinterpreted by the public (Ester, 2010). This is not to question how journalism works but to ask journalists to rethink their reporting. Whilst there is agreement among scholars that the media’s style of reporting on international migration in South Africa is xenophobic (Mbetga, 2014), few studies have linked inputs (media reporting) to outputs (xenophobic violence).

Thus this paper attempts to link media coverage of international migration related issues to xenophobic violence in South Africa - at a time when internet penetration is increasing (Onslow, 2021, Windelspecht, 2022) - by adopting textual analysis (Mgogo, et al, 2020) with particular reference to the Daily Sun's online edition.

While dictionary definitions distinguish 'immigrants'- people who are settling or intending to settle in a new country - from 'migrants' - those who are temporarily resident, 'immigrant' and 'migrant' (as well as 'foreigner') are often used interchangeably in public debate and even among research specialists (The Migration Observatory, 2019). For the purposes of this study, the understanding of an immigrant as a person who moves away from their place of usual residence across an international border, with or without refugee status or asylum, 'documented' or 'undocumented', will be applied.

The study submits that to effectively fight xenophobia, a responsible, and ethical media, including the Daily Sun must be well placed in the defensive line, with appropriate ammunition. For this to be achieved we propose Ubuntu journalism, peace journalism, (Mbetga, 2014), social responsibility and solutions journalism. The study opens a window for further investigation into factors that sustain unethical and unprofessional journalism, especially the role of the curriculum and the pedagogy. We will call for the liberation and decolonisation of the media curriculum and the pedagogy to promote social responsibility and solutions journalism, as an alternative emancipatory discourse.

Key words: Xenophobia, Afriphobia, Media, immigrant, refugee, international immigration, cross - border, South South Migration, North South Migration, agency, the Global South, the Global North, transnational, critical discourse analysis, moral panics theory.

Objectives

1. To identify cases of incomplete, erroneous, and un-analytic reporting in the Daily Sun, a year prior to the xenophobic violence that started on January 17, 2022, lasting until the present.
2. To identify the link between the erroneous, incomplete and unanalytic reporting in the Daily Sun to the xenophobic violence against African immigrants in South Africa.
3. To identify headlines, images and terms used by the Daily Sun with the potential to incite violence against African immigrants in South Africa.

Rationale

Current research exposes pervasive forms of discrimination, hostility and violence experienced by migrant communities, with the latter becoming easy scapegoats for various social problems in host communities (Crush, 2009)

But how the media may have a hand in this debate has not been adequately articulated. It is imperative to cover that gap and besides - contributing to the ongoing body of research in understanding South African xenophobia (Mbetga, 2014) and the role of the media in sustaining it, the study is consistent with national, regional and international obligations and protocols.

Objective 17.33 of the Global Compact, makes a commitment “to eliminate all forms of discrimination, condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestation of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants in conformity with international human rights law” (UN, 2018, Crush, 2020), and the media , especially the electronic media, may play in that role.

Recent international forums on migration and development have consistently highlighted the need to tackle xenophobia, and related political, economic, and social exclusion of immigrants and refugees (Crush, et al, 2009). In 2005, the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) urged local authorities, migrant groups, and other non-state actors to promote social cohesion, and the integration of immigrants while on July 2007, participants at the first meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in Belgium underscored the urgency of developing new initiatives to counter xenophobia and racism, as well as marginalisation, abuse and discrimination faced by migrant groups (Crush, et al, 2009). There is no strategy to combat xenophobia that may succeed, without the media but its ethical and professional conduct need to be stressed.

At the Department of Home Affairs Workshop on Xenophobia in August 2008, a commission was established specifically to discuss the role of the media and calls were made for editors and journalists to be made personally liable for inflammatory content (Hadland, 2010). Noting that an effective strategy to combat xenophobia should be inclusive and holistic, the media must be allowed

to play its part, but must be guided by ubuntu.

Since the existing scholarly literature debate focuses more on older patterns of xenophobia emerging as non-violent discrimination and segregation, but pays less attention to xenophobia as a violent practice per se (Gerorgiadou, et al, 2017), it is important to see how the mainstream online media, especially the Daily Sun, contributes to explicit violence against foreign nationals.

Whilst there has been growing scholarly attention in the Global North, the causes, nature and magnitude of xenophobia in countries of the Global South remain under-represented in the literature - even at a time when South-South migration is increasing (Crush et al, 2009), particularly the role of the media to shape perceptions and thus the policies relating to migration in South Africa.

A number of studies done previously on xenophobia have broadly served as barometers of measuring the level of xenophobia and some of the underlying social issues without grounding on the causal effect of media reporting and xenophobia (Gomo, 2010). There is no question that the digital mainstream media's coverage of immigrants and transnational migration is largely unethical, and the Daily Sun's electronic version shares the blame. What should be fully investigated is the link between inaccurate coverage of international migration and xenophobic violence on the ground.

The focus of study is crucially significant with the intention of allowing open discussions with the South Africa society (Mbetga, 2014), on how the pen has instigated violence against foreign nationals, and the solutions thereafter.

Although there have been a few studies that examined the role of the media and representation of foreigners in the South African context, none has focused specifically on the representation in the (Mbetga, 2014) Daily Sun's online edition and the period under review. Though Mbetga (2014) carried out a relatively similar study in 2008, it was on how the Daily Sun portrayed and depicted black foreigners and the violence perpetrated against them during xenophobic violence and not how the Daily Sun online edition's unethical reporting on international migration may have contributed to the violence that followed.

Further to that in investigating the representation of black 'foreigners' in the media with reference to xenophobia, Mbetga (2014), analysed the paper version of the Daily Sun accessed via National Library of South Africa. This is different from the current study which is based on a textual analysis of news headlines, images, captions, and content, on immigrants and international migration in the Daily Sun's online newspaper and accessed via Google Search. It is also different in that most of the studies on media representation of international migration examined a much earlier period. Yet it is imperative to understand the link between the media and the intensified xenophobic violence that rocked South Africa for the greater part of 2022.

Research on xenophobia and responses to it failed to focus on the victims themselves (Borman, 2018). Focus on this group is critical if an understanding of how the media is viewed in the eyes of those affected is to be achieved. This study will recognise the role of the subaltern by interviewing two immigrant community leaders to hear their side of the

story with regards to digital mainstream media handling of international migration. Further evidence based research is urgently needed to understand more fully the effect that the print media - including the digital mainstream media- has on attitude and perceptions in South Africa (Smith, 2009). This is because if there is going to be a campaign to convince the press to develop a more analytical and informed view on migration then such a campaign should be based on a more informed view as to why - and how - the press has been xenophobic for more than a decade (Smith, 2009) now. A number of generalised and unverified statements were made in 2008 by the media which triggered xenophobic attacks on African immigrants. These statements failed to avail scientific evidence to verify these cause-effects claims (Gomo, 2010). This study is of the view that we cannot afford to make the same mistakes again.

Despite the fact that there are existing studies that examine xenophobia in the media by looking at media content, the author is of the view that there are still gaps in the literature that need to be addressed and this study sets out to do that (Mbetga, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Cultivation theory, agenda setting theory, and the collective violence theory

Literature Review

Introduction

Much scholarly literature on xenophobia has explored its psychological, social, historical and symbolic dimensions, focusing on opinions, sentiments and attitudes towards foreigners (Georgiadou, et al, 2017), without stressing the role of media scholars in shaping them. This summary speaks to scholars in communication research, migration studies and immigration policy, as well as the broader interested public (Eberl, et al, 2018). It explores available knowledge on similar problems, and challenges existing knowledge with a view to create new ideas (Leed:1974, Gomo, 2010). While this literature review is not exhaustive, we collect and summarise key findings on how immigration and different migrant groups are reported in the media and how this coverage affects audiences (Eberl, et al, 2018) in South Africa. The general theoretical context of literature on xenophobia and the media will be explored (Gomo, 2010).

Definition

Despite its widespread usage, xenophobia is an ambiguous and contested term in popular policy and scholarly debates (Misago, et al, 2015). Traditionally, the term xenophobia entails hatred and fear of foreigners (Tarisayi, et al, 2020). But xenophobia in South Africa goes beyond hatred and fear to include violent attacks on suspected foreign nationals.

Harris (2002), argues that an inclusive definition of xenophobia should underpin the why, how and whom xenophobia targets. Such a framing may be close in directing an understanding of the South African xenophobia which violently targets

poor black Africans, using accusations that they are criminals, undocumented, spreaders of diseases (Gomo, 2010) and take jobs, resources, space, houses and women (Smith, 2011).

Masenya (2017) defines xenophobia as attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders to the community. But Harris (2002) contends that this definition is misleading because xenophobia in South Africa is not just an attitude but is also an activity - a violent practice that results in bodily harm and damage. Further to that, though Masenya (2017)'s definition may apply in other parts of the world, it excludes the concept of race as a key determinant in understanding the nature of xenophobia in South Africa. Nyamnjo (2006) notices that following Zimbabwe's economic collapse both its black and white populations have migrated to South Africa and many other destinations, but black Zimbabweans are castigated and stereotyped for transgressing South African borders, while white Zimbabweans entering the country are uncritically welcomed.

As such, Mbecke (2015) introduced a new term - 'Afrophobia' - to mean the dislike or fear of Africans by South Africans. If Europeans who settled in Africa after colonisation and conquest are to be considered as Africans, then this definition is incorrect as white Africans are largely not victims of xenophobic violence and white South Africans are not seen as perpetrators of explicit violence against foreign nationals.

Waiganjo (2017) attempts an inclusive definition of xenophobia by suggesting the term 'Xenophobia-Afrophobia' in relation to the South African context: black Africans who are non-South Africans are soft targets of the anti-foreigner's bigotry. While xenophobia is the fear of foreigners, Afrophobia is the fear of black foreigners (Waiganjo, 2017). This definition may apply in the analysis of this study, for while acknowledging that there was hatred, fear and attacks on foreigners, these attacks were targeting foreigners from other African countries (Tarisayi et al, 2020) provided they were black. However, while this definition sounds closer to the prevailing xenophobic situation in South Africa and to the scope of this study, it ignores the concept of statelessness as a political reality in the African context and excludes Indians from South East Asia who have also been adversely affected by these attacks.

Mbetga (2014) further notes that there is a class dimension to xenophobia and those foreigners who are discriminated against are mostly poor and belong to the working class. Misago et al (2015) observes that violent attacks occur in communities where the host citizens are deprived economically. As Mbetga (2014) rightfully observes: "If bank accounts are health, xenophobia disappears as if by magic" - proving that xenophobia mostly affects poor black working class communities, vendors and the unemployed from other parts of Africa and largely not the rich black 'foreign' national. But Waigonjo (2017), notices that Somali migrants are some of the key targets of xenophobia due to the nature of their work as business people in low-income zones where foreigners are perceived as business competitors and 'snatchers' of opportunities meant for local nationals.

Though there are cases where those physically targeted may be poor employees of absentee Somali business tycoons, and poor Somalis starting an income generating project, the term 'business people' does not imply that they are poor.

For the purposes of this study, we adopt a holistic definition of xenophobia as attitudes, prejudices and behaviours that reject, exclude and often villify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or "foreigners to the community, society or national identity" (ILO, IOM, and OHCHR, 2001-2002) for a variety of transgressions leading to explicit violence.

Manifestations of Xenophobia in South Africa

As elsewhere, xenophobia in South Africa translates into a broader spectrums of behaviours including discriminatory stereotyping and dehumanising remarks, discriminatory policies and practices by government and private officials such as exclusion from public services to which target groups are entitled, selective enforcement of by-laws by local authorities, assault and harassment by state agents, as well as public threats and violence that often result in wide-scale loss of lives and livelihoods (Misago, et al, 2015). While statistics on the impact of the ongoing xenophobic violence are still sketchy, violent attacks on foreign nationals are evident and the role of the digital media, particularly the Daily Sun, in inciting it needs to be interrogated.

Though understanding that xenophobia can manifest through overt means, the concerns of this paper are: acts of violence, aggression and brutality towards migrant groups representing extreme and escalated forms of xenophobia (Gomo, 2010) as is shown by attacks and even burning of immigrant business stalls at Bara taxi rank and Yeoville market besides targetted killings of foreigners and evictions, beginning January 2022.

Journalists ill-equipped to cover cross-border migration

Despite being vilified and condemned by some leading Italian politicians and international Western leaders - influenced by certain sections of the media - for bringing 53 immigrants picked up from a rubber dinghy in the Mediterranean sea off the coast of Libya into Italian territory, Carola Rackete, the former Captain of the Sea Watch, was acquitted of aiding illegal immigration by the Italian courts (D'Alessio, 2021). If the Italian media was better informed about administrative and human rights law governing Italy with regards to international migration, they could have saved the nation from this embarrassment.

Estes (2010), in their analysis of the Rwandan genocide, noticed that most of the misguided reports by the local and international press were due to lack of historical knowledge about Rwanda as correspondents had not received the training necessary to cover issues in Africa. Further to that, the media must share blame for not immediately recognising the extent of the carnage and mobilising world attention to it (Kuperman, 2000).

There are similarities which can be drawn between the Western media coverage of Rwandan genocide and the South

African media reporting of xenophobia, and the consequences of such erroneous reporting. Though this study was about the mischaracterisation of the violence in Rwanda by the Western media and based on an analysis of conventional media, it can equally help to understand the role of the South African mainstream media, especially the Daily Sun's online edition, in contributing to government inaction and ineffectiveness in intervening or in curbing violence against immigrants, but instead worsening it during the period under review.

Field work conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in four South African informal settlements affected by the 2008 xenophobic violence noted that though the media cannot be condemned directly for fanning the violence, there was a communication breakdown at the local level between communities and the state as well as within communities, which lies at the root of much of the anger and the violence (Hadland, 2010). As Hadland (2010) further stated: "By failing to respond to this breakdown, and act on its liberal imperative of providing a 'voice for the voiceless', the media may be more complicit than it or the literature is willing to acknowledge." While we question the liberal location of the media since - uncritical acceptance of the liberal model of journalism as the universal standard requires critical attention (Aujla - Sidhu, 2022), - and don't subscribe to the view that anyone can be voiceless but that human beings have agency, the inability of the digital mainstream media, particularly the Daily Sun, to provide adequate information to dispel the myth that international immigration is the cause of South Africa's social and economic challenges is apparent.

Although there are a number of causes of xenophobia, there has never been effective communication specifically focusing on the integration of foreign nationals and local community members (Rasila, et al, 2016). For South Africans to understand the important role played by the continent during the period of exile, (Rasila, et al, 2016), when South Africans took refuge in many countries around the world (Ellis, 1991) including in some African countries, - and the contribution of migrant labour from other parts of the continent (Harington, et al, 2004) the media also has to play its part.

Now to what extent is the South African reporter - including those contributing to the Daily Sun's online edition - aware of this political and historical reality?

South Africans see their fellow Africans as invaders, taking their jobs and livelihoods (Nkealah, 2011, Ngcamu, et al, 2019). Yet scholars posit that there is no research that has established a link between international migration and South Africa's economic quagmire. Instead of helping audiences better appreciate the issues at hand, the media exacerbate the conflict through sensational reporting (Ngcamu, et al, 2019).

We refer to a Media Statement by Stats South Africa (2021), on "Erroneous reporting of undocumented immigrants in South Africa", following exaggerated media reports about the quantity of undocumented immigrants in South Africa. The statement reads:

"The population census enumerates all persons within the borders of South Africa, irrespective of their citizenship or migratory status. The census migration module asks the province and country of birth, date moved to South Africa, and the country of citizenship, and not the

document status of an individual." (Stats SA, 2021). But some media, including the Daily Sun's digital newspaper, still publish exaggerated and unverified statistics of undocumented immigrants in South Africa.

When reporting on immigration, it is critical to use the correct terminology with clear understanding of their definitions to ensure reporting accurately and from an informed position (Keller, et al, 2019). But looking at how previously the media has been implicated in using derogatory terms when covering international migration stories, it is difficult to conclude that they are equipped to understand basic terminology in the area.

Cases of misquoting authorities have been rampant in South African media (Mgogo, et al, 2021), including the Daily Sun's digital newspaper. Following the 2015 xenophobic violence, Zulu King Goodwill Zwelintini, blamed the media for misquoting him (Mgogo, et al, 2020). Media misrepresentation and mischaracterisation of transnational migration and black foreigners

Allen (2016) observed that a common word used in the British print media to describe international migration was 'illegal', thereby contributing to the scapegoating of migrants (Tarisayi, 2020). Journalists have commonly employed terms like "massive invasion" and migrants were identified as 'clandestine', 'illegal', 'irregular' or 'undocumented' to describe immigration in Europe (Quassoli, 2013, Colombo, 2017).

Mbetga, (2014) notices that the press rarely differentiates between alien, illegal and other categories of migrants. Yet according to research, the ability of the average South African to make a distinction is limited (Valji et al, 1998, Mbetga, 2014). While the term 'guest worker' reflects the economic utility of a person, the term foreigner is derogatory, expressing cultural non - belonging (Saleh, 2015). These terms are mostly used in South African online mainstream media, particularly the Daily Sun, giving locals justification to evict and even kill and burn anyone black and poor, who are suspected to be 'undocumented' and 'foreign', therefore 'illegal' and not 'part of us'. Instead of dismantling these stereotypes that sustain the othering of others - a legacy of apartheid - some digital mainstream media including the Daily Sun reinforce them.

During the Rwandan genocide, Western media portrayed a picture of pervasive conflict, common in Africa, thereby normalising the genocide in the eyes of the world (Estes, 2010). In the same manner, describing xenophobic violence as a normal conflict between locals and non-locals downplays its seriousness, leading to possible government inaction. Musaro et al (2017) noticed that though perception of being invaded is not factually supported by data, the media has the tendency of exaggerating the size of any immigration population in its host country, including making use of vivid images leading to the 'crisis' narrative (Moore et al, 2012). While images of such magnitude may be missing in the South African context, images of small boats with 'illegal' immigrants crossing the Limpopo and Caledon river may portray a similar picture in the minds of locals. Essentially it can be argued from contemporary

stories that the media articles are alarmist in their construction of important stories (Tarisayi et al, 2020). It follows therefore that what South Africans are reacting to is not their experience of migration and its impact, but the perception of both the phenomenon and its impact (Valji, 2003) as manufactured by the media.

In 2008, the Daily Sun was accused of using derogatory terms such as 'aliens', and 'Makwerekwere' (Gomo, 2010) and like other newspapers - depicted the violence as something normal, understandable and legitimate reaction to the state of affairs (Mgogo et al, 2021). Kwerekwere, singular for Makwerekwere, is a derogatory and slang word used by black South Africans to mean 'foreigner' (HRW, 2020).

Linked to this, foreigners in general are often portrayed as victims, and or as criminals, or abusers of the social and legal system in South Africa (Mbetga, 2014), and the Daily Sun's digital edition is not immune from this charge.

We can therefore expect that people who are exposed to such media messages will hold more negative attitudes towards these newcomers (Debrael, et al, 2021), leading to xenophobic violence.

The power of the media and its agenda-setting role

Alitavoli and Kaveh (2018) articulate that the media shapes people's reality and their views of the world around them. Research has established that one frequently cited source where the public get their ideas about immigration - besides day-to-day contact with immigrants themselves or what friends and work colleagues might say - is the media (Allen, 2016), especially the mainstream online media like the Daily Sun. The unabating challenge of Afrophobia is thus partly explained by the media's continued portrayal of African immigrants in negative ways (Tarisayi, et al, 2020).

The epicentre of the agenda-setting theory is that it influences audiences about what to think (Tarisayi, 2020). The mass media can set agendas and frame debates as they provide information which citizens use to make sense of the world and their place within it (Berry, et al, 2015). While critical scholars may dispute some of these views, the findings of this paper revealed that these headlines are capable of inciting xenophobic violence across the country (Mgogo, 2021).

Though Gomo, (2010) in their research in South Africa, discovered that society is influencing media content rather than the other way around as is commonly the case, it cannot be denied that the news media play a fundamental role in defining exactly how black foreigners are perceived and represented in society (Mbetga, 2014). The research by Jacobs and Hooghe (2015) cited in Debora et al, (2021) concerning the reporting on television news, indicates that there is indeed a positive relationship between the extent to which the media reports about immigration and the degree to

which the public experiences immigration as a major challenge. While this does not differentiate between legacy or conventional media from digital media, it is difficult to deny that the coverage of international migration, particularly by the digital mainstream media such as the Daily Sun, has the potential to influence public opinion on migration and legitimise xenophobic actions. While some poor locals may not have access to smartphones, the role of opinion leaders in spreading anti-immigrant propaganda accessed via digital mainstream media such as the Daily Sun cannot be underestimated.

By publishing and airing hostile propaganda that dehumanised and demonised the Tutsi (Mwai, 2014), scholars posit that Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLRC), Radio Rwanda and the newspaper Kanguru did set the stage for the genocide in Rwanda. Similar allegations of fanning ethnic hatred and fuelling violence were levelled at Kenya's media particularly its local language radio stations, following the violent aftermath of both the 2007 general elections and 2005 referendum campaign (Ismail, and Deane, 2008).

Though this study is based on an English written online newspaper and immigrant-local relationships and not based on an analysis of an indigenous-language radio and relations of political or ethnic nature, the Rwandan and Kenyan examples still show the power of the media such as the Daily Sun's online edition in fuelling hatred and sparking xenophobic conflicts. While the circumstances may be different, this shows that the media may indeed set the stage for different forms of violence if professionalism and ethical journalism are ignored.

As perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide were equipped with a machete and a radio when committing the genocide (Paluck, 2007), perpetrators of xenophobia in South Africa may be equipped with the same machete, a gun and a smartphone. Informed by the cultivation theory, we argue that the reality and views of South Africans are shaped by the media (Tarisayi, et al 2020), but not necessarily all media. Flavian et al (2006) observes that digital newspapers are among the most widely demanded and visited websites within the internet community worldwide (Flavian et al 2006). Hence they have the capacity to set the agenda for xenophobic violence in South Africa.

But Stuart Hall (1980) challenged the notion of the power of the media by arguing that people are not passive receivers of messages. Fiske (1987) sums up that audiences are therefore not slaves of the media but choose the media content that gratifies their needs (Katz 1974, Gomo 2010). While these views are valid, the power of the mainstream electronic media to set the agenda towards xenophobic mobilisation during the period under review is evident.

Methodology

We gathered textual data mainly via available online archives (McLaren, et al, 2017), focusing on articles (Tarisayi, 2020) published by the Daily Sun's online edition from January 2021 to January 2022 with the wording 'illegal', 'refugee', 'immigrant', 'alien', 'Kwerekwere', 'smuggling', 'criminal', 'illegals', 'Zimbabwean Exemption Permit' and 'undocumented'. Fifty two (52) articles relating to immigrants and international migration were identified. We examined headlines, images, captions and text about African foreigners, looking at whether the stories were negative or positive towards migration and immigrants, and whether any meaningful information to put the story into context had been presented (Mbetga, 2014).

Considering that non-reporting on migration issues may lead to communication breakdown (Hadland, 2018), the study analysed the effects of the Daily Sun's non-reporting of some critical international immigration issues such as the termination of the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits in November 2021.

Since immigrants have agency and are active role players in society (Borman, 2018), we have interviewed two (2) refugee leaders in South Africa. We maintain that the subaltern must be allowed to speak (Spivak, 1998). In order to achieve balance, two (2) leaders of anti-immigrant groups were interviewed to discover their perception about immigrants and the forces behind such creation. In addition to primary sources, this research has relied on secondary sources and thorough review of academic publications to show the way the media intentionally or unintentionally contribute to the creation of a xenophobic mood in South Africa (Moyo, et al, 21020).

Data analysis

Introduction

The Daily Sun is a newspaper owned by Media 24, a company which is part of Naspers, a multinational group of media and e-commerce platforms (www.naspers.com). The newspaper's politics is that of the free market right (Berry et al, 2015). Most of its Board of Directors have backgrounds in finance, business, economics and corporate law. The paper, including its online edition, is seen to be very close to right wing, xenophobic groups and sympathetic to their cause.

According to PAMS (2017), the paper, which developed a digital component in 2020, has a readership of 3,821,000 people in and around the major cities of South Africa. Most of its reporters on international migration are local South Africans and freelance journalists.

Sampling

The unit of analysis was the entire broadcast news segment. To find news segments, the researchers searched the Internet for available episodes airing during the first four months of the crisis - from 20 January 2022 to 20 April 2022. YouTube was used to gather news-cast episodes of Al-Arabiya.net, ALAaalam and Sky News Arabia.

Not all episodes were available online, and some episodes did not provide any news segments coverage of the Houthis' military attack on Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Only three episodes of each channel were available online. Using the available videos of news-casts of four channels yielded a total of 40 news segments. A greater number of Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera segments were available on YouTube and Sky News Arabia was found on their website as well as Al-Jazeera.

Findings

We have established that for the period from January 2021 to January 2022, the Daily Sun's online version published fifty two (52) articles related to international migration in South Africa (<https://www.dailysun.co.za>). About 86 percent of the articles analysed were negative, inaccurate and unbalanced, using problematic terms and portraying immigrants as 'criminals', 'spreaders of diseases', 'undesirable' and 'outsiders'. Of the 52 articles analysed, only 7 which formed about 13 percent of the total articles reviewed, were to some extent positive. Though there is no explicit mention of 'aliens' and 'Makwiririkwiri', as was the case in previous studies, the Daily Sun's online edition still uses problematic terms such as 'undocumented immigrants', 'outsiders', 'foreigner' and 'illegal', some of the terms that landed its tabloid before the Press Ombudsman in 2008. We observe that in addition to its limited coverage of immigration issues, the Daily Sun's reform towards positive reporting is very slow.

Negative portrayal of immigrants Attempt to portray immigrants as criminals:

1. 'Soldiers intercept car smuggling.' 18 December 2021. Kgomoitso Medupe.
2. Members from the South African Defence Force at Tonga recover four stolen vehicles at Dlucluma enroute to Mozambique.' 18 December 2021. Kgomoitso Medupe.
3. 'Operation busts over 330 after killings!' 10 August 2021. Thokozile Mnguni and Aaron Dube.
4. "Suspects were found breaking the National Disaster Management Act and in possession of unlicensed firearms and drugs. Illegal immigrants were also found'. 10 August 2021. Thokozile Mnguni and Aaron Dube.
5. '1000 suspects bust in weekend operations.' 8 November 2021. Staff Reporter.
6. Robbery gang bust!,' 10 January 2022. Zamokhuhle Mdluli.
7. 'suspects were found to have committed various offences including hijacking, murder, attempted murder, rape, assault, possession of unlicensed firearms, drug dealing, driving under the influence , armed robbery and possession of suspected stolen property.' 10 January 2022. Zamokhuhle Mdluli.
8. 'Cops net 102 suspects.' 5 December 2021. Ntebatse Masipa
9. 'Campaign launch held in rape capital' 26 November 2021. Kgomoitso Medupe and Thokozile Mnguni.
10. 'nix umjolo in cop van,' 31 May 2021. Christopher Moagi
11. 'Cops bust over 1000 suspects' 8 June 2021. Sifiso Jimta.
12. Okae molao in full force! 30 May 2021. Emily Molao.
13. 'Cops raid crime rotten kasi! 30 April 2021. Emily Mgidi.

12. Okae molao in full force! 30 May 2021. Emily Molao.

13. 'Cops raid crime rotten kasi! 30 April 2021. Emily Mgidi.

14. 'We are free but struggling.' 27 April 2021. Lethabo Khambule

15. 'Tears for our Mkhukhus!' 31 March 2021. Lethabo Khambule

16. 'COPS pounce on 600 suspects!' 15 November 2021. Kgomotso Medupe

17. Guard borders 24/7." 25 June 2021. Slight Ramphaka, Florida.

18. 'Cops bust over 600 suspects!' 13 September 2021. Staff Reporter.

19. "Mashaba lashes cops!" 14 May 2021. Kgomotso Medupe.

20. 'Sibusiso's family hopes for justice.' 24 December 2021. Kgomotso Medupe.

21 . Klipa to jump Borders, 21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi,

Immigrants as spreaders of diseases:

1. This followed their arrest on charges of dealing in fong kong booze, contravening Covid - 19 liquor regulations, ... 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.

2. A resident said they were vulnerable to infection as they always crossed paths with those immigrants who were likely not tested. 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.

3. "Suspects were found breaking the

National Disaster Management Act ... 10 August 2021. Thokozile Mnguni and Aaron Dube.

4. 'Illegal immigrants make their way into Mzansi!' 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi

5. President Cyril Ramaphosa has closed 20 ports on entry. But the closure of borders between South Africa and Lesotho has seen an influx of illegal immigrants making their way into Mzansi at all cost.' 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.

6. Operation busts over 330 after killings! 10 August 2021. Thokozile Mnguni and Aaron Dube.

Immigrants as spreaders of diseases:

1. "Illegal immigrants were also found" 10 August 2021, Thokozile Mnguni and Aaron Dube.

2. 'Of the arrested suspects, illegal immigrants were taken to be processed by the Department of Home Affairs'. 8 November 2021, Staff Reporter

3. Police pounced on illegal miners in Florida and arrested suspects also found to be illegal immigrants. 10 January 2022. Zamokhuhle Mdluli.

4. 'They drove in the muddy streets of Tarleton, Magalies and Haekpoork searching for illegal immigrants, firearms, undocumented persons, stolen property and livestock.' 5 December 2021. Ntebatse Masipa.

7. 4 illegal immigrants were arrested. 8 June 2021. Sifiso Jimta.
8. Over 20 illegal immigrants are among the 1043 suspects nabbed this weekend. 30 May 2021. Emily Molao.
9. illegal immigrants arrested. 30 April 2021. Emily Mgidi.
10. We are fighting for jobs with illegal immigrants because our borders are not monitored. 27 April 2021. Lethabo Khambule.
11. Six undocumented immigrants and two suspects were arrested after they attacked the police.' 31 March 2021. Lethabo Khambule.
12. 69 undocumented immigrants were burst, as well as 29 people dealing in and having possession of drugs. 15 November 2021. Kgomotso Medupe.
13. Diepkloof community leader Zandile Dabula (35) believed illegal foreigners had taken over. 17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.
14. A group of South Africans marched in Soweto to call for the removal of illegal foreigners and their businesses ...17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.
15. A group of Soweto residents think illegal foreigners are responsible for the problems Mzansi is facing. 17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.
16. Some men claim illegal foreigners took their women.17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.
17. Musa Nkosi (37) claimed starting a business was hard because illegal foreigners sold the same goods. 17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.
18. Among the arrested, 46 were nabbed for gender based violence, while 6 foreigners were charged for contravening the immigration Act ...' 13 September 2021. Staff Reporter.
19. Foreigners continue to cross the full and treacherous crocodile infested Limpopo river along the border line between Zimbabwe and South Africa.10 January 2021. Norman Maake, Tembisa.
20. Illegal immigrants make a way into Mzansi! 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.
21. Many illegal immigrants are using old bed mattresses with tubeless tyres to cross the Caledon River, ...14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.
22. But the closure of borders between South Africa and Lesotho has seen an influx of illegal immigrants making their way into Mzansi at all cost."14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.
23. "Statistics show that there are 12 million unemployed people in the country, yet in some companies you find undocumented people occupying space. Restaurants that could be hiring our brothers and sisters are filled with outsiders ...".25 November 2021. Sibonelo Zwane.

24. 'He claimed the city buildings were hijacked and run by illegal immigrants, who forced South Africans to pay rent.' 25 November 2021. Sibonelo Zwane.
25. 26 undocumented people were arrested. 30 April, 2021. Emily Mgidi.
26. Mashaba said the group whose members are known to the community is allegedly made up of undocumented foreigners. 14 May 2021. Kgomoitso Medupe.
27. Our borders are porous and we run the risk of being outnumbered by unregistered foreigners. 25 June 2021. Letter to the editor by Slight Ramphaka.
28. The second phase, a roadblock on the Golden Highway, resulted in the arrest of suspected illegals, ... 26 March 2021. Sifiso Jimta.
29. Twenty nine illegals were burst! 26 March 2021. Sifiso Jimta.
30. Modiri Mathews of Home Affairs immigration services confirmed that 29 illegal immigrants were arrested. 26 March 2021. Sifiso Jimta.
31. "These operations are useful as we have support from cops to detain those who are in the country illegally." 26 March 2021. Sifiso Jimta.
32. "I believe this could have been prevented had the government prevented illegal immigrants from getting into our country." 24 December 2021. Kgomoitso Medupe.
33. Here we have found 12 drunk drivers, more than 20 illegal immigrants, ...' 22 February 2021. Christopher Moagi.
34. Two stolen bakkies belonging to one company were impounded, while a number of illegal immigrants were detained. 18 March 2021. Sifiso Jimta.
35. She said during the same operation, two suspects were busted for illegal mining, three possession of dagga and dealing in drugs, seven illegal immigrants were arrested ... 11 May 2021. Ntebatse Masipa.
36. Its clear most of the population in this area is undocumented and are in the country illegally. 13 June 2021. Sibonele Zwane.
37. A full load of illegal immigrants who were found in a taxi ... 21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi.
38. Mzansi borders are closed. But that's not stopping illegal immigrants from slipping into the country unnoticed. 21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi.
39. And proof was there on Thursday, 21 January after Gauteng cops bust illegal immigrants who allegedly paid R100 to enter Mzansi. 21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi.
40. Cops stopped a Toyota Zola Budd taxi ferrying 34 illegal immigrants from Mozambique ... 21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi.

41. But it remains a mystery how the illegal immigrants got into the country without being detected at the border. 21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi.

42. Gauteng police spokesman Captain Kay Makhubele, said the illegal immigrants told them they paid R100, but it was unclear what it was for. 21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi.

43. The two boats used by illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe to Mzansi in Musina , Limpopo, have been confiscated. 15 January 2022. Joshua Sebola.

44. Information was received from Crime Intelligence regarding allegations of fraud ... and also stamping passports to extend the stay of illegal immigrants from Mozambique, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. 14 November 2021. Aaron Dube.

45. The second roadblock on the Golden Highway, resulted in the arrest of suspected illegals, ... 26 March 2021. Sifiso Jimta.

46. Mawela said illegal immigrants topped the list of arrests. 13 June 2021. Sibonelo Zwane.

47. Calls have been mounting on various social media platforms for the advocate to be released, with some users claiming that his arrest was due to his vocal views on illegal immigrants. 02 August 2021. Christopher Moagi.

Portraying immigrants as a threat and exaggerating immigration population:

1. 'Border situation is bad' 10 January 2021. Norman Maake, Tembisa.

2. 'Disturbing scenes from the Lebombo Border between Mozambique and SA ... 10 January 2021. Norman Maake, Tembisa.

3. 'I am distressed by the immigration situation at Beitbridge border post in the Limpopo river in Limpopo province. 10 January 2021. Norman Maake, Tembisa.

4. 'Illegal immigrants make a way into Mzansi !' 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi

5. But the closure of borders between South Africa and Lesotho has seen an influx of illegal immigrants making their way into Mzansi at all cost." 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi

6. 'Many illegal immigrants were using old bed mattresses with tubeless tyres to cross over the Caledon river... 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi

7. ' About 50 Basotho people cross the river into South Africa daily,' .14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi

8. Also Free State police said they had arrested 129 Lesotho nationals. 14 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.

9. A full load of illegal immigrants who were found in a taxi21 January 2021. Christopher Moagi.

10. "Dabula sweeps through Soweto!" 17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.4.

11. Guard borders 24/7." 25 June 2021. Slight Ramphaka.

12. March to 'claim back the country.' 25 November 2021. Sibonelo Zwane

Identifying immigrants with their nationality:

Mozambicans, BaSotho, Zimbabwean, Eswatini and Nigerian nationals involved in criminal activities were named by their nationality with negative implications to nationals of the respective countries residing in South Africa. In most cases these nationalities are stereotyped as 'rapists', 'murderers', 'border jumpers', 'drug dealers' and 'illegal miners'. The following are the expressions:

1. Three more bodies were with his Nigerian accomplice, who was still at large.' 15 November 2021. Joshua Sebola.

2. Cops stopped a Toyota Zola Budd taxi ferrying 34 illegal immigrants from Mozambique ... 21 January. Christopher Moagi.

3. ... some suspects were found to be minors while others were illegal immigrants from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. 29 June 2021. Nelson Mlangu.

4. The suspects were aged 36 to 41 and included the Mozambican hawker who acted as an agent for fraud. 14 November 2021 Aaron Dube.

5. 'The women had been reportedly missing between August and October and were found after a Zimbabwean (34)

confessed ...' 15 November 2021. Joshua Sebola.

6. 'Illegal crossing stopped!' 15 January 2022. Joshua Sebola

7. The Zimbabwean government needs to intervene and tell the Zimbabweans to stop risking their lives. 10 January 2021. Norman Maake.

8. Four Eswatini nationals were arrested after they were found with dagga ... 9 March 2021. Bulelwa Ginindza.

Implications of using the term 'foreigner' or 'immigrant' in the South African context:

These terms carry negative connotations in the South African context.

1. EIGHT foreigners were each granted R2000 bail ... 26 January 2021. Joseph Mokoaledi.

2. Taximen have been urged to turn in foreigners who smuggle dagga ... 9 March 2021. Bulelwa Ginindza.

3. Shops, some belonging to foreigners, were looted ... 10 March 2021. Bulelwa Ginindza.

4. Cops said they will not arrest the person because the owner of the shop is not South African, meaning that foreigners are supposed to be robbed. 19 March 2021. Kgalalelo Tlhoale.

5. Shopping malls at various kasis were affected, as well as spaza shops owned by foreigners. 13 July 2021. Lethabo Khambule.

6. foreigners transporting packs of umqombothi in a bus were not spared. 20 July 2021. Staff Reporter.

7. Among the arrested, 46 were nabbed for gender based violence while six foreigners were charged for contravening the immigration Act ... 13 September 2021. Staff Reporter.

8. This happened after Sabelo Shandu and three other taxi drivers were allegedly accused of being foreigners. 26 August 2021. Emily Mgidi.

Unlimited coverage on xenophobic groups:

1. March to 'claim back the country.' 25 November 2021. Sibonelo Zwane.

2. Quoting Nhlanhla Lux the reporter said, 'He claimed the city buildings were hijacked and run by illegal immigrants, who forced South Africans to pay rent.' 25 November 2021. Sibonelo Zwane.

3. Mashaba said the group whose members are known to the community is allegedly made up of undocumented foreigners. 14 May 2021. Kgomotso Medupe.

4. Diepkloof community leader Zandile Dabula (35) believed illegal foreigners had taken over. 17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.

home countries by the UN. 20 April 2021. Karabo Rammutla.

1. After 121 foreign nationals decided to take up an offer to be flown back to their home countries by the UN. 20 April 2021. Karabo Rammutla.

2. He said the ringleaders of the protest were among those deported as they did not qualify for refugee status20 April 2021. Karabo Rammutla.

3. Several others agreed to return to various communities in South Africa 20 April 2021. Karabo Rammutla.

4. The group of foreigners decided to leave their communities, saying they feared xenophobic attacks ... 20 April 2021. Karabo Rammutla.

5. Their main preference was Canada and they occupied the Central Methodist Church 20 April 2021. Karabo Rammutla.

6. We need to guard our borders carefully. Our borders are porous and we run the risk of being outnumbered by unregistered foreigners. ...'25 June 2021. Slight Ramphaka.

Positive portrayal of immigration:

Seven (7) relatively positive articles were identified in the following categories: use of neutral words, articles with non-locals or anti-xenophobic groups as sources, articles with relative balance and articles on the side of non-locals. However it was difficult categorising these articles as entirely positive since the tone in some sections of certain articles was generally harsh towards immigrants.

Use of neutral terms:

1. I am glad I participated in this campaign and I wish everyone in the country, be it South African or non-South African, can be vaccinated. 14 May 2021. Zama Nteyi.
2. I learnt the brand in Mzansi is owned by a non - South African and that motivated me to start my own. 25 November 2021. Quincy Mahlangu.
3. Cops bust man for rape and murders!' 14 November 2021. The Sun Reporter.

Use of neutral terms:

1. SAHRC: Noodles deaths not linked to foreign nationals! 23 November 2021. Lethabo Khambule.
2. Corruption in the immigration process violates the human rights of foreign nationals ... 9 March 2021. Slight Ramphaka.
3. 'Their presence in our city also improves the local economy as most of them buy groceries and other necessities from our town ...' 15 January 2022. Joshua Sebola.

4. "Some immigrants falling in different categories of asylum seeker and refugee have earned the refugee status and are under international protection. 20 April 2021. Karabo Rammutla.

Articles citing non-locals and anti-xenophobic group as a source:

1. Yes, we are from Lesotho and don't have documents. But we need to create a life for ourselves in South Africa. ...Please don't evict us,' she said. 18 September 2021. Sibonele Zwane.
2. The anti xenophobia group, the Thembelihle Crisis Committee (TCC) said they believe in the maximum unity of the working class across all races, nationals and gender among others. 17 June 2021. Emily Mgidi.
3. Pretty Mkwepu (53) , originally from Malawi said,"I wish South Africans celebrated and embraced Freedom Day, Not all countries in the continent share what they have... 27 April 2021. Lethabo Khambule.
4. Lovemore Moyo (40) who claims he is in South Africa legally said it will be hard for South African government to halt the illegal immigration...'

Articles with relative balance:

1. Letter to the Editor: The crimes are committed by both South Africans and foreigners.09 March 2021. MJ Kubu.
2. Crime is crime and needs to be curbed. It has no nationality. 09 March 2021. MJ Kubu. Khambule.

3. ... Human Rights Commission Chairman Advocate Bongani Majola launched a study into the matter. Its entitled Policing and Non Nationals : Towards Strengthening SAPS Response to Racism, Xenophobia and Other Related Intolerance. 04 June 2021. Lethabo Khambule.

4. Cops no policy on xenophobic attacks. 04 June 2021. Lethabo Khambule.

An interview with two refugee leaders largely revealed media bias.

Views of two refugee community leaders were sought. Albert Mpazayabo, a refugee and leader of the Network for Immigrant Rights and Responsibilities in South Africa who has been in South Africa since 1997 expressed concern at the way the South African media report international migration.

“Drawing on my past experience, the South African media, whether private or government owned, are biased. They only elaborate on locals’ views which most of the time are negative views about migrants. They don’t go further beyond what is obvious and for instance approach migrants themselves, and ask their opinion,” said Mpazayabo.

Mercy Dube an activist who works with the Global South against Xenophobia and holder of a Special Zimbabwe Exemption Permit (ZEP), agrees that the South African media is biased in covering international forced migration.

“The media focus on “illegal” immigrants yet leave the corrupt police and Home Affairs officials that are taking bribes every day. When the announcement was made that the ZEP was not going to be

renewed, everyone knew how it would impact the ZEP holders. I don’t remember the media interviewing any Zimbabwean ZEP holder on how they felt about that. It’s just two months ago about 10 months after the decision was taken that now the media want to interview people from Zimbabwe on the issue. Of which it was too late because they have been telling their story the way they felt, because they wanted to sell. It’s about selling stories. It’s about making money. It’s business. I feel that there is no platform for refugees and immigrants to share their stories. They are not given that opportunity by the media.

“For me to say immigrants are scared to be interviewed does not make sense because journalists know that people can choose to be anonymous. Even if they are interviewed on TV, their faces can be covered and even their voices can be changed and they can still tell their story.

“We have heard stories such as ‘immigrants commit crime’ which have created a lot of tension. Now recently we have seen an article by the Minister of police saying foreigners are unlikely to commit crime. Already the damage has been made and the fuel has been added because of how the media report such incidents. Now how do you put off the fire?’ said Dube.

Interview with leaders of anti-immigrant groups.

Some locals learn about the misbehaviour of some foreign nationals in the community where they live.

Thabo Mjekula, (not his real name), leader of a local anti-immigrant group who requested anonymity because he did not get permission to speak on behalf of the organisation claims he is an eye witness of most crimes committed by foreign nationals in his community.

“I have no time for radio or newspapers. I saw it myself. As a community leader when something bad happens people call me. This other day, a Zimbabwean man killed his wife and ran away. Our Zimbabwean and Mozambican brothers commit a lot of crime here,” said Mjekula. Whilst most locals who hold anti-immigrant sentiments may not have time for radio or newspapers, they do however read newspaper links sent to their respective whatsapp groups in their smartphones. “We have plenty of newspaper links circulating in our Dudula whatsapp groups. Some are from Twitter and Facebook. We read those stories to learn what’s happening in other provinces,” said Mjekula.

Zanele Njolo (not her real name), an activist, and a member of a local anti-immigrant group who requested to remain anonymous for professional reasons maintains that the media is the major source of information about the misbehaviour of non-locals.

“I read links from newspapers sent by my colleagues on whatsapp groups and share with others. I prefer online news circulating on WhatsApp. I have read about foreigners doing cash heists. When they were asked by Bekhi Cele (Minister of Police) they said they come from Lesotho.

“This other time I listened to a video when Motsoaledi (Minister of Home Affairs) said most of the undocumented immigrants are criminals who are on wanted list in their countries of origin, and that they are hiding from crime here in South Africa.

Such people will remain undocumented in order to commit more crime,” said Njolo. However Nhlanhla Lux, leader of Soweto Parliament, a local anti-immigrant group, blamed the media for being biased, and for favoring immigrants in their coverage. “We are here because of Kgotso Diale, a South African who was shot and killed by illegal foreigners. Now what is the term for illegal foreigners killing our people in our communities? We know the media is designed to mislead people,” said Lux (Newzroom Africa, 19 April, 2022).

This is a case of the media caught between a rock and a hard place.

Recommendations

Based on our findings this study made a variety of recommendations. In spite of the mistakes of the past, the media can however play an important role in 'cleaning up' the image of African immigrants and thus contribute to social cohesion (Moyo, et al, 2020), through changing perceptions and reshaping the conversations around migration by writing about cross - border migration in a way that is responsible and educational (Keller, 2019).

This paper proposes communication ways that would integrate South Africa with the rest of the continent (Rasila, et al, 2016), following years of isolation. This communication should be more conscientious about the ordinary aspects of the daily lives of migrants, based on greater complexity in terms of content, image and interpretative keys, and on the will to favour an exchange with the bearers of other cultures as well as reciprocal respect (Musaro, et al, 2017). In support of the media's role in awareness raising on immigration and immigrants in South Africa, Albert Mpazayabo, one of the two refugee community leaders interviewed for this study, said: "The media must read the provisions of the law that regulate migration, including educating citizens about South Africa's obligations to local and international protocols."

Excellence in training and education of journalists should reinforce professional standards and fight ignorance about cultural differences and concerns (Heschel, 2006) to prevent violence.

We concur with other researchers that in times of peace, journalists must report positive contributions of foreigners to the South African community and not show interest only during periods of violence (Mbetga, 2014).

This paper has recommended the practise of peace journalism and Ubuntu journalism as alternative models for reporting (Mgogo, et al, 2020) on immigrants and international immigration. Peace journalism is a process by which editors and reporters make choices about what to report and how to report it, which creates opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent actions and to develop positive responses to conflict (Lynch, 2005, Mgogo, et al, 2020). Through Ubuntu journalism, journalists would highlight the need for unity of humanity and the importance of constantly referring to the principles of empathy, cooperation, peace building and sharing to seek to resolve common problems like xenophobic violence (Blank, 2017). Closely linked to this is the concept of solutions journalism which according to SJN (2022) investigates and explains, in a critical and clear-eyed way, how people try to solve widely shared problems (SJN, 2022).

However this is not an attempt to promote only 'goodwill' journalism, but good journalism able to offer the public an accurate perception of the facts (Parmiggiani, 2013).

While recognising that proposing censorship is problematic and controversial, we argue that there have to be restrictions on material that is divisive and inflammatory (Allen, et al, 2005).

We further propose the promotion of journalists and experts of immigrant origin within the information system (Musaro, et al, 2017).

Whilst this research is not about who influenced the mainline media, particularly the Daily Sun's electronic newspaper to report in the way that they did, it is important to interrogate the role of the media curriculum and pedagogy in promoting unethical journalism which dehumanise migrants and misrepresent international migration. We reiterate the need for a liberated journalism curriculum to produce reporters who are prepared to report on multicultural societies by challenging colonial legacies that create ethnic and racial division among people (Aujla - Sidhu, 2022), as is happening in South Africa.

The paper concludes by calling for further academic engagement and greater political commitment (Allen, et al, 2005) to effectively curb misinformation and propaganda in South Africa's media landscape in order to combat xenophobia.

Conclusion

The majority of stories about international immigration by the Daily Sun's online edition analysed were largely negative.

Positive portrayal of international migration was limited, inadequate and shrouded in negativity. While the reasons for xenophobia may be varied, the complicity of some South African journalists in the reigning xenophobic climate, is difficult to ignore.

Although anti-immigrant violence hit almost all parts of South Africa, most cases were reported in Gauteng province where international immigration stories were covered largely in a negative way. This explains why the province became the centre for xenophobic mobilisation by right wing groups and politicians. Colonial and dehumanising terms symbolising extreme hatred commonly utilised by the Daily Sun's online edition to describe international migration such as 'undocumented immigrants', 'refugees', 'illegals' and 'outsiders' are popular vocabulary among locals and leaders of anti-immigrant groups.

Even though some scholars argue that the community influences media content, without undermining indigenous knowledge production, it is highly unlikely that local South Africans influenced the media - the Daily Sun online newspaper in this case - to use these terms.

If the community did not learn these terms from the media, including the Daily Sun's online edition, then where did they learn from? Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that there is a positive correlation between the way the Daily Sun's electronic newspaper covered international immigration and xenophobic violence in South Africa.

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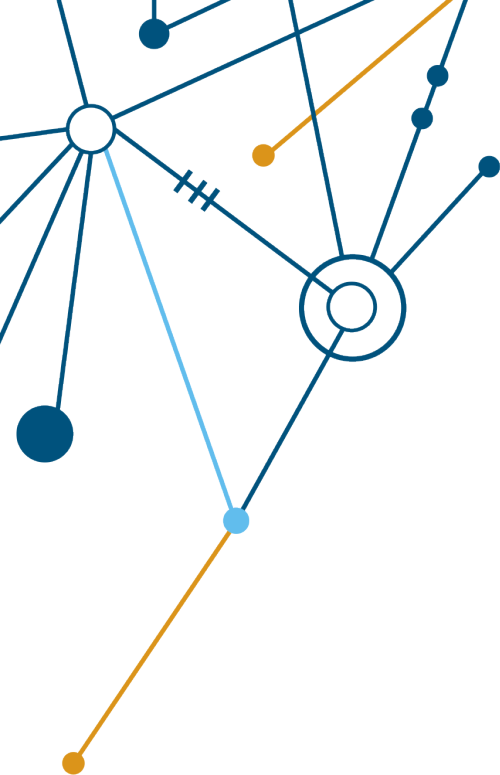
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